



Real Time Television Coverage of Armed Conflicts and Diplomatic Crises: Does it Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions

Citation

Gowing, Nik. "Real Time Television Coverage of Armed Conflicts and Diplomatic Crises: Does it Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions." Shorenstein Center Working Paper Series 1994.1, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1994.

Permanent link

<https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37371028>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, WARNING: No applicable access license found.

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press,
Politics and Public Policy

Working Paper Series

**Real Time Television Coverage of Armed Conflicts
and Diplomatic Crises:**
Does it Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions

By Nik Gowing
Shorenstein Fellow, Spring 1994
Diplomatic Editor, ITN News, London

#1994-1

Copyright © 1994, President and Fellows of Harvard College
All rights reserved



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
REAL-TIME TELEVISION : A DEFINITION.....	3
TELEVISION AND FOREIGN POLICY : THE CONUNDRUM	9
THE GULF WAR : NO LONGER RELEVANT ?.....	11
TELEVISION AND POLICY-MAKING -- THE PARADOX.....	15
TELEVISION COVERAGE OF FOREIGN CRISES :.....	17
POLITICAL SONIC RIPPLES" -- THE CATALYST FOR POLICY MAKING.....	22\
THE LAST THING WE WANT IS PICTURES FROM GORAZDE --	24
TELEVISION COVERAGE OF WAR -- RANDOM, FICKLE AND INCOMPLETE	27
HOW TV IMAGES DID CHANGE FOREIGN POLICY : SOME EXAMPLES	55
THE POWER . . . AND THE RESENTMENT	59
CONCLUSION	62

ABSTRACT

Instant, real-time television coverage of the latest generation of armed conflicts is the curse of policy makers. The relationship between such coverage and foreign policy is profound but fickle. Conventional wisdom is that real-time television coverage creates a demand that "something must be done" and drives the making of foreign policy.

This paper challenges that belief.

Frequently the relationship is not as profound as conventional wisdom assumes. Ministers and officials resist the pressure with an iron will. TV's ability to provide rapid, raw, real-time images as a "video ticker-tape" service should not be mistaken for a power to sway policy-makers.

Television journalists must not delude themselves about the impact of their images on foreign policy. On a few occasions it can be great, especially when it comes to responding with humanitarian aid. Routinely, however, there is little or no policy impact when the TV pictures cry out for a determined, pro-active foreign policy response to end a conflict

INTRODUCTION

Whenever I approached ministers, policy makers, officials or military officers and told them of my attempt to unravel the precise impact of real-time television on their work, without exception their reactions were amusingly predictable. First came a knowing smirk, then a grin, finally the raised eyebrows and a chuckle.

No politician or official is immune from the new power of real-time TV coverage out of a crisis zone to influence the making of foreign policy. The relationship of real-time television to policy making frequently goes to the heart of governance. "Diplomats . . ." one senior British official reflected, "We are used to working methodically, slowly, systematically and reflectively".¹

But real-time images no longer allow such leisurely reflection. They compress transmission and policy response times. In turn this puts pressure on choice and priorities in crisis management. Such images distort and skew the work of diplomats, military planners and politicians.

In an analogy to nuclear physics, it can be said that real-time television has dramatically shortened the 'half-life' of both a story and its impact.² No President or Prime Minister will ever again enjoy the six day "cocoon of time and privacy afforded by the absence of television scrutiny"³ which President Kennedy enjoyed in 1962 as he wrestled with the Cuban missile crisis. No Foreign or Defense Minister can expect to repeat the experience of US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara who did not switch on a television set "during the whole two weeks of that [Cuban] crisis".⁴

There has always been tension between the media and the policy makers. Many in government continue to view the media with contempt. They resent deeply the erosion of their power to control the real-time information flow to journalists. Most still expect to manipulate the media with the three C's -- "control, confidentiality and coolness".⁵

To this end they would prefer that real-time television went away. It will not. It has created new challenges for governments who would prefer to deflect pressures or delay responses.

Real-time television is thus having to be understood, accepted and factored into policy making. Sir David Hannay, British ambassador to the United Nations, has expressed publicly what many ministers and diplomats confirm in private. "It is no good trying to abolish this factor: it is with us for the foreseeable future. It is no good deploring it in a rather elitist way".⁶

This study is an attempt to draw together the experiences of both policy makers and journalists in order to clarify a relationship that is profound, complex, uncomfortable, often contradictory and still evolving in an uncertain fashion.

At times the paper tilts towards historical analysis of a few crisis points which since 1990 have destroyed all the naive, premature post Cold-War hopes of a New World Order : Bosnia, Croatia, Somalia, the former Soviet Union. It makes no claim to an exhaustive contemporary history of any of these crises or the two dozen others in the world. Rather, it draws upon various specific events to illustrate and test the

relationship under examination. In doing so it uncovers new and hitherto unreported perspectives, sometimes created by the very presence of journalists and/or a television camera. Inevitably Bosnia dominates the study.

I have drawn upon more than one hundred interviews with senior officials and politicians at the heart of policy making in several countries. I urged all political appointees -- past and present -- to be non-partisan in their responses.

Some interviews were on the record and are openly sourced in the footnotes. Many were on background. Most interviewees agreed to meet me, sometimes for several hours of discussion, on condition that I respected their anonymity. This I have done out of a sense of gratitude for both their time and willingness to talk frankly at a time when many issues were still raw, controversial and subject to political scrutiny or dispute.

Consequently I have left many points sourced anonymously, identified in the end notes as 'background interview', with a date where appropriate. A handful of strictly off-the-record conversations are not even sourced by date. I do, however, appreciate the inevitable unease of any readers who in principle disapprove of anonymous sourcing.

Given the multilateral complexity of the events being studied it is both possible and probable that some perspectives have been omitted. Further contributions to clarify the record or correct facts will be much appreciated.'

REAL-TIME TELEVISION : A DEFINITION

We are in the 'Decade of the Dish'.⁷ While the military arsenal contains the latest stealth and smart technology, the television journalist's arsenal contains a lap-top computer, a Marisat telephone, and a portable 'up link' satellite the size of a large umbrella.

Real-time images are those television pictures beamed back live by satellite from a location. Alternatively they may have been taped a few minutes earlier, or perhaps an hour or two beforehand -- but little more.

The presence of a satellite dish has created a new grammar and editorial agenda for TV news coverage. It is beamed out of a war zone virtually instantly without the dangerous challenge of dispatching video cassettes by road, air or sea -- often through road blocks and fighting -- to a distant TV station. As the experience of covering Lebanon in the 1980's showed, such logistics create both a crude editorial filtering effect and a vital time delay which means the pictures are out of date (though still relevant or news worthy) by the time they are transmitted.

The absence of a satellite dish usually means significantly less TV coverage of a crisis. Often no dish means no coverage. On the other hand, the presence of a dish creates news coverage because of a TV news manager's corporate obligation to justify its costly deployment. Sometimes live 'two-way' interviews on

location with correspondents or key news figures help to generate news or keep up the profile and/or momentum of a story, even though there is no particular news development to warrant them. Without real time satellite 'up links' such an editorial momentum cannot be maintained.

The very presence of a satellite dish in a conflict zone thus creates new dynamics and pressures in television journalism. In the words of Ted Koppel of ABC News who reported from Vietnam: "You write differently when you know your piece won't make air for another day or two. You function differently . . . You have time to think. You have some time to report . . . The capacity to go live creates its own terrible dynamic. . . Putting someone on the air while an event is unfolding is clearly a technological *tour de force* , but it is an impediment, not an aid, to good journalism".⁸

It is an impediment that is now understood by the policy makers, which is why they have little trust in TV reporting. As one senior US official put it: "Television is often wrong. We have to make sure we are right".⁹ Another official said: "Television is a joke, and it is scary to think that this is the way many Americans get their news".¹⁰ A senior Downing Street insider added: "Something must be done, [but] TV means we can do the wrong thing".¹¹

In Britain, Edward Bickham, former Special Adviser to the British Foreign Secretary, has expressed publicly what many former Foreign Office colleagues told this author privately. "The power of television in foreign policy is a mixed blessing. As a medium it plays too much to the heart, and too little to the head. It presents powerful, emotive images which conjure strong reactions. . . Anecdotes about individual suffering make compelling television, but they rarely form a good basis to make policy. . . Foreign policy should be made by democratic governments, accountable to Parliament, not in reaction to which trouble spots the news gathering organizations can afford to cover from time to time. . . Reactions to the priorities of the news room are unlikely to yield a coherent or a sustainable foreign policy".¹²

Such official distrust of the skewed, incomplete picture provided by TV coverage is one key reason why in general, real-time television has less impact on foreign policy formulation than many assume. But on many occasions television is right and reports events before the policy makers even know about them.

That is the moment when the impact of real-time television can be profound.

TELEVISION AND FOREIGN POLICY : THE CONUNDRUM

**"In the country of the blind,
the one eyed man is king"¹³**

In the new generation of armed conflicts, the great western political and military powers have often found themselves unsighted. For long periods -- especially in the early stages -- they have been blind, knowing little of what was happening. They have also mis-read much of whatever limited information came their way.

The lens of a single television camera -- the 'one-eyed man' -- has often provided images that leave enduring impressions which no diplomatic cable or military signal can ever convey. The television image frequently speaks where words or government telegrams and reporting do not.

Real-time television has sharpened that impact.

The presence in a war zone of TV cameras and accompanying satellite dish reduces the time span of the news cycle to a point where there is virtually no time lag. Where once there were delays of days or hours in getting news video out of a conflict zone and onto the air, now it is often merely a matter of minutes. Frequently there is no delay at all. That is why coverage is real-time.

In turn, the ability to transmit in real-time increases the frequency of updated news stories. In extremis it allows indefinite live and worldwide coverage of a developing conflict like the storming of the Russian White House in October 1993. Officials confirm that information often comes to them first from television or text news services well before official diplomatic and military communications channels can provide data, precision, clarification and context.

Real-time television coverage from any zone of conflict is thus an irreversible fact of political life. For TV news operations only three factors stand in the way of routine real-time transmission from any crisis location. They are coverage costs, changing editorial priorities and the occasional bureaucratic obstruction of some governments to the installation of portable satellite dishes. Distance and remoteness are no longer an obstacle. Government efforts to censor or control television reporting are usually (though not always) bypassed as a matter of routine.

The impact of what many call the "CNN factor" or "CNN curve" cannot be disputed. The now legendary reputation which CNN has built for itself in real-time coverage of crises is an important marketing tool for the corporation.

Prod a little deeper, however, and many in government say the "CNN factor" is in reality more of a catch-all term for a much broader phenomenon. Other international broadcasters like Sky, Superchannel and BBC World Service TV have similar impact on governments, especially outside the USA. More services will soon join them, like CBC News World International. The worldwide provision of news video and satellite services by Reuter, WTN and (soon) Associated Press Television multiplies the scope of real-time television, as do the growing number of German, Hispanic and other language services under development.

By receiving live transmissions of press conferences, speeches, interviews and sometimes unfolding horrors, the government machines experience no delay in receiving raw information. As such, real-time television provides a "video ticker-tape" service.

The conventional wisdom is that such vivid immediacy regularly forces some kind of change in policy -- especially after horrific events in conflicts like Bosnia. This paper will detail examples of this cause and effect relationship, including the role of TV news in prompting humanitarian aid operations.

But such a connection is not the norm.

A clutch of important examples do not in themselves confirm an automatic cause and effect paradigm. As the number of cases of "territorial disputes, armed ethnic conflicts, civil wars and the collapse of governmental authority"¹⁴ proliferates, the chances that horrific images of war will stir governments to take action is diminishing fast.¹⁵ The answer to the question Ethnic Conflicts: Who Cares? can be summarized as "Some people do. Most don't. Many more people should".¹⁶

As will be shown, instant coverage of the Sarajevo market massacre in February 1994 contributed in some part -- but not as much as many assume -- to bringing peace and a prolonged ceasefire to that city;¹⁷ TV coverage of a dead American serviceman being dragged through Mogadishu in October 1993 created public pressure on the Clinton administration to confirm a US intention to withdraw from Somalia; TV pictures of suffering in the besieged Moslem town of Srebrenica forced the United Nations Security Council to create Safe Areas in April 1993.

But real-time television coverage did not, for example, force policies to save the besieged UN Safe Area of Gorazde from Bosnian Serb bombardment in April 1994. Neither did it force policies to relieve the horrors of the Central African state of Rwanda and save 200,000 people from death in the same month¹⁸; or policies to save Burundi from similar mass, inter-tribal slaughter in October 1993 on a scale of bloodletting far more extensive and horrifying than what was being witnessed in Bosnia or Croatia at the same time.¹⁹ Vivid reporting of the Burundi carnage from the BBC's George Alagiah created virtually no significant diplomatic resonance.

Most important, television coverage in 1991 did not force western governments to adopt policies aimed at preventing armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia which western intelligence agencies had warned was inevitable. First in Croatia, then in Bosnia in 1992, television encouraged only limited crisis management at the lowest common denominator of agreement by governments who had no decisive political will to pre-empt war.²⁰ On the other hand, television played virtually no part in the international decision to deploy a UN force in Macedonia designed to prevent war spilling over from Bosnia.

In general, television merely highlighted the West's impotence and failure to find enough of a diplomatic consensus to prevent or pre-empt war. Its coverage became a catalyst for humanitarian operations but did not force crisis prevention.²¹ Governments worked to apply diplomatic bandages while the warring parties deceived them. "Bosnia was not a diplomat's dream," observed UN Assistant Secretary-General Alvaro de Soto in a masterly diplomatic understatement. "It was like diving into an empty swimming pool".²²

As Professor Lawrence Freedman has concluded: "The basic failure was to watch passively as the

Yugoslav crisis brewed, so that once it bubbled over and alarm bells began to ring, the possibilities for constructive action had already been narrowed.... The lesson here is that emerging crises such as this need to be monitored and acted upon long before they go critical".²³ The 1991 war in Slovenia was brief and cost only eight Slovenian lives. "A pleasant war to watch . . ." one European diplomat remarked in retrospect, ". . . and relatively unbloody." But TV suggested much worse. It showed aerial attacks, convoys of military hardware on the motorways and the mobilization of the Yugoslav People's Army. The international community made diplomatic demarches, but found its efforts neutralized by the determination of the belligerents to fight and their ability to deceive western governments. Television coverage made no difference.

Meanwhile the Serb siege and bombardment of Vukovar had begun in August 1991. For many weeks it produced heartrending TV images of destroyed buildings and columns of refugees reminiscent of World War Two. Then in October came the sights and sounds of medieval Dubrovnik being shelled from land and sea and apparently being destroyed.²⁴

Slovenia, Vukovar and Dubrovnik are three important examples of how television's powerful role as a video tip-sheet must not be confused with a power to influence or drive policy decisions -- a power that is often significantly less than many believe. Indeed, closer questioning of officials, politicians and journalists for this paper confirms a fickle relationship that is the opposite of conventional wisdom.

Some senior officials describe how regularly they and their ministers at the highest levels have been moved, shocked, humbled and emotionally troubled by the horrors they have seen on TV. They "saw images of people who could have been themselves. Yugoslavia kept officials awake at night", said one British source.²⁵ "People were genuinely upset by the substance of what TV showed. [At times] John Major was upset," confirmed a former senior Downing Street official.²⁶ "Universal guilt has begun to haunt policy-makers and military strategists in recent years, as media demands have become ever more incessant for interventions in disputes and disasters," wrote David Fisher, Under-Secretary of State in the British Ministry of Defence.²⁷

Following the Gulf War in February 1991 such emotions were translated into a firm policy response. Television images motivated John Major to defy diplomatic advice and press for Safe Havens to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq. It was a rare example of governments bowing to the power of real-time television on a foreign policy issue.²⁸ That power is also partly confirmed by the reluctance of western governments to protect the Shia Marsh Arabs in southern Iraq, where there was virtually no TV coverage of their plight.²⁹ Officials involved in considering policies to protect the Shias later claimed, however, that it was insurmountable practical difficulties -- not the lack of TV coverage -- which weighed most heavily against any UN operation to protect the Shias.

"If TV was the only bedrock of policy it would have changed policy, but it wasn't," said the senior Downing Street official. "TV is a major source, but not the primary source".

