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The Crime Of William Calley

On March 16, 1968 C Company of the 1st Battalion of the 20th Infantry, 11th Light Infantry Brigade of the United States armed forces in South Vietnam, carried out a specific order to take and destroy the hamlet of My Lai 4, in the village of Song My, province of Quang Ngai, some 330 miles from Saigon.

There were indications later, from various circumstances connected with this attack, that it had been deliberately planned by some traitor high enough up in the American chain of command for the very propaganda purpose that it was eventually made to serve. As we have shown in earlier chapters of this book, the whole war had been conducted by the American government, from the beginning, as a means of increasing Communist power and prestige in Asia, while weakening anti-Communist morale in the United States and everywhere else in the world. So there was nothing absurd about this suspicion as to many features of the My Lai "incident." But the basic conjecture was never substantiated, and must be mentioned here, in a factual history, only because of its contribution to the later mood of the American people.

The expedition against My Lai was spearheaded by a green platoon under the command of Lieutenant William Calley. It was exactly one year to a day since this young man had entered Officers Candidate School at Ft. Benning, Georgia. So the lieutenant was anything but an experienced veteran. What's more he was an unpopular officer, because he could not explain to his men why the Army took some of the steps that it did. (Who could?) Also, even though not fully understanding, he himself, in accordance with a trait which later documentation revealed had been his outstanding characteristic all of his life, believed in faithfully obeying orders—whether of his parents, his teachers, or his military superiors. And this unpopularity may have been counted on by the plotters for advantage to themselves in future testimony against him.

In any event, both Lt. Calley and his men had been briefed in advance, with emphasis on the fact that My Lai was a nest of the Viet Cong guerrillas. It was well known to all American soldiers in the area that the whole Song My village was a Viet Cong stronghold, nicknamed "Pinkville" for that reason, and colored accordingly on army maps. It had been cleaned out by American soldiers before. But, in accordance with the traitorous policy under which the war was being conducted, as soon as these soldiers captured a Communist-held area they were obliged to withdraw and allow the enemy to reoccupy it.

All Vietnamese in the province also knew that My Lai was a Viet Cong base, from which guerrillas constantly sallied forth to kill American soldiers and South Vietnam civilians. It was known to be subject to a renewed attack. All natives in the area had received ample warning. There was no excuse for any women and children being in My Lai except those who were a part of, or sympathetic to, the Viet Cong infiltrators. Indeed, My Lai may well have been selected as the



target for this attack because an inexperienced platoon, engaged in carrying out its orders to “search and destroy” a Communist guerrilla base, would have had less reason to be concerned about non-combatants in that spot than in almost any other which could have been chosen.

Also, all members of C Company were bitterly aware of certain fundamentals. The Communist guerrillas, without uniforms and indistinguishable from the civilian population, had deliberately conducted the war in Vietnam so that it was usually impossible for American soldiers to tell friend from foe. Waiting to find out was frequently fatal. And it was well known that among the deadliest of these foes were women and children. When the guerrillas wanted simply to disappear in a hurry from some recognized base, they frequently put on women’s clothes and merged into the surrounding population. And one of the “civilians” actually captured at My Lai turned out to be an officer in the North Vietnamese army. What the American soldiers faced in Vietnam was movingly described by a group of their own officers as follows.

We would take a village away from the V.C. There would be only old men, women, and children in evidence. Troops would search the native houses. When two or three men went in, a Claymore mine would go off and they would be blown up. A “little old, and I mean old, lady” sitting on her doorstep was also sitting on a number of strings, and when she saw our men go into a certain building she would pull a certain string, and off would go the mine. Even innocent looking little children are used by the Viet Cong. Any time you see a kid with a package, especially one who is pushing into our men crying for candy, especially chocolate, it’s time to yell out an alarm. The chances are the kid is carrying a bomb and has been instructed by the V.C. to pull the string when he is well within the group and “give the soldiers a surprise. ” That the kid blows up along with the bomb is of no concern whatever to the V.C.

All of this the soldiers of C Company had in mind. As one of them explained later, they did not look upon the inhabitants of My Lai as civilians, but as a part of the Viet Cong guerrilla force they had been ordered to “search and destroy.” The accuracy of this belief was soon made tragically clear. Another member of the company reported on their experience before they even reached their target.

