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The Vietnam War: A comparison of interpretations

David Scott Morokoff
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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THE VIETNAM WAR: A COMPARISON OF INTERPRETATIONS

by

David Morokoff

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Department of History
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 1997
The thesis of David Morokoff for the degree of Master of Arts in History is approved by:

Chairperson, Joseph A. Fry, Ph.D.

Examining Committee Member, Eugene P. Moehring, Ph.D.

Examining Committee Member, Thomas C. Wright, Ph.D.

Graduate Faculty Representative, Robert M. Bigler, Ph.D.

Dean of the Graduate College, Ronald W. Smith, Ph.D.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 1997
ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on a quantitative analysis of Time magazine's coverage of the Vietnam War. It demonstrates that Time held a pro-war bias in 1967, was neutral during 1968, and turned strongly against the war from 1969 through 1974. From mid-1969 on, some articles factually misrepresented what was happening in Vietnam in such a way as to promote the goals of the anti-war movement. If events admitted of both a pro-war and an anti-war interpretation Time published almost exclusively the anti-war view. By 1972, administration supporters had published a large body of verifiable evidence (summarized in chapter 3) demonstrating that progress was being made toward winning the war. Time reported on almost none of this evidence. Consequently, this thesis concludes that the previous authors who have written about the media's role in the war (Herbert Gans, Clarence Wyatt and Daniel Hallin) were incorrect: Time's heavily biased anti-war coverage did in fact hurt the war effort.
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INTRODUCTION

During the Vietnam War and since, conservative Americans have believed that a liberal press hurt the war effort by taking an anti-war stance. In this view, the media's constant criticism helped turn neutral Americans against the war, and convinced the Communists that there was no need to negotiate because the pressure of public opinion would eventually force a unilateral American withdrawal.

The historical community, however, has challenged the conservative view. Herbert Gans' book, *Deciding What's News*, argued that the routines of objective journalism and the institutional nature of the media prevented journalists from selecting the news on an ideological basis. In this view journalists strove for objectivity, and used a variety of techniques to balance the news coverage. They had to because if any particular publication were perceived to be biased, it would lose credibility and its audience. Daniel Hallin's

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book, The "Uncensored" War, and Clarence Wyatt's Paper Soldiers both supported Gans. They argued that the corporate American media had really represented the establishment view of the war from start to finish. The press had continued to publish mainly pro-war stories as late as 1968, long after reporters in the field and protesters at home had begun to raise serious questions. After 1968 the media did begin to oppose the war, but only after Congress and public opinion had turned against it. Even then, the press continued to give the administration a significant amount of support. If the media had been truly anti-war, it would have turned more harshly against the war. The press could have gone much farther than it did, for example, in condemning the My Lai massacre. Daniel Hallin's quantitative analysis of the New York Times Vietnam War coverage during the early 1960s also established that the press did not report evidence which it had discovered (or easily could have) if that evidence did not support the Kennedy administration's official line on the war.2

This paper seeks to shed further light on the controversy with a quantitative analysis of all of the Vietnam War coverage printed in Time magazine from July 1967 through December 1974. First the pro-war and anti-war positions were defined, then the articles were divided into pro-war, anti-war, and neutral categories. Articles normally took one slant

for a paragraph or two, then changed to a different bias for a while before switching again. Thus to quantify the content, each section of each article was measured in column inches. For example, if an article started with nine column inches (CI) of neutral coverage, I marked it off and wrote a short summary of what was in those nine CI. Thus my notebook entries look like this:

December 22, 1969
p. 22  9 CI neutral  Time is not sure when negotiations will come or what the terms might be.

3 CI pro-war  The U.S. "must show aggressor from Peking to Havana that so called wars of liberation will not be allowed to succeed."

1 CI anti-war  However, the war, "has proved to be [too] costly in lives, dollars, and international prestige."

Using these criteria, Time held a pro-war stance in 1967, was neutral through most of 1968, and turned strongly against the war in 1969. From mid-1970 on Time's numerical bias was over 17 to 1 anti-war. Many stories factually misrepresented what was happening in Vietnam in such a way as to promote the goals of the anti-war movement. Following the 1968 Tet Offensive, Time gave the pro-war view little or no space and published almost exclusively the anti-war interpretation. Also, by 1970 administration spokesmen and
supporters had published a considerable body of verifiable evidence showing significant progress toward winning the war. *Time* published almost none of this evidence.

*Time* Incorporated's editor-in-chief, Hedley Donovan, announced in a 1971 editorial that although there was good reason to think progress was being made in Vietnamization, the United States should withdraw all of its forces from Vietnam as quickly as possible even if it meant losing a war which could have been won.\(^3\) *Time* also recognized earlier in 1971 that to many Americans a victory in Vietnam would be "the final outrage."\(^4\) In April of 1971 *Time* stated that it sympathized with the idea that America ought, as a matter of principle, to suffer defeat on the battlefield.\(^5\) These were some of the most extreme anti-war positions it was possible to take. *Time* stated that Hedley Donovan's anti-war editorial had evolved from a series of speeches which Donovan had given in support of the anti-war movement.

This thesis will argue that in the late 1960s and early 1970s *Time* magazine's ideological bias again prevented it from reporting evidence that it was aware of or easily could have discovered. The difference was that in the later years, unlike the early 1960s, it was the media's anti-war bias which prevented it from publishing the pro-war view of events and

\(^3\) *Time*, June 14, 1971, pp. 28-30.

\(^4\) Ibid., March 1, 1971, p. 10.

\(^5\) Ibid., April 5, 1971, p. 12.
the evidence supporting it.

As late as September 1970 *Time* reported that over the previous four months "the doves have been beaten [on all proposed pieces of anti-war legislation, and] public opinion polls show that public support of the President's policies remains strong." Thus, it is the conclusion of this paper that from mid-1969 on *Time* did not represent the establishment nearly so well as it represented the anti-war movement. This is significant because these were the critical years in deciding how much assistance America would give to South Vietnam after the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops.

In addition to examining the bias in *Time*, this thesis will also raise the question of whether an anti-war bias has existed in the mainstream historiography of the war. Wyatt, for example, wrote that recent content analysis of the news had shown that it mainly reported official sources with relatively little dissent. At the time that Wyatt published, Peter Breastrup had already published his study of the media's coverage of the 1968 Tet Offensive, *Big Story*. Breastrup convincingly demonstrated that the media completely ignored official sources including General William Westmoreland, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle Wheeler, analyst Douglas Pike and President Lyndon Johnson. These men accurately described the offensive as a crushing defeat for the Viet Cong. However,

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instead of publishing the information provided by official spokesmen, which turned out to be factually correct, the media falsely reported that the Viet Cong were winning a great battlefield victory.

This was an unprecedented situation. Never before had the American media flatly refused to report the official battlefield analysis of the United States army. Even if army spokespersons had turned out to be wrong, it would seem to be very significant that the media completely prevented the American people from receiving their government's official analysis. George Herring wrote that reporters groaned in disbelief when General William Westmoreland explained the battlefield situation. Apparently on the assumption that Westmoreland was deceiving them, media sources then created the false interpretation that America was being defeated on the battlefield. Media sources continued to publish their factually mistaken anti-war view for several weeks, long after it was obvious that the Communists had been badly defeated.

In any other war this remarkable behavior would have drawn intense scrutiny from historians. Breastrup describes the coverage as a "failure of the media" and a "distortion of reality." How could it have happened? One would expect the historical community to seriously question this unprecedented behavior. Was subsequent coverage equally biased against accurate official sources? Yet the mainstream historiography of the war has not questioned the anti-administration bias of
the media's Tet Offensive coverage. To the contrary, Wyatt's preface flatly denies that it happened.

Wyatt's thesis is that the Nixon administration's manipulation of the news was largely beyond the journalists' ability to resist. Under this pressure, the media published the statements of official sources with relatively little dissent. Consequently, the media had in fact not been an opponent of either the military or the governing administrations. Wyatt does not indicate that coverage of the Tet offensive was an exception to the rule.

Likewise, Ambassador Martin Herz's quantitative analysis of media coverage in 1972 was published prior to Paper Soldiers. Herz demonstrated that in covering the December 1972 bombings the media published the views of administration critics many times more often than the interpretation of administration spokespersons. Again, Wyatt does not indicate that the 1972 coverage was an aberration. He does not argue that Herz and Braestrup were wrong. He simply ignores the meaning of their work.

Daniel Hallin's The 'Uncensored War was also published prior to Paper Soldiers. Hallin argues that certain institutional constraints limited the extent to which the media was free to turn against the war. Still, "journalists clearly did not think of themselves simply as 'soldiers of the typewriter' whose mission was to serve the war effort." Every administration during the war "had periodic crises in its
ability to 'manage' this more independent or adversarial news media, and over the years the volume of 'negative' coverage increased so dramatically that there seems little doubt that the news coverage did indeed contribute to the public war-weariness. Hallin noted that editorial comment by journalists turned two to one against the war after the Tet offensive. None of this is consistent with the exceptionally strong language used in Wyatt's thesis and conclusions.

Beyond this, pages 196-197 of Paper Soldiers argues that in the 1970 Cambodian incursion and Opperation Lam Son 719 in 1971 the media were able to see through the false optimism being offered by administration spokesperson, and published a much more pessimistic interpretation. The argument presented in these pages directly contradict Wyatt's thesis (and indeed the title of his book), at least as regards these battles in 1970 and 1971.

Wyatt appears to have used the available evidence selectively, publishing those parts that support his interpretation and ignoring the evidence that contradicts his position. The unacceptably selective use of evidence in Paper Soldiers is particularly significant because Dr. George Herring, author of the standard text book used in many university classes on the Vietnam War, America's Longest War, was Clarence Wyatt's thesis advisor (while Paper Soldiers was being written as a doctoral dissertation).

Hallin, "Uncensored" War, pp. 6-7.
This thesis will argue that just as Wyatt and Herring have ignored Herz, Brestrup, Hallin, and the evidence of pages 196-197 of Wyatt's own book, the mainstream historiography of the war has consistently ignored those published sources which seem to undermine their anti-war interpretation of events.
PROLOGUE

In the late nineteenth century France added Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) to its colonial empire. When German armies occupied France during World War II and Japanese armies over-ran Vietnam, French power was broken for several years. In that period a nationalist movement arose, known as the Viet Minh. When Japan withdrew from Vietnam, a new government led by Ho Chi Minh asserted Vietnamese independence. France, however, refused to recognize the regime. In 1946 it sent troops to Vietnam in an attempt to reassert French colonial hegemony.

Because the most widely revered Vietnamese nationalist leaders were also communists, Russia and China assisted the Viet Minh with military and economic aid. With this assistance they were able to win the crucial battle of Dien Bien Phu, effectively forcing France out of the war. Under the auspices of an internationally regulated cease-fire agreement, France withdrew its forces from North Vietnam, while the Communists withdrew from the South.

The Geneva agreement recognized the Communists as the
legitimate government in North Vietnam, and allowed France two years in which to withdraw from the South. The terms under which North and South were to reunite, however, were ambiguous. Dr. Douglas Pike asserted that, "The Agreements are not clear in meaning or intent." Sir Robert Thompson states that, "the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities," was signed by the various parties, but the, "final Declaration was not signed by any members of the conference . . . . [And] its standing in international law has since been much disputed." The Declaration called for free elections in the summer of 1956, but as Pike points out, "it did not specify elections for what . . . a single legislature for the entire country, or elections as a referendum." on reunification, "or elections to choose between Ho Chi Minh and Bao Dai - Ngo Dien Diem, or whatever."

Pike continued, "There is no unanimity of view among international lawyers on the question," of which government constituted legal authority in Vietnam. Some jurists, "take the tack that there [were] two states in Vietnam, neither of which [could] claim total permanent sovereignty." Both the Northern Communist regime and the new Southern government were, "of a caretaker nature, which legally should pass out of

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8Douglas Pike, War, Peace and the Viet Cong (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969), pp. 157-62. All of Dr. Pike's quotes on this page and the next come from this source.


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existence upon the creation of a new single state of Vietnam."
The new government of President Ngo Dien Diem in South Vietnam argued, with American support, that elections in North Vietnam could not be free. Since the North had the larger population, even if all the people in the South were opposed to the specific terms of unification being offered in 1956 they would still be outvoted by the Communist controlled block in the numerically larger North. Approximately one-third of the population of South Vietnam was made up of the religious sects, the Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, the Catholic refugees from the North, the Chinese business community, and the military officer class.10 Throughout the Viet Minh War these groups had demonstrated their anti-communism. Urban South Vietnam was also noted for its failure to support the Viet Minh against the French. These groups represented about one-half of the population, all told. Of the remaining half at least the upper-class land owners were strongly anti-communist.

Under these circumstances President Diem argued that nothing in the spirit of the Geneva agreements required the southerners to allow a communist totalitarian government to be imposed upon them against their will. Thompson stated that if a similar vote had been applied to East and West Germany or North and South Korea, the numerically larger non-communist blocks would certainly have prevailed. "That argument silenced Russia," which had initially supported the North Vietnamese

10Pike, War, p. 81.
demand for elections, but then retreated.\textsuperscript{11}

The London \textit{Economist} confirmed in 1973 that, "lawyers could spend a long time arguing whether this is what the 1954 Geneva agreements intended." The \textit{Economist} has an international reputation as one of the world's finest news publications. It is not a spokes piece of right wing views. It consistently referred to the war as a tragedy for a variety of reasons. When subjected to quantitative analysis, the great bulk of its coverage fell in the neutral category. It applied the same values to the Vietnam war as it applied to any of its other coverage. These principles led the \textit{Economist} to the editorial opinion that "the Americans were right to respond to South Vietnam's original and repeated appeals for help."\textsuperscript{12} This made sense in light of the American liberal ideals as set forth in the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution. This Bill of Rights guaranteed protection for the individuals right to freedom of expression in speech, the press, art and literature, and protection of the individual's private property from seizure by the government without the consent of the people's freely elected representatives. Helping a people resist the imposition of an unwanted communist totalitarian government was well within the tradition of American liberal ideals.

Beyond the moral and political aspects, there were U.S.

\textsuperscript{11}Thompson, \textit{Peace}, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{12}The London \textit{Economist}, January 6, 1973, p. 11.
security considerations. President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned that if North and South Vietnam became united under Ho Chi Minh, trouble would follow. Eisenhower believed that communist insurgents, with weapons supplied by Russia and China, would conquer Cambodia and Laos. Eisenhower was correct about this. Vietnamese guerrillas helped to develop the Khmer Rouge and Pathet Lao organizations which eventually overthrew the governments of Cambodia and Laos.

Eisenhower believed that the communists would not stop with Cambodia and Laos. He expected them to foster insurrections in Thailand, Malaya, and Indonesia. No one can say whether these efforts would have succeeded if America had not opposed the Communists in 1954. If they had, however, the balance of power in the world would have been considerably different. That scenario would have created a new Communist block containing approximately one fifth of the world's population. It would have given the Chinese and Russian insurrection specialists a greater degree of prestige and momentum. If this had translated into more vigorous Latin American insurgencies, leaders in the United States of the 1950s and 1960s would surely have reacted as if these events were a threat to national security. Thus it was by no means impossible that an unopposed Communist expansion in 1954 could have eventually created a situation which Americans would have seen as genuinely threatening their security. Arguably, then, there were quite legitimate reasons for the United States to
assist South Vietnam in 1954.

Unfortunately the Diem government quickly became unpopular in South Vietnam. By 1960 more than half of the rural population supported the Viet Cong insurgency. In the late 1950s and early 1960s as U.S. military aid increased, one might have asserted that the United States was militarily imposing a hated dictator on an unwilling people. A change in policy seemed warranted.

Because of the Viet Minh's popularity in the late 1950s and early 1960s, prominent observers advised the American government to reject a military buildup in Vietnam and concentrate on counterinsurgency. Bernard Fall warned that the situation was fraught with heavy political overtones: "To win the military battle but lose the political war could well become the U.S. fate in Vietnam." Hans Morgenthau advised the Kennedy administration "to avoid military responses [and] force political reforms upon the Diem regime." Robert Komer, who headed the allied counterinsurgency effort in 1967 stated that there was no "dearth of advice on how to fight an insurgency through land reform, rural development programs, paramilitary and police techniques." General Edward

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Landsdale "dissented with vigor" from the military buildup policy and recommended counterinsurgency. Dennis Duncanson and Sir Robert Thompson of the British Advisory Mission in Saigon, "gave similar operational advice," as did the Michigan State University Advisory Group.

President John F. Kennedy, however, chose to steadily increase the number of military advisors to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) (as well as the flow of weapons and supplies). When this proved insufficient, President Lyndon Johnson committed American air power. The introduction of massive American firepower did not sit well with liberals. Although it may have had some marginal military value in slowing the flow of Communist war supplies, bombing North Vietnam did not seem likely to make South Vietnamese peasants turn their support from the Viet Cong to the Saigon government. Walter Lippman stated that, "an American air war against North Vietnam was as foolish as it was immoral." Predictably the bombing failed to turn the war around. With the ARVN on the verge of defeat in 1965, Lippman wrote that Americans would have to pay for the "grievous mistake" of a failing Vietnam policy. Historian Charles DeBenedetti concluded, "They would pay either with their pride through a political settlement or with their lives in an extended war." President Johnson chose to commit U.S. ground forces.

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16 DeBenedetti, Ordeal, p. 94.
17 Ibid, p. 102.
When American troops landed in 1965, their mission was to make war on the hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese who were trying to overthrow their government. While American liberals could have endorsed the use of known counterinsurgency techniques (the introduction of democratic local government, combined with assistance in local security and economic development), simply killing the 40 percent of the population which lived in Communist controlled areas could not be justified. Under these circumstances the liberal anti-war movement arose in America.

The world had changed since 1954. The Communist insurgency in Malaya had been defeated. Governments there and in Indonesia were more stable. Some economic development had occurred. President Eisenhower's Domino Theory was probably less valid in 1965 than it had been a decade earlier. But even if one believed that Thailand, Malaya and Indonesia were still vulnerable, it would not have seemed necessary for the United States to militarily defeat the Communists in order to protect the remainder of Southeast Asia. The mere existence of an effective ARVN probably would have been enough to fulfill America's national security objectives. It would have given allied counterinsurgency experts enough time to implement the techniques which they had been arguing would win the war. If

18 Thompson, Peace, pp. 32-33.

an effective ARVN had existed at all, it seems unlikely that the Communists would have diverted resources for a large scale undertaking in another country. It does not seem probable that they would have chosen such a strategy, but even if the Communists had wished to do so their long supply line through Laos and Cambodia would have been vulnerable to an ARVN assault.

In order to meet U.S. security objectives, then, it was only necessary to insure against the collapse of the Saigon government, while working to improve South Vietnam's military performance. Some aggressive combat was required of American forces in 1965 to stave off immediate defeat, but having accomplished this much, as Sir Robert Thompson asks, "The question was 'What next?'" A limited application of American power would have required neither large numbers of American troops and casualties, nor the expenditure of massive quantities of American ordinance against Vietnamese civilians. Also, it would not have cost $150 billion. Even if South Vietnam had never proved viable, eventually American forces could have withdrawn, secure in the knowledge that Thailand, Malaya and Indonesia had developed sufficiently that they were no longer easy targets for insurgency or conquest. Time Inc.'s editor-in-chief Hedley Donovan made this argument in a 1971 editorial. Donovan stated that America had achieved its

\(^{20}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 134.\)

\(^{21}\text{Time}, \ June \ 14, \ 1971, \ pp. \ 28-30.\)
19

national security purpose because the other nations of South East Asia were no longer at risk.

President Johnson and General William Westmoreland, however, chose a more aggressive policy. They attempted to militarily defeat the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regular army. Westmoreland stated his priorities in his book, *A Soldier Reports*: "a commander . . . wins no battles by sitting back . . . . if we avoided battle, we would never succeed. We could never destroy the big units," if American troops did not aggressively pursue them into their elusive sanctuaries. 22

Thus American combat troops fought the Communists throughout South Vietnam, and American airpower was used against targets in North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Thompson, however, argued that this strategy was a mistake. If Westmoreland had used aggressive small unit patrols near the vital population centers he could have detected Communist main force attacks, and used superior American mobility to bring in the reserves. Battles fought in the open agricultural lands would have forced the Communists to expose themselves, allowing American fire power to overwhelm them. The Viet Cong would have been unchallenged in the vast unpopulated areas of mountainous jungle, but they would have been cut off from their source of supplies and recruits. Such a strategy would have taken much longer, and

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might never have actually defeated the Communist armies, but American success did not depend on defeating them. The lower level of American involvement would have made the war more palatable to critics during the time required to improve South Vietnamese performance. The United States, however, chose General Westmoreland's more aggressive search and destroy strategy.

Unhappy as they were with the American military buildup, "The great majority of antiwar critics . . . rejected the demand for immediate withdrawal as politically infeasible, dishonorable in view of Washington's past commitments," and an abandonment of the legitimate goal of checking Communist aggression.23 Still liberals were concerned about "the kind of war being waged."24 America was causing "untold harm to the people of Vietnam."25 During 1965 anti-war forces sent at least 1,500, "Vietnam-related messages per week," to the Johnson administration emphasizing "the immorality of the war."26 B-52 raids over North Vietnam called forth, "a moral judgement on the war's basic inhumanity."

In March 1965 the anti-war forces developed the "idea of a teach-in to focus attention 'on this war, its consequences

23DeBenedetti, Ordeal, p. 97.
24Ibid., p. 99.
25Ibid., p. 100.
26Ibid., p. 106. The next quote comes from this page also.
and ways to stop it. The technique was an instant success. One hundred and twenty universities held teach-ins during 1965. As the level of U.S. commitment grew, critics also developed the argument that America was wasting limited resources. The nation needed to "choose between devoting its resources and energies to maintaining military superiority and international hegemony or rechanneling those resources and energies to meeting the desperate needs of its people."25

Moreover many anti-war activists were "not necessarily opposed to all war, but rather to a military subjugation of newly emerging nations."29 Liberals also focused on the inequities of the draft, which allowed the wealthy, college bound upper classes to avoid service while the poor could not. It also forced unwilling American boys to go to Vietnam where they inevitably became part of the immoral process of killing innocent civilians. Draft resistance developed into a personal commitment for many anti-war liberals.30

In 1966 three marines were court martialed and sentenced to life imprisonment for, "killing civilians while on patrol near Tribinh." Grimly, Hans Morgenthaler predicted that "the real moral heroes of this war" would be those officers who quit

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27Ibid., p. 108.
28Ibid., p. 111.
29Ibid., p.136
their commands rather than participate in the indiscriminate killing of civilians.\textsuperscript{31} Journalists and activists who visited North Vietnam "documented the fact of tragic civilian destruction," caused by American bombing.\textsuperscript{32} With South Vietnamese civilian casualties averaging more than 2,000 per week, the United States appeared to be destroying the country it was supposed to be saving and corrupting itself in the process.\textsuperscript{33}

Martin Luther King stated that, "I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without first having spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today--my own government."\textsuperscript{34} King called for a bombing halt, defensive enclave strategy, and a negotiated settlement. At the beginning of 1968, like Martin Luther King, "Most liberals still resisted immediate withdrawal" but they could not support the methods by which the war was being fought.\textsuperscript{35}

In the spring of 1968 the Tet Offensive shocked America's confidence. It caused President Johnson to drop out of the Democratic primaries and to open negotiations with the

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 169.
\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 170.
\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 172-73.
\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 194.
Communists. When negotiations failed, the war dragged on through 1969. Although President Nixon announced the unilateral (phased) withdrawal of American troops, the fighting continued. The obvious question was if, "Even with a half-million troops and a punishing three year air war, the United States had failed" to significantly limit Hanoi's ability to make war, how were the South Vietnamese supposed to hold out after the Americans left? "What purpose could now be served by continued fighting?" Anti-war forces began to acknowledge "open acceptance of American failure in Vietnam." They called for immediate American withdrawal. In November 1969, "Perhaps a half-million Americans gathered" on the Mall in Washington, D.C. "to rescue the nation from the war makers." When the story of the My Lai massacre came to light, it only added fuel to the fire. The war was "a bad down-hill careening nightmare, entirely out of rational control."

