

After we get out, will there be a bloodbath in South Vietnam?

[Separate articles by]

John S. Carroll
Richard Barnet

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Portuguese. 'Oh, I can't hat hour of a glowing rinning, but e of atmos- 'ordinary," d happened rs had met d news for ou and the ey reached t and said, vision cam- ng all over out to the ifornia, too.

had been... him that the McGovern-Shriver campaign was in better shape than the Humphrey-Muskie campaign in '68. The opinion polls? Trouble was they were national polls, said Sarge, and the Presidential election was not a national election but 50 simultaneous state elections. Local polls were showing the Democratic ticket only six or seven points behind Nixon in key states such as Massachusetts, Iowa, California, he claimed. In Michigan they had narrowed the gap 17 points.

He was interrupted in full flow of euphoria by the news that Governor Askew was on the phone. There followed one of those very unprivate conversations for the benefit of the cameras; speaking on the telephone for public effect is a difficult art. "Good morning, Governor, how are you this morning? . . . I'm very, very happy you took the trouble to call me this morning. . . . I know you must be very busy up there in Tallahassee. . . . You are up there in Tallahassee? . . . You just inter-



rupted my speech at a very good moment. . . . No, no, no, I'm very appreciative of you calling me. . . . Fine . . . Fine . . . Fine . . . Sure thing. . . . Well thank you for calling, Governor . . . Good-by, Governor." Over and out.

He hadn't come here to make a speech, said Sarge, returning to the breakfast table. But he couldn't resist it and made another one. The United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America had been waiting in the convention hall of the next-door hotel. They looked as if they had had a rougher night than Sarge. To fill in the time, one of them sang the "Fascination Waltz" in English and in French. Mercifully, Shriver now arrived, this time with his wife, Eunice, in tow. She has a royal effect on bystanders, and is used to it. People whispered, "There she is!" "It's her!" The night before, the rubber workers had endorsed the Democratic ticket. A big blown-up picture of McGovern was now on the wall. Shriver said several



times what a great guy Pete Bommarito was. His aides had told him that Bommarito, the union president, was thought to be close to George Meany, the implacable A.F.L.-C.I.O. boss. The rubber workers' endorsement was seen as a hopeful omen. Later, the admirable Pete presented a check to Sarge, who waved it ecstatically in front of the cameras. The reporters wrote down, "Only \$15,000."

Shriver's assignments in the first weeks of the campaign were to unruffle feathers among the party regulars and labor leaders, raise money for the strapped campaign, and try to enthrone Democratic voters and stop their half-hearted defection to the Nixon camp. The message to union gatherings, such as the rubber workers', was that it was still the same old religion. The pocketbook issues were still at the top of the agenda, the Democratic party needed the support of the working man, and the working man needed the Democratic party just as much as ever. Organized labor needed "people who are interested in rebuilding our society—people like George McGovern and Pete Bommarito."

Shriver has been a friend of labor ever since the New Deal — his own family fortunes were swept away by the Depression—and as editor of The Yale Daily News he wrote editorials in support of the Detroit sit-down strikers. While briefly a journalist, he was active in the American Newspaper Guild and had supported the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. But what did the rubber workers who do dirty, smelly jobs in places like Akron, Ohio, make of this cultured, well-bred, well-spoken, exquisitely dressed husband of a million-

aires? He played on a distinction between "them" and "you." "They" ate in executive dining rooms or in restaurants on expense accounts; "you eat in the canteen and can't even claim expenses for a Hershey bar." "They" had reserved parking spaces with their names on them; "you hunt and hunt [for a place to park] and then walk an hour to work." "They" took time off to visit the dentist and stayed home if they didn't feel well; "you get your pay docked if you are off work for an hour."

Sarge's sincerity was plain, but you could almost hear the workers asking themselves, "Hell, when did that guy last work in a factory, eat in a canteen or hunt for a parking space?" It had just been reported in the papers that Shriver earns \$125,000 a year in his law practice.

Next stop on the crazy, crazy schedule was Dubuque, Iowa. During the night something had happened to the plane, a chartered 727. It now bore the freshly painted legend, "Fighting Lucky 7 — Victory in the Air." The Lucky Seven are the seven Shriver—Sarge, Eunice, four sons and a daughter. Sarge also felt that his lucky number had come up, or so he claimed, when he became McGovern's allegedly seventh choice of running mate.

Victory in the Air? Well, at least Sarge was in the air, no doubt about that; he would have flown more than 11,000 miles by the end of that week. The plane is specially equipped with a traveling campaign headquarters in the forward cabin and an office and communications center at the rear. The press and the Secret Service make the filling in the sandwich. Having a telephone on board keeps Sarge happy. Telephoning is his one known vice. He doesn't smoke, takes only a glass or two of wine a day with meals and when asked, after the Eagleton debacle, if there were any skeletons in his closet said, "Only Eunice." But when it

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After we get out, will there be

The past warns that a great many innocent people will be executed.

By John S. Carroll

What would happen if the United States cut off all the guns, bullets and bombs the Thieu regime needs to survive? George McGovern, who promises to do just that if given the chance, has a scenario.

