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The News Media Coverage of the Tet Offensive (1968): Historical Evaluation as and Educational Tool

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THE NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE TET OFFENSIVE (1968): HISTORICAL EVALUATION AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to probe how reporting shaped perception of the Vietnam War with special reference to the watershed series of battles, commonly known as the Tet offensive of January, 1968. A further analysis and evaluation of media coverage for classroom use in formal schooling follows.

The author's interviews of ten top journalists concerning the Tet offensive are at the core of the study supplemented by an analysis of a seminal set of interviews of jourjnalists conducted by Thomas R. Morgan in July 1984 on the Vietnam War.

This treatment is further reflected in additional analysis of the replies given by journalists in 1987 to William McCloud's query "What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam" as recounted in American Heritage. Relevant approaches from an extensive curriculum project entitled "Teaching the Vietnam War" as described and proposed in extenso in Social Education for 1988 are also discussed with particular reference to and emphasis upon the Tet offensive in the context of the Vietnam War in American history textbooks.

Truth can be highly elusive, and especially in war. Vietnam now is regarded as an uncensored war, a war where journalists generally could compete against each other for news.

A few definitions may be in order here.

Journalism? Essentially, it is the reporting and writing of news. And good journalism has been described as the "first draft of history." Others often have called it "instant history." Too, it is a recording of factual events.

News? Virtually every journalism textbook carries a definition. One definition developed by the author over thirty-five years is this: "That which is most meaningful and significant to the largest number of people at a given time."

News? David Brinkley of ABC once gave this definition: "News is what we say it is." Some would disagree, as I do, with this definition and claim that Brinkley is too superficial and shallow.

The reporting, writing and editing of news is a highly complex, but usually successful, operation--whether on TV, radio or in newspapers.

Stephens and Lanson in their text, Writing & Reporting, list several generally accepted news determinants. Included are:

- Impact
- Controversy
- Weight
- Emotion
- Uniqueness
- Prominence
- Proximity
- Timeliness
- Currency
- Educational Value.[1]

All of these criteria are in various ways kept in focus for the journalists interviewed in this study.

A prefatory comment seems perenially true as well.

War indeed is hell, and war is to be avoided at virtually any cost. The late U.S. Senator Hiram Johnson in 1917 said: "The first casualty when war comes is truth."

That quote is from Phillip Knightley's book, The First Casualty which traced the role of the reporter-correspondent from the Crimean War through Vietnam.[2]

Dan Oberdorfer in his powerful book TET wrote both accurately and hauntingly. The book's frontispiece is worth quoting:

DEDICATION
For Those Who Died (January 29-March 31, 1968)

3,895 officers and men of the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.

214 officers and men of the Republic of Korea & Forces, Vietnam; the Australian Force, Vietnam; the New Zealand Army Force, Vietnam; and the Royal Thai Military Assistance Group, Vietnam.

4,954 officers and men of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (South Vietnam).

58,373 officers and men of the Vietnam People's Army (north Vietnam) and the South Vietnam People's Liberation Armed Forces (Viet Cong).

14,300 civilian men, women and children of South Vietnam.

And Those Who Live and Learn.[3]

The book's afterword is also worth quoting:

The Tet Offensive was a dramatic and important event which clearly required a reconsideration of the strategy being followed. It caused the participants on all sides of the war to take a second look at their positions. In the United States Tet provided a rationale for turning around rather than going ever deeper into a war the nation was unwilling to pay for and many of its young men were unwilling to die for. In bewildering and awkward fashion, the people and private leadership of the United States made up their minds about the war at Tet, and they communicated their views forcefully to those in high public office. A democratic corrective was applied to a policy gone wrong--but only after terrible wounds had been inflicted which are likely to scar the nation for a generation.

It has been said that war is a series of mistakes, and in this perspective it is fitting that the mistakes of the United States should take their toll in the United States. What has been done to Vietnam and the Vietnamese is another question. No matter which Vietnamese ultimately "win" this proxy war of the great powers, they

> will have lost more than they have gained. Whoever wins must set about in his own way to bind up the wounds of a ravaged and divided nation, to salvage what is left of a way of life, to restore the old villages, the old pagodas and the old ways and to deal with the new cities and a new generation. The rice fields and fruit orchards are fertile and the people are resilient. They will find a way to deal with the past and the future, with or without our help. In the end it will be a Vietnamese solution, and we will probably never understand how it was reached. By then our nation, long since sick of the war, will have lost all interest in the outcome and will wonder why so many of our young men died so far away for a cause so few could name.
>
> After this dark age of Vietnamese history, those who survive could justly repeat to us, with reproach, the message presented by their forefathers to the first group of French sailors who ventured up the Saigon River a century ago, during the earliest stage of the European conquest. "Your country belongs to the western seas, ours to the eastern," the proclamation said. "As the horse and the buffalo differ, so do we--in language, literature, customs. If you persist in putting the torch to us, disorder will be long. But we shall act according to the laws of heaven, and our cause will triumph in the end."[4]

War is controversy. War is conflict and therefore news. Often, much news.

This paper is aimed directly at examining the educational value of the extensive news coverage of Tet in the context of the Vietnam War. News reporting reaches the highest level of professionalism when it is neutral, objective and non-partisan.

The primary function of reporters is to be fact-finders. It is at the heart, indeed of their very right to perform their craft. The reader, then, of a news story, about Tet or anything else, should ideally come away from the story without any idea of the religion, political beliefs or anything about the personal beliefs or background of the reporter.

The primary role of a reporter simply is to tell it like it is. There is little latitude, then, for a liberal or conservative view of a military battle. The neutrality of the reportage should be at the core

of whether a teacher or scholar can trust the work to use it in a classroom or in research.

The crux of this dissertation rests upon allegations by Peter Braestrup in the introduction to his Big Story:

> Before and during Tet, as will be seen . . . Lyndon Johnson, willy-nilly, helped to create conditions that led to an unusual failure in U.S. crisis journalism. Six months prior to the Tet attacks, he orchestrated a "progress" campaign; to shore up public support, he and his subordinates presented an optimistic view of the Administration's limited war of attrition in Vietnam. Shortly before the Tet attacks, he received word from Saigon that Hanoi was planning a major battlefield effort of some sort; he did not warn the American people, but rather stressed his quest for "peace." When the Tet attacks came, he confined his initial reaction to a hastily called untelevised news conference several days later. He left the detailed explanations to subordinates. Amid the clamor of an election year, he took no retaliatory actions, e.g., more bombings or mining; instead he hunkered down, besieged, apparently trying to buy time. Finally, on March 31, he addressed the nation, announcing a new bombing pause, a new peace offer, and his withdrawal from the 1968 presidential race. For two months, he had left a vacuum--which others hastened to fill. Simply to describe the alarms and distortions of the TV and the press in February-March 1968, as "deliberate" or "ideological" ignores both poor Administration performance and the President's own failure to respond decisively to the sudden turn of events in Vietnam. Possibly owing to the deep contradictions in his own "guns and butter" war policy, Johnson did not give the news media (or the public) a coherent scenario. In that sense, the President's political crisis in Washington after Tet was a self-inflicted wound.[5]

A key purpose of this dissertation is a direct analysis of the coverage and presentation of answers from experts. Those interviewed for this dissertation were selected because of their excellent reporting achievements.

While the author did not report from Vietnam, he encountered many of the war correspondents reported during a 30-year career here in the United States.

The men and women interviewed generally have been praised for their professionalism and craftmanship.

The following basic questions were asked of all those interviewed for this dissertation:

* 1. Was the news coverage of the Tet military action reliable enough to be used by future teachers, students, and historians? If not, why not?

2. Was there accurate enough coverage during Tet of President Johnson and his administration in Washington, D.C. and in Vietnam? If not, why not?

3. What mistakes were made during Tet by the news media in Vietnam and Washington?

4. Was Peter Braestrup accurate in his accusations of President Johnson's alleged "willy-nilly" conduct before and during Tet?

5. Are the available radio, TV tapes and news accounts, periodicals and books on Tet accurate enough for use today by students, teachers and scholars? If not, why not?

The study also proposes to assess with the advantage of additional perspective the ways in which textbooks, among other materials, reflected the accuracy and legitimacy of the news coverage.

CHAPTER I NOTES

[1]Mitchell Stephens and Gerald Lanson, Writing and Reporting (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1986), 67-77.

[2]Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), frontispiece.

[3]Don Oberdorfer, TET! (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1971), frontispiece.

[4]Ibid., 334-35.

[5]Peter Braestrup, The Big Story (New Haven: Yale University Press, abridged ed., 1977), xii-xiii, xvii-xviii.

CHAPTER II

WHY TET AND WHY VIETNAM?

Relevant Inquiry into the Evolvement of the Vietnam War and TET

Tet impacted the entire world with a fury in early 1968. It was to be an effort for a final victory, somehow, for the Communists. It was to be a sign of valiant defense, courage and great determination for the Free World.

It was not to be a time of half-measures for either side.

It is also necessary to extensively reexamine the history of the entire region. The following serves to help explain that history.

The Tet offensive needs to be examined in an historical context. It cannot be isolated alone in a 1968 time frame. There were major developments both before and after the military battles.

It should be noted here that there were these pertinent preliminary incidents in December, 1967, and they should be considered a part of the brief chronology of Tet. First, General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the J.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned publicly, on December 18, 1967, in Detroit of a possible enemy offensive. It was two days later on December 20, 1967, General Westmoreland privately told officials in Washington that the Communists had decided to try an all-out win-the-war effort throughout South Vietnam.

President Johnson was unpredictable in his behavior. He

privately told Australian officials at the White House on December 21, 1967, that he expected "kamikaze attacks" but, later, in publicly discussing Vietnam fails to mention "kamikaze attacks."

Peter Braestrup, in his book, Big Story, used the following as a brief chronology of the Tet period from January through March 31, 1968:

Jan. 20: Siege of Khe Sahn begins.
Jan. 22: General Westmoreland tells NBC he expects major enemy effort around Tet holidays.
Jan. 23: North Koreans seize U.S. intelligence ship Pueblo.
Jan. 29: Tet holiday cease fire begins. Saigon's troops on 50 percent holiday leave. Curfew lifted.
Jan. 30: Communists launch surprise attacks in II corps, hit Da Nang and Hoi An in I corps.
Jan. 31: Attacks throughout South Vietnam, including the Ben Tre, Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the U.S. Embassy, and the Presidential Palace.
Feb. 1: General Westmoreland predicts more enemy attacks.
Feb. 2: President Johnson says Tet offensive was a military offensive, but predicts more hard fighting.
Feb. 7: Communists occupy the Lang Vei outpost near the Khe Sahn and continue battling in Hue and the outskirts but have withdrawn from other areas.
Feb. 8: Senator Robert Kennedy assails Johnson's policy.
Feb. 18: Communists gunners shell 45 cities and bases.
Feb. 24: Hue cleared of enemy forces.
Feb. 25: Westmoreland is optimistic during AP interview, but says he may need additional forces in the future.
Feb. 27: CBS's Walter Cronkite, in a special report, says negotiation is the only way to conclude the war.
Feb. 28: General Wheeler, after a Saigon trip, presents a complex 206,000 troop request. Johnson orders a task force under incoming Defense Secretary Clark Clifford to study it. The Congress and the Johnson administration are divided on the war.
Mar. 1: Last Communist push at Khe Sahn is fought back.
Mar. 6: General Wheeler cables Westmoreland that it is almost impossible that troop increase will be allowed.
Mar. 10: New York Times reports exclusively that Westmoreland asked for 206,000 men "to regain the initiative." Frank McGee of NBC reports U.S. is losing the war.
Mar. 11: Newsweek magazine calls for peace and runs "Agony of Khe Sahn" feature.
Mar. 12: Senator Eugene McCarthy wins 42 percent of Democratic primary vote in New Hampshire.
Midmonth: UPI reports that heavy bombing causes communists to pull back forces around Khe Sahn.
Mar. 16: Robert F. Kennedy announces candidacy for President.

Mar. 21: Thieu announces 185,000-man Army increase.
Mar. 22: President Johnson announces Westmoreland will become Army Chief of Staff in mid-1968.
Mar. 30: President Johnson is at an all-time low in public approval for his performance, according to a Gallup poll.
Mar. 31: President Johnson gives first nationwide TV speech since Tet: he announces partial bombing pause, willingness to negotiate with Hanoi, and his decision not to run for reelection.[1]

Study of this calendar enables one to focus on both causes and effects. Any examination of Tet coverage should be balanced against the reportage of past wars and the entire Vietnam war itself.

It is not the purpose here to review or analyze the entire war, but Tet can be evaluated for what it did and did not do.

Stanley Karnow's Vietnam: A History can be used as a supplement to The Big Story. Karnow provides a chronicle of Vietnam. To avoid duplication, the author has deleted in the following those incidents relating to Tet that Braestrup used.

