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Peace Group to Set Up Panels on Atrocity Charges

The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation of America said yesterday it would set up commissions of inquiry in "every significant American community" to look into alleged war atrocities in South Vietnam.

Ralph Schoenman, director of the American branch of the foundation, said that the commissioners would provide a place where former soldiers could present "first-hand evidence of war crimes."

Mr. Schoenman, who was Lord Russell's personal secretary before he was deported from Britain after the United States revoked his passport for traveling in Cuba and North Vietnam, told of his group's plans at a news conference at Town Hall.

The formation of citizen's commissions, he said, will be more fully discussed on Dec. 11 at a meeting in the Diplomat Hotel.

Mr. Schoenman took the opportunity, however, to recall testimony offered at the so-called "International Tribunal on War Crimes" in Stockholm two years ago.

He said that atrocities, including electric torture and killing of prisoners, were part of an American "policy" in South Vietnam.

He said that all his group's evidence had been offered to George W. Latimer of Salt Lake City, the civilian attorney who will represent First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. at his court-martial at Fort Benning, Ga.

Lieutenant Calley has been charged with premeditated murder for the alleged shooting of 109 South Vietnamese civilians in the village of Songmy on March 16, 1968.

Mr. Schoenman said that he could not allow Lt. Calley "to be used as a scapegoat" in the Songmy case, saying that all the atrocities allegedly committed in Vietnam had been carried out "on orders from those higher up."