

The atrocities that Nixon continues

by i.f. stone
Washington, D.C.

The Pinkville massacre falls into perspective if we remember that from the first days of the struggle against the french general Giap's strategy has been to fight a "people's war". Without our ever fully realizing it, ours has become an "anti-people's" war.

Some years ago an American colonel who was never identified, put it very plainly. Mao Tse-Tung, the foremost theoretician of the people's war, said that the guerrilla swims among the people as a fish does in the sea. The U.S. Colonel said we would "dry up the sea".

Our strategy has been to destroy the villages and the crops, to drive out or kill the people, wherever we suspect Viet Cong. We set out to create a desert where no "fish" could live.

The soldiers at Pinkville may not have been ordered to kill women and children but they were certainly ordered to burn down the village and kill the livestock, to destroy their homes and their food supply.

If the main target of a people's war is to win the confidence and support of the peasantry, the main target of an anti-people's war is to uproot or destroy the peasantry the guerrillas may have won over. From such a strategy Pinkvilles come naturally.

In the rules of war, soldiers and civilians used to be separate categories. The strategy of the anti-people's war has given us that legal monstrosity we now read about - the "innocent civilian". This implies that some civilians are innocent and some are guilty. The latter are not only fair game but the safe rule when in doubt is to shoot first and investigate later, or

just add them to the body count.

Horrible as this may sound, it has its logic and the logic grows stronger as the spiral of hate mounts on both sides. The guerrillas use civilians in their area - like the home population in any war - for many auxiliary tasks. The civilians - including women and children - take up those tasks ever more willingly as they see their homes and livestock, their menfolk and ancestral graves, destroyed by indiscriminate bombing and artillery fire and by "search and destroy" missions like the one in Pinkville.

Relations are not improved by calling them "gooks" or - more politely, as in Lt. Calley's indictment - "oriental human beings". They retaliate with homemade mines and booby traps, including the ponji, the sharpened stick coated with excrement. The biggest and dirtiest booby trap of all is the filthy pit of this war itself, from which we emerge stinking in the nostrils of mankind.

There is a flurry of stories

from Saigon about "reindoctrinating" troops on the humane treatment of civilians. But we are dealing here not with an occasional atrocity but with a deliberate policy. What a fear-crazed and hate-filled GI may do in occupying a hostile village can be put down to the brutalization of war.

The real crime is higher up. When the president announced that he was revising our chemical and bacteriological warfare program and sending the Geneva protocol to the senate for ratification, it looked like a gesture of contrition.

It turned out to be the most hypocritical kind of public relations, for it excepted from these restrictions the two weapons of gas and chemical warfare from which the civilian population of Vietnam suffer most. These are the tear and lung gases which drive them out of their homemade bombing shelters into the open where our B-52s and fragmentation "anti-personnel" bombs can destroy them, and

the herbicides which kill their crops and threaten - like thalidomide - their unborn children.

How can we convince the world that we have not turned barbarian when a whitehouse announcement, designed to take the curse off Pinkville and demonstrate our concern for international law, perpetuates a gross violation of it?

We refer to the use of crop-killers. It is said that the Geneva protocol banning chemical warfare does not mention herbicides. True. But earlier treaties to which we are a party do. The army field manual (FM 27-10) in paragraph 37 cites that provision of the Hague convention of 1907 which says "It is especially forbidden ... to employ poison or poison weapons."

The army interpretation which follows says this "does not prohibit measures ... to destroy, through chemical or bacteriological agents, harmless to man, crops intended solely for consumption by the armed forces (if that fact can be determined)."

But even this tortuous sophistry admits we may not destroy crops just because we believe some of the supplies may feed guerrillas, and that we may not employ chemical or bacteriological agents which are harmful to humans.

Two years ago the Japan science council released a report on anti-crop warfare in Vietnam which said nearly 1000 peasants and more than 13,000 livestock has been killed by it. Han Swyter, a former aide to secretary McNamara, told the house foreign affairs committee December 2 that since 1962 we have sprayed about 100 million pounds of herbicides over four million acres, an area the size of Massachusetts.

He said that since late 1967 there have been increasing reports and pictures in the Saigon press of a new kind of abnormality in newly born children. These reports have found confirmation in a still secret report for the national cancer institute (See *Scientific research* for November 10) which found that one herbicide, 2,4,5-T was "probably dangerous" and 2,4-D "potentially dangerous" as teratogenic agents, i.e. capable, like thalidomide, of producing gross birth defects if ingested by pregnant women.

As a result the pentagon has "restricted" the use of the first, but not the second, substance to areas remote from human population.

So will the civilian-killing via the tear gas route. The government's position is that the Geneva protocol does not cover tear gas. The protocol itself speaks of "asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases." The British government ever since 1930, like many other signatories of the protocol, has held that tear gases, too, are outlawed.

Congressman McCarthy (D-N.Y.) told a Montreal audience December 1 that when in London he heard the U.S. government was pressuring the British government to change its position on tear gas.

The enormous quantities of tear and lung gas we use in Vietnam - almost 14 million pounds since 1964, or more than half the total weight of the mustard gases used by both sides in World War I - testify how far we have gone from exceptional use in "riot-like" circumstances to routine application before bombardment.

These are the atrocities Nixon condones and continues.



VIEWPOINT

by tom wallace
brunswickan staff

are you going to do your thing during nursing week?



lauren bassett
bus. ad. 111

"Sure, I've got a lot of cures."



ralph steele
cleaning agent
007

"Yea, I'd really clean up."



margie whiting
bus. ad. 1

"Do you have to be a nurse to do your things?"



keith wells
sc. 11

"Sorry I've already got a date with the tavern."



jerry vowles
ed. 11

"Yea, I'll teach the girls where to put the thermometer."



phil doherty
bus. ad. 1

"What thing?"



steve mitton
bus. ad. 1

"I'd like to."



deanna urquhart
arts 111

"But why do you have to wait for nursing week?"