In moving on My Lai [he said], Charlie Company was badly bloodied – with soldiers killed and wounded by snipers and booby traps. The company was pinned down by enemy fire just outside the village and took shelter in a rice paddy. When it attacked, it was met by sniper fire. When the company entered the village, they found many dead as a result of artillery shelling and bombing from the air. The only firing into groups of old men, women and children occurred when military age males deliberately ran among these civilians. Eventually it was established that at least some of these were Viet Cong or NVA troops.

The men of Company C, despite the setback and their losses, went on to do their duty as good soldiers, faithfully obeying orders. They captured the hamlet of My Lai, and wiped out this batch of Communist guerrillas. Then the fuse of their future troubles was immediately lighted. Either because the whole “incident” and the propaganda to be developed out of it really had been carefully plotted in advance, or simply because it is a standard practice for the Communists always



to accuse their enemies of exactly those crimes which they themselves are committing, accusations about American atrocities in My Lai were started at once. So the United States Army command in the area conducted an investigation and found no grounds for the atrocity stories. Which was certainly not conclusive, but deserves to be recorded and remembered. As does one other relevant and revealing circumstance. Second Lieutenant William Calley was promoted to First Lieutenant William Calley on July 9, 1968, almost four months after the attack on My Lai.

Charges continued, however, that 527 civilians had been massacred in that attack. Eventually these charges were being diligently promoted and spread, in the United States and all over the world. Many investigations were held, some of which were so framed as to be obvious *blackwash* operations. But the one that finally stood up best, as most completely or nearly in tune with the actual facts, was carried out by Lt. General Hoang Xuan Lam, South Vietnamese army commander of the area that included My Lai hamlet. A carefully restrained communiqué by President Thieu's government, based on this general's investigation, reported that in March, 1968 an American task force had advanced on My Lai hamlet with the aim of destroying an important Communist force in the area; that the task force met strong resistance from the enemy; that in the course of the battle for My Lai 125 Communist soldiers and about 20 civilians were killed, most of the civilians by artillery fire and bombing before the infantry arrived; and that reports by newspapers and by a foreign news agency of 527 civilians being killed were "completely inaccurate."

The South Vietnam government also pointed out that the Viet Cong were not above having ruthlessly killed some of their own women and children in order to prepare a base for their propaganda about American atrocities. Nevertheless, when all of the evidence was sifted, with full allowance made for the incredible exaggerations, distortions, and malicious falsehoods in so many of the headlined reports, it became clear that some twenty to twenty-eight so-called "civilians" – some of them women and children—had been killed in the course of the day's action at My Lai. This was one of the horrors of war; of any war, especially since the Communists had so brutalized the whole nature of war during the preceding two generations; and particularly of the kind of war that Viet Cong guerrillas had already been fighting in Vietnam for six years.

Nevertheless, after long and careful preparations, through massive propaganda intended to brainwash the American public, Lt. Calley was tried for premeditated murder. This was in the last two months of 1970 and the first three months of 1971, after the left wing publicity had been insidiously referring to the My Lai action, for three years, as the My Lai "massacre." He was not tried by a jury of his *peers* —even though the supposed crime had been committed in the course of an undeclared war— but in a court martial, by a small panel of his *superior* officers, who had been selected by somebody higher up and were subject to all kinds of unknown pressures and influences in connection with their own future military careers.

Calley himself was already regarded by many competent observers as a "psychiatric case." (Who would not have become one, after all he had been through?) And there was no telling then what he might say or do in later months, as a result of all the pressures, confusion, and opportunities which his notoriety would provide. But in his final statement at the trial he summarized his own



defense with remarkable clarity and insight. Some parts of that brief statement are well worth repeating even now.