Chronology of Vietnam

208 B.C. Trieu Da, a renegade Chinese general, conquers Au Lac in the northern mountains of Vietnam, established a capitol, and proclaims himself emperor of "Nam Viet."

1st century B.C. Han dynasty expands and incorporates Nam Viet into the Chinese empire as the province of Giao Chi.

A.D. 40 Trung sisters lead insurrection against the Chinese and set up an independent state.

967 Emperor Dinh Bo Linh ascends throne, calling his state Dai Co Viet. Period of independence follows.

1428 The Chinese recognize Vietnam's independence by signing an accord after nearly a decade of revolt led by Emperor Le Loi.

1460-98 Le Thanh Tong rules Vietnam. Introduces comprehensive legal code and other reforms; extends dominion southward.

1545 Civil strife roils Vietnam, splitting the country for nearly two centuries.

1627 Alexandre de Rhodes, French missionary adapts Vietnamese language to Roman alphabet. Paves way for further French influence in Vietnam.

1772 Start of Tayson rebellion. Ruling Nguyen clan unseated. French missionary activity spreads.

1787 Pigneau De Behaine, French missionary, enlists support of Louis XVI to help a pretender to the throne. Nguyen Anh, regain control. France agrees to send men and material in exchange for exclusive commercial privileges, but later reneges.

1802 Gia Long (Nguyen Anh) becomes emperor of Vietnam and unifies the country.

1820 Captain John White of Salem, Massachusetts, is first American to set foot in Vietnam.

1843 Permanent French fleet deployed in Asian waters.

1847 Clash between French forces and Vietnamese mandarins in the city of Tourane, now Danang. Tu Duc ascends throne with plans to eliminate Christianity in Vietnam.

1861 French forces capture Saigon.

1862 Tu Duc signs treaty with French granting them broad religious, economic, and political concessions.

1863 French control extends to Cambodia.

1878 French inroads into Tonkin begin.

1879 Cochinchina's first French civilian governor is appointed.

1883 France establishes a "protectorate" over Annam and Tonkin, and rules Cochinchina as a colony.

1887 France creates Indochinese Union composed of Cochinchina, Annam, Tonkin, and Cambodia.

1890 Ho Chi Minh is born in central Vietnam.

1911 Ho leaves Vietnam, not to return for thirty years.

1918 Ho Chi Minh, then known as Nguyen Ai Quoc, arrives in Paris; remains there for next seven years.

1919 Ho tries to petition President Woodrow Wilson, at the Versailles peace conference, for self-determination in Vietnam.

1920 Ho joins newly formed French Communist party in December.

1924 Ho leaves Paris for Moscow, becomes full-time Communist agent. Later goes to Canton as assistant to Mikhail Borodin, Soviet representative in China.

1930 Ho and comrades form Indochinese Communist Party in Hong Kong.

1932 Bao Dai, theoretically emperor since 1925, returns to Vietnam from school in France to ascend throne under French tutelage.

1936 Popular Front government in France sponsors short-lived liberal reforms in Vietnam.

1941 Ho returns to Vietnam covertly, forms the Vietminh to fight both Japan and France.

1944 Vo Nguyen Giap forms Vietminh army.

1945 Japanese take over French administration throughout Indochina, March 9.
Bao Dai proclaims the independence of Vietnam under Japanese auspices, March 11.
At Potsdam Conference in July, Allied leaders assign British to disarm Japanese in southern Vietnam; Chinese Nationalists to perform the same function north of the sixteenth parallel.
Japanese transfer power in Indochina to the Vietminh, August 18.
Bao Dai abdicates on August 23.
Ho proclaims provisional government in Hanoi on August 19, with Bao Dai as supreme counselor.
Japan formally surrenders to the Allies. He declares the independence of Vietnam, September 2.
British forces under General Douglas Gracey land in Saigon on September 18; soon return authority to the French.
Lieutenant Colonel A. Peter Dewey of the OSS is killed in Saigon, September 26, the first American to die in Vietnam.
Indochinese Communist party dissolved in November, replaced by Association for Marxist Studies as Ho tries to broaden his base.
Throughout the period, some two million Vietnamese die of famine in the north.

1946 China agrees to withdraw forces from Vietnam, and France concedes its extraterritorial rights in China.
French and Vietminh reach accord in March; France

recognizes Vietnam as a "free state" within the French Union. French troops authorized to return to the north to replace the Chinese. A referendum to determine whether Tonkin, Annam, and Cochinchina should be reunited.
Battle of Dienbienphu begins, March 13; French defeated at Dienbienphu, May 7.
Eisenhower decides in April against American intervention to help France in Indochina after Britain rejects his proposal for concerted action.
Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference opens in May 3, with Britain and Soviet Union as co-chairmen.
Bao Dai selects Ngo Dinh Diem as prime minister, June 16.
Pierre Mendes-France, invested as prime minister of France, Jun 17, pledged to achieve a cease fire in Indochina within a month; goes to Bern to negotiate secretly with Zhou Enlai, Chinese foreign minister.
Diem returns to Saigon, July 7.
Agreements reached at Geneva in July call for cessation of hostilities in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Provisional demarcation line at seventeenth parallel divides Vietnam pending political settlement to be achieved through nationwide elections. Final declaration accepted orally by all participants at the conference except United States, which states it will not disturb the agreements but would view renewed aggression with concern.
Bao Dai's government denounces agreements.
The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) formed, September 8, by United States, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, and Philippines.
French forces leave Hanoi, October 9.
General J. Lawton Collins, Eisenhower's special envoy, arrives in Saigon to affirm American support for Diem, including $100 million in aid. Hundreds of thousands of refugees flee from the north to the south with help of U.S. Navy.

1955 United States begins to funnel aid directly to Saigon government in January, agrees to train South Vietnamese army.
Diem crushes the Binh Xuyen sect in April.
Period ends for French forces and their Vietnamese auxiliaries to deploy to the south, and Vietminh troops to regroup in the north.
Diem rejects the Geneva accords and refuses to participate in nationwide elections on July 16, a decision backed by the United States.
Ho Chi Minh, in Moscow in July, accepts aid, having earlier negotiated in Beijing for Chinese assistance.
Diem defeats Bao Dai in a referendum, October 23, becomes chief of state; proclaims the Republic of Vietnam, with himself as president, October 26.
In December, land reform in North Vietnam reaches its most

radical phase as landlords go before "people's tribunals."

1956 Prince Sihanouk, now Cambodian prime minister, asserts his intention in April to pursue a neutralist policy.

1957 In January, Soviet Union favoring a permanent division of the country, proposes that North and South Vietnam be admitted to United Nations as separate states.
Diem arrives in U.S. for ten-day visit on May 8. President Eisenhower reaffirms support for his regime.
Communist insurgent activity in South Vietnam begins in October in accordance with decision reached in Hanoi to organize thirty-seven armed companies in Mekong delta.
During the year, guerrillas assassinated more than four hundred minor South Vietnamese officials.

1958 Communists form a coordinated command structure in eastern Mekong delta in June.
Prince Souvanna Phouma dissolves his neutralist government in Laos on July 22; succeeded by Phoui Sananikone, who with American support adopts anti-Communist stance.

1959 A plot to overthrow Sihanouk uncovered in February, with a CIA agent involved.
North Vietnam forms Group 559 in May, to begin infiltrating cadres and weapons into South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
Major Dale Buis and Sergeant Chester Ovnand killed by guerrillas at Bienhoa on July 8, the first Americans to die in what would be called the Vietnam Era.
Diem promulgates law authorizing intense repression of Communist suspects and other dissidents in August.
Hanoi leadership creates Group 959 in September to furnish weapons and other supplies to Communist insurgents in Laos.

1960 North Vietnam imposes universal military conscription in April.
Eighteen prominent South Vietnamese petition Diem to reform his governments.
Captain Kong Le stages coup d'etat in Laos in August, hands power back to Souvanna Phouma. General Phouma Noasvan, with CIA help, forms opposition faction in souther Laos.
Lao Dong congress opens in Hanoi, September 5; stresses need to combat Diem regime.

1965 Johnson's national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, arrives in Saigon on February 4, as Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin arrives in Hanoi.
Vietcong state attacks against American installations, February 7.
Johnson authorizes Flaming Dart, American air raids against North Vietnam.

Dr. Phan Huy Quat forms governments in Saigon, February 18; General Khanh leaves the country.
Operation Rolling Thunder sustained American bombing of North Vietnam, begins on February 24.
Two marine battalions land to defend Danang airfield, March 8; the first American combat troops in Vietnam.
Johnson, at Johns Hopkins University, April 7, offers Ho Chi Minh participation in a Southeast Asian development plan in exchange for peace.
North Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Dong rejects Johnson's proposal, April 8; says settlement must be based on Vietcong program.
Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky takes over as prime minister of a military regime in Saigon, June 11.
American command in Saigon reports on June 26 that Vietcong have put five South Vietnamese combat regiments and nine battalions out of action in recent months.
Johnson reappoints Lodge ambassador to South Vietnam, July 8, to replace Taylor. Eighteen American combat battalions now in the country.
Johnson approves Westmoreland's request, July 28, for forty-four additional combat battalions.
In September, Chinese Defense Minister Lin Biao, in "Long Live the Victory of People's War," indicates China will not intervene directly in Vietnam. Mao Zedong begins the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.
American forces defeat North Vietnamese units in the LaDrang valley in October, the first big conventional slash of the war.
By December, American troop strength in Vietnam reaches nearly 200,000.
Johnson suspends bombing of North Vietnam on December 25 in an attempt to induce the Communists to negotiate.

1966 Johnson resumes bombing, January 31.
Johnson and South Vietnamese leaders issue a communique, February 8, in Honolulu, emphasizing for pacification in South Vietnam.
Buddhist demonstrators against Saigon regime in Hue and Danang, March 10. Government troops take over Danang, May 23. Government troops take over Hue, June 16.
American aircraft bomb oil depots near Hanoi and Haiphong, June 29.
President de Gaulle of France visits Cambodia in September; calls for American withdrawal from Vietnam.
American and South Vietnamese leaders conclude conference in Manila, October 25.
American troop strength in Vietnam reaches nearly 400,000 by year-end.

1967 North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh says on January 28, United States must stop bombing North Vietnam

before talks can begin.
Johnson ends two-day meeting on Guam, March 21, with Thieu and Ky.
North Vietnamese reveal exchange of letters between Johnson and Ho Chi Minh.
Westmoreland confers with Johnson in Washington, April 27; addresses Congress next day.
Ellsworth Bunker arrives in Saigon to replace Lodge as ambassador, May 1.

1970 Kissinger begins secret talks in Paris with Le Duc Tho, February 20.
Sihanouk overthrown in Cambodia by Lon Nol and Sisowath Sirik Matak, March 18.
Nixon announces, April 30, that American and South Vietnamese forces have attacked Communists sanctuaries in Cambodia.
Large antiwar protests spread across the United States.
National guardsmen kill four students at Kent State University in Ohio on May 4.
Nixon proposes "standstill cease-fire," October 7, but repeats mutual-withdrawal formula next day.
American combat deaths in Vietnam during last week in October numbered twenty-four, lowest toll since October, 1965.
On November 12, Lieutenant William Calley goes on trial at Fort Benning, Georgia, for his part in the Mylai massacre.
American troop strength in Vietnam down to 280,000 men at year-end.

1971 In February, South Vietnamese forces begin incursions in Laos against the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
Lieutenant Calley convicted, March 29, of premeditated murder of South Vietnamese civilians at Mylai.
Thieu reelected president of South Vietnam, October 3.
American troop strength in Vietnam down to 140,000 in December.

1972 Nixon reveals on January 25 that Kissinger has been negotiating secretly with the North Vietnamese.
North Vietnam launches offensive across the demilitarized zone, March 30.
On April 15, Nixon authorizes bombing of area near Hanoi and Haiphong.
North Vietnamese capture the city of Quangtri, May 1.
On May 8, Nixon announces mining of Haiphong harbor and intensification of American bombing of North Vietnam.
Thieu opposes draft agreement in meeting with Kissinger's assistant, Alexander Haigh, October 4.
Breakthrough at Paris meeting between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, October 8. Back in Saigon in mid-October, Kissinger finds Thieu implacably opposed to agreement.

Hanoi radio broadcasts details of the agreement in an effort to pressure Kissinger. But he is anxious to reassure North Vietnam; declares that "peace is at hand." Kissinger resumes talks with Le Duc Tho, November 20, presents him with sixty-nine amendments to agreement demanded by Thieu.
Fresh talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho begin again in December and break down.
On December 18, Nixon orders bombing of areas around Hanoi and Haiphong, raids continue to eleven days. Communists agree to resume diplomatic talks when bombing stops.