This official and many others confirmed that television is merely one part of a much broader mosaic of government intelligence and reporting channels on which the world's most powerful nations base their decisions.

Governments want to resist the impact of television images, yet ministers and officials know they have to be seen to respond.

In the years before the arrival of the mobile satellite dish governments could get away with policy responses which took advantage of slower public awareness within a longer time frame. Now ministers and officials have learned to adapt by making instant responses which make the most limited commitments possible.³⁰ The impression when a Prime Minister speaks in a rushed doorstep interview, or the US President makes a soundbite comment on the White House lawn, is often of governments being prompted to respond to TV images. "We have to look active and concerned without giving away positions before having made a considered decision," one Downing Street insider confirmed.³¹

But TV sound-bites and official declarations of horror, outrage or condemnation must not be mistaken for action or changes in policy. They are what one senior British official labelled "pseudo decisions for pseudo action".³² As one former senior US official put it: "Reacting can be anything from a UN resolution to sending a press spokesman out".³³

At times most government officials have talked of their "iron will" to maintain a policy line and not be deflected by the power of television images.³⁴ On Bosnia, under a headline Keeping our Heads in a Nightmare, the British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd wrote a detailed justification which concluded: "What we are doing in Bosnia is not abdication, but sense".³⁵

The challenge for TV news crews is to cover crises as rapidly, as comprehensively and as accurately as possible. The challenge for governments is to appear to react while quietly adhering to the continuum of a "cold and rational" policy line³⁶ drafted at the start of a crisis. "A government is there to decide what to do and what not to do. Television only distorts decision making when a government allows it to distort," said Sir Robin Renwick, British ambassador to the United States.³⁷

Yet in the confidential surroundings of EU, NATO and WEU councils -- un-monitored by journalists -- foreign ministers have been heard regularly asking aloud whether they have to be seen to respond, or whether they could ride the impact of TV pictures until it faded.³⁸

"Governments have to be prepared to cope and have bloody sticky moments," said one official. "They must be willing to sustain the policy line during [TV coverage], then after TV has gone away".³⁹ A senior Downing Street official at the heart of the political process on Bosnia confirmed: "Politicians were prepared to withstand images. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary will always take a long view. We were driven by TV pressure, but it was never overwhelming".⁴⁰ A senior military officer added: "TV plays a key role, however TV has not changed my view. But the way it [Bosnia] has been presented [on television] then affected the way I presented it [the policy] politically".⁴¹

In other words, there can be considerable cause, but much less effect. Such a conclusion challenges Kinder and Iyengar's broad belief that "TV news is news that matters"⁴². On the other hand TV's real-time

coverage of foreign armed conflicts does still make it a "serious and relentless player"⁴³ in the political process. The official downplaying of the role of real-time television helps explain how mounting humanitarian operations became a convenient cover for limited political action -- which is how the Bosnian government viewed international policy towards them. In the view of their UN ambassador, Mohamed Sacirbey: "Whenever there was a movement towards greater action, it was not based on any systematic approach to the problem. It was based upon what one saw on the television screens . . . If you look at how humanitarian relief is delivered in Bosnia you see that those areas where the TV cameras are most present are the ones that are the best fed; the ones that receive the most medicines. While on the other hand, many of our people have starved and died of disease and shelling where there are no TV cameras".⁴⁴

In a rare moment of candor, one British official even went so far as to describe the London Conference on the former Yugoslavia in August 1992 as a high profile "stalling machinery" created for public relations purposes, where "the UK and US agreed to smother Bosnia Herzegovina with cotton wool in order to subdue the fighting". Throughout the Croatia and Bosnia crises, governments succeeded by and large in keeping to that line unpressured by television coverage.

But non-governmental organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross say that such political responses have often been disastrous for their humanitarian activities. "Political leaders were pushed to make immediate responses because of what they saw on television screens," one official told this author. "But [often] they were not the most appropriate".

Thus, fundamental changes or reversals of policy in the wake of shocking TV news footage from a war zone are rarer than many assume. Indeed, governments frequently go out of their way to appear to modify policy when little or nothing of substance has changed. And then any change is justified on the basis of the often vaguely-defined but frequently-cited concepts of either "public opinion" or "national interest".

This study will show that such justifications are often spurious conveniences. As one senior Downing Street official at the heart of post Cold War policy making expressed it: "Public Opinion and National Interest are two cant phrases that have been around for two hundred years. Over Yugoslavia it is not sure what the public opinion wanted".⁴⁵ Mark Gearan, President Clinton's Communications Director, characterized the citing of public opinion to justify foreign policy decisions as "an additive to bolster an argument. Public opinion is not that important."⁴⁶

Yet, the role of television in policy making cannot legitimately be described as "a sideshow about a footnote".⁴⁷ Where they are deployed, TV news cameras do have a role in prioritizing crisis management both within a specific crisis and between different crises. They highlight the new fault lines in what has been described variously as the developing "Clash of Civilizations"⁴⁸, the "Clash within Civilizations"⁴⁹, "the Coming Anarchy"⁵⁰ or some other variant of the ethnic instability fast developing across the globe.⁵¹

The British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd has admitted that for a distant but strategically important conflict like the war in Tajikistan the usual flow of Foreign Office telegrams failed to create the same impact on him as a couple of minutes of news video he saw one Sunday night on ITN.⁵²

"What is new is that a selection of these tragedies is now visible to people around the world," Mr Hurd has concluded. "Before the days of [lightweight] video cameras . . . people might have heard about atrocities, but accounts were often old and disputed. The cameras are not everywhere. But where the cameras operate, the facts are brutally clear"⁵³.

In other words, where TV news cameras and satellite dishes are assigned they highlight the "clashes" and "flash points for crisis and bloodshed"⁵⁴ which western governments have yet to comprehend fully or come to terms with.

For such conflicts western policy makers have a choice. Either they can choose to respond preemptively as the "clashes" intensify, or they must accept passively a trend towards "important and bloody conflicts"⁵⁵ which is inevitable and will not be prevented by either diplomatic or military means -- or television.⁵⁶

Thus real time television coverage serves to highlight the policy dilemma but does not resolve it. Indeed, the likelihood is that where real-time TV coverage occurs it draws attention to armed crises in which the world's leading powers have no political will to get involved and no ability to broker or impose a peace. As the eminent war historian Professor Sir Michael Howard has put it with reference to war in the former Yugoslavia: "Television brings it closer to us, but provides us with no new means to resolve it."⁵⁷

No television news executives, correspondents, producers or camera personnel should try to convince themselves otherwise.

THE GULF WAR : NO LONGER RELEVANT ?

I have resisted all temptation to return in detail to the Gulf War of 1991 to discuss censorship, news management and the so-called "CNN factor". That path of controversy is now well worn.

In journalistic and policy terms the Gulf War was a heavily-controlled, well-choreographed affair fought to a relatively precise battle plan in a near-perfect environment for war and the restriction of TV images. In his book Second Front, John MacArthur labelled the bitter media/military relationship in the Gulf as "Operation Desert Muzzle" which for the press involved what he called a "stunning loss of prerogative" because of their forced adherence to government manipulation on coverage.⁵⁸

In the Gulf, live television pictures did not dictate policy or force policy changes. They distorted public impressions and confirmed the war strategy being carried out.⁵⁹ CNN's live pictures of the bombing of Baghdad allowed allied commanders to assess at first hand the success of their air strikes. Even catastrophes did not change policy. Images of the carnage after the allied bombing of the Al Amariya bunker shocked TV audiences. But they did not undermine significantly public support for the war. However in Somalia and Bosnia gruesome images did -- on occasions -- weaken the political consensus for military involvement.

Apart from the few enterprising 'unilateral' TV teams who defied military controls in the Gulf, the vast majority of TV correspondents (but not all) submitted to traditional propaganda techniques designed to mobilize consent.⁶⁰ Both willingly and reluctantly they conformed to Walter Lippmann's celebrated principles of journalism⁶¹ under which "the public is seen as stupid, volatile and best kept in the dark, with policy left in the hands of a superior elite who can better judge the national interest".⁶²

Only in the final moments of the Gulf land war did TV images influence policy. President Bush saw TV pictures of the apparent carnage after allied warplanes attacked retreating Iraqis in the Mutla Gap on the road north from Kuwait City to Iraq. The word apparent is used because the eventual estimated death toll in what became known as the 'turkey shoot' was eventually found to be significantly lower than what the first gruesome images of charred bodies had suggested.⁶³ Yet those pictures did play a major part in Bush's decision to halt the ground war at a moment which coincided conveniently with 100 hours of battle.⁶⁴ It was not the horror of the pictures that swayed the President, but the realization that the war was effectively over and TV should not be allowed to show needless further casualties.⁶⁵

Compared to the battle to liberate Kuwait, the armed conflicts in this new post-Gulf War period are of a wholly unpredictable and unmanageable dimension. The nature of international involvement is of a new, uncharted kind. UN troops are not assigned as combatants but as part of a non-combatant force of interposition. As a result the core issues have now progressed well beyond the kind of recriminations between the military, the politicians and some journalists seen during and after the Gulf War.⁶⁶

In these new wars ministers and officials cannot control journalists as they did in the Gulf. They can no longer assume that the media is willing "to rely excessively on the government as a news source and defer to its positions".⁶⁷ Of course many journalists -- though not all -- will still have to defer to the White House, Downing Street, the Elysee Palace or the Matignon for policy announcements.⁶⁸ But governments can no

longer impose censorship and news management of the kind they enjoyed in the Gulf, and which in theory the military continue to advocate.⁶⁹

In the Gulf War, policy makers controlled the uneasy partnership between television and the military in line with the established principle that governments coerce society in order to build and preserve consensus about defence and security policy. But in Bosnia, Somalia, Russia and the growing number of regional conflicts, television and the military have travelled alongside each other on a steep learning curve. There is a new, mutually complementary partnership where policy makers have virtually no control over TV coverage, where "no previous rules apply",⁷⁰ and where it is virtually impossible for governments to "coerce society" on what is taking place in the war zone. In the midst of Bosnia's political and military anarchy, for example, TV crews and reporters can take risks as they see fit. In many of these new conflicts a significant number have paid with their lives, unlike in the Gulf War.

This is an important new development in crisis management. Many policy makers say that the instant power of real-time television and the loss of government control of information from a war zone will now be a more significant factor in a government's decision on whether or not to become engaged in a conflict. "It will be a definite factor in decision making," said Col. Bill Smullen, who from 1988 until 1993 was special adviser on public affairs to General Colin Powell, former chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁷¹ "It could now be a factor in not going to war".

Having criticized the press and TV news organizations for their "stunning loss of prerogative" in the Gulf War, MacArthur concludes (as does this paper's author) that in the former Yugoslavia there has been no such loss of prerogative. Instead, MacArthur says that "the press has shown enormous prerogative. Hooray for the media -- especially the British correspondents".⁷²

Such plaudits are not, however, without irony. By late 1992 TV coverage of Bosnia began to orientate itself to locations involving United Nations troop deployments. The journalistic drive to report unfolding horrors had not lessened. The chances of being killed had -- significantly.⁷³

Unlike during the Gulf War, the escalating viciousness and banditry of Bosnia pressured TV teams to seek the unspoken but vital protection of being 'tactical bound' to the armed umbrella of UN military operations.⁷⁴ UNPROFOR bases became like a mother ship to journalists, even helping to supply food, fuel, spares and a few home comforts.⁷⁵ Only occasionally did journalists go 'unilateral' and defy warnings of significant danger from UN forces who themselves would not even travel in their armored vehicles because of the perceived military danger.⁷⁶

After all the principled complaints by journalists of pool arrangements and news management during the Gulf war, in February 1994 after the Sarajevo market massacre, journalists, camera crews and photographers even willingly submitted to a UN pool system as the safest and most productive way to secure pictures and report facts. Unlike in the Gulf War, most of the 250 media personnel accepted that pooling on primary news coverage is preferable to some kind of uncontrolled media anarchy in a war zone.

These, then, are the realities of the new generation of war and real-time television coverage.

TELEVISION AND POLICY-MAKING -- THE PARADOX

Frequently ministers and officials talk resentfully of this "profound" relationship between television and policy making because it creates a clamor that "something must be done".⁷⁷

"I tell my staff : real-time reporting has changed the name of the game," said one senior British official. "It skews the details and the realities of what is happening in a war."⁷⁸

The United Nations/European Union negotiating team for the former Yugoslavia in Geneva told how they often quipped that "television and CNN have become the sixth permanent member of the UN Security Council".⁷⁹

Yet probe further and this author found evidence of a determination to keep to a policy line and to resist the immediately profound and emotive impact of real-time coverage of a conflict on television. "It is not that great and it is always easy to resist," said Marlin Fitzwater, who was press secretary to Presidents Reagan and Bush, and who worked in White House press relations for a total of ten years.⁸⁰

This is a paradox because TV often creates a clamor for action which policy makers would prefer not to be drawn into.

At times it is difficult to unravel the contradiction. On the one hand the impact of real time television remains great. In the view of UN Secretary General, Boutros-Boutros-Ghali: "Today the media do not simply report the news. Television has become part of the event it covers. It has changed the way the world reacts to crises. Public emotion becomes so intense that United Nations work is undermined. On television, the problem may become simplified and exaggerated".⁸¹

On the other hand, as will be shown in detail later, television coverage of a conflict like Bosnia is superficial and flawed. Journalists know the shortcomings. So do governments and the military. Lt.Colonel Alastair Duncan, a former British UNPROFOR commander, described the paradox in relation to the former Yugoslavia thus: "It is very difficult to know what is happening in Bosnia [yet] it suffers from news-hype. It is a very vicious and nasty civil war, and it is largely ignored".⁸²

Yet real-time television has served to highlight events which do not otherwise appear on a policy maker's radar screen. The British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd has described correctly "the searchlight of media coverage [which] is not the even and regular sweep of a lighthouse". The result is "patchy" coverage and "unlit tragedies" which create "a steadily growing extra dimension to the business of government, and in particular to the business of diplomacy"⁸³.

"The TV camera puts an issue on the agenda when it might otherwise not have been there", one of Mr.Hurd's senior officials confirmed.⁸⁴ According to former US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger: "The television sets a great deal of the agenda, and then the President and his Secretary of State have to deal with it. There's just no argument".⁸⁵

This appears to support the conventional wisdom of a cause and effect relationship which the veteran American television and radio broadcaster Daniel Schorr has described as "an interactive system of

formulating policy and the instantaneity of modern television [which] makes it necessary to formulate policy on the run".⁸⁶

The ultimate test of this argument is to examine the converse. The virtual absence of images from conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Moldova, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Abkhazia, Angola, Liberia, Burundi, Kashmir, Sudan or the southern marshes of Iraq has consistently lead to little or no pressure for action by western governments or the United Nations. Yet the conflicts listed above are just as awful as Bosnia and in many cases much worse⁸⁷.

For example, as noted earlier, while the world focussed on Sarajevo and Bosnia in March 1994, it is estimated one thousand people died in one violent two-day period in Burundi.⁸⁸ At the same time a US diplomat was describing Sudan as "Somalia without CNN"⁸⁹, with a humanitarian situation worse than in Somalia. In 1994 new names were being added monthly to the list of conflicts, like Algeria and Yemen.⁹⁰

But television news operations can only cover one or two crises or disasters at once. They cannot and do not cover every armed crisis in the world⁹¹. They have been severely tested trying to cover parts of Bosnia adequately, let alone comprehensively⁹², and the cost pressures on TV news in an increasingly aggressive commercial environment are becoming greater⁹³. Television editors have to make choices according to costs, logistics, personal safety of staff and their estimate of audience interest. However these editorial choices have an important influence on the priorities in government crisis management.

"We are under no pressure to do something about crises that are not on TV," one senior Downing Street official confirmed.⁹⁴ "It is television that put Bosnia on the agenda for the last two years, and did not in Angola," said Lawrence Eagleburger.⁹⁵

Television coverage is thus a powerful influence in problem recognition, which in turn helps to shape the foreign policy agenda. But television does not necessarily dictate policy responses.⁹⁶

In Whitehall, one British official defined the limit. "Television is a big influence on a daily basis, but the key is keeping a balanced, even keel over the long term"⁹⁷. On Bosnia another British official conceded that "TV almost derailed policy on several occasions, but the spine held. It had to. The secret was to respond to limit the damage, and be seen to react without undermining the specific [policy] focus".⁹⁸ Britain's UN ambassador Sir David Hannay concluded: "We are a pretty stubborn lot. When it comes to an earth shattering event we will not be swept off our feet".⁹⁹

Washington is little different. "Television does not have much day-to-day impact. [It] is never called up as collateral to make decisions," said Charles Kupchan, director of the European Affairs desk at the National Security Council from 1993 to 1994.¹⁰⁰ "As a source of information for the National Security Council [television] is not that important. Gross pictures of suffering [in Bosnia] were not going to force intervention because the policy makers have decided these fights are not worth picking".

