

HELEN LAMB LAMONT

May 31, 1906—July 21, 1975

A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

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Edited by CORLISS LAMONT

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Helen Lamb Lamont, June 29, 1975

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Introduction: DR. CORLISS LAMONT

We are gathered here this afternoon to pay tribute to the life and work of Helen Boyden Lamb Lamont. This is a *celebration*, in which we rejoice that such a beautiful, talented and compassionate woman as Helen Lamont could and did exist—and for full 69 years. Her life was a blessing for everyone who knew her.

I want to introduce to you the Chairman of this assembly, a good friend of Helen's and a former Professor of Economics at Fairleigh Dickinson and Rutgers Universities, Robert S. Browne. He is at present Executive Director of the Black Economic Research Center and President of the Twenty-First Century Foundation.

I knew Helen by reputation long before I had the opportunity to know her as a person. Exactly 20 years ago in the Summer of 1955, I accepted a job in what was then still called Indochina. In attempting to prepare myself for this adventure I discovered writings in English about contemporary Indochina by only two writers—one of whom was Helen Lamb.

Seven years were to pass before I met her, however, and once again it was her interest in Indochina which brought us together. Seeing a letter of mine in *The New York Times* (this is now 1962) in which I raised critical issues about U.S. policy in Vietnam, she sent me a note and invited me to have lunch with her—an invitation which I accepted readily both because I had for seven years wanted to meet her and thank her for the helpful insights which her writings had provided me—and also because I was at that moment eager to talk with anyone who was concerned about Vietnam (and there were few such persons at that time).

Needless to say, I fell immediately under Helen's magic spell and we had many pleasant and rewarding discussions thereafter, for she maintained regular contact with the Vietnamese intellectual community in Paris and elsewhere; and through her contacts, her insights, and her efforts, she accomplished much toward bringing some light and truth to the confusion and dishonesty which characterized official information and policy through this difficult period of our history. The world may never realize the full extent of her contribution during this dreary period of American history. We are all beneficiaries of her tireless efforts.

Our first speaker today is Dr. Paul Sweezy, Co-Editor of *Monthly Review* and a founder of that magazine in 1949. He is also co-editor of Monthly Review Press, which in 1972 published Helen Lamont's most important book, *Vietnam's Will to Live*, under her pen name, Helen B. Lamb. Dr.

Sweezy taught economics at Harvard from 1934 to 1942 and has been a visiting professor of economics at Cornell, Stanford, Yale and the New School for Social Research. At present he is a member of the Executive Committee of the American Economic Association. Dr. Sweezy is the author of *The Theory of Capitalist Development*, *Socialism*, and other books. He was a close friend of Helen Lamont for more than forty years.

DR. PAUL M. SWEETZ

If one lives long enough, one gradually loses all one's dearest friends and comrades. I counted Helen and her first husband Bob Lamb, who died in 1952, in that category. It is sad and painful to think that with Helen's death they are both gone and a vital link to my own past is extinguished. Many of you here today must, I am sure, feel the same way.

I have been associated in one way or another with people who played crucial roles in Helen's life for a very long time. If I reminisce a bit, it is because one's view of another human being greatly depends on the contexts of both their lives.

Corliss and I were brought up in Englewood, New Jersey, and within a few blocks of each other, he on Mountain Road and I on Woodland Street. He was a contemporary of my older brother, eight years my senior. They were at Exeter together and then Harvard. My other brother, Alan, who is here today, and I followed in their footsteps at both Exeter and Harvard. I doubt that Corliss ever noticed me in Englewood days, and it was in fact not until my Senior year at Harvard that I first really came in contact with him. I was the president of the *Crimson*, the college newspaper, that year when a much-publicized scandal hit the Harvard community. The university, it was revealed, was paying its scrubwomen less than the Massachusetts state minimum

wage. Corliss, unlike many of us in those years before the Great Depression, was already highly sensitive, as to his honor he has been ever since, to issues of social justice and civil liberties. He was outraged by Harvard's penny-pinch-ing meanness and raised a hue and cry among alumni. Sad to relate, the *Crimson* turned out to be part of the problem, not of the solution. At my instigation we condemned Harvard, but we also condemned Corliss for washing Harvard's dirty linen in public. It is not an episode I look back on with any satisfaction. But it did initiate a relationship between Corliss and me which I am glad to say has grown warmer and more understanding ever since. I will only add that I have tried to make up for Corliss's having been so far to the left of me at the beginning by moving to the left of him in later years.

Another Exeter-Harvard student of the 1920s, three years ahead of me if I recall correctly, was Bob Lamb. My brother knew him first. All three of us were into school and college journalism, on the *Exonian* and the *Crimson*, and Bob later became for several years the head of the Harvard news office. We all also went into economics and became more or less simultaneously radicalized by the Great Depression and the rise of Nazism. Bob was a fascinating personality, like no one else I've ever known. He had an extraordinarily fertile and active mind, always working on new theories and schemes which were often brilliant and sometimes too complicated and convoluted for simpler souls to comprehend. He was, quite literally, an exciting person to be with, and he enriched the lives of many of us fortunate enough to know him well during the 1930s and 1940s.

Helen graduated from Radcliffe in 1928. I did not meet her until later, I suppose it must have been when she was doing graduate work in economics, and I did not get to know her well until she and Bob were married. They were very different temperamentally and intellectually—Bob restless, intuitive, and quick to enthusiasms; Helen calm,

logical, orderly, inclined to skepticism in the best sense of the word. I think they complemented each other very well.

I also knew and greatly admired another person who was of course enormously important in Helen's life—her mother, Mrs. Walter Boyden,* who at age 99 survives her. The Boyden house where Helen grew up was on Irving Street in Cambridge. Mrs. Boyden later moved to an apartment on Memorial Drive where she lived for many years. She was a southerner, from Texas, who married into an elite Boston family (Helen's uncle was a partner in Boston's leading law firm of Ropes, Gray, Boyden and Perkins). I don't know the history of Mrs. Boyden's political views; but by the time I knew her, the term "liberal" was too weak and wishy-washy to describe her position as follower, sympathizer, and supporter of all good causes from civil liberties and civil rights at home to national liberation and socialism abroad. I also don't know whether in this respect she influenced Helen or Helen influenced her—probably both. In any case from the time I first knew Helen she was a radical and a socialist—emotionally as well as intellectually. And she remained so to her dying day, as solidly and reliably and intelligently on the left as anyone I have ever known.