1973 Kissinger and Le Duc Tho resume talks, January 8, finally initial agreement, January 23.
Cease fire agreements formally signed in Paris, January 27.
Secretary of Defense Laird announces that draft in the United States has ended.
Last American troops leave Vietnam, March 29.
Last American prisoners of war released in Hanoi, April 1.

1974 Thieu declares in January that the war has begun again.
Communist buildup of men and supplies proceeds in South Vietnam in June.

1975 Communists capture Phuoc Long province, north of Saigon, January 6.
North Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung goes south to take command of Communist forces, February 5.
Communist capture Banmethuot, March 11.
Thieu meets with his commanders at Camranh, March 15; orders northern provinces of South Vietnam abandoned.
Thieu reserves himself, orders Hue held at all costs, March 20. But the city falls to the Communists five days later.
Communists capture Danang, March 30.
On March 31, politburo in Hanoi directs General Dung to push toward Saigon in the "Ho Chi Minh Campaign."
Le Duc Tho arrives at Communist headquarters at Locninh, April 7, to oversee offensive.
In Cambodia, Phnompenh falls to the Khmer Rouge, April 17.
Communists capture Xuan Loc, April 21, last South Vietnamese defense line before Saigon.
President Ford, speaking in New Orleans on April 23, calls the war "finished."
Thieu leaves Saigon for Taiwan, April 25. Vice-President Tran Van Huong transfers authority as chief of state to General Duong Van Minh, April 28.
Option IV, evacuation of last Americans from Saigon, begins April 29. Ambassador Martin departs.
Communist forces capture Saigon, April 30. Colonel Bui Tin takes surrender from Minh.
U.S. merchant ship Mayaguez seized by Cambodian Communists in Gulf of Siam, May 12. American aircraft bomb Cambodia.

Thirty-eight U.S. marines die in rescue of thirty-nine seamen.

1977 On January 21, the day after his inauguration, Carter pardons most of 10,000 Vietnam war draft evaders.
Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke begins talks with Vietnamese officials in March to explore U.S. recognition of Vietnam.

1978 Vietnam joins Comecon, the East European economic community, in June.
In July, tensions between Vietnam and Cambodia build up; relations between Vietnam and China deteriorate.
In October, United States postpones plans to normalize relations with Vietnam.
In November, Vietnam and Soviet Union sign a friendship pact, which the Chinese term a "threat to the security" of southeast Asia.
Vietnam starts to repress its ethnic Chinese minority. Thousands flee the country.
Vietnam invades Cambodia, December 25.
Thousands of "boat people" begin to flee Vietnam in December.

1979 China invades Vietnam in February.[2]

1982 Vietnam veterans memorial unveiled in Washington, D.C., November 11.[3]

1986 Vietnam veterans march in Chicago, June 13.[4]

Why such an emphasis on Tet? The crucial decisiveness of these unexpected battles, unexpected in Vietnam and by the public in the United States led to a psychological defeat in the face of a genuine military victory. And there has been unending controversy ever since.

CHAPTER II NOTES

[1]Peter Braestrup, The Big Story (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), xxxv-xxx, xxxvii.

[2]Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (Brattelboro: Penguin Books, 1984), 623-88.

[3]New York Times, November 16, 1982, 16.

[4]Ibid., June 14, 1986, Sect. 1, 6.

CHAPTER III

HOW REPORTAGE SHAPED PERCEPTION

Indeed, they were the "Reporters of the Lost War."

Thomas R. Morgan told of their heroic efforts in an article for the July, 1984 issue of the Esquire magazine. Morgan reported what they did and their influence: "For most Americans, the war was media. The news we saw, heard and read in our living room defined it and gave it a certain dimension."[1]

Morgan interviewed ten well-known journalists who covered Vietnam, Interviewed were Ward Just, David Halberstam, Michael Herr, Peter Arnett, Tim Page, Charles Mohr, John Laurence, Neil Sheehan, Gloria Emerson and H. D. S. Greenway. Morgan goes on to show the ten are highly regarded, won awards and served in Vietnam ranging from at least eleven months to more than ten years at various times in a space of fifteen years or so.

Just's experiences were summarized in these words:

"What the war did," he said,

> was really make me a profound pessimist. I have never seen a collection of men work harder than the Americans in Vietnam. I'm talking specifically about my time there. The war overwhelmed everyone. In the American embassy, the twelve-to-fourteen-hour day was absolutely routine. Love affairs took place in the context of the war. Evenings of drinking took place in the context of the war. You could go days, literally, without having a conversation that had anything to do with anything other than the war. You were caught up in that funny kind of way you are in the opening moments of a love

affair. And for many people, this had been going on for years--it was their entire life.

And then add this:

"The thing that Vietnam did, of course," he said,

was spoil you for anything else. It didn't seem to me that being a political writer had the same stakes that the war did. The war really mattered, getting things right about the war mattered, spending time with the troops and trying to find out truly what was going on mattered in a way that dreaming up editorials didn't. I did not want to go cover another war, either. I'd done that. So I was ruined as a journalist after Vietnam. There was too much that could not be explained. After what you'd seen, the only way you could write about it was to go very deep into the imagination and write about it in a fictional mode. I might add that Vietnam was not a popular subject and writing about it is no way to fame, power, and riches.

Any analysis of reporting of events immediately before, during, and after Tet must first acknowledge what must first be present to make news.

Stephens and Lanson in their text, Writing & Reporting, list several generally accepted news determinants. Included are: impact, controversy, weight, emotion, uniqueness, prominence, timeliness, currency, educational value.[2]

War is controversy. War certainly is conflict and therefore news. Often, big and continuing news. It is neither partisan or simplistic to offer that all the news media play a substantial and important role in affecting the American public as well as many of those in the free world.

Patterson and McClure had this to say in The Unseeing Eye:

To control what people see and hear means to control the public's view of political reality. By covering certain news events, by simply giving them space, the media signals the importance of these events to the citizenry. By not reporting other activities, the media hides portion of reality from everyone but the few people directly affected. . . . Events and problems placed on the national

> agenda by the media excite public interest and become objects of government action.[3]

This conclusion by Patterson and McClure implies a conspiracy by news executives to "place" news before the public. This does not happen and did happen in the Tet coverage. The enormous competition alone in the news industry eliminates the often mentioned "conspiracy" theory.

The author disagrees, too, with the observation by Patterson and McClure that "the media hides portions of reality from everyone but the few people directly affected. . . ." Professional journalists who seek to "hide" news will not survive long in a highly competitive situation. And the Tet offensive was a competitive event for reporters.

Tet had many correspondents. It is likely that few were more competent, or braver, than a reporter for the New York Times. He was Charles Mohr. Mohr and two other journalists were awarded Bronze Stars in 1980 by the then commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps.

The three were the only civilians so honored by the marines for heroism during the Vietnam War. Their Bronze Stars were for attempting under fire to rescue a dying marine. Mohr was not wounded, but correspondents Alvin Webb of UPI and David Greenway of Time were hit by gunfire or shells.

Their uncommon bravery was documented in Battle for Hue by Keith William Nolan.[4]

Mohr offered his reflection on Hue, Tet and Vietnam in a far ranging interview with aforementioned writer Morgan.[5]

> . . . And the Marine that Dave Greenway, Al Webb and I saved at Hue had been shot in the throat and died anyway. That affected me most profoundly in the intensity and degree of contempt built up in me for civilian policy makers [who put] troops in hazard for concepts

like credibility and essentiality, which boils down to the unwillingness to admit a mistake and disengage.

Writer Morgan asked Mohr if Vietnam had bothered his sleep.

"I have never had nightmares because of Vietnam," he said.

It made me see what war is though. Peter Arnett and some other reporters and I were together one night during some fighting and we were able to sleep in the medical bunker on the operating cots. Well, four or five times during the night we had to get up as they brought casualties in. I remember one kid who had been in the National Football League draft was brought in with his legs all blown to hell and he wanted to hold my hand and all that stuff.[6]

Mohr did some sober reflecting on what he and other journalists did in Vietnam and presented the results in an article "Once Again--Did the Press Lose Vietnam?" A sub-headline read "A veteran correspondent takes on the new revisionists." The article is authoritative in that Mohr spent four years as a battle correspondent in Vietnam from 1962 through 1973. Mohr was in Saigon when the Tet offensive began as was Peter Braestrup.

Mohr then was an on-the-scene observer at Tet who rebuts what he describes as "the surly critiques of the polemicists." And Mohr identified some of those he claimed were guilty of historical revisionism with this:

Notable among the critics, writing and speaking with varying degrees of bitterness and coherence, have been the editorial page of The Wall Street Journal, Robert S. Elegant, (a former Los Angeles Times reporter), William F. Buckley, John P. Roche, Walt W. Rostow, William C. Westmoreland, Richard M. Nixon and Henry A. Kissinger.[7]

Mohr contends, simply and directly, that the revisionists, and he has named only a few, simply do not know much about what it is that they are talking and writing about.

Some of these critics have drawn conclusions that bear little relation to the actual conduct of mainstream journalists for major news organizations in the years 1961 to 1975. Some of their

> conclusions also reflect an astonishing misrepresentation, or at least misunderstanding of the nature of war. This can be especially disturbing when it comes from former civilian officials who helped manage and prosecute the war. There is also confusion about the manner in which events actually unfolded, the problems of Vietnam war correspondence, and what the journalists actually said and wrote.[8]

Mohr's attack against the revisionists must be understood in the context and against the backdrop of very frequent criticism of Vietnam war correspondents.

It was common knowledge among journalists here in the United States during the early 1960s that President John F. Kennedy was quite unhappy over the Vietnam coverage and sought to have David Halberstam of the New York Times returned home.

There was continuing tension over the independent reporting by professional journalists in Vietnam. And it continued until the U.S. withdrawal from Saigon. The assault on the journalists by revisionists has not ceased, either, since Mohr's 1984 article. Mistakes were made, of course, by journalists. Mohr has this summary of the overall performance by journalists and their shaping of perceptions.

> Before and after Tet, the story did often tend to overwhelm the essentially conventional journalistic methods we employed. Much went unreported, although this may have been unavoidable in a sprawling nation of forty-four provinces and scores of allied divisions and brigades.
>
> Granted that much went unreported, that factual errors were not rare, that sometimes were too argumentative and skeptical (although much of the time we were far too gullible), that we spent too much time covering American troops and too little with the South Vietnamese. Still, in a broad sense, the coverage seems sound in retrospect. Not only ultimately, but also at each major milestone of the war, the weight of serious reporting corresponds quite closely to the historical record.
>
> Revisionists seem to fault correspondents for distrusting the version of events propounded by the most optimistic senior officials in Vietnam. But what if the correspondents had believed the version

> and been guided by it in carrying out their assignment? In that case, the reporters' reputations, which are not unblemished, would be irredeemably tarnished.[9]

The reputations of Mohr and other Vietnam correspondents have not, to my knowledge, been "irredeemably tarnished" by the revisionists or anyone else. There is rather an almost universal failing abroad in this land to either understand, or struggle to understand, what it is journalists do or why they do it.

Two colleagues of Charles Mohr--David Halberstam, then of the New York Times and Malcolm Browne of the Associated Press--were awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1964.

Halberstam, a graduate of Harvard College, was no favorite of his fellow Harvard alumnus--John F. Kennedy--due to his honest accurate and hard-hitting reporting. And he pulled no punches in telling Morgan later of what it meant to be an honest reporter in Vietnam.

> The truth, and it remains for me all these years still a painful truth, is that we in the media erred not in being too pessimistic, but in not being pessimistic enough. . . . We never managed to get into our stories what the French Indochina war had done to Vietnam, how it had created in the North a modern dynamic society and how it had given us as allies a dying postfeudal order. . . . [Our sins were] not that we were inadequately patriotic or that we undermined an otherwise high national purpose--but rather that we did not from the start make clear the impossibility of the struggle. That is burden enough for most of us to bear these twenty years.[10]

Without question, Halberstam ranks very high in any rating of hero correspondents in Vietnam. And he was among the first, if not the first. His cohorts included Homer Bigart of the New York Times, and Mert Perry who were not interviewed by Morgan.

Halberstam was a recent Harvard graduate. That assured at least a modicum of competence and talent.

Halberstam, later the author of several books, once correctly

wrote: "Vietnam was a war in which journalists made their reputations and generals lost theirs." So it was. And those generals and other military officials still have not forgiven journalists.

In fifteen months of superb reporting, Halberstam established a permanent reputation as a first class reporter and writer.

