Photographer: Eddie Adams
Born 1933

Reflections

Why is this picture so shocking?

Do you think that the public were surprised to see this level of brutality?

Can you understand the actions of the General? What might make him do this?

What are your views on the photographer regretting taking this picture?

Photograph: Execution
Vietnam
1968

Contextual information

Eddie Adams is a Pulitzer Prize-winning American photographer who started his work on conflict photography during the Korean War of the 1950s.

While his work was well received at this time, it was during the conflict in Vietnam that his work achieved worldwide fame, and it was also during this conflict that he won the Pulitzer Prize for his work.

It was actually one single photograph, on 1 February 1968, that Eddie Adams took his shot of General Nguyễn Ngọc Loan executing a Viet Cong prisoner who he suspected of murdering more than 30 people including the General's relatives. The picture, though, taken at the split second of the execution showed to viewers back home the brutality and horror of the war and was said to do much to stir up anti-war feeling within the US.

Adams actually later regretted taking the picture, especially for the damage it did to the life of the General and his family, who Adams actually believed was fighting for a just cause. He later apologised to the General for the loss of honour and sent tributes when he heard the General had died.