

3.2.2.3.2.75 Good stories and cheap heroism

A good story is an even better assignment if it's reported from a foreign land. For one doesn't have to worry so much about fact and fiction. And it's a perk to be able to travel far.

Western media covering Western sex tourists in Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Cambodia often create wrong impressions about sex slavery. They report as if there were widescale abductions, and keeping sex slaves, including children, locked up. That's dramatized fiction.

To further dramatize their coverage, Western media reports typically exaggerate not just child prostitution but especially the extent, Western tourists are involved. Sexual arrangements including females below the age of 18 are not very much of interest if it happens in the Hindukush and among Hindukush locals. For it's a rule for good stories that they somehow must relate to home.

Here just one example on this kind of a good story:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4038249/>

Western journalists like to do their undercover research into child prostitution in Phnom Penh rather than in Miami not only because of the perks of traveling to an exotic land, and because of the potential to dramatize a story with some fiction. There is another reason, which they share with female child rights campaigners and Catholic sex priests.

Because it's by and large a low-risk venture. It's cheap heroism.

There has, in Southeast Asia, traditionally not been the strong link between prostitution and organized crime that is typical for the Western hemisphere.

The references made to “syndicates” in Western reports on prostitution in Southeast Asia, even child prostitution, are misleading. A woman talking a village girl into becoming a hostess, and a massage parlor owner who later employs her, don't make a syndicate, even if the conduct of both is illegal, and even if they do it regularly.

Colombian drugs cartels and mafias with hierarchies are syndicates. They have enforcement units (hit men), and professional equipment (especially arms). Such structures are not associated with prostitution in Southeast Asia. Prostitution in Southeast Asia is overwhelmingly voluntary, and happens on an individual level. Syndicates as they operate in Latin America are very rare, if ever they exist.

Undercover research into child prostitution in Southeast Asia, and tourist customers, is the perfect topic for cowards in the media and the priesthood who nevertheless want to be heroes. The risk for the researchers are almost nil. Sex tourists are not violent, and pimps are usually womwn without bodyguards and arms.

A US TV-station, instead of deploying a team to Cambodia, could make a real difference at home, where it has much more leverage on politicians and law enforcement agencies than in Cambodia. Or in a nearby American country. So how about some courageous undercover-reporting on child prostitution in Miami or Mexico?

It won't happen. It's too dangerous. Pimps in Miami and Mexico are more suspicious of undercover journalists, and they are armed and have a track record of brutality against intruders? Intruders don't just get murdered. They get tortured and mutilated before being dumped roadside, where easily found. A TV station may buy existing footage offered by freelancers, but no responsible TV editor in the US will assign a camera team and reporter to gang undercover infiltration in Miami or Mexico. Their staff may get hurt, and then the TV station would be liable to pay widows.

Covering Western sex tourists in Southeast Asia is a good story and cheap heroism. No risks involved.