Your honor, court members I'm not going to stand here and plead for my life and my freedom. But I would like you to ask - or to ask you to consider the thousands more lives that are going to be lost in Southeast Asia. The thousands more to be imprisoned in North Vietnam and in hospitals all over the world as amputees. I've never known a soldier, nor did I ever myself, ever wantonly kill a human being in my entire life. If I have committed a crime, the only crime that I have committed is in judgment of my values. Apparently I valued my troops' lives more than I did that of the enemy when my troops were getting massacred and mauled by an enemy I couldn't see, I couldn't feel, and I couldn't touch, that nobody in the military system ever described as anything other than Communism. They didn't give it a race. They didn't give it a sex. They didn't give it an age. They never let us believe it was just a philosophy in a man's mind. That was my enemy out there. And I had to value the lives of my troops and I feel that is the only crime I have committed. Yesterday you stripped me of all my honor. Please, by your actions that you take here today, don't strip future... future soldiers of their honor, I beg of you. "

Despite this plea and all other considerations, on March 29, 1971 Lt. Calley was convicted of murder. On March 31, 1971 he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Since the one witness who claimed he had seen Calley shoot at a two-year old baby took refuge behind the admission that he did not know whether the baby had been hit or not the "jury" magnanimously reduced this particular count to a charge of assault. All of the important propaganda purposes had already been served. The Liberal press at home, and all over the world, gushed voluminously and incessantly that the United States had nobly cleansed itself of a terrible blot on its moral record. Every Comsymp who, by voice or pen, could reach an audience of a dozen people, and every pro-Communist unit among the mass media of communication, set out at once to make the greatest possible use of this American "confession of guilt." But it soon became obvious that the conspiratorial apparatus might have overplayed its hand; and likely that many of those who had engineered this tragic infamy would live to regret it.

For the American people instinctively saw through the vicious calumny in any such condemnation of an American serviceman, for having done his duty as a soldier in the heat of battle with such savage, treacherous, and unidentifiable enemies as the Viet Cong at My Lai. Their spontaneous reaction against the visibly pro-Communist and anti-American slant of the Nixon Administration reached a degree of bitter resentment, and crystallized into a force of patriotic fervor, far beyond the expectations of what some critics were already calling the *Insiders* in Washington. And many observers felt that the turning point, in the whole long struggle against the betrayal of their country into Communist hands, had at last arrived. More Americans were waking up every day, and the My Lai storm turned out to be a powerful alarm clock.

The hypocrisy of the charges . . .

The American people shuddered at the thought that *any* unarmed "civilians" had been killed. But they soon recognized that the term "massacre," as applied so persistently and screamingly to the



action at My Lai, was a semantic trick of enemy propaganda. For by the year 1970 there were enough anti-Communist organizations in the United States, with enough understanding of at least some features, methods, and purposes of the Conspiracy, to turn some penetrating light on the spectacular that was being staged. And this light disclosed, among the stagehands, an amazing procession of punks, pinks, and pundits in a gradually ascending order of importance, all of them fabricating malicious stories and phony pictures to build up the Big Lie.

One of the chief actors in the whole shoddy performance, for instance, was a malodorous journalist named Seymour Hersch, who propagated most of his imaginative falsehoods through a newly formed propaganda outfit which posed as a news service. Typical of the Hersch creations was an incident that he published as fact in his book called *My Lai 4*. He gave a lurid description of an American soldier pulling the pin of a hand grenade and throwing it into a native hut, thus killing in cold blood a mother, two children, and a baby. A grandfatherly old man who tried desperately to prevent this action had simply been knocked to the ground by the GI's "buddy." As vividly narrated by Hersch, this factual account was designed to make every reader think that American soldiers were incredibly cruel monsters. In time, however, it was shown that this whole report, including the specific details in Hersch's description, had simply been lifted by him from a book of fiction, about an imaginary war, that was published before the My Lai affair ever occurred.

At a higher level two major promoters of the atrocity theme were *Life* magazine and the CBS Television Network. Both had already become notorious as having absolutely no regard for the truth. *Life* was particularly adept at using pictures, which were taken in one place under one set of circumstances, to support the false impression – always favorable to the Communist line – that it wanted to plant about some event in some other place under entirely different circumstances. In fact, *Life* was specifically accused by a patriotic United States Senator of having perpetrated exactly this fraud against American servicemen in the My Lai episode.

As for the CBS outfit, its ability to lie with a television camera was exceeded only by its ambition to do so – always on behalf of the Communist viewpoint, or to smear its patriotic opponents. It was being emphatically and widely accused, during this very period—by the Vice President of the United States among many others—of having produced and shown a “documentary” film viciously derogatory of the American armed forces, which was loaded with falsehoods, trickery, and deliberately created “phony” pictures, from one end to the other.