First, President Thieu and his colleagues would clear out of Saigon. A coalition would emerge which would initially embrace all the major elements on South Vietnam's richly variegated political landscape and then negotiate a merger with the North. Yes, there would be bloodshed. Perhaps, McGovern says, several hundred people might be assassinated.

This opinion was not reached casually. It is grounded in a number of current writings in the press, plus scholarly publications and memos from such authorities as Prof. George McT. Kahin, head of the Southeast Asia program at Cornell. Taken together, it is a fascinating body of literature, one which attempts to uproot much of what pre-Nixon Administration historians believed about what happened in a similar situation—the Communist victory in North Vietnam in 1954.

This revisionism has come as a response to President Nixon's strident warnings of a bloodbath in South Vietnam. It was, as we shall see, developed hastily, and then eagerly seized upon by well-meaning writers, lawyers and politicians who wanted to believe that pulling the plug on the Saigon Government would be morally inexpensive, if not free. Today at least one of the principal assumptions on which the revisionist history rests is not even believed by its own author. Others are demonstrably false.

All this is interesting for the effect it could have on the election and, in turn, the effect on foreign policy. Perhaps the voters, after weighing the bloodbath of continued war against the probably smaller bloodbath of a Communist take-over, will choose the latter. But they should do so with eyes open. The choice should be painful.

As a pro- or anti-war issue, the bloodbath theory must naturally be considered along with other questions, such as the human cost of the bombing of North Vietnam and the possibility that the Saigon Government will ultimately crumble with or without our support. Taken alone, the bloodbath argument says something about the use of "history" in politics. Nixon uses the most extreme accounts of past killing to predict future

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John S. Carroll, who covered the Vietnam war for *The Baltimore Sun*, is now a Washington correspondent for that newspaper.



Vietnamese women weep over the coffins of loved ones who were killed after the Vietcong seized Hue in 1968. The inset photo shows United States Marines in the battle to retake the city. President Nixon cites the civilian killings as an omen of what would occur if the United States withdraws . . .

a bloodbath in South Vietnam?



Bloodbath? That's what we are causing now.

By Richard Barnet

Several years have passed since Presidents have dared to look voters in the face and proclaim the Vietnam war either a "fight for freedom" or an indispensable commitment to the defense of San Francisco. In this election year the principal argument for prolonging the American war in Indochina is that "we cannot abandon our friends." Sir Robert Thompson, President Nixon's chief guerrilla war consultant, recently amended his prediction of the number of probable victims of deliberate Communist revenge in South Vietnam from "several hundreds of thousands" to "well over one million." President Nixon has also matched his escalation of the air war over the last three years with escalating predictions of massacres to come if the U.S. fails to keep the Communists from taking power in Saigon. In the Orwellian age, the daily saturation bombings of Indochina are defended as missions of mercy.

Anyone in the heat of debate on war policy who makes hard and fast predictions of what will happen in Vietnam, as the President has done, deserves to be reminded of the official United States record of prediction in Indochina over the last 20 years. It is as futile to paint a rosy picture of a Vietnam free of American domination, although that would no doubt make some Americans feel better about leaving, as it is to use atrocity stories to justify our staying. There is only one humanitarian question for Americans: "Does the continuation of the present bloodbath make a future bloodbath more or less likely?"

The term bloodbath is, if anything, inadequate to describe what has gone on in Indochina during the last four years. From January 1969 to the end of September, 1972, 3,829,992 tons of American bombs were dropped on Indochina, well over one million in excess of all the bombs dropped in World War II. In June 1972, the latest month for which precise figures are available, the United States dropped 112,460 tons. That is the equivalent of two tons every 60 seconds or 5½ Hiroshima-strength bombs a month. Senator Edward M. Kennedy, chairman of the Subcommittee on Refugees, reported in August that there had been 165,000 civilian deaths and 410,000 civilians wounded in the last four years. According to the estimates of the subcommittee, almost four million refugees have been created by the war in the last four years.

The Administration's argument is that the "other
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... support now from South Vietnam. There is disagreement on this, however. Nixon says 3,000 people were murdered; a U.S.I.A. official put the number at 2,000. Others have said that most of the killings were caused by the Americans in their attempts to liberate the city and by the Vietcong in retreat.

Many people will be killed

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mayhem. McGovern, in spite of his careers as historian and Vietnam spokesman, sweeps the whole problem under the rug by subscribing to shaky re-investigations of the past designed to reach predetermined conclusions.

Before dealing with the revisionists, we should look quickly at what is being revised. Nixon argues that a Communist victory would bring death to "perhaps one million marked for assassination because they fought against North Vietnamese attempts to conquer South Vietnam." He bases his argument on captured Communist documents, broadcasts and publications which speak of "blood debtors," "tyrants" and "reactionaries" and on the belief that the Lao Dong (Communist) party of Vietnam has always consolidated power with the use of executions and terror. The Nixon Administration cites any number of incidents, such as the Vietnam's 1945-46 "coalition" period, or current reports of atrocities in hamlets captured since the North Vietnamese offensive began last spring. But for the most part Nixon aldes rest their case on two events: the "land-reform" program in North Vietnam after the Communist victory in 1954 and the mass executions in the South Vietnamese city of Hue in 1968.

