

Viet 'Blood Bath' Myth Attacked

O R L E A N S
FRANCE-DNSI-The alleged "Communist Bloodbath" in North Vietnam after the 1954 Geneva Accords was "100% fabricated" by intelligence services in Saigon financed by the U. S. Government, according to a Vietnamese Catholic who was head of psychological warfare for the Saigon army during the Presidency of the late Ngo Dinh Diem.

Colonel Nguyen Van Chau, Director of the Central Psychological War Service of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces from 1956 to 1962, declared in an interview that the Saigon government waged "total psychological warfare" in 1956 to persuade Vietnamese and world opinion that there was a terrorist bloodbath in North Vietnam. The purpose of the campaign was to justify President Diem's refusal to negotiate with Hanoi and to carry out the elections and reunification promised in the 1954 Geneva Accords.

"By a total campaign, I mean that it was ideological, literary and even artistic," said Chau. "Forged documents were distributed to various political groups and to groups of writers and artists, who used the false documents to carry out the propaganda campaign."

British and American intelligence services helped collect authentic documents on which the forged documents were based. The forgeries were so well done that President Diem himself was fooled by them, Chau said. Diem's brother Nhu was in on the fabrications, but Diem was "too innocent" to realize what was going on, Chau added.

When Diem was assassinated in 1963, Colonel Chau left Washington, where he had been military attache at the Saigon embassy. He now lives in Orleans, France, with his large family in a suburban apartment decorated with traditional Vietnamese art objects and pictures of the Pope. Chau is a school teacher.

Colonel Chau said that accusations against the North Vietnamese regime in books by Hoang Van Chi were "wholly

imaginary and without foundation."

The prediction by the bishop of Danang, Pham Ngoc Chi, that a communist takeover in the South would lead to bloody reprisals against 2 million people is "ridiculous."

The reason for Bishop Chi's "purely imaginary" accusations, said Chau, is that bishop of Bui Chu in North Vietnam in the early 1950s he organized his diocese militarily to fight against the Viet Minh, with French backing. "Bishop Chi is a good bishop and I like him personally, but because of his past he feels there is no hope for him to cooperate with the communists. He has no good source of information about North Vietnam; he is not at all well informed," Chau said.

Between 1945 and 1956 up to 500 Catholics were killed or imprisoned for political reasons in North Vietnam, said Chau, adding that the figure was probably too high. Since 1956, the regime has been liberal toward Catholics.

"If in 1945 the anti-communist nationalist parties and not the Viet Minh had taken power, just as many Catholics would have been killed, because the population regarded the Catholics as instruments of colonialism-not without reason," said Chau, who noted that his own family was one of the first to be converted to Catholicism in the 17th century. French missionaries and bishops manipulated Vietnamese Catholics to serve French interests, he said.

Chau recounted that as a military Catholic in North Vietnam, he himself was frightened by the first wave of American-financed anti-communist propaganda that in 1954 persuaded hundreds of thousands of Catholics to flee to the South.

"In early 1954, in preparation for the worst--that is, a Viet Minh takeover--the Americans trained and sent Vietnamese special agents under various covers to penetrate the population in the North. After the Geneva Accords, those agents prepared the 'black propaganda' that frightened the

refugees into leaving."

("Black propaganda" is the technical term which describes written or radio messages disseminated in such a way that readers or listeners feel the content is coming from an official or friendly source, when, in fact, it is not.)

The "Black propaganda" consisted primarily of fake "communist" tracts announcing bloody reprisals against Catholics and others who had collaborated with the French. One effective form of "black propaganda" was staged photographs supposedly showing "revolutionaries" committing atrocities and sacrileges. Chau said he later learned that such photographs were faked.

Later, "black propaganda" was used extensively to discredit communists in South Vietnam. In 1961, British, American and Vietnamese intelligence services cooperated in putting together a collection of "captured communist documents" that were put on exhibit in the Saigon City Hall, drawing huge crowds. The project was financed by the CIA and the documents were all forgeries, said Chau.

Chau said that the Saigon regime used to, and probably still does, run a clandestine radio which pretended to be "Liberation Radio" in order to diffuse "black propaganda." The broadcasts were patterned on authentic Liberation Radio broadcasts, with just a few slight changes in detail, designed for example to give the impression that the communists were massacring innocent civilians. Even cabinet ministers in the Diem regime thought the broadcasts were authentic and would call up Diem "who was frightened too," and ask him to order the intelligence services to track down the transmitter, which was located in the outskirts of Saigon. Information services carefully monitored the fake radio and gave translations of broadcasts to journalists, who accepted them as authentic.

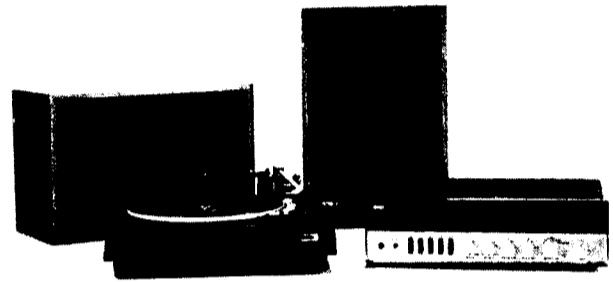
Colonel Chau said he has come to realize that the Catholics' intransigent

anti-communism has been a main obstacle to peace and national unity in Vietnam. "In this isolated corner of France," he said, "as a Catholic I pray that our bishops in South

Vietnam will change their attitude before it is too late, so that the Church can fulfill its proper apostolic role to end the killing and bring peace and reconciliation to Vietnam."

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