Helen's career as an economist embraced teaching (at Black Mountain College, Sarah Lawrence, and Bennington), government work (for the Foreign Economic Administration during the Second World War), and academic research (at MIT's international affairs center in the 1940s and 1950s). She got her Harvard Ph.D. in 1943 for a thesis entitled "Industrial Relations in the Western Lettuce Industry," a subject in which she became intensely interested in the course of the LaFollette Committee's famous investigations of violations of civil liberties, in which Bob Lamb, as staff director, played a key role. I was out of the country when the thesis was finished, and I never saw it. By that time national attention, stimulated by and reflected in

*Mrs. Boyden died December 4, 1975—C.L.

Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, had shifted away from the plight of California's migratory agricultural workers, and the thesis remained buried in the archives of Widener Library. Today, with interest in agribusiness rapidly rising and the plight of the agricultural workers dramatically highlighted by the unionization drives of Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers Union, I wonder whether the time may not have come to disinter Helen's thesis. Provided with a scholarly introduction or supplement bringing the story up to date, its publication thirty years later might help to provide the historical dimension so important to a real understanding of the class struggles which, despite media attempts to hide them, have never ceased to rage in the United States.

Bob Lamb died of cancer in 1952. The next decade was a difficult period for Helen. As head of a family with three young children, she sought to supplement her modest MIT salary by remodeling a large house in Cambridge (on Francis Avenue very near the house she had been brought up in) to contain a number of revenue-producing apartments. Thus to the problems of child-raising and carrying a full-time job were added the onerous and often disagreeable responsibilities of being a landlord. I saw Helen fairly often during those years, and I know the difficulties and crises she had to cope with as well as the toll they took on her nerves and at times on her health.

Professionally she was engaged during this period in research on the MIT Center's India project. Since I knew that her closest colleague in this work was George Rosen, head of the economics department at the Chicago branch of the University of Illinois, I asked George to tell me what he could recall of their association. I would like to share his reply with you: it throws light on her activities in those years and also on what kind of a person she was:

"I knew Helen quite well in Cambridge from about 1956-1960, and I guess the last time I saw her was in late 1962.

"We came to Cambridge and MIT with very few friends there. Helen and I had adjoining offices and she was the warmest and friendliest person we knew at the Center. She had a very genuine interest in what was happening in India (she was on the India project), not in the sense of seeking to influence American policy, or to prevent communism, but to truly understand the country. Her main work was in the study of entrepreneurship in India, the relationship between the caste system and entrepreneurship, and the social and historical factors that influenced Indian economic development. There was not, at that time, too much interest in that subject at MIT—the main stress was on influencing policy, Indian and American, and advising governments. As a result she was out of the Center's major thrusts. I don't feel she was sorry about that; but she would have liked more exchange and more interest in what she was doing.

"Looking back on her work at that time, it was pioneering, in that she was always aware of the social and historical context within which Indian economic development occurred; she was never enamored of complex mathematical models, capital/output ratios, etc., that economists then used widely. She anticipated Myrdal's approach in that respect, and much of the current emphases. One of her most significant articles was entitled "The Indian Merchant," in a volume entitled *Traditional India*, edited by Milton Singer (1959). This related the character of the Indian merchant to India's caste system and community system, and it was truly a pioneering piece. I also have a small book *Economic Development of India*, published in India in 1954 by Friends' Book Depot, Allahabad. In that book, and as early as that date, she raised many of the key social and historical factors that would condition future development, as well as questions of social and economic power. Helen's main professional regret at the time was that she had not visited India, and would not be able to because of her family responsibilities. She realized that, and went as far as she could with what was available here. She was also very

highly regarded by such social scientists as Milton Singer, Robert Crane, and others working on India.

"She had many Indian friends, and was close to Indian scholars who were in Cambridge or visitors through Cambridge. Again these were generally not very high officials (at least then), but scholars, businessmen, and students passing through, for whom her home was a center. She was interested in them as people, and as Indians—not as government representatives.

"Apart from her scholarly work she was a very warm person, and a very genuine one. She was a very good friend when we were living in Cambridge—and her death is a real loss."

George was well advised to add in parentheses that Helen's Indian visitors were "not then" very high officials, for some of them went on to become very high officials indeed. Two whom I met at Helen's house were Zakir Husain, then President of the Muslim University of Aligarh, who rose to the presidency of all India in the late 1960s; and P. N. Dhar, then a young and quite radical economist, who in recent years has become, and so far as I know remains, one of Mrs. Gandhi's two or three closest advisers.

This chapter in Helen's life came to an end with her marriage to Corliss Lamont in 1962. The time of stress and strain was over: the last thirteen years were a period of tranquility and fulfillment, thanks in no small part to Corliss's devotion and support. Their interests in civil liberties, peace, and socialism dovetailed perfectly. They shared work and responsibilities, and together made an important contribution to the cause of peace and freedom in the United States and in the world.

During this period the focus of Helen's research and writing shifted from India to Indochina, and more particularly to Vietnam. Her admiration for the Vietnamese people and their historic struggle for national liberation grew with the ferocity of American imperialism's onslaught. How was it possible for a small, largely peasant country to stand up

to the most powerful military machine the world has ever known? Helen set out to find the answer to this puzzle in the only way that could possibly yield a valid explanation, i.e., through the study of Vietnamese history. Making excellent use of the large literature on Vietnam in French, much of it by Vietnamese scholars, she painstakingly gathered the material for her last and undoubtedly her most important work, *Vietnam's Will to Live: Resistance to Foreign Aggression from Early Times Through the Nineteenth Century*.

