

syll-89

6/25/94

To: Doug Pike
Indochina Studies Archives
FAX:

From: Jane Hamilton-Merritt
FAX:

Doug, as promised, I'm faxing some of the Frank Proschan material today. The remainder I am sending priority mail. I'm also faxing some preliminary responses about the Proschan effort by Arthur Dommen and a Philip Smith letter to Rep. Ben Gilman.

Also, I'm faxing a draft of my two-page analysis of the situation which I must ask you **NOT TO CIRCULATE** at this time.

Today, Saturday, I will be available at 203-938-3024. This number will also work on Monday.

Again, thanks so much for your interest in this issue.

Green
SUBH
DATE 6/22/94
SUBJECT

CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS

2200 Wilson Blvd., 102-35, Arlington, VA 22201 Tele. (703)749-8127

Indigenous Peoples Preservation Project "Human Rights For ALL Peoples"

June 22, 1994

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

Dear Congressman Gilman:

Recently, I received a copy of the draft document allegedly written by Mr. Frank Proschan that is being circulated to key Members of Congress about Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt in an apparent attempt to discredit her and her book Tragic Mountains.

The draft document—aside from oozing academic arrogance in quite a number of places—leaves out major pieces of information including the endorsement of her book by former CIA director Bill Colby and its widespread endorsement by combat veterans in the Hmong, Air America and Ravens community.

Sadly, the real victim of this apparent character attack by Mr. Proschan will probably be the Hmong refugees at Ban Napho camp and Wat Tham Krabok in Thailand. As you may know, despite your important efforts at the April 26th hearing of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Asia, regarding Indochinese refugees, the U.S. Department of State and the Royal Thai government have not agreed to allow any of the thousands of legal Hmong refugees in Ban Napho camp—including the Vue clan—to leave the camp for resettlement in third countries. They will, therefore, it seems, be all sent back to Laos even though many were closely associated with the CIA secret war in Laos and the current Hmong resistance.

Like Rwanda and its tribal/ethnic divisions, the current implementation of the Luang Prabang Tripartite policy may be a recipe for disaster and genocide.

Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt and some of her book may be "politically incorrect" to some in the mainstream Indochina policy establishment entrenched in academe, the State Department and the NGO community. Attacks against her character and her work detract from the real issue at hand—the lives and long term security of the Hmong refugees in Ban Napho camp and at Wat Tham Krabok as well as the policy implementation failure of the Luang Prabang Tripartite Agreement. Time is running out for these Hmong refugees—and the assurances that proper monitoring has been done by the authorities in Laos does not seem to be completely true.

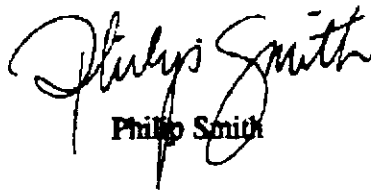
Elements of the Thai military recently forcibly repatriated 25,000 Cambodian refugees. By the looks of the current Hmong refugee crisis, a similar situation may face the Hmong at Wat Tham Krabok—who some say are closely associated with the Hmong resistance (and, therefore, it would seem, at greater risk of retribution if they are returned to Laos).

At a recent NGO conference I attended on Southeast Asia, Mr. Prochan seemed to be on extremely close terms with high ranking Pathet Lao officials in attendance as well as other individuals intimately associated—or economically associated—with the present Lao regime. Perhaps this is why the document attributed to him that you recently received refers (on page #3) to Hmong veterans and resistance fighters—like the ones you met during the Vietnam war—as "Lao resistance terrorists."

Your continued efforts—and those of Dr. Jane Hamilton-Merritt's—are crucial in order to save the lives of these "Lao resistance terrorists" and their families that sacrificed so much for the United States during the Vietnam war and its aftermath.

Thank you for your efforts—and the crucial efforts of your exceptional staffer Paul Berkowitz—on behalf of the Hmong people at Ban Napho and Wat Tham Krabok.

Sincerely,


Philip Smith

cc: Members of Congress

July 6, 1994

DEPARTMENT OF
HISTORY & POLITICS

Converse College
Spartanburg, South Carolina 29302-0006
(803) 596-9000

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

Dear Congressman Gilman:

The manuscript, "Jane Hamilton-Merritt: An Evaluation of Her Scholarly Work," has recently come to my attention. I am appalled by the arrogance, ignorance, and deceitfulness of this "McCarthyist" smear which attempts to masquerade as the work of a concerned scholar. Mr. Proschan is either naive, a fool, or he has a political agenda.

