

To Much of the World Songmy Signifies an American Tragedy

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Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Dec. 2.—In much of the world's press and for many ordinary citizens the village of Songmy has become the symbol of an American tragedy, even more than a Vietnamese tragedy.

Apart from the predictable exploitation by the Communists, the atrocities allegedly committed by American soldiers have moved the world to feelings of sorrow, shock, anger and a deep fear that the continuation of the war will have a corrosive, brutalizing effect on American youth and American society as a whole.

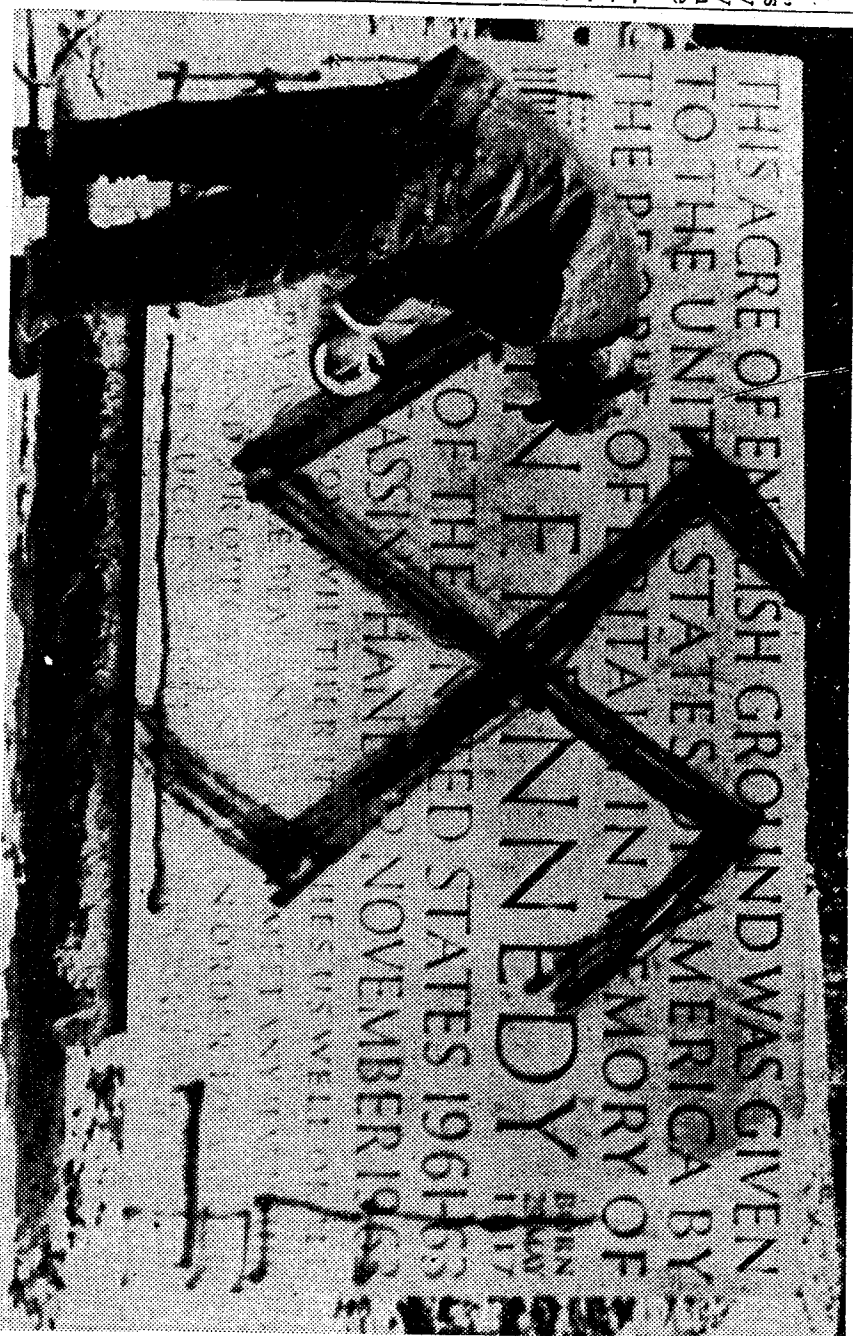
These feelings emerge as the main theme from reports by correspondents of The New York Times from some 30 countries.

Although comparisons with wartime Nazi crimes and with crimes committed by Communist forces in Vietnam were being drawn by some, the survey showed that the great majority in most countries do not see Americans in a similar light.

Judgments Vary

Most persons, the survey showed, apply one set of moral judgments to dictatorships, both Communist and Nazi, and another to the United States. Although an implied tribute, this only deepened the anger and the sorrow of those who have considered themselves the friends of Americans.

"What is happening to America, arbiter of the world, with its high moral standards," an Italian university professor asked. "Are you fighting the war by the standards of your enemies?"



A workman removing a swastika Monday from a memorial to President Kennedy. Monument is in Runnymede, England.