Vietnam's Will to Live is an altogether admirable work, reflecting its author's personality and capacities with perfect fidelity. Unpretentious, straightforward, meticulously researched, closely argued, and above all exuding throughout a radical humanism appropriate to and characteristic of both author and subject matter—these are the qualities that struck me most forcibly on reading it again in preparation for these remarks. But there are others who will speak here today better qualified than I to assess the content of her work on Vietnam and to comment on her relations to the Vietnamese people. I will content myself with two further remarks. We at Monthly Review Press, which published the book, are proud and honored to have had that privilege. We trust and believe that *Vietnam's Will to Live* will be a fitting and lasting monument to a fruitful life and a wonderful person. And in our sorrow at her passing we thank God that she was spared long enough to see the triumph of the Vietnamese people which she never doubted would be the final outcome of that terrible ordeal.

In closing let me recommend to all of you that you read or re-read the last chapter of *Vietnam's Will to Live*. I do not pretend to know whether Helen intended it that way, but as I read this chapter at any rate it contains a message of the greatest importance for politically conscious Americans in this last quarter of the twentieth century. She emphasizes and re-emphasizes that in their struggle against French domination the heroic resisters of Vietnam refused

to be daunted by the certainty of short-run defeat and that in this way they kept alive and strengthened an age-old tradition of struggle which was eventually to contribute so importantly to their success. Writing of Dr. Phan Dinh Phung, a famous nineteenth-century scholar-resister, she says, "In his letter to Hoang Cao Khai [French-appointed puppet Viceroy of Tonkin], Dr. Phung likened his forces vis-à-vis those of the French to the grasshopper who tried to stop a cart with his foot. He concluded, 'In comparison with what I have undertaken, even this analogy is inadequate.' Yet he persisted."

We too are engaged in a long struggle, the struggle to overthrow American imperialism, to make sure that no more Vietnams occur anywhere else in the world, and ultimately to liberate the American people from a cruel and inhuman social system. And as of now we must admit, if we are honest, that our forces are weak and our chances of success in the near future virtually nonexistent. Helen's message, if I interpret her correctly, is that, like the Vietnamese resisters, we too must refuse to be daunted; that no effort and no sacrifice are in vain; that what we do now will strengthen the will and determination and ability of successor generations to accomplish the great tasks we know they must accomplish if the human race is to survive.

PROFESSOR BROWNE

Our next speaker, Mrs. Sylvia Crane, is an American historian and author of *White Silence*, a book in American cultural history. During the last decade Mrs. Crane has been writing articles of political analysis of the American scene for journals in France and Italy.

Mrs. Crane has been one of our most militant and courageous fighters in the continuing struggle for civil liberties. For many years she concentrated on the abolition of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and its successor, the House Internal Security Committee. She was a founder of the abolition movement and pioneered in representing it on Capitol Hill; she stayed with the movement until the H.I.S. Committee was abolished by the House of Representatives last January. Mrs. Crane is a member of the National Council of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, is Vice-Chairperson of the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation and a National Board member of Americans for Democratic Action.

SYLVIA E. CRANE

Keats's memorable line "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" epitomizes Helen. To have been loved by Helen, as I know I was, was to be enfolded by infinite warmth, affection, tenderness, and sympathetic understanding. Her love spoke to my heart and it will comfort me as long as I live. It was as sustaining as the proverbial "Rock of Gibraltar." Although our friendship was long lasting and of a special intimacy for two women, endowed with a healthy appreciation of men, Helen told me repeatedly over the years, but more frequently of late, "I love my friends," and that category embraced men and women alike, including most of you assembled here.

She was dependable in every conceivable way and was

the most generous person I ever knew. Her unbounded generosity stemmed from her compassionate understanding of the people she related to, to the extent of perceiving and withstanding their idiosyncrasies along with their creativity. She had the capacity to communicate with them in their own terms and to express her love without resort to sentimentality.

A misunderstanding with Helen was unthinkable. She could be relied upon surely for the most generous interpretation of any event that could be variously construed. She was indeed properly brought up. She gave life to Jefferson's definition of good manners; to wit, a recognition of another person's personality. Armed additionally by a rare quality of compassion, she shielded me from being hurt by barbs that were occasionally, and perhaps inadvertently, hurled by troubled colleagues or friends. She could invariably interpolate these difficult personalities to me so as to explain their strange behavior. She was stalwartly supportive; she buttressed my strength. I always supposed this support reflected an extension of her own strength and inner equilibrium.

Whenever our husbands went off at the same time, we'd consult to explore a mutually convenient time to eat together or just talk. Our living in the same building for the last fifteen years helped. If I were engaged for the entire period or declared the necessity to work, she was naturally disappointed (as I was in the reverse) but she invariably managed to persuade me of her self-sufficiency so as to avoid evoking my feelings of guilt. When an out-of-town friend or acquaintance turned up at the Lamonts for a meal or longer stay, she promptly thought to share the visitor with me, thereby embellishing my life considerably. Whenever I'd fly off on my annual expedition abroad and take the occasion to deepen my acquaintance with her friends, Helen never expressed displeasure because she couldn't be present to share the extended fun. Oh the contrary, she manifested only unreserved delight in having been the cata-

lyst who brought us together. Helen had not a strand of envy in her fabric. Last spring, when mutual friends came to stay overnight with me, I thought to include Helen and Corliss for dinner. The only hitch was my being hobbled by crutches as a consequence of a recent ski accident. Although Helen was depleted by her illness, she overcame my protests and insisted on providing the dinner in order to spare me the strain of preparations.

Perhaps the strongest bond between us was intellectual. We listened attentively to each other's ideas from the moment we met; she the economist, I the historian, both political radicals. We viewed most subjects with striking similarity. Although we shared skepticism of the significance of American sociology, she, nevertheless, paid attention to the literature long after I had given it up, and made a point to fill me in on any significant thoughts these scholars produced. Our reservations toward this discipline rested on dual ground: the logical positivism at the root of American sociology and the jargon in which it was generally couched.

Helen and I talked much about style and she inveighed heavily against academic jargon. She insisted that lucidity required an accurate employment of the English language and she commanded the range of vocabulary to demonstrate the feasibility of the rule. She could always find the precise word to express the thought she wanted to convey. Together, we secretly harbored a lasting suspicion of unnecessarily embroidered and intricate formulations as smokescreens for muddled thinking or hypocritical compromises. We always agreed that Occam's razor sufficed as a guide for speculative analysis.