What took place after the 1954 take-over depends on which expert one consults. Speaking last year to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Nixon told of "half a million, by conservative estimates, in North Vietnam who were murdered or otherwise exterminated. . . ." (Nixon's estimates vary. His speeches suggest that he considers it bad luck, or perhaps bad politics, to use the same number twice. On the number of Catholics who fled the North in 1954, for example, he has used 1.5 million, 850,000 and 800,000, in that order. He is headed in the right direction; the correct number is generally believed to be 600,000 to 800,

000.) The President's estimate of the number killed is higher than almost any to be found outside the White House. Yet there is, in support of his underlying point, an impressive body of writing which says there were, indeed, executions on a mass scale in which so-called "land-reform" tribunals administered death penalties, often on the basis of death quotas for each village. For example:

Robert Shaplen, the respected New Yorker correspondent and author of several books on Southeast Asia, including "The Lost Revolution," estimates that between 40,000 and 50,000 people were killed during the land-reform period.

Hoang Van Chi, a North Vietnamese intellectual who fled in 1955 and is now in Washington with the Agency for International Development, has written that 100,000 died following a Central Committee order raising the death quota from one to five per village.

Prof. Gérard Tongas, a French Vietnam sympathizer who stayed in North Vietnam until 1959 and developed a loathing for the regime, wrote that 100,000 died under a formula of one execution per 500 inhabitants, "which meant easily an average of 5 or 10 per village."

P. J. Honey, a British authority, writes that "hundreds of thousands of patently guiltless people were done to death in the most cruel fashion. . . ."

Anita Lauve Nutt, now a Rand Corporation consultant, says that as an official in the United States Embassy in Saigon in the mid-nineteen-fifties she handled "stacks" of reports from Vietnamese families whose relatives were killed in the land reform.

Similarly, Robert F. Turner, a researcher at Stanford's Hoover Institute, writes that as an American official in 1971 and 1972, he interviewed witnesses from "widely scattered parts" of North Vietnam, including two who had actually been judges in the tribunals. His conclusion: "Whether the actual blood-

bath was 300,000 or 500,000—it is quite clear that a major purge did occur and that the casualties numbered in six digits."

The late Bernard B. Fall, one of the few scholars to be held in high regard by doves and hawks alike, wrote: "While it is obviously impossible to give precise figures, the best-educated guesses on the subject are that probably close to 50,000 North Vietnamese were executed in connection with the land reform and that at least twice as many were arrested and sent to forced labor camps."

What is the revisionist response to such a barrage of testimony? There are several counterarguments, the first of which is:

Political reprisals after 1954 against those who had sided with the French simply never happened.

This is the contention of an article published in 1969 in Christian Century and widely repeated. The authors, D. Gareth Porter (a junior colleague of Professor Kahin at Cornell) and Len E. Ackland, rely on the absence of evidence of a bloodbath in reports of the International Control Commission, the peacekeeping organization set up by the Geneva Conference in 1954. "International Control Commission (I.C.C.) reports," the authors begin, "while not definitive, give us a reasonable account of the situation in North Vietnam after the 1954 accords." On this slender reed, the authors base their conclusion that nothing resembling a bloodbath took place then.

The publication of the Christian Century article was a case of rare timing. On Nov. 3, 1969, only two days before, Nixon had given a hard-line television speech in which he raised the bloodbath specter. (This time the figures were 50,000 "murdered" and "hundreds of thousands" dead in "slave labor camps.") Those who wanted to refute the President made enthusiastic use of the Christian Century findings. Reports of the I.C.C. were soon being hailed as authoritative accounts of the post-1954 events in North Vietnam. The argument, couched in language almost identical to that in the Christian Century, was used in quick succession by Professor Kahin (New York Times Dec. 6, 1969), Tom Wicker (The Times, May 12, 1970), and Clark Clifford (Life, May 22, 1970). It also turned up in a book called "Atrocities in Vietnam: Myths and Realities" by Edward S. Herman. It was the lead-off argument in a study prepared by two Washington lawyers, Charles E. Hill and Frank W. Lloyd III, and inserted into The Congressional Record on Aug. 28, 1970, by Senator McGovern. The argument was used as recently as Sept. 23 of this year, this time in a column by Clayton Fritchey on the op-ed page of The Washington Post.

Apart from the I.C.C.'s structural infirmities—it was the cold war in miniature with Canada on one side, Poland on the other and a nervous India at the fulcrum—there are several well-known

reasons why the land-reform deaths never turned up in the I.C.C. reports. One is a legal end run the Hanoi regime made around the Geneva regulations. By early 1955, the regime had made a very significant change in its laws to allow political reprisals to be carried out in the land-reform tribunals—a part of the civil administration which the I.C.C. could not touch. Wilfred Burchett, the pro-Hanoi Australian correspondent, who would certainly be the last journalist to fabricate unfavorable stories about North Vietnam, wrote that the legal changes were "partly made necessary by the 'no reprisals' clause in the Geneva Agreements. . . . Accusation meetings were abolished and replaced by the People's Tribunals with judgments pronounced by the properly constituted provincial courts."