I believe that I can make some modest claim to knowing the literature of the Indochina War. I have published a book on the subject, written a couple dozen bibliographic articles, authored over 200 individual reviews of books on Indochina, and regularly present papers at scholarly conferences. In sum, I would argue that I have a larger grasp of the literature than Mr. Proschan, an individual of whom I have never heard; and from reading his vitae, I can discern why. As a historian, I found his pompous exegesis on accepted practices of historical research a bit amusing, but more sad and pathetic. Although he makes a few valid points, he himself is guilty of many of the sins he enumerates; and his analysis is seriously flawed and unconvincing. I choose to address only a few basic points.

Mr. Proschan's claim that Ms. Hamilton-Merritt is not active in the field or her scholarship recognized by her peers is simply false. Employing the same tactics which he decries in his essay, Proschan issues the blanket statement that among the Southeast Asianists with whom he consorts, Ms. Hamilton-Merritt has a modest reputation. Among the Indochina War specialists that I know, which includes the major names in the field, she is considered the authority in her area. She has presented papers or participated in panels at the five major interdisciplinary Indochina War conferences of the last several years: the **International Conference on Vietnam and the West** (University of Swansea, Wales, 1988), **The Vietnam War: Impact and Legacy** (Georgia Tech, 1991), **Remembering Tet** (Salisbury, MD, 1992), **Vietnam: Paris Plus 20** (Center for the Study of the Vietnam Conflict, Texas Tech University, 1993), and **The United States and Vietnam: From War to Peace** (University of Notre Dame, 1993). Obviously, Mr. Proschan was not at any of these conferences to witness the reception of Ms. Hamilton-Merritt's presentations.

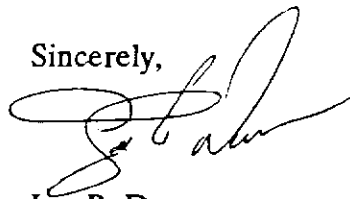
The fact that Ms. Hamilton-Merritt spent fourteen years traveling all over the world in the researching and writing of her groundbreaking and seminal treatise more than adequately explains why she has not compiled a resume of esoteric "scholarly" articles which Mr. Proschan seems to think important. If more academics focused on producing truly meaningful work rather than compiling longer vitae citations, scholarship would be well served. Yes, Ms. Hamilton-Merritt is a trained journalist which explains

her publications in "popular" media. This does not depreciate the importance of her contributions. For example, academics may well have learned more about the Presidency, the Supreme Court, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the CIA, and other subjects from the books of journalist Bob Woodward than from hundreds of "scholarly" treatises on these subjects. A high percentage of the most high profile books on Indochina, upon which academics rely, come from journalists. David Halberstam, Stanley Karnow, Neil Sheehan, Jonathan Schell, and Arnold Isaacs are but a few examples. It will be many years before the kind of documentation that historians and political scientists would like will be available on many Indochina topics. Thus we are fortunate to have people such as Jane Hamilton-Merritt whose investigative journalism skills have ferreted out vital stories that would not be available otherwise for decades. The issues with which she deals are too important for such delay.

Finally, Mr. Proschan states that **Tragic Mountains** has not been reviewed by the scholarly community. In fact, the list of reviews grows daily. Besides a number of the more important "popular" sources such as the **Wall Street Journal**, **The New Yorker**, **Philadelphia Inquirer**, **San Francisco Chronicle**, and cited in the **Los Angeles Times** as one of the five best books in history for 1992-1993; specialized journals such as the **Foreign Service Journal**, **Foreign Intelligence Literary Scene**, **Veteran**, **China and Pacific Rim Letter**, **Infantry Magazine**, **The Bloomsbury Review** (by John Clark Pratt, one of the nation's most knowledgeable authorities on the war in Laos), etc.; the reviews in the major scholarly publications--which are notoriously backlogged--are now out or forthcoming. I believe that Mr. Proschan would concede that reviews in **The Journal of Asian Studies**, **The Journal of American History**, and **The Journal of Asian History** qualify as the kind of scholarly titles which he erroneously infers have neglected **Tragic Mountains**. In all of the reviews above, and several others not cited, I know of only one negative review of the book, that by an individual of strong ideological perspective and questionable credentials himself. Most reviews are not only favorable but effusive.

