

# 'What Has Happened to Us?'

By SAMUEL C. BRIGHTMAN

WASHINGTON—This evening, when Lieutenant Calley was solemnly compared on network TV with Jesus Christ by a "spokesman for the people" who said Lieutenant Calley's punishment was as heinous as the crucifixion, I felt sick to my stomach.

The nausea started when the Vietnam doves piously said Lieutenant Calley's action was perfectly normal because the "immoral" Vietnam war has taught all apple-pie-loving American boys to murder women and children, particularly if their skin is brown, because in Vietnam having a brown skin is an act of "gookery."

I got sicker when I heard a lot of "spokesmen for the people" say that Lieutenant Calley only did what "the Army taught him to do."

If that be even remotely likely, then the Congress would be wise to create a select committee for Senator Ervin rather than rely on the duly constituted military watchdogs, Senator Stennis and Representative Hébert, to get to the bottom of that mess.

Should this investigation prove that Fort Benning is finding out "officers and gentlemen" trained to act as did Lieutenant Calley, then for the first time in my life I shall want to become an expatriate.

I think it not too farfetched to compare the act of Lieutenant Calley with that of a policeman should he gun down a group of black mothers and children at a street crossing on their way to school. He would explain that he was taught to kill Black Panthers and that he was only told that they were black and nobody told him that

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## *Calley Is No Hero; Neither Is He Alone To Carry the Blame*

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some black women and children were not to be killed on sight so he was only doing what he was trained to do.

Because the skins of the corpses he created would be brown and he "was only doing his duty," he would become a national hero should any attempt he made to punish him for the slaying—perhaps as admired a hero as Lieutenant Calley appeared to be on the tube tonight.

My God, what has happened to us? How can Americans make a man a hero for killing helpless children?

I know that American history is not without blemishes and I am aware that General Custer had something like Wounded Knee more in mind than a mass polio inoculation when he went to the Little Big Horn, but two wrongs do not make a right.

And lest you think I am a divinity dropout who has led a sheltered life, I will say that I was on the edge of combat in World War II, saved (at least temporarily) some suspected collaborators from summary execution in the street fighting in Paris, and have seen the bodies of both Americans and Germans who could only have been killed after they surrendered. During the disorganized days of our dash across Germany a Hitlerjugend tried to kill me by telling me a heavily

mined road had been swept. I was lucky enough not to be blown up, but I had been so badly trained at officers' candidate school that I failed to do my duty and kill the boy. All I did was take him to the nearest military policeman and suggest they get someone else to direct traffic at that crossroads. However, I suspect that character defects other than mercy prevented me from amounting to much in the Army.

I know that war—all war—is immoral, degrading—whatever ugly adjective the doves apply to Vietnam as though it were the first and only "immoral" war. I know that Lieutenant Calley will be a scapegoat, albeit a murderer, if the investigation stops with him or with Captain Medina. A scapegoat, a victim, a weakling, an unfit soldier gobbled up by an army desperate for manpower and turned into an officer because he had gone to military school long enough to pass that key Army aptitude test of knowing his left foot from his right foot—maybe all of these, but a hero? No!

And the professional veterans, the blubbery men in silly hats who rushed before the network cameras to praise Lieutenant Calley and denounce the verdict of Lieutenant Calley's combat peers, these hardened veterans of the beery political combat at the local Legion or V.F.W. hall, no matter what you see and hear on your TV set, these characters do not speak for the "people," or at least not for me.

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