One needs only the most casual familiarity with the I.C.C. to appreciate the absurdity of considering its reports a "reasonable account." Bernard Fall provided two illustrations in an article in this Magazine ("How the French Got Out of Vietnam," May 2, 1965). In North Vietnam, the I.C.C. attempted to inspect Haiphong's Catbi airport, the largest airfield in the country, but permission was denied on grounds that Catbi "belongs to a private flying club." That was the end of that investigation. In South Vietnam, Fall recalled asking an Indian I.C.C. official about a U.S. aircraft carrier which was clearly violating the rules by unloading

The agony of bloodshed



A Vietnamese boy searches the lists of personal effects found on 134 bodies of people clubbed to death or buried alive in a mass grave after the Vietcong captured Hue in 1968: One authority says 2,000 persons were killed in this manner. The boy is looking for his father.

warplanes—within sight of Saigon's main thoroughfare. He was told that "officially [emphasis Fall's] we have not been informed of the presence of the aircraft carrier."

Recently I spoke by telephone with Gareth Porter, co-author of the Christian Century article which popularized the I.C.C. argument. He said then he was soon coming out with another article to prove Nixon wrong, but this one would be based on different evidence. He acknowledged that the original I.C.C. approach is weak: "I don't think I'd want to base the argument on the I.C.C. reports at this point."

The second thrust of the antibloodbath argument is as follows:

There were executions but they were connected with land reform—not with the Communists' assumption of power.

This theme, one of Senator McGovern's favorites, has been sounded again and again in the literature of the revisionists. To pluck out one example, the Hill-Lloyd study, which Senator McGovern put in the Congressional Record, contends that the land-reform program was just that—land reform. The deaths "actually took place in connection with Hanoi's efforts to mobilize the local peasantry and redistribute to peasants land held by landholders, not as planned reprisal for pre-1954 activities nor to eliminate potential opposition and consolidate control." McGovern recently repeated much the same statement, adding that the killings occurred two years after the Communists came to power.

There can be no serious doubt that the land-reform courts were used for purposes beyond land reform. The excesses, which eventually stirred rebellion among the peasantry, even included executions of people who were neither landowners nor collaborators with the French. Bernard Fall writes that "the lack of real landowners (those who indeed could be classed as such had of course fled southward in 1954 and 1955) compelled Hanoi to put on trial as reactionary landlords' men and women who were by no stretch of the imagination rich landowners. . . . in the hands of pro-Peking leaders such as the party secretary, Troung Chinh, every village felt compelled to produce its own 'quota' of such reactionaries. Perhaps

50,000 were executed." Is this really land reform?

Professor Kahin goes beyond most others in contending that the deaths were distinct from the take-over not only in concept, but also in time. He repeatedly insists—in the face of writings which include a textbook he himself edited—that the deaths did not take place for more than two years after the end of the war. In his Times article, for example, he criticizes Nixon for an "appalling misunderstanding of what actually happened," and then goes on to demonstrate his own misunderstanding by stating: "It was in the fall of 1956, more than two years after the Geneva Armistice that violence occurred on a significant scale in the north." In another article, he goes so far as to misquote Joseph Buttinger on the timing, although Buttinger is admirably clear on this point.

Buttinger and other historians believe the deaths began not two years after the take-over, but in some provinces, slightly before the 1954 victory and, after a hiatus to stem the southward flow of refugees, again in 1955. The violence was slowed by the regime in the summer of 1956 when widespread unrest became apparent, but the change in policy came too late to prevent the peasant rebellion that fall—which, it should be pointed out, took a good part of the North Vietnamese 325th Division to put down.

A third theme runs through the revisionist arguments:

The number killed was probably only 10,000 to 15,000—and that may be high.

The influential Christian Century article uses the 10,000-15,000 figures and attributes them to Buttinger. However, it is also pointed out that Buttinger's "sympathies lay with Diem," as if to suggest that he may have been overstating the misdeeds of the North.

Among the historians who are most respected in this country, Buttinger provides the lowest estimate—and the lowest by far, as we have seen. It is a fraction of the figure used by Bernard Fall and Robert Shaplen and a smaller fraction still of the figures provided by Gérard Tongas, Hoang Van Chi, Robert Turner and P. J. Honey. It should be regarded as a minimum not a maximum. There is and probably never will be any way of knowing the extent of the

Hail the conquering heroes



North Vietnamese wait for the Vietminh to enter Hanoi after defeating the French in 1954. They hold red flags but the celebration is distinctly subdued, perhaps in anticipation of what followed. Author Carroll says there is no doubt that "large numbers" were murdered.

killings in North Vietnam or the exact manner in which it was carried out. There is no doubt, however, that a great many people died. If the Communists take control in South Vietnam and do not execute large numbers of people, it will be a very real departure from past practices. If by that time there are executions, it is doubtful that anyone would be able to stop them—or, again, even know about them for certain.

Another popular theme of the revisionists is that the potential victims are elements Vietnamese society might well be better off without:

General Thieu and his associates are the ones who are threatened.