Helen was the first of my friends to read the original draft of my book, *White Silence*. She had asked to see it out of curiosity during an extended visit with us at Woods Hole one summer. As I look back on it, I knew that the raw draft was dreadful. Not to Helen. She found every positive feature worthy of praise (and that took ferreting) and put me on a workable stylistic course.

Helen had a judicious mind and rigorous standards of scholarship. Her books and reviews reflected both superbly. She expounded the substantive points of any work tersely and objectively, always emphasizing the positive. If she disagreed with an author, she stated her difference plainly and dispassionately and never indulged in carping criticism or polemics. She had no need of polemics because of the lucidity of her logic. She resented the intellectual nitpickers as much as I did and spotted the fakers and compromisers easily.

Her good nature did have limits, however. It did not embrace views or people she disapproved. These were strictly rejected. The public good was her measuring rod. This made of Helen a reasoned political radical; a fierce and unrelenting critic of capitalism, especially of the corruptions and injustices of the monopolies and oligopolies and of the state that ruled in their favor at the expense of the general welfare. She resented the infliction of poverty on the masses that could have been avoided by a juster distribution of the wealth; the injustice of the disparity riled her. Her next book, for which she had amassed voluminous notes, was to deal with the world problem of the multinationals and their economic consequences for the peoples. How, indeed, could they be controlled? Helen believed that the economic planning of the socialist system held greater promise of peace, justice, and abundance than planless, profit-motivated capitalism. If academic and political freedom could be instituted as well, socialism would be more perfect.

During the turmoil of the '60s, she was startled by the disruptive violence of the youthful dissenters, but she was not deflected from supporting them because of disagreement on tactics. The Vietnam war was the essential evil and had to be fought no matter who the allies were in the battle. She saw early that the violence was counter-productive and concluded, long before the Huston plan was exposed, that much of it was attributable to agents provocateurs.

Helen thought along old-fashioned Marxist class lines rather than sociological categories of race or ethnicity. Her priorities lay with the poor workers and farmers. She had labored in the New Deal to improve their lot. Despite the middle class orientation of the American women's lib movement and her own liberation in her youth, she supported the cause because of its basically progressive thrust. Helen moved right along with the times.

She could not have enjoyed her profound attachment to Corliss and her deep communion with me, had she not also shared devotion to civil liberties.

Helen took painstaking trouble to understand our world and to criticize it. My husband, John, who had known and loved Helen since childhood and who had, indeed, introduced us, often wrote me from abroad, "Tell me what you and Helen think (underscored), not what is being said generally."

She hated the misrulers passionately because they imposed hardships and suffering on the people. Her opposition to the Vietnam War and hatred of the perpetrators of our involvement came early and was implacable. The same went for the Cold Warriors and red-baiting McCarthyyites. She had known some of these people personally as academic colleagues at M.I.T. and within the economics fraternity. Walt Whitman Rostow, one of these, was her pet bête-noir as chief architect of our early Vietnam policies. Henry Kissinger took second place on Helen's proscribed list. She had known him, too, at close range through regular attendance at the Harvard International Seminar which he headed. I accompanied Helen to these sessions one summer and our post mortems should have burned his ears right off. Robert McNamara, the Hot Warrior, and Dean Acheson, the Cold one, were contemptible compromisers and misleaders for the sake of power. She was never beguiled by titles or social position. She was totally free of snobbery. The qualities of fakery and compromise for personal advantage were beneath contempt at any social level in her scale

of values.

Helen was a tough judge despite her compassion and ability to empathize. Her sense of right and wrong was incorruptible. She lived by her values and loved and hated accordingly. The betrayers were cast into perdition; they were beyond the pale. But hatred of her enemies—the enemies of the people—never corroded Helen's capacity to love. On the contrary, through the years, she became ever more intense in her expressions. Once you entered that marvelous benign sanctum of her love, you knew at once the blessings of true love and loyalty that were so great as to penetrate you and last forever.

PROFESSOR BROWNE

Helen Lamb Lamont's maiden name was *Boyden*. And as our next speaker we have her brother, Roland W. Boyden, Professor of History at Marlboro College in Vermont. During the summer he and his family live in Tamworth, New Hampshire, the small town where Helen had a house and spent many a summer vacation.

PROFESSOR ROLAND W. BOYDEN

As you can well imagine, it is difficult for a brother to speak comprehensively about an older sister. From the day I was born Helen was an important star in my universe. At first protective, almost maternal, she early shifted her attitudes and by the time I was a young man the relationship had become one of warmth and companionship without thought of seniority. We had long conversations, occasional arguments, short walking trips together. During the war years she put me up in Washington on a couple of occasions for months at a time. The second time included a wife that I had recently acquired. There was a somewhat complicated household. Bob Lamb and Helen off to work early in the morning, two pre-school-age boys off to pre-school, early in the morning, a school-age housekeeper's daughter off to school, early in the morning. I was off to work at a barbarous hour in the Navy Department. This left the housekeeper and my wife together. However, Helen didn't hesitate to add us to the menage.

Since then, we have been together regularly in the summers in New Hampshire and less regularly in Cambridge, New York and Vermont. This, perhaps, is easily understood as far as brother and sister are concerned, but Helen's sense of family went well beyond her closest relatives. Family loyalty and affection were natural to Helen and the rest of our generation, for the Boyden clan in which we all

grew up was remarkably close-knit. Aunts, uncles, cousins, and relatives by marriage all formed essential elements in a widening connection that strengthened the feelings of brother and sister and parent and child. Such feelings were particularly strong in Helen. Her affectionate and generous nature responded easily to family ties of all kinds, and she always gave more than she received. Many here can testify to this quality.

Of course, she did not limit herself to her relatives. Witness her enormous capacity for friendship which has already been referred to and was based on the same personal qualities. The family remained important to her to the end and through her to many others. These qualities of mind and heart found professional expression in her career as a teacher (which has already been referred to). She was a fine teacher, a fact that is sometimes lost in her subsequent career in research and writing. Just a few years ago, one of her students at Black Mountain arrived at Marlboro, Vermont, with a daughter to enroll and he was still glowing over the teaching experience he had had from Helen.