Associated Press

people," an editorial in Dagens Nyheter, the respected Swedish daily said.

From Oslo a correspondent reported that the common theme of virtually all available comment was "the war has to stop" and one of the most urgent reasons for stopping it "is to save American youth from slow moral poisoning."

In several countries Songmy awakened memories of other wars and other atrocities — atrocities committed as well as atrocities suffered.

Other Villages Recalled

"The Americans have learned that the Americans in Vietnam have become the equal of the French in Indochina, Madagascar, Algeria and of the Germans at Oradour," wrote the Paris weekly L'Express, whose publisher, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, first gained prominence abroad by writing a book about a young lieutenant — himself — being caught up in the "vicious circle of violence" in Algeria.

Oradour-sur-Glane was a village in central France that was razed and its entire male population killed by the Germans in reprisal against an attack by partisans in 1944.

In Germany too, newspaper editorialists recalled not only Oradour, but also Lidice, the Czechoslovak village, and

Filetto di Camarda, a village in Italy, both of which suffered atrocities.

In Spain an official remarked: "Perhaps if American writers were dealing with the civil war now they would not be so quick to draw moral conclusions from the terrible things that happened then," referring to the Spanish Civil War of 1936 to 1939.

"I am shocked," a grocer in Athens said. If atrocities like this are tolerated by the United States Army and we are simply told that the Reds are doing worse, one wonders what it is the Americans are fighting for in Vietnam."

Redeeming Aspects

"Almost every army has its killers, but these Americans have done away with the American dream of being different," said an official in Belgrade.

And in The Hague, an editorial in the Socialist daily Het Vrije Volk wrote: "The American's have been killing the people they wanted to protect. This means the bankruptcy of United States Vietnam policy."

Many persons abroad noted that the American press had given detailed coverage to the eyewitness accounts. This public debate and the Administration's promise to investigate and mete out justice are the only redeeming aspects of the

tragedy, in the view of foreign public opinion, the survey showed.

Aldo Rizzo, an editorialist in the Bologna Daily Il Resto del Carlino condemned the alleged massacre and added:

"All this must be said explicitly and without mental reservation, but it is necessary to add that the war crime of Songmy is being examined, evaluated and discussed in America today with a frankness and sincerity that has no precedent in the sad history of such things."

La Stampa, the respected Turin daily, wrote in a front-page editorial: "But the civilization of a people is judged above all by the courage and the severity with which it isolates certain individuals and denounces their crimes. The American press has done and is doing its duty."

Government officials in

The reports also showed that in Europe and Asia the Songmy affair has rekindled sharp public concern over Vietnam, reversing a trend toward growing indifference that an earlier survey had found a few days after President Nixon's speech on Vietnam of Nov. 3.

Threat to Americans Seen

Many people linked the alleged massacre in the settlement of Mylai No. 4, which is a part of Songmy, to what they saw as the inherent evil of the Vietnam war. They renewed their criticism of Mr. Nixon's Vietnam policies and renewed their appeals for the United States Government to end the war.

American withdrawal now is "both a necessary act of state and a human imperative," wrote The Spectator, the conservative-inclined London weekly, in a typical comment.

"Continued war now means a deadly threat not only to Vietnam but to the American

most countries have refrained from making statements. Among the exceptions were those in Britain, Sweden, Norway and West Germany.

Prime Minister Wilson, six days before the White House issued its statement, said that it would be a grave atrocity if the charges made thus far turned out to be only a quarter true.

Efforts are under way to bring the issue into the House of Commons for formal debate or at least before a meeting of the Parliamentary Labor party prior to Mr. Wilson's departure for Washington in January.

The British press, politicians and people were quicker than their American counterparts to sense the full horror of the affair, a correspondent wrote from London, adding:

"Why should this be so? Perhaps it is easier for out-

siders to see horror. The British admire us so much, and still have so many illusions about the United States, that our wounds make them bleed. And they are less inured to violence than Americans now."

Termed Horrifying Example

Foreign Minister Torsten Nelsson, of Sweden said in a speech in Malmoe last week: "World opinion cannot be silent about the American war crimes in Vietnam. We must say clearly what we think."

In Norway, Songmy was described during a debate in the Storting, or Parliament, as a horrifying example of the atrocities of war. It was the main reason why Gunnar Garbo and Olaf Kortner, respectively chairman and vice chairman of the Liberal party, which is part of the Government coalition, came out for recognition of Hanoi.

Guttorm Hansen the spokesman for the Labor opposition, which is spearheading the move for recognition, said: "This war is a heavy weight on America's relations with its friends around the world, and from the dead-end street this great nation has driven itself into, there is only one way out: the way back."

In Bonn, Chancellor Willy Brandt was asked about Songmy at his first news conference since taking over the Government, and refused to draw a parallel with Nazi war crimes. He replied:

"If I were still a private citizen or a newspaperman I know what I would say. I can see how heavily the burden weighs on the American people and I feel it inappropriate for me to comment as if to put two things in the same pot that do not belong together."