President Nixon, however, proved to be an effective opponent. His "policy of negotiation and Vietnamization

36 General Westmoreland states on page 233 of A Soldier Reports that Johnson told him in November 1967 that he had decided not to seek reelection because of health problems.
37 DeBenedetti, Ordeal, p. 238.
38 Ibid., pp. 240, 248, 257.
39 Ibid., p. 262.
40 Ibid., p. 267.
largely denied an issue to anti-war activists. The problem was that since Nixon had already committed the nation to a unilateral withdrawal of American troops, it was difficult to convince a majority of the public that the immediate withdrawal of all troops should be the minimum requirement of a moral society. One anti-war response to this problem was, "to challenge the legitimacy of the Thieu government." If South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu could be shown to be a brutal military dictator who did not enjoy the support of the South Vietnamese people, then it would be much harder for Nixon to justify the continued fighting. If Thieu were in fact forcing the war upon a populace who would have preferred to negotiate a settlement, then further U.S. support of Vietnamization was clearly immoral. Peace activists "regarded Vietnamization as a mercenary policy which would perpetuate violence in Vietnam indefinitely." Liberals began denouncing Thieu as a tyrant. Because Thieu "would not submit to free elections and could not survive them . . . . the Saigon regime . . . was itself the real barrier to a peace settlement." American liberals found themselves "unhappily moving to the side of those who would prefer . . . an American

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41Ibid., p. 268.
42Ibid., p. 268.
43Ibid., p. 295.
44Ibid., p. 312.
defeat to Vietnamization." Randall Woods states that for one of the most powerful anti-war activists, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, William Fulbright, the war's basic immorality meant that "The worst thing that could have happened in Vietnam was for America to have won a military victory." In the spring of 1970 American troops attacked Communist strongholds in Cambodia. This move injected new vigor into the forces opposing the war as "the president unilaterally expanded it into Indochina." At this point the war caused one of its worst side effects in America. Student unrest in the wake of the Cambodian incursion brought the national guard to the Kent State University campus. When guardsmen shot four students to death, the tragedy reached new dimensions.

Still Nixon fought on. Despite years of protest, the killing continued. Many members of the anti-war movement became exhausted and bitter in 1971 and 1972. The President was able to continue prosecuting the war and remained popular enough to win a landslide reelection in 1972. Nixon and Kissenger's 1973 peace treaty gained the release of American prisoners and brought the troops home, "with honor." But for

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"Ibid., p.


Ibid., pp. 294, 297.
informed American liberals the war was not over. Peace activists, "drew a distinction between the end of overt American combat and continuing U.S. intervention in the struggle for power in Indochina." Nixon still pursued his "political objective of an allied anticommmunist South Vietnam. In that respect peace was still elusive and Vietnam yet an American dilemma."50

Because anti-war forces considered the Thieu regime to be the "real barrier to a peace settlement," that most Vietnamese wanted, it was morally imperative for the United States to "withhold further military and political assistance," to the South Vietnamese.51 Morality also required America to "end the bombing of Cambodia and military aid to Lon Nol." Anti-war forces could at least take satisfaction in achieving these goals. Congress forced Nixon to end U.S. air support of Lon Nol in the summer of 1973. In South Vietnam the United States continued to give some aid, but it was not enough to allow the ARVN to fight effectively. Sir Robert Thompson wrote that during 1973 the ARVN was able to use only one-fifth as much ammunition and one-tenth as much gasoline as it had used in 1971, even though the war was still being fought at a rate which killed 12,778 ARVN personnel (while 14,647 had died in 1971).52 George Herring states that after the Paris

52 Thompson, *Peace*, p. 156.
agreements, "Congress drastically cut back aid to South Vietnam . . . . air force operations had to be curtailed by as much as 50 percent because of shortages of gasoline and spare parts. Ammunition and other supplies had to be severely rationed. The inescapable signs of waning American support had a devastating effect on morale."\textsuperscript{53} After America withdrew, South Vietnam collapsed relatively quickly.

This essentially liberal interpretation of the anti-war movement, as compelling as it seems, leaves several questions unanswered. The underlying assumptions are that continued U.S. assistance to South Vietnam was immoral because: one, victory was impossible; and two, the unpopular military dictator, Thieu, was forcing the South Vietnamese people to continue a war which they did not want to fight. Historian Charles DeBenedetti argues, for example, that President Nixon, "perpetuated the illusion that . . . the United States could secure an independently viable, noncommunist regime in South Vietnam."\textsuperscript{54} George Herring states that no amount of support would have been "enough to save an army that refused to fight . . . . the American effort to create a bastion of anti-communism South of the seventeenth parallel was probably doomed from the start."\textsuperscript{55} Randall Woods believed that "the

\textsuperscript{53}George Herring, America's Longest War (New York: McKay, 1996), p. 293.

\textsuperscript{54}DeBenedetti, Ordeal, p.247

\textsuperscript{55}Herring, War, pp. 296, 298.
situation was that Hanoi had only to wait and refuse to make concessions; eventually the Americans would be gone and the pitifully weak Thieu would be summarily dispatched.  

But these assumptions must be challenged. Russia and China had been supplying the North Vietnamese with all of the weapons, ammunition, fuel they had used to fight the war. After the 1972 Easter Offensive the Communists spent $2.5 billion rebuilding the North's army with the most advanced artillery, tanks, and MIG aircraft in the Russian arsenal.  

Informed liberals also knew that the Viet Cong's normal daily fighting tactics amounted to war by perpetual atrocity.  

What if there had been good reason to believe that the South Vietnamese wanted to defend themselves from this ruthless, externally funded attempt to militarily impose totalitarian communism on them? Such evidence would render the liberal position, that morality required the United States to refuse them the means to defend themselves, extremely difficult to justify.  

A great deal of evidence exists supporting the conclusion that South Vietnamese forces fought hard and defeated their

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56 Woods, Fulbright, p. 561.


Communist adversary in the Tet Offensive, the Cambodian incursion, Operation Lam Son 719, the Easter Offensive, and in local security battles. Equally prominent is the evidence that the Communist position grew steadily weaker as a consequence of each of these defeats. This material is presented in chapters two and three below.

Herring, DeBenedetti, and Woods assert that, "the American effort was doomed from the start." This opinion appears in virtually every mainstream history of the war. Nevertheless there exists a substantial body of evidence contradicting the assertion that the war was impossible to win.

A second question about the assumptions which underlay the liberal interpretation of the war arises from the assertion that President Thieu was a brutal and unpopular military dictator who forced the South Vietnamese to fight on when they would have preferred to negotiate an end to the war. DeBenedetti argues that the Saigon/U.S.A. report "documented the barbarous repression of the Thieu regime. In this respect it got to the bottom of the matter of Vietnam . . . [because] 'We do not have the right and do not have the capacity to save a political regime abroad that does not have the respect of its own people.'" If America withdrew its support the Communists were bound to win but "that could not be as bad as the repression and destruction wrought by Saigon" and its

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59 DeBenedetti, Ordeal, p. 269.
George Herring added that America "stubbornly supported Thieu long after it was evident the President had no backing within his own country."

Again, there is a considerable body of evidence which contradicts these opinions. Dr. Howard Penniman, Professor of Government at Georgetown University, investigated the charges that the Thieu regime was brutally repressive. He found that there were twenty-seven Vietnamese language newspapers operating in April 1972. There were, "five pro-government, eight anti-government, nine independent and five religious," publications. During 1970, 1971, and the early part of 1972 (when the research was conducted), "no daily newspaper had been suspended and no editor or newsman jailed or fined," although anti-government editorials were frequently published. Dr. Lucian W. Pye of the Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, stated in 1971 that, "compared with most Asian societies South Vietnam remains relatively open." Dr. John P. Roche, Professor of Politics at Brandies University wrote that South Vietnam had, "a considerably higher specific democratic gravity than some 100 members of the United Nations." U.S.

60 Ibid., p. 322.
61 Herring, War, p. 297.
Commanding General William Westmoreland described Thieu as being "honest and candid . . . a master of timing. He was patient and cautious . . . a deft handler of the leaders of the religious and sectional factions."\(^6^3\)

Reporters for *Time* magazine and the *Economist* were in South Vietnam during the 1971 presidential election. Both agreed that Thieu had "enough solid support in the countryside to win going away."\(^6^4\) Dr. Penniman's observations confirmed this opinion. The evidence of Thieu's electoral popularity is presented on pages 84-86 below.

A more important question, however, is whether the South Vietnamese people supported Thieu's war policy. Events documented in 1968 and 1972 strongly suggested they did. In 1968 President Johnson agreed to participate in peace talks with the North Vietnamese government and the National Liberation Front (the political representative of the Viet Cong). President Thieu, however, upset the process by refusing to cooperate. Thieu believed that if the NLF were allowed to participate it would amount to an admission that they legitimately represented some portion of the South Vietnamese people and thus should be allowed to participate in a coalition government. Thieu preferred to seek a military victory rather than negotiate on those terms. Because of this

\(^6^3\)Westmoreland, Report, p. 218.

stand Thieu was hailed as a hero throughout Saigon. Time reported that the normally quarrelsome opposition press had united behind the President. A photograph showed members of the South Vietnamese legislature marching in support of Thieu's strong pro-war, anti-communist stand.

President Thieu took a similarly strong stand in rejecting Henry Kissinger's Paris agreement of October 1972. The London Economist reported that just as in 1968 Thieu had "won a lot of support this week, even among his political rivals" for his strong pro-war, anti-communist stand. Popular enthusiasm for the war was strong enough that the elite divisions of the military, such as the airborne and the marines, filled their manpower quotas from volunteers in 1972. No draft was necessary for these units.

Dr. Penniman agreed, stating that "Nearly all members of the National Assembly sprang to the defense of South Vietnamese independence" during the 1972 Easter Offensive. They "led the people in contributing money to the cost of defending the nation" in this crisis. Penniman concluded that "the vast majority of the South Vietnamese appear to prefer" supporting the war effort, rather than allowing a communist totalitarian government to conquer them.

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65 Ibid., November 15, 1968, pp. 40-42.
67 Thompson, Peace, p. 112.
68 Penniman, Elections, pp. 195-96.
The South Vietnamese people gave conclusive proof of their preference in 1975. By then it was clear that the ARVN had neither the money to pay its soldiers nor the ammunition to fight effectively. The United States had demonstrated that it did not intend to re-intervene. The ARVN was in full retreat, and in no position to counterattack in any foreseeable future. Thus the war was over in areas being "liberated" by the North Vietnamese.

The people living in these areas had a clear choice. If they rallied to the Communists they could secure a variety of benefits. They would be safely behind the front lines, physically secure from the war. They would be able to continue living in their own homes. Most important, perhaps, they would gain favor with the new government by immediately rallying to its standard.

If, instead of accepting these benefits, people tried to flee the Communists, they exposed themselves to North Vietnamese artillery fire, which was constantly intradicting all roads. The best hope of those who survived the deadly artillery bombardment would have been to find shelter in a refugee camp near Saigon.

Given these two choices, the people fled south by the hundreds of thousands. They unquestionably preferred the continued suffering of war under the Saigon government to security and peace under the Communists.

Thus here again the liberal interpretation of the war can
be questioned. What is the evidence that the Thieu regime was an unpopular, brutally repressive dictatorship which forced the Vietnamese people to continue a war which they would have preferred not to fight? One purpose of this thesis, then, will be to challenge the assumptions underlying the liberal position in the years after the 1968 Tet Offensive.
CHAPTER 1

TIME'S IDEOLOGICAL BIAS

This thesis examines the bias in Time magazine's coverage of the Vietnam War. In order to get a sense of the criteria used to categorize Time's articles and measure bias, readers should cast themselves in the role of a propagandist. If the propaganda editor for a pro-war publication would have wanted an article printed, then it was a pro-war article. Conversely, if the editor of an anti-war publication would have wanted to print it, then it was an anti-war piece. If neither editor would particularly have favored an article's publication, but would have had no particular objection to its use, then the article was neutral. The next few pages more specifically define these positions.

Many representatives of the anti-war position came to believe that the U.S. involvement in the war had been a mistake from the beginning. It had been immoral for America to impose its choice of corrupt military dictators on South Vietnam. It was objectionable for the United States to use its
massive advantage in technology and firepower against a less developed, nonindustrial nation. It was unconscionable for Americans to have killed hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese. Beyond that it was senselessly impractical because the war could not have been won at any reasonable cost. Worse perhaps, dissention over the war ripped American society apart. The U.S. presence in Vietnam was causing both nations needless, senseless suffering. America had little or nothing to gain from its continuing involvement in Vietnam, and a great deal to lose. The surest way to end the U.S. orchestrated tragedy in Vietnam was to end U.S. involvement. From the anti-war point of view, there was really only one question about the war: how soon could the U.S. withdraw?

Opponents of the war favored publicizing the war's tragedies, the My Lai and Kent State massacres in particular. An anti-war publicist would have wanted to emphasize the cost of the war in lives and dollars. Money wasted on the war could not be spent on America's legitimate needs and social programs. Publications taking the anti-war view would have written about the suffering of U.S. service personnel and prisoners of war. The problems of Vietnamese civilians driven from their homes into squalid refugee camps would have been important. Anti-war forces portrayed the Saigon government as a corrupt and repressive military dictatorship. Anti-war protest demonstrations in the U.S. were seen in the most favorable light.
It was also very important from the anti-war prospective to define the war as being hopelessly lost. This was crucial because by 1971 the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) had taken over almost all of the combat responsibilities from U.S. troops. If the perception had existed among the U.S. public that the ARVN could win the war with only U.S. financial aid, advisors, and occasional air support, some Americans would have endorsed this ongoing aid. Those who wished to cut off funds would certainly have faced an angry debate. If, however, anti-war forces were successful in convincing the American public that the war could not be won (the ARVN was incompetent, and the South Vietnamese people did not support the corrupt military dictatorship of the Thieu regime) then complete American withdrawal would have been the only reasonable choice.

On the other side of the issue, pro-war advocates believed that the principles of containment applied to the Vietnam War. They felt that communism was an evil system, which stole the rights and freedoms of the people whom it oppressed. Proponents of containment believed that Russia and China were aggressive military empires. They used the "national war of liberation" as their favorite technique for enlarging their empires. Communist agents worked in third world countries across the globe in support of these national wars of liberation. They armed and trained guerrilla insurgents. These small minorities of Communists then tried to
militarily subjugate the unwilling majority. When the Communists won, in North Vietnam for example, they used brutal methods to institute collectivized agriculture and maintained power through the use of harsh police state tactics.⁶⁹

From this point of view, the U.S. needed to help those countries which were threatened by international Communism. Helping people fight Communism was morally good in and of itself, because it prevented the enslavement and suffering of the threatened people. But it was also fundamentally necessary to the security of the United States. International Communism could only be stopped by force. If the United States could not help Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans fight and contain international Communism then eventually America would be forced to fight World War Three against the enlarged Chinese and Russian empires.

People who believed in containment wanted to preserve the independence of South Vietnam. Representatives of this point of view emphasized the fact that ARVN had taken more battle casualties than the United States in 1968, and by mid-1969 it was taking at least 80 percent of the allied battle deaths.⁷⁰ War supporters wrote about the improving degree of security provided by the ARVN in combination with the new local militia, the Regional Forces (RF) and the Popular Forces (PF).


⁷⁰Time, December 12, 1969, p. 15.
They emphasized the improving standard of living of the South Vietnamese peasantry and their newly prestigious social status after land reform had made them farm owners for the first time in the nation's history.

As the United States reduced its presence in Vietnam, there would have been some level of assistance which would have allowed South Vietnam to sustain its independence from the North Vietnamese Communists. In South Korea, for example, the U.S. maintained troops and economic assistance over an extended period of time. War supporters wanted to frame the debate during U.S. withdrawal in terms of how much continuing assistance would have been required to win a Korea-like settlement.

Working from these perspectives, this thesis treats those combat articles which portray allied troops in positive winning terms as pro-war stories. Articles which portrayed the Communists in positive winning terms were anti-war.

Peace treaty negotiation stories have all been defined as neutral. Technically, perhaps, they should all be counted as anti-war. Certainly there were members of the pro-war camp who believed that the allies should simply win on the battle field and forget about negotiating. There were also, however, many war supporters who would have welcomed a negotiated settlement, if the terms had been acceptable. *Time*’s articles on the peace negotiations were always quite speculative in nature. There were never enough concrete details about the
terms for readers to judge whether they could have supported a treaty or not. Thus, for purposes of this paper, they have been categorized as neutral.

Using these criteria of classification, from June 1, 1969, through December 24, 1974, Time published 693 CI pro-war, 4047 CI neutral, and 5,578 CI anti-war. If one looks at the period from September 21, 1970 forward, Time's bias was even more pronounced: 228 CI pro-war, 2758 CI neutral, and 3,916 CI anti-war.

In June 1971, Time Inc.'s editor-in-chief, Hedley Donovan, laid out the magazine's editorial philosophy. Donovan argued "for total withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam" as quickly as possible. He continued, "Actually, there are grounds for thinking that the South has a fighting chance, but . . . the U.S. can no longer stay . . . to protect or improve that chance." Donovan believed that too many Americans had already died in Vietnam. "Coming out of Viet Nam means removing all American combat and support forces--land, sea and air--from South Vietnam, and ending air operations, carrier based and Thailand based, over Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia." This editorial was not one of a series, it was not balanced by a similar pro-war editorial. It represented Time Inc.'s editor-in-chief announcing his conviction about the war. In the editorial, Donovan explained why he had converted from being a war supporter to being an advocate of immediate

\[7\] Time, June 14, 1971, pp. 28-30.
withdrawal. Donovan actively promoted his anti-war views, not only in Time but also through a series of anti-war speeches. As early as 1967, he told a New York University graduating class that America ought to "admit that we had attempted something beyond our powers" in Vietnam.\(^2\)

Donovan's view was essentially that of the anti-war movement. The U.S. should completely withdraw as quickly as possible, even if it meant losing a war which might have been hypothetically possible to win. Time outlined this position as early as the October 24, 1969, issue. It contained the argument that what America required was "a commitment that U.S. forces be totally withdrawn regardless of progress in Saigon or any other factor . . . . Bitterness at home is likely to grow so severe if the war is continued even at a relatively low level that the U.S. system itself is likely to be impaired."\(^3\)

This article represents an extreme form of anti-war rhetoric. It completely misrepresents the mood of mass opinion in America. The fact is that as U.S. combat deaths fell so did support for the anti-war movement. Public opinion polls showed consistent support for President Nixon's policy of relatively low levels of U.S. combat involvement while helping the South


\(^3\)Time, October 24, 1969, p. 20.
Vietnamese prepare to defend themselves. A September 1972, Harris poll found that 55 percent supported continued heavy bombing of North Vietnam, 64 percent supported the mining of the Haiphong Harbor, and 74 percent thought it was important that South Vietnam not fall into the hands of the Communists.

In a February 1970 article, Time asserted that the policy of Vietnamization was immoral because it prolonged an immoral war that could not be won. Here again, only members of the anti-war movement felt that Vietnamization was immoral. Most Americans consistently supported Vietnamization. In May 1970, Time offered the view that "The President is isolated . . . not adequately exposed to reasonable opposing views . . . he has not offered the level of moral leadership [which the country needs. Thus] the nation disintegrates . . . . If Americans continue on their present path, their epitaph might well be that they were a potentially great people." It seems absurd that a respected national publication could have been predicting the collapse of the republic if America did not withdraw all forces from Vietnam as quickly as possible. Yet that is exactly what Time magazine was doing in 1970.

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74 Hallin, "Uncensored War", p. 182.


Again, it represents an extreme form of anti-war rhetoric.

In the spring of 1971, *Time* announced that, "To those who have long regarded U.S. involvement in the war as profoundly immoral, a victory would be the final outrage." In May 1972 *Time* asserted that the war continued as it did only because of President Nixon's "almost obsessive fear of personal humiliation in Viet Nam." In November 1972 *Time* helped America "assess the terrible cost of its . . . most debilitating . . . unwinnable, inconclusive and finally intolerable war . . . . The methods we have used in fighting the war have scandalized and disgusted public opinion in almost all foreign countries."^80

It was, however, in the April 5, 1971, issue that *Time* assumed its most extreme anti-war position. *Time* announced that it was sympathetic to the idea that America, as a matter of principle, ought to be defeated on the battle field. The article began by quoting columnist Arthur Hoope, "The radio this morning said the allied invasion of Laos had bogged down. Without thinking I nodded and said 'good'. And having said it, I realized the bitter truth: Now I root against my own country." *Time* went on to explain, in its own editorial words, that rooting for an American defeat on the battle field "is not basically a matter of treason . . . . since it long ago

became clear that an American 'victory' in Viet Nam is impossible.\footnote{Ibid., April 5, 1971, p. 12.}

Time's editorial philosophy is clear enough. But was it simply reflecting what it perceived as public opinion? No, it was not. During 1969-1971, polls showed that most Americans were angry and frustrated by the length of the war, the number of dead, and the cost in dollars. They did not, however, want to see America withdraw from Vietnam in defeat.\footnote{Louis Harris, The Anquish of Change (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 70.} They supported President Nixon's policy of Vietnamization, which strove to build up South Vietnam's resources to a level at which it would be able to defend itself from the North Vietnamese Communists. This policy required U.S. combat troops to remain in South Vietnam defending the country until ARVN units could develop the strength to take their places. As U.S. troop strength diminished, President Nixon stated, on more than one occasion, that "Air power, of course, will continue to be used. We will continue to use it in support of the South Vietnamese until [they] have developed the capacity to handle the situation themselves."\footnote{Time, November 22, 1971, p. 24.} President Nixon and his policies averaged a 57 percent approval rating from the American public during his first term in office, 1969-1972.\footnote{Hallin, 'Uncensored' War, p. 182.}
Public opinion on the war broke into three groups. A noisy minority of Americans continued to actively support the war. *Time* carried stories of pro-war demonstrations on four separate occasions scattered through 1969 and 1970. I have not been able to find any figure for the size of this group, as a national percentage.

The second minority group were those who, like *Time*, believed in the goals of the anti-war movement. A poll in June 1970 showed that 27 percent of the American public were sympathetic to the anti-war protest demonstrations (53 percent condemned them). The anti-war movement then probably represented about 27 percent of all Americans. The majority of Americans were angry and frustrated, but still supported the President.

Public opinion polls frequently asked in one form or another whether Americans approved of the President's handling of the war. In late 1972 a majority of the public responded positively to this question. *Time*, however, responded negatively and scolded the American public for disagreeing. "By any yardstick, except the polls, the Administration should

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87 Harris, *Anguish*, p. 75.
be in trouble over its handling of the war." The article then provided detailed criticism of the President's handling of the war.

*Time* indicated on six other occasions that it was aware of the huge gulf separating its editorial philosophy from the mass of American public opinion. In October of 1969 *Time* announced the results of the latest Lou Harris poll: "it is remarkable [that the] President enjoys considerable public support: a majority backs him on the rate of troop withdrawal and on the matter of self determination for South Vietnam."*89* In September 1970 *Time* indicated that although Congress had passed the Copper-Church amendment in July (ending funding for U.S. troops in Cambodia), a filibuster had delayed passage until the United States had already evacuated Cambodia. "Since then the doves have been beaten [on all proposed pieces of anti-war legislation, and] public opinion polls show that public support of the President's policies remains strong."*90*

In November 1971 *Time* indicated clearly that its value system (the values of the anti-war movement) were considerably more liberal than those of the mass of American opinion. The article stated that President Nixon was making heavier use of bombing than even President Johnson had. Lamenting that the anti-war forces remained dormant in spite of this provocation,

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*88* *Time*, October 23, 1972, p. 34.