Up to a point I followed in her footsteps, even to beginning at Black Mountain College. As a final note in this somewhat personal reminiscence, I want to mention Helen's laughter. Not only did she love her family and her friends and think with astonishing force and clarity, she also laughed, often with a vigor sufficient to break up a meeting. There was nothing ambiguous about her laugh. It was deep, resonant, genuine and contagious and, as such, was a wonderful reflection of her personality as a whole.

MESSAGES IN TRIBUTE TO HELEN LAMONT

PROFESSOR BROWNE

A large number of beautiful and moving letters and cables have come in to Corliss Lamont and his family about the death of Helen Lamont. We have time here to quote only a few of the messages of tribute.

LEONARD AND JEAN BOUDIN

Helen Lamont's combination of clear thinking, scholarship, passion about Vietnam and yet calmness and sweetness was a rare one. All of this, a part of a wonderful marriage, will make us grateful for the years in which we knew her and the years in which we will think of her.

IRWIN SILBER, *Executive Editor of the radical news-weekly Guardian*

Helen Lamont led a rich and full life and one which was devoted to concerns of the most profound humanitarianism. She will be remembered for a long time to come by the countless thousands whose lives she touched.

NAOMI MARCUS, *President of the United States Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*

Helen Lamb Lamont's contributions to the cause of peace, freedom and justice over a period of many years were too numerous to mention. Her courage and her ability to see clearly and analyze political trends won her the sincere respect and admiration of all women and men engaged in the struggle for a better world.

HARVEY AND JESSIE O'CONNOR

Helen was a beautiful person, a powerful combination of intellect and heart, such as this country deeply needs. We owe her a big debt of gratitude for all the wonderful work she did on Vietnam, and a hundred other things.

A CABLE FROM HANOI, NORTH VIETNAM

Please receive our deepest condolences at the death of Helen Lamb Lamont, bright scholar and great friend of Vietnamese people and just cause. Let works and activities by Helen be example for American public to build peace and friendship between our two peoples.

—*Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American people.*

PROFESSOR J. KENNETH GALBRAITH

Some people, no doubt, are difficult to describe. Helen Lamont is not. She was a woman of calm, civilized and tolerant conviction. Over the forty years that I knew her, sometimes as a neighbor, always as a friend, she never changed. She was a partisan in all issues where peace, compassion and concern for the less fortunate were involved. She was a wonderful person. She glows in our memory.

MRS. ALICE ELLIS, a friend in Cambridge

What made friendship with Helen so exceptional and priceless were her basic simplicity and honesty, without a trace of self-righteousness. Her commitment to liberal ideas and social and economic justice ran like a strong golden thread through her life.

JEAN SHULMAN, *Executive Coordinator, Women Strike for Peace*

We of Women Strike for Peace feel a sense of great personal loss in the death of Helen Lamont. Our under-

standing of the great people of Vietnam, their history of struggle and independence would have been sadly deficient had it not been for Helen B. Lamb's eye-opening book, *Vietnam's Will to Live*. Women Strike for Peace will miss Helen Lamont's great inspiration, and we shall all remember her lovingly in all we do.

ALICE THORNER, *writing from Paris*

The nearest I can come is to say she emanated a kind of radiance. Her gifts of intelligence, seriousness, concern for her fellows, firmness of character and gentleness of manner shone forth like an aureole.

MRS. MARCIA W. BRADLEY of the Sierra Club

She had the most luminous eyes, quite extraordinary, signifying, I think, her purity and integrity.

ALFRED AND MARTHA STERN in a cable from Prague

Helen's lovely, bright, questing spirit lives on with you, us and all who knew her.

MRS. LINDA E. STORROW, Associate Publisher of The Nation

I have seldom met anyone who combined the warmth, sympathy, brilliance and strength into one beautiful whole as did Helen Lamb Lamont.

REVEREND EDWIN H. WILSON, Director Emeritus, American Humanist Association:

I have known Helen Lamont as a true Humanist, a lovely lady, a warm and gracious hostess, and a scholar. In days when protest was not popular, she spoke out for the victims of war and injustice, manifesting her compassionate concern for all humans everywhere. She leaves a legacy of splendid memories and influence.

PROFESSOR BROWNE:

We are most fortunate in having as a speaker today a native Vietnamese, Professor Tran Van Dinh, who was born in the Imperial City of Hue in 1923 and was a graduate of Hanoi University. He was active in the nationalist student movement during the French and Japanese occupations of Vietnam, and fought with the Vietnamese Liberation Army. He later joined the South Vietnamese Foreign Service and became Chargé d'affaires at the South Vietnamese Embassy in Washington. In 1963 he resigned because of the growing United States intervention and became an author, journalist and teacher. He has written one book and co-authored four, and has taught at several American colleges. He is now Professor of Political Science in the Institute of Pan-African Studies at Temple University.

PROFESSOR TRAN VAN DINH

I did not meet Helen Lamb Lamont until after her major work, *Vietnam's Will to Live*, was published in early 1973, although I had known of her long before that time, mostly through a friend, Dr. David Marr, author of *Vietnam Anti-Colonialism: 1885-1925*. One day, back in the spring of 1968, during the course of our discussions on ways and means to develop among the American public a deeper understanding of the Vietnamese people—without which, we feared, the anti-war movement might degenerate into an arrogant exercise in paternalism—David Marr suggested that "I contact Dr. Helen Lamb Lamont." I asked him why. "She is one of the most serious opponents of the United States aggression in Vietnam. Besides, a trained economist, she is a good historian and a Humanist," was his answer. I could not see her that year, though.

Five years later *The Nation* provided me with a most pleasant and unexpected opportunity to meet with her and

to know her when it assigned me to review her book. The review was published on April 16, 1973. A few days later, David Marr called me up:

"Your review is excellent," he said. "Like the book, it shows that you are a good historian and a good Humanist."

"Indeed, she has made me a better historian, but I have yet to prove that I am a good Humanist," I replied.