"When something dreadful happened on TV it did not open up new policy options or change them," according to Marshall Harris who worked as Special Assistant to Secretary of State James Baker in 1992, then Bosnian Desk officer at the State Department until he resigned in August 1993.¹⁰¹ "The effect of television is not as much as people have suggested. Clinton would have preferred no coverage. The fact that people are

seeing horrors does not necessarily force them [the administration] to do something they do not want to do . . . The resources, assets, power and control at the disposal of an administration far outweighs the ability of television material to manipulate or drive foreign policy."

Warren Zimmerman, US ambassador to Belgrade from 1989-92 then Head of the US Office of Refugees until he retired prematurely, is skeptical about the power of TV. "If we had had no CNN or ITN, I do not see how it [policy on the former Yugoslavia] would have been any different".¹⁰²

After five years in the US State Department followed by two years on the US National Security Council which included high level involvement in Gulf War policy, Philip Zelikow concluded: "Television is influential on problem recognition, but has very little influence on foreign policy content. Television presents problems, insists problems are addressed, but has no effect on the way policy is constructed . . . No television does it [crisis coverage] well enough to have an influence on policy".¹⁰³

Hence the broad conclusion of Stewart Purvis, Editor-in-Chief of ITN, on television's overall role in the west's policy towards the former Yugoslavia: "We influenced events, but not the outcome".¹⁰⁴

Yet as Bosnia, Somalia and other regional conflicts have shown, the unforeseen often takes place. That can be the moment of policy weakness when there is a degree of policy panic on tactical issues. Diplomats have confirmed it is at such moments that TV coverage has tested and challenged the kind of overall minimalist strategy seen in Bosnia. Governments came under fire from journalists and politicians for failing to take sufficient action to prevent or pre-empt deeper crises.¹⁰⁵ Television images pressed governments sharply and suddenly in a direction at odds with policy. They either filled an apparent vacuum or created a new one, thereby testing to the limit a government's determination to manage a flurry of emotions without modifying policy.

"When governments have a clear policy, they have anticipated a situation and they know what they want to do and where they want to go, then television has little impact. In fact they ride it," according to Kofi Annan, Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping at the United Nations.¹⁰⁶ "When there is a problem, and the policy has not been thought, there is a knee-jerk reaction. They have to do something or face a public relations disaster".

Ministers and officials have confirmed how in such situations they found themselves fighting the tide of a "fantastically powerful medium [television], which is often crude, and where the words that go with it are often trite".¹⁰⁷ At this point institutional resistance has sometimes weakened. "We are not impervious to events and human emotions. We can be angry and upset like everyone else, and if the policies are shown not to be working then we must react", said Sir David Hannay, British ambassador to the UN.¹⁰⁸

Such occasions have been rare, but they help explain this author's description of a fickle and unpredictable relationship between real-time television and policy makers -- a relationship whose precise influence continues to be disputed by colleagues at the highest levels of government.

For example, in the view of Madeleine Albright, US ambassador to the UN: "Television's ability to bring graphic images of pain and outrage into our living rooms has heightened the pressure both for immediate engagement in areas of international crisis, and immediate disengagement when events do not go

according to plan".¹⁰⁹ But three weeks after Ms. Albright spoke, the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, cautioned against over-emphasizing any cause and effect relationship. He told the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "television is a wonderful phenomenon and sometimes even an instrument of freedom. But television images cannot be the North Star of America's foreign policy"¹¹⁰

Rick Inderfurth, Alternate US Representative to the United Nations provided what is arguably the most vivid illumination of this fickle dichotomy. "There are many times when there are horrific images and there is no policy impact. It is very difficult to work out and anticipate how the CNN factor will come into play. It is like waking up with a big bruise, and you don't know where it came from and what hit you".¹¹¹

TELEVISION COVERAGE OF FOREIGN CRISES :
HOW MUCH DO MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS WATCH IT?

A further important paradox has undermined the belief that television influences those who make foreign policy. Few ministers and senior officials have either the wish or the time to watch television, including news!¹¹²

In Britain most ministers have a television in their office, but almost none of them ever watches it.¹¹³ During the Gulf War, the British Foreign Secretary's private office installed two televisions, and senior officials monitored the output. But the arrangement was not permanent. Similarly only a tiny number of officials have TV's in their offices. "When I arrived here, one of the first things I did was put that in," said one newly appointed aide as he pointed towards the TV in his office¹¹⁴.

So on almost every occasion when ministers or officials feel pressured to respond to an outrage there is a high chance none of them will have actually seen the TV coverage in question¹¹⁵. There are many reasons: from official engagements and pressures on the diary, to travelling or the gruelling need to process ministerial paperwork. As one senior British official expressed it: "Ministers have better uses for their time than watching television"¹¹⁶.

In contrast, US officials at all levels have televisions in their offices, as this author discovered. Some - but not many -- are news "junkies" and have a TV switched on permanently to CNN, usually with the sound suppressed. They want both to know instantly how the media are spinning policy issues and to have access to what one official called the "shorthand intelligence" provided by round-the-clock news.¹¹⁷

According to White House sources, President Bush watched TV newscasts a significant amount, but President Clinton less so. "He does not really watch anything," said George Stephanopoulos, Special Advisor to President Clinton on Policy and Strategy, but "television does have an influence on him".¹¹⁸

However, by and large, television's influence on presidents has not outweighed policy considerations. "That [TV] is not where the pressure comes from. It comes from other sources," said Marlin Fitzwater.

While Clinton's National Security Adviser Anthony Lake has rarely watched television news coverage, if ever, his predecessor Brent Scowcroft did -- though not to be influenced. Scowcroft considered TV as an invaluable policy tool, but not a primary information source. "Scowcroft religiously looked at TV, but only to validate the intelligence that he was receiving", said one former aide.¹¹⁹ Another described how the general usually urged caution in the wake of emotive TV pictures. "He would always remind us it is awful. But if we start on a slippery slope, we will never fix it".¹²⁰

Most others, however, did not feel they needed the CNN "tip sheet" as a permanent accompaniment to their duties. During his time in office CIA Director Robert Gates ordered that his TV be removed. "Gates did not rely on TV, just intelligence . . . TV does not focus for long enough and it is often too sensational".¹²¹ Similarly, many of those officials interviewed for this paper said they virtually never switched on their TV sets. They also confirmed they rarely saw sets on in the offices of bosses or colleagues. For example,

according to Charles Kupchan "TV was never on in [National Security Adviser] Lake's office, or [Deputy National Security Adviser] Sandy Berger's, or [Staff Director] Nancy Soderberg's".¹²²

When TV coverage has been brought to an administration's attention it has therefore usually been via the monitoring operations in the various government public affairs offices or watch centers. The White House Situation Room contains seven TV sets tuned to news coverage and monitored 24 hours a day. Urgent information or an alert is transmitted immediately by phone to the relevant desk. In the White House, news video from any US network can be replayed directly to any office at any time on demand.

It must be said, however, that some fellow politicians and policy makers have not accepted the claims of ministers and officials that they don't watch television and therefore are not influenced by it. For example, Barbara McDougall, Canadian External Affairs Minister during much of the Yugoslav crisis from 1991 to 1993, made a point of watching television coverage and believes that despite what most of her opposite numbers claimed, they did too.

"Television is every bit as valuable as the academic cables you get from diplomats. It does have an influence," said Ms. McDougall. "I took notice. At Foreign Ministers' meetings I heard them talk about what they had seen on CNN or the BBC".¹²³

In Britain, ministers and officials have described how it is often their wives, children, families, office drivers, colleagues or friends who see appalling images then express to them their horror with words like "Did you see that . . .? You've got to do something"¹²⁴ or "Where is Douglas? [the Foreign Secretary] He must see this!"¹²⁵. It has been a combination of private buzz at home or in government corridors, plus the newspaper follow-ups to the TV image, which has often created the momentum that no minister or senior official can resist. "There is a fair determination to resist and limit the power of television," said Sir Robin Renwick, Britain's ambassador to the US. Then he recalled pressure on Bosnia from his own teenage daughter at home. "But we are susceptible, and we hate horrors too".¹²⁶

As one British official described it: "It is not the politicians or ministers who see the images. It is the staff. The whips. The messengers. Even their wives. They say: 'crikey! perhaps we should review policy'. TV is so powerful and has such impact on the public and back benches [in the British House of Commons]. We cannot take an Olympian approach. Suddenly there is all that doubt. We have to take account. We cannot say 'no comment'".¹²⁷

Barbara McDougall had no doubt that "there is an ambivalent attitude towards television. It is fickle". But she still believed that she -- like many ministers -- did modify foreign policy because of TV coverage. "But how? I am not sure. It is hard to know how our brains reacted".¹²⁸

Instinct about the likely political impact has been one factor. "The camera does not lie," said one senior British official.¹²⁹ "You cannot fight against it, because inevitably the truth comes out. TV creates resonances and political sonic ripples that cannot be ignored."

And it seems that in these "political sonic ripples" lies the clue to whatever cause and effect relationship does exist between real-time TV coverage and policy making.

"POLITICAL SONIC RIPPLES" -- THE CATALYST FOR POLICY MAKING

The number of people who watch news channels and who are motivated by the impact of real-time television pictures is far smaller than most assume. The well-publicized "reach" of TV news channels like CNN¹³⁰ is far greater than the less-publicized number who actually watch.

In the US, the regular viewing figure for CNN is on average six-tenths of one rating point -- some 500,000 "households" -- and getting smaller. Viewing figures for the international service are only guesstimates, but overall they are believed to be "tiny, tiny".¹³¹ Most important, the vast majority of those who do watch tend to be passive news addicts who are not involved in the business of policy-making, especially on foreign affairs.¹³²

For the purposes of this analysis, the TV viewing audience can be sub-divided into elites and mass public opinion. Interviews for this paper suggest that the elite of policy-making ministers and government officials tends to be "ambivalent"¹³³ to the power of TV images, even though real-time news coverage does help prioritize crisis management.

As already seen, the second tiny elite of families, close friends and working colleagues does have some limited influence on policy makers in a random, ad hoc way.

The largest group is mass public opinion. The vast majority of these viewers tend to be indifferent to news, except the 5-10% classified as 'attentive public' who regularly watch bulletins and updates. Except at times of national crisis mass public opinion watches at fixed times and does not tune in to rolling news.

It is estimated that in the US some 30 million households watch what can be described as the filtered, intensively-edited, 22-minute summaries on the early evening network newscasts. In Britain some 16 to 18 million viewers watch the main half-hour nine- and ten-o'clock main evening bulletins. Occasionally this mass of viewers is moved emotionally by what it sees. But on issues like air strikes for Bosnia they are not affected in a way that is informed enough to be considered seriously by the foreign policy makers who take both the policy decisions and ultimate responsibility.

The third elite are the journalists and lawmaker politicians who make the greatest effort to stay actively tuned in to round-the-clock (and therefore real-time) news broadcasts. The small number of what one British official has called political sonic ripples which affect foreign policy are found in this elite. Occasionally this elite includes some, if not all, of the 5-10% 'attentive public'.

This elite group comprises editors, leader writers, Op-Ed columnists and motivated politicians who frequently have no responsibility for policy making but are affected (often emotionally) by the vivid horrors real-time television brings to them. There are not many of them, and like ministers and officials "most of the politicians miss most things on television", according to Stephen Hess,¹³⁴ who has analyzed the relationship between TV and members of the US Congress.¹³⁵ But when they see television, or public pressure brings it to their attention, then it is these lawmaker politicians and journalists who have significant impact on the policy makers.

Without exception, the ministers and foreign policy officials who played down the impact of real-time television images on themselves pointed to this numerically tiny but politically powerful elite as the group which does influence foreign policy making based on what it sees on television. Marlin Fitzwater, White House Press Secretary to President Bush confirmed that "the pressure of television on decision making by the President is always indirect".¹³⁶

The views of this influential elite play back to the policy makers through both newspaper opinion columns and broadcast interviews with ranking politicians responding to what they have seen on television. Having read the daily newspaper cuttings, President Clinton "pays real attention to the op-eds to see what people are saying", the president's special advisor George Stephanopoulos confirmed.¹³⁷

Thus the power of columnists like William Safire, Anthony Lewis, Mary McGrory, David Broder, Jim Hoagland and George Will in the US, or Simon Jenkins, Andrew Marr, Edward Mortimer and others in the UK, is great. "Events take on a momentum of their own according to how they are picked up by the newspapers, especially the Op-eds," Charles Kupchan confirmed after his time at the National Security Council.¹³⁸

The true impact of real-time television on forcing policy makers is therefore not because a minister or official sees for himself graphic real-time television coverage and says: "My God, we must stop this!" The impact is indirect and via the newspaper cuttings and/or the political process. "Editorial policies of major newspapers have consequences among the elites and the policy makers," confirmed Mark Gearan, White House Communications Director.¹³⁹

"There is no primary pressure from TV images," Marshall Harris confirmed as a result of his State Department experience. "It depends on journalistic pick up and the grapevine of who is watching it".¹⁴⁰ One European analyst added that "since they [the Clinton Administration] did not have a policy [on Bosnia] they worried more about the New York Times!". In Canada, ministers have also felt beholden to pressure from Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and constituents.¹⁴¹

It is important to note, however, that the dominant role of newspapers over television at critical moments in government foreign policy making is not new. On 9 May 1969 Marvin Kalb of CBS and William Beecher of the New York Times together broke the news that on the orders of President Nixon the US Air Force had begun a secret bombing campaign of Vietcong supply lines through Cambodia. The reports enraged Nixon. By his own admission, Kalb's own TV and radio reports had far less political impact than Beecher's front page revelations in The New York Times.¹⁴²

In Britain, unlike in the US, ministers and officials take more note of breakfast radio than overall TV coverage. They also spend time reading and analyzing summaries of newspaper coverage because they can digest quickly a daily government cuttings service instead of watching a TV news broadcast in real time. "Papers have more clout than TV," said one former British official¹⁴³. "There are no summaries of broadcast news, so there has to be a fuss in the papers first".

Finally there is the role of public opinion.

If politicians are to be believed, public opinion plays a more defining role than TV. Ministers claim they rely more on their instinctive sense of the likely public and political reaction to the TV images than the impact of the images both on themselves and close officials. If the ministerial explanation is accepted, then TV images drive public opinion just as they drive the newspaper columnists. In turn, public opinion (or lack of) drives (or neutralizes) policy decisions.

But in the United States, on foreign policy the Clinton administration appears to have only a passing anxiety for public opinion, unless it swings dramatically against the government, which rarely happens on foreign issues. "We [the White House] do not poll on foreign policy as a matter of policy -- principle," according to George Stephanopoulos.¹⁴⁴

There is, however, one clear example of how the force of public opinion did break a government's determination that TV images should not sway policy -- particularly on a military mission where casualties have to be expected as inevitable.

In October 1993, the macabre images of the naked body of one dead US Special Forces crewman being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, plus video of the battered face and faltering words of Chief Warrant Officer Michael Durant¹⁴⁵ led to thousands of phone calls to Capitol Hill demanding that America withdraw its troops from Somalia. This in turn led to intense Congressional pressure on President Clinton to announce a withdrawal, which reluctantly he did shortly afterwards.¹⁴⁶

Even though the CNN factor "worked in spades", administration sources have confirmed to this author that it was political pressure from Congress, more than the President's personal response to the pictures, which forced a withdrawal decision. "If that event had happened and it was not on TV, it would have been far less dramatic for policy -- [although] it still might have had an effect," said Alternate US Representative to the UN, Rick Inderfurth.¹⁴⁷

National Security Adviser Anthony Lake has confirmed that the TV pictures forced a decision which was already being contemplated on the future of US troops in Somalia. "In all candor we could have done that much earlier," he admitted.¹⁴⁸ But having made such an analysis, six months later Mr Lake confirmed in private conversations that he himself had never seen the video of either the dead US Ranger or Durant. He only saw the still pictures in newspapers.