Senator McGovern himself has probably done more than anyone else to spread this belief. Again and again he has declared that the sacrifices in Vietnam have been for the purpose of saving Thieu. Recently he said on television that if Thieu and "some of his friends feel endangered" they could be granted asylum in the United States. As for less prominent South Vietnamese, he has explained what happens when the Communists attain power:

"When they take over a village, they don't assassinate the people there. They set up a school and a road system and a tax system. They just move in and take over. They don't kill the people, even though the village may have been indifferent or hostile . . ."

Again, consider the land-reform tribunals. Many people

did not live to enjoy those roads and the schools and the people executed were not generals and prime ministers.

To suggest that the bloodbath primarily threatens Thieu, Ky, the militarists, corrupt politicians and other unsavory characters is misleading. One must assume that the big operators have taken out life insurance policies in the form of emergency escape routes and European bank accounts. What the bloodbath theorists are talking about is the literally millions of people who have openly supported the Government by working as civilians in the national, province, district, village or hamlet apparatus, or in the military, or for the United States.

Having cleared away the debris from the first wave of revisionism we must face what is shaping up as the new wave, again started by Gareth Porter of Cornell. Porter has now circulated his new paper, which attacks the bloodbath theory as being based on "propaganda and careless scholarship," and then, relying on the party newspaper Nhan Dan and other official North Vietnamese publications, concludes that only 800 to 2,500 persons were executed during the land reform.

Porter contends that, for one thing, Hoang Van Chi mistranslated North Vietnamese documents and speeches. The most serious case, he says, is Chi's translation of the 1956 speech in which Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap discussed the mistakes committed in the land reform pro-

gram. Giap admits that the party "executed too many people," according to the Chi translation—but Porter says this should have said merely that there was an "unjust disciplining of innocent people." Chi also says the speech contains an admission that officials "resorted to terror." Here again Porter says the translation is wrong; it should have said, "used excessive repressive measures." These are two of eight examples.

At best, Chi seems guilty of failing to explain that his translations are not literal. At worst, his work is "fraudulent," as Porter asserts. But even if one reads Giap as translated by Porter, it is hard to believe that he isn't using elliptical language to describe terrible events. Chi, and others who speak both Vietnamese and English, say that loose translations are frequently used in dealing with Lao Dong party jargon, which is often euphemistic. "Unjust disciplining" does mean executions, they say, just as "excessive repressive measures" means terror.

There remains one other disturbing aspect of the Porter paper. After criticizing others for making use of propaganda, he repeatedly returns to Nhan Dan and other official Hanoi publications for the truth. He refers to these sources as "official documentary evidence," or "the actual historical record." In these impressive-sounding sources he has found little evidence of a bloodbath. Hanoi has not accused itself of murder; therefore, it is innocent.

Apart from the historical arguments, McGovern bases

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his antibloodbath faith on his judgment of what the Communists intend to do today, not what they did 18 years ago.

In July of 1969 he said his then recent visit to Paris had been helpful in making this assessment. "When I suggested to Hanol and N.L.F. (National Liberation Front) delegations that some Americans fear a bloodbath during or after an American withdrawal," he said, "they replied that just the opposite would happen—the killing would stop . . . as for reprisals against those Vietnamese who have stood with our forces, they said that it would be in the self-interest of any regime to try to broaden its support and unify the country, which would call not for reprisals but accommodation."

This August he said, "Any administration coming into power has to consolidate its position with the people. You don't do that by just widespread killing and terror . . ." With the notion of a benevolent, all-embracing coalition, McGovern has come up with a particularly American solution to a Vietnamese problem. Franklin D. Roosevelt is part of our tradition, not theirs.

It is true that Ho Chi Minh himself publicly repudiated the excesses of the land-reform program, but the repudiation was not necessarily sincere. It was made in 1956 at the time of the peasant revolt, and was thus expedient. Writing about the repudiation, Ralph Smith of the University of London concluded that the results of the land-reform campaign were irreversible and were something "no one in the party's Politburo can seriously have wished to change."

The Administration's reply to those who say the Vietnamese Communists have changed their ways is simple: Look at Hue.

"We saw a prelude of what would happen in South Vietnam when the Communists entered the city of Hue last year," Nixon said in 1969. "During their brief rule there, there was a bloody reign of terror in which 3,000 civilians were clubbed, shot to death and buried in mass graves."

There are several detailed studies of the Hue killings. The one best liked by the White House is by Douglas Pike, an officer of the United States Information Agency who has written extensively

of course

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on the N.L.F. He concludes that in addition to the initial executions of civil servants, police officials, military men and community leaders, there was an ominous phase during which the Communists thought they could hold the city forever, and set out to shape it to their liking.

"Orders went out," Pike writes, "to round up what one prisoner termed 'social negatives.'" Pike estimates that 2,000 died in this period, including a significant portion of the intellectual community. He describes the destruction of a prominent "community leader" and his family. Not only was the man executed, but so were his wife, his married son and daughter-in-law, his young unmarried daughter, a male and female servant, their baby, the cat and the goldfish.

If Pike's analysis is sound, the events in Hue portend brutal social engineering under a Communist regime.

The counterargument to Pike comes from Len E. Ackland, the co-author of the Christian Century article, who lived in Hue during 1967 and returned after Tet to reconstruct the occupation in Gia Hoi, a precinct of 25,000 residents.