Without engaging in a line by line refutation of Mr. Proschan's diatribe, I think that I have pointed out enough to call into question his "document." Should he be so brazen as to actually submit this for publication, he will be subjected to more thorough discrediting than I am called upon to provide here. Since it is highly unusual procedure to circulate a draft manuscript before members of Congress prior to publication, I suspect that Mr. Proschan has more of a political than a scholarly agenda, and I caution that his essay should be read in that light. Mr. Proschan has the temerity to refer to Ms. Hamilton-Merritt as an advocate rather than a scholar. Personally, I am more concerned about for whom Mr. Proschan speaks. He is no scholar; and for whom is he a lobbyist?

Sincerely,



Joe P. Dunn

Charles A. Dana Professor of History & Politics
Chairman

In skimming rapidly over Proschan's piece with its innumerable quibbles my attention was suddenly caught by his discussion of the Pathet Lao radio broadcast of May 6, 1975 on his pages 6 and 7. He puts forward an interpretation of the meaning of that broadcast which had never occurred to me. It bears close examination.

He maintains that the threat contained in the broadcast is directed against the "Vientiane ultrarightist reactionary clique," not against the Hmong special forces. When I read the full text of the broadcast in the FBIS files a couple of years ago, there was not the slightest doubt in my mind that the threat was directed against the Hmong special forces. And even from the excerpts cited by Proschan on page 6 I think any reader of English would conclude that this was so. I don't have the full text with me now, but consider the following:

--The phrase "We can wipe them out any time" clearly refers to the Hmong special forces. Whether this is a threat or not is, I suppose, debatable. If I were a Hmong, I would certainly take it as a threat, or at least a not very reassuring augury of what my future holds.

--This same group of people are obviously the object of the "very specific" threat (Proschan's words) contained in the subsequent statement that "the Patriotic Armed Forces must exercise our right of self-defense and duly punish or wipe them out." This is so because Sisouk Na Champassak, the Sananikones, and other prominent lowland Lao officials by May 1975 hardly constituted a threat against which the "Patriotic Armed Forces" had to be mobilized; these individuals had been maneuvered into a position where they no longer had any effective command over anything, and in short order could be expected to flee across the Mekong, which most of them did. The Hmong special forces, on the other hand, were something entirely different. A constituted, battle-hardened military force under resourceful and capable leadership, operating in a friendly environment with popular support, the Hmong special forces did constitute a continuing threat to Pathet Lao control. Indeed, the title of the broadcast, "The U.S.-Vang Pao Special Forces Must Be Completely Cleaned Up," cannot be interpreted as meaning the "Vientiane ultrarightist reactionary clique," for if that clique was the intended target of the broadcast, the title would have said so.

--The Hmong may not have been mentioned as such in the broadcast (for obvious political reasons of the Pathet Lao), but the name of Vang Pao, their leader, in the title of the broadcast makes it clear that the threat is to the Hmong and the Hmong only.

--The most convincing evidence of the existence of a threat against the Hmong lies in your interviews of Hmong who actually heard this broadcast and took it to mean they were threatened, personally and as a group. (Proschan cannot deny that the

broadcast occurred.)

So in conclusion, I would say that on the basis of both the documentary evidence and the interview evidence Proschan's interpretation of the meaning of the broadcast is not only novel but also mistaken. The rest of his argumentation is very likely equally fallacious.

Please note also that he is wrong when he says on page 2 that your book was not reviewed in any scholarly journal: the review by Alfred McCoy in The Journal of Asian Studies.

I think it is important to bear in mind, when dealing with an individual who makes so much out of evidence and the treatment of it in historical writing, that we are dealing here with a regime that is so secretive about its actions, not to mention its policies, that it has never published a word about how it came to power or how it treated its defeated enemies after victory (e.g. the seminar camps, the treatment of the king); has never indicated the possibility of any amnesty for those who opposed it; has never spelled out the procedures for reintegrating those of its citizens who fled abroad (in contrast to the foreign officials who find themselves today caught up in this process and who therefore must find some explanation for it, legal, rational, or otherwise); and continues to shield its ruling party behind the mantle of legality of what we in the West usually refer to as governance. The only historical accounts to have emerged from this regime in almost 20 years are tales of military exploits by the valiant Patriotic Forces against the imperialists and their valets. The only rationalization by a top party leader of the party's ascendancy is a jargon-filled little book by Kaysone published in Moscow in 1980 in which the only sure things that I could find was that the party justified the use of violence against its opponents and the party was always right. In these circumstances, disquisitions by American academics on the treatment of historical evidence regarding the LPDR have, to say the least, an Alice in Wonderland character to them. The danger is that this opens the way to the re-writing of history by those who have an interest in doing so, to the detriment of those of future generations who will have no way of knowing better.