In general, however, the frequent government citations of "public opinion" can be considered as political froth for most foreign policy issues. Governments pay lip service to the vagaries of public views which during crises like Bosnia they know are usually ill-informed, inexpert, uncritical and therefore unreliable.¹⁴⁹ Administrations invoke public opinion when it suits them, and they know full well the limits. "Public opinion is really a narrow band. [Only] a small section is influenced", said Barbara McDougall after her time as Canadian External Affairs Minister.¹⁵⁰ For example, a week after the Sarajevo mortar attack on 5 February 1994, Madeleine Albright, US ambassador to the United Nations, explained an apparent hardening of US policy by saying that "pictures on television have helped to educate the American people about the horrors of people dying . . . the polls are showing increasing public support".¹⁵¹

Ambassador Albright's statement appears to have been somewhat disingenuous, however. Within the administration there was no particular interest in what opinion polls were saying on Bosnia. Rather, the citing of opinion polls was a political device designed to give political justification to President Clinton's decision to "put some steel" into US policy on Bosnia and "appear strong" in the eyes of the American people.¹⁵² "Policies in the garbage can were dusted off" by the Clinton administration "and rushed forward" in the hope of removing Bosnia from the headlines, said Philip Zelikow.¹⁵³

Indeed a Gallup poll following the Sarajevo market massacre showed only a tiny margin of 48% to 43% in favor of air strikes, but with conditions attached.¹⁵⁴ It was hardly the kind of resounding political justification for modifying the policy rhetoric on Bosnia which Ambassador Albright had implied.

"We can't always take the spoken claims about public support as real," said Marlin Fitzwater. "Albright claimed public support was changing when it was not. She was invoking a public view when it was not there. There was no avalanche of letters to Congress. There was no strong public opinion."¹⁵⁵

Similarly, extended public polling during the whole Bosnia crisis signalled how little the TV coverage of specific outrages had changed the profile of public opinion. As one senior Red Cross official told this author: "On one side there are pictures on television, but on the other hand people are bored by it. They are not motivated."

In other words, it can be argued that any government's citing of opinion poll pressure as the reason for an apparent policy change has often been bogus.

"Polling information is virtually completely useless," in Philip Zelikow's government experience. "Foreign Policy is not dictated by polls, except when there is a traumatic event. Public opinion may not care about Bosnia. The government worries more about the future of policy and the way government is seen to respond".¹⁵⁶

Edward Bickham, former Special Adviser to the British Foreign Secretary, has detailed how the British government weighed the options. He said that on Bosnia, television images created an instant sense of revulsion and an urge for 'something to be done'. But on the basis of regular opinion polls and the light post bags relating to the former Yugoslavia, ministers decided that public pressure was not really significant. "Although surveys show at times over half the British public would have supported armed involvement in the Bosnian conflict, the strange thing is how shallow the demand for such action proved to be".¹⁵⁷

Yet senior ministers have remained vigilant and fearful of the effect of television images on public opinion. As one regular observer of European Union meetings on Bosnia remarked about the behavior of Foreign Ministers: "They were afraid of the public. The main issue in policy making is the press and public opinion. They always asked themselves 'what am I going to say?'"¹⁵⁸

Yet statements after such meetings tended to be palliatives. Hence the bitterness and frustration felt by many journalists over the West's minimalist policy responses to the Bosnia bloodletting. Instead of more proactive policies of intervention or pre-emption there was lowest-common-denominator policy making dictated by the need to achieve consensus in the United Nations, NATO, the European Union, etc. It is an explanation, but no consolation to journalists who have taken risks to witness a war like Bosnia.

"This will be recorded as the first genocide in history where journalists were reporting it as it was actually happening, and governments didn't stop it," claimed the Pulitzer prize-winning correspondent Roy Gutman. "It's outrageous and hypocritical".¹⁵⁹ Ultimately, journalistic voices of anger on Bosnia did not weigh as heavily on government thinking as many have assumed. Neither did public opinion. By and large the aim of governments was to maintain within limits a well-defined, low-risk, low-cost policy line.

**"THE LAST THING WE WANT IS PICTURES FROM GORAZDE --
WE CAN ONLY JUST COPE WITH SARAJEVO"**

So far this paper has gone a long way towards questioning the conventional belief in a powerful, automatic direct relationship between television news images and foreign policy. There are, however, important examples where television has had a significant impact and distorted policy making.

The quotation above from a senior British official in the spring of 1992 illustrates both the impact and the resentment which real-time television coverage can create.

The official had just been told that a BBC TV team had entered the town of Gorazde three months into the siege by Bosnian Serb forces. Pictures to be aired that night would portray a harrowing picture of starvation, desperation and death. Instantly they would widen the perception of the Bosnia conflict beyond the hills around Sarajevo into an area of terror and conflict so far little seen by a television or newspaper correspondent. Western governments would no longer be able to claim ignorance about ethnic horrors being perpetrated in vast areas of Bosnia which were unmonitored by the UN and European Community Monitor Missions (ECMM).

The immediate impact of such images was to draw up policies for increased humanitarian aid which many argue became palliatives for more pro-active diplomatic and military action designed to end the war. The role of TV pictures was critical.

Sylvana Foa, who since 1992 has revolutionized the public profile of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees confirmed that "television is our lifeline to the politicians who want nothing to do with us or hope that the problem will go away from public consciousness".¹⁶⁰ Or as Ms.Foa put it when asked about the importance of television coverage to the sustaining of UNHCR operations in Bosnia: "Without you, we have no weapon at all".¹⁶¹

The exasperated words from the British official thus go a long way to highlighting one important role of television in educating and informing western governments during first year of war in the former Yugoslavia.¹⁶² "We drew the map as we went," one UN commander confided.¹⁶³ From 1991 until the autumn of 1992 western intelligence gathering was negligible.¹⁶⁴ "We were grasping for ways to fill the void and television filled that," said one senior military officer. "Reporters have filled in gaps."¹⁶⁵

In 1992 General Lewis Mackenzie, the Canadian commander of 1200 UNPROFOR troops could barely discover what was happening in and around his base in Sarajevo, let alone the rest of Bosnia Herzegovina.¹⁶⁶ He had no international phone system or satellite dish and listened to the BBC World Service in the hope of discovering what was happening elsewhere in his "patch".¹⁶⁷

The limited UN operation had poor communications which were non secure and could be monitored by the warring factions.¹⁶⁸ UN civilian officials and military officers had to book phone calls through the local operator to contact their headquarters operation in Sarajevo, Zagreb or New York¹⁶⁹.

One senior UN officer described General Morillon's efforts to contact the Bosnian Serb military headquarters from the besieged Moslem town of Srebrenica. "Morillon was broadcasting in French on a Canadian radio network to a French Canadian in Visoko, who transmitted it in English on a Motorola [handset] to Kiseljak [UN headquarters]. Kiseljak then re-transmitted it to [UN] Sector Sarajevo, where it was picked up by a Ukrainian who passed it to a Frenchman, who then spoke to the Chief of Staff [British]".¹⁷⁰ Eventually the message reached the Bosnian Serbs.

Television, with its random "searchlight", was thus a primary if erratic source of raw information¹⁷¹, reinforced by equally brave newspaper reporting. It provided detailed information on specific incidents where cameras were present, but was "no good on the general picture". In the second half of 1992 intelligence resources were eventually switched "very quickly" to cover Bosnia.¹⁷² By 1993 the level of UN intelligence was far higher, though still well short of the optimum, despite the hundreds of NATO sorties flown each month in the No-Fly Zone and the UN forces on the ground.¹⁷³

The implications for the partiality and safety of journalists were immense. Unwittingly TV cameras and reporters had become collectors of intelligence for UN operations. (It should be noted that in order to preserve its image of neutrality, the UN insists on the term 'military information' instead of intelligence).¹⁷⁴

Even in late Spring of 1993, almost six months after the deployment of the first British UNPROFOR battalion, a British intelligence briefing on Bosnia in London was punctuated with phrases like: "based on what we saw on television last night, we have concluded that . . ." and "we have a lot of your reporting to tell us about that"¹⁷⁵. The phrase was probably a half-truth. Yet it did signal the limited ability of UN forces, reconnaissance patrols, overflights and AWACS missions to chart with full precision the swirl of the ethnic conflict around them in the early months of the UNPROFOR mission.¹⁷⁶

All sides benefited and used the 'tip-sheet' nature of real-time television.

The UNPROFOR Chief of Staff Brigadier Vere Hayes first heard from CNN that he would be monitoring a Bosnian Serb withdrawal from Mount Igman in August 1993. After two hours he had received no confirmation so he phoned Geneva to see if the CNN report was correct. Even in early 1994 a senior British source was confirming: "TV is often well ahead of the military. I learn from television".¹⁷⁷

UN negotiators in Geneva have described how one or other of the warring parties would see a television report of, say, an attack. Without checking the details a Bosnian, Croat or Serb official then rushed into the room, issued a *demarche* and sometimes threatened to abandon the talks with words like "it is no longer possible for me to stay at the negotiations while my people are being killed".¹⁷⁸

Often TV coverage was used as a convenient excuse to stall or break off talks, without having to take the blame. "It was an irritation because it distracted our attention and eyes from the main focus, and we became sidetracked into something that mattered less," said one member of the UN negotiating team.¹⁷⁹

Similarly a senior US diplomat based in Belgrade explained how staff had to "modify" their reporting because they knew the State Department in Washington had seen pictures via CNN. "We often got questions from the seventh floor [from the most senior officials at State]. Is it true what CNN are reporting? Is it really like we are seeing on CNN?"¹⁸⁰

That goes some way to explaining why government insiders talk of the "profound" effect of television while also rejecting its power to influence policy making.

Senior UN military officers in Bosnia complained that governments like Britain received information first via often emotive TV news packages instead of via more considered military reports sometime later. "It is very difficult to compete with electronic news gathering," said Lt.Colonel Alastair Duncan, commander of the Prince of Wales section of the British UNPROFOR battalion in Bosnia.¹⁸¹ He highlighted the "pressure of commanding officers" because of the intense scrutiny by television seen in London. "TV puts additional pressures on the hard-pressed people on the ground," said one senior Whitehall-based official.¹⁸²

Another senior UN military officer in Bosnia reinforced the point. "The power of news and Ceefax [text news] was reaching ministers before we could get a factual, coordinated story transmitted from HQ. We got urgent cables from London to ask what so and so was doing. The ability of TV to transmit selective evidence creates problems for ministers. . . Questions would always be coming to us. If TV crews had not been in places then we would not get these questions."¹⁸³

In London, officials accept that television slanted their impressions of Bosnia. "TV skewed the way London saw things," one senior British-based officer confirmed. "It distorted the view of the theater [of operations], even with military reporting. The random agenda of the media itself created priorities in the minds of officials and ministers".¹⁸⁴

At times dramatic TV news footage has therefore had a critical impact on how the politicians -- many of whom did not fully understand the intricacies of a war like Bosnia -- viewed the conflict. "In the summer [of 1993] there was wobble [political doubt] in the House of Commons. But the reality was that Colonel Duncan had things very much under control, and things were not as bad as portrayed", said one senior officer.¹⁸⁵ He added that UNPROFOR had reported that "we are very relaxed", but it was "very difficult" to convince headquarters in Britain.

As another officer expressed it: "It annoyed me intensely on one occasion. We had said that all was going well, then someone [in London] saw something on the news saying all was not well. I was then questioned very closely. They believed TV but not me. They said: 'are you sure you have the right idea?'"¹⁸⁶

For the United States, of course, this pressure was not an issue as the US had no troops in Bosnia or Croatia.

TELEVISION COVERAGE OF WAR – RANDOM, FICKLE AND INCOMPLETE

The word 'fickle' describes not only the relationship between real-time television coverage and the foreign policy makers but also the way television has reported war in the former Yugoslavia.

Television reporting and journalism in general will always be a dreadfully imperfect way to portray or understand any conflict. Bosnia proves the point. That war has provided prime examples both of the impact of television and the massive difficulties in uncovering the extent of what really took place.

Some incidents have been etched indelibly on memories: the bread queue massacre in Sarajevo in May 1992¹⁸⁷; the food market massacre in August 1992¹⁸⁸; revelations of the Bosnian Serb detention camps in August 1992¹⁸⁹; the Croat massacre of Muslims in the central Bosnian village of Ahmici in April 1993¹⁹⁰; the water queue massacre in July 1993¹⁹¹; the mortaring of the Sarajevo market in February 1994¹⁹². The outside world knew about these horrors because a television camera arrived shortly afterwards to witness the aftermath, and a satellite dish was conveniently nearby to transmit the video almost instantly.

But no list will ever reflect accurately the scale of carnage in Bosnia and what TV in particular never saw. "The very worst is always out of sight," wrote Ed Vulliamy of The Guardian. "The horrors we have seen are only the tip of the iceberg"¹⁹³. If it could ever be collated, the true list of horrors in Bosnia would be endless, as highlighted by the grim tally of 9,900 people killed in Sarajevo alone during the 22 months to February 1994¹⁹⁴.

Television also failed to portray accurately the reality of the peace negotiations. "Many stories were so wide of what was happening," said EU peace negotiator Lord Owen. For example: "The Moslems denied at the microphone [in the United Nations building in Geneva] that they were in negotiations over Sarajevo, but they had been in negotiations for months".¹⁹⁵

In many respects television reporting and journalism excelled in Bosnia, especially for risk taking, revelations and the vivid first hand portrayal of the horrors human beings were inflicting on each other.¹⁹⁶ One UN official wrote: "The appearance of a camera crew has on several occasions halted, or at least postponed, atrocities which the perpetrators would prefer to be conducted in private. More than one British commander on the ground has remarked that the press is the only truly effective weapon".¹⁹⁷

But in many crucial respects the international press have been humbled by their inability to represent even a modest percentage of the ghastliness taking place. After the mortaring of the Sarajevo market on 5 February, the editor of the city's remarkable newspaper *Oslobodenje* asked: "Why is there all this fuss in west about one incident?" After all, death by mortar was a daily event throughout Bosnia.¹⁹⁸

Bloody events in Bosnia and elsewhere had a terrifying, unpredictable momentum of their own. Television put some incidents on the political map, but far from all.¹⁹⁹ "What appears on television is true and immediate and influences opinion and policy. What fails to appear effectively never happens," wrote the pseudonymous UN official 'Kenneth Roberts'.²⁰⁰ The chances of comprehensive journalistic coverage diminished sharply as the war progressed and the dangers for journalists intensified.

The mortaring of Sarajevo market could be covered by crews and journalists billeted less than a mile away.²⁰¹ A similar horror in another part of Bosnia would only receive coverage if there happened to be a camera in the vicinity.²⁰²

Why the international focus on the Serb siege of Sarajevo, but very little on the "unmitigated horror"²⁰³ of the virtually unreported Croat siege of the western Bosnian city of Mostar?²⁰⁴ "To talk of Croats is muddling the issue," one senior British official confirmed. "It is only the Serbs for the United States"²⁰⁵

Until UN officials entered Mostar in March 1994, the city's plight was even more ghastly than the Serb stranglehold on Sarajevo.²⁰⁶ There was exceptional and occasional TV reporting by a handful of brave correspondents like the BBC's Jeremy Bowen.²⁰⁷ Others tried but were killed -- like three members of an Italian TV crew who tried to reach Mostar in February 1994, and two more -- a photographer and interpreter -- killed in May two months after the Croat/Moslem political agreement was signed in March.

But when they emerged, television reports did occasionally create great impact on the ground.

On 15 November 1993 senior UN officers and civilian staff were sitting in the mess at UNPROFOR's Bosnia HQ in Kiseljak watching a tape of Bowen's extended Mostar report. Everyone was moved by what the video showed them.

The UN Chief of Staff, Brigadier Angus Ramsay, turned to Larry Stachewicz, a senior UN Field Service Officer. "What we have seen in Mostar is pitiful and horrifying," said the Brigadier. "Could we review the film and see what can be done about Mostar?"²⁰⁸ Stachewicz says the BBC tape stirred consciences in a way no order from the UN could have done. "It said we have to get into Mostar. How can we do it?"

