

A LOOK BACK UPON

SƠN MỸ



QUANG NGAI GENERAL MUSEUM

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A look back upon Sơn Mỹ



Introduction

On March 16th, 1968, a unit of the United States Army entered Son Mỹ village and massacred, in one breath, 504 Vietnamese innocent civilians including mostly the old, women and children. Eighteen months later, the massacre was revealed in the USA and it entirely shocked the whole world and human conscience. People all over the world expressed their wrath and condemned the barbarous act that could be compared with Orulour, Guernica, Shapeville, Katin, Lidice, Hiroshima, etc in the Second World War. In fact, Son Mỹ event has come into history as an acute pain suffered by the Vietnamese people as well as mankind.

However, Vietnamese people, traditionally magnanimous and merciful, consider Son Mỹ a thing of the past although it has still been painful. At present, the normalisation between Vietnam and America is established, but the world after the cold war, to a certain extent, has not been stable yet. Now, looking back upon Son Mỹ, a piercing event of the past, is not to wake up the hatred but to understand an unforgettable historical occurrence, and more importantly, to keep vigilance, to pray and struggle for peace so that the world will never witness such things as Son Mỹ.

For that purpose, we would like to introduce this book to our readers and wish them peace and happiness.

TÀ HIÊN MINH

Avantgrade Artist

Director of Quảng Ngãi

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FROM SƠN MỸ TO THE "PINKVILLE"

The place where the massacre took place is one among peaceful agricultural villages in Central Vietnam. From the North edge of Quảng Ngãi provincial town, on the National Highway One, there is a road leading along the left bank of the Trà Khúc river to Sa Kỳ estuary to the East. Sơn Mỹ, about 13 km from Quảng Ngãi provincial town to the East-Northeast, is bounded by Ba Làng An peninsula (Batangang) on the North, by Đại estuary (Cổ Lũy), where the Trà Khúc river joins the sea, on the South. Đại estuary used to be the most important harbour in Quảng Ngãi province in the past.

For many foreigners, especially the Westerners, the consecution of bamboo-fully shaded villages and large, plane rice paddies here make it almost impossible for them to distinguish the boundary among villages, even it is some times regarded as a semi-civilized region. When the American came, they disregarded it and gave it a name without asking permission. In fact, this region had been civilised by the Vietnamese at least two centuries earlier before the United States of America was established. All the land boundaries here as well as throughout the country



Trú Khúc river

of 4000-year civilisation have been distinct and stable. During the colonial-federal period, Sơn Mỹ belonged to Tổng Châu (equivalent to present several villages of Sơn Tịnh district), one of the four communes of Sơn Tịnh district, Quảng Ngãi province.

After destroying the colonial-feudal regime and gaining independence by the August Revolution, 1945, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam began to fix all the administrative units again. An administrative system of village was put into use instead of "tổng" (equivalent to several combined villages) because it was too large to control, while the administrative system of district basically remained unchanged. As a result, Tịnh Khê village was established, it is one of 19 villages belonging to Sơn Tịnh district. After the Geneva Agreement in 1954, Vietnam was divided into two parts,

the North and the South, with different political systems. The democracy continued existing in the North, while the South was contemporarily placed under the control of the French, and Tịnh Khê is in South Vietnam. After taking over the South, and with the assistance and encouragement from the United States of America the Saigon government tried its best to destroy all of the revolutionary fruit in which there was a change of place names. The administrative unit of district was basically maintained as before, but its name "huyện" (district) was replaced with another name "quận". The administrative unit of "thôn" (hamlet) was renamed "ấp". Only the place names of village were changed. Under the previous Saigon regime, Tịnh Khê village was renamed Sơn Mỹ, while its administrative boundary was maintained as it had been under the previous government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (before 1954).

Tịnh Khê village is bounded by Tịnh Thiện and Tịnh Long village on the West, by Tịnh Hòa and Tịnh Kỳ village on the North, by the Trà Khúc river and Đại estuary (Cổ Lũy) on the South and by South China sea on the East. Tịnh Khê village whose area is about 20 sq.km, consists of 4 hamlets: Tư Cung, Trường Định, Mỹ Lại, Cổ Lũy. Tư Cung hamlet with its green rice paddies is located deeply inland in the West of the village; Trường Định hamlet is in the South, Mỹ Lại hamlet with lots of earthmounds, and graves is in the North, and Cổ Lũy hamlet in the East is separated from the inland by the Kinh river creating a terrain "Sea in front and river behind" with many sand-bank, coconut trees, filao forests and beaches. Each hamlet consists of several sub-hamlets. The massacre on



The Elephant Hill, opposite the irrigation ditch (looking from Sơn Mỹ Vestige Area)



Kinh river, in the west of Mỹ Hội sub hamlet, one of the places the massacre happened.

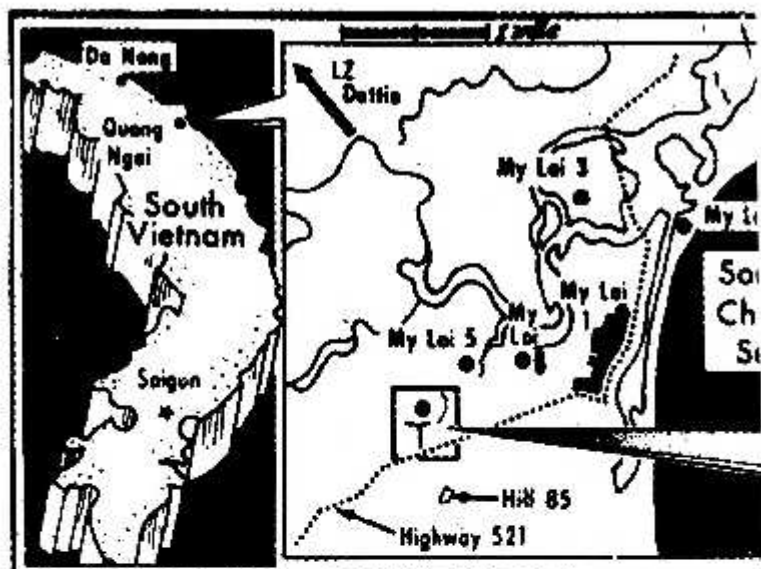
March 16th, 1968 took place mostly at Thuận Yên sub-hamlet (i.e Xóm Làng), Tư Cung hamlet (My Lai 4) and at Mỹ Hội sub-hamlet, Cổ Lũy hamlet (My Lai 2).

From Quảng Ngãi provincial town, taking provincial road 624 (Highway 521) to Sơn Mỹ we can see several hills scattering around on a flat plain. On our right stands a chain of hills creating a natural boundary between Tỉnh Khê and Tỉnh Long village. While approaching to Sơn Mỹ, we can also see the Elephant Hill (Hill 85) right on the road side. Opposite the hill, on the left side of the road is an irrigation ditch that was flooded by blood in the massacre. Reaching the top of the Elephant Hill one can catch the panorama of a large beautiful area beneath with green rice paddies like chess board, village roads winding

through tree-shaded hamlets, orchards, earthbounds, burial grounds, etc. To the East of Sơn Mỹ, there is the immense sea with its waves continuously beating upon Cổ Lũy golden sand beach and the filao forests nearby standing as a wall to shield the village from waves and winds. On nice days, we can also see Lý Sơn island in the distance, about 24 km from the inland. The Elephant Hill used to be seen as an important strategic position by the Sài Gòn, South Korean and American troops to control the area.