And at a still higher level, because of the official prestige involved, a good sample of the pack was Stanley R. Resor, Secretary of the Army. Mr. Resor was a graduate of Yale and Yale Law School (which, for a quarter of a century, had been the only close rival of Harvard Law School, anywhere in the United States, for the depth and extent of its pro-Communist influence). He had first been appointed Secretary of the Army, by President Johnson, in 1965, in the days when McGeorge Bundy wielded great influence in the White House. He had been held over by President Nixon in the same position; obviously for sound reasons from the point of view of the *Insiders*. And in the December 8, 1969 issue of *U.S. News ~ World Report*, Secretary Resor published what was probably as clever a piece of *reverse propaganda* as had ever been contrived. It would have been worthy of Elmer Davis (the all-time world champion in that field), at his best. And it gave official



sanction at the highest level to all of the smear of Lt. Calley which was to follow.

For several years it appeared to be Mr. Resor's function in life to initiate or promote actions which would smoothly weaken the traditions, the efficiency, the strength, and the morale of the men in uniform under his command. This was harder for the American people to grasp than civilian activities to the same end, at no matter how high a level. But even here they were no longer such babes in the woods about such matters as when an active Communist sympathizer named Newton D. Baker had been Secretary of War under President Woodrow Wilson. For in the meantime the pro-Communist activities of General George C. Marshall, as U.S. Army Chief of Staff during World War II— and later as Secretary of State and then Secretary of Defense - had been pretty thoroughly exposed. As had the more recent machinations, of pro-Communist and anti-American impact, on the part of another Secretary of Defense named Robert Strange McNamara.

It was at last being fully recognized, by more and more good citizens, that Comsymps could often be found in some very high places indeed. There were scores of other participants, besides those we have named, in the crescendo of vilification that was focused on Company C over its capture of My Lai. All of the big and little pieces could not have fallen in place more smoothly if the script for the whole long show had been written in advance - which it may have been! But even the venality of the leading players in this drama was surpassed by the fraudulence of their lines, when considered against the background of their previous policies and actions.

Typical of the rampant hypocrisy fed to the American public was the following statement by Senator Edward W. Brooke of Massachusetts. "There can be no excuse under any circumstances," he said, "for the cold-blooded murder of unarmed civilians." To be consistent the Senator should have added: "that is, of course, if the victims are *Communists*." Otherwise, the murder of civilians by American armed forces, with or without reasonable military justification, had long been entirely acceptable to him and all of his fellow demagogues. In fact most of them, in the highest positions, had often considered such massacres as eminently desirable, for the sake of spreading devastation, demoralization, and terror among *anti-Communist* civilian populations. For this brutal principle, always followed by the Communist bosses and their armies - and which reduced warfare to a barbarism that had previously been repudiated by all civilized nations—was adopted during World War II as the firm policy of the American government. And so it remained until long after the My Lai affair.

The Japanese city of Hiroshima had very little military significance, if any at all. Yet an atomic bomb, killing tens of thousands of women and children and civilian non-combatants, was dropped on it without warning—on August 6, 1945 — by orders of the very highest officials of the United States government. In that case even the military excuse offered, that such bombing would hasten the end of the war and thus save other lives, was a complete and vicious falsehood. For the Japanese had already been striving desperately for months to surrender, on exactly the same terms that were ultimately accepted. But, it should be noted, the civilians killed in Hiroshima *were not Communists*, so nobody dreamed of making any of the responsible American officials stand trial at Nuremberg.



Even more cruel and contemptible, however, than this cold-blooded massacre, had been the wanton destruction a few months earlier of the beautiful German city of Dresden.

This was true for many reasons. Not only did Dresden have no military value. Not only was it an “open city,” even without air raid shelters. But for all practical purposes the military phase of the war in Europe was over. Not only was no warning given to the almost totally civilian population. But at that very time the normal number of inhabitants of “this large and splendid city” was swollen by hundreds of thousands of hungry and terrified women and children who had fled, from their homes to the east, before the advancing Communist armies.

Nevertheless, on the night of February 13, 1945, Dresden was subjected to massive, indiscriminate, and ubiquitous bombing by two thousand heavy planes, more than half of which were a part of the Eighth Army Air Force of The United States. The rest were British planes. They were all under the control of Supreme Commander Dwight David Eisenhower - an American. The raid was repeated in the same gigantic proportions the next day, and again one day later. The number of people killed — a huge majority of them being helpless women and children—was far greater than the seventy thousand later murdered at Hiroshima. Yet there never was any slightest suggestion made of bringing anybody to trial for these murders, at Nuremberg or anywhere else. For the helpless victims had not been Communists, nor even allies of the Communists.