Eight days after viewing the BBC report Stachewicz led a small UN team into Mostar "at great risk". The Croat stranglehold on the city was so dangerous that the Spanish UN battalion enjoyed no control and had taken high casualties. Yet somehow, a month later, Ramsay, Stachewicz and their teams moved into Mostar with a mobile field hospital donated by South Africa. It was burned down not long after, but those involved in getting it there say that Bowen's TV pictures played a vital part in providing the motivation.²⁰⁹

That hospital success was a rare, if brief success in a prolonged period of ghastliness relating to Mostar. "TV spurred us to make a policy, but we could not implement it," said Stachewicz.²¹⁰ "TV [coverage of the city] would have changed the whole balance on Mostar. It would have given us [the United Nations] strong leverage".

But because of the logistics nightmare, coverage of Mostar was minimal and the city's predicament never grabbed world attention like Sarajevo. Conditions were too dangerous for TV crews to work. Broadcasters would not risk deploying their satellite dishes. Consequently there was never the same drip feed of emotive real-time siege stories to catch international sympathy, as happened with Sarajevo. One senior UN officer confirmed the ignorance about Mostar. "No one knows what is going on in Mostar. There is a very low level of information".²¹¹ And Larry Stachewicz confirms why not highlighting Mostar's plight like Sarajevo's was such a journalistic failing -- albeit understandable. "The Croats have been by far the worst aggressors in this conflict," he said.

Mostar also showed how for every horror witnessed by a journalist there could be ten, a hundred or perhaps even a thousand more.²¹² For example the Guardian journalist Ed Vulliamy has described how he drove down a road where shortly afterwards some 250 Muslims were executed.²¹³ Larry Stachewicz described how in March 1994 he drove through a village near Vares where he said he saw some five hundred Muslim men, women and children hanging.²¹⁴ Neither incident -- like an unknown number in Bosnia -- was witnessed by a TV camera. Therefore neither created any public revulsion or international political outrage.

Aid workers regularly witnessed horrors, but routinely they did not carry cameras. Had they done so, the worldwide distribution of any horrific pictures would have instantly compromised their delicate neutrality. Imagine the international fury if by chance cameras had recorded the kind of incidents which UN or Red Cross workers saw.

In its own imperfect, random way, TV's limited coverage exposed both its own fallibility and the fallibility of diplomatic crisis management and policy planning. As one British official described the process: "Policy planning has always been a suspect science. Television's impact on policy has always meant that it [policy planning] has been for the birds".²¹⁵ It also complicated the work of the peace negotiators. "[The] random TV image may not be representative of the situation on the ground, but it has a weight of its own to be used by the protagonists" said one staff member.²¹⁶

Yet for all the humanitarian operations, television coverage remained their most vital ally. As Sylvana Foa of the UNHCR put it: "Without TV coverage we are nothing. Our operations and their impact would die without TV".²¹⁷

HOW TV IMAGES DID CHANGE FOREIGN POLICY : SOME EXAMPLES

Despite the overall resistance of governments to real-time television images, several case studies show how on a limited number of critical occasions such pictures did force changes in policy during moments of policy weakness.

FEBRUARY 1991 :

The Gulf War Refugees Saved by Television

The new impact of TV images on foreign policy was first identified after the Gulf War in February 1991.²¹⁸ Tens of thousands of Kurds sought refuge from Iraqi forces in the freezing mountains of south-east Turkey. In a unique departure from its normal harsh policy banning journalists from entering such regions, the Turkish government allowed TV cameras into the area, along with their portable satellite dishes. Harrowing live TV images of the squalor, dying babies and malnourished Kurds had a profound impact on western policy making.

Electronic images had presented viewers with not only live SCUD missile attacks on Tel Aviv or Dhahran, or the victorious allied advance into Kuwait. Now there was also the horror and squalor of the war's tragic consequences. After all the vigorous controls during the Gulf war, television's new, highly-mobile satellite technology had overcome the power of politicians and legislators to control it.²¹⁹

The images personally moved the British Prime Minister John Major "as he was putting on his socks in his flat" one Sunday morning ²²⁰. In a vivid example of 'belt and braces' policy making he defied diplomatic advice. He made policy "on the back of an envelope" flying to the EC summit in Luxembourg.²²¹ Within days Mr Major persuaded first his EC partners and then President Bush to create 'humanitarian enclaves' in Iraq, which quickly became 'safe havens' protected by UN air and ground forces under 'Operation Provide Comfort'. President Bush said at the time: "No one can see the pictures . . . and not be deeply moved".²²²

It can be argued that the power of TV images during the Kurdish crisis is confirmed by the west's simultaneous reluctance to take action to protect the Shias in southern Iraq. Access to the southern marshes by TV reporters and crews was impossible.²²³ As a result there were no TV images and there was no pressure for western action²²⁴.

Some diplomats, however, say that the Shia crisis developed more slowly. They say they did have reliable information on what Iraqi forces were doing to the Shias. However, even if there had been powerful television images, it is unlikely another 'Safe Haven' operation could have been organized. There were insurmountable military and political problems -- not least the unwillingness of Gulf States to host the kind of military operation Turkey was willing to support for the Kurds.

Nevertheless, Shia resentment remained long after the end of the Gulf War.²²⁵ More than two years after Kuwait was liberated, organizations like Amnesty International who monitor the Shias and the continuing abuse of human rights declared bitterly: "You've probably never heard of the Marsh Arabs before. You probably never will again".²²⁶

AUGUST 1992 :

The horrors of the Bosnian prison camps revealed

"The sunken eyes stare with a mixture of bewilderment and beseeching inquiry from behind strands of barbed wire"²²⁷

The case of what some labelled the Bosnian "concentration camps" illustrates the great power of television to catapult an issue onto the diplomatic agenda. Above a full front-page color picture the London Daily Mail labelled the first television pictures shot by ITN as "The Proof".²²⁸

The horrors of the Bosnian Serb prisoner camps are now well known. The TV images will not easily be forgotten. "Haunting images of emaciated prisoners tore at our consciences," was how twenty months later President Clinton's National Security Adviser Anthony Lake chose to describe his memory of the TV pictures.²²⁹

Roy Gutman won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting which led to his revelations in Newsday on 2 August 1992.²³⁰ Four days later ITN broadcast television images of emaciated figures behind barbed wire in Omarska and Trnopolje camps. They confirmed Roy Gutman's report and left the profound, unforgettable impression of Dachau or Auschwitz revisited. They TV pictures highlighted not only a policy vacuum, but government suppression of information.

For their reporting ITN's correspondents, Ian Williams and Penny Marshall, received several awards, including 'Best News and Actuality Coverage' from BAFTA. Ed Vulliamy of The Guardian, who accompanied them the ITN team, was named as Granada TV's 'Foreign Correspondent of the Year, 1992'.²³¹ Vulliamy believes his newspaper story would never have made the same impact had it not been reinforced by the simultaneous transmission of the vivid and emotive ITN pictures.²³²

Within minutes of transmission, there was outrage in Europe and America. Government ministers and Congressmen condemned such barbaric treatment in what some willingly labelled "concentration camps".

In Britain the Overseas Aid Minister Baroness Chalker appeared visibly shaken as she watched the film live in the Channel Four News studio. She pledged that Britain would do all it could to end "the appalling atrocities". Soon afterwards President Bush called a press conference and labelled the scenes a "humanitarian nightmare". He pledged that America "will not rest until the international community has gained access to all detention camps". Bush demanded action by the United Nations to restore human rights in Bosnia and guarantee the passage of humanitarian aid.

The impression given by governments was one of great shock and surprise at what Gutman's article had revealed and ITN's TV images confirmed. The following day, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said: "The abuses which have been brought to light are intolerable and must be stopped"²³³.

But had the abuses in the camps really been "brought to light"? Or had they been known about by governments for some time? Was such surprise credible?

There is clear evidence that the UN, the US government and to a lesser extent the International Red Cross had known for more than two months. They had in their possession significant but incomplete detail of the inhuman treatment in the detention camps. Gutman and ITN's pictures smoked out a truth which many leading western governments (but maybe not all) already knew about. It was, though, information on which they had neither felt compelled nor willing to take political action. Indeed they actively resisted any behind-the-scenes pressure for action.

According to John Fox, who was then East European specialist in the US State Department's policy planning staff: "The US government had in its possession credible and verified reports of the existence of the camps -- Serbian-run camps -- in Bosnia and elsewhere as of June, certainly July 1992, well ahead of the media revelations".²³⁴

According to middle-ranking officials there was a heated internal debate in the State Department with those at the highest level who had political responsibility. "You can't have concentration camps in this day and age and not have a public outcry," said George Kenney, a former official on the Yugoslav desk. "We had to say what we thought. Instead the State Department's position was: 'Let's pretend it isn't happening. Let's -- let's try to push it out of our consciousness!'"²³⁵

On 24 June 1992, a front report from Dan Stets of the Philadelphia Inquirer in Sarajevo, had already revealed prima facie evidence that Bosnian Moslems were being held in "concentration camps".²³⁶ The claims and details came from Zlatko Hurtic, a Bosnian lawyer who had 120 statements from witnesses and represented a coalition of human rights groups called "Save Humanity". A procession of journalists visited Hurtic and received the same information but the details never created any political or diplomatic resonance. There was no impact internationally, and no follow up. A similar Bosnian document prepared on 9 May was also passed to the UN and the US government. It detailed mass executions in Breko and alleged "concentration camps" in the Bosnian Krajina.²³⁷

Stets had seen the list, but he could not verify personally Hurtic's claim that "40,000 have been murdered along the Drina River and that another 70,000 are still in concentration camps". Yet documentation prepared by "Save Humanity" and seen by Stets was detailed enough to confirm at least the existence of camps and what the Inquirer was willing to headline as "a systematic extermination campaign". Hurtic appealed for international human rights organizations to investigate further, but to little effect.

Roy Gutman's investigations had begun in Banja Luka in early July when he discovered that Moslems were being removed from their home towns on railway wagons. On 14 July he visited Manjaca 'prisoner-of-war camp' where a German photographer travelling with him was able to snap three sneak still pictures of prisoners with shaven heads.²³⁸ Gutman's revelation of torture and appalling conditions was printed

on 19 July. He recorded the fact that officials from the International Red Cross (ICRC) were present during his visit.

On 29 July, beneath the same picture of cowed Moslem prisoners with shaven heads, Maggie O'Kane's splash front page report in The Guardian revealed further details of the "concentration camps" and executions in Trnopolje, Omarska and Bratunac.²³⁹ O'Kane's report stirred ITN's interest in establishing the precise nature of the camps. The Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic happened to be in London at the time. That day he denied the existence of the camps. At the same time it was this author who decided to challenge Karadzic face-to-face and demand that ITN have access to the camps to check the allegations. After a heated exchange Karadzic agreed.

By late July Roy Gutman had met a handful of eye-witnesses to the "routine daily slaughter" in Omarska which Newsday would soon headline as "Death Camps".²⁴⁰ He and his foreign editor tried to alert the US Foreign Policy establishment, while wondering why US intelligence and/or the UN had not alerted the world. "I began to develop a theory," Gutman wrote, "that the Western governments had written off Bosnia and had not bothered to tell the public. Media reports such as mine represented so much inconvenience".²⁴¹

Eighteen months later Gutman said: "From the moment I heard about Omarska I did everything I could to ring the alarm bell. I called the White House. I called the House Foreign Affairs Committee -- seven or eight or maybe ten different efforts to alert the US government to the fact that there was possibly a death camp; that they should look into it and that they should come up with the truth of it. And nothing happened. Absolutely nothing happened."²⁴²

On 3 August, the day after Gutman's first article (and three days before ITN's reports), the State department spokesman Richard Boucher confirmed that "Serbian forces are maintaining what they call detention centers for Croatians and Moslems, and we do have our own reports similar to the reports that you have seen in the press".

On 4 August, however, Assistant Secretary of State Tom Niles tried to roll back on Boucher's statement. "We don't have, thus far, substantiated information that would confirm the existence of these camps," Niles told an incredulous congressional committee.

Despite a categorical denial later by the then acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, John Fox from the policy planning staff claims the seventh floor [the highest political level at the State Department] gave instructions "deliberately not to tell the truth" about the camps.²⁴³

Until, that is, the ITN pictures on 6 August confirmed their existence, beyond any doubt.

That evening the British Foreign Office played down the significance of the camp revelations. A spokesman responded that "reports of death camps are exaggerated" and that there was "no systematic execution of prisoners by the Serbs". But he accepted that it was "not a pretty picture".²⁴⁴

Simultaneously in New York, Albert Peters, spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, told a heated press briefing that one month earlier on 3 July the UNHCR had circulated to the ICRC, UNPROFOR and the EC Monitoring Missions a memorandum. It contained "information on alleged

abuses collected by UNHCR field officers from various credible sources" relating to four camps.²⁴⁵ Hurtic was one of the sources.

Peters said the UN believed the ICRC had used the document as a basis for interviewing 4,000 people since 7 July, but access to many areas had been denied. In addition, on 27 July the UNHCR had circulated to "more than 4,300 journalists, diplomats and humanitarian organizations around the world"²⁴⁶ a document containing details "of one of the worst alleged prison camps" -- Omarska.

To this day the Red Cross say they were never able to undertake the interviews as the UNHCR claimed. Key officials in the British Foreign Office deny they ever received, heard of or saw the UNHCR memorandum.²⁴⁷

On hearing of the revelations about Omarska and Trnopolje camps and the UNHCR claim to have circulated a document, one key British official "called back to the UN to find out where their [the British government's] copy was".²⁴⁸ The official added: "Only after the TV [coverage] did we act. We did not know the UN had already reported what was happening in these camps".

On Friday 7 August, after transmission of ITN's reports and the appearance of newspaper front pages filled with the now unforgettable picture of an emaciated prisoner, the British Foreign Secretary postponed his departure for holiday in Italy to chair an emergency meeting of some fifteen officials. "There was a perceived need to respond, but not a crusading zeal," said one senior official who attended.²⁴⁹ He confirmed that Mr Hurd's private office "did not know what was going on". Up to that point they had received "no reports from any [humanitarian] agency". Such was the political pressure to take action that UN department of the Foreign Office urgently employed extra staff to handle the new workload of records, registration, communications and logistics.

As for the International Committee of the Red Cross, they did not know about the camps. "I can be very clear about this," Thierry Germond, ICRC Delegate General for Europe confirmed. "Probably the UN had some kind of allegations. We had never been approached on it by the UNHCR".²⁵⁰

In any case, the ICRC had been in no position to carry out the interviews and investigation. In mid-May 1992 the chief ICRC delegate in Sarajevo had been murdered. Subsequently all ICRC staff in Bosnia were withdrawn pending a political agreement from all three warring factions to allow them to work safely.

Therefore, until the end of June there were no ICRC staff in Bosnia to follow up whatever information the UN and/or US government might have passed to their headquarters in Geneva. The ICRC confirms that like Roy Gutman it heard rumors of large numbers of people detained in Omarska, but they "did not have a full picture".

And the UNHCR memorandum? "If such a document existed and was circulated to governments, I never knew about it," said Monsieur Germond. "I would find it very strange that governments would have the information and not call us about it."

By early August what Monsieur Germond calls the "Sherlock Holmes" efforts by the ICRC, ITN and Roy Gutman to discover the accuracy of the rumors were converging independently of each other. Whether they knew beforehand or not, governments were galvanized immediately by the TV images.

"Governments have been compelled through those pictures to put the issue of prisoners at the top of the agenda, at least for several weeks," Monsieur Germond confirmed. "Without them [the TV images], the governments would not have been prepared to put this at the top of the agenda, even if it is not possible to establish the extent of the influence."

The ICRC further believes that without the international pressure created by the TV pictures, the "big shock" of so many prisoners would never have been discovered. The camps became a central issue at the EC/UN Yugoslav Conference in London in late August. The Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic made commitments to close them down, and Omarska camp was quickly shut, but not without further indiscriminate executions of detainees.²⁵¹

Having created an obscene showcase closure at Trnopolje camp for TV cameras,²⁵² Karadzic then prevaricated. He harnessed the camp issue as a political bargaining chip at the same time as more camps were found to exist in towns and villages across Bosnia.²⁵³

Eventually most camps were emptied, albeit slowly. Over subsequent months many prisoners who survived were moved to refugee camps outside Bosnia under ICRC supervision. For that reason the ICRC believes that instead of contributing to the freedom of the camp prisoners, the ITN/Newsday revelations inadvertently helped the Bosnian Serbs in their aim of ethnic cleansing. "We got people out of hell," one official told this author, "but without the international pressure to get people out we could have kept open the possibility of keeping them [the Bosnian Moslems] in the area".

