

Guest Editorial

### Public Television Does Great Service With Right Programs

by Reed Irvine

I hope every reader of the AIM report shares my indignation over the hypocrisy shown by the Public Broadcasting Service in their rejection of AIM's documentary, "Television's Vietnam: The Impact of Media". I was not too surprised at the staff. After all, they are the same people who have been airing the most outrageous far-left propaganda documentaries for many years. No one was twisting their arms to force them to broadcast such programs as Philip Agee's anti-CIA polemic, "On Company Business," and to take money out of the special projects fund to get a pro-guerrilla film, "El Salvador, Another Vietnam?" on the air in record time so that it would coincide with the communist-led so-called "final offensive" in El Salvador in January 1981. I was very disappointed in Bruce Christensen, the president of PBS, whose background and whose support for airing our first documentary last year led me to believe that he was a new broom at PBS that would clean things up. I can't believe that Christensen actually "likes" to see his organization air such pro-communist propaganda programs as the three they have broadcast since December 17. He still hasn't responded to a long letter I sent him on December 18 which described some of the more objectionable features of "Guatemala: When the Mountains Tremble".

Probably the only way to get Mr. Christensen and his associates at PBS to explain their choice of such despicable, mendacious films at the same time they are rejecting the AIM film is to get them before a Congressional committee and take their statements under oath. With your help, we may be able to generate enough support on Capitol Hill to bring this about. Please write to the senators listed under "What You Can Do".

One of my associates suggested that I include a few words in these notes about the million-children myth, which evidently made a deep impression on PBS senior vice president for programming, Suzanne Weil. In January 1967, the left-wing magazine "Ramparts" ran an article by one William F. Pepper in which he claimed that over a million children had been killed or injured in Vietnam as a result of the war. He put the number of deaths at 250,000. Dr. Benjamin Spock, the once-famous baby doctor, picked this up and the message reverberated around the country. Martin Luther King embellished the figure, saying, "So far we may have killed a million of them—mostly children." Look magazine ran a story in its issue of April 17, 1967, using the figure of a million child casualties. Marjorie Eccles, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, gave a speech to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco in which he declared, "We have killed, wounded or burned more than one million children." Sen. J. William Fulbright, then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had the speech inserted in the Congressional Record. King and Eccles blamed all the casualties on our side, something that even William Pepper had not done. I checked the figures out with the military and AID and concluded that Pepper had exaggerated total civilian casualties by at least a factor of four and that he had arbitrarily decided that 60 percent of the civilian casualties were children. Hospital admission records for 1967 showed the figure to be only 21 percent.

Pepper was apparently overrating the number of killed and wounded children by at least a factor of 10, but you can never underestimate the power of a good round

number like "one million". I hadn't heard the "million-children myth" for many years until Sue Weil dredged it up from the depths of her memory in that December 17 meeting. Nineteen years after Pepper first invented the figure, it is still embedded in some people's minds. There were, of course, additional children killed between 1967 and April 1975, but I very much doubt that the total ever approached one million.

While PBS is following its normal inclinations and airing pro-communist propaganda while censoring AIM, ABC has had the good sense to refuse to broadcast under Soviet pressure to cancel its miniseries, "America", which will show life in the United States ten years after we have been defeated and occupied by the Soviet Union. On January 8, Braden Stoddard, president of ABC Entertainment, revealed that the project was being reassessed. The problem was partly money. The miniseries had been planned to last 10 hours and cost \$0 million. That had been reduced to 12 hours and the cost cut to \$2 million. However, Stoddard also said that one of the considerations that would be factored into the decision was strong Soviet objections to the program. It was disclosed that Moscow had hinted that relations with ABC News would be adversely affected if ABC Entertainment went ahead with the miniseries. ABC was planning to have its "World News Tonight" broadcasts anchored out of Moscow during the forthcoming Communist Party Congress, and it was evidently feared that at a minimum the Soviets would interfere with that plan.

Even the hint that ABC might bow to Soviet pressure and cancel "America" evoked strong protests from liberals and conservatives alike. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett denounced ABC's seeming willingness to "factor in" Soviet objections as "shocking." Donald Wrye, the writer, editor and producer of "America", said that "it would be preposterous for an American organization to allow itself to be affected by a form of blackmail." The New York Times ran an editorial in which it called the proposed miniseries "senseless", but it said that canceling it under conditions that implied bowing to Soviet pressure was "dumbness squared". The New York Post said that ABC might have to change its name to something like "the Soviet-American Friendship Society". ABC was deluged with letters, a lot of them from AIM members. It was also picketed in New York and Washington by the Freedom Federation, a coalition of organizations representing many people who have fled from communist tyranny in Eastern Europe.

On January 23, ABC announced that it would go ahead with "America", that production would be started soon and that it would be aired in the spring of 1987. John B. Sias, ABC's new president, said that this decision had been made with "full understanding of what pressures this decision might bring to other areas of our company." Boris Malakhov, press spokesman at the Soviet embassy, had originally praised ABC's reassessment of the project, but now he said that the decision was strictly up to ABC. The Freedom Federation said that it would now hold a rally in support of ABC.

I was very distressed to see ABC give any indication that it might cancel this project as a result of Soviet objections, and I am delighted to see that they have decided to go ahead. However, I am not doing handshakes about this project even though it is one that AIM helped inspire.

## William F Pepper - children in VN exaggeration

Clipped By:



MidSouth\_Investigator

Thu, Aug 8, 2019