Time concluded, "The harsh calculation—that it is better to sacrifice Vietnamese lives than American ones—seems to satisfy the American public . . . . [But, Time hoped] Eventually stronger emotional opposition to the air war may build." The difference between Time's position and the mass of American opinion was best expressed by sociologist Dr. Howard Schuman in his study of attitudes about the war. As U.S. combat troops played a smaller role and combat casualties declined, the issue for members of the anti-war movement was, "What are we doing to the Vietnamese?"; for the mass public it was "Are we winning the war?" In other words, for Time and the anti-war movement Nixon's use of bombing amounted to a crime against humanity. By contrast, the general public consistently supported the use of bombing in an effort to win the war.

In the May 3, 1972, issue Time devoted 63 column inches to an attack on "the reckless President Nixon [who] risked WWIII by mining Haiphong Harbor . . . . [It was] the act of an emperor, a dictator," who acted alone against all advice. Lost in the middle of several pages of radical anti-war rhetoric Time included three column inches stating that, "A Lou Harris survey showed that 59% of Americans backed Nixon's mining decision." If 59 percent supported the President's

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decision, why did Time give only three column inches to this view, while spending twenty times as much print space condemning, "the act of an emperor, a dictator," who acted alone against all advice?

Finally, on June 12, 1972, Time reported on two-hundred "in depth interviews" conducted for the purpose of measuring voter reaction to the war and how it might affect the 1972 U.S. presidential election. Time introduced the topic by saying that the "North Vietnamese pressed their military advantage [as] the war that will not go away once again preyed on the nation's conscience." In a virtual non sequitur, Time then conceded that 70 percent of those interviewed backed the President's policy on Vietnam, and believed that "Something like the negotiated settlement in Korea" was now possible.† The public believed that the allies could stop the advance of communism in Vietnam, as they had in Korea, because the ARVN, with the assistance of U.S. air power but no U.S. combat troops, had just turned the tide of battle against the massive Communist invasion known as the 1972 Easter Offensive. "Something like the negotiated settlement in Korea," with its long-term commitment of U.S. forces to guarantee the peace, was exactly what Hedley Donovan had argued so emphatically against. Thus one sees the enormous distance between Time magazine and the average American.

†Ibid., June 12, 1972, p. 16.
Time's editorial philosophy appears to have affected its war coverage in several ways. First, when events admitted of two interpretations, Time gave almost all of its print space to that view which best supported the interests of the anti-war movement. Chapter two will address this subject. Second, as Hedley Donovan said, "Actually, there are grounds for thinking that the South has a fighting chance." Time's reporters and editors were perfectly well aware of the evidence that progress was being made toward winning the war. Administration spokesmen were doing all they could to bring such evidence to the attention of reporters. In the period from mid-1969 through the end of the war, Time actually printed 123 CI which told the story of the war being won. Unfortunately 123 CI spread out over 260 plus issues was not really adequate to tell the story. The other problem, for anyone interested in a balanced picture of the war, was that Time printed 5,578 CI of anti-war material in this same period. The details of the story that Time did not tell will constitute chapter three. Third, Time factually misrepresented what was happening in Vietnam in a variety of ways. Chapter four will cover Time's factual misrepresentations.
CHAPTER 2

THE ANTI-WAR INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS PUBLISHED IN TIME
AND THE UNPUBLISHED PRO-WAR INTERPRETATION

From mid-1969 on, if the events of the war admitted of a pro-war and an anti-war interpretation, *Time* gave almost all of its print space to the interpretation which best supported the interests of the anti-war movement. The topics illustrating this tendency include: coverage of the battlefields and villages during the period from 1968-1972; coverage of the anti-war protest demonstrations in the U.S.; and coverage of South Vietnam's 1971 presidential election.

The coverage of the battlefields and villages was the most important in forming an accurate view of the war. In early 1968 the Communists launched a massive assault known as the Tet Offensive. They captured most of Hue and parts of Saigon before being repulsed. Prior to the 1968 Tet Offensive *Time* had supported the Johnson Administration's policy by
maintaining a two to one pro-war bias in its coverage. The February 9 issue was the first to carry news of the Tet Offensive. Beginning with this issue, Time's bias shifted to a four to one anti-war stance, and the battlefield coverage of Tet reflected this new anti-war bias.

As spring turned to summer, it became clear that the Communists had taken a terrific military beating in the Tet Offensive, and Time moved from its four to one anti-war bias back to a strong pro-war bias for a short period, before becoming virtually neutral for a year. In total, Time printed 340 Cl describing Tet as a military victory for the Communists (printed mainly in February and March 1968) and 177 Cl describing the campaign as a military victory for the allies (mainly from the short pro-war period in late spring). Today, the standard historiographic interpretation of Tet is that although the Communists suffered a military defeat, Tet was the turning point in the war for them, because it caused the American public to stop supporting the war. Thus Time factually misrepresented the Tet Offensive by giving twice as much space to coverage representing it as a military victory for the Communists.

On March 28, 1969, Time offered the summation of its analyses of Tet. Time concluded that the Communists had suffered heavy casualties but had been able to replace their loses and remain on the offensive. "But they had also won a

95 Herring, War, pp. 203-204,241.
clear cut psychological victory, demonstrating their ability to attack almost anywhere in Viet Nam at will and shattering all the optimistic assessments of the war in the minds of the U.S. public." This is very much the conclusion of mainstream U.S. historiography.

Qualified, newsworthy experts, however, presented a differing interpretation of the Tet Offensive. *Time* devoted only 17 CI to this alternative view, as articulated by John Paul Vann, Sir Robert Thompson, and Dr. Douglas Pike.

John Paul Vann was the second ranking civilian in the pacification/nation building agency, Civil Operations and Rural Development Support, commonly referred to as CORDS. Vann had been in Vietnam longer than any American, with the exception of Dr. Pike. He had a great deal of personal experience in rural South Vietnam. Vann demonstrated his expert knowledge in his loud and public criticisms of the state of rural pacification in the early 1960s. Arguably, Vann had as deep an understanding of the war as any American and may have been in the best position to judge the state of rural pacification.

Vann testified in a 1970 hearing before a Senate subcommittee that he believed that the Tet Offensive had been

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the turning point in the war. He, however, contended that it had been the turning point at which a war that would have been enormously difficult to win became winnable. Vann asserted that the Viet Cong's best South Vietnamese guerrillas had borne the brunt of the battle for the Communists, and they had sustained crippling loses. He estimated that perhaps two-thirds of the Communists' experienced South Vietnamese guerrilla cadre had been killed in 1968. This staggering manpower loss forced the Viet Cong to withdraw from substantial portions of the South Vietnamese countryside. As the Communists withdrew, newly trained local defense platoons known as the Regional Forces (RF) and the Popular Forces (PF) deployed across the country. These 1,000 new platoons used aggressive night patrols to bring security to most of rural South Vietnam for the first time.

When the Communists were able to refill the ranks of the Viet Cong, it was with North Vietnamese guerrillas whom the South Vietnamese peasants regarded as invaders. Prior to the Tet Offensive, the South Vietnamese Viet Cong guerrillas had had access to and support from most of the villages in South Vietnam. After Tet, they lost regular access to and support from 75 percent of the nation's hamlets, even at night. This forced the Communists to fight a conventional war, which would

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have been very difficult, if not impossible, for them to win, if the United States had provided ongoing air support to the South Vietnamese.

Sir Robert Thompson agreed with Vann. In December 1969, *Time* reported that "the Cambridge educated Thompson, 53, was knighted for devising the strategy that ultimately defeated local Chinese Communist terrorists in Malaya in the 1950s. . . Viet Nam has been his specialty since 1961." At President Nixon's request, Thompson spent five weeks touring Viet Nam. He reported that the improvements since 1968 were astounding. Though the Tet Offensive was a Communist psychological victory, Thompson argued that it was militarily suicidal. "'The thing that surprised me more than anything else was the extent to which the government has regained control in the countryside,' he said. . . 'the war isn't won, but we're in the kind of position from which we could win. . . . It could take three to five years before Hanoi is compelled to give up her purpose and to negotiate a real settlement.'"

Dr. Pike goes further in his interpretation of the Tet Offensive. Based on his reading of North Vietnamese sources, Pike believes that the battle of Ia Drang Valley in November 1965 was a major turning point in the war. In this battle the Communists sacrificed between 1,000 and 2,000 men in order to test the fighting techniques of the U.S. forces. They concluded that the modified guerrilla warfare tactics employed

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at Dien Bien Phu would not work against the superior American fire power and mobility. As they searched for another strategy, the Communists were under increasing American pressure. They, "had not won a single battle of significance in two years. Allied fire power was eating deeply into their reserves of men and supplies. [Their] desertion rate had doubled every six months. . . . A loss of ideological faith was leading to confusion and demoralization among the key figures in the South, the cadres."\(^{100}\) Lt. General Ngo Quang Truong also describes Viet Cong loses and weakness throughout 1966 and 1967 as forcing the change in strategy which lead to the 1968 Tet Offensive.\(^{101}\) General Donn Starry reached the same conclusion.\(^{102}\) Thus, the Communists were forced into a new strategy. They judged their massive 1968 assault on urban South Vietnam to be the least unattractive option in a set of bad choices. The Tet Offensive was a military catastrophe for all the reasons cited, but it was not simply a mistake in strategy. It was a gamble forced on Hanoi by their steadily deteriorating position in 1966 and 1967.

*Time* did not quote any of John Paul Vann's testimony regarding the Tet Offensive and its effect on rural

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\(^{100}\) Pike, *War*, pp. 121-24.


pacification, even though Vann had spoken in a Congressional hearing open to reporters. Time did interview Vann in July 1971. He was quoted as denying any knowledge of South Vietnamese General Ngo Dzu's alleged connection to narcotics trafficking. In May 1972 Time cited Vann's prediction that the coming spring offensive, now known as the Easter Offensive, would be an all out invasion. Neil Sheehan explained that by 1970, "While many of the reporters Vann knew no longer agreed with his conclusions about the war, he retained a special credibility with the press because of all he had put in the bank in the past and because he could still be frank about the flaws on the Saigon side." In other words the media was willing to use Vann's expert knowledge as a source to criticize the war, but would not publicize his overall evaluation. On June 19, 1972, Time gave six column inches to reporting Vann's death. His interpretation of the Tet Offensive did not appear in the magazine.

Time quoted Pike in May 1969 analyzing the divisions within the North Vietnamese leadership. Pike's assessment of the serious problems facing Hanoi, however, were not published. Time gave Thompson 17 CI.

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In total, *Time* published 340 CI describing Tet as a military victory for the Communists, 177 CI describing it as a military victory for the allies, and only 17 CI explaining the pro-war interpretation of the Tet Offensive and its effect on the state of rural pacification. *Time* also periodically ran articles asking the question, 'is pacification working?', and invariably concluded that some progress was being made, but that it was fragile and was unlikely to succeed before the United States was forced out of Vietnam. Time did not elaborate on who was doing the forcing.

Sir Robert Thompson and John Paul Vann were certainly two of the world's foremost experts on pacification. Both agreed that Tet had been the turning point at which the allies had begun to win the war. Their reasons for believing that the war had turned (as stated by Vann and others in over 700 pages of transcript in open hearings before the Congress) were logically coherent and were supported by a good deal of solid verifiable evidence (described in chapter three of this paper).

By failing to give the pro-war interpretation of the 1968 Tet Offensive and its effect on pacification anything like equal space, *Time* prevented its readership from having the opportunity to make an informed discussion about the war. Polls suggested again and again that a majority of Americans

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would have preferred to have won the Vietnam War if it could have been done without sacrificing the lives of U.S. combat troops. Vann and Thompson were certain that it could have been done. If they were correct, then Time's failure to publish this interpretation did a remarkable service for those who believed in the goals of the anti-war movement and a remarkable disservice to the majority of Americans.

The media also took a strong position denouncing the allies' 1970 operations in Cambodia. In March 1970, General Lon Nol overthrew Prince Sihanouk's government. The new regime then closed the port of Sihanoukville to the Communists. Sihanoukville had been used to import 80 percent of the Communist war supplies destined for the Mekong Delta region. Time then reported that since almost all of the Communists' supplies would have to come overland from the North, "'they're going to have a helluva time sustaining themselves in the lower half of South Vietnam. . . . Rocket and mortar attacks have become almost a rarity . . . there is reason to believe that the Communists are being forced to revise their entire strategy for conducting the war.'"

North Vietnamese troops responded by stepping up their support of the Khmer Rouge and trying to overthrow the Cambodian government. President Nixon stated that "My immediate inclination was to do everything possible to help

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Lon Nol. In opposition to the President's desire, Secretary of State William Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird "strongly recommended that we hold back," because if America aided Lon Nol the Communists would believe the United States had engineered the coup and that they were justified in unleashing a full-scale invasion of Cambodia. On April 22, however, Nixon wrote in his diary, "We have really dropped the ball on this one due to the fact that we were taken in with the line that by helping him we would destroy his 'neutrality' and give the North Vietnamese an excuse to come in. Over and over again we fail to learn that the Communists never need an excuse to come in . . . . the only government in Cambodia in the last twenty-five years that had the guts to take a pro-Western and pro-American stand is ready to fall," and the United States had not yet taken any substantial measures to help it.

Nixon stated, "I never had any illusions about the shattering effect a decision to go into Cambodia would have on public opinion at home." He decided to act anyway. General Abrams had advised the President that in military terms it would be highly advantageous for the allies to respond to the North Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Vietnamization would significantly benefit if the Communist supply stockpiles were

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110 Nixon, RN, p. 447. The rest of the paragraph comes from this page also.

111 Ibid., p. 449. The rest of the paragraph comes from this page. Page 450 describes General Abrams opinion.
destroyed and the supply port remained closed.

This put the President in a peculiar position. A pro-American government which seemed to enjoy broad popular support had come to power in Cambodia.\textsuperscript{112} The Communist North Vietnamese army occupied a substantial part of Cambodia and had begun training Khmer Rouge guerrillas for their war against Lon Nol. Nixon believed that in a military sense he needed to address the problem. He knew also that the American media would take the position, espoused by Communist propaganda releases, that he had widened the war by invading a neutral country. The President decided to act in spite of the media's opposition. Militarily the operation was an unqualified success, and ARVN troops continued to conduct cross border operations in Cambodia, preventing the Communists from regaining access to Sihanoukville.\textsuperscript{113}

Lt. General Truong confirmed the importance of the Cambodian operation. He stated that the Communist's Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) issued Resolution Number 9 in 1969. It "emphasized the strategic importance of the Mekong Delta," and ordered the entire NVA 1st Division into the Delta. The infiltration "succeeded despite heavy losses" to the Communists. After the North Vietnamese were established in the Delta, the South Vietnamese local security forces "were

\textsuperscript{112}Woods, Fulbright, p. 634.

thrown off-balance and the pacification effort declined as a result of extensive enemy attacks and shellings. Not until after the enemy's sanctuaries beyond the border had been destroyed during the Cambodian incursion and his capability to resupply from the sea eliminated were these 1st NVA Division forces compelled to break down into small elements and withdraw."114

The American media did not report the effect of the Cambodian operation on the NVA 1st Division in the Delta. Instead, the media condemned President Nixon. In response to the American media's apparently pro-communist coverage of the Cambodian operation, the London Economist wrote, "For years, North Vietnam has violated the neutrality of this country--with barely a chirp of protest from the rest of the world . . . . To condemn the United States for 'invading' neutral Cambodia is about as rational as to condemn Britain for 'invading' formally neutral Holland in 1944."115

With the Sihanoukville port closed to the Communists, President Nixon hoped that an allied strike against the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos would damage the North Vietnamese supply lines sufficiently to prevent them from launching a 1971 offensive. The operation, code named Lam Son 719, began in February 1971. Time reported that the ARVN attacked with a

114 Truong, Easter, p. 139.

115 Nixon, RN, p. 453.
main force of 14,000 men. Besides this main force, several artillery fire bases were lifted by helicopter onto the mountain tops overlooking the supply trail in Laos. Time noted that the Communists had 35,000 troops arrayed in defensive positions around the point of attack. Another 20,000 Communist troops were converging on the ARVN's position from other parts of Cambodia and Laos. Large numbers of reinforcements also poured into the battle zone from the North Vietnamese regular army divisions assigned to defend their side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ—the border between North and South Vietnam). South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu then threatened to take advantage of the Communist's vulnerability by launching an invasion of North Vietnam itself. Time reported that China took the threat seriously enough that "Premier Chou En-lai retaliated by [declaring that China would] 'take all necessary measures, not flinching even from the greatest national sacrifices,' to help the North Vietnamese" if ARVN forces invaded.

Time also reported that the ARVN faced some unusual problems. The artillery that the U.S. had helilifted in was inadequate. The ARVN's "155 mm eleven mile range howitzers are often out reached by North Vietnamese gunners with 130 mm

pieces that can fire a shell 17 miles. [Also] Fog blankets fire bases and curtails vital air support.  

120 Somewhat over 2,000 ARVN troops were killed, while the Communists lost more than 15,000.  

121 After two months of heavy fighting the South Vietnamese withdrew from Laos.

A reasonable interpretation of Operation Lam Son 719 might have been as follows. After the Communist supply port of Sihanoukville had been cut off in 1970, the Ho Chi Minh supply trail became doubly important. If the ARVN had been able to maintain permanent fire bases on the mountain tops above the trail, with forward spotters directing the artillery fire and B-52 air strikes, then the North’s ability to deliver war supplies into South Vietnam would have been seriously impaired. Recognizing the danger, the Communists made an all-out effort to defend their vital interests, even to the point of denuding the defenses of North Vietnam itself. The Communist defenders outnumbered the South Vietnamese attackers by three or four to one. Bad weather and exceptionally intense anti-aircraft fire limited the effectiveness of U.S. air support. Yet, in spite of all of this, ARVN forces maintained their position in Laos for two months, killing about 15,000 Communists while losing only around 2,000 of their own dead. Thus it would be reasonable to interpret Operation Lam Son 719 as a strong proof that the ARVN was a competent and effective...

120 Ibid., March 8, 1971, p. 20.
121 Herring, War, pp. 265-66.
fighting force.

Sir Robert Thompson interpreted Lam Son 719 this way, in his 1974 book, *Peace Is Not At Hand*. "In the first instance the very fact that the South Vietnamese were able to release such a force for an offensive operation into the North's secure 'rear bases' indicated that the balance of capability was changing." To illustrate this point one has only to recall that in 1964 the South Vietnamese were on the verge of being defeated by the relatively lightly armed Viet Cong guerrillas. General Westmoreland commented that in 1965 "The enemy was destroying battalions faster than they could be reconstituted and faster than we had planned to organize them under the ARVN's crash build-up program." At that time ARVN would not have been capable of sending a two-division assault force to attack Communist sanctuaries in Laos.

Thompson continued, "On the way in the South Vietnamese fought well. One Ranger battalion on the northern flank was practically decimated by repeated assaults. After receiving 200 casualties and inflicting three or four times that number on the enemy, it successfully withdrew in good order to a neighboring position, with all its weapons and carrying its wounded. There was no rout." After it had caused as much damage as possible the ARVN began to withdraw. "A withdrawal in the face of the enemy is probably the most exacting operation of war . . . . The picture of a South Vietnamese

\[122\] Westmoreland, *Report*, p. 139.
coming out on the skids of a helicopter was flashed around the television screens of the world for days on end. It gave an unfair and false picture of the fighting quality of the South Vietnamese troops.\textsuperscript{123}

President Nixon stated that the American military command had underestimated the number of Communist troops that would be marshalled to repel Lam Son. The United States "failed to respond to this unexpectedly intense level of combat with the necessary increase in air cover for the invading forces. The resulting ARVN casualties were heavy, but they continued to fight courageously." As the South Vietnamese withdrew, Nixon repeated, "Our air support was inadequate," and under severe pressure some men panicked. "It took only a few televised films of ARVN soldiers clinging to the skids of our evacuation helicopters to reinforce the widespread misconception of the ARVN forces as incompetent and cowardly."\textsuperscript{124} Nixon believed the press' falsely negative portrayal of Lam Son hurt the war effort among the South Vietnamese whose "morale was shaken by media reports" of the battle. In the United States, "news pictures undercut confidence in the success of Vietnamization and the prospect of ending the war." The military benefits of the operation were great enough, however, that Nixon agreed with Henry Kissinger's assessment, "If I had known before it

\textsuperscript{123}Thompson, \textit{Peace}, pp. 90-91.

\textsuperscript{124}Nixon, \textit{RN}, pp. 498-99. The rest of the paragraph comes from this page.
started that it was going to come out exactly the way it did, I would still have gone ahead with it."

General Starry agreed that Lan Son 719 "helped to delay major enemy operations for the remainder of 1971." ARVN troops also discovered the Communists's oil pipe line, destroyed a section of it and were able to supply U.S. pilots with its location for future bombing raids. Starry's overall appraisal of Operation Lan Som, and other 1971 battles, was less optimistic than Sir Robert Thompson or President Nixon. He saw these engagements as a military draw which "demonstrated that a parity existed in South Vietnamese- North Vietnamese strength." Even this assessment, however, meant that a marked and steady improvement had occurred in the ARVN fighting ability.

In 1967 General Westmoreland agreed that steady progress throughout 1966 and 1967 had made the ARVN a competent enough fighting force that he expected to begin withdrawing U.S. forces within two years. Because the South Vietnamese forces had doubled in size over a three year period it was impossible to know which of the new officers would provide high quality leadership in combat until they were so tested. Improvement would take time and experience. But in spite of "the thin veneer of leadership," Westmoreland believed that "Few

\[125\] Starry, Armored Combat, p. 197.
\[126\] Ibid., p. 198.
\[127\] Ibid., pp. 180-181, 186.
organizations in the world could have done" as well as the ARVN under similar pressure. Westmoreland "followed a policy of making myself readily available for interviews." His interpretation of the war, however, was not published in *Time*.

Neither did *Time* interview President Nixon, or publish his opinion that the media's falsely negative portrayal had made Lam Son 719 "a military success but a psychological defeat." It devoted merely three column inches to U.S. Commanding General Creighton Abrams and Sir Robert Thompson praising the ARVN during the campaign.

*Time's* overall interpretation differed from that of the war supporters, offering the battlefield analyses that ARVN troops were, "getting their asses kicked," that the ARVN appeared to be suffering, "an embarrassing defeat in Laos, [and that] the allies have paid dearly." The ARVN was chased out of Laos and "The last group out . . . barely made it. [Thus] last week's banner headlines declaring complete victory were in Hanoi's newspapers, not Saigon's." *Time* concluded that "Many sophisticated Asians . . . are now

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129 Ibid., p. 276.


132 Ibid., April 5, 1971, p. 20.
privately convinced that Hanoi will prevail."133 All told, *Time* printed 120 CI of anti-war articles related to Operation Lam Son 719, and only 14 CI pro-war. None of the 14 pro-war column inches made an effort to explain how the battle could be interpreted as proof of the ARVN's competence.

*Time*'s interpretation made it appear that the ARVN could not defeat the Communists even with U.S. air support. Thus, *Time* made it easier for undecided Americans to believe, as Hedley Donovan did, that the U.S. should completely withdraw from Vietnam as quickly as possible. By not publishing a pro-war interpretation of Lam Son 719, *Time* again deprived its readership of the opportunity to make an informed decision about the war.