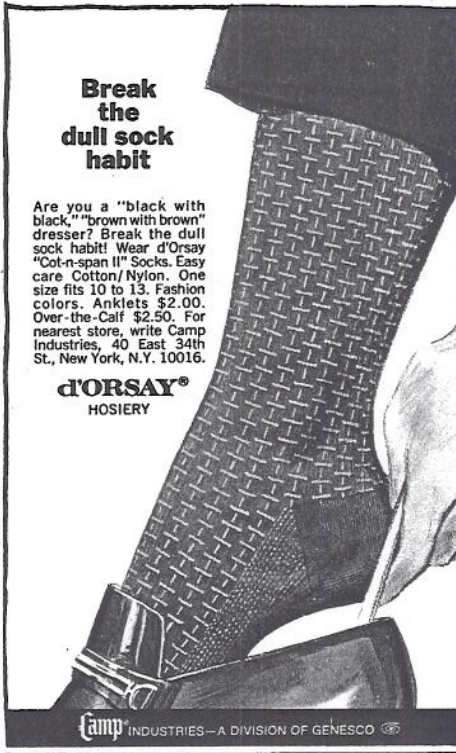
Ackland agrees that there were some blacklist killings at first. He writes that during the first week and a half, the deaths included executions of people "as examples" for failing to report as ordered to meetings, as well as killings of selected individuals "because they had been particularly unpopular with Hue's population." The mass deaths came, Ackland goes on, when the Vietcong were being pushed out of the city. Suddenly "re-education" lists became liquidation lists. Ackland concludes that the deaths were a result of the destruction sown by an army in retreat.

Whether the Pike study proves that Communist rule would be a bloodbath, as the Nixon side insists, may be open to debate. Yet in reading the Ackland study, which tries to refute this idea, one can hardly be encouraged by the treatment accorded the people of Hue, even prior to the "army in retreat" period. Is there any reason that those killed for not showing up at meetings, or for being "particularly unpopular," would have fared any differently if the Communists had controlled the entire country and not just Hue? "A revolution," Mao Tse-tung once said, "is not a dinner party." ■

Break the dull sock habit

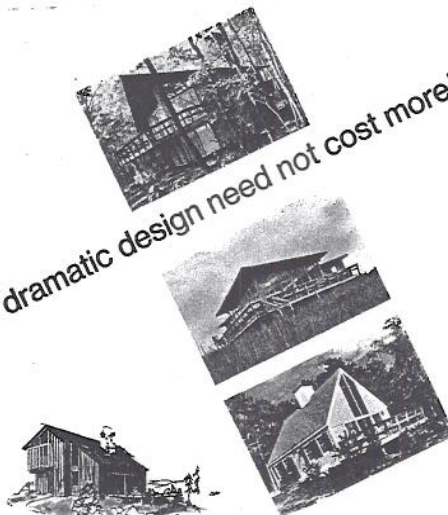
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But there's a bloodbath now

(Continued from Page 39)

side" has marked more than a million South Vietnamese for murder and that these murders will occur unless the power of the Communists is broken. The White House bases its argument on the use of political terror by Vietnamese Communists in the past. In his Nov. 3, 1969 speech announcing Vietnamization, President Nixon said that after 1954 when the French withdrew, 50,000 people were killed in reprisal for what they did in the first Indochina war. The historical record does not support this repeated charge. The International Control Commission set up under the Geneva Accords reported 55 incidents of political reprisal in the North (as opposed to 1,404 such incidents in the South). But no policy of reprisal was reported. Indeed, amnesty provisions similar to those contained in the present National Liberation Front program were put into effect in 1954, and today hundreds of individuals who previously supported "the other side" are serving in the Hanoi civil service.

However, after the war, according to the late French historian Bernard Fall, 50,000 may have been killed in con-

nection with their resistance to a sweeping land reform program. Many American politicians rely heavily on his accounts since he was one of the few well-known authorities on recent Vietnamese history living in the United States. It was not uncommon for American officers in Vietnam in the nineteen-sixties to have his complete works in their command posts. Fall's 50,000 figure is repeated in other writings but Fall himself turns out to be the source, and he cites no authority for the figure. National Security Council sources admit that President Nixon's statement that "half a million people were exterminated" is based on a book by Hoang Van Chi, a North Vietnamese exile who was in North Vietnam at the time of the land reform. His book, which was financed by U.S. intelligence agencies, is not supported by the original Hanoi documents on which it purports to rely, according to the Cornell scholar Gareth Porter, who reads Vietnamese and has made a thorough study of the land reform.

Hoang Van Chi recently told The Washington Post in an interview that the half-million figure was "just a guess" based on a pro-

Vietnam historian



Bernard Fall, shortly before his death in 1967 near Hue. His works remain respected by hawks and doves alike.



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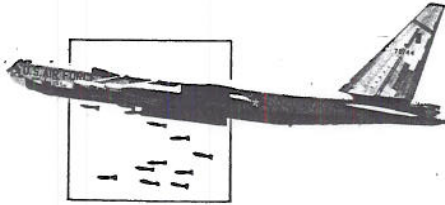
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jection of what happened in his own village of about 200 people. He said one person was executed and about nine others died of starvation for which he blamed the Communists.

