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The University of Georgia

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences
Department of History

June 28, 1994

The Hon. Ben Gilman, Vice Chairman
Foreign Affairs Committee
U.S. Congress
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gilman,

Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt has sent me a "draft of a review being prepared for publication" by a Frank Proschan. The review - "Jane Hamilton-Merritt: An Evaluation of Her Scholarly Work" - apparently has been distributed to members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

This "draft review" is in fact a rather blatant and scurrilous attack on Dr. Hamilton-Merritt's work and reputation. Standing on the high ground of historical ethics (as interpreted by Mr. Proschan), the author faults Dr. Hamilton-Merritt's methodology and credibility. If Mr. Proschan is to be believed, Dr. Hamilton-Merritt's recent book, Tragic Mountains, should be dismissed as amateurish trash.

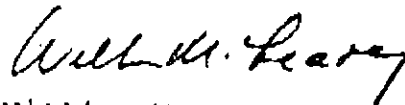
Let me say, first of all, that I possess a doctorate in history from a fairly respectable institution (Princeton University). Also, over the past thirty years I have published a substantial number of scholarly books and articles, many dealing with the historical activities of the Central Intelligence Agency. I am keenly aware, therefore, of the difficulties in providing acceptable documentation for studies on the role of the CIA in such events as the war in Laos.

In my view, Dr. Hamilton-Merritt's Tragic Mountains represents a pioneering effort to shed light on a little understood aspect of the Vietnam War. While sympathetic of the plight of the Hmong who fought on the side of the United States during the long and bloody conflict in Laos, Dr. Hamilton-Merritt does not deserve to be castigated for her views.

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Mr. Proschan's "draft review" remind me very much of the passionate harangues of the anti-war writers of the 1960s. I trust that the Committee will recognize that Mr. Proschan speaks more as an advocate for the current Lao regime than a dispassionate scholar. His attack on Dr. Hamilton-Merritt should be viewed in this light.

Respectfully,



William M. Leary
Professor of History