Thus, as with the Srebrenica 'Safe Area' concept (see later in the paper), television coverage forced policy decisions which were deemed a correct, understandable response at the time. Yet they also helped contribute to the war aims of the main guilty party -- the Bosnian Serbs.

Ultimately, whether there was a conspiracy at either international or nation levels to suppress emerging information on the camps remains open to debate.

In the US there is clear evidence that the horrors of the camps were known to the Bush administration but suppressed at some level to avoid creating a political issue which might demand a more assertive US response. Deputy Secretary of State at the time, Lawrence Eagleburger, denies emphatically that there was any cover up. He called such claims "baloney".²⁵⁴

Meanwhile there does not appear to have been a cover-up in Europe, although why the US knew and other governments in the anti-Serb alliance like Britain and France were not informed remains a strange, unanswered question.

For his part Roy Gutman believes the US failure to follow-up what it knew of the camps in June and July 1992 was a significant lost opportunity to throw the Serb aggressors off balance.²⁵⁵

As for the distribution of the UNHCR memorandum, the claims and counter claims will probably never be resolved. For the moment the failure to know or act can probably be explained by a mix of bureaucratic bungling, incompetence, overstretch in undermanned staffs, and failures in both inter-institutional and inter-governmental communications when outsiders would expect much better.

APRIL 1993 :
Srebrenica : the 'Safe Area' Created from Nothing

In April 1993, television images were instrumental in saving the mainly Bosnian Moslem town of Srebrenica from Bosnian Serb forces. No television camera was inside Gorazde one year later when the threat was identical.

It was TV images filmed by a freelance reporter/cameraman²⁵⁶, plus the defiance of the UN commander General Morillon, which helped to save the town of Srebrenica from being overrun and the swollen Moslem refugee population from being slaughtered.²⁵⁷ Inside the United Nations and the broader international community the TV images created political chaos and diplomatic resentment. They forced the creation of Safe Areas in defiance of the wishes of the main western powers.

In the Spring of 1993 Bosnian Serb forces were pursuing relentlessly their year-long policy of ethnic cleansing in eastern Bosnia. By mid-March much of the area had already fallen. Srebrenica, Gorazde and Zepa were the last significant obstacles to the Serb takeover of the area, and Bosnian forces were holding out.²⁵⁸

Tens of thousands of Bosnian Moslems had sought refuge in Srebrenica, which remained under Serb artillery attack. There was virtually no food. The conditions were appalling. For months the UN had tried to take food convoys into the town, but with little success. The intolerable conditions were known to humanitarian agencies. But in the face of Serb obstruction of all aid convoys the UN found themselves powerless to help.

General Morillon made a "Damascene conversion"²⁵⁹ and decided to make a stand over Srebrenica "by force of personality and bravery"²⁶⁰. In Morillon's own words: "The Serbs had decided, despite their promises, to finish off the cleansing of Moslems in the areas . . . Any attack on the town would take the form of a catastrophe".²⁶¹

Defying UN headquarters in New York, General Morillon and a small team of UN soldiers and aid agencies headed through the mountains for Srebrenica on a snowbound logging track.²⁶²

"He was appalled by what he heard and wanted to stop the Serbs. He got no order. He did something himself and brought the whole thing to a head. That whole area would have been cleansed of Moslems."²⁶³

When Morillon's team finally entered Srebrenica they were surrounded by desperate Moslem women and children who refused to let him leave. The scale of the potential catastrophe was clear. Morillon tried to slip out of the town, but was overwhelmed emotionally by the numbers of Moslems trying to find sanctuary from the Serbs.²⁶⁴ He addressed the Moslems from his jeep, and declared he would not desert them or their plight. Later his life would be threatened by the "murderous furor" of a "spontaneous demonstration" organized by the Bosnia Serb army's chief of staff.²⁶⁵

One senior UN official said: "The UN ideal is to have a commander who does what New York orders him to do and does not dispute it. More important he should not embarrass New York by showing up things and events which New York does not want highlighted or does not know about".²⁶⁶

On the international diplomatic front Morillon was creating enough problems. An amateur video camera would soon compound them.

Until Morillon's personal commitment the west had heard skimpy reports of the ghastliness inside Srebrenica, but seen nothing at first hand. The best television could do was a few brief seconds of scripted copy describing conditions based on reports from Medecins sans Frontieres, accompanied by a dot on a map to represent the town. Nothing else.

By this time TV journalist Tony Birtley had spent three weeks trying to enter Srebrenica. He tried trekking by donkey. He tried walking.²⁶⁷ Finally he conned his way onto a Bosnian Mi-8 helicopter that was shipping a tiny amount of ammunition to the beleaguered troops.²⁶⁸ Flying at tree top height above the Serb artillery positions, he secured access to Srebrenica without the comfort of staff benefits, pension and life assurance if it all went wrong.²⁶⁹

Tony Birtley's smuggled video images created the impression of a death camp. They showed squalor, desperation, hunger and humiliation. They confirmed the reason for General Morillon's defiance and had a profound impact worldwide. As a result, it is argued that Birtley's enterprise and bravery saved Srebrenica, along with the unilateral, controversial and unorthodox pressures and guarantees of General Morillon. Together they provided governments with the stark reality that they had to do something or be accused of being accomplices to the slaughter of many thousands of Moslems. Together Birtley and Morillon defied western indifference.

At the time the international mood was one of concern, but disengagement from the horror of Srebrenica. The British Foreign Office minister Douglas Hogg said on radio one morning: "If you are asking me if we have a policy that will certainly save Srebrenica in a few hours, the answer I regret to say is 'No'"²⁷⁰.

Around the world Birtley's images made politicians realize the horror of the town in a way that the dribble of official reports from humanitarian operations and the speculations had failed to.

UN headquarters in New York was furious. "Morillon was cursed by the 37th floor because of what he showed in Srebrenica," said one senior official.²⁷¹ "It forced the Secretary-General [Boutros Boutros Ghali] to take action. It made the UN Peacekeeping Department look to be fools and incompetent. But TV did it for Morillon."

The UN's target was Morillon. The Bosnian Serb target was Tony Birtley and his video camera. As UN trucks began transporting Moslem women and children out of the town, Serb forces targeted Birtley for thwarting their military intentions. They hit him with a mortar and shattered his leg in four places. He was lucky to survive. A covert UN evacuation saved his leg from instant amputation.²⁷²

By now, the horror of Srebrenica had a new international political momentum of its own. Politicians in western capitals wrung their hands and steered firmly away from intervention that might save the town. The idea of creating 'Safe Areas' was rejected, even though in London at least there was what one official called "a certain admiration of General Morillon for kicking away orthodoxy and defying instructions".²⁷³ "There was a political feeling that if he could save Srebrenica then it would prevent the Moslems losing Eastern Bosnia".

The stated British position at the time was the opposite. In public the Foreign Office dismissed the 'safe area' idea as both a bad precedent to set and a bad principle to adopt.

But at UN headquarters in New York the TV images had already stirred the majority non-aligned nations on the Security Council. Their number included several Islamic states sympathetic to the Bosnian Moslems.²⁷⁴ These nations had long complained of being repeatedly steamrolled by the Permanent Five (the US, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom). Unusually they wanted to flex their political muscles within the Security Council and embarrass the big powers. Srebrenica was their chance.

Venezuela held the rotating chair of the Security Council. Led by the outspoken and flamboyant Venezuelan ambassador Dr Diego Arria, the non-aligned defied first the Permanent Five, then the firm advice of the UN Secretariat, quoting the UN force commander General Wahlgren.²⁷⁵ All of them had warned that a Safe Area was a vague concept with no political or military foundation.²⁷⁶ It would become an enclave with the same overwhelming humanitarian and security problems as the Gaza strip and all permanent refugee camps around the world.

"The major powers were resenting the media's involvement," Dr. Arria confirmed. "Ours was a cry of impotence. It was the knowledge [from TV images] that drove me because they gave me information".

Dr. Arria claims the Permanent Five tried to block the distribution of information about Srebrenica in order to justify not taking action. They also accepted the UN Secretariat's advice against Safe Areas, because (as one ambassador is reported to have said) "we cannot base UN resolutions on press releases".

There was bitter internal wrangling. Dr. Arria believes he "terrified" the big powers because based on Birtley's TV pictures "I told the truth". He believes that in return the permanent UN secretariat tried to hoodwink him. "The only ally we [the non-aligned] had during the whole period was the media -- especially TV. Otherwise we would not have known. I used to tell Hannay [the British UN ambassador] that one day public opinion will catch up with you".

"TV images were fundamental," one senior UN official agreed.²⁷⁷ "The non-aligned relied on television rather than the UN. If TV had not existed then the non-aligned would not have had the basis to pressure. Dr. Arria took on an extraordinary role as a one-man ginger group. He demanded daily meetings [over the weekend] with the P5 ambassadors, then hustled and hustled. He kept asking: what is happening in Srebrenica? What is the UN doing? What does the UN know?"

Late in the evening of 16 April 1993 the non-aligned nations achieved their aim of thwarting the big powers. Security Council Resolution 819 authorized the establishment of Safe Areas in Srebrenica and Zepa, even though no one knew precisely what a Safe Area meant in legal and military terms, or how to police and defend it. How big would the area be? Would it be demilitarized? To the non-aligned nations such details did not matter. What did matter was the principle of responding to the humanitarian disaster being portrayed on television.²⁷⁸ A later follow-up resolution would create another four Safe Areas.²⁷⁹

Sir David Hannay has confirmed the strong objections to creating Safe Areas within the closed Security Council session. But in the end the TV pictures "tipped the resistance."²⁸⁰ One of the reasons TV played such a role is important. The big western governments have large, well-oiled mechanisms to gather and

assess information from a variety of sources -- the diplomatic service, the military and the intelligence communities. Smaller nations like those who stood their ground on Srebrenica have limited and sometimes virtually non-existent government reporting machineries. "So they rely on the mass-media and their opinions are formed by that. That is why [TV] pictures are very influential [to them]", said Sir David Hannay.²⁸¹

Under orders from the Security Council, the overall UN commander in the former Yugoslavia, General Wahlgren was left to draw a blue line on the map and decide how best to defend a few square kilometers which senior military officers advised could not be defended. "A Balkan Lesotho," was the grim and accurate prediction by one Serb leader for the Moslem enclave which was about to be created.²⁸²

The current squalid status and conditions of Srebrenica are hardly surprising given what can now be revealed about the nature of the negotiations.

The Security Council did not realize that while they were wrangling over Resolution 819, negotiations to end hostilities around Srebrenica were already underway. At the very moment the ink was drying on 819 in New York, the Serb and Bosnian commanders were preparing to meet at Sarajevo airport under UN auspices. The text of 819 arrived during the meeting, but it was a declaration of intent, impossible for UNPROFOR to implement and at odds with the thrust of the agreement being worked out between the Serbs and Bosnians. Events had moved on. In Sarajevo, 819 was seen as no longer relevant, so the UN officers ignored it.

At 2 a.m on 18 April, after fourteen hours, Generals Mladic and Halilovic agreed the principle of a Serb/Bosnian ceasefire. Details would be decided later. It was this agreement between the warring parties, not Resolution 819 which froze the war around Srebrenica.

General Wahlgren ordered Morillon's Chief of Staff Brigadier Vere Hayes to chair negotiations on the detail. He wanted Hayes to secure a larger ceasefire area, not just the town of Srebrenica. But by his own admission Brigadier Hayes had no training or expertise in techniques of mediation and negotiation. Such was the lack of preparation for UN duties.

"I was left there with the deputy Serb commander and the deputy Bosnian commander. The first set of talks to establish principle lasted eighteen hours. Then I had 72 hours to negotiate detail and implement the agreement on the ground. I did not have a clue what to do," the Brigadier recalled.²⁸³

They negotiated "hammer and tongs" for another 24 hours.

"The Canadians [UN troops] were on their way, but they did not know what to do because we had not agreed it!"

Discussions became protracted and debilitating. The Bosnian and Serb commanders eventually agreed that Srebrenica would be demilitarized and that Bosnian troops would either hand in their weapons or leave the area. But they could not agree the size of the area to be affected.

Such were the pressures and uncertainties about what he was being asked to do that at 3 a.m. on 20 April Brigadier Hayes felt the need to get on his knees and pray for inspiration. With no one to consult he took it upon himself to insist that the Srebrenica 'Safe Area' embrace both the town and the hills around. But the Bosnian Serbs flatly rejected Hayes's proposal. Mladic insisted that only the town itself was covered.

Without referring upwards, Hayes took it upon himself to write out the operational order. Srebrenica would include the surrounding hills. "Because neither side would agree I told them what I was going to do," said Hayes. "I said 'Oy! Time Out! Sign up! And they stopped.'"

That was how Srebrenica came to be demilitarized. Full implementation of the UN Safe Area principle itself took many months, and despite what is commonly believed, in many respects it never took place properly because of Serb objections.

Senior UN officials -- on both the political and military side -- quickly feared that the creation of such "safe" areas had done the Bosnian Serb commander General Mladic an enormous military favor. Firstly it assisted the process of ethnic cleansing and corralled Moslems into a deep valley from which they could not leave without risk. Secondly it released Mladic's forces from outside Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde for other military operations against the Bosnians.

In hindsight it is now believed that General Mladic probably never intended to capture Srebrenica. He just wanted to kill or terrorize as many Moslems as possible while his policy of ethnic cleansing continued elsewhere unchallenged. It was a policy later repeated in Gorazde a year later with terrifying success -- virtually unchallenged by the UN until too late.

It can be argued that by forcing the creation of the Safe Areas, TV images facilitated the Bosnian Serb war aims at the time. They hastened the "cleansing" of Eastern Bosnia.

The deep disquiet over the Safe Areas was further compounded by furious arguments surrounding the activities and demands of the Security Council delegation which later visited Srebrenica to examine what they had created. "They came out as a busload of school boys wanting to have their photographs taken. They almost caused a riot," said one senior UN source. The source complained about the cavalier way the delegation taunted Serb forces with a video camera, with the result that "the Serbs went mad and cocked their weapons". The delegation also handed out cigarettes and demanded the press accompany them at all times, ignoring opposition from the warring factions and the fact that their insistence jeopardized the very objective of their visit -- namely to visit Srebrenica.

Dr Arria rejects such complaints. Rather, he says UN forces "behaved like a servant to the Serbs", were "prejudiced", and "conspired with the Serbs not to allow journalists into Srebrenica [with us]".

One month after their creation, conditions in the Safe Areas were bad enough. Optimistically European Union foreign ministers called the UN-protected enclaves "temporary"²⁸⁴. "A death camp with a peaceful air about it," was how Srebrenica's Deputy Mayor described each of the areas.²⁸⁵ Three months on, the Safe Areas remained miraculously in tact despite accusations they were a "sham"²⁸⁶, the constant fears about their viability²⁸⁷, the degrading conditions²⁸⁸, the continuing sporadic artillery barrages on the Moslems, and the incursions by Serb forces. One year later, the terrible conditions remained with the Moslems "effectively imprisoned by the Serbs".²⁸⁹

The systematic Serb bombardment of Gorazde and its Bosnian population in the spring of 1994 showed how fragile the concept of virtually undefended Safe Areas had always been. For a year their survival had hung by a thread, but with none of the world TV attention being accorded to Sarajevo.²⁹⁰ Enclaves like

Srebrenica were forgotten "even though their plight is much worse [than Sarajevo]"²⁹¹. Some 44,000 Moslems lived without work or schooling in an "eerie, nether world existence between war and peace" in the most appalling conditions.²⁹² Even the UN protection force of 150 Canadian troops said they felt "like refugees".²⁹³

Tony Birtley's pictures and General Morillon's lone stand forced creation of a Safe Area in Srebrenica which undoubtedly saved lives. The impact of Birtley's images was recognized by the Royal Television Society in Britain who named him Television Journalist of the Year.²⁹⁴

But the Areas developed all the worst characteristics which the original opponents had feared. Each became a rest, recuperation and "divisional supply dump"²⁹⁵ for Bosnian forces. While preparing for renewed fighting the Moslem forces could live off UN food handouts under the UN's protective umbrella and prepare attacks against the Bosnian Serbs.