This parade of examples could go on for many pages. It would show an extraordinary double standard which worldwide public opinion — under skillful manipulation by the Communists - had been brought to accept.

When Communist-controlled mercenaries, under the flag of the United Nations but financed and supported by the United States, invaded and subjugated Katanga, there was deliberate bombing of hospitals and ambulances, as well as widespread and merciless killing by ground soldiers of unarmed non-combatant civilians, including women and children. These atrocities were passed off as the regrettable but inevitable necessities of war. But American troops in Korea, also fighting under the flag of the same United Nations, were obliged to go to extreme lengths in allowing sanctuaries to their North Korean and Chinese Communist enemies so that danger to civilians in these Communist-held areas would be avoided.

No such parade is needed, however, because just two exhibits in the Vietnam war alone, out of dozens available, will show how far this strange policy had been carried. American troops were rigidly forbidden to bomb Hanoi, the capital city of their North Vietnam Communist enemies, supposedly because this strafing of civilians could not be justified on military grounds. But it was considered perfectly all right for the United States government to have American planes bomb Saigon, the capital city of its South Vietnam allies, killing thousands of innocent (but anti-Communist) women and children. This was on the flimsy excuse that some Communist guerrillas were thought to be holed up among the civilian population, in those parts of the city which were bombed.

There was never any slightest claim made by anybody that American ground troops should have routed out these enemy forces, while taking sufficient pains every step of the way to distinguish



civilians from Viet Cong guerrillas. In fact, the American pilots and soldiers had been made so impervious to that consideration, in the course of this elimination of the enemy, that they killed Saigon's mayor, its chief of police, and several other officials, in the course of just one incident on a Saigon street. Yet this all took place only six weeks before the attack on My Lai, *and as a part of the same offensive.*

The horrible devastation and *massacre* wreaked on the city of Saigon by the United States armed forces had, of course, been extremely well played down — *in the United States*—by the American government, and even more so by the Communist-dominated American media of mass communication. But in the April, 1968 bulletin of The John Birch Society the centerspread consisted of an actual photograph of Saigon, taken from the air immediately after the bombing earlier that year, showing what a large section of the city had been converted into rubble by this action. And on the page preceding that picture were the boxed paragraphs reproduced below.

The Damage to Saigon

Our centerspread in this bulletin is a picture of one part of Saigon, after the recent bombing of that city. It is one of a number of photographs sent us by one of our members, and was accompanied by the following message. "I have been able to gather some interesting photos of the damage to Saigon and other smaller cities and towns that could be used by the Society perhaps to inform the people in order to help them realize that our leaders are willing to destroy nearly one-third of the largest city in South Vietnam but refuse to bomb the major cities in North Vietnam. We have no qualms about killing our friends and allies here but don't want to kill any of the 'poor civilians' in North Vietnam. I don't see how the 'leaders' of our 'Great Society' can justify not bombing the major cities in the North from now on to put a stop to the incoming supplies through Naiphong and Hanoi. I have flown over all of Saigon and personally took these pictures. I have also seen nearly every city and town in this, the Third Corps area, bombed or fired upon with artillery. Had we bombed the cities in the North with the same destruction the war would have been over with long ago. "

The pilots who conducted this bombing raid over Saigon, killing a hundred times as many innocent women and children as those who — whether "innocent" or not — were killed at My Lai, did not even have the excuse of battle tension to justify their action. They simply carried out orders to murder civilians wholesale, without warning such as the women and children of My Lai had received. But there were no trials and no hullabaloo over this massacre, for two reasons. First, it could not have been used by Communists in the American government and press as the makings of a *cause celebre*, because the direct responsibility for the orders that set off such a horror reached too high up. And second, the women, children, and other civilians killed in Saigon had *not been Communists*. They had, instead, been the staunchest kind of anti-Communists, who were on what was supposed to be the Americanist side in the struggle against Communist tyranny and terror.