Any consideration of Halberstam must include an appraisal of the work of combat correspondent Homer Bigart. Nieman Fellow Jack Foisie '47 this remembrance of Bigart for the Fall, 1991 issue of the Nieman Reports:[11]

> He was the longest-serving copy boy ever to put in time on The New York Herald Tribune. His editors were slow to learn that behind his intense stuttering was a stubborn talent.
>
> As a Stars and Stripes reporter I remember taking Homer out in Sicily on his first look at ground combat. Until then he had been based in London, one of the first correspondents to fly bombing missions.
>
> I took him to the Third Division HQ where he was briefed, then to regiment, then to battalion. "That's about it, Mr. Bigart," I said. "We can go up to an OP and you can see some fighting." But oh no, the newcomer insisted on going forward to a company. Then he made a bent-over dash to a platoon outpost. Where he and his reluctant guide took a bout of German mortar fire. This guy isn't going to last long, I decided.
>
> His cabled report to the Herald-Trib that day skipped any personalization. But the home front readers gained a good idea of what combat is all about.
>
> The rest is legion. When The Herald Tribune folded, The New York Times grabbed him.
>
> It took me some time before I realized Homer also had acting talent. When the press camp was about to move, Homer always seemed bewildered. I or other colleagues always found ourselves doing his packing, rolling up his sleeping bag. While Homer pecked out another dispatch!
>
> It was the same ambling Bigart in Korea. Our paths did not cross there. But they did again in the early days in Vietnam. What a remarkable man. Although they will be Nieman citations, perhaps your idea of recognizing journalistic excellence could be called Bigart Awards.

The Bigart reputation than cast a heavy shadow of independence and integrity upon the younger Halberstam and others. And Halberstam,

although only twenty-eight, responded brilliantly to the challenge in his Vietnam assignment. And praise came quickly. He earned a Pulitzer Prize and several other awards.

Commentary magazine described Halberstam as the "Times most exceptional reporter of recent years." Harper's said: ". . . at the age of 35 . . . a legend in American journalism.

Tom Morgan accurately focus on Halberstam as the "Woodward and Bernstein of Vietnam." It is even fairer to say that Woodward and Bernstein are the David Halberstam of Vietnam.

> He is still the first correspondent I think of when I remember Vietnam's adversarial journalism. . . . He blew the whistle the loudest, if not quite first or more clearly, following his idol, Homer Bigart, who had left prophesizing that the war wasn't to be won. After he left it took several years before other correspondents concluded that the war wouldn't be won, and several years more before any felt, that, under the circumstance, it shouldn't be won.[12]

The late, great Ernie Pyle, of course, had no direct and specific influence on the Vietnam War. His shadow of heroism and professionalism did hover over Bigart, Foisie, Halberstam and many others.

Controversy has swirled about reporter Halberstam and his role in the war. Controversy over Vietnam has dogged Halberstam and will continue to do so. It is clear, however, that the professionalism and courage of Halberstam did make a difference. History will only polish those Halberstam qualities, not diminish them.

Unlike their friend Mohr, neither Halberstam or the estimable Neil Sheehan covered Tet. But Sheehan since his Vietnam days in the early 1960s has emerged as one of this century's premier American journalists.

Writer Tom Morgan in his aforementioned Esquire piece wrote of Sheehan:

> Inspired by his friend (Homer) Bigart, Sheehan along with Halberstam and Browne helped discover his own country's awesome "credibility gap" in Vietnam. In turn, that discovery brought him to another: that he would have to make his choice--not only as a journalist but also as an American--between politics and truth. Vietnam insisted that Sheehan define himself as a public man and as a private citizen.[13]

Sheehan, a Harvard College graduate as Halberstam, first went to Vietnam for the United Press International and was later hired by the New York Times. Some of what Sheehan, a U.S. Army veteran before Vietnam, told writer Morgan is of considerable significance in light of later developments. His words are most meaningful, in my opinion, in seeking to evaluate, understand and assess and evaluate how reporters shape perception.

In part Sheehan commented:

> I went there as a young man with all the ideas of the Cold War and American imperialism in my head, believing in all that. I was very much in favor of our being in Vietnam. I think we all were in 1962 and 1963. And we ran into a situation where no official spokesman on the American side would tell you anything. It was a splendid mistake the Kennedy administration made. They thought they would reduce reporting in Vietnam if the official spokesman provided no information. Instead, they forced all of us to develop a whole network of sources among the South Vietnamese military and the American advisers, sources of our own. We had to get the information ourselves. Nobody was going to give it to us. It wasn't going to be announced. And this gave us--at first it was terribly difficult--enormous independence, because we were not dependent upon the press spokesman.[14]

Sheehan did not hold back in telling writer Morgan in detail what he did and why he did it. He and most of his colleagues reported the pessimistic as well as the official of events. They wanted an American victory, but not at the cost of the truth. They always sought to tell it like it was.

This was not always easily accepted. A very testy Secretary of State Dean Rusk once asked correspondents:

"Whose side are you on?"

Rusk did not get Sheehan's answers directly, but Morgan did:

> We felt we ought to try to convey the truth so that we could start winning the war. We felt that the senior officers who didn't have a grasp of reality were in effect assisting the opposition, assisting the Vietnamese Communists, because they were carrying out a self-defeating policy, and, as Americans, we wanted to see the United States win there. We felt we were being patriotic. But then, as the years went by, this slowly changed from an emotional desire to help win the war to simply a struggle to get out the truth.[15]

Sheehan spent from 1962 to 1966 covering the war for the UPI and then the New York Times.

"What those Vietnam years did for me," Sheehan told Morgan,

> was to confirm that I was professional witness, that my value lay in what I could report of a situation looking at it independently, and trying to find out and record and report what actually happened versus what we would like to happen, or what people with vested interests said had happened. Vietnam made me grow up as a journalist.[16]

Sheehan took that maturity from Vietnam here to the United States for a series of assignments from the New York Times from 1966 to 1971. He first was at the Pentagon, then covered the White House and then served as an investigative reporter for the Times' Washington bureau.

A friend named Daniel Ellsberg read a Sheehan piece in which he asked whether war crimes had actually been committed in Vietnam by American leaders.

Although it became public later, Ellsberg made available a 47-volume very secret report that eventually became known as the Pentagon Papers. Of course, it set off a wild battle between the Times and the

U.S. government and involved the issue of a battle over prior straint that had to be settled in a special session by the United States Supreme Court. The Times won and most of their stories about the Pentagon Papers were written by Sheehan.

In recent years Sheehan has written a biography of the late Lt. Col. John Paul Vann, who was both a hero and victim of the Vietnam war. Vann was in Vietnam for nearly ten years as both a career soldier and as a civilian official. He was killed in early June, 1972 in a helicopter crash in Vietnam. Of his Vann book, published sometime in late 1988, Sheehan told Morgan:

> I felt I wanted to leave something behind more permanent than another magazine article. So I thought I'd try to bring to history and biography the qualities of the journalist: the ability to reconstruct in detail something that has happened.[17]

Four chapters of the Vann book were published in The New Yorker during the summer of 1988. Sheehan set about in the 1980s in Washington to do what he said he had done in the 1960s: "Serve the general interest." "In Vietnam," Sheehan told Morgan,

> you served the general interest by providing information that helped society to work its way through what turned out to be a long, profound national crisis, which changed much of our thinking about our role in the world, our fallibility versus our infallibility, our right to kill in the name of American ideas. That is, we went into Vietnam with the belief that we had the right to kill any Vietnamese or get them killed, or any Korean, or any Chinese, because what we were doing was going to save humanity. Well, then Vietnam made me, at least, realize that we didn't have a monopoly on good. We could do evil just like other people. If I succeed in writing a book that helps us understand that experience better than we have so far, well that would be a great emotional fulfillment for me. It would give meaning to my life.[18]

Any consideration of reporting (and reporters) must consider the beginning of the Tet offensive in downtown Saigon. Again, Charles Mohr of The New York Times was at center-point. Also, much present was Peter

Braestrup, then the chief of the Washington Post's Saigon bureau. Mohr was quick in his article published in the Columbia Journalism Review to defend the reporting of the Communist invasion of the U.S. Embassy grounds.

> The most serious charge made by the revisionists, and one of the most frequently repeated, is that the Vietnam press corps failed to report an allied victory at Tet and, indeed, concealed its existence. There were unquestionably, flaws in the purely military coverage and not all of them were sins of omission. But in its raw form the charge does not seem to hold up.[19]

Mohr was steadfast in his opposition to the revisionists with this:

> I believe that Tet represented a serious tactical defeat for the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese superiors. But this did not ultimately constitute a strategic victory for South Vietnam. That should be obvious. It was also argued that Tet shattered, nearly destroyed, the indigenous guerrillas and forced North Vietnam to continue the war with its own regular army troops. This was also to a large extent true; but it was also what almost all serious journalists reported. . . .[20]

Gloria Emerson is certainly not to be overlooked in any study of Vietnam correspondents.

Emerson's philosophy was apparent in this comment to Morgan: "I didn't have any idea what the war would mean to me. All I ever wanted to do in my whole life was work for the New York Times. It was the kingdom. I never wanted to do anything else."[21]

And there was this comment to Morgan about Vietnam and World War II reporting:

> In Vietnam, the reporters were on the wrong side. That created a certain mental strain, a peculiar anguish that could not have been known by correspondents in World War II. And then, to come back home and find no one held accountable for the ruin of a small country and see our veterans was to know a despair that was inconceivable as a younger woman.

Emerson was asked by Morgan what her lasting impressions of Vietnam were. The answer:

> . . . I have become someone else. Certainly harsher, certainly crueler. I find that instead of being more gentle and more sympathetic, I am harsher and I am crueler. That's--well, you wanted to know what effect the war had. But maybe I would have been this way anyway.

The last interview for Tom Morgan was with H. D. S. (David) Greenway. Here was the proper Bostonian with a Yale, Oxford and U.S. Navy background who spent the better part of the years 1967 to 1975 in Indochina. He also spent time at Harvard as a Nieman Fellow. And became an associate editor at the Boston Globe.

Greenway stands tall as one of America's premier correspondents in the Vietnam war. Greenway was wounded at Hue when he and Charlie Mohr and Alvin Webb, UPI, risked their lives to rescue a severely wounded Marine. Greenway was wounded in the leg and returned to duty the next week and on crutches was sending his dispatches from Saigon.

Greenway told Tom Morgan:

> I covered Vietnam for Time from Saigon in 1967 and 1968, and then from Bangkok, running the bureau that had responsibility for Laos and Cambodia. I was in Laos in March of 1970 for the coup against Sihanouk, and in the spring of 1972 for the North Vietnamese invasion. I then joined the Washington Post and they sent me right back to Saigon. I kept going back and back. I was there in 1973, the time of "peace at hand" the peace that never really was a peace, then months after that in Cambodia with the war getting worse and worse. In the spring of 1975 I went from Cambodia back to Vietnam for the collapse of Saigon, and then I finally left by helicopter from a rooftop in the command of the American embassy on April 29, 1975.[22]

And there was this quote from Greenway to Morgan:

> There wasn't any need for me to rush back and back, except for the terrible attraction that Indonesia had, and except there wasn't any place as interesting. And even today, nothing life has ever reached that intensity. If I'm lucky, it never will again.

In 1980, Greenway, Mohr and the UPI's Webb all were awarded Bronze Stars by the commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. They were the only civilians so honored by the Marines during the Vietnam War. Nolan in "Battle for Hue" graphically details the heroics of the three newsmen. It should be remembered they were noncombatants, civilians, who risked their lives to rescue a dying fellow American--a young U.S. Marine. Tragically, the Marine dies later despite their efforts.

Photographer Tim Page found early that combat was not safe for photographers. Robert Capa died. And later Page's buddies Larry Burrows and Sean Flynn perished. But Page survived.

Page was grievously wounded by a land mine, but managed to survive.

Tom Morgan asked what had been driving Page in Vietnam. The answer:

> You are either curious and intrigued about what's happening in a place or not. You've got to keep playing with finding out, or not. If you want to do that, Vietnam was sure as hell exciting. It was a rock 'n' roll time. I had some of the best cope, the best women I ever had. It was karma. The Sixties, mate were the most important decade, sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. And 1968, that was the most important year of all. The Doors, the Airplane--you have to remember the music. I loved it. It was the fastest, most exciting time I'll ever see. I don't regret a minute of it, although it would have been nice to have had a little less pain.[23]

Charles Mohr is now dead. His spirit, however, should be alive for a long time in writers covering wars--anywhere and any place. Mohr came out of Nebraska and graduated from the state university there. His career as a war correspondent spanned more than thirty years. Professional journalists generally agreed that covering wars and related military affairs brings out the best of journalistic talents. Indeed, Mohr was all of that for Time and the New York Times. He was eclectic.

He served as a competent White House correspondent, covered political campaigns nationwide, and wrote well on a variety of military technology subjects.

The place of Michael Herr in Vietnam War history is secure for now and forever. The author of Dispatches will be always remembered for his audacious reporting and observations.

