

Guilt in Vietnam

To the Editor:

Thirty-five Williams College faculty members demand (letter, Dec. 18) a full investigation of the "alleged" Songmy massacre because failure to do so "may make all of us political accessories to mass murder as the German people became..."

The fact is that we have been murdering Vietnamese in mass ever since our planes began dumping bombs and napalm on towns and hamlets and forests. Harrison Salisbury of The Times reported this years ago. Everyone who hasn't shut his eyes to the shameful truth knows what we have done.

It is too late to escape our guilt as political accessories to mass murder, and the excuse that we don't countenance face-to-face shooting of the innocent is sophistry. Nor can we pretend that the Songmy massacre was the deed of a few misguided officers. As Orville and Jonathan Schell have noted (letter, Nov. 26), exterminating the populations of entire villages has been U.S. military policy.

The only way to make partial atonement for our guilt in Vietnam is to get out immediately—a course that gets hardly a whisper of support from the press, let alone from a Government that intends to keep the massacre going for years.

If a public inquiry into Songmy diverts attention from the overwhelming need for peace, if it allows the citizenry to think some rascals have been punished and we're a mighty decent nation after all, the investigation will do more harm than good.

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Quakertown, Pa., Dec. 19, 1969