

Critical thinking on effects of leadership

Countries, Vietnam



All throughout history, there have been many wars that involved horrific and unexplained massacres done by nation from all over the world. Whether these massacres are done for the benefits of war or just plain cruelty, nonetheless it is still an undifferentiating and cruel slaughter of people. However, the United States themselves are not innocent of heartless bloodbaths and in fact have two incidents where many believe has stained and scared their hands with the blood of innocent people. The Biscari Massacre and my Lai Massacre are two bloodbaths that took place by Americans up under a leadership of high rank.

The Biscari massacre has something to do with two World War II occurrences in which U. S. soldiers were involved in killing 73 unprotected German and Italian prisoners of war (POWs) at Biscari on 14 July 1943. Twenty five years later, the My Lai Massacre occurred. This happened during the he Vietnam War and was a mass murder of among 347 and 504 defenseless civilians in South Vietnam on March 16, 1968, by soldiers of " Charlie" Company of 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the American Division that were a part of the United States Army. Most of the victims were children, infants, women, and elderly individuals. A lot of the women were gang-raped and their bodies were later discovered to be mutilated and numerous women were supposedly raped previous to the killings.

Leadership played a huge role in each case of massacre. In the case of the My Lai massacre. Colonel Oran K. Henderson and Lieutenant Colonel Frank A. Barker urged their company " go in there violently, close with the opponent and wipe them out for good".. Barker gave the orders for the 1st Battalion commanders to take it to another level by burning the houses, and then

killing the livestock, abolish crops, and possibly to close all of the wells .

These men were up under strict leadership to go and carry out the bloodshed.

Later on in court, these men were asked if they specifically were ordered to take out everyone in the village including innocent women and children.

Those that had been present later on mentioned gave different accounts of what the leaders told them to do. Some, counting platoon leaders, swore

that the orders as they assumed them were to get rid of every North

Vietnamese combatants and guerrilla " suspects" and that included men

women, children and even animals to torch the village, and contaminate the

wells.. He was likewise cited as mentioning " They are all nothing but a

bunch of V. C., now go and get them" and others heard him say " Who is my

enemy?" Medina added, " Anyone that is trying to flee from, hiding from us,

or seemed to be the opponent. If anybody is running, then take them out,

put them down, even if a woman is running around with a rifle in her hand,

shoot her too.". It appears that many of the soldiers did what the orders

directed them to do without giving it much thought. However, over the

following two days, each division was involved in extra burning and

annihilation of houses, in addition to maltreatment of Vietnamese prisoners.

Even though a lot of the soldiers did not contribute in the crimes, they

neither complained nor protested to their superiors or leaders. Many were

scared that they would be court marshaled. Research shows that this type of

leadership was manipulation by using fear to get the job done.

Going back to World War II just twenty something years previous, it appears

things were slightly different. According to Gorgan (1944) the document

stated that these men were later tried for the crime in court. Captain John T. Compton was court martialed for having killing 36 POWs under his charge. However, he was not the only leaders that was responsible for this action. What makes this different from the leadership in Vietman was that they were ordered to go and kill men, women, children and babies regardles. Here, they were noy actually given orders to do a bloodbath but nevertheless, orders were given to shoot the prisoners. Compton while in court did defended his actions by appealing that he was simply following orders from those that were over him or basically his superiors. Judge Advocate and investigating officer both declared that Compton's actions to be illegal, nevertheless the court martial however cleared him. Later on, he was transported to the 179th Infantry Regiment. It appears that leadership coming from Patton ordered that the men who had killed the prisoners needed to be put on trial. All leadership was not for this massacre unlike those from the My Lai massacre. Copmton later testified that he took his leaders at their word.

In conclusion, it appears that leadership in both cases was out of line. It also appears that there was poor communication between infantry and leadership that goes higher up. Although, it appears that the leaders in the My Lai massacre were ruthless and did not care about killing babies, and the Bascai massacre was the slaughter of scared Italian prisoners, both events were set off by leadership authority in high positions that gave order.

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