He once said,

> I went there behind the crude but serious belief that you had to be able to look at anything, serious because I acted on it and went, crude because I didn't know, it took the war to teach it, that you were as responsible for everything you saw as you were for everything you did.[24]

Herr covering future wars?

"Any more wars? Never again, man," he says.[25]

> Vietnam is the central issue of my generation. We never cleaned up the obsession. But I'll never go to another war. Shit, man, every time there's a shot fired around the world, I get a call from a magazine to go. I won't want to see it ever again. I don't want to, man.

Herr's reactions should answer those who would dramatize death in battle as something greatly heroic and to be desired. Herr's remarks reminds one of the actions by General Lucien K. Truscott, the crusty World War II combat leader who returned to the Anzio beachhead on Memorial Day, 1945. Truscott was one of several speakers, but he spoke to the dead, not the living.

Truscott emotionally faced the lines of crosses and Stars of David. He apologized to his fallen comrades and warned that old men should remember there was nothing dramatic or to be desired about death in combat. Among the witnesses at that dramatic scene was Bill Mauldin, Truscott's friend and a Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist.

Peter Arnett is another esteemed correspondent who witnessed, and survived, the Vietnam conflict. Arnett's considerable skills have since earned his recognition for his work for CNN during the Gulf War.

Arnett's peers, according to Tom Morgan, argue that Arnett should have received more than a Pulitzer Prize. Arnett was then praised by his peers for "accurate observation, unflagging curiosity, and competitive zeal."

Those same peers also declared that Arnett's personal research and military savvy developed to heroic proportions during Vietnam combat. Younger reporters were told to risk their lives for a story overnight in a Vietnam village "only if Arnett is there."

John Laurence of CBS News was a good friend and colleague of Charles Mohr. Laurence was a college dropout who went from the U.S. to Vietnam for the first time in 1965 and spent many years there.

He told Morgan in most poignant terms what the war meant to him:

> The Vietnam experience--to see all that waste of life--was deeply disturbing. Very, very few journalists or soldiers who saw combat were not affected by it. War is a shattering, abhorrent form of human behavior, brutal beyond imagination. It was a long war, and if it changed me it is that having been rational and fairly level-headed, having practiced my profession in a good way, and behaved humanely through it, all that has given me a certain confidence in dealing with ordinary life and ordinary situations.

"War," he continued,

> teaches you a lot about other people and about yourself. These very violent situations, shared with other men and women who do or do not react gracefully, tend to create an extraordinary history for a friendship. Many of my closest friends today are reporters and photographers I went through the war with. We had a shared spirit of excitement in combat. That cannot be denied. The British said we were war junkies and war lovers and had a death wish. But I feel we were just the opposite. Meticulous planning, careful briefing, and caution kept us alive. One was not a war-lover. The war wasn't "fun."[26]

The following basic questions were asked of ten journalists interviewed for this dissertation:

1. Was the news coverage of the Tet military action reliable enough to be used by future teachers, students, and historians? If not, why not?

2. Was there accurate coverage during Tet of President Johnson and his administration in Washington, D.C. and in Vietnam? If not, why not?

3. What mistakes were made during Tet by the news media in Vietnam and Washington?

4. Was Peter Braestrup accurate in his accusations of President Johnson's alleged "willy nilly" conduct before and during Tet?

5. Are the available radio, TV tapes and news accounts, periodicals and books on Tet accurate enough for use today by students, teachers and scholars? If not, why not?

Those interviewed all were reporters or observers in Vietnam. Their answers to the attached key questions were offered without bias and the spirit of neutrality.

First interviewed was Larry Green, then Midwest bureau chief of the Los Angeles Times. He was assigned to Vietnam as a correspondent for the old Chicago Daily News in the 1960s and 1970s. Interviewed June 22, 1986.

His answers:

1. The coverage was reliable as any information that is quickly gathered. We were doing history in a hurry. After the fact, you can fill in the blanks and make adjustments. There was simultaneous turmoil in every major battle and development.

2. No. That administration [Johnson] was not leveling with us. The news from reporters was a lot more accurate. What was written and reported was the kind of stuff that the first Amendment was created for. The press was way ahead in telling the truth and perceiving what happened. The new media was sharper.

3. Some coverage suggested that the Communist offensive as

being more successful than it actually was. Communists were losing the battle, but laying the groundwork to win the war. The events we were covering were happening in multiple confusion and under very primitive circumstances. There were more battles going on over there than journalists could cover. And the military were not informing us.

4. Am not able to answer.

5. The news media is the best we've got. Reporters and photographers did tend to stick together as we did at the Embassy during Tet.

Jack Fuller now is editor of the Chicago Tribune. He earned a Pulitzer Prize for his editorials on the Constitution. Jack is a graduate of Yale Law School and was reported for the old Chicago Daily News. He has written a novel from his Vietnam experience. Interviewed July 20, 1986.

His answers:

1. One has to be very careful to rely on the Tet coverage. There were any number of misstatements. I don't believe that everything we have now is absolutely correct. At the same time, it can be said there were some accounts that were absolutely accurate. I will cite the work of Bernard Weintraub of the New York Times and Charles Mohr, now also with the Times.

2. I don't have enough information to think to answer this question.

3. The primary mistake was that we did not report Tet as a tactical disaster for the North Vietnam. We didn't realize the infrastructure was destroyed in the villages. The misimpression at the time was that Tet was a strategic victory for the enemy.

4. There were problems before and after Tet as far as the administration was concerned. The government was unwilling to level with the people.

5. They are accurate for use today if you are skeptical.

Keyes Beach accurately can be described as an "old hand" in the Far East. He logged nearly forty years out there as a U.S. Marine and a

very successful correspondent for the old Chicago Daily News. He observed World War II, Korea and Vietnam. He is generally rated as one of the premier war correspondents (U.S.) of this century. He was interviewed July 7, 1986, by telephone at his retirement home near Washington, D.C. Keyes Beech has since died.

1. No. It's not sensationalism. There were some instances of sensational coverage. It depends on why you read. Breaking into our Embassy was done. The enemy politically won Tet, but not militarily.

2. I'm not competent to answer.

3. South Vietnamese committed atrocities. However, we did not photograph or play the atrocities committed by our enemies. They were seldom reported. What the enemy did as far as atrocities was hardly news. Yes, My Lai was terrible, but what the North Vietnamese did at Hue was kill 3,000 persons. Executed. I've been around a lot of wars, but those executions got little play.

4. Yes. I have faith in Peter Braestrup's credibility. And he was a company commander with the U.S. Marines in Korea.

5. I was very much impressed by the 13-part PBS series on Vietnam. I give Stanley Karnow a lot of credit for that series. Really, I've stayed from a lot of the other accounts and stories since I've returned.

Haynes Johnson, now a Washington Post columnist, is a regular and popular panelist on the PBS "Washington Review" TV show on Friday nights. He is the author of about ten books. He has been close to the Washington scene for many years. His father was a newsman. He was interviewed by telephone on July 7, 1986.

1. News of any event is really not definitive. We do not know why.

2. No. There were lots of reasons. There sometimes was not credence to our second-guessing. We were not plugging into reality. There was a lot of covering that we did not do.

3. There were multiple mistakes. And there were many misunderstandings. There was a misunderstanding of the

roots of historical forces at work. There was an awful lot of "Bang-Bang" journalism also involved.

4. Essentially yes. Peter Braestrup might have made too hard a case at times.

5. I think you have to be careful in using and defining accurate. What we have available, of course, are valuable tools. All sides are useful to be seen. History then is not black and white.

David Reed was a senior roving editor of the Reader's Digest magazine. He was interviewed by telephone July 11, 1986 from his home in Annapolis, MD. Reed had several tours in Vietnam and wrote a book and several articles on his experiences. He tended to be caustic and direct in any conversation, particularly one involving his profession and colleagues. He is now dead.

1. It was a military disaster, but political victory. You have to remember that the American public despite the developments really want out. TV infrastructure was left intact despite the battles.

2. The correspondents largely were inexperienced. They embarrassed the government. I am especially remembering David Halberstam and Merton Perry. Mal Brown of the AP was experienced and did a good job. There were some accurate accounts and some were not.

3. The mistake I remember now is that journalists failed to realize there was a military disaster over there.

4. I have a graduated response. There was some managing of the news there. I did not feel then, and do not now, that we were brainwashed.

5. The TV clips can be of some use. But you often have tanks going round and round for a minute and that's it. I think TV is out to sensationalize and in doing so makes the print guys look bad. A lot of the people over there as journalists were only 22-23 years old and did not have much status. The photographers often shot and sent back whatever they had. I was there for a monthly magazine, so my operating standards differed greatly from many others.

Bill Plante is now a correspondent for "CBS TV News". He had

four separate tours of duty in Vietnam from 1964 to 1975. He is low-key, direct and concise. Bill is a 1959 graduate of Loyola University of Chicago. He was interviewed July 11, 1986.

1. Yes. It was what we knew at the time. We were limited by the amount of time that was available to us. The military action was a surprise and created temporary chaos.

2. My impression is that we were given a heavy dose of self-serving bull-shit by Johnson and his people. We were ambushed at Credibility Gap.

3. We had little documentation for what the North Vietnamese did. I guess we saw their faults far less than we should have.

4. President Johnson did unpredictable things. He got away with arm-twisting on the national level, but it would not work on the international level. And he did not like this.

5. I have not found much to fault. I don't feel qualified to say much more on this question.

Raymond R. Coffey is now a columnist and editorial page editor of the Chicago Sun Times. He is a graduate in journalism from Marquette University. He served three tours in Vietnam as a correspondent for the Chicago Daily News. He also served many years as the chief Washington correspondent for the Chicago Tribune. He was interviewed July 14, 1986.

1. I think so. The stuff that came out definitely should be historically useful.

2. Yes in Vietnam. Westmoreland was given a fair shake. The psychological victory was important over the military victory. It was Westmoreland and Johnson who said this was not a great victory for the VC.

3. There were mechanical mistakes that are made on any big, breaking story--even the Our Lady of Angels School fire. There are initial judgments that later prove wrong. The wire services make mistakes under pressure. It is unrealistic to not expect mistakes in the first four to twelve hours. You are going to have them.

4. Johnson and Westmoreland were the principal contributors to the "win" psychology. These two also blew us smoke over the "light at the end of the tunnel" stuff. The original shock of Tet came out of what Johnson had been saying.

5. Of TV coverage, I'll say they were competing among themselves. You could use 6-i crews in the field fighting for the best footage. This sometimes made things go slow.

Hedrick Smith is now one of America's most celebrated journalists. His books on Russia and frequent TV appearances have made him very familiar to many Americans. Interviewed in late October, 1986 by telephone in Washington, D.C.

1. Yes. Officials spoke and reporters reported. The evidence is a very valid part of history.

2. Yes. LBJ and the journalists were on the leading edge of history.

3. I doubt if there were inaccurate stories. Stories were not knowingly inaccurate.

4. No comment.

5. Generally, yes.

Lawrence Lichty, a Northwestern University professor and nationally known expert on the Vietnam War's TV coverage. He was interviewed by telephone September 16, 1986.

1. Yes. Errors did creep into some satellite coverage, but it was quickly corrected.

2. Yes, even though Johnson manipulated the media, and lied to reporters.

3. Yes. The media did not focus enough on the fact that the war had come to the cities. There was drama during Tet, but in some instances there was newspaper exaggeration.

4. Johnson tried to get others to do his "dirty work" for him. And it did not have much effect. He often overstated his case.

5. Overall, some were accurate and some were not. Yes, the reportage then can be used today. It can be trusted. In some cases there is not enough for the larger perspective.

George Esper of the Associated Press is generally regarded as one of the most highly regarded journalists to have come out of the Vietnam War. He was interviewed in Boston by telephone on September 8, 1986.

1. The news coverage overall was very good. The Tet coverage certainly was on the mark. Of course, Tet was the watershed of the war. We did not completely report the crushing defeat of the Viet Cong. However, forty years from now the eyewitness accounts of the enemy attacks on the U.S. Embassy will be available for one and all to read.

2. There was accurate adequate coverage in Vietnam. There definitely was adequate coverage of the U.S. Embassy even when there was conflict over battle accounts. Everything issued by the government was cleared with Washington. There was no challenge of the AP on accuracy of our stories--to my knowledge.

3. Mistakes made? One stands out was we did not dig out the My Lai story. It only came out because of Seymour Hersh.

4. Johnson did not give out accurate body counts of the Viet Cong dead.

5. Generally, everything read or watched today would be accurate. Sure, there were some minor mistakes. The AP accounts absolutely can be relied upon. It is amazing to me now how accurate we were. We were accurate because we usually had trained and experienced people at the scene. I think now we provided a wealth of material. Of course, official documents would have to be examined today by students, teachers, and scholars to supplement our reportage.

