



Rose DeWolf . . . Off Center

Horrible Beyond Belief?

" . . . We found women, children and old men unarmed in their hootches, some still eating breakfast and Lt. Calley said 'take care of these people.' So Conti and Meadto had these people sit down and started to guard thm. . . . Lt. Calley came back and said: 'why haven't you taken care of these people?' They said: 'we have'. Lt. Calley said: 'I mean kill 'em.'"

—Testimony from the court-martial of Lt. William Calley, Ft. Benning, Ga.

"I was in Sweden when I first heard of the My Lai Massacre," said Mark Lane. "It was being talked of as if it were the only incident of its kind in Vietnam. But I'd been talking to men who served in Vietnam. I knew there had been hundreds of incidents like that. It was, in fact, a matter of official policy."

Mark Lane, who now sports a huge, bushy beard, was in Philadelphia to promote his new book "Conversations with Americans" . . . a nonbook really . . . it is the recorded testimony of 32 Vietnam veterans about . . . well . . . American atrocities in Southeast Asia.

MARK LANE, if you recall, was just another politically active New York lawyer until he wrote a book ("Rush to Judgment") attacking the Warren Commission Report on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. For a time, Lane was retained by Lee Harvey Oswald's mother on behalf of her son.

Well, it isn't Lane's insistence that Oswald didn't do it that makes people wonder about him, it is his opinion of who did.

As he was saying the other day:

"I've just finished writing a film script which will be pro-

duced by Jack Nicholson. It will be about the assassination. It will be like "Z" . . . fiction based on fact. It will show who really killed Kennedy.

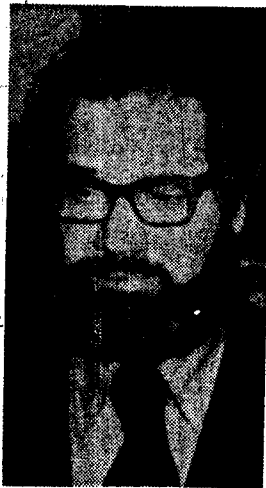
"And who did?"

"The American Intelligence Agency."

"I just don't believe that." Mark Lane just shrugs . . . and changes the subject.

You get what I mean . . . Mark Lane is firm in his opinions . . . but he is just so hard to believe. As somebody else once put it: "Mark Lane is his own credibility gap."

SO NOW he comes along and says our American youth



Mark Lane

are committing unspeakable atrocities in Vietnam. He says (and his editors at Simon & Shuster say) that these printed conversations in the book are for real.

One conversation begins:

"What is your name? Chuck

Onan. How old are you? Twenty. . . . Were you ever given training in interrogation of enemy prisoners? Yes. Did you ever receive special instructions on how to interrogate women? Yes. What did they suggest? They're pretty sadistic. I don't like to talk about it. What good does it do to talk about it. I'm trying to forget, to get it out of my mind."

But Onan does talk about it. And it's pornographic. I won't repeat it here.

Naturally you don't want to believe it. Our side isn't supposed to do things like that. Our guys are all John Wayne—tough but fair. The other guys are the ones who are slit-eyed, sneering, evil and vicious.

MARK LANE says that stereotype just isn't true anymore. He says there have been individual excesses by Americans in past wars, but that Vietnam is different because wholesale slaughter and torture have actually become instruments of American policy. He says it is all a result of fighting a war in a land where the majority of the people—including your supposed allies—hate you.

And you would like to shrug and say: Oh well, Mark Lane . . . and change the subject. Mark Lane, after all, is man who has given up the practice

of law (except for occasional defenses of friends like Jane Fonda) to become a full-time author, lecturer and fighter for causes.

His ardor for these causes seems to some to border on mania. This latest book (or nonbook) is so horrifying, you'd like to dismiss it for this reason.

And yet, Mark Lane is not the only one saying these things, not the only one finding this kind of testimony. There are so many others. The whole defense of Lt. Calley in that trial now going on in Ft. Benning is based on the premise that the lieutenant was merely carrying out orders.

You'd like to say for sure that these charges are not true . . . and the best you can really say is that they shouldn't be.