Generally speaking, Sơn Mỹ is considered one of the most beautiful villages in Quảng Ngãi. Its beauty is made up mostly by the sea and river. And the nicest hamlet in Sơn Mỹ is Cổ Lũy. Cổ Lũy golden sand beach (also known as Mỹ Khê beach), 7 km long, has its shape of a crescent and a green filao forest nearby. The Kinh river flowing in the back of the hamlet (from the South to the North of Sơn Mỹ) is about 200 m wide. The water level in the river is influenced by the tide. On the two river banks grow cypresses, mangrove trees and nipas. Cổ Lũy hamlet shaded by coconut trees together with South Cổ Lũy hamlet used to be considered one of ten most beautiful spots in Quảng Ngãi with its beautiful name "Cổ Lũy cô thôn" (Cổ Lũy lonely hamlet). Also Mỹ Lai hamlet on the Kinh river side was so beautiful that Trương Đăng Quế, a high-rank mandarin of the Nguyễn dynasty in the early 19th century said that his home village (Mỹ Lai hamlet) was second most beautiful place in Vietnam just after Hue royal capital.

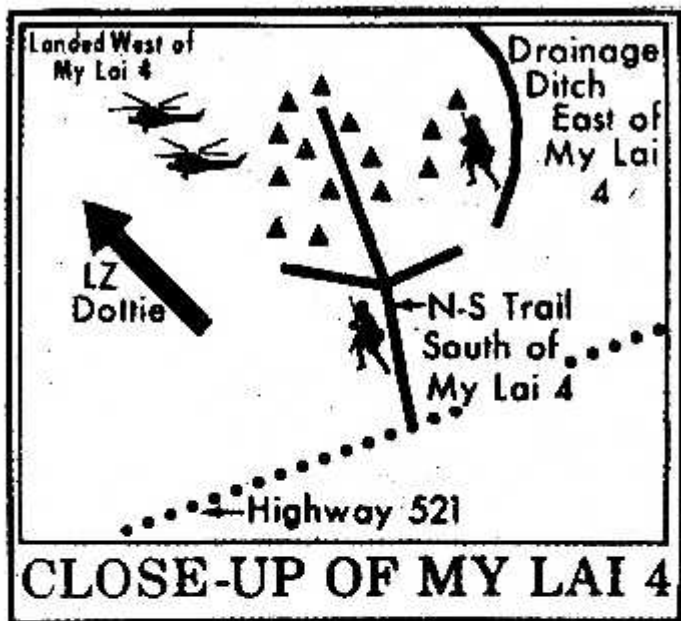
Sơn Mỹ belonging to Quang Ngai province, well-known for its traditional patriotism has given birth to many



famous heroes such as Tây Sơn commander-in-chief Trương Đăng Đố in the late 18 th century, Trương Công Định, leader of an anti-French movement from the earliest time as French army started to invade Vietnam (1859), Trương Đăng Quế, high-rank mandarin within 40 years in the early 19th century under three Nguyễn dynasties: Minh Mạng, Thiệu Trị, and Tự Đức.

Under the severe rule of colonial-feudal regime, lust for a changing life of Sơn Mỹ people violently emerged, together with the whole country, they carried out the August Revolution in 1945 and established the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam.

In nine-year resistance against the re-aggression of French colonialists (1945-1954), Sơn Mỹ proudly stood right in the most dangerous position to keep Quảng Ngãi province free.



In the resistance against American imperialists for national salvation, Sơn Mỹ was one of the villages to be early liberated (1964). But right after that (1965), American Army ravelly landed in the South, and in many military activities, the assault on Sơn Mỹ happened.

Tỉnh Khê, a peaceful and early-civilised area was turned into Sơn Mỹ, a battle field by the US fire power. For the American troops, Sơn Mỹ was a "free-fire zone", an "area of the despicable Indian tribe", a "Pinkville". It was marked by the red circle on the US military map.

In fact, on a military map (ratio 1/100.000) published in 1967, a large area was circled in red ink with the writing:

"Area under the special duty of Brigade 2, South Korean Marine from January 1967 to December 31, 1967 was handed over to Task Force Barker, Bridge 11, Americal Division from the above mentioned time".

Inside the circle there is another smaller one that surrounded Sơn Mỹ village, and in the centre is a small dot with a note:

"Tư Cung hamlet, Sơn Mỹ village".

The massacre took place mostly in this small dot, i.e Thuận Yên sub-hamlet, Tư Cung hamlet or My Lai 4; or Pink-ville as referred to. And it was Brigade 11, Americal Division, Task Force Barker that directly carried out the massacre. The Task Force Barker consisted of 3 companies: Company Alpha (A) belonging to Battalion 3, regiment 1; Company Bravo (B) belonging to Battalion 4, Regiment 3; Company Charlie (C) belonging to Battalion 1, Regiment 20, and an artillery unit. And it was Charlie Company that was in charge of the bloody massacre in Sơn Mỹ on March 16th, 1968, and Platoon 1 directly conducted it. The commander of Charlie Company was Captain Medina, who was born in New Mexico in 1936. He was nicknamed "Mad Dog Medina" because he was very hungry for killing "Việt cộng" (Vietnamese revolutionary force). The commander of Platoon 1 was Lieutenant William Calley, who was nicknamed "Rusty Calley". Like many other American military units, the Charlie Company often killed Vietnamese innocent civilians, destroyed their houses and crops. Based on many testimonies, the massacre at Sơn Mỹ was declared by Captain Medina at the meeting on the previous night, i.e on March 15, 1968.

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HORRIBLE MORNING

Early in the morning of March 16, 1968 as usual, Sơn Mỹ villagers got up early and prepared the meals which they used to do to be ready for a working day. A great deal of families gathered around the rice-trays. Some got off to markets or fields with the hoes on their shoulders. It was a spring morning, the birds sang, some of the cocks made late crows, people got together to work. The green trees in the village were lightly decorated with a little morning dew, which made the landscapes here a picturesque and dreamy air and a beauty of simplicity and peace.

That short moment of peace suddenly became broken. Then at 5.30, a series of artillery of various kinds echoed from Răm Mount, Bình Liên (Bình Sơn District), Sơn Tịnh sub-district, Quảng Ngãi sub-sector into the four hamlets of Sơn Mỹ village. The ground surface made a violent vibration together with a deafening explosion, tree cracking, cocks and ducks, people's hoarsing cries. No sooner had a series of artillery lasted for 30 minutes then two helicopters flew over the land with several circles, continually coughed rocket bullets and shots of heavy

American troops landed on the west of Thuận Yên



Photo by Hasberle

machine gun into the civilians's resident area of the two hamlets Tư Cung and Cổ Lũy. Next, a group of nine helicopters flew from Chu Lai (an US Army base located in the North of Quảng Ngãi), landed troops on the western rice fields of Tư Cung hamlet, another group of eleven on the deserted ground area next to Gò sub-hamlet, Cổ Lũy hamlet.

The honest villagers were hiding themselves in the atillery shelters, or having their breakfasts in the huts, or staying at the fields, all of them imagined it an usual mopping-up as ever before, none had predicted that the fate of themselves and their compatriots were obtained.

