

Wilson Sees 'Grave Atrocities' If Massacre Reports Are True

By ANTHONY LEWIS

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LONDON, Nov. 20—Prime Minister Wilson said today that if the reports about the massacre of South Vietnamese civilians by United States troops proved to be even "one-quarter true, they would be regarded as very grave atrocities."

Mr. Wilson answered questions on the incident in the House of Commons against a background of widespread and urgent concern in Britain. Many Members of Parliament expressed shock at the reports, which were banner news in British papers.

On the front page of tomorrow's issue of The Daily Sketch, a popular tabloid, the main headline reads: "War Crime. If This Can Happen, America Has Lost."

In the House of Commons there were calls for early debate on Vietnam. Labor Party leaders told agitated backbenchers that there would not be time before the Christmas recess, but efforts will be made to overcome that resistance and get an airing in the Commons before the Prime Minister goes to Washington for his scheduled meeting with President Nixon in January.

'Deep Feeling' Cited

A left-wing Labor member, John Mendelson, raised the issue in the House in connection with the Washington trip. He said:

"When you meet the President will you point out the very strong and deep feeling in this country about the wholesale assassination of ordinary village people in South Vietnam by members of the United States forces, revealed, to its great credit, in the American Press in the first place?"

The Prime Minister said he had noted the reports about the alleged incidents in Vietnam.

"Even if they prove to be only one-quarter true, they would be regarded as very grave atrocities," he said. "There have been atrocities on both sides in this horrible and tragic war."

In this connection, Mr. Wilson recalled the mass murder of civilians in Hue by the Communist side when it held that city during the Tet offensive in 1968.

Would 'Express Our Horror'

But, returning to the present reports, he said: "It is for us to express our horror if the stories prove to be true."

Later, he answered a friendly question about the American role in Vietnam in a way

that seemed deliberately to emphasize the desirability of early American withdrawal.

A right-wing Conservative, Duncan Sandys, asked:

"Will you explain to the President that very large numbers of people in this country appreciate the efforts which the United States are making to prevent a spread of Communism throughout Southeast Asia?"

Mr. Wilson replied:

"What all of us appreciate above all is the fact that he has made a very clear offer to withdraw his ground combat troops from Vietnam and play a full part in ending the fighting if there can be a settlement."

"I don't think anyone would wish to have a political solution imposed on Vietnam from anywhere which was contrary to the wishes of the people there."