

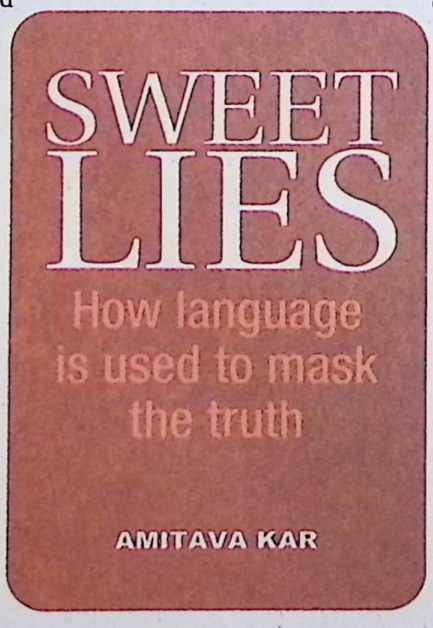
PHOTO: AP, 1968, VIETNAM

Changing the name of the condition doesn't change the condition.

You hear these expressions all the time, but you never take time to examine them carefully. Like *a pink slip*. I bet you never got one although you may have been fired a lot of times. Someone came to your desk and told you to get the hell out. You wish he would give you a pink slip instead.

This is euphemistic language or euphemism, language experts will tell you. And American English is loaded with euphemism. Or they are just words with cloudy vagueness that hide the truth and conceal reality.

Take for example, the term "national interest" which is commonly used as if it's something good for the citizens. So when you hear a political leader say "I'm doing this in the national interest," you're supposed to feel good because that's for you. But if you look closely, it turns out that the national interest is not in the interest of people; it's what's in the interests of the corporate elites who are able to control the resources that enable them to control the state. Similarly, the term "special interests" is used to refer to women, poor people, workers, young people, old people, ethnic minorities-in fact, the entire population. So you are supposed to be in favour of the national interest and against the special interests. In other words, you are supposed to vote for and support someone who is against the people and is working to protect the interests of corporations.



"This is a typical case of the way the framework of thought is consciously manipulated by an effective choice and reshaping of terminology so as to make it difficult to understand what's happening in the world," says Noam Chomsky in *Stenographers to Power: Media and Propaganda*. "A very important function of the ideological institutions-the media, the schools, and so on-is to prevent people from perceiving reality, because if they perceived it they might not like it and might act to change it, and that would harm privileged people who control these things."

Perhaps it's like George Orwell said in his essay *Politics and the English Language* that in our time political speech and writing is largely the "defense of the indefensible." Orwell gave interesting examples like the term "pacification" which was used for mass murder. Thus the US government carried out "pacification" in Vietnam. Orwell had pointed out many more early examples