In Cổ Lũy hamlet, having just got off the plane, a platoon of Bravo Company rushed into Mỹ Hội sub-hamlet,

The G.I.s divided into several groups, searched up every house and every shelter. Mr. Lê's was the first searched up, whose shelter hid 15 people. When the G.I.s came over it, eight of them got out, were then fired, corpses piled one up another. The G.I.s went on jerking the shelter with mines to kill up the rest, made the corpses faded into ashes. Another group rushed into the next door Mrs. Trinh's. An eight-year-old child of hers running out of the shelter was shot to death while his mouth was still filled with boiled rice. Having killed the kid, the G.I.s kept jerking the shelters with mines, killing seven including Mrs. Trinh and her three kids, Mrs. Hòa and her two ones, none of the corpses remained intact. A maternity woman, Mrs. Võ Thị Mai who gave birth to a baby just a few days ago, too weak to go down the shelter, was stripped and raped to death by the G.I.s. A newly-born baby bursted out a dismal cry and her two children were called out from the shelter to be fired. Mrs. Ngôn, a pregnant woman who was about to give birth to a baby was raped as well, the G.I.s penetrated her belly with a bayonet, broke her featus out with two legs. Her left three children were too terrified to see it and made a screaming cry, then fired by the G.I.s. Mrs. Võ Thị Phụ was shot to death while giving a suck to her baby, the baby both cried loudly and scrawled over to shake her mother's breast. The G.I.s said "VC, VC", then piled thatches on both, burned them and their hut as well.

Both of the her and baby were totally burned, arms and legs shrunk, the baby's skeleton was still laid on the mother's corpse.

Similarly, the two sisters Ngô Thị Mùi, Ngô Thị Một were pulled out of the shelter by four G.I.s, raped by one after another, was then pushed into the shelter, jerked the mines to kill them up with Mrs. Mùi's four kids. The Võ Mãi's had four killed people. Mr. Võ Toan's shelter had 6, four of them were killed with ammunition by the G.I.s. Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Thi's shelter was collapsed, two old women and six little kids were killed, only a survived ten-year-old child was in a badly wounded state. The other sixteen families in the sub-hamlet has 7 old men, 12 women, 17



Photo by Haebel's

children aged under 15 who shot to death by rifles, sub-machine guns, mines and ammunition. Many were killed in without full corpses. Houses in sub-hamlet were totally burned, trees cracked down, furniture's broken, buffs, oxen, cocks, ducks were killed. Only for a very short moment, the whole village turned out to be a death area: 97 people mostly the old men, women and children, were massacred.

In Tư Cung hamlet, no sooner has Charlie Company, led by Captain Ernest Medina, landed troops then they surrounded Thuận Yên sub-hamlet. The platoons II and III together stopped all



Herbert Carter wounded himself

the paths, rushed through the rice fields, went along firing at the people they met on the way. And the Platoon I led by Lieutenant William Calley rushed straight into the village to conduct a firing to the civilians without any weapons in their hands. The only loss that the GIs then suffered a black guy Herbert Carter, who couldn't stand

TRƯỜNG LÍNH NGUYỄN
 DIA CHU
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such barbarous action, fired at himself for fear that he could participate in the massacre. Later Carter told that the killing at Tu Cung hamlet started as soon as the GIs got off the helicopters, landed troops on the field ground at the village edge "I saw an old man in the midst of the rice-field waving with a friendly look, then was shot by the GIs"...To the village, I saw none of VCs but many of the peasants hurrying out of the burned huts were fired by the GIs. Some of the guys seemed to be having a lot of fun. They were wisecracking and yelling "Chalk that one up for me". The Army wing of Platoon II, led by Lieutenant Stephen Brooks, was no more than different. Simpson, one of this platoon's guys, told "A woman and a child popped up from us towards some huts. Lieutenant Brooks gave the orders to shoot. I shot them, the lady and the little boy - he was about 2 years old". Simson confessed that he killed 10 people then. Peasants and buffalo boys were first killed at the rice field before the helicopters landed troops, mainly the civilians of Binh Đông and Binh Tây sub-hamlets. However, the place where the most terrible massacre occurred was in Thuận Yên sub-hamlet (My Lai 4).

Following Charlie Company's operation into the Pink - ville was Ronald Haeberle, a sergeant and also an US Army photographer, only in eleven days of military service

would return home from demobilisation. It mustn't be doubtful that he was one of the important witnesses, who contributed to bring the massacre into light, which shocked violently the public in America and the world over. At that time, Haeberle took 3 cameras with him, 2 black-and-white film installers and a coloured one.

After the massacre, Haeberle handed in 40 black-and white photos to the Army, and kept the left 18 for himself. Eighteen months later, when the massacre was brought out for investigation in America, Haeberle showed the coloured photos, which made the US government terribly shock. Those 18 photos were enclosed with the author's extremely coherent and detailed statements. Haeberle





described them in the *Life* (an American magazine) : he joined the Charlie Company at 6 a.m in the morning of March 16, 1968 before sunrise. None explained anything of this operation to him. Having just got off the plane, he heard a gun - shot exploding crackingly. Glancing aside, he saw the bodies fall to death, but he didn't turn his face back. Some of the Vietnamese civilians, who must be about 15, mostly women and children, were walking along about 100 yards away. Suddenly, the G.I.s fired at them with M.16 and M.79 guns. Facing such scene, he dared not believe in his eyes. Haerberle said when coming to another place: "Off to the right, a woman's form, a head appeared from some bush. All the other G.I.s started firing at her, aiming at her, firing at her over and over again. They just

kept shooting at her. You could see the bones flying in the air, chip by chip”.

The Platoon I, led by Calley, was the first troop rushing into Thuân Yên sub-hamlet and conducted the methoded and planned massacre, in which the G.Is was divided into several groups, stretched out in various directions, one did the firing, searched to arrest the civilians, one burnt huts, exploded mines to collapse the shelters, the others fired at buffaloes and oxen, cut down the trees. As well as in Mỹ Hội sub-hamlet of Cổ Lũy hamlet, the G.Is'extinction reached to the pinnacle. Haeberle's photos obviously recorded those scences.



Burning all Photo by Haeberle

Just when the G.I.s rushed into the hut, Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Đốc's family was gathering around the morning tray of rice and a few sweet potatoes. The G.I.s suddenly rushed, fired disorderly at the tray. Nine people was killed, including her husband, the eldest couple of her son, her daughter and grandchildren. A grandchild whose head

rolled around, still had a sweet potato kept tightly in his mouth. The grandmother, laid motionlessly wounded there, with her three grandchildren, hadn't sat down for meal, narrowly escaped the death.

Next-door to Mrs old Đốc's was Mr. Đăng's, the six of his family were also sitting down by the tray. The G.I.s rushed into and fired at all of them and burned the hut totally. Seven people of the Ly's were chased down the shelter, then killed by mine explosion. Five of the Liên's, six of the May's, four of the Nguyễn's - none of them survived.



Photo by Haeberle

Mr. Trương Thọ, aged 72 then, whose beard was snatched to pull to the yard by the G.I.s, heavily beaten. The G.I.s cut both his beard bunch and chin, pushed him down the well with a throw of ammunition. Mr. old Múc Lai, whose beard was also snatched by the G.I.s for fun, then to be fired at. One of Haerberle's photos showed an old man squatting down, with an indignant straight look, he said "This man was old and trembling so that he hardly walked. He looked as if he wanted to scream out. When I left him, I heard two shots go off".

For children, the G.I.s also unflinched to do the massacre. Another journalist of the US Army, who accompanied the operation was Jay Roberts, said "A really



When these two boys were shot at. Photo by Haerberle

tiny kid - he only had a shirt on but nothing else. He came dragged over corpses and held the hand of one of the dead, probably his mum. One of the G.I.s behind me dropped into a kneeling position thirty metres from this kid and killed him with a single shot". One of the photos that deeply moved the public was the scene of two children lying on their fronts on the road by a rice field with Haerberle's saying: "As these two boys were shot at, the older one fell on the little one as if to protect him. Then the guys finished them off".