Was the news reportage from Vietnam honest and fair?

It was overall with a few exceptions should be the only answer.

There might be some triteness to this, but it is accurate: The best and the brightest of American journalism served in Vietnam. And they were courageous, too.

The censorship of news was extremely limited. Were reporters lied to? Absolutely, especially by President Johnson and some of his top aides.

Perhaps, James Reston summed it up best in his book Deadline when writing:

> When the United States did begin to intervene [in Vietnam] in 1961 and soon ran into trouble, Washington's reaction to the depressing military news was to blame the reporters. On October 22, 1963 at a meeting in the White House, Kennedy suggested to Arthur Ochs Sulzberger and Turner Catledge that David Halberstam, one of our men in Saigon be transferred. "Don't you think that he's too close to the story?" Kennedy asked. But Sulzberger said he had no intention of transferring Halberstam, and Kennedy's intervention merely assured that David and his colleagues would continue to have the support of their publisher.
>
> Halberstam's stormy talent was that he was not only "close to the story" but on top of it. This is why he had also usually been ahead of the competition in his coverage of the civil rights struggles in the South and in his reporting from the Congo. It was precisely because he and his colleague Neil Sheehan cared so deeply and personally about the excesses and deceptions of the war that Lt. Col. John Paul Vann, who was exposing the lies of the official communiques, leaked the ugly facts to them for publication in the Times.[27]

CHAPTER III NOTES

[1]Thomas B. Morgan, "Reporters of the Lost War," Esquire Magazine, July, 1984, 49-60.

[2]Mitchell Stephens and Gerald Lamson, Writing and Reporting (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1986), 67-71.

[3]Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure, The Unseeing Eye: The Myth of Television Power in National Elections (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1976), 75.

[4]Keith William Nolan, Battle for Hue Tet, 1968 (New York: Dell Publishing, Co., Inc., 1985), 226-27.

[5]Morgan, 49-60.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Charles Mohr, "Once Again--Did the Press Lose Vietnam?" Columbia Journalism Review, November-December, 1983, 51-55.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Morgan, 52.

[11]Jack Foisie, Nieman Reports, Fall, 1991, 86.

[12]Morgan, 51.

[13]Ibid., 56.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., 58.

[16]Ibid., 56.

[17]Ibid., 58.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Mohr, 54.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Morgan, 58.

[22]Ibid., 59.

[23]Ibid., 54.

[24]Michael Herr, Dispatches (New York: Knopf, 1977), 1-46.

[25]Morgan, 54.

[26]Ibid., 56.

[27]James Reston, Deadline (New York: Random House, 1991), 315.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF MEDIA COVERAGE FOR CLASSROOM USE; FORMAL EDUCATION

Howard Elterman took the position in the January, 1988 Social Education that students should consider public participation in decision making![1] Students should consider the press coverage by asking four questions:

1. What key policies did the United States carry out in this theatre.
2. What did government officials at the time tell the American people about these policies.
3. How accurately did The New York Times, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report, report on these issues nationally, for example.
4. How accurately did the alternative media, New Republic, New Statesman, and the Guardian report on these matters.[2]

The last two questions get to the very heart of the democratic process in which the press performs the functions of keeping the public informed and serving as a protection against government abuses.

Elterman also writes that coverage of the War, including Tet, was blasted by both the political left and right here in the U.S. The coverage was described as negative, sensational and subversive of the

overall struggle to defeat the communists.

According to these key sources and analyses the Doves' said the journalists uncritically passed on government propaganda and failed to represent fairly the views of war opponents.

The media definitely has admitted there was a flawed performance but blamed it on struggling to cover a war on the other side of the world and constant lying by government officials, the military, and South Vietnamese forces, and censorship of field reports by editors and publishers.[3]

Students and their professors seeking answers to the above must examine and reflect critically upon the problems of news reporting. There are always factors that influence accuracy and completeness.

How well did the news media perform in influencing public opinion and government conduct? What, if anything, can be done to improve news coverage?

One must agree with Elterman that there is comparatively widespread ignorance among both young people and adults about the Vietnam war. And conditions possibly have worsened since an ABC News--Washington Post poll was taken in 1985 that found that one-third of the adults polled did not know which side the U.S. supported in the war.

As shocking, 75 percent of the adults interviewed in the same poll said they did not have a "clear idea" of what the war was about.[4]

Ronald J. Nurse and Dan B. Fleming said there are seven focus issues that the nation is struggling with. They are: (1) To what extent can the U.S. have both "guns and butter" in our time? (2) Can we support everyone who calls on us in the name of liberty? (3) Can a

postindustrial democracy sustain a prolonged limited war? (4) Should there be limitations on wartime dissent in a democracy? (5) Need war be declared? (6) What is the proper balance between the government's desire to manage information and the public's right to know? (7) How has the nuclear "balance of terror" affected the role and the status of the superpowers in international conflicts?[5]

Nurse and Fleming write that textbooks on the Vietnam war give little attention to the impact of the media. This is most unfortunate.

One question well could be examined by students: Do daily scenes of war on television heighten awareness of the grimness of a war? Or do they make people callous and lead them to tune out the entire experience.

In turn, Nurse and Fleming point out that the growth of historical perception can be much aided by examining the media accounts, print and visual of various antiwar demonstrations.

To flesh out the more abstract treatments, there is a certain poignancy to be found in one article titled "We Must Not Let Them Forget Vietnam." It was written by the late Charles DeBenedetti and published in January, 1988.

DeBenedetti died January 27, 1987 while a Professor of Specialist History at the University of Toledo in Ohio. He was considered a specialist in the history of the peace movement.

In 1961, DeBenedetti was eighteen years old and a student at Loyola University of Chicago. He received a 2-s deferment, married and pursued graduate studies in history. He then worked in the peace movement.

He wrote:

> While working against Washington's war for the unwinnable, I gained an entirely different understanding of the place of irrationality in modern American history. I decided that political irrationality was not so much a peculiar feature of mass social movements as it was an expression of unrestrained governmental power.

DeBenedetti began teaching a course on "The U.S. and Vietnam" a few years before his death. He wrote that one student, a Vietnam veteran, asked that younger, non-vet students, not be allowed to forget the war. "Don't let them forget, don't ever let them forget," the vet told Debenedetti.[6]

In a more extensive approach with many more additional insights "What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam?" was the title of a magazine article written for American Heritage by Bill McCloud and published in 1988.[7] Several journalists were among those who replied to McCloud's question. Here are their partial answers:

Michael Arlen:

> In the end what I urge on your students is to live their lives in such a way that they not be burdened by what strikes me as democracy's most notable drawback--namely the seeming tendency of democratic peoples to be surprised by life.[8]

Peter Braestrup:

> I suggest that there are five things a junior high-school student should understand about the Vietnam War.
>
> 1. The war was fought for a noble cause--to defend South Vietnam from a Communist takeover.
> 2. Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon tried to fight the war "on the cheap."
> 3. American troops at least until President Nixon began troop withdrawals in 1969, fought as well as (or better than) their elders in World War II or Korea.
> 4. The South Vietnamese ally was caught up in a civil war--abetted by outsiders from North Vietnam.
> 5. Geography and political constraints made an allied victory impossible under the ground rules of 1965-73.[9]

Malcolme Browne:

> Maybe the lesson of Vietnam was this: If you really want to win a war, you're best off fighting it on your own, with as little help from outside as possible. . . . For a junior high student (or anyone else) I think the best prescription is to study history, history, and more history.[10]

Philip Caputo:

> The two most important things for today's junior high school students to understand about the Vietnam War are:
>
> 1. The United States learned in Vietnam that there are limits to its power and that to exceed those limits invites tragic consequences.
> 2. The American soldiers who fought in the war did so out of sense of duty to their country, but their country betrayed them by sending them to an unwinnable war.[11]

Jack Foisie:

> I think that young Americans ought to be told the unvarnished truth about the American performance in Vietnam--militarily and politically--even though much of it is unpleasant.[12]

John Hersey:

> It seems to me that the lessons of Vietnam spread far beyond the borders of that country:
>
> 1. War is no way to solve problems between nations.
> 2. Sophisticated weapons don't win wars: the spirit and determination of the people who fight are what determine the outcome.
> 3. It is a mistake to think of communism as being one and the same in every country where it appears.
> 4. We need to have more concern for poverty and hardship and sickness and backwardness of education in underdeveloped countries.
> 5. So long as we preserve here at home the remarkable freedoms bequeathed to us by our Constitution and Bill of Rights, we have nothing to fear from communism.[13]

Marvin Kalb:

> First the political and military leaders of the U.S. cannot and must not lie to the American people about their major security concerns. Second, no controversial policy can ever succeed without the support of the American people. Third, no American must ever be called upon to sacrifice his life for a cause that is poorly understood, blurred, or deceptively explained by the administration.[14]

Donald Oberdorfer, Jr.:

> Whether because the task was impossible from the start or because it was poorly executed or because in the end the American people lost confidence and terminated support--and I think there were elements of all three--the Vietnam War was a monumental failure of a giant scale national project.[15]

Pierre Salinger:

> Students should understand that our participation in Vietnam drastically changed the attitude of Americans about participating in overseas wars.[16]

William Tuohy:

> The most important thing for your students to understand about the Vietnam War is the limitation on the use of American power abroad.[17]

The trenchant observations and judgments made by these journalists in their responses to William McCloud are, to some extent understandable, in contrast to the less forthright and even weaker treatments in the textbooks.

The Vietnam War in American History Textbooks

While textbook teaching has been often decried and even castigated on occasion, social studies and history classrooms still heavily rely on it. To be sure creative teachers can and do supplement this source with a variety of other media projects, e.g., films, slides, tapes, VCRs, newspapers, periodicals and interviews with veterans, where these are available. However, we are only too aware of time and space constraints so that textbooks do remain a very important source of historical information for young Americans.

Fleming and Nurse[18] have recently researched and evaluated developments in the treatment of the Vietnam War in American history textbooks. As might be expected with the passage of time, better

perspectives and better treatments developed. More concretely, in May 1982, before they did their own review of textbooks published in 1978 and 1979, they took note of the work of Frances Fitzgerald and the study done by William L. Griffin and John Marciano. Fitzgerald's was a more far-ranging work entitled America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century (1979). It is no doubt because of its scope better known than Marciano and Griffin's, which was more narrowly focused. Teaching the Vietnam War: A Critical Examination of School Texts and Interpretive Comparative History Utilizing the Pentagon Papers and Other Documents, also in 1979. Both these endeavors, with differing degrees of emphasis, endorsed the view of Henry Steele Commager on the pervasive role of nationalism in the preparation and writing of history textbooks.

> There is one bias, one prejudice, one obsession, so pervasive and so powerful that it deserves special consideration nationalism. History, which should be the most cosmopolitan of studies, most catholic in its sympathies, most ecumenical in its interests, has, in the past century and a half become an instrument of nationalism. Nationalism is, no doubt, the most powerful force in modern history, and it is hardly surprising that it should have captured historiography and enslaved historians.[19]

In the same tenor, the Billington Committee of the American Historical Association had stated in 1966, that "nationalistic bias is as persistent in today's schoolbooks [referring to texts of the early 1960s] as in those used a generation ago."[20] However, they concluded it was not as blatant as the deliberate distortions of many nineteenth-century historians and their nationalistic fervors.

Thus, it is refreshing to note that the National Science Foundation's Project Span in 1980 took this view: "Today's texts tend to be less chauvinistic and less narrowly nationalistic. Controversial

topics are still treated cautiously but they are treated, and that has not always been the case."[21]

Fleming and Nurse go on to proffer the same valuable generalizations on the basis of the ten texts they investigated (all came out between 1977 and 1981). As might be expected, the textbooks dealt primarily with the military and political sides of Vietnam War, to the neglect of what to Fitzgerald were very important understandings of Vietnamese history and culture. They also seemed to play down the struggle between "doves" and "hawks" over moral issues such as the Kent State shooting, the massacre at My Lai and chemical warfare, for example.

While Fleming and Nurse agree about the neglect of different moral issues, they did find that all the textbooks did deal with the anti-war protest and most of them did bring in the Pentagon Papers.

They state their conclusions in the 1982 study in this wise:

> Most of the textbooks in our study offer a too sketchy account of the Vietnam War. However, the deficiencies of the narratives are not those of distortion, dishonesty, inaccuracy, or bias. The problem tends to be the neglect of certain key topics. This omission is particularly true of war aims, moral controversies and "lessons" of the war. This deficiency can be explained, in part, by the limitations of space available to authors, which is an inherent problem for all survey textbooks. In essence, therefore, the changes made by Fitzgerald's sweeping study, as well as those of Griffin/Marciano (directed against older textbook editions) continue to have considerable validity. However, the more recent textbooks are more objective and more accurate, and they show a marked domination in the degree of nationalistic bias.[22]

In 1988, Fleming and Nurse updated their study with what they felt was a really representative cross-section of textbooks in national use. They investigated how these recent textbooks handled a number of key topics regarding the Vietnam War, such as the Geneva Agreement of

1954, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the anti-war movement, war aims, the legacy of the war, and Vietnamese culture. Their conclusions are encouraging; progress seems to have been definitely made.

