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Study Calls It a 'Myth'

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A Viet 'Bloodbath' Denied

Washington

The charge by President Nixon and others that the North Vietnamese murdered up to 500,000 of their own people when they took over the country in the 1950s is a "myth," according to a study made public yesterday by Cornell University.

The charges are dissected in a 59-page essay by D. Gareth Porter, a 30-year-old research associate at Cornell's International Relations of East Asia project. Cornell's project office, in sending out the report, said it deserves "immediate, widespread public attention" because of Mr. Nixon's frequent references to the alleged bloodbath in North Vietnam.

"This bloodbath myth is the result of a deliberate propaganda campaign by the South Vietnamese and U.S. governments to discredit North Vietnam," Porter charges in summarizing the paper he researched in South Vietnam and at Cornell. Porter has been a critic of the Vietnam war.

GUILTY

The prime source for Mr. Nixon, author Bernard Fall, and others in describing the alleged massacre during the North Vietnamese land reform from 1953 to 1956 is a book guilty of "gross misquotation" and "fraudulent documentation," Porter alleges.

The book Porter cited is entitled, "From Colonialism to Communism," by Hoang Van Chi. Chi's book — pub-

lished in 1964 — was financed and promoted by such U.S. agencies as the Central Intelligence Agency, according to Porter.

Chi himself, now a course chairman in Southeast Asia orientation at the State Department's Washington training center, could not be reached for comment.

The National Security Council cited Chi's book as one of President Nixon's sources for declaring on April 16, 1971, that "I think of half a million, by conservative estimates, in North Vietnam who were murdered or otherwise exterminated by the North Vietnamese after they took over from the South . . ."

BLOT

The President added at that same news conference that "if the United States were to fail in Vietnam, if the Communists were to take over, the bloodbath that would follow would be a blot on this nation's history . . ."

Asked by Porter to document the President's "half a million" figure, the National Security Council quoted Chi as writing the following: "The guilt complex which haunted the peasants' minds after the massacre of about 5 per cent of the total population . . ." The National Security Council added on its own that "5 per cent of the total population of North Vietnam at that time would be about 700,000."

"Mr. Chi offers no justification for this allegation" that 5 per cent of the North Vietnamese population were murdered, asserts

Porter, "but he suggests at one point that most of the deaths were those of children who starved owing to the isolation policy."

CHARGE

Charges Porter: "This is yet another of the many wholly unsubstantiated charges put forth by Mr. Chi, for there was no such policy of isolating families . . ."

"Yet it is mainly on the basis of Mr. Chi's totally unreliable account, the intention of which was plainly not historical accuracy but propaganda against North Vietnam, charges Porter, "that the President of the United States himself has told the American people that 'a half a million' people were exterminated.

Western authors like Fall, says Porter, suffered a "critical" shortcoming because they could not read Vietnamese and thus could not research the original documents the North Vietnamese used to communicate with their own cadre. Fall and others, therefore, had to rely on Saigon and U.S. government summaries of the North Vietnamese material or on authors like Chi. (Porter reads Vietnamese.)

Porter charges Chi also mistranslated General Vo Nguyen Giap's speech of Oct. 29, 1956, on land reform. Giap, according to Chi's translation, said the party "executed too many honest people" and came to regard torture as normal practice.

Comparing the Vietnamese original text of Giap's

speech with the Chi and Porter translations (which Porter said other scholars and Vietnamese corroborated), Porter alleges that "Mr. Chi's translation is one of his most flagrant abuses of documentary evidence."

Donald Brewster is the National Security Council staffer (on loan from AID) who discussed the source of Mr. Nixon's bloodbath figures with Porter. Brewster told the Washington Post that real and literal meanings of Communist statements are sometimes two different things.

Brewster added that the sources he cited for Porter "are not the totality" of the material the White House relied upon. Also, said Brewster, it is the trend that is most important — not specific figures. In that sense, he said, the trend of Communist actions, such as North Vietnamese assassinations in Hue, show fears of a bloodbath in South Vietnam are indeed well founded, just as President Nixon has stated.

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