Helen Lamb Lamont has made me a better historian because she has brought out a very important Vietnamese truth which I had only vaguely perceived before. She wrote: "The answer (to the Vietnamese will to resist foreign aggression) lies in the Vietnamese attitude that history is something far more than a simple chronicle of events or means to intellectual understanding. The Vietnamese . . . value the study of history as a means of achieving moral perfection . . ." Our history, as she has correctly pointed it out, is a history of resistance to foreign aggression. It is our national and individual morality, our humanism. We know that, if we submitted ourselves to foreign aggression and domination, we would negate the two historical missions of our people, that of *Dung Nuoc* (To build a Nation) and *Giu Nuoc* (To preserve the Nation). Vietnam, as a nation, is made of those who exist, who make their own history, and those who resist, those who believe that to accept injustice and oppression, to condone inhumanity is to give up our Will to Live, is to deny our very own existence on this earth we love.

Naturally, the successful fulfillment of the difficult dual task of *Dung Nuoc* and *Giu Nuoc* requires the participation and support of all Vietnamese, of the masses, the peasants who live in the villages. Dr. Helen Lamb Lamont, unlike most of social scientists and economists, did not see the Vietnamese village primarily as a center of ignorance, poverty, disease and superstition. To her, a "Vietnamese village was far more than a collection of families or an administrative unit. It was a commune, a corporate whole which held the individual families tightly within it. Unlike

the typical village in China and other parts of Southeast Asia, the Vietnamese commune collectively held a significant proportion of the total village acreage in communal land, the *Cong Dien*, to be tilled in rotation by the various families, with village authorities deciding which families would rent which fields." From this observation, she comes to another one, equally fundamental to the understanding of Vietnamese society—and to a certain extent of non-western societies as a whole—: The Concept of Law. "Vietnamese Law," she noted, "was not based on the principle of equality before the law, still less on the Western idea of individual rights. Vietnam's legal codes emphasized the group, be it the family, the community, or the state . . . Vietnamese law stressed one's duties and responsibilities for the well-being of the group, which meant maintaining the proper relationships within society and within the family and showing the utmost reverence for the dead. In such an ambience, no right is inalienable. Even the possession of landed property was only a temporary right conditional on its proper use and frequently revoked with no thought of compensation. . . ."

Equipped with these two main characteristics of Vietnamese social development: the commune-village and the Group Law, she proceeded to exploring another truth in our history of resistance to foreign aggression, namely that no resistance succeeded unless and until it became generalized and protracted. The strategy for success, especially in a country like Vietnam—small in size and not big in population—can be logically only guerilla warfare. Helen Lamb Lamont described and explained it precisely and clearly: "For centuries, guerilla warfare, Vietnamese style, had meant planning for just such a long war of attrition, wearing down the enemy and taking advantage of every possible element—the jungle, the mountains, the swamps, the tides, the weather, the mosquitoes and above all, village solidarity. It involves impaling the foe on the horns of a dilemma: the need to concentrate his forces for attack and the equal

need to disperse them in order to hold occupied and hostile territory. It required keeping the initiative by surprising the enemy when he was off balance and retreating when threatened—thus drawing the enemy further into the country and attenuating his lines of supply for future ambushes. In other words, it was a policy of being tactically offensive while strategically remaining on the defensive." I have yet to see a better description of guerilla warfare.

Scientific and gently rigorous in her analyses of some aspects of Vietnamese failures, particularly in dealing with the French conquest in late nineteenth century, yet always compassionate to the sufferings and the sacrifices of the Vietnamese people, she has, in *Vietnam's Will to Live*, essentially drawn a tableau of a continuing historical Vietnamese situation. As we Vietnamese see it, in every human situation, Truth and Justice can be attained only by an harmonization of *Liy* (Reason) and *Tinh* (Feeling). Vietnamese readers will surely regard her book as *Hop Tinh* (Conforming to Feeling) and *Hop Ly* (Conforming to Reason) and therefore to Truth and Justice. We applaud it as an honest attempt to understand us and our history.

Seeing our history under both *Liy* and *Tinh*, Helen Lamb Lamont is one of the very rare, if not unique, writers on Vietnam who has the lucidity and the courage—in the context of American anti-communist hysteria—to assess that "Vietnamese Marxists became the spiritual leaders of the nineteenth century resistance . . ." and that in Vietnam, the "Communist Party is an integrative movement in a disintegrated society." Indeed, since 1930, when the Vietnamese Communist Party was created, the Vietnamese masses have found in the Party and its beloved leader Ho Chi Minh a Reason to fight and a Feeling to persist and to win. Helen Lamb Lamont never doubted of the final outcome of the Vietnamese Revolution and affirmed that "the war goes on and is likely to continue until the United States recognizes Vietnam as a nation and agrees to withdraw all its forces."

On the last day of April 1975, months before she departed from this earth, the last American left the Vietnamese soil. She had ample opportunity to confirm that Vietnam's *Will to Live* has won and that her political conviction has become a historical reality. She would have chuckled when she read statements by officials and predictions by those incurably ignorant gurus of the think-tanks about a "bloodbath" which would occur when the Vietnamese liberation forces entered Saigon. The "bloodbath" remains a myth in the minds of the guilty. She would have advised these ill-wishers to turn to page 26 of her book and read: "When peace was finally made between Vietnamese and Chinese in 1428, the Vietnamese who had collaborated with the Chinese were given a choice of going to China or staying in Vietnam. A majority chose to remain in Vietnam. . . . This traditional policy of tolerance and reconciliation was followed by all our leaders in our history, from the TRAN dynasty in the 13th century to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, and this despite the fact, as she remarks, that "in Vietnamese history, the great hero is the man or woman who rallies the country against invaders, not someone who invites foreigners into the country in order to take sides in an internal struggle for power." *Vietnam's Will to Live* is to me a classic book of history. A classic book of history is not the one which makes the readers feel they see "history repeats itself." This is not always true. Rather, it is the one which inspires and guides them to grasp the essence and the meaning of the movement of people, of women and men toward a more humane society, a society in which the forces of repressions, oppressions, superstitious, barbarity, recede in front of a protracted and united struggle by all concerned human beings. In this sense, *Vietnam's Will to Live* has brought to the field of history a contribution larger than Vietnam itself.