Overall, the mid-1980s textbooks provide improved treatment of the war in Vietnam. They generally point out the United States' errors and tackle controversial topics such as the Gulf of Tonkin incident and our support of the Ngo Dinh Hiem.

> They still ignore the culture of Vietnam, however, but have improved their discussion of the costs of the war, particularly with respect to reexamining the role of the United States in the world. Just as the American public appears to be taking a new look at the war in Vietnam, so history textbooks seem gradually to be presenting a new "truth."[23]

CHAPTER IV NOTES

[1]Social Education 5 (January, 1988): 33-34.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

5

[6]Social Education ? (January ,1988): 43.

[7]American Heritage, May-June, 1988, 55-77.

[8]Ibid., 57.

[9]Ibid., 58-60.

[10]Ibid., 60.

[11]Ibid., 64.

[12]Ibid., 64-65.

[13]Ibid., 66.

[14]Ibid., 68.

[15]Ibid., 72-73.

[16]Ibid., 76.

[17]Ibid., 77.

[18]Social Education, May, 1982, 338.

[19]Ibid., 338-39.

[20]Ibid., 339.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., 343.

[23]Ibid., January, 1988, 28.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The interpretation of the Tet offensive of 1968 continues to be contested, as then, so now by "hawks" and "doves" in varying degrees but persistently. This study has attempted to probe this problem in the context of the entire war: with special concern for teaching of American history in the junior high and high school grades.

The meaning of Tet was fought over recently by such luminaries as Norman Podhoretz and Noam Chomsky. On the one hand, Podhoretz sees Tet as the time when Congress, the people and the media gave up on the Vietnam War. On the other hand, Chomsky sees its aftermath as showing forth the reliance of American forces on increasingly violent tactics (My Lai for example).

Much ink has been spilt on speculation as to how such a military defeat at Tet has been changed into a decisive strategic/political victory for the North Vietnamese.

Apart from the stark record that the Vietnamese--both North and South--bore the brunt of the conflict, Americans naturally wish to assess the importance of Tet and the Vietnam War for our people, especially for our heirs and beneficiaries. Consequently, American arguments about Tet go on. Notwithstanding, reactions by our media people and reactions to them have much to teach us and our children. To

what extent is Tet a victory misunderstood? The debate goes on in all our classrooms.

With regard to the ten core interviews with the on-the-scene correspondents, some tentative conclusions seem to be in order. They were asked five questions. They are repeated here:

1. Was the news coverage of the Tet military action reliable enough to be used by future teachers, students and historians? If not, why not?

   There were yes answers from seven respondents.

   The answers from three were qualified and entered some reservations.

2. Was there accurate coverage during Tet of President Johnson and his administration in Washington, D.C. and in Vietnam? If not, why not?

   "No" was the answer from three.

   "Don't know" was the answer from two.

   Two said "yes" to Vietnam coverage. Two others answered "yes" for both Washington, D.C. and Vietnam. One said "yes" and "no."

3. What mistakes were made during Tet by the news media in Vietnam and Washington?

   The answers were varied as these examples show:

   - Some coverage suggested the Communist offensive as being more successful than it actually was.
   - The primary mistake was not reporting Tet as a tactical disaster for the North Vietnamese.
   - Executions at Hue got little play.
   - Many mistakes and misunderstandings of the historical forces at work failed to realize there was military disaster over there (for the North Vietnamese).

- Little documentation on what the North Vietnamese did.
- Mechanical mistakes as on any big breaking story.
- The North Vietnamese atrocities were under reported; initial judgments were later proved wrong.
- Not knowingly inaccurate.
- Not enough focus on city invasions.

4. Was Peter Braestrup accurate in his accusations of President Johnson's alleged "willy nilly" conduct before and during Tet?

   Two answered "Don't know."

   One answered "somewhat."

   Seven responded "yes."

5. Are the available radio, TV tapes and news accounts, periodicals and books on Tet accurate enough for use today by students, teachers, and scholars? If not, why not?

   "Yes" was the answer from seven.

   "Mixed" was one answer and the respondent wanted all sides examined.

   One said there was "some sensationalism."

   One said the TV coverage was accurate and usable.

A pattern that seems to emerge from the above analysis is that students, teachers, and scholars can trust the historical accounts of this water-shed battle, Tet, and of the Vietnam War in general, that have been based on the materials generated by the journalists and their media colleagues. The added perspectives of eighteen years give their views a genuine maturity.

At the same time initial mistakes and some inaccuracies are

adverted to and admitted with appropriate qualifiers that really serves to support the overall veracity and integrity of the correspondents. Thus, these interviews in fine go counter to the occasional allegations that the media especially after Tet turned military victory into political defeat. Their accounts, of course, were variously interpreted by "hawks" and "doves."

This author seeks now to offer his own response to the questions that were asked of and answered by ten key journalists who covered Vietnam:

1. Was the news coverage of the Tet military action reliable enough to be used by future teachers, students and historians? If not, why not?

Author's response: It can be used. However, it would be well for any user to be mindful of the admonitions from Philip Knightley.

Knightley's very perceptive interpretation of television coverage of the Vietnam war is relevant.

> Years of television news of the war have left viewers with a blur of images consisting mainly of helicopters landing in jungle clearings, soldiers charging into undergrowth, wounded being loaded onto helicopters, artillery and mortar fire, air strikes on distant targets, napalm canisters turning slowly in the sky, and a breathless correspondent poking a stick microphone under an army officer's nose and asking, "What's happening up there, Colonel?" (The only honest answer came in 1972, from a captain on HIghway 13. "I wish the hell I knew," he said.) The networks claimed the combat footage was what the public wanted; that concentrating on combat prevented the film's being out of date if it was delayed in transmission; that it was difficult to shoot anything other than combat film when only three or four minutes were available in the average news program for events in Vietnam; and that the illusion of American progress created by combat footage shot from only one side was balanced by what the correspondent had to say.

Knightley argues that the network claims are false. He contends that the aforementioned combat footage did not adequately convey all

aspects of combat. This author is a World War II infantry combat veteran and agrees with Knightley.

The author also is in strong agreement with this summary by Knightley:

> American television executives showed too little courage in their approach to Vietnam. They followed each other into paths the army had chosen for them. They saw the war as "an American war in Asia--and that's the only story the American audience is interested in," and they let other, equally important, aspects of Vietnam go uncovered.

This author has not ever uncovered legitimate evidence that there was deliberate and intentional distortions in the filming or reporting of the Tet battles. Major inaccuracies apparently were quickly identified and corrected.

Mistakes were made in selectivity, editing, and eventual placement of photos, film and news stories. These mistakes must be considered in the larger context of journalism realities.

2. Was there accurate coverage during Tet of President Johnson and his administration in Washington, D. C. and in Vietnam. If not, why not?

The news, in this author's opinion, was accurately reported. Dozens of books over the years have chronicled the lies and obfuscations of Johnson and his administration. Reporters soon became distrustful of Johnson and his people both in Washington and in Vietnam. When possible, reporters challenged Johnson and his people as to the facts and the veracity of their statements.

3. What mistakes were made during Tet by the news media in Vietnam and Washington?

At times, the journalists were not aggressive or hard-charging enough. They were not skeptical enough nor did they dig deep enough.

And editors in both print and TV were sometimes "sloppy" and did not challenge their own people to be accurate and complete.

There were certainly mistakes in the early days of Tet that led to the general impression that the U.S. had suffered a major military defeat. Time and subsequent events have proved this was not so. The mistakes were not intentional and often of an accidental nature.

4. Was Peter Braestrup accurate in his accusations of President Johnson's alleged "willy nilly" conduct before and during Tet?

Yes, Braestrup was accurate for the following reasons with which this author concurs.

1. Six months prior to the Tet attacks, he orchestrated a "progress" campaign; to shore up public support, he and his subordinates presented an optimistic view of the Administration's limited war of attrition in Vietnam.

2. He was warned by the military from Saigon that Hanoi was planning a big battle, but did not warn his fellow Americans. He only stressed his quest for Peace."

3. When Tet did come, he gave a hasty reaction, not on television, and left detailed explanations to his aides.

4. He took major retaliations against the enemy.

5. It was a month after Tet that Johnson announced a new bombing pause, his withdrawal from the 1968 presidential race and a new peace offer.

6. Johnson did not give the media or the public a credible coherent explanation.

5. Are the available radio, TV tapes and news accounts,

periodicals and books on Tet accurate enough for use today by students, teachers and scholars? If not, why not.

Yes, with some qualifications. Again, scholars, teachers and students today will have to exercise some caution in accepting and understanding materials.

This entire study underscores the importance of comprehending how the media people do and do not function in a crisis.

To further recapitulate the constant crisis situation in which reporters and photographers found themselves in this most photographed of all American wars it is important to summarize the challenges under which they worked.

In the early 1960s, there was other enormous pressure on journalists here and in Vietnam from U.S. leaders and politicians "to get on our team." Unfavorable news reports from Vietnam were considered almost treasonous. On of the best accounts of this is from Knightley:

> Not it was Time's turn to join the team. In August 1963, Charles Mohr, the magazine's chief correspondent in South-East Asia, and Merton Perry, who had been a Time stringer in Saigon since 1962, wrote, at the request of the head office, a long story on the Saigon correspondents and their battle with the American mission and an even longer round-up of the war situation. The latter began: "The war in Vietnam is being lost." When it appeared in Time, this line had disappeared. Things were going well in Vietnam, the article said, and "government troops are fighting better than ever." The article on the Saigon press corps did not appear, but on September 20 another article was published. It was a vicious attack on the correspondents, and it began: "For all the light it shed, the news that U.S. newspaper readers got from Saigon might just as well have been printed in Vietnamese." The article accused the correspondents of pooling "their convictions, information, misinformation and grievances," of becoming themselves "a part of the Vietnam's confusion," and of producing material that was "prone to distortions."

When the article appeared, Time's chief of correspondents, Richard Clurman, who had tried to have it stopped, called Mohr to placate him. Mohr said that unless he could have equal space to reply personally . . . , he would resign. Time would not agree to this, so Mohr and Perry went.

Washington kept up the pressure. News reports from Vietnam, said Pierre Salinger, the White House press secretary, were emotional and inaccurate. As a stream of highly regarded reporters and special writers went out to Vietnam, including several Second World War correspondents, and the columnist Joseph Alsop. All decided that the war was going well. Frank Conniff, a Hearst writer, blamed the pessimistic reporting on American editors. The fact that young reporters, most of them in their twenties, had been assigned to report an involved story reflected little credit on the prescience of their employers, he wrote. President Kennedy felt the same way, and he tried to get rid of his particular bete noire, David Halberstam, by asking the New York Times' publisher, "Punch" Sulzberger, to reassign him. Sulzberger not only refused to do so, but also cancelled a two-week holiday Halberstam was about to take, in case that it should appear that the Times had yielded to Kennedy's pressure. So the impression of these early years of Vietnam is of courageous and skilled correspondents fighting a long and determined action for the right to report the war as they saw it.

There is only one flaw in this: the correspondents were not questioning the American intervention itself, but only its effectiveness. Most correspondents, despite what Washington thought about them, were just as interested in seeing the United States win the war as was the Pentagon. What the correspondents questioned was not American policy, but the tactics used to implement that policy, in particular the backing of Deim as the "white hope" of Vietnam. "We would have liked nothing better than to believe that the war was going well, and that it would eventually be won," Halberstam wrote later. "But it was impossible to believe these things without denying the evidence of our senses." Mohr was embarrassed when he found that his stand against Time had made him something of an anti-war hero. "Everyone thought I left because I was against the war. I just thought it wasn't working. I didn't come to think of it as immoral until the very end."

A recent summary in 1991 by the redoubtable long-time New York Times reporter, columnist and editor, James Reston recapitulates with forthright cogency the considered judgment of many on the role of the reporters of Vietnam:

> They were vilified for their pains, denounced by the government, sometimes mistrusted by their own editors, condemned by some of

> their own colleagues in Washington, and even blamed by some officials for the nation's final humiliation and defeat. I thought this was unfair and still believe that these reporters, including the men with their television cameras on the battlefield, did a better job under more difficult circumstances than any other band of war correspondents in my time.