Thank you again for the copies of documents from the American Embassy.

A. Dommen

FILE COPY



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.

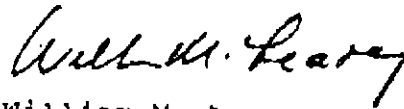
Let me say, first of all, that I possess a doctorate in history from a fairly respectable institution (Princeton University). Also, over the past thirty years I have published a substantial number of scholarly books and articles, many dealing with the historical activities of the Central Intelligence 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.

- 2 -

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

July 9, 1994

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

Dear Congressman Gilman:

I received a "draft of a review being prepared for publication" by Dr. Frank Proschan, an anthropologist from the University of Indiana. It is entitled, "Jane Hamilton-Merritt: An Evaluation of Her Scholarly Work" and it will be distributed to the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Professor Proschan's "draft review" is an obvious effort to discredit what I consider to be a fine book, Tragic Mountains. Proschan, an anthropologist, attacks Jane Hamilton-Merritt on a number of levels, ranging from her credibility to her methodology. He asserts that she has no respect among scholars in the field and that she is not an active participant in the profession, i.e., that she is not a member of the Association of Asian Studies or the American Historical Association and that she does not deliver papers at academic conferences. Indeed, she is not a member of either the Association of Asian Studies or the American Historical Association. Neither am I. In fact, many respected historians have abandoned the AHA because of its overt commitment to scholarship based on gender, race, and sexual-orientation at the expense of genuine scholarship in the liberal tradition implicit in the free market of ideas. The Association of Asian Studies, too, has fallen to the academic left. Indeed, Jane Hamilton-Merritt does participate in academic conferences. I have served on several panels with her, the most recent being at Notre Dame University in December, 1993. Proschan's charge that Tragic Mountains has not been reviewed by reputable academic publications is also false. It was reviewed by John Prados in a recent edition of the American Historical Review.

Before going further, let me state that I am a historian with a doctorate earned at George Washington University. Additionally, I served in Southeast Asia as an Air Force intelligence officer at Headquarters 7/13th Air Force. This headquarters was intimately involved in operations in northern Laos. Additionally, I am the author of three books on the Air Force in Vietnam, the latest being Crosswinds: The Air Force's Setup in Vietnam. I know the difficulties involved in writing about the war in northern Laos. Documentation from the Air Force has only recently become available and that from the CIA and State Department remains a problem. Dr. Hamilton-Merritt has done a thorough job of research.

It is true that Dr. Hamilton-Merritt is passionate in her commitment to the Hmong. The idea that the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao could be anything other than liberators runs against the grain of many in American academia. Perhaps that is reason for Frank Proschan's attack on Dr. Hamilton-Merritt. As someone who knows the historiography of the Vietnam War, I would submit that Hamilton-Merritt's work is well within the boundaries of interpretations by scholars like Douglas Pike, Arthur Dommen, William Leary, Tim Castle, and George Herring. It is ironic that when the journalist Hamilton-Merritt writes a passionate book about Vietnam she is lambasted by the likes of Proschan. When Neil Sheehan does the same thing, but is critical of the role of the United States, the left embraces him. As history, Bright, Shining Lie, does not hold a candle to Tragic Mountains in terms of its historical research. Nevertheless Sheehan's work has won many awards and is touted by many historians as some kind of revelation and a deep analysis into what is wrong with the United States. It is neither. I feel that I should also point out that Hamilton-Merritt's book is a top contender for the Los Angeles Times book of the year award.

This "draft review", if read carefully, will remind one of the anti-war diatribes of the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, Proschan refers to the Lao resistance as "terrorists", when, in fact, many members of the Lao resistance are former Pathet Lao disillusioned with the Vietnamese-dominated regime in Vientiane. I can only conclude that Proschan is an advocate of the current Lao government, one of the last Marxist-Leninist (if not Stalinist) regimes left. Take his remarks with a grain of rice.

Sincerely,

Earl H. Tilford, Jr., Ph.D.