The 5 per cent death rate in his village supported by other general impressions became the basis for declaring that 5 per cent of the total population was killed. Hoang Van Chi's methodology was quite scientific enough for a White House propaganda campaign. It should also be noted that information, or misinformation, about the period has ultimately come from defectors from the North, most of whom represented upper classes and yearned for the overthrow of the Communist Government because they felt comfortable with the old French colonial way of life, the old schools, the old culture. So, of course, their objectivity must be questioned.

The North Vietnamese have admitted that executions took place, and they have denounced the killings as "serious errors." Whatever the numbers of victims, it is true that the North Vietnamese once attempted to break domestic resistance by terror. This was undeniably a human tragedy. Nothing about the forced land reform suggests that the executions were part of a policy of political reprisals, however, and there is no other evidence of any such policy.

The most dramatic evidence for the "bloodbath argument" is the alleged "massacre" at Hue during the Tet offensive of 1968, where, according to Sir Robert Thompson, the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese executed 5,700 persons (President Nixon's figure is 3,000). The White House is advertising the Hue occupation as a "prelude of what would happen in South Vietnam" if the Americans really left. The President's account of what happened in Hue is contradicted by a number of witnesses to the events. Tran Van Dinh, who had once been

an official in the Government of Diem, received official word shortly after the occupation of Hue that his brother and nephew were "Vietcong victims," only to learn from his family that they had actually died under an American bombing attack. Len E. Ackland, a student of Vietnamese who had worked and lived in Hue in 1967, returned shortly after the Tet offensive to conduct interviews among the people. He later wrote: "When on the first day of the attack, about 20 Vietcong entered Gia Hoi (a precinct of 25,000 residents in Hue) in order to secure the area, they carried with them a list of those who were to be killed immediately as enemies of the people." According to Le Ngan, director of Hue's special police, "the list consisted of five names, all those of officers of special police." The local Catholic priest reported that "none of his clergy or parishioners were harmed by the N.L.F." According to Stewart Harris, a correspondent for The Times of London, who was in Hue in March, 1968, the Police Chief in Hue, Doan Cong Lap, estimated the total number of executions at 200. (He also estimated the total civilian casualties caused by the United States in its effort to "liberate" the city to be 3,776 killed and 1,909 wounded). These figures are in line with the recent reports of allied intelligence officials that somewhere between 250 and 500 Saigon Government officials were executed by the Communists over a three-month period when they took over northern Binh Dinh province earlier this year.

There is no doubt that the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese have used terror for political purposes in this war, just as, it must be said, the United States has done. But because the political purposes of the two sides are different, so also are the uses of terror. The United States has bombed villages and dikes, destroyed crops and despoiled the land of Vietnam so that the leaders in Hanoi

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might feel enough "pain" to stop the war. We do not know whether President Nixon's planners employ the torturer's idiom used so liberally in the Pentagon Papers ("one more twist of the screw"), but the purpose of the military escalation in this Administration, particularly the air war, is the same. "Everyone has his breaking point," Administration officials have told private visitors who ask how the Vietnamization strategy can end the war.

In the hands of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese, terror becomes a much more selective weapon. A number of the recent assassination victims for example were, according to The New York Times correspondent Joseph B. Treaster, "policemen who had worked as counter-intelligence agents trying to kill and capture key political and military figures in the Communist organization." From the earliest Vietcong assassinations of village chiefs in the late nineteen-fifties, the pattern of deliberate killings has been the same. Certain symbols of authority, particularly those who have themselves engaged in repres-

A different bloodbath?

When the Rev. William Sloane Coffin was in Hanoi recently with the group that brought back three American prisoner-of-war pilots, he asked whether there would be a bloodbath in the South if there were a settlement on North Vietnamese terms.

"Yes, there will be a bloodbath . . . and it won't be our side causing it," replied Hoang Tung, who is North Vietnam's official spokesman after Premier Phan Van Dong.

Hoang Tung said that when the North Vietnamese overran Quang-tri province, they captured a document from a village chief which he claimed gave detailed plans that provide, in the event of a cease-fire, for cadres in the Saigon Government's United States-sponsored Phoenix program to pinpoint the Communists and exterminate them. He gave the Americans a copy of the purported document.

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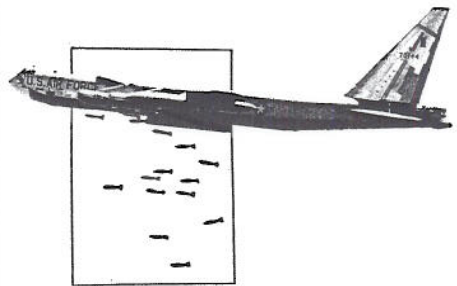
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sive acts, have been marked for death. Under the United States-sponsored Phoenix program, which was undertaken in conscious imitation of Vietcong tactics, more than 40,000 Vietnamese civilians, according to official United States estimates, have been killed on suspicion of being "Vietcong cadre." The "other side," partly because they have a keen political interest in trying not to alienate the population and partly because they have much better information about who's who in a Vietnamese village than American intelligence officers, have been more selective and more accurate in distinguishing "cadre" from bystanders. True, the North Vietnamese have engaged in some shelling of civilian areas which are almost as indiscriminate as air attacks. But can the North Vietnamese and N.L.F. contribution to the ongoing bloodbath of noncombatants compare with the executions from the air carried out by American pilots?

