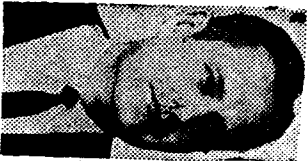


**JACK ANDERSON**

# Scapagoat Found In Viet Massacre?

WASHINGTON—This column's investigation of the nasty Song My massacre raises the possibility, at least, that the accused mass murderer, Lt. William Calley Jr., may be more of a scapagoat than an ogre.

From sources close to the investigation, this column has obtained facts about the night-marish incident that would seem to mitigate the charges against him.



Unimpeachable sources swear, for example, that orders to wipe out the village did not come from Calley but from higher up.

Jack Anderson, a d v o c a t e s, who are exploiting the incident, may also have trumped upon Calley's rights. Presumably, they hope that the revision over the massacre will increase the pressure upon President Nixon to soften his conditions for ending the war. But they have also stirred up personal revision against Calley that may be tragically unfair.

The tight-lipped Calley is a perfect patsy for the Army to offer as a sacrifice to public opinion. Army associates describe him as a spit-and-polish officer who goes by the book. He is the sort who carries out orders and asks questions afterward.

He also is a loner without friends in high places who might help him. His mother died of cancer in 1966; his

father is a diabetic. All his life the lieutenant has been too much on the move to establish roots.

THE LETTERS he wrote to his family from Vietnam express a deep sympathy for the pathetic Vietnamese children who roamed the streets, hungry and homeless. He provided one child with food, clothing and shelter. From his letters, he didn't seem to be a man who could shoot down women and children in cold blood.

What really happened at Song My? Here are the facts this column has been able to dig out:

The hamlet was a Viet Cong stronghold, nicknamed Pinkville, which U.S. troops had cleaned out on two previous occasions. Someone at higher headquarters decided that the third time should be the last and issued orders to destroy the village.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to fix the real responsibility for the massacre. Lt. Col. Frank Barker Jr., the task force commander, later killed in an air accident, was told to eliminate the stronghold. He passed on the orders to Capt. Ernest Medina, who briefed the troops.

THE CAPTAIN instructed

them to burn the buildings and slaughter the livestock.

He also warned that the village was teeming with Viet Cong and advised his men to go in shooting. Medina has sworn to Army investigators that he merely relayed the colonel's orders and that he did not call for the indiscriminate shooting of women and children.

Every Vietnam combat veteran knows, however, that the Viet Cong use both women and young boys who can be every bit as deadly with their weapons as the men.

In order to save American lives, the U.S. always devastates enemy positions with firepower before sending in manpower. Accordingly, Pinkville was declared a free fire zone and was battered by artillery. Then helicopter gunships raked it with a deadly hailstorm of machinegun fire. Finally the troops poured in with guns blazing.

It should be pointed out that South Vietnamese irregulars also participated in the exercise and did some of the shooting. They were responsible, too, for the misinformation about the big Viet Cong concentration of Song My.

FOR THE Army to blame Lt. Calley for what happened, though he may not be entirely blameless, is too pat. It looks suspiciously as if the Army

selected him as a convenient scapegoat.

Actually, the secret interrogations by Army investigators implicate at least 25 men in indiscriminate shooting. For every witness against Calley, there are two witnesses who have made secret statements in his defense. The Army has shut up at least a dozen witnesses who, reportedly, are willing to testify for Calley.

The horror pictures which Pentagon officials showed to senators really prove nothing

against Calley. The blood-drenched women and children could have been killed by artillery shrapnel, machine-gun fire from the sky or infantry fire in the heat of battle. The testimony of combat photographer Ronald Haeblerie could be challenged, since he tried to sell the pictures for a big sum. His statement that the women and children had been shot down in cold blood increased the market value of the pictures.

As for the Army's charge that Calley murdered a South Vietnamese civilian in an earlier incident, those who have talked to the lieutenant say that he seemed genuinely puzzled by the charge and denied knowing anything about it.

Whether Calley is guilty or not, he deserves a fair

trial, and the Army shouldn't be permitted to wipe its own hands clean on a lowly lieutenant.

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