*Time*'s coverage of the 1972 Easter Offensive was similar. By 1972, all U.S. troops had been withdrawn from combat. Aside from U.S. logistical support (air and artillery) the ARVN fought alone. The Communists hoped to take advantage of this situation by launching their first full scale assault since the Tet Offensive. They invaded with 120,000 troops. Their three primary objectives were Hue near the DMZ, An Loc, a provincial capital 75 miles from Saigon, and Kontum in the central highlands. The Communists lost 100,000 men and failed to take any of their objectives.134

Normally when an invading army suffers a five-sixths

134 Herring, *War*, pp. 271-75.
casualty rate and does not take any of its objectives it is judged to have suffered a military catastrophe. Certainly the October 30, 1972, issue of *Aviation Week and Space Technology* interpreted it this way. Administration spokespersons Dr. Douglas Pike, Sir Robert Thompson, and Dr. Henry Kissinger have all published books supporting this interpretation. Each of them was a well known, readily available media source. Inexplicably, however, *Time* reached exactly the opposite conclusion, stating that "Any illusions about the prospects of victory through Vietnamization . . . were shattered by the success of Hanoi's Easter Offensive." *Time* gave absolutely no space to these administration spokesmen's interpretation of the battle.

Part of what *Time* did not publish was Pike's view that the 1972 Easter Offensive, "required the best weapons the Communist world's armament factories could produce, and they met the challenge. The North Vietnamese armies in the 1972 offensive had more tanks (410) than the South Vietnamese (296) and more long range artillery (130mm and 152mm guns) . . . . Several hundred fighter planes were also delivered (MIG 15s, MIG 17s, supersonic MIG 21s, and later, the more advanced MIG 21C and MIG 21D)."

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136 *Time*, November 6, 1972, p. 18.

137 Pike, *Vietnam*, pp. 120, 125.
In his book, *The Easter Offensive*, the commander of the U.S. Marine advisors, Lt. Colonel Gerald Turley, stated that the priority North Vietnam placed on victory in the invasion could be seen by the commitment of the NVA 308th Division. "This unit had conducted the final assault on the entrapped French at Dien Bien Phu . . . . In the long history of the Vietnam War, the 308th had left Hanoi to join in only," the battle of Dien Bien Phu and the 1972 attack.\(^{138}\)

Sir Robert Thompson described the Easter Offensive as "a massive conventional invasion with fourteen divisions and the most modern weaponry, which not one single country in the Western world, other than the United States, given the shape and topography of South Vietnam, could have defeated alone without adequate outside air support—-not even Israel."\(^{139}\)

South Vietnam's problem was that it had a 600-mile long border. The Communists were able to mass their fourteen divisions under cover of the triple canopy jungle anywhere along the border. The ARVN had to defend the forty-four district capitals, as well as the various airfields, supply depots and military installations scattered across the country. Popular Forces platoons were stationed in about 10,000 rural hamlets. Given the total size of all their military forces (about 1,000,000 men) the South Vietnamese


\(^{139}\)Thompson, *Peace*, p. 28.
could concentrate only about 6,000 to 8,000 troops, even in their more important defensive positions. To complicate matters, in most places South Vietnam was less than 100 miles wide. Saigon was less than 35 miles from Cambodia.

In the Easter Offensive the North Vietnamese brought 40,000 men across the border at each of three points. They enjoyed tremendous invading momentum against the relatively small number of defenders at the point of each attack. These circumstances would certainly have been expected to carry the Communists well into the heart of the country. Because of this Robert Komer argued that "We tended to underestimate the great value of allowing the enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos." The South Vietnamese suffered 25,000 casualties (almost half of the total number of Americans killed in the entire war), in preventing the North Vietnamese from taking even their first objectives. It would seem apparent that the ARVN fought fiercely in the Easter Offensive.

The London Economist commented: "It is still not appreciated how much the South Vietnamese Army has," improved in morale because of the Easter Offensive. "Despite all the American help from the air the South Vietnamese Army has had to fight hard on the ground; in most of the action it has held, and in some it has done much better than that. The

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140 Komer, Bureaucracy, p. 5. See also Westmoreland, Report, pp. 180-81.
result is a visible improvement in morale."

Lt. Colonel Turley provides a detailed account of what went right and what went wrong in Military Region One (MR-1) during the battle. He states that South Vietnamese Brigadier General Vu Van Giai, the commander of the ARVN 3rd Division which had primary responsibility for the defense of MR-1, put the division in a position of extreme vulnerability. On the day the Communists launched the invasion, only a few hours before the battle began, General Giai initiated a plan to rotate the positions of two of the divisions' three regiments. "Tactical command posts (CPs) were vacated, unit radios shut down," and infantry units were marching in open formation down the road "when thousands of artillery rounds struck the exposed troops causing instant death and chaos." Thus the 3rd division "was temporarily unable to perform as a viable fighting force."  

Military manuals are specific about the techniques required to reduce the risks involved in troop rotations. In spite of the fact that he was well aware of the buildup of North Vietnamese forces in the region and the high probability of an imminent battle, Giai did not take even the most rudimentary precautions. Turley asserts that "The timing of Giai's relief-in-place operation, the unprofessional manner in which it was executed and his disregard of the warnings of a

\[141\] Economist, October 14, 1972, p. 32.

\[142\] Turley, Easter, p. 53.
major attack, inevitably led to the hypothesis of treason.\textsuperscript{143} General Truong's history agrees with Turley that the highest level command decisions which led to the fall of Quang Tri Province were disastrously inadequate.\textsuperscript{144} After Quang Tri fell, President Thieu replaced the command staff for the defense of Hue, the next city to the south in MR-1. General Giai was eventually arrested and sentenced to prison.

Aside from this problem, the 3rd Division had been created fairly recently. Although most of the troops had combat experience, they had never fought together as a unit. One of the three regiments, the 56th, "had only been activated three months earlier, and still was having many start-up problems. . . . the quality of the 56th leadership was poor" and required time and experience for improvement.\textsuperscript{145} Beyond these problems, the cloud cover was so low through most of the offensive that tactical air support was ineffective. B-52 strikes were effective in any weather, and were a crucial element in the defense, but the use of tactical air power and helicopters was severely limited.

The ARVN fire support bases had been located in the same positions for several years. They were effectively positioned to interdict small unit infiltrations, but the Communist long range artillery located north of the DMZ had these bases

\textsuperscript{143}Ibid., pp. 34-36.
\textsuperscript{144}Ibid., pp. 252-53, and Truong, Easter, pp. 38-39.
\textsuperscript{145}Turley, Easter, p. 47.
locked in. The North Vietnamese fire was extremely accurate and intense. Under the pressure of thousands of incoming shells many of the inexperienced ARVN artillery crews abandoned their guns, seeking shelter in reinforced bunkers. "Thus when it was needed the most, ARVN counterbattery fire was drastically reduced because of fear in the gun pits." 146

In spite of these problems the Marines at outpost E-4 repelled three infantry assaults on March 30th, "inflicting heavy casualties on their attackers." 147 Two similar outposts were overrun. Few of their men made it back to the main fire base. On the second day of the offensive the Communists bypassed outpost E-4 to attack the main fire base Nui Ba Ho. The Marines in E-4 "continued to bring fire into the flanks and rear of enemy units attacking the Nui Ba Ho perimeter." U.S. advisor, Captain Ray Smith, stated that "the heroic actions of this platoon inspired the Bravo group [inside the main perimeter] to put up even greater resistance to the numerically superior enemy force." 148 They repelled several heavy assaults that day. During the second night of the invasion, Nui Ba Ho was overrun. Similarly, the 4th Battalion at Fire Base Sarge "had acquitted themselves valiantly." Their mortar platoon had faithfully provided fire support to the troops throughout the battle. "By evening every member of the

146 Ibid., p. 61.
147 Ibid., p. 66.
148 Ibid., p. 80.
approaching the fire, over three hours. The mission: J.S. J.

Desperado, four stolen Bases, and the overall effort.

Bases at new hours, and we're as far as the fire's let us go.

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platoon had been wounded or killed." After thirty-six hours of heavy combat Fire Base Sarge was evacuated. Fire Bases A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, C-1, C-2, C-3 and Fuller were all overwhelmed by Communist numerical superiorities of three or four to one and were evacuated on the second day of the offensive. Some conducted orderly retreats; others abandoned their weapons and fled.

Although the weather continued to prevent tactical air missions, U.S. Naval fire support was effective. "History will record that the U.S. destroyers were of immeasurable value in holding back the North Vietnamese attack down Highway 1 to Dong Ha and Quang Tri City."

Three hundred soldiers had manned Fire Base Nui Ba Ho on March 30. Three days later the sixty-nine survivors made it to Fire Base Mai Loc. Having "gallantly fought against an overwhelming, numerically superior force, then survived a desperation march," they ate their first food in over fifty hours.

On the fourth day of the invasion Communist tanks were approaching the vital Dong Ha bridge. If they had been able to race across the Cam Lo River, they might well have overwhelmed

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149 Ibid., p. 82.
150 Starry, Armored Combat, p. 205.
151 Truong, Easter, pp. 24-26.
152 Turley, Easter, p. 88.
153 Ibid., p. 91.
Quang Tri City and attacked Hue before an effective defense could be organized. Marine advisor Captain John Ripley was with the ARVN 20th Tank Battalion, which positioned itself to defend the bridge. He stated that the Communist artillery assault was easily "the most devastating and destructive attack I had witnessed. It virtually tore up Dong Ha leaving no area untouched, causing many civilian casualties," killing all the livestock and flattening the town. Over 1,000 rounds fell in forty-five minutes.

As the last of the preparatory fire fell on Dong Ha the Communist tank column approached the bridge. A South Vietnamese sergeant crawled out into the lead tank's path and hit it with an M-72 light anti-tank weapon (LAW). Uncertain of what force was opposing them, the North Vietnamese tanks spread themselves into a defensive posture, rather than crossing the bridge. South Vietnamese Marine Brigade 258 commanded by Major Binh was all that stood between the main North Vietnamese assault column and a clear path to Quang Tri City. At this point Binh and Ripley heard an erroneous radio report stating that Dong Ha had fallen and the bridge had been crossed. Each then sent simultaneous reports out over their respective radio networks to insure there could be no mistake about the actual situation. Their message said: "There are Vietnamese Marines in Dong Ha. My orders are to hold the enemy in Dong Ha. We will fight in Dong Ha. We will die in Dong Ha."
We will not leave. As long as one Marine draws breath of life, Dong Ha will belong to us." The 3rd Battalion defended the south bank of the river while Captain Ripley called in naval fire support. "There was an almost instantaneous response from the five U.S. destroyers off the coast." In addition, the tanks of the 20th Regiment provide accurate fire, quickly destroying eleven North Vietnamese tanks. This gave the allied defenders enough time to wire and blow up the bridge. Of the seven hundred Marines who took up defensive positions on April 3rd, only two hundred remained alive when the 3rd Battalion was rotated off the front line on April 19th. One hundred and fifty of them were wounded. Major Binh had died. His prophesy had proved true. The 3rd Battalion had fought and died, and the Communists had not crossed the Cam Lo River. The invaders were delayed long enough for the defense of Hue to be organized.

On the fourth day of the invasion the largest of the MR-1 fire bases, Camp Carroll surrendered, giving up 1,800 soldiers and twenty-two artillery guns. Turley believed that, "The surrender at Camp Carroll created a catastrophic void in the shrinking defensive line." At other fire bases the defenders (in worse condition than at Camp Carroll) had broken through the encircling attackers and made it to secure ARVN lines. The

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155 Ibid., pp. 153-56.
156 Starry, Armored Combat, p. 208.
157 Turley, Easter, pp. 233, 256.
American advisors in fact did break out and were rescued by helicopter. Turley wrote that Camp commander "Lieutenant Colonel (Pham Van) Dinh's treacherous act in the surrender of his regiment en masse had an enormous adverse psychological impact on the remainder of the besieged South Vietnamese units." General Truong was much kinder to Dinh, stating that, "Troops of the 56th Regiment at the camp valiantly endured heavy artillery fires and resisted repeated assaults by enemy infantry . . . . Seeing that his situation was hopeless and wanting to save as many of his soldiers' lives as possible," he surrendered.

That night the defenders of Fire Base Mai Loc ran out of ammunition. They destroyed their guns, and broke out of the defensive perimeter and headed east. They "soon discovered the trail was littered with the wounded and exhausted Marines of the 4th and 8th VNMC Battalions. These survivors of FBs Sarge and Nui Ba Ho and the few stragglers from FB Holcomb had simply run out of stamina and collapsed along the trail. Throughout the night the 7th Battalion picked up and somehow carried every exhausted or wounded Marine they encountered." After making four river crossings they successfully reached secure ARVN lines.

On April 9, 10 and 11 the North Vietnamese assaulted Fire

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158 Ibid., pp. 172-73.
159 Truong, Easter, pp. 29-30.
160 Turley, Easter, p. 199.
Base Pedro west of Quang Tri City. They attacked with several thousand infantry and a tank battalion. Twenty-three tanks were captured or destroyed and over 420 Communists killed, while the South Vietnamese suffered only sixty-six casualties. Colonel Turley believed, "There was great significance to the South Vietnamese victory at FB Pedro where the NVA tanks lay shattered and burning. First, it presented the disillusioned South Vietnamese forces in Quang Tri Province with their first real victory in a knockdown, drag-out battle." More importantly "the defense was all planned and a successful counterattack executed by South Vietnamese forces." U.S. advisor Captain Al Nettleinham wrote:

I think the whole credit for repulsing the attack belongs to Colonel (Ngo Van) Dinh. He had his finger on the situation at all times. He knew what assets he had available and then committed them at the crucial moments. He's a commander in the full sense of the word. His subordinate commanders had great confidence in him, in his judgement. The man presented the best example of decisiveness and military skill that I've ever seen."\(^{161}\)

On April 18th the South Vietnamese repelled two major assaults. "As the momentum of the NVA attack increased, enemy artillery raked the South Vietnamese positions. However, the line held firm as ARVN artillery struck back at the exposed

\(^{161}\)Turley, Easter, pp. 239-41.
NVA infantry causing the attackers to break off" and withdraw along the full seven miles of the 3rd Division's western defensive line.\textsuperscript{162} Communist artillery resumed heavy shelling untill the 23rd when they launched another major assault. "Again, the ARVN's western defenses held."\textsuperscript{163}

On the 27th the Communists attacked with a full division across the entire front. The ARVN troops had been under heavy artillery attack for an entire month without being rotated off the front lines. When the North Vietnamese broke the defensive line at a couple of points some of the exhausted ARVN units fled in panic. Communist units attacking from the west threatened to take the Quang Tri bridges, cutting off thousands of defenders north of the city. "The 2d ARVN Regiment rose to the occasion," however, holding the bridges long enough to allow the other units to retreat.\textsuperscript{164}

USAF Major David Brookbank wrote: "Many ARVN forces held while others broke and ran. The ARVN Marines never lost fighting effectiveness and had to be ordered to withdraw many times to plug gaps in the line . . . . because they never stopped fighting and remained effective, [they] enabled the U.S. advisors, cut off at the Citadel, to evacuate."\textsuperscript{165} U.S. Marine Major Robert Sheridan observed that as thousands of

\textsuperscript{162}Ibid., p. 254.
\textsuperscript{163}Ibid., p. 256.
\textsuperscript{164}Ibid., pp. 261, 262.
\textsuperscript{165}Ibid., p. 285.
suffering refugees flowed past Brigade 369's headquarters, "The Marines gave them food, water, money. The generosity could not alleviate the suffering of the people as their numbers were too great."\textsuperscript{166}

As thousands of ARVN soldiers crossed the My Chanh River into Thua Thien Province and retreated towards Hue, Major Sheridan turned to his Vietnamese counterpart Colonel Pham Van Chung and said, "Well, sir, it looks like everyone else is heading south. What are we going to do?" Colonel Chung replied, "No, no, we will not go south. We are a good brigade and with your help we will kill all the VC along this river."\textsuperscript{167} As they dug in Major Sheridan reported, "The enemy opened the most devastating artillery barrage that the brigade had ever received. We thought the whole world was falling apart around us. Our vehicles, bunkers, villages and guns were being demolished. We wondered if anyone would live to fight."\textsuperscript{168} The survivors used their M-72 LAWs, naval gun fire and tactical air support to repel both NVA tank and infantry assaults. Colonel Chung was correct; the Communists never crossed the My Chanh River to threaten Hue. General Starry concluded that, "Although vastly outnumbered [the South Vietnamese] had succeeded in slowing the momentum of the massive North Vietnamese invasion. With assistance from U.S.

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., p. 287.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., p. 298.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., p. 299.
and Vietnamese tactical air forces, they provided the resistance that delayed the enemy until enough reinforcements could be brought up to halt the offensive.\textsuperscript{169}

After reorganizing the defenses of MR-1, the South Vietnamese began their counterattack. By September 15 they had battled their way back to Quang Tri City. In house-to-house fighting they suffered over 5,000 casualties, "before raising their national colors over the Citadel's destroyed walls."\textsuperscript{170}

The stories of the defense of Kontum and An Loc were similar. Some units fought better than others, but all suffered heavily under the incessant artillery bombardment of the numerically superior North Vietnamese. At the crucial moments they held in spite of devastating casualties. Although some units broke under extreme pressure, the valor and sacrifices of most units won the battle.\textsuperscript{171}

\textit{Time} interpreted the battle differently. "Any illusions about the prospects of victory through Vietnamezaization . . . were shattered by the success of Hanoi's Easter Offensive this year, when only American air strikes prevented a South Vietnamese rout."\textsuperscript{172} \textit{Time} printed 518 CI of anti-war coverage and only 86 pro-war CI. The bulk of the pro-war coverage described the success of the U.S. Air Force. \textit{Time}'s coverage,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{169} Starry, \textit{Armored Combat}, p. 212.
  \item \textsuperscript{170} Turley, \textit{Easter}, pp. 304-305.
  \item \textsuperscript{171} Truong, \textit{Easter}, p. 176-81.
  \item \textsuperscript{172} \textit{Time}, November 6, 1972, p. 18.
\end{itemize}
moving forward from April 10, 1972, contained the following. The Spring Offensive has begun and the Communists are delivering "A beating" to the ARVN.\textsuperscript{173} "The colors of the South Vietnamese flag are certainly appropriate—most of the people are yellow and the rest are red."\textsuperscript{174} The South Vietnamese air force "can't fight and won't fight."\textsuperscript{175} Actually, \textit{Time} inquired, why should the Communists negotiate in Paris when they are about to win on the battlefield? The ARVN troops broke and ran at Quang Tri, leaving their equipment behind. By day these men "looted stores in broad daylight. By night gangs of deserters started fires and fought drunken skirmishes in the streets." Can the ARVN even survive, \textit{Time} wondered, "much less defeat the North Vietnamese?" Communist General Giap's "strategy of annihilation [is] obviously having its effect." Nixon's best hope, in \textit{Time}'s opinion, was that the ARVN might be able to avoid annihilation "at least through the seven day Moscow summit" later in May. The Communists expected to "crumble ARVN and to topple the Thieu regime" by mid-summer. They are "smelling blood in South Vietnam."\textsuperscript{176} Saigon was enveloped in gloom "in the wake of the abject ARVN collapse."\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{173}\textit{Ibid.}, April 10, 1972, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{174}\textit{Ibid.}, April 17, 1972, p. 37.

\textsuperscript{175}\textit{Ibid.}, April 24, 1972, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{176}\textit{Ibid.}, May 15, 1972, pp. 12, 24, 30.

\textsuperscript{177}\textit{Ibid.}, May 22, 1972, p. 15.
At this point in early June, *Time* reported that "The worst of the ground fighting may be over."\(^{178}\) *Time* offered no explanation as to how the ARVN had survived its "abject collapse," but did conclude that the invasion had "drastically affected the pacification program [and] badly battered ARVN."\(^{179}\) Then, in a paragraph completely out of character with its previous coverage, *Time* printed two CI stating that, "the North Vietnamese offensive has been obviously blunted at enormous cost to the Communists."\(^{180}\)

*Time's* depiction of the abject collapse of the South Vietnamese military did not represent the view of the United States Marine Corp's advisors to the South Vietnamese Marine Corp (VNMC). The senior U.S. Marine Advisor, Colonel Joshua Dorsey, stated in 1972 that the South Vietnamese Marines "have been in heavy combat over fifteen years. There is little we can teach them except, perhaps, how to better utilize their supporting arms." Dorsey described the South Vietnamese officers as "a band of brothers with an intense loyalty to each other. They exhibit great pride in their corps." Dorsey concluded that the VNMC's battlefield performance showed that, "They're good... They've been in some hellish fights and never buckled."\(^{181}\)

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\(^{178}\) *Time*, June 5, 1972, p. 28
During April and May, virtually all of Time's coverage described the "abject collapse of ARVN." During June, July and August as the ARVN counterattack retook lost ground, Time published only five column inches of battlefield coverage. Instead of covering the ARVN's counter-offensive, Time printed 76 CI describing the "swelling multitude of refugees . . . condemned to live in camps or in the putrid shanty towns" around South Vietnam's cities.\(^{182}\)

Time had a choice here. It could have presented the refugee problem as resulting from the North Vietnamese army's attempts to militarily impose Communism on the South Vietnamese people. On September 11, 1972, Time printed a 16 CI story describing the suffering of civilians in the Mekong Delta. Fifteen of the column inches described the U.S. policy "of massive and calculatedly destructive airpower. . . . Well dug-in guerrillas can frequently survive an attack, but a peasant in his field has little chance . . . a few of the victims at present in Dinh Tuong Hospital: A 14 year old boy . . . half of his left arm has been blown away and the other half is wrapped in a blood dripping bandage. . . . Le Van Du, 12, resembles an Egyptian mummy, wrapped from head to foot in bandages."

In the middle of the story, Time gave approximately one-half of a column inch to the observation that, "To be sure, the bombing victims represent only a part of the war

casualties. Others are suffering from mortar wounds. Communist fired B-40 rockets and AK-47 rifles; some do not know what hit them." But, *Time* concluded, "the bombs are dropping night and day on the friendly Vietnamese of Dinh Tuong."  

*Time*s coverage of the battle for Dinh Tuong Province provides an interesting contrast to General Truong's account. Truong points out that Route 4 was the only paved highway connecting the rice growing lands of the Delta with four million consumers in Saigon. It was absolutely vital for the ARVN to keep the road open. The ARVN 7th and 9th Divisions "fought many fierce battles in Dinh Tuong" for control of Route 4. In August they "fought a major battle . . . and completely cleared [the My Tho] area of the enemy . . . . By the end of August, enemy activities in Dinh Tuong Province had been seriously impeded by our quick and aggressive reactions on the ground and continuous pounding from the air by U.S. tactical air and B-52s."  

*Time* failed to report the significance or the success of these battles. Its coverage was limited to the observation that, "The bombs are dropping night and day on the friendly Vietnamese of Dinh Tuong." In a similar vein an October 23, 1972, article quoted a war veteran as saying, We went into villages after they dropped napalm, and the human beings were fused together like pieces of metal that had been

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an area where they have penny nails.

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Beyond doubt war, civilian planes attacked. Unify anti-war militants built base. They tried to attack militarily imposeceries. "In the Easter hole of the blame war" you see your own courage to say what you do to a human, you see your own courage to say what you do to a human.

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soldered. Sometimes you couldn't tell if they were people or animals. We have jets that drop rockets, and in the shells they have penny nails. Those nails—one nail per square inch [over an area] the size of a football field—you can't believe what they do to a human being. I was there a year and I never had the courage to say that it was wrong . . . . when you come back, you see your own wife, or your own family, then you understand what you did . . . you can't believe you didn't have the courage to open your mouth against that kind of murder.

Beyond doubt war creates great suffering. When the Communists built base camps in and around villages, it was impossible to attack them without injuring civilians. When American planes attacked Iraq's military installations during the Gulf War, civilians were killed. Time, however, did not cry out against "that kind of murder" when it happened. Time had a choice of whom to portray as the "good guys" and "bad guys" in the Easter Offensive. Time could have placed all or part of the blame on the North Vietnamese attempt to militarily impose communism on the South. Instead Time chose to portray the Americans as the bad guys, and to do so in the most graphic, emotion-laden terms.