Distinguishing Vietcong terror from United States violence in Vietnam is important primarily because it helps us to understand not only what we might expect will happen to the civilian population of South Vietnam after the war, but also to understand whether the present United States military operations are putting that population in a better or worse position when the Americans finally leave. Based on past history, two kinds of deliberate killings are likely to occur. South Vietnamese police officials who worked actively in the Phoenix program, or who were otherwise identified with repressive activities of the Saigon Government, are, I believe, in danger. Some may be marked for execution; more for "re-education." The North Vietnamese have made it clear that they encourage anyone who would feel unsafe in postwar Vietnam to

leave the country. But the numbers are nothing like the hundreds of thousands or millions in the scare stories being circulated by the White House. Point 2 of the Provisional Revolutionary Government's seven-point program provides for "guarantees so as to prohibit all acts of terror, reprisal, discrimination against persons having collaborated with one or the other party." Taken literally, it would exclude all reprisals. But it seems too much to expect that such language would protect the most notorious Saigon police officials, although the pressure to deal summarily with them would be much less after the war than in the midst of a military campaign as in Hue or Binh Dinh.

When I discussed the matter of reprisals with Premier Pham Van Dong of North Vietnam three years ago, when Nixon first raised the bloodbath argument, he stated flatly, "There will be no reprisals," and then went on to ask, "Why should Vietnamese go on killing Vietnamese once we have our independence?" The Communists know that they cannot impose a Communist Government on the South without a continuation of the civil war even after all the Americans leave. The primary task of the Vietnamese after the war is survival, and survival demands cooling the passions of war, not continuing the bloodshed. There is nothing in recent Vietnamese history to suggest that a government bent on killing hundreds of thousands of people in South Vietnam can keep peace. That is why the other side knows that it must go slow in building a postwar Vietnamese society, and has proposed a coalition government which is two-thirds non-Communist.

A more serious problem is likely to be the outbreak of individual acts of revenge—against, not in furtherance of, official policy. After a generation of civil war, passions

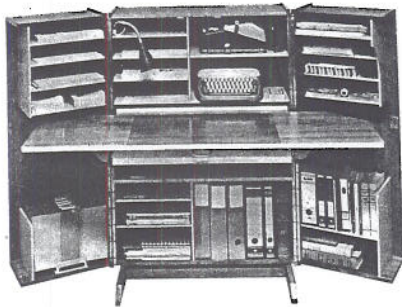


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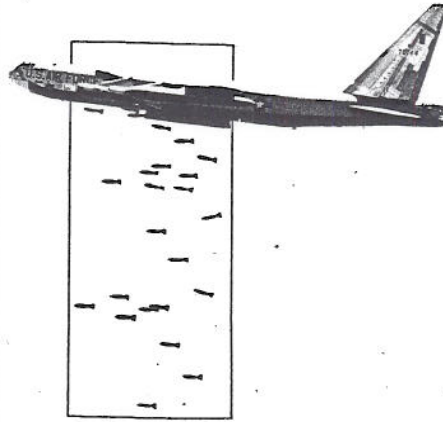
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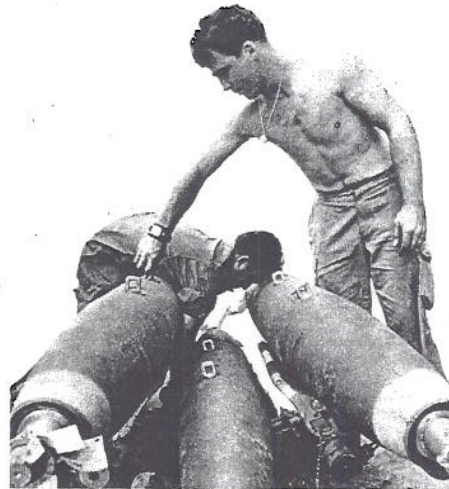
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run high on all sides. Some old scores will be settled. The United States has no power to prevent spontaneous killings in Vietnam after the war. It can, however, increase their likelihood by further tearing at the social fabric of Vietnam. The only effective restraint on popular revenge is the Vietnamese social structure itself. Almost every family has members who have fought on both sides. It is in traditional Vietnamese family feelings which transcend politics, and whatever survives of the strong Vietnamese sense of national community, that the best hope for minimizing postwar

bloodshed lies. By continuing to split Vietnamese society and to set Vietnamese against Vietnamese, the United States is fanning the very hatreds from which spontaneous violence erupts. As Senator Kennedy told the Senate recently the bloodbath argument is a "cynical hoax — an excuse that has allowed this Administration to prolong the agony of Vietnam and to maintain and escalate a policy of war." The bloodbath argument is, indeed, put forward as a justification for continuing the American war in Indochina. It is, on the contrary, the most compelling argument for stopping it now. ■

Deadly cargo



Marines prepare the payload for a raid against North Vietnam. "The United States," says the author, "is fanning the very hatreds from which spontaneous violence erupts."