For women, before killing ruthlessly, they performed animalistic action on their bodies. Phạm Thị Mũi, aged 14, was raped by one after ones' GIs by her mother's corpse, who had just been fired at together with the little baby. Raping off, the GIs pushed her into the hut and burned it. Every time Mũi tried to crawl out, the guy once pushed her in until she was burned to death, flame did burn the mother and the baby to ashes. Little girl - Đỗ Thị Nguyệt, aged 12, was operated on her belly. An old woman - Mrs Trương Thị Dậu, aged 60, was raped before being killed by two GIs.

One of Haerberle's colour photos printed in the *Life*, (an American magazine), issued on Jan. 19, 1970 showed a scene of women and children group standing closely, with the statements enclosed: "Haerberle and Roberts gazed at

the guys approaching the group of women and children - among them there was a thirteen-year-old girl, wearing a black Vietnamese blouse. A GI grabbed the girl with the help of others, started stripping her. "Let's see what she's made of" a soldier said. "VC boom



Photo by Haerberle

boom" another said, telling the girl that she was a whore for the Vietcong.

- "I'm horny" said the third

As they were stripping the girl, with bodies and burning huts around them, the girl's mother tried to help her, scratching and clawing at the soldier (....). One soldier kicked the mother and another slapped her up a bit.

Haeberle jumped in to take a picture of the group of women. The picture shows a thirteen-year old girl, hiding behind her mother, trying to button the top of her pyjamas (....)

Then a soldier asked

- Well, what'll we do with 'em ?

- Kill "em", another answered.

I heard an M.60 go off - Roberts said - and when we turned, all of them and the kids were dead".

A Buddhist monk resided at a small pagoda in Thuận Yên sub-hamlet - Thích Tâm Trí (Đỗ Ngô) was terribly massacred. Sledge, a radio operator of Platoon I said, "One dressing in a monk's costume was led to Lieutenant Calley's residence. He signed as if he had wanted to say "No VC". Calley asked him some questions but he only shook his head and repeated over and over "No VC". Then Calley stroke the monk's mouth with a butt. He

fell on his back, waved his hands as if he wanted to vindicate himself. Lieutenant Calley put the gun top straight to the monk's face and pressed the trigger. Half of his head was broken off.

The G.I.s cruelty represented to the utmost just when they rounded up the masses and did the all-to-all massacre at tens or hundreds of people, such incident particularly happened at a deserted green by the guard-tower next to Mr. Nguyễn Nhiều's house, and a ditch at the end of Thuận Yên sub-hamlet (now called as the East edge of Sơn Mỹ Vestige House). The answers of Paul Meadlo, former Calley's guy, to the interview by the CBS - showed some happenings of the hair - raised scences.

Question: How many people were rounded up?

Meadlo: About 40, 50

Question: Who of them?

Meadlo: Men, women, children and babies. We made them squad down and Lieutenant Calley came over and said, "You know what to do with them, don't you?" And I say yes. So I took it for granted that he just wanted us to watch over them. And he left, and came back about 10 or 15 minutes later. and said: "Haven't you got rid of them yet?" "I want them dead". He stepped back about 10, 15

fect and he started shooting them, and told me to start shooting. I poured about four clips into the group”.

Question: How many people did you kill then?

Meadlo: I fired them on automatic. I might have killed ten or fifteen of them.

Question: Only men, women and children, aren't they?

Meadlo: Men, women, and children - and babies. And we gathered about 7 or 8 people. And we were going to throw them in a hut, and then we tossed in a hand grenade. We pushed our seven or eight people toward to canal. They had about 70, 75 people, all gathered up there. Lieutenant Calley... walked over to the people and started pushing them in the ditch and started shooting.

Question: Also men, women and children?

Meadlo: Men, women and children - I saw with my eyes about 350 people in such a massacre.

Question: What do you have that in mind now?

Meadlo: That deeply engraved in my conscience and haunted me all the life. But the day, God punished me. I triggered a mine, and thus one leg of mine was completely blown off.

Not only Meadlo, but even Calley's radio operator, Sledge said, he accompanied Lieutenant Calley to the village edge. There he met Sergeant Mitchell. He couldn't hear what Calley said to him. Then both stroke a butt on them down the ditch, then shot them. Suddenly someone hollered "There a kid". He saw a child, not sure it's a boy or a girl, was running towards the hamlet. A little child. The Lieutenant ran back, grabbed him, threw him down to the ditch and shot him. Another guy declared as obviously, he looked down the ditch, seeing the corpse pile in blood, just one men, women and children. Lieutenant Calley shot the alive standing or kneeling inside the ditch. Then he went on shooting the villagers who had just been summoned. The GI group continuously parted the villagers, pushed them down to the ditch then went away, so Calley stood firing at them for an hour and a half. The ditch, in a short moment, turned into the pitch full of the corpses with full blood. However, still lucky that some survivors came back telling their terrors, as accurately as the other statements. It was Mr. Trương Châu, aged 75 - Miss Đỗ Thị Tuyết, aged 16 - Mr. Đỗ Ba, aged 24, Trương Liêm, aged 20 - due to the corpses pile on, escaped the death from the GI's firing in watchtower, told the same massacre as in the ditch: The GI summoned the villagers, rounded them up next to the barbed wires, raped the



In order to leave nobody alive.

Photo by Haeberte



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women among them, stepped backward about 15 feet and fired at the crowd with a light machine gun, the corpses were stacked in piles one after another.

Beside Calley's platoon, the other ones of Charlie Company, after surrounding and firing at the escapees, rushed to the hamlet and picked up the left. A guy of platoon 3, named Michael Terry said: "Billy and I started to get out our chow, but close to us was a bunch of Vietnamese in a heap and some of them were moaning. Calley's platoon had been through before us, and all of them had been shot, but many weren't dead. It was obvious that they weren't going to get any medical attention, so Billy and I got up and went over to where they were. I guessed we shot and finished them off".

Later, before the court, Calley managed to beat about the bush of his crime, nevertheless the truth of that was strikingly obvious. How about Chief of Charlie Company? Medina said he has never ordered the massacre and had no idea of it. Of course, several evidences were against what he said.

March 16th, 1968, two Vietnamese interpreters Sergeant Dương Minh and Nguyễn Đình Phú accompanied the operation. Mr. Phú said on March 15th, 1968, the head-quarter of Task Force Barker entertained G.I.s with beer to drunkenness. He was said there would be an

operation of massacre the next day. Sergeant Phú was half-suspicious. Being drunk, he thought it wasn't true, but it was. Then Sergeant Phú accompanied closely Medina and Charlie Company headquarter. Ten years later, he told "As the gun - shot came down, C Company head - quarter moved to the village by the left side of the bend, then saw a dead baby next to the bushy fence with a smashed head. I thought he was killed along with M.79. Reaching the junction, a terrible image stroke my eyes: a disorderly - laid pile of corpses on the route, including the old men, women, children and even babies". The 26 year-old Sergeant Dương Minh then, said ten years later: "Having witnessed a terrible scence of death, immediately I came to meet Medina and spoke to him with a soft word to protest against his cruel action. The villagers were fired, and cattles and housed were burned. Medina replied "All are enemies". I asked at once "You know, a GI shouldn't kill the civilians without any arms and protestion. Medina repeated that they fought against his soldiers. I argued if so, either your soldiers captured their arms or your soldiers would be injured. But the truth was opposite, if then, those who was killed wasn't enemies. Finally, being too embarrassed, he confirmed he had been ordered to do so. Without being asked". Medina showed to be annoyed and Dương Minh was made to go away.