In this regard Sir Robert Thompson has two stories of personal experience from the Easter Offensive. When Communist forces attacked villages near An Loc, "In nearly every case the population fled to the nearest district town." Local
Regional Force and Popular Force platoons gathered to drive the invaders back across the border. "It was on one such occasion, when the population fled from the hamlet, that the children were placed in a pagoda for safety, but several of them sneaked out to watch the battle. One girl was hit by napalm." The photograph of Kim drew worldwide attention. But of 350,000 inhabitants of Hau Nghia province, "only thirteen civilians were killed in the whole invasion period."  

Thompson's second story came from An Loc itself. After the Communists had been turned back Thompson visited the town in June. "With an escort of four gunships we traveled in at a height of 7,000 feet to reduce the risk of SA7 missiles and then spiralled rapidly down into the town . . . . When I described my visit on the following day to President Thieu he immediately asked for a similar flight to be laid on for him." For security reasons the trip was kept secret and no media were invited. When Thieu jumped from the helicopter, "the Province Chief, who was there to meet the party, broke down and wept. The troops in the surrounding bunkers, on seeing the President, rushed forward, lifted him up and carried him into town."  

Overall, Time printed 518 CI of anti-war coverage of the Easter Offensive and only 9 CI of pro-war coverage, aside from praise for the U.S. Air Force's ability to knock out bridges,

\[185\] Thompson, Peace, p. 108.

\[186\] Ibid., p. 107.
fuel supplies and tanks. Despite the fact that the Communists suffered a five-sixths casualty rate and took none of their objectives, *Time* interpreted the Easter Offensive to mean that, "Any illusions about the prospects of victory through Vietnamization . . . were shattered by the success of Hanoi's Easter Offensive this year, when only American air strikes prevented a South Vietnamese rout."

A reasonable alternative interpretation would have been that with U.S. air support the ARVN had successfully defended South Vietnam from the Communists' best effort. The results of the Easter Offensive provided substantial reason to believe that South Vietnam would be able to permanently maintain its independence, without the aid of U.S. ground support, if America continued its 1972 level of assistance. *Time*’s two hundred in-depth interviews, described above, gave a good indication of what the average American’s reaction would have been if this interpretation had been offered. Once again, *Time*’s coverage of the 1972 Easter Offensive helped to promote the goals of the anti-war movement and deprived its readership of the opportunity to make an informed decision about the war.

*Time*’s coverage of the anti-war protest demonstrations in the U.S. from mid-1969 followed a similar pattern. From the beginning of October 1969, *Time* carried 429 CI sympathetic to the war protesters and 41 CI that were critical. Even in the 41 CI criticizing the protests *Time* was careful to
differentiate between the good protesters, the "broad-cross section" of middle class anti-war demonstrators, and the "young extremists [who] marred the peace kept by the overwhelming majority of the demonstrators." 187

Beginning on October 10, 1969, *Time*’s coverage stated that a variety of Congressmen, priests, rabbis, business leaders, doctors, and lawyers were supporting the Moratorium Day anti-war protests. 188 Organizers "happily confessed that" support for M-Day had grown so quickly that they were scrambling to keep up. *Time* quoted Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird’s son saying "everybody should be against the war" as he marched in protest. A former Green Beret and Bronze Star winner proclaimed, "Now I feel guilty for going over there. I feel ashamed. [The war] has screwed me up so bad and screwed the whole county up . . . . I don't think it's worth killing American boys on the pretense of helping those crummy bastards." *Time* continued, "Mass protest has been neither frequent nor popular at Rice University," but even this conservative Southern school had joined in the M-Day demonstrations. The organizer at Rice hoped "that Moratorium Day will force the Administration to choose whether it will remain totally indifferent to the national will." Berkeley physics professor William Chinosky had never before sympathized with student protest, but even he became an M-Day

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organizer, saying, "We simply must get the American people to
begin thinking rationally about Viet Nam." A Vanderbilt
University organizer said, "It is a bad war and we have to get
out." In Atlanta, "the thought of the war not ending is just
more than people can take"; while in Houston, "business men
have been especially active" in the anti-war protests. In
November *Time* described the March Against Death:

> the protesters carried devotional candles
> and 24-inch by 8-inch cardboard signs,
> each bearing the name of a man killed in
> action or a Vietnamese village destroyed
> by the war. The candles flickered in the
> wind, the funereal rolling of the drums,
> the hush over most of the line of march—
> but above all the endless recitation of
> names of dead servicemen and gutted
> villages as each marcher passed the
> White House—were impressive drama: 'Jay
> Lee Richter . . . Milford Togazzini . . .
> Vinh Linh, North Viet Nam . . .
> Joseph Y. Ramirez'. At the capitol, each
> sign was solemnly deposited in one of the
> several coffins, later conveyed back up
> Pennsylvania Avenue in the Saturday
> march. Mrs. Judy Droz, 23, of Columbia
> Mo., was chosen to walk first in the
> March Against Death. Her husband, a Navy
> officer died in Viet Nam last spring."

In April 1971 *Time* reported that a Massachusetts
housewife walked 450 miles from her home to Washington D.C. to
"express forcefully her opposition to the war." She said, "The
vast majority of the people" she met shared her anti-war
beliefs. In May 1971 *Time* reported that an anti-war

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protest had drawn 200,000 people, "one of Washington's largest ever . . . . The Washington demonstration was the kind that cops could have brought their children to; at least one policeman did . . . . On the same day, in San Francisco, 125,000 demonstrators . . . were led by Bob Silva, a 21 year old Viet Nam veteran, with medals dangling from his sports shirt, who rode in a wheel chair . . . . Both demonstrations were happily free of violence." When protesters shouted "Pig," the police replied, "We don't like the war any better than you do." Time also reported on John Kerry, a Yale graduate who won a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts. Kerry testified before Congress that there was "nothing in South Viet Nam that threatens the United States of America. To attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Viet Nam, Cambodia or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy." Time commented, "there was no arguing with the conviction with which he spoke."

Given Time's coverage one might easily assume that the anti-war protest demonstration had a much broader base of support than 27 percent of the public. Time appears to have been trying to sell the demonstrations to a reluctant majority. The 53 percent of Americans who condemned the

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193 Ibid., May 17, 1971, p. 15.
protests believed that they damaged the war effort by leading the enemy to believe that there was no need to negotiate because sooner or later public pressure would force a unilateral American withdrawal. Time printed only 8 CI representing this majority point of view, while printing 429 CI which portrayed the anti-war protesters in the most glowing of terms. Thus Time's coverage of the anti-war protest demonstrations was biased in such a way as to promote the goals of the anti-war movement.

Time's coverage of the 1971 presidential elections in South Vietnam was equally problematic. President Thieu had guided a bill through the South Vietnamese legislature which eventually made it impossible for Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky to qualify to have his name placed on the election ballot. Later, in the face of a general condemnation of Thieu's strong arm tactics, the South Vietnamese Supreme Court ruled that Ky's name should be placed on the ballot. Ky then declined to run. The other candidate who had qualified, General Duong Van Minh, also withdrew from the race, forcing Thieu to accept 'victory' in an uncontested election.

Sir Robert Thompson interpreted the 1971 election this way: "As an exiled Northerner Ky never had a chance and his whole campaign was designed to [pressure] Thieu into giving

195 Harris, Anguish, p. 66-67. The poll question seems to have been phrased, "Do you believe the anti-war protests give aid and comfort to the enemy?"
him a suitable appointment . . . . I happened to be in Saigon for the first three months of 1971 and reached the conclusion, in which I was not alone, that Thieu had such overwhelming support that 'Big Minh' would be unlikely to get 20% of the vote. This would have finished him as a political figure. The London Economist agreed two months before the election that, "It is most improbable that General Minh now thinks he might win," and Ky had even less support.

Time began its election coverage by asserting, "But can anyone beat Thieu? Probably not . . . he has enough solid support in the countryside to win going away." Again on August 16, Time remarked, "It is widely believed that Thieu could win without resorting to dubious practices." This made sense in light of Thieu's popularity with the Catholics, the military and the rural peasantry, who were becoming relatively prosperous land owners for the first time in the nation's history because of Thieu's land reform and economic development program. The President had been able to shepherd a revolutionary land reform bill through the legislature which "differed very little from the original executive proposals, despite a serious attempt by the Lower House to substitute a

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196 Thompson, Peace, p. 13-14.
199 Ibid., August 16, 1971, p. 29.
much weaker version. Dr. Howard Penniman states that the prevailing opinion in rural South Vietnam was represented by a village chief whom he interviewed. Like most local officials he believed that Thieu would have easily won even in a three way race against both General Minh and Vice President Ky because Thieu, "gave us the land, the fertilizer, the pigs and chickens, and provided a school for our children. Few people on the land know General Minh and fewer know who Ky is. The peasants would cooperate with President Thieu."

As the elections drew closer, however, *Time*’s interpretation changed. It ran stories in August, September, and October which reported that the elections were being reduced "to the level of a farce, a situation which might in turn force the U.S. to hasten its withdrawal from Viet Nam." The election bore "little resemblance to the 'self-determination' that Washington politicians talk of when they explain why the U.S. is still in Viet Nam. [It had become a] bitter joke, [and a] source of deep embarrassment to Washington. [Thieu's election rigging was] knocking the underpinnings from the U.S. contention that it remains in South Viet Nam at the request of a freely and democratically

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elected government. Time concluded that the U.S. should suffer no more combat deaths "if the net result of U.S. policy is to be an electoral farce in Saigon." Time favored "Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield's proposal that all U.S. troops be legislated out of Viet Nam if the election is not cleared up." Time could have built on its initial assertion by saying that it was unfortunate that President Thieu had been unable to resist the temptation to give himself an unfair (perhaps insurmountable) advantage by tampering with the election laws, but that since he was popular enough to be re-elected in a fair election, it was not all that significant. Instead, Time chose to interpret the elections to mean that South Vietnam was not worthy of receiving further U.S. assistance. Time published 175 CI of anti-war election coverage, and only the three early column inches indicated that there might be another point of view. Time had once more pursued the anti-war perspective.

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204 Ibid., September 6, 1971, pp. 23-25.
Chapter three addresses the story that *Time* did not tell. Sir Robert Thompson asserted that what had "always impressed me with regard to the attitudes of American society, and that of the West generally . . . has been its abysmal ignorance of the nature and course of the war."\(^{205}\) During the late 1960s and the early 1970s administration spokespersons such as the director of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Services (CORDS) William Colby and his second in command John Paul Vann provided reporters with the details of this alternative story, but it did not see print in *Time* magazine.

During 1967 President Johnson consolidated all of the various American agencies which were giving economic aid to South Vietnam under the umbrella bureaucracy CORDS. In 1970 the Senate Foreign Relations Sub-Committee on Vietnam invited the highest ranking CORDS officials, along with a variety of military experts, to make their best case for continued Congressional funding of the war.

\(^{205}\) Thompson, *Peace*, p. xiii.
In these hearings the pro-war argument fell into three main categories: the big unit, main force war; local security from Viet Cong guerrillas; and economic development/nation building. Administration spokespersons argued that the Communist main force units had been driven away from the bulk of the South Vietnamese people into border sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos. Also, local security patrols were effectively preventing Viet Cong guerrillas from having access to 75 percent of South Vietnam's hamlets, even at night. The third prong of the pro-war argument was that the peasants living in the government secured hamlets had used American developmental aid to greatly increase the number of fields which were planted with two crops per year, the rice yield per crop, and the farmers' income. Thus, war supporters argued, the bulk of the population lived in relatively good security and increasing prosperity.

John Paul Vann's testimony carried the authority of experience. He had gone to Vietnam in the early 1960s as a U.S. military advisor to the ARVN. Once in rural South Vietnam, Vann discovered that a majority of the peasantry had joined the Viet Cong insurgency. They had not done so because they were Communists, or even sympathized with communism. They had done so because of their overriding desire for better government.

As soon as he understood the situation, Vann became sharply critical of the American war effort. He explained to
reporters that it did not matter how much military pressure the U.S. applied, if half of the peasantry still supported the Viet Cong, and the other half remained passive, the United States was going to lose the war. Vann retired after completing his twenty year military service in order to return to the United States and publicize his view that the South Vietnamese people did not support their government and that unless Saigon could be made to provide better government and a better life for its people, the war would inevitably be lost.\textsuperscript{206} When President Johnson formed the CORDS team in 1967, Vann joined it to help in the nation building effort he believed would win the war. As outlined above, Vann testified that the 1968 Tet Offensive had been the turning point in the war because of the crippling losses suffered by the South Vietnamese Viet Cong and the new local security forces which had replaced the Viet Cong across the countryside. At the hearings, Vann testified that local security was sufficient to enable "most of the civilian population of the delta" to live in peace. Hamlets and government installations could expect on average to be attacked only once every eighteen months. "Actually, of course, there are many places that have never been attacked," and a few that the Viet Cong attacked regularly.\textsuperscript{207}

Marine officer F.J. West had participated in the

\textsuperscript{206}Hearings, p. 112. Also Sheehan, \textit{Lie}, pp. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{207}Hearings, p. 90.
development of local security as a member of a Combined Action Platoon (CAP). CAPs were made up of half Popular Forces and half U.S. Marines. In his book, The Village, West describes the process by which the local security forces with whom he worked gained control of a contested village. When he initially joined the CAP, its night patrols faced frequent fire fights. One night a company of Viet Cong overran the CAP's fortified base camp. The defenders casualties were high, but eventually the cost of guerrillas killed by night patrol ambushes became too great for the Communists. Infiltration attempts became rare events. West described the sense of trust that developed between the villagers and the CAP. Once, after driving the Viet Cong from the town in a relatively large scale fire fight, the defenders drank free at the local bars for a week.

Marine Captain Michael Peterson supported West's view of local security in his book, Combined Action Platoons. Peterson asserted that the morale and the sense of achievement were very high in the local security forces. CAP Marines were twice as likely as regular Marines to request a second tour of duty in Vietnam.

Sergeant Richard Wallace, a squad leader in a CAP platoon, testified at the hearings that, "by working with the

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PF every day and sharing their danger and hardships, the marines and PF developed close ties . . . . In fact most marines come to feel as if they are part of the village community." Wallace stated that before his CAP was established in 1967, "the VC guerrillas had a free hand in the area," gathering food, supplies and recruits. In 1970, however, guerrillas no longer received "moral or material support from the people. Nearly all the hard core VC supporters have been driven out or captured and people are supporting their legitimate government" without fear of Communist retaliation.²¹⁰

After mid-1969, when *Time* interviewed U.S. soldiers, it invariably did so as a forum to criticize the war. *Time* gave no space to soldiers like West, Peterson and Wallace who had a proud sense of achievement in their work in Vietnam.

Sir Robert Thompson witnessed a local security forces battle in 1973. "I visited a hamlet on the north bank of the Thu Thua canal in Long An province, just after the cease fire in 1973." This canal was the first physical obstacle in that area to the North Vietnamese invading forces. The hamlet was defended by a PF platoon and the local Peoples Self Defense Force (PSFD-civilians whom the Saigon government had supplied with rifles). In the first few days following the cease fire, small Communist units attacked hundreds of these hamlets near the border, hoping to expand the area under their control. The

²¹⁰ *Hearings*, p. 287.
local forces engaged their assailants, and although casualties were suffered and houses were burnt down, the attack was driven off. "The villagers were not elated by their victory. . . [but] you could see a quiet determination that if it happened again, and it would, they would do it again. Their families were there, their land was there. . . . Some would die, others would take their place. They would keep the enemy out."\(^{211}\)

General Tran Dinh Tho wrote that while the urban PSFD tended to be trigger happy, in many villages they performed well. "In insecure hamlets and in certain areas under religious influence [Catholics, Cio Dai, and Hoa Hao] the PSDF . . . were rather well disciplined. In both cases, they appeared to be genuinely motivated by the need to protect their communities."\(^{212}\)

In 1967 the U.S. Army developed a rating system to measure local security, the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES). One of the key differences separating 'A' and 'B' hamlets from 'C' hamlets on the HES questionnaire was that the hamlet chief had to be present day and night in the more secure hamlets, but only during the day in 'C' hamlets.\(^{213}\) HES asked this because it was widely recognized that the Viet Cong made

\(^{211}\) Thompson, *Peace*, p. 16.

\(^{212}\) Tho, *Pacification*, p. 158.

a priority of assassinating local representatives of the Saigon government. The strategy was designed to discourage people from participating in local government and to show that Saigon was not even strong enough to protect its principal local officials. In hamlets where the Viet Cong had access at night, even occasionally, the hamlet chief and the school teacher slept in the fortified compound of the local security forces. By 1970 HES rated 75 percent of South Vietnam's hamlets as either "A" or "B".214

In Vietnam, a village of several thousand people was normally comprised of several hamlets of a few hundred people each. The largest hamlet, with the local businesses, generally sat astride the main transportation route, either a road or a canal. Smaller hamlets formed rings radiating out from the center. Normally the central hamlet had the highest security rating, while the outermost ring was least secure. Likewise, villages closest to the Communist border sanctuaries were least secure. When allied troops made search and destroy sweeps, it was the outer-lying (contested) villages and hamlets that got caught in the line of fire. By 1970 many residents of these contested areas had moved to the more secure central villages and hamlets. When interviewers asked why they had moved, they most often responded that they wanted to escape from the bombing and the fire fights. The second

most cited reason for moving was the better economic opportunity in the government secured areas. Consequently, administration spokespersons argued, if 75 percent of the hamlets were secure, then somewhat more than 75 percent of the rural population lived in day to day security.

In the 1970 hearings, pro-war spokespersons argued that urban South Vietnam was more secure than the countryside. Donald MacDonald, the Director of the U.S. Aid for International Development (AID) mission in South Vietnam testified that of the 10,000 AID employees working in urban areas none had been killed or wounded during 1969 or 1970. He also stated that security had improved greatly since the Tet Offensive. MacDonald stated that his wife was safer walking in Saigon than she would have been in Washington D.C. or New York City. Sir Robert Thompson agreed: "It was remarkable that during the whole of this period there was hardly a terrorist incident in Saigon and I can say with complete personal conviction that Saigon was a safer place in which to live and walk around both by day and night than most American cities." South Vietnam had about 6,800,000 urban residents and about 10,800,000 rural inhabitants. If virtually all

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216 Hearings, p. 602.

217 Thompson, Peace, pp. 64-65.

218 Hearings, p. 78.
of Saigon's 4,000,000 people, and most of the rest of the urban South Vietnamese were safe from contact with Viet Cong cadre, and 8,600,000 of the rural people resided in secured hamlets, then the vast majority of the population was reasonably well protected from Communist tax collectors and assassins.

Pro-war adherents second area of emphasis was the increasing prosperity of the peasantry. The U.S. spent about $12 billion on economic development programs in Vietnam. \(^{219}\) Dr. Douglas Pike said in 1969, "in spite of the war and in some ways because of it, a surprising amount of nation building activity has gotten under way. Economists in Vietnam believe that within a year or two after the end of hostilities Vietnam will be at the point of economic take-off." \(^{220}\) While doing field research in 1967 economist Dr. Robert Sansom found that the nation building effort included an ambitious canal digging program in the early 1960s. \(^{221}\) The canals brought irrigation water to many new fields. Farmers discovered that a small, relatively inexpensive American pump could raise water from the canals to the surrounding fields. The hand pumps which had been the peasants' only tool required too much

\(^{219}\) Pike, Vietnam, p. 127.

\(^{220}\) Pike, War, p. 41.

\(^{221}\) Sansom, Economics, pp.151-212. The next two paragraphs come from these pages.
time and energy. The new mechanical pumps greatly increased productivity and profit.

Another new tool, the Honda rototiller, was also much faster and cheaper to use than plowing with a water buffalo. Using the newly available irrigation waters, pumps, and rototillers many farmers were able to plant a second rice crop each year during the dry season. American fertilizer and insecticide also helped to increase the yield per acre. All of these things, canals, pumps, tillers, fertilizer, and insecticide came to the Vietnamese farmer at below market rates. America's $12 billion nation building effort subsidized these imports.

In the late 1960s, scientists developed a hybrid strain of high yield rice. This "miracle rice" had a shorter growing season, which made double cropping (planting two crops per year in each field) easier and more attractive. Use of miracle rice seed was expanding rapidly in the early 1970s.\(^{222}\)

The government also sponsored the Self-Help Hamlet Development Program. The GVN provided materials and technical assistance if the local people asked for it. But because "The programs would lead to success [only] when they reflected the true aspirations of the population . . . projects were initiated and managed by the people from start to finish."\(^{223}\)


\(^{223}\)Tho, \textit{Pacification}, p. 110.
Self-help projects included installing irrigation systems, constructing bridges, dams and sewage systems, digging wells and fish breeding ponds, building enclosures for pigs, cattle and chickens, and construction of market places and brick factories.

Another government effort, the Animal Husbandry Program, taught farmers how to select breeding stock, the advantages of various mixed feeds, and how to treat livestock diseases. The GVN provided, free of charge, either forty breeding pigs per hamlet or ten breeding chickens per family. Similarly the Fisheries Program surveyed lakes to determine fish suitability, dug breeding ponds, taught fish culture, built refrigeration rooms, and provided breeding stock. The government also made loans for the cost of motor boats and fishing gear.

Pacification programs under the Diem government had been imposed from above, and had alienated many rural Vietnamese. Thus General Tho believed that local planning was crucial to the acceptance of the Self-Help programs in the later stages of the war. "Experience showed that when their own interests were at stake, and when they had a voice in the management of their own affairs, the people volunteered and willingly cooperated."225

In 1970 the Thieu Administration added the last piece to

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the rural prosperity puzzle by instituting a sweeping land reform program and establishing the Rural Development Bank, providing the new land owners with credit to buy seed and equipment. The Land-To-The-Tiller (LTTT) redistribution eliminated all plantation sized farms and absentee ownership. Most rural peasants became farm owners and directly benefitted from the new improvements in productivity and profit.

During 1971 and 1972, economist Dr. C. Stuart Callison and Dr. Henry Bush did field research in rural South Vietnam. Both confirmed the new rural prosperity. After thirteen months of study Callison concluded that "There is no question that the LTTT Program effected a major redistribution of wealth and income from the landlord to the tenants." New land owners immediately began investing more money in mechanized farm equipment, fertilizer, insecticide and high yield rice seed than they had as tenants. The effect was that between 1970 and 1974 rice production increased by 41 percent in the Delta.

The new double cropping with miracle rice was an extremely labor intensive form of agriculture, leading most new owners

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226 Ibid., p. 143.

227 William Duiker, Vietnam Since the Fall of Saigon (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University, Center for International Studies, 1980), p. 18; See also Lewy, America, p. 189; General Tho, Pacification, pp. 29, 142-143; and Charles Stuart Callison, Land-to-the-Tiller in the Mekong Delta (New York: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1983), p. 82.

228 Callison, Land, p. 332.

229 Ibid., p. 329.
to hire non-family labor to help them farm their land. The
development of South Vietnamese agriculture was creating a
significant number of new jobs.

In addition to the new farm employment, rural families
were spending part "of their higher incomes on such things as
housing materials, construction labor, basic household
furniture, local education and other services," thereby
creating more jobs in the local economy.\textsuperscript{230} Beyond this, land
recipients were newly interested in supporting local projects
to build or improve schools, roads, bridges, canals,
irrigation facilities, and health clinics.\textsuperscript{231}

The most significant effect of land reform, however, was
expected to be political. After the 1968 Tet Offensive, the
Saigon government's influence in the countryside had been
rapidly increasing. Even in areas in which they still could
not live, landlords were increasingly able to visit during the
day to collect rents. Thus, prior to land reform, the
peasantry had a major incentive to hope that the Viet Cong
would not be entirely defeated, allowing the landlords to
regain the oppressive power they had exercised before the
insurgency.\textsuperscript{232}

But when the Saigon government began issuing land
ownership titles it had "no small psychological impact on

\textsuperscript{230}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 333.

