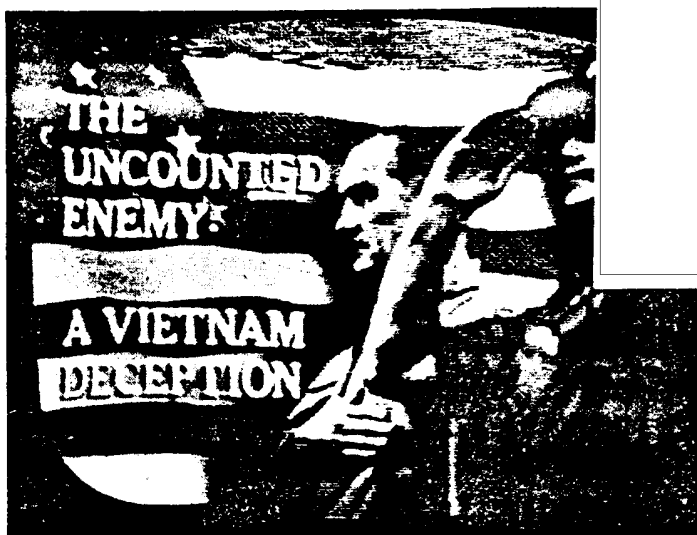
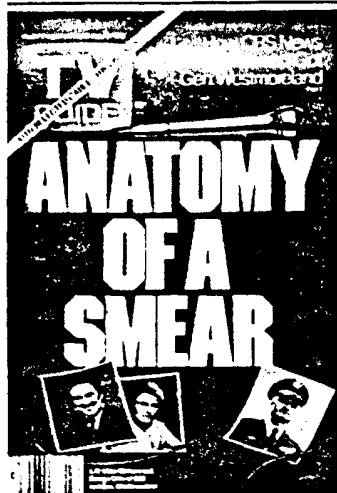


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Acts of omission: Did the tactics used by both CBS News and TV Guide obscure the truth?

Who Broke the Rules?

It was an unusual story for TV Guide, covered at extraordinary length: eleven and one-half pages purporting to describe "How CBS News broke the rules and 'got' Gen. Westmoreland." The subject was "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," a "CBS Reports" documentary broadcast last January that accused Gen. William C. Westmoreland and his aides of suppressing accurate estimates of growing enemy troop strength in South Vietnam before the 1968 Tet offensive. In television spots and on the cover of its May 29 issue, TV Guide promoted its exposé as the "Anatomy of a Smear." The story made eighteen allegations against "CBS Reports" producer George Crile and correspondent Mike Wallace. Among the charges: CBS ignored evidence that contradicted its conspiracy theory, rehearsed the interview of a friendly source and grilled "unfriendly witnesses with prosecutorial zeal."

The indictment was too detailed to be shrugged off with a standard "we stand by our story" denial, and CBS clearly recognized as much. CBS News president Van Gordon Sauter immediately announced that the network was undertaking an internal investigation to be headed by him and veteran producer Burton Benjamin. "Whether one thinks [the TV Guide charges] are valid or not, they need to be thoroughly examined—and that is what we are doing," Sauter said last week. "We'll need another three weeks to complete the job. It is a very serious series of allegations." Meanwhile, no one at CBS was commenting publicly on the allegations—including Crile, who some staffers believe may be fired if the network concludes that TV Guide's attack was largely justified. For the record, Crile remained confident. "I would

talk about this until CBS completes its internal review."

There seems to be little doubt that CBS was guilty of some questionable practices in putting together "The Uncounted Enemy." As TV Guide noted, Crile and his colleagues went into the project with a preconceived notion of what their conclusion would be—and they demonstrated a disconcerting tendency to consign interviewees who contradicted it to the cutting-room floor. They also failed to interview perhaps the most important participant in the controversy—the chief of military intelligence in Vietnam at the time.

Leak: Given CBS's silence, it is difficult to weigh its defense against TV Guide's claims. But in taking out after CBS, the magazine may have been guilty of some of the same questionable tactics it attacked the network for using. "Anatomy of a Smear" owed its existence to a CBS insider who leaked to TV Guide reporters Don Kowet and Sally Bedell unedited transcripts of all the television interviews conducted by CBS for the documentary. This gave the magazine the opportunity to second-guess every one of the network's editing decisions. After comparing the transcripts with what appeared on the tube, the reporters decided that CBS had "misrepresented the accounts of events provided by some witnesses," ignored other witnesses "altogether" and "pulled quotes out of context."

One of the magazine's strongest accusations was that "CBS's own paid consultant [former CIA analyst Sam Adams]

charged. According to Adams, the only help Wallace provided was to tell him to shorten the length of his answers—and in any case he was clearly identified as a paid consultant at the beginning of the program.

Too Low: The article also raised questions about some of the documentary's most powerful testimony against Westmoreland. It was provided by Col. Gains Hawkins, an Army

intelligence officer who spoke of the "great concern" Westmoreland expressed when presented with high estimates of enemy troop strength. Hawkins admitted that he later defended what became known as the "command position" on troop estimates—even though he believed the estimates were too low. According to TV Guide, those statements presented a distorted picture of Hawkins's real views; Crile and his colleagues edited them selectively, the magazine said, to conform to their own biases. But last week Hawkins told NEWSWEEK that his views *had* been presented accurately—and that he had told TV Guide reporter Kowet as much. Kowet doesn't dispute that. "Hawkins had no problems with how he was represented in the documentary," he conceded—precisely the opposite of what the article implied.



Bernard Gotfryd—NEWSWEEK

Producer Crile

There were other omissions as well. TV Guide never mentioned that Westmoreland had telephoned Hawkins four times after the broadcast to try to get him to say that his remarks had been taken out of context—and that Hawkins had refused. It did make a point of reporting that Westmoreland had felt ill-used by Crile, who he said had been "very vague" about what he would be asked on camera. But it neglected to mention that the general publicly withdrew the complaint after Crile produced a copy of a letter that had

been sent to Westmoreland before he was interviewed in which the subjects CBS intended to discuss with him were described. CBS consultant Adams said he invited Kowet to come stay at his house so that he could look at "all the evidence—and he never took me up on the offer." (Kowet says he interviewed Adams for "seven hours"