Some of the G.I.s confirmed Medina witnessed the scenes of massacre and he himself interfered in that bloody action. John Paul, Medina's radio operator, told 5 people were shot down in the rice field, and one alive woman of them was ended with Medina's fire. Private Richard Pendleton said: The killing was about to end. Some of the G.I.s fired at the survived villagers. A little boy, in the middle of a pile of 15 corpses, seemed to look for someone, who was killed by Medina's bullets. Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, a helicopter pilot, was then in charge of flying over Sơn Mỹ, said that he saw a wounded people, marked the scene and asked in the infantry for help. No doubt that a captain came over and ended his life with bullet. Later, Thompson recognised the captain to be Medina.

John Kinch, one of Medina's lowers declared that the day after the massacre, the G.I.s went out to the beach and arrested 4 suspects with a boy among them. All were ruthlessly tortured. Then Captain Medina ordered to fill the boy mouth with rags and tied him to a bamboo-tree. Then he was photographed, lifting a coconut to mouth by one hand, and pointing the knife to the boy throat by the other.

When Medina's Company withdrew, Sơn Mỹ sunk in fire and death. The hamlet was full of fire and smoke, blood filled the ditch and rice-fields, village paths.

Everywhere in hamlet laid disorderly the corpses, on floor burned to ashes, or near collapsed shelters. Only in Tu Cung hamlet, one morning, 407 were killed by the G.I.s, mostly women, old men, children. 24 families were killed all. Particular in the ditch-end of Thuận Yên, the G.I.s did a series of massacre to 170 people.

The Sơn Mỹ Vestige House, built by the ditch - end of Thuận Yên sub-hamlet, kept in record a following list of the victims of the massacre.

- The total massacred civilians: 504 people with 182 women (17 in pregnancy), 173 children (56 under the age of 5 months), 60 old men over the age of 60, 89 middle-aged people.

- Properties: 247 houses burned, thousands of buffaloes, oxen and poultries killed.

Yet, it wasn't the exact number of the massacre. Many others took numerous physical and mental wounds which were hardly recovered. The effect of the then massacre was still deeply engraved and agonious in the people who used to have a peaceful and quiet life here.

3

THE TRIBUNAL OF CONSCIENCE

Just after the GI's withdrawal from the massacre in Sơn Mỹ, the cadres of National Liberation Front got back, together with the survivors buried the dead, tended the wounded, rebuilt the village in total ruin. The ninth day after the massacre, National Liberation Front Committee of the mid-Central Vietnam made an urgent declaration, violently accusing G.I.s' crimes in Sơn Mỹ. On April 16, 1968, the standing delegation represented the Southern Vietnam National Liberation Front, based in Hanoi, hold a press conference to officially present that declaration. Early May, 1968, Liberation News Agency and Liberation Broadcasting Station handed out a letter written by Sơn Mỹ village Liberation Women Association which reported lots of details showing concretely and sincerely the massacre. On May 15, 1968 the delegation of Vietnam Democratic Republic attended the peace talk in Paris, issuing two publications in French the *Sud Vietnam en Lutte* and *Bulletin du Vietnam*, accused this bloody massacre. However, with the reason that the US Army force in Vietnam and Saigon puppet government intentionally concealed, it took 18 months

since the massacre for the American and world people to recognise it.

The pile of documents that puppet government in Quảng Ngãi didn't extinguish on time before their withdrawal (March 1975) contained a report, dated March 18, 1968 sending to Quảng Ngãi Civil issue Center, which referred fairly concretely the massacre in Sơn Mỹ 2 days ago. On March 28, 1968, 12 days after the massacre, Lieutenant Trần Ngọc Tấn, Sơn Tịnh district chief, sent the report No 181/HC/ST/M to Lieutenant Colonel, and Chief of Quảng Ngãi province, which wrote that "as the G.I.s landed in Sơn Mỹ, the enemy shot out too many ammunitions, and the fighting couldn't save the death, the Communist can distort the truth to reduce the Army alien's prestige". Saigon puppet government sent out the secret agents to threaten Sergeant Dương Minh as he intended to write the massacre report for newspapers.

Just after the massacre, the commanders of the US Army distorted the truth to drive it into a great victory. Americal Division office in Chu Lai, the northern of Quảng Ngãi, with the report of Task Force Barker, handed out the news to Saigon in the evening of March 16, 1968 to hundreds of journalists. The report said, the G.I.s launched an operation in My Lai village. The fighting lasted until late noon. The result was as follows: 128 enemies were

killed, 13 suspects were arrested, 3 guns were captured. Based on the news resources provided by permanent journalists in Saigon, this article was printed on the first page of the *New York Times* and the other ones. The weekly news itself, the *Southern Cross* of Americal Division also printed the long article enclosed Haerberle's black - and - white photos showing the G.I.s in a fighting posture for praising "My Lai victory". A report was sent to the Pentagon from Saigon in the evening of March 16, 1968.

A few days after the battle, General William C. Westmoreland, commander of US Forces in Vietnam, sent the following message "Operation Muscatine (the code name for the Mỹ Lai 4 assault) contact Northeast of Quảng Ngãi City on March 16 dealt enemy heavy blow. Congratulations to officers and men of C-1 20 (Charlie Company, 1st battalion, the 20th Regiment) for outstanding actions".

3 months later, Barker, the Task Force Commander was killed in a helicopter crash, so he didn't have to go for the court and public to reply this audacious deceit.

Together with the declaration of "victory", the US officers managed to black out the truth. Not all of Charlie Company agreed with the vicious action. Herbert Carter caused himself injured right at the scene, Michael Bernhardt and some other G.I.s avoided to interfere in the

crime. As knowing that Bernhardt intended to send a letter of confide to his state's senator, Medina immediately came to meet and threaten him to stop his voice. The other U.S officers also did such actions to the lowers made them silent, to keep the crime secret.

Due to the report by pilot Hugh Thompson, sent to the commander officer of the 123 Aviation, the rumour was also propagandised to the units of Americal Division. Major general Samuel Koster - the division Commander-in-Chief - was forced to conduct an investigation on May 1968 to check whether there was a massacre. And the person who was assigned the investigation was Henderson, the Commander-in-Chief of Brigade 11. Actually, the operation into Son Mỹ was then considered as the greatest one of Americal Division, so Koster, Henderson and Barker all conducted a surveying fly at the height of 2.000 feet, 2.500 feet and 1.000 feet in the sky of Son Mỹ. At least, they knew exactly what happened under - when it occurred. Consequently, it wasn't surprised at all of Henderson's investigative result as follows: "approximately twenty non-combatants had been inadvertently killed by preparatory fires and crossfires between friendly and enemy forces, and that the report of unnecessary killing of civilians were merely another instance of a command Vietcong propaganda technique and were groundless".

On account of intentional conceal, a bloody massacre was brought to light rather late.

Early in the summer of 1968, Paul Meadlo returned home in Terre Haute, Indiana, with a broken leg. By early 1969, most of the veterans of Charlie Company left Vietnam to go on their education or got back to their previous jobs throughout America. Some of the G.I.s were still stricken and haunted by the massacre. The other attempted to forget their past crimes. Nevertheless, there was a veteran, who was not the previous soldier of Charlie Company and not interfere in the affair, silently ready to accuse the massacre. That was Ronald Ridenhour.