\textsuperscript{231}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 334.

\textsuperscript{232}\textit{Ibid.} pp. 35-41, 337.
former tenants. If the GVN won a complete victory, the peasantry no longer had to fear the return of the landlords. Following the LTTT program the people had less incentive to support the Viet Cong, while two strong incentives to support the war remained: first, they had a genuine fear of Viet Cong terror; and second, the communists imposed high tax rates on incomes above the subsistence level, in those areas to which they had access.

Callison concluded that while his research was not designed to empirically measure new political support for the Saigon government, "it was clear that support for the insurgents in the Delta was waning in the early 1970s . . . . [and] it would appear the land reform had a stabilizing effect."

Dr. Bush's research was aimed at both economic and political effects. He published a paper in 1972 in which he listed the consumer goods newly in evidence in the villages he studied. These included furniture, radios, motor scooters, concrete foundations for homes, all-weather roofs, and occasionally even televisions and trucks.

Bush argued that in peasant cultures land ownership is normally a highly valued mark of social prestige, and that

233 Ibid., p. 337.
234 Ibid., pp. 54, 191, 285. Also, see pages 126-32 below.
235 Ibid., pp. 337, 339.
this was true of the South Vietnamese peasantry. Also, government agents had thoroughly indoctrinated the peasants concerning the Communists' plans for farm collectivisation. Bush asserted that the peasantry of a third-world nation can normally be expected to support that government which has given them land (as well as the supplies and tools to farm it) against a government dedicated to taking their land away. He observed that in the villages he studied the new land owners strongly supported the Thieu government and its war against the Communists.237

The administration spokespersons' third argument was that the big unit, main force war was being won. Communist main force armies had been driven into the mountainous jungles, the Delta swamps, across the borders to sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos and back into North Vietnam.238 The war was being fought primarily in eleven provinces along the borders, and in the jungles and swamps. Thirty-three of South Vietnam's forty-four provinces had come to experience day-to-day security.239 Colby described having taken an unescorted motorcycle tour with Vann, across the Delta. They slept in former Viet Cong strong-holds, which had been cleared by ARVN


238Hearings, p. 113. Also, Truong, Easter, p. 4-5; Starry, Armored Combat, pp. 155-56, 180; and Tho, Pacification, p. 26.

239Komer, "Impact," p. 68.
units and secured by Popular Force patrols.\textsuperscript{240}

When Lt. Colonel Turley inspected Military Region One, just south of the DMZ, prior to the Easter Offensive he found "There was a growing feeling of tranquility among the people as nearly seven years of heavy fighting appeared to have diminished into occasional harassing incidents. Highways long closed were open to traffic, which stimulated the rebirth of a growing economy."\textsuperscript{241} The markets in Quang Tri City, Dong Ha, Hue and Cam Lo "humming with the incessant chatter of bargaining Vietnamese, were full of food and wares."

How well did \textit{Time} represent these views of the war's supporters? \textit{Time} did not cover the 1970 Senate Foreign Relations Sub-Committee's hearings on Vietnam. This is quite surprising if one subscribes to the view that news stories were selected on the basis of institutional constraints. By Herbert Gans' definition the hearings were exceptionally newsworthy.\textsuperscript{242} Gans states that the holders of high office become newsworthy by virtue of their position. Recognized experts are newsworthy. People who have been interviewed before are newsworthy.

At the 1970 Hearings, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee William Fulbright presided. \textit{Time} had


\textsuperscript{241}Turley, \textit{Easter}, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{242}Gans, \textit{News}, pp. 8-12.
quoted Fulbright on several occasions criticizing the war in Senate debate. \textsuperscript{243} The Hearings were a major event on Fulbright's calendar, taking several weeks and filling over 700 pages of transcript. We have seen that \textit{Time} interviewed John Paul Vann, and quoted him, on more than one occasion. Likewise, Director of CORDS William Colby had been interviewed and quoted.\textsuperscript{244} Despite the presence of all of these newsworthy personalities and a parade of other expert witnesses, \textit{Time} did not cover the hearings. It published none of the Administration's most knowledgeable spokespersons' best arguments for continued funding of the war.

In general, \textit{Time} gave the case for an expanding area of security and prosperity very little attention. In his book, \textit{Honorable Men}, Colby described his frustration with the media: "Almost every week I invited one of the resident American newsmen to accompany me on one of my overnight trips in the field . . . . they rode up canals that had been under enemy control a few months before; they drove with the morning market traffic over roads no longer blocked by mines. But only a few wrote an account of what our program was doing and the changes it was bringing to the people in the countryside."\textsuperscript{245}

The reporters Colby took into the countryside had the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{243}\textit{Time}, October 10, 1969, p. 17; April 13, 1970, p. 18; June 1, 1970, p. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{244}\textit{Ibid.}, March 28, 1969, p. 27.
\item \textsuperscript{245}Colby, \textit{Men}, pp. 278-79.
\end{itemize}
opportunity to verify the Administration's claims. Did the
hamlet chief and school teacher really sleep in their own
homes? Were the farmers using new water pumps and rototillers?
Did their houses really have new concrete foundations? Were
the people sitting on their new couches listening to their new
radios? Were they driving around on their new motor scooters?
One would imagine that even a casual visitor would have
noticed these sorts of things in a Vietnamese village.
Economists Dr. Robert Sansom, Dr. C. Stewart Callison, and Dr.
Charles Bush have all published their research conclusions
stating that these things were happening.

When journalist Robert Shaplen toured the Delta in 1970,
he found that,

There is no doubt that improvements have taken
place. Many roads that had been closed to traffic
for years are open again . . . . There is no doubt
that many people have moved out of Communist areas
in the Delta in the last year . . . . As far as
economic improvements in the Delta, today one can
see there thousands more Hondas, sewing machines,
television and radio sets, and the like, than one
could a year or so ago, and the current rice crop,
amounting to more than five million tons, is the
highest in several years.²⁶

Dr. Pike stated in 1969 that, "Economists in Vietnam
believe that within a year or two after the end of hostilities
Vietnam will be at the point of economic take-off." Historian
William Duiker did research in Vietnam after the Communist

²⁶Robert Shaplen, "Letter From Saigon", The New Yorker,
January 31, 1970, quoted in Hearings, p. 149.

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victory. He found, "In 1975 the urban economy in the South was relatively advanced." The work force was technologically trained, and marketing systems were in place. "Many towns and cities possessed a relatively advanced commercial and manufacturing sector. Moreover, the technological level of the population was high, and there was a large and dynamic petty bourgeoisie. Transportation and communications were quite sophisticated." There can be no legitimate doubt that significant progress in economic development and nation building had grown out of America's $12 billion in economic aid. How could the investigative reporters whom William Colby was dragging around South Vietnam have missed these signs of progress? And yet Time published no stories describing CORDS work in positive terms.

South Vietnam's security and prosperity in 1972 provided a obvious contrast to the situation which had existed in 1965. When Dr. Penniman visited Saigon in 1971 "friends urged me to check with the U.S. embassy" to see which parts of the city were safe. Embassy employees told him that he could walk anywhere in the city and that "Saigon is safer than either Washington or New York." Penniman was pleasantly surprised that "It was a situation in striking contrast with that of four years earlier [during his last visit] when the city was by no means quiet and safe everywhere and no one would have

247Duiker, Vietnam, p. 23.
advised a visitor that it was."^{248}

Likewise, the Commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, General William Westmoreland described a variety of terrorist attacks in Saigon after his arrival in 1964, and continuing into 1965. Many incidents were aimed specifically at Americans. Aside from the Viet Cong attacks "seething local political turmoil in Saigon also posed a threat. Demonstrations, sometimes violent, by students and religious radicals, Buddhists and Catholics, were the order of the day."^{249} In the summer of 1964 "street fighting between Buddhists and Catholics broke out in Saigon. [Driving] the roads without heavy armed guard became increasingly perilous; American dependents were forbidden to travel by any means other than air."^{250} Richard Hunt agreeded that in late 1965 "many district and provincial capitols were inaccessible except to an armed convoy with air cover."^{251}

In contrast to the situation in 1965, by 1970 Congressional staff members Richard Moose and James Lowenstein were able to travel unescorted throughout the Mekong Delta. They rode bicycles.^{252} Obviously a dramatic change had taken

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^{248}Penniman, Elections, pp. 22.

^{249}Westmoreland, Report, pp. 44-47.

^{250}Ibid., p. 72, 65.


^{252}Woods, Fulbright, p. 551.
place. The Administration's claims of progress, supported by such a wide sampling of evidence, should have been evaluated and reported. The claims were easy to verify or deny. Given Time's stated editorial philosophy and the tone of their normal coverage, one would assume that the magazine would have relished the opportunity to demonstrate the inaccuracy of published U.S. government claims of rural development and prosperity. Yet Time published no analyses of the rural economy at all.

The only in-depth story Time published about pacification reported on a "D" rated village. Only 5 percent of all South Vietnamese villages in which pacification had been tried at all had a security rating this low. The article left readers with the impression that while some progress was being made, it could all be swept away at any time. Although this was true of "D" rated villages, Major F.J. West did not think that was true of the village he had helped to secure. John Paul Vann and Sir Robert Thompson certainly did not think that pacification gains in the "A" and "B" villages could be undone by the Communists, if South Vietnam were given enough resources to defend itself from the North Vietnamese main force invasion. At the 1970 hearings Vann testified that the Communists were capable of massing their troops and capturing hamlets on a small scale in 1970, but that it cost them about 100 men for each hamlet they overran. Since there were

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thousands of defended hamlets, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese together did not have nearly enough manpower to roll back the progress which had been made in local security.\textsuperscript{254}

The Easter Offensive offered strong confirmation of Vann's analysis. Just prior to the invasion over 82 percent of the nation's hamlets were rated either 'A' or 'B'. Under the extreme pressure of the all out assaults against An Loc, Kontum, and Hue almost half of the ARVN units in the Mekong Delta were transferred from local security assignments to the front lines.\textsuperscript{255} In spite of these troop transfers, and the massive nature of the invading forces, the Viet Cong were only able to bring the number of 'A' and 'B' hamlets, nation-wide, down to 69.9 percent, at the lowest point in October.\textsuperscript{256}

The Communists' inability to disrupt pacification in the heavily populated Delta was due in large measure to the battle of Kompong Trach, a small Cambodian town just across the border. ARVN forces met the NVA's 1st Division and forced it "to exhaust its combat potential on Cambodian soil . . . . [thus the Communist's] mission to destroy the pacification progress in IV Corps [the Delta] was unsuccessful; they caused

\textsuperscript{254} Hearings, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{255} Truong, Easter, p. 155.

only minor disruption. By December 1972, the ARVN counter-offensive had restored the number of 'A' and 'B' hamlets throughout South Vietnam to 80 percent.

Time failed to report another crucially important aspect of the war; North Vietnam's weakness in 1972. The new weakness of Hanoi's position resulted from two techniques used initially by the United States in 1972. The first was the use of laser guided bombs (smart bombs). Certain railroad bridges had been frequently targeted but never hit (because U.S. pilots were trying to avoid being shot down by one of the most sophisticated anti-aircraft defense systems in the world). In the 1972 bombings, however, these bridges were destroyed. Sir Robert Thompson contends that "between 800 and 1,000 sorties were flown against the Than Hoa bridge south of Hanoi and it was never hit. But now [in 1972] in the first sortie of four Phantoms, it was hit at once by a 2,000 lb smart bomb." Pike agreed that the North had been much more severely damaged in the 1972 bombings than previously. Laser guided bombs had demonstrated "a destructiveness the PAVN (North Vietnamese) High Command did not realize was possible."

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257 Truong, Easter pp. 144-45.
258 Hunt, Pacification, p. 256.
260 Thompson, Peace, p. 113.
261 Pike, Vietnam, p. 97.
Second, President Nixon mined the Haiphong Harbor in North Vietnam. This magnified the North's extremely vulnerable logistical position. "Because North Vietnam had no full-scale armament factories (as opposed to assembly plants), all of its weapons and ammunition," as well as all of its fuel, had to be imported.\textsuperscript{262} During the Easter Offensive, Thompson stated, "The consumption of POL (fuel) and ammunition alone was running at several thousand tons per day."\textsuperscript{263}

Aside from these military needs, Pike stated that, "from 12 to 15 percent of the rice eaten in the North" was imported, along with substantial quantities of other foods.\textsuperscript{264} Thompson adds that "the North had to import one million tons of cereals" in 1973.\textsuperscript{265} Beyond this, the USSR was "supplying Vietnam with fertilizer, pyrites, various metals, agricultural machinery, industrial equipment, motor vehicles, oil products, foodstuffs and clothing and fabrics, totaling 220,000 tons" in the period from July to September 1971. "Cargo delivered to North Vietnam from Soviet ports in the Far East totaled 350,000 tons" in the same period.\textsuperscript{266} North Vietnam had been importing between two and three million tons of supplies each year. In the wake of the December 1972 bombings they were

\textsuperscript{262}Pike, \textit{War}, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{263}Thompson, \textit{Peace}, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{264}Pike, \textit{War}, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{265}Thompson, \textit{Peace}, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{266}Pike, \textit{Vietnam}, pp. 115-16.
unable to transport anything like this quantity of material into the country (prior to repair of the transportation network).

When the Soviets reacted mildly to the mining and bombing, North Vietnam felt abandoned. Hanoi's position was very serious. Thompson stated that during the Easter Offensive, "All regular NVA divisions, except the 316 Division in Laos, had been committed and the reinforcements being sent forward ... contained many teenagers with little more than three weeks training." Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff confirmed this. General Truong stated that elements of the ARVN 7th Division defeated the NVA 207th Regiment in the Delta during November 1972, taking 73 captives. "Most of these prisoners were teen-agers, ill-fed and ill-equipped, some without weapons or ammunition. They disclosed that they had been abandoned by their leaders who fled when the fighting became tough." General Truong stated that the period following their enormous losses in the Easter Offensive was the first time in which he had encountered such weak Communist forces.

In addition to describing the weakness of NVA troops in

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267 Pike, Vietnam, pp. 92-93, 96.
268 Thompson, Peace, p. 121.
270 Truong, Easter, pp. 153-54.
the South, Thompson further asserted that the 1972 air war over North Vietnam had "kept the damage . . . running at a higher rate than Hanoi's capacity to repair it." In early 1973 the food shortages would have begun to take hold. Because of the Communist losses suffered in the Easter Offensive, and the North's inability to replace its lost men and materials, "South Vietnam was in a much stronger political and military shape by September, 1972, than it had been before the invasion started six months earlier."  

Aviation Week and Space Technology supported Thompson's analysis. Its October 30, 1972, issue described the Easter Offensive as a severe military reversal for the Communists. It stated: "Hanoi is negotiating from the weakest military position it has held in eight years." The North Vietnamese army had "literally lost its major military capability in its disastrous southern offensive." Most of its tanks, artillery and aircraft had been destroyed. Hanoi had "watched its once never-ending source of foreign supplies trickle to a halt and its once massive supply stockpiles dwindle to anthills" under the newly accurate smart bombs. Aviation Week concluded that the Communists had suffered "a major military defeat" and faced "an economic disaster in the north unless they find some way to relieve the unbearable pressure" of their imported supplies being cut off. "That is why they are willing to

271 Thompson, Peace, p. 121.
272 Ibid., p. 122.
negotiate now. We hope the American people . . . will understand the valid and necessary role of applied military power in achieving real peace instead of a surrender labeled 'peace'."\textsuperscript{273}

This represents a reasoned and informed expert opinion. It is also a view held by our foremost expert on Vietnamese Communism, Dr. Douglas Pike. The Broadcast Code of Ethics requires that all licensed television stations and networks present this sort of opinion in a reasoned and convincing way, as well as reasoned opposing views, and allow the viewership to form their own conclusions. American Ambassador Martin Herz's quantitative analysis of the network news broadcasts in late 1972 concludes that this view of North Vietnamese weakness was not convincingly reported as required by law.\textsuperscript{274}

Lt. Col. G.H. Turley's book, The Easter Offensive, agrees that "most Americans have little appreciation for the true ferocity of the Easter Invasion, or for the indication it gave us of the South Vietnamese willingness to fight and die for their independence."\textsuperscript{275} Thus, the anti-war movement was able to convince "Congress to cut off the funds which would have

\textsuperscript{273}Aviation Week and Space Technology, October 30, 1972, p. 7.


\textsuperscript{275}James H. Webb, quoted in the preface to Turley, Easter, p. viii.
made it possible for them to defend themselves." General Tran Dinh Tho agreed: "South Vietnam was lost not because pacification had failed but because" it was abandoned by the United States in 1973.  

Aviation Week agreed with Ambassador Herz that the national television networks and nationally distributed news weeklies had not published the pro-war view. In a February 1973 editorial Aviation Week argued that although the American public had not been informed of it, "The Hanoi government is aware of the crippling military/industrial damage it suffered" in the December 1972 air assault. "About 1,000 sorties were flown, each dumping 24 tons of iron bombs with radar guided precision that was astonishing by any standards other than laser-guidance." 

In testimony before Congress Admiral Moorer estimated (from reconnaissance photos) that 160,000 tons of supplies per month were being imported into North Vietnam prior to the December bombing, and that only 30,000 tons per month could get through thereafter (until repairs to the transportation infrastructure were implemented). Moorer described the damage done to bridges, rail yards, electrical generators and power grids, fuel storage areas, canal barges, harbor facilities, radio transmitters, and airfields. Between the Easter

276 Ibid., p. vii.
277 Tho, Pacification, p. 169.
278 Aviation Week, February, 12, 1973, p. 7.
Offensive and the December bombing, Communist losses in 1972 had been devastating. Admiral Moorer concluded "I do not think that they, as of this moment, have the capacity for what I would call main force unit action." 279

Dr. Pike emphasized that "the growing stability of the GVN [and the] success of Vietnamization," along with the effects of the Easter Offensive, the harbor mining, and the smart bombs put Hanoi in a position of weakness.

The DRV signed the [Paris] agreements because at the time it could not do otherwise. It signed because of military punishment, having been badly mauled in the 1972 Easter Campaign . . . . It signed because of Chinese defection and Soviet pressure . . . . Whatever else they were, the Paris agreements were no victory for Hanoi, and were certainly not regarded there as such. 280

President Nixon stated that "Kissinger had brought back terms that would achieve our and Thieu's objective while allowing the North Vietnamese to save face."281 To Nixon, the Communists' key concessions were: the Thieu government would remain in office unless voted out by the South Vietnamese people; and although North Vietnamese troops were not forced to withdraw from the South "the agreement regulating the replacement of forces and closing the border sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia would effectively cut them off from their source of supplies." If the Communists abided by the terms of

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280 Pike, Vietnam, p. 97.

281 Nixon, RN, p. 692. The rest of the paragraph comes from this page also.
the treaty these troops could not have defeated the ARVN and
overthrown the Thieu government. Nixon believed that the Paris
accords "amounted to a complete capitulation by the enemy:
they were accepting a settlement on our terms."

The London Economist agreed that the concessions which
the Communists offered on October 8th had "made their weakness
visible." The Economist concluded that as the victors the
Americans had a special obligation to be generous with the
defeated Communists.

President Nixon had no illusions about the good faith of
the North Vietnamese. He believed "they would observe the
agreement only so long and so far as South Vietnam's strength
and America's readiness to retaliate forced them to." In
that regard Nixon wrote to President Thieu "You have my
absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms
of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe
retaliatory action."

Thus even with the agreement which was signed, there was
good reason to believe that, given continued U.S. support as
stipulated in the treaty, South Vietnam would be able to
maintain its independence. As it turned out, the Communist
infiltrated enormously more men and materials into South
Vietnam than the treaty allowed, while the United States (as

\[282\] Economist, November 4, 1972, p. 18.

\[283\] Nixon, RN, p. 690.

\[284\] Ibid., p. 718.

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Watergate crippled Nixon, virtually abandoning South Vietnam. 285

If instead of signing the treaty in early 1973, the United States had continued to re-arm South Vietnam, while preventing the Communists from resupplying (by harbor mines and the smart bombing of the transportation systems) throughout 1973, Hanoi's position would have become steadily weaker. This would have cost America few if any men or airplanes because, as Thompson argues, "By 28 December the North's defenses were shattered and the B-52s, if the bombing had not stopped the following day, would have been able to roam over the North with impunity. Hanoi was no longer able to track them with radar, its MIG 21s could no longer get off to intercept them, and the resupply of SAMs was only a fraction of their expenditure in the first few days of the raids (1,242 SAMs were fired in eleven days)." 286 Aviation Week and Space Technology supported Thompson: "By the fifth day the Northern defenses were beginning to sag and no B-52s were lost for two full operational days . . . . By Dec. 28, the Northern defenses were shattered." 287 Thompson concluded that, "The whole system was breaking down, including the radio communications on which the Communist regime is particularly

285 See page 24 above.

286 Thompson, Peace, p. 135.


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dependent for control. At this point the war could have been won . . . [if] the bombing and mining [had continued] for as long as necessary through 1973. Hanoi simply could not have faced this prospect.288

Instead of pressing its advantage in late 1972, however, the United States abandoned South Vietnam while the Soviet Union poured an enormous amount of aid into North Vietnam, rebuilding its shattered army. Dr. Pike states: “Estimates on the cost of this effort vary but may have been as high as $2.5 billion.”289 The Soviets built highways and oil pipelines into South Vietnam to service the sophisticated tanks and mobile field artillery they were giving to the North Vietnamese. During 1974, the South Vietnamese experienced scarcities of money, artillery shells and fuel. Time reported on December 23, 1974, that ARVN guns had been limited to two artillery shells per day.290 At An Loc, during the Easter Offensive, the Communists had been firing 7,000 shells per day.291 Time also reported that the South Vietnamese Air Force could no longer fly adequate support missions because of aviation fuel shortages. When Time published this story in late December 1974, the Communist offensive that would finally defeat South Vietnam had already begun. If, upon receiving

288 Thompson, Peace, p. 135.
290 Time, December 23, 1974, pp. 35-36.
news of these shortages, any of Time's readership had wanted to supply more shells and fuel to the beleaguered South Vietnamese, it would have already been too late. During the period of March 24, 1974, through the end of the year, Time printed 5 CI pro-war and 159 CI anti-war. During the spring and summer, when it would have mattered, Americans did not learn from Time magazine that South Vietnam required more military aid to counter the massive buildup of North Vietnamese forces by the Soviet Union.

In conclusion, after mid-1969, what Time did not print was as important as what it did print. The magazine did not cover the 1970 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on Vietnam. It did not publish any evidence of economic development. Time did not describe the experiences of CAP marines like F.J. West and Michael Peterson. It did not adequately explain the massive nature of Soviet military aid prior to the 1972 and 1975 Communist offensives. Time did not inform the American public of North Vietnam's weakness in 1972. And finally, it did not help readers to understand that America's failure to match Soviet aid had left South Vietnam unable to defend itself in 1974. These omissions were crucial to the pursuit of editor-in-chief Hedley Donovan's stated goal of convincing the American people that the U.S. should completely withdraw all forces from Vietnam as quickly as possible.
CHAPTER 4

TIME'S FACTUAL MISREPRESENTATIONS

This chapter focuses on several topics on which Time factually misrepresented what was actually happening in Vietnam in such a way as to promote the goals of the anti-war movement. The first subject of misrepresentation was a set of scare stories asserting that the U.S. must withdraw from Vietnam immediately or face certain dire consequences. The second set of stories involved Time's misrepresentation of the state of economic development and pacification. The last topic addressed in this chapter involves Time's portrayal of America's Communist opponents in the war.