Finally, let us mention one more very revealing incident in the Vietnam War. At one point within a few weeks of the My Lai affair, the Communists had swept into and captured the ancient, revered,



and beautiful South Vietnam city of Hue'. Then, not in the heat of battle, but as a deadly calm and premeditated atrocity, days after Hue' had been captured and there was no more fighting or resistance of any kind, the Communists had lined up over five thousand *civilians* of the town beside huge ditches prepared for this gruesome rite, had shot them in cold blood, and buried them in the massive trenches — whether or not they were still alive. Yet the American government, American press, and American television altogether did not give this atrocity enough attention so that one person per thousand in the United States knew anything about it.

Let's review very briefly the argument of the last few pages. For here again at Hue' these victims of the savage violation of all rules of warfare and of humanity were not Communists. They too had been murdered precisely because they were staunch anti-Communists who might, at some future time, resist Communist slavery.

So the American government and press were not concerned. Yet, when one platoon of American infantry, in the midst of a bitter battle in which many of its men had already been killed or wounded by booby traps and the treacherous activities of Communist guerrillas that could not be distinguished from Communist civilians among whom they intermingled - when this platoon proceeded with great bravery and patriotic determination to obey its orders and wipe out the Viet Cong base, these soldiers soon found themselves being gradually enveloped in ignominy by massive pro-Communist propaganda.

Some of them eventually found themselves being tried for murder before a military court martial. Because the time had now come, and all appropriate preliminary steps had been taken, for the tremendously valuable pro-Communist benefit which the Conspirators could gain out of such a development. The real crime of Lt. Calley, for which he was persecuted and prosecuted, was that he killed *Communist* civilians—or Communist enemies for whom such a classification could be claimed. And it was the misfortune of Lt. Calley that he did so at a time and place which fitted into extensive plans of the Conspirators to use the incident for purposes of great importance.

The Purpose Of The Charges . . .

As always, in connection with Communist plans, there were many different and complementary objectives involved. And just a syllabus of those plans which were visible in 1970 should have been enough to scare the apathy out of the American people - whom the *Insiders* still considered "just too damn dumb" to understand what was happening to them.

(1) Throughout many chapters we have emphasized the Communist theme of *peace*, because they made it the core of their propaganda effort during many decades. It was their aim, by contriving to bring about enough wars, and by making those wars as horrible as possible, to create a great longing for peace on the part of the whole human race. And then to capitalize on that mood by offering the world, and imposing on it, the Communist version of *peace*. For in their language *peace* had always meant only one thing: Namely, a situation in which there was no resistance to Communism. So obviously, if they could make warfare, even as conducted by *American* troops, appear more and more horrible to the American people and to the rest of the



world, this would help tremendously in developing the attitude which was so important to their strategy.

(2) One major obstacle faced by the Conspiracy, in getting the human race to accept Communism as a way of life—and in bringing about the *Great Merger* of the United States, Soviet Russia, Red China, and all other countries under a Communist regime disguised as the United Nations – was the century-long saga of Communist atrocities. Therefore, whatever grist could be fed to the Communist propaganda machine, and whatever publicity that machine could turn out, to convince the world that American soldiers and American officials were just as brutal as Communist soldiers and Communist officials, was a tremendous help in promoting an ultimate outlook, in the midst of despair, which could be expressed as follows: “Well, I guess the Communists really are not much worse than the rest of us, so maybe we had all better try to get together and live as peacefully as we can.”

(3) Building up a sense of guilt on the part of the American people, about the “My Lai Massacre,” was intended to serve many collateral purposes, and help the achievement of many diverse goals, in the psychological war which was always being conducted by the Communists. To compare what happened at My Lai with what happened at Hue’, or at Katyn Forest, was an incredibly criminal distortion of both facts and sense. But Lies so Big, and so widely heralded, that nobody would stop to doubt them, had always been a main item of the Communists’ stock in trade.

(4) From the beginning the war in Vietnam had been run by the United States government for the benefit of Communist prestige, gains, and propaganda. Nevertheless, by 1970 it had become a very dangerous headache for the Communists themselves. The realization by the American people that they were being betrayed was steadily increasing. And growing fastest of all was the feeling that the American armed forces in Vietnam should have been allowed, and *should still be allowed*, to go ahead and win that war and get it over with in an honorable fashion.