Ronald Ridenhour from Phoenix, Arizona, went in for the army in March, 1967 and at the year - end he was transferred to Vietnam. Being a helicopter door gunner of a long-range reconnaissance, Ridenhour was appointed to fly in the sky of Son Mỹ, a few days after the massacre. He noticed the village to be totally ruined, there was even no bird's singing. Then, from about April to November 1968, Ridenhour luckily met the guys: "Butch" Gruver, and then Terry, Doherty, LaCroix, Bernhardt, who willingly told him about the massacre in Son Mỹ. Returning home in Phoenix from demobilisation in early December, 1968, Ridenhour still fostered his intention to accuse the massacre though he was prevented by his fellows. Being



O. HENDERSON



E. MEDINA

helped by the ex teacher Arthur A.Oman, Ridenhour showed in a long letter of what he heard about the Pinkville, it was something "really dark and bloody", and he proposed a public and open investigation on this matter. Ridenhour made the letter into lots of copies, which were sent to President Richard Nixon and the tops of Defense Ministry, Ministry of foreign Affairs, Joint general staff the leading members of the House and Senate. Although many V.I.Ps said not to know anything about the letter, the U.S Government and Army couldn't neglect the affair. In early Sept. 1969 Calley was prosecuted of his intentional killing of

109 people in Sơn Mỹ. From Oct. 1969 to March, 1970, other 15 G.I.s were prosecuted including Captain Medina, Captain Willingham (Chief of Bravo Company), Captain Kotouc (Spy officer of the Task Force). On Nov. 24, 1969, General William Westmoreland, then returned to America and kept the position of Army Chief of Staff and Stanley Resor, Army Secretary, appointed Lieutenant General William Peers - the one who had ever totally destroyed a village in Pleiku in Vietnam Central Highlands - led an investigative delegation of Sơn Mỹ - the House Armed Services Committee also their charges in



Calley had to come back to Quảng Ngãi to testify. The man on the right is Major Raby, the army Judge.

founded an investigative sub-department of Sơn Mỹ. The investigations cost lots of energies but it had unsatisfied results. As concluded by the investigation departments, more 14 officers were blamed to violate the army regulations, not complete

investigation and treatment for Sơn Mỹ affair, among them were Lieutenant General Koster, former Commander - in - chief of Americal Division, Major General Young, former Vice-Commander of the Division, Colonel Henderson, Commander-in-chief of Brigade 11, Colonel Person, former Chief - of - staff of Americal Division, Colonel Luper, Commander-in-chief of Artillery Battalion 6...

While the U.S Government and Army was showing to be reluctant and slow to conduct the investigations, the U.S press continually shot the news of Sơn Mỹ. On Nov. 13, 1969 a series of daily newspapers in America printed the first report of the Sơn Mỹ massacre written by journalist Seymour Hersh...

On Nov. 16, 1969, journalist Henry Kamm's article, printed in the *New York Times*, showed that 567 people were killed in that massacre, who were the unarmed villagers taking no action against the G.I.s. On Nov. 23, 1969, Meadlo appeared on the TV screen of the CBS, answered the interview of the journalist Mike Wallace confessing the crimes of his own and of Calley's Platoon in Sơn Mỹ. The American journalists flew to Vietnam to search the veterans of Task Force Barker or the survivors to write for the press - A great deal of new details and

witnesses were daily appeared on the newspapers, radios and televisions. News of Sơn Mỹ shaded the news of Apollo spaceship 12 that had just completed the second landing on the moon. The American indignant and motional wave had increased since the colour photos taken at the crime scene by Haeberle were shown in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, published on Nov.20, 1969, then in the *Life*, published on Jan. 19, 1970, at the same time with lots of the U.S and foreign newspapers. The photos obviously showed a terrible reality. The American public became excited and indignant just because their children turned out to be unimaginatively atrocious killers.

Facing such situation, on Nov.26, 1969, the Press Secretary of the U.S president, Ronald Ziegler, was ordered to appear in public, promised that the White House would take favourable measures to treat those unvirtuous and illegal behaviour with the army regulations. On Dec. 8, 1969, President Richard Nixon hold a press conference saying that "What appears was certainly a massacre, under no circumstances was it justified... We cannot ever condone or use atrocities against civilians".

Meanwhile the massacre was brought to light in American public, then the Saigon puppet government definitely supported the U.S Army. President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu forced Saigon Press to be silent for 8 consecutive

days. On November 21, 1969, Minister of Foreign Affairs Trần Văn Lắm declared that the president decided to conduct an investigation and the next morning, the Ministry of Defence presented the result of investigation which repeated the old allegations, and proved the accusation of massacre to be completely untrue...

Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, who had a previous conflict with Mr Thiệu ordered the Ministry of Defence to conduct an investigation, however he was immediately prohibited by Hoàng Đức Nhã, the President's Secretary.

The opposition side of Mr. Nguyễn Văn Thiệu was Senator Trần Văn Đôn on Nov. 25, 1969, declared that he would head his investigation party - Unable to prevent Trần Văn Đôn's travel to Quảng Ngãi, Nguyễn Văn Thiệu suggested the Joint General Staff to send an urgent message to Quảng Ngãi, which recommended the Colonel and Provincial Chief "remind Sơn Tịnh of replying this affair intergrately". In other words Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and the U.S Army also played a game "Cats flirt mice", as a result the investigation by Trần Văn Đôn "was suddenly deleted", 30 U.S cannon-balls exploded 800 metres away because "the U.S force couldn't predict the journey of the investigation party" (*Chính Luận* newspaper, Saigon, dated Dec. 3, 1969) Trần Văn Đôn's investigation resulted in nothing at all. By the way, Nguyễn Văn Thiệu

Trần Văn Dôn's investigation party only came to the refugee camp.



obstinately denied the massacre and repeated over and over "It was simply the Vietcong's propaganda ploy", "an accident of war", "an action of war", although the Vietnamese in and out of the country showed extreme indignation.

In America, all the officers were prosecuted with a light trial and most of them were in amnesty and then every fault to the end was charged by the black pawn: Calley.

Military Court Fort Benning did a trial of Calley which began Dec. 12, 1970 and ended Mar. 31, 1971; and which

became the longest court case in the American history, an event which shook the American public seriously. The three journalists of the News Agency (AP) Arthur Averest, Kathryn Johnson and Harry F. Rosenthal wrote a book named "The Trial of the Century". After failing to lighten Calley's crime, the senior lawyer Latimer who was in charge of absolving became annoyed to make it plain: Calley was only a bottom-grade officer, who was brought out as an offering. Calley was condemned to life-imprisonment, dismissed from the army, deprived of wages and allowances. However, only a day after trial, Nixon ordered Calley to be set free from jail. Until 1975, Calley became totally free. Calley was later a famous jeweller's keeper in Columbus, Georgia. In case he was recognised to be a murderer, he just calmly replied that he was never haunted by the corpses in Son Mỹ, he never awared himself to be a murderer.

But to condemn Calley wasn't a problem. The U.S President Richard Nixon then both acknowledged what happened in Son Mỹ and tried to recuperate it as "an isolated incident". The world and American public weren't so easy to believe that, and couldn't be pleased with the trial to Calley or some criminals - not including that such trial was too skinned - deep and impractical to the accused's real sins. Before, in and after the trial, only for

human conscience could voice its just trial to Calley and the criminals.

Son Mỹ wasn't "an isolated incident". Terry Reid, a veteran of Brigade 11 said "Our company was credited with hundreds of the killed. In the first fire our company encountered, my platoon alone accounted

An American soldier is off to war. They did not just cut down the civilian population in one My Lai but in many hundreds (UPI).