A few weeks before my review appeared in *The Nation*, I was invited, on March 6, 1973, to do a radio interview with Helen Lamont on her book. Before the interview

took place, we lunched at the Algonquin Hotel. That was the second time I saw her. That was also the time when many of us, our minds fresh with the memories of the barbarous B-52 Christmas 1972 bombing of Hanoi, suspected that the 1973 Paris Agreement, a victory for the Vietnamese *Chinh Nghia* (Just Cause), could be a tactical device for the Nixon Administration to continue its intervention in Vietnam. She had no faith of course in Nixon, but she had faith in the Vietnamese Will to Live and to win. When we left the table for the interview, she said to me: "Regardless of what Washington is trying to do to destroy the Paris Agreement, your people will be independent and free soon." There was a combination of firmness and confidence in her voice. For a short moment, I attempted to find a Vietnamese word to describe her as a person, a word which kept eluding me since I met her for the first time at a reception in New York City on February 23, 1973 at her niece's [Mrs. Priscilla Cunningham]. I found it that day. The word is *Hien*. Written in capital letters HIEN designates someone who has attained the highest level of wisdom and concern for the human condition. In small letters, it means: compassionate, kind, beautiful, a word we use when we speak admiringly, lovingly and respectfully of our mothers.

Helen Lamb Lamont is HIEN to me in both capital and small letters. I am proud to have known her. I shall always remember her as a HIEN American, not forgetting of course her important contribution to the understanding of the Vietnamese and therefore to the defeat of the United States military machine in Indochina and to the triumph of the American conscience and human decency in the world.

PROFESSOR BROWNE

Helen Lamont had four grandchildren and five step-grandchildren, ranging in age from two to seventeen. She took great joy in these young people. Today, to represent them, we have Jonathan Lamont Heap, a stepgrandson, who is a Senior at Greenwich High School. He has been active in school plays and is especially interested in the development of the motion picture. Last spring, for a film that he produced, he won first place in both the School and the State Film Festivals.

JONATHAN LAMONT HEAP

When I was only three years old, Helen became my step-grandmother. On many Sundays my parents took me and my sister Andrea to the house in Ossining, to visit Helen and my grandfather. I always looked forward to Sunday dinner. I found out recently that when I was very young, Helen had discovered I liked roast lamb; so every Sunday that I went there for lunch, she arranged to have it served. Just for me.

This kind gesture summed up her feelings and actions toward her younger friends and relatives. As one of them has said, "Helen was a keenly aware, ever curious, thinking person. She never slowed down, and life was a bit more energetic whenever she was there. Yet she was sensitive to the moment, offering a ready pat or whispered reassurance which always reminded you that she was nearby and cared." In her mind, every grandchild, grandniece or nephew, was a separate individual with faults as well as assets. For instance, she watched the development of one grand-daughter with interest and appreciation, as she changed from a reluctant, complaining tiny hiker on our first walks together, hating even the smallest uphill grade, to a competent sportswoman, enjoying equally hiking, skiing, tennis

and riding. As one grandniece said, "Helen always knew who I was," whereas other people sometimes mistook her for her sister.

Helen was very concerned about our well-being. She would always ask me what I was doing in school or out of school, and remembered to ask pertinent follow-up questions the next time I saw her; more recently, we had lively discussions about the movies we had both seen, and she didn't always agree with me!

Helen was willing to do anything with us or for us. Her thoughts were of our happiness and not of her own much of the time. She accompanied Grandpa Corliss and us on long hikes through the woods near the Ossining house, often going far afield with Grandpa first to scout out new and interesting territory for us to explore; and she enjoyed the shouts of excitement as we ascended rocky terrain or came out unexpectedly onto a new and beautiful lake. From the time we were very small, we joined Helen and Grandpa on many ski trips; and though Helen was by no means an expert skier, she nevertheless good-naturedly tackled some of the trails at Bromley, Mt. Snow and Aspen, Colorado, enjoying rehashing all the turns and spills at dinner in the evening. Whether getting ready for a picnic in Maine or planning the family Christmas at Ossining, she seemed to be relaxed and having fun with all of us. At Christmastime, she usually included a gift of candy for each child, which seemed a very nice old-fashioned treat.

One of my cousins speaks for all of us when he says, "It is for her thoughts and for her love that we will remember Helen."



*Helen and Corliss Lamont on a picnic,
White Island, Penobscot Bay, Maine, August 1970*

PROFESSOR BROWNE

I have been asked to announce that the families will be glad to greet friends at the conclusion of the meeting. Our final speaker is Corliss Lamont.

CORLISS LAMONT

I want to read two or three more messages about Helen Lamont. Here is a cable from London that has just come direct to this hall. It is simply, "With you in thought," signed by Lady Juliette Huxley.

Then Anne Morrow Lindbergh writes:

"I think the rare thing about Helen was that the breadth of her mind was equalled by the breadth of her heart. They don't always go together. That is what made her such a wonderful person."

A third message is from Mrs. Bette Chambers, President of the American Humanist Association, who wired:

"The Board of Directors and I are deeply saddened to hear the news of Helen's death. Her monument is her long and courageous life, lived as a sincere Humanist and devoted champion of human rights and world peace. She will be greatly missed by all of us."

Yes, Helen Lamont was a member of the Humanist Association which designated her as a Humanist Fellow in 1970. Humanism is a philosophy that believes a person's supreme commitment is to work for the happiness, freedom and progress of all humanity here and now in this world. *Compassionate concern* for our fellow human beings is the Humanist watchword. And that was certainly Helen's guiding principle.

I wish to note also that in politics and economics Helen Lamont was a convinced radical, believing that the best solution for the critical, complex problems of the United States and the world is some form of democratic socialism.

That was a major reason for Helen's having the honor of appearing on Richard Nixon's Enemies List, once as Helen Lamont and a second time as Mrs. Corliss Lamont. It was obviously too much of a brain strain for United States Intelligence to figure out that those two names represented the same person.

