

Saigon G.I.'s Indignant Over Calley Ruling

By GLORIA EMERSON
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 30—The immediate reaction of many G.I.'s here to the conviction yesterday of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. was indignation.

Dozens of servicemen, including those who have seen combat, said they believed that the officer was being used as a "scapegoat." A few men, who identified themselves with the officer, said he "was just another victim of a war nobody wanted to fight."

A stronger, more bitter reaction came from a handful of South Vietnamese politicians and intellectuals who privately attacked President Nguyen Van Thieu for remaining silent during the disclosures of the Mylai slayings and during the trials.

South Vietnam's large anti-war Buddhist faction—which is believed to represent a majority of rural South Vietnamese—said today that a cable would

be sent to the military court asking that Lieutenant Calley be spared from death.

The Vietnamese public, which has never been fully informed about the massacre or showed much curiosity about the killings, did not give any indication today that the conviction mattered much. Only brief articles, taken from the foreign news agencies, ran in eight of Saigon's evening newspapers.

There was no editorial comment tonight in any of the leading papers.

Conviction No Surprise

The responses of enlisted men and officers who were questioned today at Long Binh—the largest American military base in South Vietnam—had a quiet, almost melancholy tone. No one seemed surprised that Lieutenant Calley had been convicted.

Specialist 4 Robson Mabry 3d of Tampa, Fla., who has spent 10 months in the field, said:

"Whether the man committed these murders or not, it is wrong for a man to be tried for murder when we are in this conflict. It disappoints me that our government would even let a trial like this take place."

"He was sent here to do something he didn't want to do—Jesus, like me, I didn't want to come over here either—well, over here you don't really know who you are fighting. Women and children can shoot or frag you as easily as a man can."

Lieutenant Steve Fall, who was the class of 1969 at West Point and has been in the field for nearly eight months in Vietnam, showed sympathy for Lieutenant Calley, too.

"They did take people and

herded them together for murdering and there is no place for that even in a war," Lieutenant Fall said.

But, he added about Lieutenant Calley: "His platoon was being hit daily. It impaired his judgment. They are making a mistake."

A 24-year-old enlisted man from Peoria, Ill., wrote down, with several misspelled words—how he felt because he could not put it in quite the right words. He was afraid to give his name. He wrote:

The trail should of never been held. Because the men is here in Vietnam under false pretence. "He didn't want to come here and fight this war in the first place and never has any other G.I. He does his job whether it be write or wrong and he gets hung for it. That's the New Action Army."

'Wrong' to Punish One

Lieut. Richard Harris, 24, of San Francisco, said:

"Well obviously Calley's been made a scapegoat—there are other people in it, too. I think its wrong what he did, but they're not punishing anyone else. If you just punish one person and throw all the guilt on him, that's not right."

An officer who did not wish to be identified said:

"They're getting Calley because the newspapers got hold of it and outraged so many people. The Army has to do something."

The Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, secretary general of the United Buddhist Church, known as the An Quang Pagoda, said that if Lieutenant Calley was

sentenced to death, a cable would be sent to the military court "to plead for his leniency." He asked, "What is the use of another dead?"

The Saigon Government has never acknowledged that a massacre in March, 1968, took place at the site called Mylai. It has not been discussed on radio or television.

Deputy Ho Van Minh, a vice speaker in the National Assembly, said, "I expect a wave of criticism from political and intellectual circles on Thieu's lack of eagerness to denounce this crime, now and in the past."

Tran Ngoc-Lieng, a well-known lawyer who heads a minor antiwar group here, said that the conviction was not important. He explained:

"The point is that Vietnamese lives are nothing in the eyes of foreign troops here. This is a dark shame on the Thieu Government. It is too dependent on the Americans to even have had the courage to denounce this crime against the Vietnamese people. The Americans bared the Mylai case while the Thieu Government tried to hide it for them. Shame beyond words."