FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618) 462-5415

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MEDIA DOUBLE STANDARD ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

The networks have become so paranoid about the possibility of a Jesse Helms takeover of CBS that a New York public relations firm has been hired to survey opinion leaders about their perception of the networks' "bias," "power," and "arrogance." After the interviewer finishes asking the interviewee the prescribed questions, the final one is, "Is there any other criticism of TV newscasting that we haven't mentioned?"

Yes, there is one other element more important than any of the above. It's the selection of which news to cover each day. The networks exercise their control over what Americans think far more by what they cover and how often they repeat, rehash, and reanalyze than they do by overt bias in reporting.

If one didn't know better, one could easily think that CBS, ABC, and NBC have a conference call at 2 p.m. each day and agree on which dozen news stories they will cover that evening, leaving each network its option for the trivia story to close the program.

A decade ago, the national electronic and print media hammered at us every day to get the United States out of Vietnam. In a thousand ways, the refrain was beamed into American consciousness, "Stop the killing." The campaign was successful.

After the Americans pulled out, then the killing began in earnest. The Khmer Rouge deliberately killed almost a third of the population of Cambodia, between two and three million human beings. North Vietnam sent 400,000 South Vietnamese into "re-education" camps, and a million and a half fled their homes, risking probable death in an escape attempt instead of certain death if they stayed.

But where are the cries on the national media and the networks to "stop the killing"? Somehow, there is a deathly silence about the most horrible genocide since Auschwitz.

We are indebted to the Heritage Foundation's quarterly journal, Policy Review, for reminding us how the liberal politicians and media pooh-poohed the prospect of a Communist bloodbath and promised us that pulling out of Vietnam would stop the killing.

"What future possibility could be more terrible than the reality of what is happening

to Cambodia now?" Anthony Lewis in the New York Times, Mar. 17, 1975. "INDOCHINA WITHOUT AMERICANS: FOR MOST, A BETTER LIFE." New York Times headline, Apr. 13, 1975.

"The greatest gift our country can give to the Cambodian people is not guns but peace. And the best way to accomplish that goal is by ending military aid now." Rep. Chris Dodd, Congressional Record, Mar. 12, 1975.

"It is time that we allow the peaceful people of Cambodia to rebuild their nation. The Administration has warned that if we leave there will be a 'bloodbath.' But to warn of a new bloodbath is no justification for extending the current bloodbath." Rep. Tom Downey, Congressional Record, Mar. 13, 1975.

"The dire warnings of a Cambodian 'bloodbath' conveniently distract attention from the bloodbath now underway." Sen. Dick Clark, Congressional Record, Mar. 17, 1975.

"The evidence is that in Cambodia the much-heralded bloodbath that was supposed to follow the fall of Phnom Penh has not taken place. As for Vietnam, reports from Saigon indicate exemplary behavior.... The revolutionaries in both countries seem to have acted responsibly, perhaps more so in Vietnam because their revolution is a mature one, its leaders seasoned by experience and historical perspective." The Nation, editorial, June 14, 1975.

"The Communist are focusing primarily on the restoration of law and order and on providing such essentials as food, water, lodgings, and electricity, and, both their own propaganda and refugee accounts agree, they are relying on persuasive rather than coercive methods to attract popular sympathies." Stanley Karnow in The New Republic, April 26, 1975.

"Vietnam should teach us an important lesson. On the one hand Hanoi is one of several among the poorest nations in the world that have tried or will try to create a collectivist society, based on principles that are repugnant to us, yet likely to produce greater welfare and security for its people than any local alternative ever offered, at a cost in freedom that affects a small elite." Stanley Hoffman in The New Republic, May 3, 1975.

"When the guns of the Vietnam War have at last fallen silent, the peace that follows will be a new and in many respects strange experience for a whole generation of Vietnamese." Gerald Hickey in The New Republic May 3, 1975.