During the thirteen years of our marriage, Helen and I were able to function consistently as a team and as comrades fighting for a better America and a world at peace.

This was especially true of our opposition from the start to the barbaric American war of aggression in Vietnam. Over a period of twelve years, we together wrote and published a number of public messages condemning the American Government's policy in Vietnam and Cambodia. In the spring of 1975, although Helen was very ill, she helped compose an advertisement on Vietnam that was printed in *The New York Times* and another one on the madcap Mayaguez affair in Cambodia. Of course it made Helen very happy when, in the spring of this year, the last American soldiers and airplanes were forced to leave South Vietnam, and the entire Vietnamese people could celebrate freedom and independence. That was a great day of vindication and triumph for Helen.

Now I am gathering together all of our public pronouncements since 1962 to be issued in another month or so in a pamphlet entitled "The Meaning of Vietnam and Cambodia."

Paul Sweezy mentioned Helen's interest in India and her writings about that great country. This reminds me of the fact that in the summer of 1926 both Helen and Jawaharlal Nehru, future Prime Minister of India, were attending the Geneva School of International Studies. Helen told me that one day she hiked up a small mountain with him and others.

Helen's last public action on behalf of truth and justice was to sign with me an ad supporting the plaintiffs who unsuccessfully sought financial compensation for the stu-

dent massacre at Kent State University in 1970. This advertisement was not published until after Helen's death.

During her illness of seven months, Helen kept working on a new book. It was to be about the Multinational Corporations, of which she took rather a dim view. Before she died, she had assembled a vast number of clippings and other references on the subject.

Helen Lamont died from cancer, a disease for which the science of medicine has not yet discovered either the cause or cure. If we could assign to cancer research \$5 billion from President Ford's overkill defense budget of more than \$100 billion, we might make real progress in controlling and defeating this dreadful disease.

We are grateful to the various speakers who gave of their time and thought to participate in this meeting. And we are grateful to the New York Society for Ethical Culture for making this splendid Auditorium available.

I think that the finest Memorial of all to Helen Lamont is for us to keep on working for the fulfillment of her aims and ideals. For the best of all answers to death is the wholehearted and continuing affirmation of life on behalf of the greater glory of the human race.

Obituary on Mrs. Lamont, July 22, 1975

Helen Lamb Lamont, an economist, author and educator and the wife of Dr. Corliss Lamont, author and former Columbia University lecturer, died yesterday of cancer in St. Luke's Hospital. She was 69 years old and had homes here, in Ossining, N.Y. and in Tamworth, N.H.

Mrs. Lamont, who was known professionally as Helen B. Lamb, was the author of *Economic Development of India and of Vietnam's Will to Live: Resistance to Foreign Aggression from Early Times Through the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1972. Both independently and with her husband she frequently took public stands opposing American involvement in the Vietnam war. The opposition often took the form of large display advertisements in newspapers.

Mrs. Lamont was graduated in 1928 from Radcliffe College, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Her first marriage was to a Harvard contemporary, Robert K. Lamb, an economist who became a staff investigator on several Congressional committees and was legislative representative for the United Steelworkers in 1944-47.

Dr. Lamb returned to the academic world as a lecturer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He died in 1952.

Mrs. Lamb, who received a Ph.D. degree in economics from Radcliffe in 1943, had taught at Bennington, Black Mountain and Sarah Lawrence Colleges.

In World War II, she was a research analyst for the Foreign Economic Administration, working on the program preparing for occupation of Japan. After the war she joined the Center for International Studies at M.I.T., specializing on the economy of India. She was married to Dr. Lamont in 1962.

Surviving, besides her husband, are three sons of her first marriage, Robert B., William and Albert Lamb; her mother, Mrs. Walter L. Boyden; two brothers, Roland W.

and W. Lincoln Boyden Jr.; four stepchildren, Mrs. Ralph Antonides, Mrs. George Jafferis, Mrs. J. David Heap and Hayes C. Lamont; four grandchildren and five step-grandchildren.

TO HELEN LAMONT

*No artist could capture that blue of her eyes—
A lady of beauty, so brilliant, and wise.
Somehow or other we all knew too well
That last day at Ossining was really farewell;
The man in her life stands firm at her side,
Her sons all around, she looked at with pride,
Grandchildren at play on grass so green
That matched her dress as she smiled like a queen;
And as she waved her last goodbye
Teardrops mingled with rain from the sky,
We raised our glasses in her name,
Hope she heard through her window pane.
It's plain to see why God would want
A blue eyed angel named Helen Lamont.*

—Agnes Docherty

(This poem was written by the Lamonts' housekeeper)

Editor's Note:

Since the Memorial Tribute to Helen Lamb Lamont in September 1975, several developments have taken place in relation to her work and activities.

First, Basic Pamphlets has published a booklet, *The Meaning of Vietnam and Cambodia*, by Corliss and Helen Lamont. This pamphlet consists of Open Letters, public messages, and essays by the Lamonts about the dreadful United States aggression in Southeast Asia from 1962 to 1975. The pamphlet may be obtained for 50 cents from Basic Pamphlets, Box 42, New York, N.Y. 10025.

Second, in the fall of 1976 Monthly Review Press, which published *Vietnam's Will to Live* under her professional name, Helen B. Lamb, will bring out her *Studies on India and Vietnam*, with an Introduction by Dr. Paul M. Sweezy, Co-Editor of *Monthly Review*. This book will contain some twenty essays and reviews written by her from 1954 to 1975, and published in various journals. *Studies on India and Vietnam* by Helen B. Lamb may be obtained after September, 1976, at Monthly Review Press, 62 West 14 Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

Third, Helen Lamb Lamont's letters and papers have been requested by and delivered to the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. This Library is at Radcliffe College, from which Helen graduated in 1928. It is good to know that there will be a permanent Helen Lamont Collection at Radcliffe.

Fourth, Helen Lamb Lamont's numerous books and pamphlets on Vietnam and Southeast Asia were sent to the Indochina Resource Center in Washington, D.C., one of the best organizations in the United States for research on Southeast Asia. These materials have been placed together to form a small Helen Lamont Collection.

—Corliss Lamont,
February 1976