So a huge number of organizations had been created by the Comsymps, and a mighty campaign had been set in motion, to make it palatable to enough of the American people for the Nixon Administration to start withdrawing troops from Asia, and surrendering South Vietnam on the installment plan. This would inevitably mean eventually turning that betrayed and helpless country over to massive torture and murder by the incoming Communists. And millions of Americans were not going to like it. But sufficient pressures had to be put to work to get American armed forces out of Vietnam before, by some miracle which even Washington could not prevent, these forces simply went ahead and won the war. The magnification of the My Lai incident, therefore, was designed to play exactly into the hands of the “moratorium” freaks, and to help them to bring about immensely more dissension and bitterness between various factions within the United States.

(5) In any event, and no matter what happened otherwise, it was of extreme importance to the Communists to demoralize the American armed forces and destroy their will to win. For the two great bastions against Communist subjugation of the American people had been the loyalty of their independent local police forces, and the patriotism of their military services. The long



Communist drive to discredit, demoralize, and render ineffective the local police of American cities, towns, and counties had been thwarted to some considerable extent by the *Support Your Local Police* campaign of The John Birch Society. Yet these local police forces had already been intimidated to the point that, in too many cases, even the most conscientious officers were unable or afraid to do their duty in connection with Communist-inspired riots and crimes which could be considered as a part of the “revolution.” Now the same kind of pressures were to be turned on men in the services.

Local police had been hauled before review boards, or even tried for murder, as a result of simply under taking to prevent crimes or to arrest criminals. Now American servicemen were to be warned by experience that to conduct themselves as brave and patriotic soldiers in engagements with Communist guerrillas was to lay themselves open to demotion and disgrace, or even to court martial trials for murder. The justification for killing anybody, that this is the unfortunate soldier’s unhappy job in battle, was to be reserved for the Communists only, or for soldiers of the American or other armies who were engaged in killing anti-Communists. And the My Lai exhibit was to be made of immense importance in this area of the Communists’ psychological warfare.

(6) A purpose of less immediate impact, but of tremendous long-range importance, was to convince civilian populations everywhere of the comparative safety of being Communist subjects. If they were anti-Communists—as in Saigon—there was no end to the atrocities which could be committed against them with impunity. Whereas, if they were within the orbit of Communist rule, and therefore supposedly of Communist protection—as in Hanoi—they were relatively safe from attack by any outside military force. *And that this principle applied even in the case of Communist outposts temporarily established in anti-Communist territory.* The experience of five thousand inhabitants of Hue was what all anti-Communists should learn to expect, without anybody anywhere else getting excited about it. While the experience of a handful of pro-Communist “civilians” in My Lai would bring about a worldwide revulsion to prevent its repetition anywhere else under similar circumstances.

The Final Result . . .

All of these plans were well designed, and in accordance with long tested Communist strategy. But the plotters had underrated the instinctive feeling by most Americans of such high regard for their men in uniform, which the Calley verdict was going to bring to the surface. They had also underrated the extent to which the American people were becoming aware that something was seriously and radically wrong. One reflection in particular, out of many which worried them, was the fact that the Vietnam conflict had been conducted as an *undeclared* war. There seemed to be something sneaky about the whole arrangement. *As, of course, there was.*

To the *Insiders* who had contrived the American involvement in Vietnam there were many advantages in this underhanded way of doing things. Chief among these considerations, perhaps, was the greater ease with which the American people could be kept largely unaware that the Vietnam military action was a United Nations operation, conducted in the name of its “regional agency,” SEATO. And that all military actions of the American government in Southeast Asia were



supposed to be required and justified by its obligations as a signatory to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization.

But another possible reason also began coming to the conscious surface in many minds. For it was perfectly obvious, to those who gave the matter serious thought, that the *Insiders*, especially those in the high echelons of government, felt less concern about possible charges of deliberate treason so long as they conducted this shooting operation – no matter how large it became – as an informal military action. Less concern, that is, than if the action were being carried out as a formal war after a proper declaration by the American Congress.

But in actual fact, without such a declared state of war to provide the moral sanction for all killing of other human beings by soldiers in the field, all military activities became the more direct responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief and his immediate subordinates. And while those who held this power in their hands felt sure that almost nobody would have the courage to point out the significance and effect of their hiding, from technical conditions of treason, behind an *undeclared* state of war, the Calley case changed that picture.