Reston noted again how early on the White House and its bureaucracy, namely President Kennedy and his advisers, including such men as the militant Joseph Alsop tried to persuade the publisher of the New York Times, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger to do something about the reporting of David Halberstam. They, in fact, urged strongly that he be sent home. However, Sulzberger, fortunately for the freedom of information position, stood his ground and encouraged Halberstam to keep on. Reston again:

> Halberstam was a human lie detector, with an explosive temper, a profane vocabulary, a talent for getting into brawls, and the physique to muscle out of them. Sheehan was a gentler sort. His tours of the blasted Vietnam villages on either side of the line reduced him to tears, and he was so admiring of Colonel Vann's courage and determination to tell the truth that he spent seventeen years after the war writing a book about him--A Bright Shining Lie which won the Pulitzer Prize. Kennedy was not the only one who complained about Sheehan and Halberstam.

In a quandary as an editor back in the States, Reston even proposed that the New York Times print side-by-side the regularly contradictory unofficial and official reports from Vietnam.

> Nobody was quite satisfied with this fifty-fifty display. The officials in Washington complained that we were questioning their judgment, which of course we were, and even members of our own staff thought we couldn't make up our minds.

In view of these swirling controversies, Reston decided to go to Vietnam again to personally observe the reporters, military and civilian, at work. His vivid account of the "Five O'Clock Follies" presents a very telling set of insights.

> These were presided over by Harold Kaplan, an intelligent and amiable official with a long Filipino cigar in his teeth. The briefings usually produced between twelve and fifteen single-spaced pages of reports on the day's events, for this was not one war but sixty-three different wars in different provinces and offshore in the China Sea. Kaplan permitted some ragging questions for about fifteen minutes, all ending at about six o'clock in a scoreless tie. Then began the tedious task of checking the reports and trying to transmit the stories to New York over a communications system that, in the opinion of the reporters, justified the Vietnamese rebellion against the French.

Reston was clearly and, in the author's view justifiably gratified by the military's policy of permitting reporters to get to the battle scene, even offering transportation and he was also impressed with how the reporters had gained the confidence of officers and men on the battlefield. He further extolled the work of the TV reporters and their cameras and graphically describes their impact.

> I have tossed a few slurs at television in these pages, but I have to say that its cameras brought the human tragedy of the Vietnam War home to the American people more vividly than the newspapers could describe it. They showed the brutality of the Communists in the villages, but it was left to Morely Safer of CBS to show on film U.S. Marines setting fire to the thatched peasant houses of the villagers. This dramatized what was happening not only to the enemy but also to our own men, and it raised such an uproar at home that the marine command ordered a stop to the practice.

Reston's fulsome praise of the journalist's work, both in print and non-print was not limited to the New York Times people, though he knew them best. He also singled out among the many who did such an outstanding job: Peter Arnett, of the A.P., Ed Morgan of ABC, Ward Just of the Washington Post and the ubiquitous Frances Fitzgerald of the New Yorker. His summation of the difficulties under which all involved worked are deeply perceptive.

> The war in Vietnam was so alien to the American experience and such a tangle of conflicting cultures, interest, memories, religions, and personal, regional, and tribal ambitions that it defied precise definition and was almost beyond comprehension.

> Even the words normally used to describe a war were misleading. It was not a war in the usual sense. It was a series of violent actions, some rather like Al Capone's gang raids in Chicago, some like the frontier skirmishes in the French and Indian War, still others like the savage encounters between the Americans and the Japanese in the Pacific island caves of 1945--all this with the Strategic Air Command, of all things, bombing guerrillas, of all people, in tunnels in the Vietnamese forests, of all places.
>
> It really needed a new vocabulary, Vietnam was not a nation but a physical and strategic entity broken into conspiratorial families, clans, sects, hamlets, and regions by many generations of Mandarin, French, Japanese, and religious influence.
>
> In that situation, it was almost impossible to perform the reporting function of reducing diversity to identity. All you could do was try to illustrate just how complex human political and military relations were.

When he returned home with all these puzzlements fermenting in his mind, Reston proceeded to defend his fellows vigorously against the chronic complaints from administration officials about the negative reporting from Vietnam. Soon after he wrote that "with the bombing of targets on the outskirts of Hanoi and Haiphong it [the Johnson administration] had now done almost everything it said it wouldn't do, except bomb China."

He continues in the most personal way an account of his confrontation with the beleaguered President Lyndon Johnson.

> When I got home, I heard the same complaints from administration officials about "negative reporting" out of Saigon, and did everything I could to defend the integrity and accuracy of my colleagues in Saigon. I wrote that the Johnson administration might finally get over its agony in Vietnam, but it would probably never regain the people's confidence in its judgment and veracity. With the bombing of targets on the outskirts of Hanoi and Haiphong, it had now done almost everything it said it wouldn't do, except bomb China. It said it was not seeking a military solution to the war, and it was obviously seeking precisely that; it said it was there merely to help a legitimate government defend itself, and it ended up by supporting a military clique that was not a government, not legitimate, and not really defending itself.
>
> The president called me to the White House and gave me "the works." He denounced my colleagues in Saigon in terms I could hardly bear after my trip, and he asked me, "Why don't you get on the team? You have only one president. I had heard it all before

> and said I thought he was trying to save face. He stood up and showed me to the door. "I'm not trying to save my face," he said, "I'm trying to save my ass."

These are some lessons our children and their teachers can learn from this welter of conflicting charges and countercharges.

As John McDonough, a free-lance writer, pithily stated it in the Chicago Tribune, Tempo Section on May 26, 1990:

> To a reporter, war is always the good old days. Peace may have given us record military budgets and too many journalism students. But only war can build a five-star general or a legendary correspondent. Maybe this is why those who write the proverbial "first drafts of history" as war correspondents often return to write the second as historians.

One such is Morley Safer who so incensed President Johnson with his on the scene Vietnam reports. In his "Flashbacks: One Returning to Vietnam," he said that Vietnam was uniquely a follow-up to World War II.

> The witnesses to WWII see it all . . . from the disillusionment of the '20s that shaped their first world views through the moral certainties of Vietnam that challenged their prestige as senior journalists.

Eric Sevareid is another such witness, since he was in all the major events for CBS from the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939 until the end of the war in Vietnam. Says Sevareid:

> There was an epic irony here. We became the victim of our own victory. This is always the dilemma of a great power. You oscillate from Munichs to Vietnams. You fail to use power when you should. Then you become too quick to use it when you shouldn't. It's the misery of the mighty.

On the other side of the fence, senior correspondents of the stature of Richard C. Hottelet and Larry Le Suer, keenly recollecting Chamberlain and Munich were strenuously opposed to any form of appeasement. It was, of course, the younger generation of reporters such as Safer that used the camera so successfully to belie official

reports of military actions, e.g., the outrageous burning of the village at Cam Ne. The debate they launched, especially when such influential powerhouses as Eric Sevareid and Walter Cronkite came aboard, is now history. It would not be long before Lyndon B. Johnson would withdraw from the presidential race.

The conclusions drawn by the Lessons of the Vietnam War, the previously cited modular textbook that emerged from the Center for Social Studies Education at Pittsburgh are echoed in this study.

> Nations have long memories. Vietnam will continue to have a powerful influence on American foreign policy until some other cataclysmic event replaces it. It is therefore urgent that we study and learn from it. In doing this, we must remember that history does not yield precise, explicit answers to today's most pressing questions. Indeed, when used improperly, history is a mischievous guide. We should we wary of those who justify present-day commitments and strategies on the basis of what was done or not done in Vietnam.
>
> On the other hand, careful analysis of how we got into Vietnam and why we failed can provide vital perspectives on today's problems. It can educate us about who we are and how we deal with other peoples and can offer cautionary principles, such as those cited above, that can help guide our leaders in making decisions. The past is indeed prologue, and we cannot begin to deal with today's most pressing issues without coming to terms with the longest and most divisive war the nation has fought.

CHAPTER V NOTES

[1]Philip Knightley, The First Casualty (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovitch, 1976), 379.

[2]Ibid., 380-81.

[3]James Reston, Deadline: A Memoir (New York: Random House, 1991), 313.

[4]Ibid., 315.

[5]Ibid., 316.

[6]Ibid., 317.

[7]Ibid., 318.

[8]Ibid., 318-19.

[9]Ibid., 321.

[10]John McDonough, Chicago Daily Tribune, Tempo Section, May 26, 1990.

[11]Jerold M. Starr, ed., Lessons of the Vietnam War (Pittsburgh: Center for Social Studies Education, 1988), 21.

APPENDIX

Their names are not to be found engraved on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall in Washington, D.C. Nor most anywhere today.

For they died working as journalists covering a war that was both hated and misunderstood. They perished, too, in Laos and Cambodia.

Their graves are scattered and the bodies of some still have not been located, but now they must be presumed dead.

The known who died in Vietnam are:

Michael Y. Birch	Free Lance
John L. Cantwell	Time-Life
Sam Castan	Look magazine
Dickey Chapelle	Free Lance
Charles Challapah	Free Lance
Charles Eggleston	UPI
Robert J. Ellison	Free Lance
Ignacio Ezcurra	Free Lance
Bernard B. Fall	Free Lance
Ronald D. Gallagher	Free Lance
Bernard Kolenberg	AP
Ronald B. Laramy	Reuters
Hiromichi Mine	UPI
Huynh Thanh My	AP
Oliver Noonan	AP
Bruce Pigott	Reuters
Jerry Rose	Free Lance
Tatsuo Sakai	Nihon Keizai Shimbun
Paul Savanuck	Stars and Stripes

Philippa Schuyler	Manchester Union Leader
Francois Sully	Newsweek
Pieter Ronald Van Thirl	Free Lance

Reported dead in Laos were:

Larry Burrows	Life
Henri Huet	AP
Kent Potter	UPI
Keisaburo Shimamoto	Newsweek

Killed in Cambodia were:

Frank Frosch	UPI
Gerald Miller	CBS
Koichi Sawada	UPI
George Syvertsen	CBS

It is ironic that only one journalist is not listed missing in Vietnam itself. He is Alexander Shimkin of Newsweek.

Still missing and now presumed dead somewhere in Cambodia are:

Claud Arpin	Newsweek
Dieter Bellendorf	NBS
Gilles Caron	Gamma Agency of Paris
Roger Colne	NBC
Sean Flynn	Time
Georg Gensluckner	Free Lance
Welles Hagen	NBC
Guy Hannoteaux	L'Express
Alan Hirons	UPI
Taizo Ichinose	Free Lance

Tomaharu Ishi	CBS
Akira Kusaka	Fuji Television
Richard A Martin	Free Lance
Willy Mettler	Free Lance
Terry Reynolds	UPI
Kojiro Sakai	CBS
Dana Stone	CBS
Toshiihi Suzuki	Nippon Dempa News
Yujiro Takagi	Fuji Television
Takeshi Yanagisawa	Nippon Dempa News
Yoshihiko Yurigo	Nippon Dempa News
Yoshihko Waku	NBC

They total 53. Thirty are known dead and 23 must now be presumed dead. They must be acknowledged in any serious analysis of the coverage of the Vietnam war. This study focuses on the Tet offensive coverage that lasted approximately two months. The sacrifices made by journalists throughout the war also deserve recognition here.

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THE NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE TET OFFENSIVE (1968): HISTORICAL EVALUATION AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

This study probes how reporting shaped perception of the Vietnam War with special reference to the water-shed series of battles, commonly known as the Tet offensive. A further analysis and evaluation of media coverage for classroom use in formal schooling follows.

The author's interviews of ten top journalists concerning the Tet offensive are at the core of the study supplemented by an analysis of a seminal set of interviews of journalists conducted by Thomas R. Morgan in July of 1984 on the Vietnam War.

This treatment is further reflected in additional analysis of the replies given by journalists in 1987 to William McCloud's question "What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam?" as recounted in American Heritage. Relevant approaches from an extensive curriculum project entitled "Teaching the Vietnam War" as described and proposed in extenso in Social Education for 1988 are also discussed with particular reference to and emphasis upon the Vietnam War in American history textbooks.

Why such an emphasis on Tet? The crucial decisiveness of these unexpected battles--unexpected in Vietnam and by the public in the United States--led to a psychological defeat in the face of a genuine military victory. And there has been unending controversy ever since.

Was the news reportage from Tet, and all during the Vietnam War, fair and honest? James Reston, retired New York Timesman, answered with

a loud affirmative in his 1991 book titled Deadline. This study explores the pros and cons of such an affirmation.

It should be noted that students and scholars should bring a knowledge of how and why the media does what it does and a healthy skepticism to any study of Tet and the Vietnam War.

The author is in full agreement with the center for Social Studies Education at Pittsburgh that concluded: "The past is indeed prologue, and we cannot begin to deal with today's most pressing issues without coming to terms with the longest and most divisive war that nation has fought."

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