In January 1994 the departing UNPROFOR commander Lt.General Francis Briquemont wrote in a confidential report: "Taking the benefit of UNPROFOR protection and supplied by the humanitarian aid convoys, the BiH forces have been reorganized, resupplied and trained. Their morale is now very high. The BiH army attacks the Serbs from a Safe Area, the Serbs retaliate, mainly on the confrontation line, and the Bosnian Presidency accuses UNPROFOR for not protecting them against the Serb aggression and appeal for Air Strikes against the Serb gun positions".²⁹⁶

Arguably the biggest disaster was that in defining the boundaries of 'Safe Areas', the UN had frozen the military situation on the ground.²⁹⁷ The UN delimited small packets of land to be left under nominal Moslem control monitored by the UN, but with no form of defence. Thereby it recognized Serb territorial gains.

The creation of Safe Areas in a fit of exasperation that Friday night in April 1993 saved many thousands of lives. But it has been argued that the Areas complicated whatever chances there might once have been for peace negotiations.²⁹⁸ Hence the unrelenting Bosnian Serb fury about the Safe Area principle²⁹⁹, and the determination of their military commander General Mladic to remove them as an obstacle to his overall war aims. Only after the virtual annihilation of Gorazde in April 1994 and the subsequent creation by the United Nations and NATO of a 20-kilometer exclusion zone did each Safe Area finally have any prospect of being "safe".

"It is a sheer miracle that we have not had a disaster," one senior UN official said in the weeks before Gorazde happened.³⁰⁰ "The Safe Area is an irresponsible concept. It is totally unviable and undefendable, with no chance of normal economic activity. It could have gone wrong so easily. Conditions have not been close to disaster because the Serbs held their fire."

As Gorazde showed in the spring of 1994, when the Bosnian-Serbs no longer held their fire, and they set themselves a military goal of neutralizing an enclave, they had the power and gall to do it. Finally one Safe Area did become a disaster. It highlighted both the impotence of both western minimalist policies and all the theological talk of prevention and pre-emption in conflict resolution.

In retrospect did Dr. Arria believe both his dependence on TV pictures and the Security Council's defiance of diplomatic advice had been right? "I did not know that what we were creating was a trap", he now concludes.³⁰¹

APRIL 1993 : The Ahmici massacre **The Croat/Muslim War We Almost Never Heard Of.**

Throughout the first year of war in Bosnia the international community's efforts were aimed preeminently at heaping responsibility on the Bosnian Serbs for their policy of "cleansing" territory by force. By and large the media took their cue from the regular declarations by western ministers. The Serbs were the main guilty party. All western diplomatic efforts by the UN and EU focussed on tightening the economic and political noose around Serb interests.

This political focussing of guilt meant that the surge in fighting between Croats and Moslems in central Bosnia during the Spring of 1993 received virtually no coverage, although it was just as vicious and known to western governments. The tension between Serbs and Croats in the Krajina region of Croatia was barely covered. This was due to both overload on the journalists in the war zone, plus an inevitable reluctance of their editors to perceive more than one evil party in the war.

The apparent diplomatic perception in western capitals -- in public at least -- was no different either. Graham Allison, formerly Assistant US Defense Secretary in the Clinton Administration, reflects a widely-held view. "We [the US] have to have a black hat and a white hat. The possibility that there are three black hats is too confusing for most Americans and has been very hard for this administration".³⁰²

Emotive TV coverage of the discovery on 22 April of the Croat massacre of Moslems in Ahmici created the kind of diplomatic vacuum referred to earlier. It challenged dramatically the convenient and simplistic journalistic and political perception that only the Serbs were guilty.

A small group of British military vehicles had been on a UN patrol in the hills near their base in Vitez. By chance they heard from Moslems in one village about large numbers of people killed in a neighboring village. Accompanied by a pool cameraman and two correspondents from ITN and the BBC the British patrol entered Ahmici. They found Croat houses untouched and Moslem houses burned. Worse was to come. Inside the Moslem houses they discovered the charred remains of Moslems who had been rounded up and burned alive.³⁰³

In the words of the commander, Lt. Colonel Bob Stewart of the British Cheshire regiment: "Here and there the outline of a body was recognizable. Two small bodies appeared to be lying on their stomachs, but their heads were bent backwards over their arched backs at an impossible angle. In one the eyes were completely burnt. At first I was too shocked to notice the smell, but then it hit me. God, I felt sick".³⁰⁴

The TV camera recorded on video the British soldiers searching the village and turning up further horrors. It also recorded the emotions of soldiers confronting scenes they had never faced before, along with a

burst of rage by Colonel Stewart when asked by a Croat soldier if the UN troops had permission to be in the village. It was gruesome but compelling news television.

Within a couple of hours the images of charred flesh and bones were broadcast by ITN and the BBC from their fly-away satellite dish in the British base a few miles away. Their dreadful nature meant some pictures had to be edited out. As the BBC's Martin Bell said in what some called an insensitive 'stand-up' delivered in the charred basement of a house: "What happened here can frankly not be shown in detail. But the room is full of the charred remains of bodies and they died in the greatest agony".³⁰⁵

Later Bell wrote: "There are images of massacres and mutilations too terrible to be seen which we cannot transmit. . . What you see leaves you simply speechless with grief. I actually couldn't get the words out, for, I suppose, the first time in my life".³⁰⁶

Western policy makers had long known of Croat aggression. "For a long time we knew they were equally evil," said one senior British source.³⁰⁷ "The UK government knew; but the public did not. The media had not concentrated on it".

The impact of the Ahmici images on both diplomats and politicians was profound. Suddenly those who -- either out of ignorance or convenience -- labelled the Serbs as the sole evil party were forced to draw breath. The full complexities of the Bosnian war were finally exposed. The Croats were shown to be equally evil. While cabinet ministers had known, politicians with only a superficial understanding of the Bosnian conflict quickly had second thoughts about backing possible military action against only the Serbs. At the time a new head of political steam seemed to be building to force such action.

The British government had known the realities in Central Bosnia for months. But to avoid undermining the diplomatic offensive against the Serbs they never made a point of fingering the Croats in public. One British source told this author that on 19 January 1993 a report to a meeting of senior cabinet ministers, officials and military officers described how "Croats are by far the biggest culprits" in central Bosnia. This source said that the information was "roundly sat on" by one senior minister. "It was information they did not want to hear. There was a belief that the Croats were OK and can do no wrong. Our reports on the Croats were being dismissed."³⁰⁸

In the spring of 1993, before the Ahmici incident, there was anger in UNPROFOR that the Croats had blocked roads and were torching Moslem villages south of Gornij Vakuf. "The Croats were doing what the Serbs were doing", said one senior UN officer.³⁰⁹ But western capitals still took no notice. "We were punching cloud. We were reporting, but nothing was being done about it. There was a lot of horror on the ground, but no international pressure on the Croats".

Such was their exasperation that senior UN officers tried to harness the power of television to get the message over. "We had to show that the Croats were as bad as the Serbs." UNPROFOR officers encouraged TV crews to go to the area, but failed. "Why do you not go down there to show what is happening?" senior officers reportedly prompted the journalists. "But the UK press were only interested in UK forces".³¹⁰

It must be said, though, that not all senior UN officers were so keen to use "the avenue" of TV coverage to reinforce a political point which was not being acknowledged in western capitals. "I knew it was

open to me," said one commanding officer,³¹¹ "but I did not use it. If the camera was there, then so be it, but I did not want to manipulate it. It would be very dangerous".

Then, in April, unplanned by western governments and therefore unwelcome, came the TV pictures from Ahmici. At a stroke they forced the Croat/Moslem conflict onto the diplomatic map when governments had not planned for it. "It showed there were no angels in Bosnia," said a member of the UN negotiating team.³¹² At that time the negotiators were trying to get Croats and Moslems to cooperate. "Those images were not helpful".

In Britain at least, the coverage instantly forced a rapid diluting of the political consensus against the Serbs. The British government openly rejected air strikes and privately welcomed the coverage of the Ahmici massacre. As one senior Downing Street official put it much later: "Images [like Ahmici] that complicated the Bosnia-Herzegovina story made it easier for us [to reject air strikes]".³¹³

TV news coverage of the Ahmici massacre thus changed the diplomatic landscape, despite the British Foreign Secretary's later claim that Central Bosnia had gone "virtually unreported".³¹⁴ But the impact of Ahmici in highlighting the Croat/Moslem war had a relatively short half-life. It was soon forgotten, and the Serbs quickly regained their position as sole evil party in the war.

It also led to a distorted perception of what developed subsequently during early summer in central Bosnia. After the Croats were fingered as murderers of Moslems, UN forces witnessed a "huge land grab" by mainly Moslem Bosnian government forces throughout the Lasva river valley towards Gornij Vakuf. But the press showed virtually no interest in Moslem atrocities. International media attention returned to focussing on the plight of Sarajevo. As one senior UN officer put it: "While the world was seeing the hard pressed Moslems in Sarajevo, the [Bosnian] Third Corps was pushing the Croats back relentlessly. In my area the air strikes would have to be against the Moslems, but that was not politically correct".³¹⁵

Television coverage of the Moslem push was token and sporadic at best. "Central Bosnia was ignored because murder became normal -- a daily occurrence. There was 'total normality'. As soon as a level of fighting becomes a certain level it is no longer news and therefore not newsworthy".³¹⁶ As another senior officer put it: "There was an anaesthetizing effect of regular coverage".³¹⁷

On the basis of audience research, the editorial justification to shift away from Central Bosnia at such a moment was understandable. As Stewart Purvis, Editor-in-Chief of ITN, put it: "Viewers do not like stories that come up time and again when there is nothing new to say. [But] we have fallen into the trap of listening more to the fear of boredom".³¹⁸

Thus it could be said that chance coverage of the Ahmici massacre revealed both the profound impact and the consequent inadequacy of TV coverage. The true diplomatic agenda briefly stood unmasked. But soon both the agenda and TV coverage returned to most of their preconceptions.

JULY-AUGUST 1993

Sarajevo: The Partial Myth of Shells and Mortars

Questions must be raised about the reporting of some elements of the prolonged Sarajevo crisis. The picture seen by the outside world did not always conform to reality.

At critical moments the accuracy of real-time television coverage -- and therefore its impact -- was skewed by the absence of crucial facts in the reporting. UN officials bitterly labelled some journalists and their reporting as "glamour without responsibility".³¹⁹

There is, of course, no doubt that during 1992 and 1993 Bosnian Serb forces surrounded Sarajevo. They deployed heavy artillery nicknamed 'Top-Guns' in the hills, and snipers within the city. Their aim was to inflict terror on the mainly Moslem population and force its eventual evacuation or annihilation. "There is nothing quite like the Sarajevo feeling," wrote Ed Vulliamy.³²⁰ "In Sarajevo, you are never out of range". Because of the presence of satellite transmission dishes in Sarajevo the city's ordeal became a matter of deep and constant international concern.

There was much brave reporting of the daily horrors and deaths. But was the reality the same as the picture portrayed on TV?

"The fact is that no one is starving in Sarajevo, or ever has been," wrote the anonymous UN official 'Kenneth Roberts'. One look at the quantity of goods on sale in the markets, or one encounter with a besuited Sarajevo government delegation visiting central Bosnia is enough to disprove the much peddled image of a city totally besieged and isolated".³²¹

In late July 1993 Sarajevo's predicament came to a head. Bosnia Serb forces moved to tighten the noose around the city. Their commander General Mladic was seen on television gloating at the sight of burning Moslem houses and farms around Mound Igman outside the city. He toured the area arrogantly in his army helicopter, defying the UN No-Fly zone and a UN attempt to shoot him down which failed because the UN commander could not communicate with UN headquarters.

Sarajevo's plight seemed to have taken a new and ominous turn. This was reflected in a sudden mass influx of reporters and camera crews who expected allied air strikes and sensed what one correspondent called "more than a whiff of Baghdad Mark II". UN officials noted what one described as a "blood lust" among journalists.³²² One leading correspondent asked a colleague over breakfast: "What is it going to take us to get the US and their allies to intervene here?"³²³

An emotive wave of TV reporting and alarmist newspaper headlines followed. They demanded both explicitly and implicitly that the international community take measures to save Sarajevo.

The London Independent, for example, launched a campaign which some analysts linked cynically to the newspaper's dropping circulation numbers. On 2 August under the headline "Sarajevo: Action Now!" it covered its front page with the names of more than 2,000 people who they said shared the paper's "sense of outrage that our leaders are vacillating while Sarajevo dies".

The emotional pressures for the first determined western military response to the Bosnian Serbs were intense. At the start of the August holiday season in western capitals vivid on-the-spot reporting seemed to play a crucial role in stirring up an unstoppable diplomatic momentum. NATO representatives met and

produced two strongly worded declarations which authorized a significant military build-up in preparation for air strikes. But there was no final commitment to take action.

One high ranking military officer confirmed the crucial role of TV coverage in prompting the NATO decision. "Air strikes has been wound up by TV", he said.³²⁴ However one British official described The Independent's "heart on the sleeve campaigning" at that moment as "counter productive for politicians" because it "subverts the ability of newspapers to have an impact"³²⁵.

While the situation in Sarajevo seemed to be on the point of degenerating into a humanitarian catastrophe, there remain legitimate questions as to whether the reality in and around the city was as television and others portrayed it. "The Serbs on Igman was one of the worst examples of bad reporting," according to EU peace negotiator Lord Owen. "[Peace] negotiations were held up by [the issue of] the Serbs on Igman when it was not an issue. But the Press was saying that this was a big strategic change. Izetbegovic [the Bosnian President] sat in his hotel and would not come to the negotiations."³²⁶

The pressures on journalistic neutrality and impartiality are an age-old problem, especially in war.³²⁷ Given the declared partiality and emotional sympathies of many journalists towards the beleaguered people of Sarajevo,³²⁸ it is professionally perilous to raise such questions. They challenge the integrity of some colleagues who were prepared ultimately to risk their lives in Bosnia and the news organizations that sent them there.

Yet interviewing, debriefing and cross-checking for this paper confirms that the questions must be raised and the challenge made. They bear out the complaint of UN official 'Kenneth Roberts' and another (or the same) anonymous 'senior UN official' who wrote to Foreign Policy magazine. "The Press corps there [in Sarajevo] developed its own momentum and esprit. Much of it set out to invoke international military intervention against the Serb aggressors -- a principal strategy of the Bosnian government. That induced in some a personal commitment -- indeed crusade -- that lay uneasily with the maintenance of true professional standards, Publication, in turn, helped to create an appetite back home for more of the same".³²⁹

Whether by design or by default, a significant part of the reporting of Sarajevo has been skewed and driven by the inevitable personal emotion of correspondents who like the Sarajevans endured the daily fear of relentless Serb bombardment. As Roy Gutman described the work of some reporters, they "didn't take the time to get their compasses straight"³³⁰

Not unnaturally, reporters became embroiled in the intense emotions of a frightened, war-weary population who expected that the presence of foreign journalists (and the United Nations) would herald a decisive western intervention to end the horror.³³¹ By their own admission, correspondents often found that their passions and commitment on the issue of Sarajevo's plight became intense.

Frequently, however, there has been selective omission of certain critical facts in the reporting which could often provide balance and context to the headlines, and therefore dilute their emotive and political impact. One example was the barely reported refusal of the Bosnian government -- not the Serbs -- to reconnect Sarajevo's gas and electricity supplies in the summer of 1993.³³² Another was the Bosnian government's obstruction of international efforts to restore water.³³³

When asked for their view, not all colleagues accept this criticism. Indeed they were affronted by the suggestion. Yet some concede there are good grounds for such complaints of distortion by selective omission, whether knowingly by a correspondent on the ground or later during the editing and sub-editing process over which he/she had no control.