40 killed. Yet no one in my platoon saw a Vietcong body. But I witnessed many civilians being shot down like clay pigeons". For Ron Grzesik, an other veteran, My Lai 4 was the end of a vicious circle that had begun months earlier. "It was like going from one step to another worse one". He said "First, you'd stop the people, question them, and let them go. Second, you'd stop the people, beat up an old man, and let them go. Third, you'd stop the people beat up an old man, and then shoot him. Fourth, you go in and wipe out a village". Scopefully, the G.I.s caused several crimes not only in Son Mỹ but also in the whole of Vietnam. Whenever in



In Hà Nội and both the Northern and Southern, a lot of demonstrations, broke out to oppose against American crimes in Sơn Mỹ and many other places as well.

Vietnam, the U.S aggressors with numerous guns and ammunition caused barbarous death scenes, such as spraying the poison gas into the shelters, filling the food and drink with poison, burning the huts, throwing the villagers into the burning fire, killing in series with infantry guns, pointing knives and ammunition, bombing overwhelmingly in both the North and South... The victims of them was the civilians without any guns. The criminals were not only the gangsters as Calley, Meadlo and Medina. With the atrocious extinction policy, in the U.S Army produced the bloody killers of whom was Colonel George Patton as a symbol, the commander of Armoured Cavalry Regiment 11, based in the southern Quảng Ngãi.

He often said to his guys "I'd like to see the arms and legs fly". Patton celebrated Christmas in 1968 by sending cards with the words "From Colonel and Mrs. George S. Patton III - Peace on Earth". Attached to the cards were colour photos of disabled Vietcong soldier stacked in a pile (...). When Patton left Vietnam, he threw a skull of Vietcong at the farewell party while wearing a peace medal around his neck. Only in Quảng Ngãi, the U.S expedition Army and South Korean Army caused the bloody massacres to hundreds and thousands of the civilians in Bình Hòa, Bình Châu, Khánh Giang-Trường Lệ, Diên Niên-Phước Bình, etc. Right in battle field, Japanese journalist Shizudo recorded a lot of killing scenes, atrocious destruction caused by the U.S and South Korean Army all over Vietnam, which was later printed in a big brochure "Vietnam Liberation War".

When Sơn Mỹ incident stood revealed, Calley was brought to trial, then some warlike Americans managed to support Calley, some considered Calley as a hero, a missionary took an example of Calley as Kito Christ who suffered to be nailed himself on cruxifition, even some showed slogan suggesting Calley to be Minister of Defence, However, the true Americans spoke out their just voice, needed to trial Calley as exactly as his crimes, simultaneously unable to neglect his upper's serious

crimes, though their hands seemed not to be bloodstained. The intellectuals in America showed that the criminal was General Westmoreland, even the person sitting in the oval room of White House to control this extinctive war. The public related to the case of German General Pheppi, on account of his lower's crimes was charged 15-year imprisonment by the Nuremberg court, the case of Japanese General Yamashita, on account that Japanese soldiers killed civilians and war - prisoners in Philippines, was taken the death sentence, and the case of General Westmoreland and his lower's crimes in Sơn Mỹ, in Vietnam.

In opposition to the fact that Sơn Mỹ was only an isolated incident and Calley was brought to trial, which was condemned by the world and American public : Sơn Mỹ was in a series of American's crimes in the Vietnam war and the criminals were no one more than the U.S government and Army.

People everywhere in the world reported and re-printed in the newspapers the photos of Sơn Mỹ massacre, and voiced up against the atrocious aggressive war in Vietnam by the U.S Army.

Judging the serious level of Sơn Mỹ, the public compared this massacre to the most barbarous ones in World War II, though caused by the fascists or American

imperialists. In France, the *Paris Daily* called Sơn Mỹ an Oradour Vietnam. In the German Democratic Republic the *New Germany* said what occurred in Vietnam could only be compared with the German fascism's cruel actions in Lidice (Czech) Oradour (France). In Belorussia, Mr. Kaminski said that Sơn Mỹ could be compared to the massacre by German fascists in Katin village that he was the only survivor. In England, the *Times* wrote Sơn Mỹ incident was the same as Guernica, Hiroshima, Sharpeville, stroke the human conscience, which could not be forgiven. The *Guardian* emphasised the Sơn Mỹ incident was so terrible that it couldn't be briefly overviewed as the other terrible ones of the wars. The *Observer* affirmed Sơn Mỹ incident reflected exactly the war in Vietnam, that was the consequences of the U.S involvement. The *Daily Sketch* wrote: "War crime. If this can happen, America has lost". A newspaper in Hongkong wrote: The Japanese-German fascists cruelty is behind the American one in Vietnam. The *Hongkong Daily* wrote: Hundreds of millions of the American people were heavily suffered the pangs of conscience and the U.S Army's prestige was seriously affected. The peace - keeping soldiers bore animalistic characters. In Soviet Union, the *Newtimes* wrote: Hundreds of villagers were burned by the U.S Air force, ten thousands of Vietnam peasants were killed by bombs and ammunition, napalm. It was

American imperialists who were in charge of the Sơn Mỹ massacre, as well as the atrocity was against the Vietnamese people.

A newspaper in Czech, wrote: Sơn Mỹ tragedy was only a little chapter in a big tragedy of the U.S aggressive war in Vietnam. Besides the informations were printed in the newspapers, the politicians and the people of different classes in the countries hold lots of demonstrations. The former Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs compared the U.S crimes in Sơn Mỹ to the British colonialists' crimes in India "Sơn Mỹ massacre is a series of crimes caused by



Võ Thị Liên, 13 years-old, one of the survivors in Sơn Mỹ with international press.

the U.S imperialists in Vietnam". In Sweden, the masses demonstrated in Upsala to protest against the U.S war. In France, Dr. Parain - La Souterrain Mayor said: we knew how the German fascists' atrocities in our homeland, but the U.S Army's massacre in Son Mỹ exceeded the German fascists, terrible crimes, which made our conscience extremely indignant. On December 19, 1969, a press conference was held at the International Information Center in Paris and chaired by British Duke Bertrand Russel and the famous French writer, Jean Paul Satre. The chairmen of the press conference again condemned the U.S war crimes in Vietnam. The U.S professors, based on the investigation at sight, concluded that the U.S chemical poisons made the regions of Southern Vietnam the scenes like those in the moon. Mrs Claire Culhane - a Canadian who worked at Quảng Ngãi hospital for the years 1967 - 1968 - told what she heard and saw of the GI's crimes.

For the war criminals, Calley was shown by the public not yet to be both an important criminal and a major one as well. In Egypt, the *Al Mossawar* wrote: None can deny the U.S land forces headquarter's responsibility the fighting for the crimes against the Vietnamese people. It was unbelieved that the crime was not conducted by them. The U.S government, especially the President must be in

charge of what they did. Though protested by the American people, they have been definitely conducting the aggressive policy in Vietnam. In Iraq, the *Al Nour* wrote: Calley's extinctive crime is less serious than Abrams' crime, who knew the U.S helicopters contained the burning bombs and how the effect of napalm and poison - gas bombs were. It isn't as serious as the crime of Westmoreland, Mc Namara, Laird, Johnson, Nixon, who have so long conducted the war, killed thousands of Vietnamese. The Standing Secretary of the African-Asian people's solidarity Organisation made the declaration that: Son My affair was not an isolated incident but a predicted crime of the policy "burning all, destroying all, killing all" of the U.S in Vietnam.