For the build up of the murder accusation against Lt. Calley was so raw and blatant a manifestation of treason, on behalf of pro-Communist agitators and against American soldiers in the field, that it soon began to bring forth some very serious charges. Almost immediately after Calley was convicted, for instance, one anti-Communist leader in the United States, with a huge following, stated on a nationwide radio broadcast that the only real criminals—if any—in connection with what happened at My Lai, were the Commander-in-Chief Richard Nixon, and his top subordinate in Vietnam, General William C. Westmoreland. And there was no doubt that a huge part of his immense audience agreed with him.

In any event, the American soldiers had become extremely tired of fighting a war in which they were not allowed to win, but only to die. And the American people were becoming extremely disturbed by the strange statements and activities of a chief magistrate which were diametrically opposite to what he had promised during the political campaign in which he was elected. Both soldiers and people had become convinced that the actions and policies of their government were still being determined by the conspiratorial pro-Communist influences which Candidate Nixon had emphatically and repeatedly stated that he would weed out of Washington. And the Calley conviction really made them sit up and take notice.

The public reaction and protest took many forms. Governor Edgar D. Whitcomb of Indiana, decorated World War II veteran, ordered all state flags flown at half mast. He said that Calley's conviction "on the basis of actions carried out in time of war in the defense of the nation – is a body blow to America and its system of military defense." Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia proclaimed April 5 "American Fighting Men's Day" in the state and urged residents to display the flag and drive with headlights on. There were several angry speeches in Congress, and angry statements to the public by Congressmen. Rep. John R. Rarick (D.-La.) said: "I have had veterans tell me that if they were in Vietnam now they would lay down their arms and come home."

Many members of draft boards resigned, and some boards resigned en masse. A business man in



Indianapolis offered to post a hundred thousand dollar cash bond for Calley's release. Resolutions asking for executive clemency for Calley were introduced into the Illinois Legislature, the Alabama Legislature, the Texas Legislature, and various other public bodies. One American Legion Post started a campaign to raise a hundred thousand dollars for the cost of Calley's appeals. Many newspapers ran front page editorials condemning Calley's conviction. A radio station in South Carolina played "taps" several times an hour for most of a day. The National Commander of the American Veterans Association stated bluntly and publicly that Communism had influenced the outcome of Calley's trial. The John Birch Society came out with its new slogan as a symbol around which to make the reaction more permanent and more constructive. It read:

Stand Up For Our Fighting Men and Boost Their Will To Win!

And the American public knew instinctively that this exhortation made a lot of sense.

The flood of letters and telegrams to the White House reached extraordinary proportions. The Presidential Press Secretary early admitted that these communications were running 100 to 1 in support of Calley. The conviction had come on Monday, March 29, 1971; the sentence to life imprisonment on Wednesday, March 31. On Thursday, April 1 President Nixon — who had publicly stated about the "massacre" at My Lai that "under no circumstances was it justified" — intervened in the case, ordered Lt. Calley removed from the officer's prison stockade at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and returned to the comfort and comparative freedom of his regular bachelor quarters. At the same time the President made it clear that he personally would determine the final disposition of Calley's future status, *after* all of the regular appeals and legal maneuvers had been completed.

On April 8, 1971 the Pentagon announced that it had given up trying to find ways to bring former servicemen to trial for "atrocities" committed in Vietnam. Serious doubt was already arising as to whether any of the court martial trials already projected for other officers and men who had taken part in the capture of My Lai would ever be held. And Washington was still reeling from a public reaction it obviously had not expected, and which exceeded anything it had faced in the way of public resentment and criticism within the memory of most observers.

It was true that the Communists and *Insiders* had gained the full propaganda effect, in the United States and throughout the world, of all this publicity about American soldiers having engaged in a "massacre" of "civilians" in Vietnam. And that this gave them the psychological leverage they had wanted for many purposes. But by the first of May, 1971 even some of their most highly placed agents or sympathizers may have begun to wonder whether or not the gain had come at too high a price. Some of them may even have sensed the serious danger that the persecution and prosecution of an American serviceman for simply doing his duty on the field of battle might have set off a reaction that they could not stop. One which would not be stopped until the whole tide of the Communist advance had been turned to run against them. And until eventually it had become known as *The Wave Of The Past*.