Perhaps the most obvious misrepresentation Time presented to the American public was its picture of the entire American military presence in Vietnam as a colony of heroin addicts. Time ran a series of articles from December 1970 until June 1971 in which it explained that good American boys were being shipped into a Vietnamese den of iniquity. Lonely and frightened, they were seduced by the peer pressure of the many heroin addicts already there. "It is one sorry byproduct of
the war that cannot be eliminated by Vietnamization," Time warned. "As the U.S. soldiers come home all too often they bring their new habits with them."^292 The argument in this series of articles was that even though U.S. battle casualties were relatively low by this point, responsible parents still had very good reason to resist allowing their children to be sent to Vietnam. Time quoted a U.S. officer as saying, "The soldier going to South Viet Nam today runs a far greater risk of becoming a heroin addict than a combat casualty."^293 This was based on the estimate that 10-15 percent of the homeward bound G.I.s were addicted to heroin. Time commented that "the dimension of drug addiction among American troops offers one more heart-rending reason why the U.S. should get out as quickly as possible."^294 As spring turned to summer, Time continued to run ever bolder scare stories, eventually estimating that as many as one-third of all G.I.s returning from Vietnam were addicted to heroin.^295

In the August 9, 1971, issue a short article reported that Dr. Jerome Jaffe, director of the drug abuse program of the Illinois Department of Mental Health had begun doing urinalyses on homeward bound soldiers. About 5 percent of them had detectable levels of narcotics in their systems, but it

^293Ibid., April 19, 1971, pp. 21-22.
did not follow that all 5 percent were addicted to anything. Some had received injections of narcotics as pain killers for their wounds recently enough to show up in the urine tests. In the year that these teenagers spent in Vietnam, some percentage of their former classmates became addicted to drugs in their neighborhoods back home. The early 1970s are generally recognized as a relatively free era in this regard. *Time* offered no evidence that a greater percentage of the teenagers in Vietnam became addicted to heroin than their peers back home.

*Time* spent 97 column inches spread out over seven separate issues publicizing the great heroin scare. *Time* stopped printing these stories only when faced with irrefutable proof to the contrary. The rebuttal article got 8 column inches. Thus, *Time* had factually misrepresented what was actually happening in Vietnam in such a way as to promote Hedley Donovan's goal of convincing the American people that they ought to push for removal of all American forces from Vietnam as quickly as possible.

In a similar type of article, *Time* played upon American racial fears and prejudice. In the September 9, 1969, issue *Time* 's reporter asserted that the contemporary African-American soldiers were much different than they had been. "Before the war went stale and before black aspirations soared

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296 Ibid., August 9, 1971, p. 22.
297 Ibid.
at home, the black soldier was satisfied to fight on an equal basis with his white comrade-in-arms . . . . But now there is another war being fought in Vietnam--between black and white Americans . . . . Many of today's young black soldiers are yesterday's rioters . . . . Elaborate training in guerrilla warfare has not been lost upon them, and many . . . believe that Vietnam may prove a training ground for the black urban commando of the future." Time took a poll of black G.I.'s and reported that "45% said they would use arms to gain their rights when they return to America." Time warned its white middle class readership that if it continued sending black soldiers to Vietnam, when they started returning "this fall and winter . . . they could constitute a formidable force in the streets of America, schooled and tempered in all the violent arts as no generation of blacks has ever been."  

This type of article probably contributed to white America's fear of young black men and may have created a white racial backlash against innocent black veterans. Time printed no evidence that black veterans were more likely to commit racially motivated violent crimes. In the absence of such evidence, Time helped to promote racial prejudice while factually misrepresenting the war and its consequences. This article seemed to give middle class whites another good reason to support Hedley Donovan's goal of withdrawing all U.S. forces from Vietnam as quickly as possible.

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298 Ibid., September 19, 1969, p. 22.
Time also misrepresented the war in a series of articles which analyzed the degree of South Vietnam's economic development. As we have seen, three American economists did field research in rural South Vietnam during the war. They found that farm productivity and income had risen sufficiently to allow farmers to invest in home improvement construction, vehicles, power tools and consumer luxuries. Two respected historians confirmed the three economists' findings. Even Time's reporters and editors were aware that U.S. aid programs had created "an economic infrastructure especially valuable to a developing nation . . . [and that] Thieu's land reform program has already given much of the peasantry reason to back him." This four column inch story appeared in August 1973, after America had signed a peace treaty and withdrawn from Vietnam. President Nixon had already suffered the first crippling effects of the Watergate scandal, and Congress was moving to pass legislation designed to sharply curtail the Executive Branch's war making ability. There was little chance that this good news about the success of nation building would affect future U.S. policy.

During the years in which America was deciding how much continuing assistance to give Vietnam after U.S. combat troops withdrew, Time printed three articles analyzing the South Vietnamese economy. The first appeared on August 31, 1970. It said that vehicle exhaust fumes

Ibid., August 27, 1973, pp. 33-34.
engulf Saigon in a noxious blue haze . . . Alleys are scenes of chaos, as dogs, children and chickens scurry amid garbage and rubble. Row after row of shacks are built on stilts and often are constructed from sheets of rolled beer cans. One family lives with hundreds of Miller High Life emblems as the facade of its house, while a neighbor may prefer the hues of Pabst Blue Ribbon or Budweiser. Beneath many of these dwellings flow canals whose black waters reek of raw pungent sewage. In the shacks, which have no electricity and little furniture, adults and children sleep side by side in a single room measuring no more than 8 ft by 10 ft. Even so they are [compared to the homeless. Although the war has created some jobs, what) has happened to Saigon is indicative of what is happening all over South Vietnam . . . . When the war finally ends, South Vietnam is likely to face a severe economic crisis . . . [its] cities are already developing many of the same fateful characteristics that have caused despair and urban terrorism in other parts of the world.

An October 12, 1970, article said that unless something could be done "about Saigon's faltering economy . . . an unhappy U.S. Congress might sharply curtail American aid. Congress has reason to be concerned" because of South Vietnam's high inflation rate, trade deficit, and overvalued currency. "To ease the situation, President Nguyen Van Thieu last week decreed a package of reforms aimed at cutting inflation to 15% next year - a dubious proposition . . . Thieu's reforms may well prove too little and too

300 Ibid., August 31, 1970, p. 35.
In November 1971, Time carried a short, neutral article describing some of Thieu's proposed reforms. Anyone who took Time's coverage of the South Vietnamese economy to be an objective appraisal would have been forced to conclude that the situation was hopeless. Time presented its readership with a factually inaccurate picture of the state of economic development in South Vietnam, falsely suggesting that the anti-war movement was correct: complete withdrawal was the only rational choice.

The American economists who did field research in rural South Vietnam described President Thieu's land redistribution program as one of the most successful of such efforts in the history of the third world. Prior to the August 1973 article referred to above, Time reported on land reform only once. On July 11, 1969, Time stated that Thieu had made a revolutionary land redistribution proposal, but, "There is, of course, the major question of whether Thieu's government can muster the political will and managerial skill to succeed in the task." Again, Time's coverage of land reform painted a factually inaccurate picture which made it appear that things were not going as well in Vietnam as they really were.

301 Ibid., October 12, 1970, p. 33.
304 Time, July 11, 1969, p. 29.
The last topic on which *Time* misrepresented the war was in its portrayal of America's Communist opponents. *Time* articles described the North Vietnamese leadership as wise men who had suffered greatly in pursuit of their one goal, the legitimate right to rule in their own country. Although the demands of the revolution had forced them to employ harsh tactics and the war they directed had brought much suffering, they were still loved by their people:

The face that he [Ho Chi Minh] presented to the world was that of an avuncular, slightly shabby poet . . . He impressed most visitors with his gentleness, but no man can hold together a Communist Party for nearly forty years, as he did, without an iron hand . . . Ho Chi Minh's life was dedicated to the creation of a Unified Viet Nam, free from foreign control, and the 19 million people of his tortured land suffered mightily from his total devotion to that vision. Even so, they affectionately knew him as 'Bac Ho' (Uncle Ho). So did many in the South. [His North Vietnamese followers] possess a serenity rarely seen in Asia. They always seem to be fighting an invader or a natural calamity. The Mongols, the Chinese and the floods were all defeated . . . . General Giap once proudly said that the Vietnamese were the only people to stop the Mongols. 'We will be the only ones to stop the Americans in the 20th century.'

The problem with *Time*'s depiction of the North Vietnamese was that they were not sacrificing themselves in pursuit of their one goal, their legitimate right to rule in their own country. North Vietnamese armies had invaded Cambodia and Laos

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in the early 1960s and had been attempting to militarily impose their Communist rule on these unwilling peoples thereafter. The methods the Communists routinely used to prosecute these wars were comparable to the most gruesome terrorist acts practiced anywhere in the world.

Historian Guenter Lewy has made a detailed study of Communist terror tactics during the war.\textsuperscript{307} He contends that an organized bureaucracy staffed by over 25,000 men "drew up target lists" and then assassinated more than 27,000 persons and abducted more than 42,000. "The mortaring of refugee camps was a common occurrence," as was laying land mines in the rural market roads. A favorite Viet Cong tactic was to fire snipper rounds at allied soldiers from a hamlet friendly to the GVN, hoping to draw return fire on the innocent inhabitants. "At other times, the VC assaulted villages and hamlets directly with the intention of killing men, women and children." The Communists used flame throwers to attack the undefended villages of Dak Son in 1967 and Son Tra in 1968, killing 330 and injuring many more. At Phuthan in 1970 they methodically dropped grenades into the mouths of the villagers' bunkers killing "an estimated 100 civilians."

"Another terror tactic involving the intentional and indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians was the shelling with 122-mm rockets of Saigon, Danang and other major cities."

\textsuperscript{307}Lewy, America, pp. 272-77. The next two paragraphs come from these pages.
Lewy asserts that the use of terror "constituted an integral part of communist strategy." The routine use of atrocity was calculated to "drive home the point that the GVN could not protect the people under its control," and thus intimidate support for the Saigon government.

North Vietnamese armies were still in Cambodia and Laos subjugating the populations long after the U.S. had retired from Vietnam. The bellicose leaders of North Vietnam even fought a short war against the Communist Chinese in the late 1970s. They simply were not the wise, gentle, peaceful people, wanting only what was rightfully theirs, that Time portrayed them to be. Dr. Douglas Pike stated in 1969: "The rule in North Vietnam is as harsh, arbitrary, and intrusive as in any totalitarian nation on earth." Pike described the process by which the North Vietnamese Communists imposed collectivized agriculture on the peasantry in these terms: "In the name of land reform they set about to destroy a village social structure that had existed for a thousand years. Village life . . . suddenly was transformed into a jungle of animal rage." Hanoi created the People's Agricultural Reform Tribunals "which denounced, tried, and jailed or executed certain villagers. Tribunals apparently operated on a quota basis." They had to produce a certain number of victims. If wealthy landlords existed in the village, they were of course denounced. In many villages, however, the difference between

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308 Pike, War, p. 71.
the richest and poorest inhabitants was slight. In some areas the wealthiest had already fled. Under these circumstances "Party cadres deliberately created a condition of social pathology by working on the emotions of individual villagers." Those who had gained power through the various new tribunals and committees were encouraged to denounce whomever they most disliked. "It was not uncommon for an individual owning no land to find himself listed as an exploiter." Between 50,000 and 100,000 were executed. This land reform amounted to

the exploitation of basically decent people by manipulating their emotions so as to surface the dark stain of inhumanity that exists in all of us. This dehumanized the Land Reform campaign far beyond mere murder, and it created within the society a subliminal force of which it still has not rid itself. 309

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a Russian author who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, was sharply critical of the Western press for its idealization of Communist regimes. He believed that the media was overly critical of Western government's actions, while glossing over much worse abuses committed by Communist regimes. He particularly criticized the presses' sympathetic attitude toward Viet Cong atrocities during the Tet Offensive. "The proven brutal mass murders at Hue are only noted in passing, almost immediately pardoned, because society's sympathy inclined to that point of view, and no one wanted to go against that inertia. It was nothing

short of scandalous." Time magazine's coverage is a classic example of Solzhenitsyn's point. Time printed 40 CI describing the massacre of 5,700 Communist victims at Hue, while publishing hundreds of column inches covering the American massacre of just over 200 victims at My Lai.

Lewy states that "The magnitude and ruthlessness of the VC terror during the occupation of Hue left a deep feeling of revulsion among the people of South Vietnam." General Tho wrote that the People's Self-Defense Forces "arose in the wake of the enemy 1968 Tet offensive as a result of the spontaneous demand from the people. The attacks waged by the Communists during 1968 completely alienated the people who had incurred heavy losses [particularly] because of Communist atrocities." Sir Robert Thompson asserts that although the militant Buddhists around Hue had opposed South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in the early 1960s, the Communist massacre at Hue, "completely altered their stand." Dr. Howard Penniman agreed that although the Buddhists had conducted anti-government demonstrations as late as 1966, "events have sharply changed this relationship." Most of the civilians whom the Viet Cong had tortured and buried alive had

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311 Lewy, America, p. 275.

312 Tho, Pacification, p. 150.

313 Thompson, Peace, p. 11.
been Buddhists. "This may well have crystallized the views of some who had previously seen little to choose between the governments of the North and South. In 1970 the Buddhists moved to join the system" by entering a slate of candidates in the Senatorial elections.\textsuperscript{314} Although American liberals saw little to concern them in the torture and murder of thousands of Buddhist civilians, apparently the victims' families and survivors did object. Their new participation in government was rewarded when their candidates won the largest share of legislative seats.

President Nixon stated that during the Easter Offensive at both An Loc and Quang Tri "as terrified civilians rushed to flee the scene of combat, North Vietnamese troops indiscriminately slaughtered thousands of them."\textsuperscript{315} Ian Ward of the London \textit{Daily Telegraph} covered the story on Route I outside of Quang Tri. Ward called the massacre "an act of calculated butchery unprecedented even in this conflict. Forward observers for the Communist artillery targeted the columns of desperate refugees."\textsuperscript{316} Sir Robert Thompson stated that, "The casualties along Route I (the stretch of road is now known as 'La Route Terrible') were estimated at over

\textsuperscript{314}Penniman, \textit{Elections}, p. 195.
\textsuperscript{315}Nixon, \textit{RN}, p. 586.
20,000." U.S. Ambassador Martin Herz confirmed that the North Vietnamese had, "deliberately aimed artillery fire at thousands of refugees trying to flee southward from Quang Tri." Lt. Colonel Gerald Turley commanded the U.S. advisory team coordinating air strikes and naval gunfire in Quang Tri province during the Easter Offensive. He was in radio contact with all the U.S. advisors who were moving around the battlefield. Turley reported that the Communists' battle plan involved the intentional shelling of civilians in villages and cities throughout the region. This strategy created its intended effect. The roads were clogged with desperate, fleeing refugees, making it difficult for ARVN units to move during the battle. North Vietnamese artillery units had been prepositioned to fire on the various major roads, again, to interdict ARVN movements. Their decision to shell fleeing civilians was apparently in keeping with their war long strategy of intimidating support for the Saigon government. Turley's book contains photographs of the destruction to military and civilian vehicles along various roads of the region.

Turley states that on April 27th the Communist artillery began to hit Quang Tri city. "The intensity of the NVA's

317 Thompson, Peace, p. 41.
319 Turley, Easter, pp. 60, 76, 98, photographs appear between pp. 131 and 132.
bombardments and its indiscriminate shelling of populated areas had the desired effect as more civilians were forced into the roadways further complicating the movement of military vehicles, personnel and supplies . . . . Taking advantage of this helpless mass of humanity, North Vietnamese forward observers methodically began to adjust the fire from their 130 mm guns all along the lines of unprotected refugees.\textsuperscript{320} Turley indicates that the memories of the Communist's massacres at Hue (just south of Quang Tri) in 1968 added to the panic. \textit{Time} did not publish any account of this story.

It would not seem difficult to believe that the South Vietnamese genuinely hated the Communists, and wanted to defend themselves from a Northern victory. The American media, however, did not accurately portray the Communists' atrocities late in the war, the Southerners' willingness to fight and die for their freedom, or the Northern weakness in late 1972. Thus the media's anti-war bias probably contributed to the American Congress' willingness to abandon South Vietnam to an enemy who, by the standards applied to Bosnia in the 1990s, would certainly be considered war criminals.

\textit{Time} did run a 53 CI story describing Cambodia's Khmer Rouge. The author, journalist Robert Anson, explained that he was captured and taken to a Cambodian village, where he was held prisoner. He spent several weeks there. As he grew to

\footnote{Turley, \textit{Easter}, p. 259.}
know them he discovered that the Khmer were the nicest of people. Anson enjoyed a great deal of conversation with them "and in a short time became remarkably close . . . a bond was forming between us. I could almost watch it growing stronger daily." Anson described his guilt when he saw that the allied assault on North Vietnamese positions in Cambodia had forced North Vietnamese guerrillas to teach the Cambodians "how to crawl quietly through the grass, dragging their rifles behind them." When he saw the bomb shelter, evidence that his own countrymen had tried to kill these honest peasants, his feelings forced him to turn away. Anson was deeply touched by the gifts his friends gave him when they set him free.321

The import of the article is unmistakable. The message is that the Khmer Rouge were such wonderful people that no decent man would be willing to go to war against them. This is a factual misrepresentation of a people's character. The literature on Cambodian history describes them as a particularly violent people throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It should have come as no surprise that the Khmer Rouge would slaughter over a million of their countrymen when they gained power in 1975.322 They were exactly the opposite of the kind and gentle humanitarians Time


described. A recent movie, "The Killing Fields" brought their well-documented atrocities to popular notice. *Time*’s portrayal of the Communists as the sort of people that no decent man could go to war against misrepresented the situation in such a way as to promote Hedley Donovan’s goal of convincing the American people to push for immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces.
CONCLUSIONS

In the 1970s, the liberal anti-war movement believed that it was morally imperative to force a cut off of American funds for the defense of South Vietnam. Their underlying assumptions were that: 1, the war was already hopelessly lost, and thus further assistance would only prolong the suffering and delay the inevitable Communist victory; and 2, the hated military dictator, President Thieu, was forcing the South Vietnamese people to continue the war when they would have preferred to negotiate peace.

This thesis, however, has shown that substantial evidence exists supporting the conclusion that the South Vietnamese fought hard and successfully in the Tet Offensive, the Cambodian incursion, Operation Lan Som 719, the Easter Offensive, and in local security battles. Also, evidence from the 1971 presidential election showed that President Thieu in fact enjoyed wide popular support. Dr. Howard Penniman has demonstrated that Thieu's government was relatively open, responsive, and democratic. More importantly, evidence from the 1968 and 1972 treaty negotiations showed that the South Vietnamese people did in fact want to defend themselves from
the ruthless, externally funded attempt to impose totalitarian Communism upon them. The media, however, consistently failed to publish the evidence supporting these conclusions. The media's failure prevented the American people from having the opportunity to make an informed decision about how much support should be given to South Vietnam after U.S. troops were withdrawn.

A second conclusion which follows from this research is that the current mainstream historiographic interpretation of the American media's coverage of the war is directly contradicted by the coverage in *Time* magazine. For example, after October 1969, *Time* carried 429 CI describing the anti-war protest demonstrations in glowing terms and only 41 CI critical of the demonstrations. Even in the 41 CI which criticized the protests *Time* was careful to distinguish between the "radical youths" who caused trouble and the responsible adults who were peacefully protesting the "shameful and irrational" war. Only 8 CI represented the belief that anti-war demonstrations encouraged the Communists, even though polls showed that 53 percent of the American public condemned the protest demonstrations while only 27 percent were sympathetic. The most reasonable interpretation of this anti-war protest coverage is that *Time* was trying to sell the protest movement to an unwilling public.

Herbert Gans' book, *Deciding What's News*, contained a quantitative analysis of the news aired by the three
television networks, as well as the news published in *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines. He did most of his research in the late 1960s while the war was in progress. Regarding the media's coverage of the anti-war protest demonstrations, Gans wrote "Marches and demonstrations are, from one point of view, protest activities, but the news almost always treated them as potential or actual dangers to the social order." Later he reiterated, "The anti-war demonstrations of the past decade were covered as disorder stories," and again toward the end of his book, "The anti-war protests were, for most of the war, treated as social disorder news." Gans also asserts that journalists did not select news stories based on their ideological content, and "In time of war they do not report news that may damage the war effort."

Gans admitted that his "quantitative analysis omitted the Vietnam War and all domestic news directly related to the war." Although he did not subject this news to a rigorous formal analysis, Gans felt he had read enough of it to understand its import. The fact that Gans drew false conclusions about the media's war coverage without having analyzed it leaves his methodology open to criticism. The

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quantitative analysis presented in this thesis shows that his interpretation was directly contradicted by the available evidence in Time magazine's coverage of the Vietnam War.

In the preface to his book, Paper Soldiers, Clarence Wyatt states, "For over twenty years, all have agreed on one point--the press was a major factor in the United States' failure in Vietnam." Liberals praised the media for helping to end the war, conservatives blamed the press for losing the war. However, Wyatt asks: "Is either of these two views accurate? Both are based on a belief that the press was a powerful adversary of the government and the military. However, research over the past few years has indicated that such a belief is misplaced. Content analysis of newspaper and television coverage shows that, more often than not, the press reported official information, statements and views with relatively little dissent."\footnote{\textit{Clarence Wyatt, Paper Soldiers} (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), p. 7.} The evidence presented in this thesis directly contradicts this assertion in the preface to Paper Soldiers.

Wyatt does make clear that the U.S. government engaged in a number of activities during the Cold War which it tried to keep secret. The U-2 incident over Russia in the late 1950s and the Bay of Pigs fiasco during the Kennedy Administration provide good examples. Wyatt shows that the press often cooperated with the government during these years by
suppressing news voluntarily, if the government opposed its publication. During the Vietnam War, Wyatt demonstrates, the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon Administrations all used various techniques to try to manage the news. During the Nixon years, reporters were intimidated and even deported from Vietnam.

The conclusions in *Paper Soldiers*, however, are not supported by the evidence. Wyatt argued that if the founding fathers could visit us today they "would be shocked by the power that has flowed into the Executive Branch." A fundamental part of the modern Presidents' power has been their control of information. "As the Vietnam war showed, the ability and inclination of the Executive Branch to restrict and manipulate information is largely beyond the press' ability to resist."\(^{329}\) This paper concludes that in the period after mid-1969 Wyatt was wrong; *Time* did effectively resist Nixon's ability to manage the news.

Daniel Hallin's book, *The "Uncensored" War*, presents a much stronger case than either *Paper Soldiers* or *Deciding What's News*. Hallin did a quantitative analysis of 779 television network news broadcasts aired in the years 1965-1973. From this he concluded that the news coverage changed dramatically after the 1968 Tet Offensive. "Before Tet, editorial comments by television journalists ran nearly four to one in favor of administration policy; after Tet, two to

Did the media's anti-war bias after 1968 hurt the war effort? Hallin chose to frame the question this way: "Could American power have been used more efficiently in Vietnam if officials had had more control over the media? Perhaps. But the case is by no means as strong as is often supposed."

Hallin provides a good analysis of the data available to him. However, his sample of 779 broadcasts represents less than 9 percent of all television network news broadcasts during the period 1965-1973. It is too small to allow him to form an accurate judgment as to the degree of bias in the total news presentation.

Hallin also did a quantitative analysis of the war coverage in the New York Times newspaper for the years prior to 1965. This allowed him to make a crucially important point. The media's pro-war bias in the early 1960s prevented it from reporting the negative things that reporters had discovered on the ground in Vietnam. Reporters could see that the U.S. government's optimistic reports did not match the actual situation which the journalists were observing. The media's pro-war bias prevented it from publishing an anti-war interpretation of events in the early 1960s. This precluded the American people from having the opportunity to make an

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331 Ibid., p. 211.
332 Ibid., pp. 8, 9, 214-15, and chapter two.
informed judgment about what type and amount of assistance should have been committed to South Vietnam in the early and mid-1960s.