In American, the public became more ever striking on the condemnation against the U.S government, army and policy in Vietnam. In the UNO, Son My affair was brought for a public discussion as requested by the representatives of Angeria, the Soviet Union, Arab, Cuba. The Cuban Ambassador Quesada said: Crimes in Son My weren't only made by a group of G.Is. It was the product of a policy which was carefully presented and charged by the U.S government. All the American people, politicians and intellectuals voiced to show their attitudes. Mr. White Water showed his opinions in the magazine *Life*: That's

right, it was really disgusting - repeated over and over by the history, and it was not the first time that the U.S Army has cruelly killed women and children. Professor Gabriel Kolko said, as stated by the fate, the U.S policy is to turn Southern Vietnam to be a sea of fire, and made Vietnam their targets. The criminals in the history are not the ones who directly take the guns to fire. The actress Jane Fonda said: Lieutenant Calley was only an offering. The major war criminals are mainly the authorities in Washington, DC. Senator Goodell said: The investigation on the U.S Army's criminal behaviour would be impossible if only conducting the sanction against some G.I.s. The American people even awake the conscience of the whole country, as shown in the song. "Last train to Nuremberg" by Peter Seeger:

Last train to Nuremberg. Last train to Nuremberg. All aboard.

Do I see Lt. Calley?

Do I see Capt. Medina?

Do I see General Koster and all his crew?

Do I see President Nixon?

Do I see both Houses of Congress?

Do I see voters, you and I?

Last train to Nuremberg... Nuremberg has ever been a place where International Court was located to trial the war criminals of World War II. The human value of the song was to aware the whole American citizens not accidentally to connive with the crimes, and to prevent the war crime should be every people's responsibility.

Võ Thị Liên - a typical example to make the whole world deeply understand and sympathize with Sơn Mỹ people's agony. She was then in early teenage, who was one of a few Sơn Mỹ people luckily escaped from the nad of death. At the age of 15, the girl went to many countries in the world such as China, the Soviet Union, Eastern European countries, Northern Europe, Western Europe and Japan... Millions of hearts all over the world were deeply moved by the hardships that she with her compatriots suffered. Võ Thị Liên, the Sơn Mỹ girl, became a symbol of the Sơn Mỹ ache and later she actively devoted all her life to the cause of charity and peace.

4

THE PAINFUL PLACE AT THAT TIME

*I*n Spring 1975, the 21-year war was ended, Sơn Mỹ together with the whole country greatly rejoiced at peace, and reunification. However, there also remained many problems to be solved. Sơn Mỹ village was heavily damaged by the war. A large amount of cultivated land turned into wild forests, the residents still suffered much from the consequence of war and restarted their life with nothing in hand. They began to build the irrigation system, fishing boats, grow rushes, construct schools, health-care centres, etc... With their traditional industriousness, and the assistance from the government, Sơn Mỹ did their best to rehabilitate their home village and develop production, although their wounds still remained acute.

In such complicated circumstance the study of the pain that deeply rooted all the hearts of Vietnamese people as well as peoples the world over is really a necessary and imperative doing. In 1976, a year after the war and 8 years after the Sơn Mỹ massacre, the Sơn Mỹ Vestige Area with



many vestiges and a museum is located near the canal where Calley and his soldiers massacred 170 innocent civilians. Later, a monument was built in this area, and the vestige area has been restored and upgraded many times.

Today, coming to the Sơn Mỹ Vestige Area, and looking at the Monument, visitors can well understand the acute pain suffered by the Sơn Mỹ residents at the time. The vestige area full of flowers and tree-shade used to be a residential area with bamboo-trees and roads full of buffalo-leg prints. The canal nearby is a place where Calley and his companions killed hundreds of innocent civilians. In the museum, visitors can also see many objects that remained after the massacre, such as an old tray full of

bullet scratches, a broken plate - the remains of a meal, a conical plastic hat that Mrs. Dốc's husband wore, a mourning suit Mrs. Dốc wore in mourning for her husband who was killed in the massacre. Besides, many other objects also have their similar history. For instance, a dress and a pair of slippers that belonged to a certain dead girl, broken plates, bowls, casseroles, Buddhist monk Thích Tâm Trí's wooden fish (a hollow piece of wood which a monk beats while saying prayers) and a picture of him. Another remarkable object is a hairpin of Ms. Nguyễn Thị Huỳnh who was possibly one of the girls in a photograph taken by Haeberle during the massacre. Ms Huỳnh was about 20 years old at that time. Her boy friend found this hairpin after she was killed and had been respectfully keeping it for 8 years before he gave it to the museum. In the museum, beside all the objects that help visitors understand the lives and deaths of 504 victims, are maps, designs, explanations, and photographs by Haeberle which still make them feel strongly emotional.

Outside the Vestige Area, several stelae can be seen at the places where innocent people in the hamlet were killed. For instance, the guard tower at the edge of the hamlet, on the side of the path leading into Thuận Yên hamlet is where 102 civilians were killed. And, not too far from the guard tower is a kepok (cotton-tree) where 15

Panorama of Sơn Mỹ Vestige Area



women and children were killed. In the garden owned by Ms Phạm Thị Mùi, who was sexually violated and thrown into flame by American soldiers, stands a stele dedicated to 11 people killed, and buried in here. And, visitors now also can see a waterwell which the American soldiers put Mr. Hương Thơ into and killed him by a grenade. Nowadays, the pain caused by the massacre is still remaining acute in hearts of people in a peaceful hamlet full of the bamboo-tree shades.



Foreign Guests visiting Sơn Mỹ

In Mỹ Hội sub-hamlet, Cổ Lũy hamlet, covered by full coconut-tree shade with the blue sea nearby whose waves all time breaks on the gold beach, and known

as one of the beautiful places in Việt Nam, stands a stele dedicated to 97 civilians killed in the massacre.

Sơn Mỹ, a small village in Vietnam, is still always a call of conscience to everybody in Vietnam as well as the world over. In fact, from the date when the Sơn Mỹ Vestige Area was built, millions of visitors all over the world have come; and the number of visitors increases day after day. They are not only ordinary people but also businessmen, journalists from well-known news-agencies, radio and television corporations, social activists, etc. Especially, among the visitors more and more



The place where 100 people were once massacred



An American Veteran in front of Sơn Mỹ Monument

Americans are coming to Sơn Mỹ to show their sympathy with Vietnamese people on the hidden pain caused by their government and their troops during the war. Many American veterans put incense in front of the monument, bow their heads in honour of the dead and feel remorseful for what they and their companions did.

And Sơn Mỹ now seems to be echoing the following call by Julius Fucik under the Nazi gallows.

"Dear mankind, be watchful!"

Chịu trách nhiệm xuất bản :

TẠ HIỀN MINH - NGUYỄN NGỌC TRẠCH

Chịu trách nhiệm bản thảo :

BÙI HỒNG HƯƠNG - THÀNH CÔNG

Biên soạn : CAO CHU

Hiệu đính :

TRƯƠNG THỊ THIÊN HƯƠNG

Dịch sang tiếng Anh :

NGUYỄN THANH XUÂN

QUÝ LÂN - VIỆT ĐIỂN

In 2000 cuốn khổ 12,5 x 19cm tại Xí nghiệp In Quốc doanh QNDN.
Giấy phép xuất bản số 11/XBNT do Sở VH-TT Quảng Ngãi cấp ngày
14.2.1996. In xong và nộp lưu chiểu tháng 3.1996.

Thư viện tỉnh Quảng Ngãi



DCN.000191

POSITION OF SƠN
MỸ ON THE MAP
OF VIETNAM

(Excerpt from The
Australian Magazine
No 3-4, 1989)

PLAN OF AMERICAN
ASSAULT ON SƠN MỸ
ON MARCH 16th, 1968