Hallin's conclusions about the early war are excellent. Apparently, however, either his sample size was too small to draw accurate detailed conclusions, or the television coverage was remarkably more pro-war than that of *Time* magazine; and no one who has examined both has reached this conclusion. Hallin wrote that although the media turned anti-war after Tet, it did not turn very hard against the war, and it did so only after Congressional and public opinion had moved into opposition: "for the most part television was a follower rather than a leader . . . . The Nixon administration retained a good deal of power to 'manage' the news." In Hallin's opinion pro-war news coverage largely accounted "for the fact that the Nixon administration was able to maintain majority support for its Vietnam policies through four years of war." A more reasonable interpretation would seem to be

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333 Herz, *Prestige Press*. Herz quantified the coverage of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and C.B.S. television news on five separate questions dealing with the coverage of the December bombings. His results tables are printed on p. 19, 29, 33, 35, and 40. On one question C.B.S. was more pro-war (or at least less anti-war) at a 6-1 bias, compared to *Time*'s 19-1 coverage. On two questions *Time* and C.B.S. were fairly equally anti-war. On two questions, however, C.B.S. and *Newsweek* were the only media sources which provided absolutely no pro-war coverage at all. Clarence Wyatt and Herbert Gans both examined the coverage of the various national media sources also. Neither of them indicated that they found television to be more pro-war than *Time*.

334 Hallin, *"Uncensored" War*, pp. 10-11.
that the American people wanted to avoid defeat so badly that they were willing to support the President in spite of the media's attempts to discourage them.

A more fundamentally important conclusion revealed by the research for this thesis is that the mainstream historiographic interpretation of the Tet Offensive (that although it was a military defeat for the Communists, it was the turning point which led to their victory, because it ended public approval for American participation in the war) is not up-held by the evidence. Tet did not in fact cause the American people to stop supporting the effort to preserve an independent, non-communist South Vietnam. The evidence on this point is indisputably clear.

Politicians are the nation's most sensitive observers of public opinion. If there had ever been anything like majority support for the anti-war position many candidates would have liked to campaign on an anti-war platform. This was never the case. In the 1970 Congressional elections: "Three leading Senate doves were felled but about that many hawks were defeated too . . . . There was not much change in the house [either] . . . . few candidates had made the war central to their campaigns . . . . it appeared to play only a small part in the voting."335 The one candidate, George McGovern in 1972, who did make the anti-war position central to his campaign lost in a landslide.

335 DeBenedetti, Ordeal, p. 293.
In June 1972 Time reported that it had conducted a detailed interview survey of potential voters. The results confirmed that less than one-third of the American people believed in the goals and values of the anti-war movement, while 70 percent believed that a Korea-like settlement, guaranteeing the permanent independence of South Vietnam was possible, and they supported President Nixon in his pursuit of this conclusion to the war. A September 1972 Harris poll confirmed that 55 percent of Americans supported the continued heavy bombing of North Vietnam, 64 percent supported the mining of Haiphong Harbor, and 74 percent thought it was important that South Vietnam not fall into the hands of the Communists.\textsuperscript{316}

In October 1972 Henry Kissinger announced that he had the basis of a treaty guaranteeing peace with honor to the United States. President Thieu, however, refused to sign. He demanded the removal of all North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam. The Communists then insisted that President Nixon repudiate Thieu, and sign the treaty which Kissinger had negotiated. Instead, Nixon stood by South Vietnam, and resumed prosecution of the war while continuing to negotiate for a better treaty. During this period in October and November 1972, polls showed that a majority of the American people approved of the President's handling of the war.

There is no room for debate on this point. It is

\textsuperscript{316} Nixon, RN, p. 689.
indisputably certain that in 1972 the mass public rejected the goals and values of the anti-war movement, and supported President Nixon's efforts to secure an independent, non-communist South Vietnam.

Another conclusion that follows from this thesis is that North Vietnam was in very serious trouble in 1972. They required 100,000 tons of imported food per month to feed their people. In the wake of the Christmas bombings they were able to transport only 30,000 tons of cargo (which had to satisfy their needs for both food and war supplies) per month into the country. It seems probable that continued bombing of the transportation routes would have reduced their ability to import goods even further. Continued bombing would have cost few if any American lives or airplanes because virtually all of North Vietnam's radar dishes and surface-to-air missile sites had been destroyed. There were no functional runways left for their MIG aircraft to take off from. They had few SAM missiles left, and they were limited in their ability to bring new missiles into the country. Their inventory of tanks, artillery, fuel and ammunition had largely been destroyed, and five-sixths of their army had just been killed or disabled. It is difficult to see how they could have continued to prosecute the war in 1973 at a level which would have threatened the stability of the South Vietnamese government.

In spite of these facts the most widely used textbook for Vietnam War classes, George Herring's, *America's Longest War,*
stated that "the American effort to create a bastion of anti-communism south of the seventeenth parallel was probably doomed from the start." Herring made absolutely no attempt to describe North Vietnam's weakness in late 1972, as if this evidence were so obviously meaningless that history students had no reason even to be informed of it. Herring, in fact, positively asserts that in his judgment the Communist negotiating position had in no way been weakened by the events of 1972.\textsuperscript{337}

In a similar vein, the section of America's Longest War on pacification includes absolutely no discussion of the economic progress described by three economists, two historians and a host of journalists and experts. On this topic Herring concluded that, "Instead of rethinking a policy which had brought no results, Nixon clung stubbornly," to his pacification strategy in 1971.\textsuperscript{338}

In addition to this, Herring's conclusions regarding the Tet Offensive and its effect on pacification, the Cambodian incursion, Operation Lan Som 719, the Buddhists' attitude toward Saigon and the Communists, the anti-war protest movement, and the media's coverage of the war are all essentially no different than the anti-war interpretation offered by Time magazine. Herring's conclusions either completely ignore or directly contradict the analyses of Dr.\textsuperscript{337}

\textsuperscript{337} Herring, War, p. 275.

\textsuperscript{338} ibid, p. 265.
Douglas Pike, Dr. Robert Sansom, Dr. C. Stewart Callison, Dr. Charles Bush, Dr. Gunter Lewy, Dr. Howard Penniman, Dr. Lucian Pye, Dr. John Roche; media sources, the London Economist, and Aviation Week and Space Technology, the experts who worked longest in South Vietnam Sir Robert Thompson, John Paul Vann, General Donn Starry, Lt. Col. G.H. Turley, and Ambassador Martin Herz. One would not be aware, from reading Herring, that many of these individuals existed. Herring never suggests that any alternative interpretation has been published.

All of this material forms a disturbing pattern which requires some explanation. One possible interpretation is that the authors of the mainstream historiography of the war were among the one-third of all Americans who had come to believe in the goals and values of the anti-war movement. They began their research with a strong anti-war bias. The nature of bias is that it prevents individuals from noticing evidence which undermines the premise of their beliefs. Thus Herbert Gans and Clarence Wyatt were able to extensively examine Time magazine's coverage of the war, and then reach conclusions which were directly contradicted by that coverage. In much the same way the historical community failed to notice that the mainstream interpretation of the Tet Offensive has been directly contradicted by the available evidence for an entire generation. Similarly, the most widely used text for university Vietnam classes appears to represent the liberal anti-war interpretation of events, to the exclusion of all
evidence undermining that interpretation.

It was in the self interest of the liberal anti-war community to reach the conclusion that Tet 1968 had turned the American public against the effort to sustain an independent, non-communist South Vietnam. The liberals' stated desire to end all U.S. participation in the war, even if it meant a Communist victory, was easily justifiable if they were simply leading the majority of the American people. Their actions would not be as acceptable if it were the case that supporters of the anti-war movement, a minority of less than one-third of the American people, had gained control over virtually all sources of information, media and university, and they had used that power to impose a misleading, falsely negative interpretation of the war on the majority of the public, who unlike the liberal community did not prefer an American defeat to Vietnamization.

A substantial portion of the evidence used to support the historical community's anti-war interpretation comes from a seemingly unimpeachable source, the officers of the U.S. Army itself. Logically it appears that these men were in a position to know what was happening, and they had to overcome their natural pro-military bias in order to offer journalists and academic researchers an honest view of events. General Westmoreland disagreed. "If a man had the money and could maintain his grades, he could defer service until he finished college and even graduate school." This policy "had serious
effects for the United States Army." Campus anti-war militancy had closed down some ROTC programs, and limited the number of students willing to join those still operating. ROTC programs were thus unable "to provide officers in the numbers needed."

To fill the gap: "As a man finally completed his education and at last submitted to the draft," the army inducted a lot of men with master's and doctoral degrees who did not want to be in the army, much less in Vietnam. They had spent years on campus, and many had developed strong anti-war views. "The deferred man often brought his anti-war militancy with him when he finally got into uniform . . . . many tried to discredit authority by fighting haircut regulations, publishing and distributing underground newspapers, sponsoring or participating in protests, trying in any way possible to foment unrest." Thus there was a substantial pool of officers who brought a strong anti-war bias to Vietnam. Academic researchers who were looking for evidence to support an anti-war interpretation would not have had trouble locating their end-of-tour reports for use as source material.

The question of Sir Robert Thompson's suitability as a historical source is of particular interest. His interpretation of the war prior to 1968 is virtually identical to the liberal academic view. Thompson's book, No Exit From Vietnam, was published before the Pentagon Papers. It was written in a period during which Time magazine still supported

the war. Thompson's criticisms were based not on previous authors, but on his personal understanding of the war. He believed that if the overall aim of American foreign policy was "to promote peace, freedom, progress and prosperity throughout the world," then the strategy followed in Vietnam was counterproductive.\(^\text{340}\) Thompson argued that if a great power is to intervene in a local conflict without damaging its international prestige, its actions must be justifiable and acceptable to the great majority of people in its own country, the country subject to intervention, and worldwide public opinion. Furthermore, the resources committed must be of a limited scope. The commitment must be sustainable until success has been achieved. The methods of intervention must also be broadly acceptable. For example, the United States could have defeated the North Vietnamese by using nuclear weapons, but that would not have advanced the overall aims of U.S. foreign policy or America's international prestige and leadership.\(^\text{341}\)

The strategy America followed in Vietnam prior to 1969 failed on all counts. President Ngo Dien Diem was clearly not acceptable to the majority of South Vietnamese in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. When America stepped up its involvement in 1965 the cornerstone of its strategy was to inflict enough pain on the Communists to force them to give up

\(^{340}\) Thompson, *No Exit*, p. 108.

their purpose of conquering South Vietnam. The methods used to achieve this goal were intensive bombing and a war of attrition. The American troops' mission was to put enough 'search and destroy' pressure on the Communists to break them. This strategy, however, required hundreds of thousands of men, and over a million tons of bombs. This was not acceptable to a majority of Americans or other peoples around the world.

By 1968 the amount of power being applied exceeded any possible benefits. Thompson believed that "Not one of the four American Presidents concerned would have become involved in Vietnam if they could have foreseen what the eventual commitment would be." The most particularly counterproductive method America used was bombing North Vietnam. "When the oil depots round Hanoi were hit [in 1966] the British Government, which up until that time had fully supported United States policy in Vietnam," no longer condoned the American tactics, or the suffering they brought to the civilian population. "World-wide controversy was kindled and dissent within the United States itself became one of the vital factors," in America's ability to continue the war. While the bombing had only a minimal effect on the Communist ability to infiltrate men and supplies into the South, it had the psychological effect of rallying the whole North Vietnamese population to a highly intense participation in the

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342 Ibid., p. 110.
343 Ibid., pp. 95, 50.
Another problem with the bombing campaign and the massive build-up of American troops was the logistical support network it required. "The vast complex of supply depots between Saigon and Bien Hoa has to be seen to be believed. They could not be measured in acres but only in tens of square miles."\(^3\) It required a significant percentage of the available troop strength just to guard the airfields and supply depots. By 1968 America had dropped over 1,000,000 tons of bombs and lost close to eight hundred aircraft, without producing a demonstrably convincing beneficial result.\(^4\)

On the ground the war of attrition required too many American men and casualties. Hanoi had a large enough population base and the political will to accept 100,000 killed or disabled per year over an extended period of time. The American public, however, was not willing to accept the number of casualties required to win such a war. Even those peoples around the world who believed in containing Communism did not believe the Vietnam War was worth its cost in human misery. Also, American tax payers were not willing to foot a $30 billion a year bill.\(^5\) Beyond this, the massive American presence had a variety of negative impacts on the people of


South Vietnam. In the final analysis, by the end of 1967 none of the American efforts had made a significant impact on the insurgency's rural resource base. If necessary the Communists could decline battle and simply wait until the costs forced a unilateral American withdrawal. Thompson had a wide variety of more specific criticisms, most of which seem valid in retrospect.

Given the American people's unwillingness to accept the costs of a war of attrition on a long-term basis, the moral outrage of people in many nations, and the United States military's apparent determination to continue doing "more of the same," Thompson states, "It was my own view in June, 1968, that the United States had lost the war." In his analysis prior to 1968, Thompson had anticipated the liberal anti-war interpretation of events, and done so in a more detailed and knowledgeable way than many other authors. While he continued to deplore the American tactics of the early war, his opinion of who would eventually win changed after mid-1968, because of Communist loses in the Tet Offensive, the CORDS effect on pacification, the Vietnamization program, and the effects of harbor mining, smart bombs, and the Easter Offensive.

The mainstream academic community has not considered Thompson to be an acceptable source in spite of his detailed

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analysis in agreement with their interpretation prior to Tet 1968. George Herring mentions Thompson only in connection with a 1962 counterinsurgency program and to denigrate the analysis he presented to President Nixon in 1969. Herring wrote that: "With no place else to go, Nixon eagerly and uncritically embraced Thompson's conclusions."^{350}

John Vann has been treated in much the same way as Thompson. Neil Sheehan states that although he was a creditable source prior to the Tet Offensive, by 1969 "Vann had invested so much of John Vann in the war that he had to talk himself into believing," that his side was winning. He was unable to accept "the truth about the war," -- that progress was not being made and it was still irretrievably lost.\(^{351}\)

The question which arises here is whether it is reasonable to believe that these men, who had such a deep and insightful understanding of the war prior to 1968 could have actually lost their ability to make accurate judgements in 1969. If Vann and Thompson were deluding themselves, they were not alone. Many other observers believed the war had turned in the allies' favor. Dr. Douglas Pike, Dr. Robert Sansom, Dr. Stuart Callison, Dr. Howard Penniman, Dr. John Roche, General Donn Starry, Lt. Colonel Gerald Turley, General William Westmoreland, William Colby, General Tran Dihn Tho, and Lt.

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^{350} Herring, War, pp. 95, 251.

^{351} Sheehan, Lie, pp. 743-45.
General Ngo Quang Truong have all published books supporting the view that the allies were winning the war. Many conclude that South Vietnam lost primarily because it was abandoned by the United States. Is it the mainstream historical contention that all of these sources have been so completely discredited that it would be improper to present their interpretation to students in a balanced text? Where this line of reasoning appears to break down entirely is with the London Economist. When subjected to quantitative analysis, the great bulk of its war coverage falls in the neutral category. It consistently referred to the war as a tragedy for a variety of reasons. Yet it firmly believed the Communist's negotiating offer in October 1972 was an admission of defeat.

Either all of these sources were so hopelessly incapable of thinking rationally about the war that their interpretation does not even need to be presented to students in a balanced text, or the liberal authors of the mainstream historiography have taken such a strong anti-war bias that they have excluded legitimate evidence which undermines their interpretation.

Is there any indisputable, hard evidence to support the pro-war interpretation? Yes, there is. The ARVN's performance unquestionably improved. In 1965 the relatively lightly armed Viet Cong were "destroying battalions faster than they could be reconstituted."352 In 1972 the massive Communist invasion killed 25,000 South Vietnamese soldiers, but did not destroy

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352 Westmoreland, Report, p. 139.
any fighting units. The ARVN was strong enough to turn the invasion and then counterattack. It could not have done so in 1965. It would seem that the ARVN had unquestionably improved.

Likewise, in 1965 "many district and provincial capitals were inaccessible except to an armed convoy with air cover." In the 1970s unescorted Americans were able to bicycle and motorcycle around rural South Vietnam. The Communist position would seem to have been unquestionably much weaker.

Perhaps the most important improvement in South Vietnam's position was due to the Land-to-the-Tiller program. It removed a major incentive for the peasantry to work against the final defeat of the Viet Cong, and added a great incentive for the people to support the Saigon government. Two field research studies concluded that land reform was in fact reducing support for the Communists and increasing support for the Saigon government. The allied nation building effort was unquestionably improving the standard of living in rural South Vietnam. Our normal expectation would be that land reform and increasing incomes should have created greater loyalty and commitment to the Saigon government in the future.

Thus there would seem to be very solid evidence that the position of the allies was improving between 1965 and 1972. The ARVN unquestionably demonstrated that (with U.S. air support) in 1972 it was capable of defeating the Communist

\[353\] Hunt, Pacification, p. 36.
maximum effort. With continued American air support, advisors and money, presumably they should have won again in 1975, or whenever the Communists launched their next invasion. The hypothesis that the ARVN could not have won in 1975 would require that a historian speculate that the continuing positive trend of South Vietnamese performance would have reversed in 1973, and that the ARVN would have become so much weaker that they would have lost in 1975 even with continued American support.

It is an enormously different thing for a historian to present the evidence of improving South Vietnamese performance and then speculate that it would have reversed, than to simply state that the allied effort was doomed from the start. In making the assertion that no progress was being made toward winning the war, George Herring has implicitly judged that all of the pro-war sources listed above have been so completely discredited that they do not need to be considered. Either all of these source have been so discredited, or the mainstream historiography of the war has rejected legitimate historical sources and a valid interpretation.

Along this same line, a most important conclusion of this thesis is that the American media's falsely negative representation of the war probably deprived President Nixon of the public support he needed to continue the harbor mining and transportation route bombing in 1973. This continued aid would have cost America little, and would have been vital to South
Vietnam's prospects for survival. Although polls clearly showed that a majority of the public supported Nixon's efforts to preserve South Vietnam's independence in 1972, this broad approval had limits. For example, the December 1972 bombing demonstrated the media's ability to affect public opinion. Even though the bombing severely damaged the Communists' capacity to prosecute the war, and the entire twelve day assault caused fewer civilian casualties than the Communist artillery barrage on the refugees fleeing Quang Tri, the American press described the December bombing as an unconscionable act. Time stated that the "brutal" Richard Nixon launched "the bloodiest air strikes ever ... . Hanoi's claims of high civilian casualties" were plausible. "The American resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam has made the world recoil in revulsion."\(^{354}\) Time's quotes "condemned the bombing as a crime against humanity on the moral scale of such NAZI atrocities as the death camp at Treblinka."\(^{355}\) The B-52 was described as "a cruel weapon [used] to terrorize the North Vietnamese ... . the bombings will not soon be forgotten or forgiven by many Americans, by much of the rest of the world," or by the Communists.\(^{356}\) Time predicted that negotiations would become more difficult because of the air war. Another quote stated that: "Mr. Nixon is no longer, and


will never again be, a respectable man." Ambassador Herz's quantitative analysis of the news concluded that all the national media sources took a similarly biased position.

The media coverage of the bombing significantly reduced President Nixon's approval rating on his handling of the war. How could it have been otherwise? If any percentage of the American people put any credence at all in the media's view, it must necessarily have damaged public support for the President.

Beyond this, Congressional attitudes toward the war were influenced by media coverage and public opinion. Nixon's private interviews with influential Congressmen convinced him that there was a real possibility that the legislative branch would cut off funding for the war in January 1973 if he did not have a peace treaty in hand. Thus although the allies were militarily in a position of maximum strength in late 1972, the President felt he had to take a treaty which was good enough, rather than hold out for a better one.

The December bombing, however, was not the first instance of media coverage hurting the war effort. The press's falsely negative coverage began with the 1968 Tet Offensive. Time spent 340 CI reporting the false interpretation that this battle was a military victory for the Communists. Peter Braestrup's book, *Big Story*, shows that the entire American

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media, television as well as print, treated Tet in the same way.\textsuperscript{359}

Howard Schuman's research indicates that this was critically important to the mass public's support for the war. "Just before the Tet attacks in January 1968, with American leaders confidently predicting victory, the number of self described hawks outnumbered doves by two to one. But two months after Tet the proportion of doves in the country slightly exceeded that of hawks . . . . The shift in the space of just 60 days represents probably the largest and most important change in public opinion during the entire war."\textsuperscript{360}

\textit{Time} also described operation Lam Son 719 in falsely negative terms. After the supply port of Sihanoukville had been closed to the Communists, the Ho Chi Minh supply trail became their only access to much of South Vietnam. They reacted vigorously to Lan Som's threat to their vital interests. The Communists outnumbered the South Vietnamese by three or four to one, and yet the ARVN held its position astride the Ho Chi Minh trail for two months, inflicting 15,000 casualties while absorbing only 2,000. Inexplicably, \textit{Time} failed to report any of the reasons for seeing this battle as proof of ARVN's competence, and instead interpreted it to mean that South Vietnam could not win even with U.S. air

\textsuperscript{359}Peter Braestrup, \textit{Big Story} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

\textsuperscript{360}Schuman, "Two Sources," p. 515.
support.

Likewise, in its interpretation of the Easter Offensive *Time* failed to report the massive nature of Soviet assistance to North Vietnam, and the overwhelming power of the invasion force. Almost all of *Time*'s coverage made the ARVN seem weak and helpless. When the allies turned the tide of battle, *Time* stopped reporting it.

In exactly the same way, *Time* refused to publish the success of America's economic development and nation-building program in South Vietnam. Three economists and two historians verified the observations of numerous experts regarding the success of this effort. Nevertheless, *Time* reported precisely the opposite—economic failure—on those few occasions when it mentioned the economy at all.

Again Howard Schuman's research indicates that the media's falsely negative coverage probably had a critical impact on public support for the war. Schuman found that those who supported the anti-war movement did so on moral grounds. They reacted most strongly against American offensive moves such as the bombing, the Cambodian incursion, Operation Lan Som 719, and the mining of Haiphong Harbor. In contrast, the mass public showed majority support for each of these moves. When members of the general public were asked the open-ended question of why they were angry about the war, the most frequently stated response was that it was not being won.

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These respondents seldom mentioned moral concerns. The mass public simply ignored Time's thousands of column inches of moral reasons for opposing the war.

The most reasonable conclusion one can draw from this research is that if Time had published 5,000 column inches of stories written by the experts who believed that progress was being made in Vietnam, such as F.J. West, William Colby, John Paul Vann, Sir Robert Thompson, the London Economist, Aviation Week and Space Technology, Dr. Robert Sansom, Dr. C. Stewart Callison, Dr. Charles Bush, Dr. Howard Penniman, and Dr. Douglas Pike, the American people would have had an entirely different and more positive view of their nation's involvement in Vietnam.

Because of these facts, I would speculate that the media's falsely negative coverage (and its effect on public opinion) probably had a direct influence on the outcome of the war. North Vietnam was in a weaker position in late 1972 than at any previous point. If America had continued to prosecute the war throughout 1973 at the same level as it had in 1972 (economic aid, advisors, and air support) there is good reason to believe that Hanoi would have been forced to accept a peace treaty much more advantageous to South Vietnam.

Public opinion polls in 1972 clearly established that a majority supported President Nixon's efforts to secure a peace treaty which, if adhered to, would have preserved South Vietnam's independence. It stands to reason then that if the
American people had been given a fair appraisal of the Communist weakness in late 1972, very likely a majority would have supported South Vietnamese President Thieu in his demand that all North Vietnamese troops leave South Vietnam before the mines were removed from Haiphong Harbor, the transportation route bombing was stopped, and the peace treaty was signed. If a later Communist invasion had occurred in violation of the peace treaty, mining and bombing would presumably have been just as effective again.

Thus the media's falsely negative portrayal of the war, its failure to document the advances in the South Vietnamese economy, and its refusal to present the American public with the evidence of North Vietnam's weakness in late 1972 probable deprived President Nixon of the public support he needed for the sustained use of air power and harbor mines in an attempt to win the war.
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