In a rare and belated public acknowledgement of the problem an editorial in the Daily Telegraph questioned "the credulity of some sections of the media". It concluded: "The media do no service to the international community by oversimplifying the issues. Finding the right balance is all the more essential because outside intervention in the conflict has so often been spurred by the latest emotional media report of the bloodshed. If journalists are to be the catalyst for foreign policy initiatives they must retain a measure of detachment".³³⁴

In the US in particular some correspondents say their newspapers or TV stations rarely accepted reporting that undermined the beleaguered image of the Bosnian Moslems. America in particular could only cope with "one black hat". By May 1994 the Clinton administration was quietly realizing the culpability and duplicity of some Bosnian tactics. But it refused to acknowledge the fact publicly for fear of antagonizing the sizeable committed and diehard pro-Moslem lobby in Congress.³³⁵

"Led by the New York Times, the US position was that the Bosnians are the victims," one UN source confirmed. "The basic view is that the Serbs are vicious and the others are OK".

More seriously, stories which were critical of the Bosnians or implicated them were often spiked. "Editors did not want to believe it," one American reporter told this author. "Anyone who defies the conventional wisdom will find themselves in deep trouble," said another.

David Binder of The New York Times has covered Central Europe and the Balkans intermittently for 31 years. He said that work putting into context the universal demonology of the Serbs and casting the Bosnians in a less-than-favorable light has not been printed. Binder described for the record what some other journalists will only say privately. There is what he labelled a "tyranny of victimology" which is prompted by the reporter's "herd instinct" and the age-old journalistic lust for "a hot story on the front page".

"Balanced journalism has gone out of the window," said Binder. "One of the reasons is that it is not entertaining. For the masses to be entertained we have to take sides. It is considered politically correct in New York and Washington to bash the Serbs on any and all occasions to the point where it becomes almost racist. Serbs are evilized virtually to the exclusion of any reporting that might balance that".³³⁶

One key example was the brinkmanship over the apparent "siege of Sarajevo" in late July 1993. UN sources say that during this critical period of tension Sarajevo was not totally cut-off as the reporting and the unseemly public row over the city's "siege" status suggested.³³⁷ "Sarajevo was not strangled. That's an emotive phrase," one senior British official complained.³³⁸

UN sources say President Izetbegovic stoked world headlines by claiming that Serb forces had blocked their convoy routes and "stepped on our windpipe". But at the time UN officials knew that technically two supply routes remained open. In order to stop Sarajevo becoming a ghost city Bosnian forces were also stopping the population from leaving. The reported belief that Sarajevo was being "encircled" was wrong and

was undermining peace talks taking place in Geneva.³³⁹ UN officers reported that because of the impact of the Sarajevo crisis "Stoltenberg [the UN peace negotiator in Geneva] would call and ask what is going on. I told him: I have no idea"³⁴⁰

Senior UN officials became especially concerned that the skewed press reporting of Sarajevo was distorting impressions within the UN organization itself and among members of the Security Council. This in turn distorted UN policy making on the Security Council. Officials in Zagreb and New York ordered their colleagues in Sarajevo to brief the press and correct the record. They did, but they claim it failed to correct the imbalance in reporting.

"The media had a blank spot. The media turned a blind eye," one UN official in Sarajevo complained. "It did not fit their preconceptions of what was happening -- of the encirclement".³⁴¹ The UN Chief of Staff, Brigadier Vere Hayes, was interviewed on American TV. "On US television I explained it, but the State Department did not like that".

One equally emotive issue was the way reporters and news organizations portrayed the Serb shelling of Sarajevo. No one who has been inside the city during mortar or artillery salvos can overstate the horrifying sensation of apparently being targeted by the heavy guns in the surrounding hills. By their own admission, such experiences have affected the partiality of some journalists. But UN officials who monitor the armed exchanges between Bosnians and Serbs say the impression given by the media with a headline like "Serbs shell Sarajevo, killing XX" was frequently misleading. "There has been too much limp reporting of 'Serb shelling'," according to EU peace negotiator Lord Owen. "It is an instinctive feeling of being on the side of the oppressed."³⁴²

As one senior UN military officer based in Sarajevo expressed it: "I would be surprised by what I heard on the news compared to what I saw". He said that Serb shelling of the Bosnian army "would be reported as Sarajevo under heavy shelling. Reports would say the Serbs fired 500 shells in Sarajevo, without saying that 480 were aimed at the Bosnian army, and maybe twenty at the city."³⁴³

The distinction being examined here is a fine one. The offensive and deadly nature of Serb deployments was not questioned, nor the ruthlessness of the snipers. But in the UN's view a medium as powerful as television should have given an accurate, balanced view. In Sarajevo the picture portrayed by reporting was of Serb forces as the only guilty party when often (though not always) they had been provoked by a Bosnian offensive.³⁴⁴ "TV portrays only Moslem weakness and Serb strength, but not Moslem strength," said one senior UN officer at the heart of the UN operation.³⁴⁵

And this officer explained how the Bosnian army frequently tested Serb lines in a location which they knew meant that Serb artillery would have to fire shells over the main hotel for the Press. "Moslems around Zuc would shell Serb villages with a number of mortars. The Serbs responded from artillery in their barracks at Lukavica [on the other side of the city]. Shells were fired over the Holiday Inn, and over the Press's head. This was very loud".³⁴⁶

The fact that the Serbs had only artillery and mortars and relatively little infantry around Sarajevo, while the Bosnian forces were predominantly infantry with a few mobile mortar launchers went a long way to

furthering the international image of the Bosnian side as the disadvantaged underdogs. But as UN officials kept repeating, and a confidential report by the outgoing UNPROFOR commander Lt.General Francis Briquemont confirmed in January 1994, the Bosnians attacked the Serb positions with infantry and the Serbs could only respond with artillery.

On 9 January General Briquemont wrote: "In Sarajevo the BiH army [Bosnian government] provoke the BSA [Bosnian Serb Army] on a daily basis. This is very easy for us to notice as the BiH mortars are generally located near UNPROFOR units and Headquarters".³⁴⁷ The General added: "Since the middle of December, the BiH army jumped another step by launching heavy infantry attacks from Sarajevo to the Serb held suburbs of the city".

"A significant proportion of Serb shelling is brought on by Moslem attacks," one high-ranking British officer confirmed.³⁴⁸ To an outsider the shelling and mortaring was always disproportionate: an infantry attack did not have to be repelled with heavy artillery shells. But like it or not, such were the dispositions, capabilities and viciousness in the Bosnian war.

Ambassador Herbert Okun, Deputy to Cyrus Vance, the Special UN Envoy for the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1993, confirmed how -- despite the impression from press reporting -- the Serb shelling was usually not random. "The Bosnian government forces were constantly probing Serb lines and occasionally launching major offensives to break the siege of Sarajevo. But the constant impression given by the US press was that the Serbs were overwhelmingly powerful and sitting back in the hills taking pot shots at the city. They should have reported clashes between opposing forces. Instead they told of the horrors of the siege - which were real enough - but they also ignored the Moslem attempts to break out. Ironically, they thereby helped create the image that the Bosnian Serbs were omnipotent."³⁴⁹

"The shelling is due to an imbalance in the Serb and Moslem military forces," said one senior officer who frequently tried to change the media's perception in Sarajevo. "[But] telling the Press that was like taking a pork chop into a synagogue!"³⁵⁰

OCTOBER 1993

Somalia : The TV Images That Sent Home US Troops

As already discussed, the gruesome images of the naked body of one dead US Special Forces crewman being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, plus video of the shaken Chief Warrant Officer Michael Durant³⁵¹ forced -- via Congressional pressure -- President Clinton's announcement of a phased US withdrawal from the Somalia UN operation. However the precise impact of television coverage is not quite as great as it was widely assumed to be.

The images of the dead US Ranger did not fit the strict definition of real-time because they were many hours old by the time of transmission. They were, however, real time in the sense that they were

transmitted from the television dish in Mogadishu virtually as soon as they were received and the necessary editorial approval had been given on grounds of both taste and common decency.

The decision to broadcast the pictures and the freelance source of the images (a driver associated with General Aideed) caused some self-examination among TV executives, especially in the US.³⁵² The driver once worked for Reuter and was associated with the man the US identified as its enemy. As ITN's Stewart Purvis put it: "The Somali driver shows how fine the line is between information and manipulation; between exposure and titillation".³⁵³

Senior UN sources told this author that if the US government had taken a clear position on Somalia and begun preparing the US public for an eventual winding down of its commitment, then the images of the dead serviceman would never have had quite the same powerful impact on the public as they did.

According to the White House, for President Clinton the sight of the dead US Ranger on TV "was the worst day of my life". After the pictures were transmitted, US National Adviser Anthony Lake then made an extraordinary confession about the influence of real-time TV reporting on an administration which should have had access to the most sophisticated means of collecting and processing data from any crisis zone. Not only did Mr. Lake never see either the video of the dead soldier or Durant, he said that to those in the White House who did: "the [TV] pictures helped make us recognize that the military situation in Mogadishu had deteriorated in a way that we had not frankly recognized".³⁵⁴ As a result the images made President Clinton "very angry" and leant a "new urgency" for the White House to clarify policy.³⁵⁵

It must be noted, however, that until that failed Special Forces raid took place the US Somalia involvement had been a success, despite casualties and the fact that for months the administration had dithered on whether or not to end the operation. On the plus side, the UN was assuring deliveries of food aid. On the minus side, US forces seemed to have sleepwalked into war with an enemy "war lord" -- General Aideed -- and there was no military or political decision on when withdrawal would take place.

It is important to appreciate the random nature of the gruesome pictures that emerged.

On 3 October more than a dozen US soldiers had been killed in Mogadishu. But there were no TV images of either the military operations or the bodies, so America scarcely reacted. Similarly, before that date the Pentagon had rejected hearsay reports in Mogadishu that the bodies of some other dead US soldiers had been put on show and their charred flesh displayed "like trophies".³⁵⁶ The deaths of 25 Pakistani UN troops in June had also generated virtually no international outrage, except in Pakistan.

Yet the pictures of the failed US mission forced President Clinton's hand because of the intense public pressure via Congress. The decision to withdraw was made even though at the start of the mission the Pentagon had made no clear prediction or assessment of a likely casualty rate, and the number which died was less than occasionally died in routine training accidents.³⁵⁷ But the pictures struck a raw political nerve at a time when the administration was uncertain as to whether US troops were still making a valuable contribution to the UN aid mission. Clinton and his advisers were split on whether to keep troops in Somalia or withdraw them.

Broadly, the well-worn phrase "television got the US into Somalia [under Bush] and got the US out [under Clinton]" stands up to examination. But according to sources in the former administration, in reality the original decision by President Bush to commit forces in November 1992 came after several months of preparation based on an alarming diplomatic warning from the US ambassador to Kenya Smith Hempstone in May that starvation and a humanitarian catastrophe loomed.³⁵⁸ TV's pressure on politicians, newspaper columnists and the public four months later was the climax to a long period of planning and consultations with the United Nations in which TV coverage played only a marginal role.

"It took months of TV coverage of Somalia, and then the administration decided to go over there," said Col. Bill Smullen, who worked at the time in the office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. After the US Presidential election in November, US television news found it had the time and resources to focus on Somalia. This coincided with a dramatic worsening of the famine.

"After the election, the media had free time and that was when the pressure started building up," said former White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater.³⁵⁹ "We heard it from every corner, that something must be done. Finally the pressure was too great. The President said 'I just can't live with this for two months' [until he left office in January 1993]. TV tipped us over the top at a time when the death rate [from starvation] was over one hundred a day". Fitzwater himself could not look at the images any more. "I could not stand to eat my dinner watching TV at night. It made me sick," he said.³⁶⁰

Similarly, Clinton's decision to withdraw was not as clear cut as most people think they remember. The President did not just buckle to congressional pressure. He rejected demands for an early January 1994 withdrawal deadline. He decided instead on 31 March. "He withstood the pressure for an early pull out," said White House Communications Director Mark Gearan.³⁶¹

However, it must be noted that if Clinton had wanted to keep US troops in Somalia he could have mounted an effective public "spin" presentation to justify continuation of the policy. On 14 April 1994 the President was able to mount quickly just such a presentation after the disastrous "friendly-fire" shoot down of two US helicopters by two US jet fighters in the UN No-Fly zone over northern Iraq. Within hours of the accident Clinton was in the White House briefing room saying of the twenty-four officers who died: "They lost their lives while trying to save the lives of others. The important work they are doing must and will continue". The US policy against Saddam Hussein in Iraq demanded such a policy "spin". The campaign against "war lord" Mohamed Aideed in Somalia did not. Neither Marlin Fitzwater or his White House successor Mark Gearan believe that any amount of policy "spinning" could have counteracted the power of the image of the dead US Ranger. Neither could pressure have been brought to bear on broadcast organizations to prevent the image being broadcast, however profound and inevitable the effect on policy. "The charge of hiding deaths is almost worse than showing it," said Marlin Fitzwater.

5 FEBRUARY 1994

Sarajevo Market : The Mortar That Shocked The World³⁶²

Conventional wisdom has it that the determined international response to the carnage of the Sarajevo market place in February 1994 was as a direct result of the horrific TV images.³⁶³ The reality was different.

Subsequent evidence suggests the pictures were an important catalyst to galvanize urgent action, but their overall effect was not as profound as many have assumed.³⁶⁴ Other equally critical diplomatic and military factors had already quietly been at work for several weeks.

"It did not take just the TV coverage of the Sarajevo massacre to push things forward. Things were moving," confirmed White House Communications Director Mark Gearan. "The fact of the incident weighed with us most. It would not have triggered action if people were not already thinking about action," said Sir Robin Renwick, British ambassador in Washington.³⁶⁵

Before the market massacre the Clinton administration had wavered publicly for months on whether to 'do something' on Bosnia. Coincidentally, in the hours before the massacre the administration had authorized publication of the latest draft of its new policy on "The limits of Peacekeeping". They were clearly defined limits beyond which neither politicians nor television images would push the policymakers.³⁶⁶

US involvement in peacekeeping would be "more selective and more effective". Peacekeeping was "not at the center of our foreign and defense policy" because "our armed forces primary mission is not to conduct peace operations but to win wars". The key test for the administration would be "vital national interest". In one of those quirks of coincidence the mortaring of Sarajevo's market suddenly tested the new US principles to the limit.

First reports of the Sarajevo market massacre "incensed" President Clinton. They pushed him and some (though not all) of his advisers into the Oval Office on a Saturday afternoon. The carnage did not require a journalist to say explicitly "something must be done". The horrific TV pictures made their own silent, non-political plea. No viewer, whether politician or not, could fail to be appalled by the unsanitized images of shredded limbs, headless bodies, the puddles of blood and the torsos being shipped on trucks like animal carcasses.

The President was said to be "outraged" by what he saw on television, even though the White House had "become so inured to violence that the early reports . . . created only a small stir".³⁶⁷ Initially Clinton's reaction was described officially as "tentative". He did not want to be seen to react to TV images.³⁶⁸ Even though the Secretary of State Warren Christopher was said to be "traumatized" by the incident, the first White House emergency meeting was brief and inconclusive.³⁶⁹ To many administration officials the TV coverage "made it very clear that things can't go on". As so often on Bosnia the instinct of those at the top was "to tread water". In other words, in the immediate aftermath TV images were not all powerful among those who authorized policy.

Following the massacre, the President's political conflict was between exercising "caution", and as Anthony Lake the National Security Adviser put it, a realization that "we've got to do something"³⁷⁰. Indeed the President went out of his way not to appear to be responding too hastily to TV images. He made a point of discussing health care strategy, playing golf and giving the impression of "business as usual", even to the point

of not inviting the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to a Sunday meeting for fear of raising expectations with the press over air strikes.

The pressure came not from television images but on the phone from the French government. France had been furious with the Serb leadership for two weeks. At a meeting with European Union foreign ministers in Brussels in mid-January President Milosevic and the Bosnia Serb leader Radovan Karadzic had reneged on assurances relating to the peace process given to the French. The French government felt betrayed. Under growing domestic political pressure Paris was determined to take political revenge against the Serbs.

Even before Christmas, on 22 December, France had been mobilizing other EU governments relatively successfully. In Paris, Foreign Minister Alain Juppe had given US Secretary of State Warren Christopher a firm message that either the US must do more to become engaged or the EU would take tougher action alone. "Juppe tore Christopher off a strip," one diplomatic source told this author.

Despite public declarations of intent at the NATO summit on 10 January, the Clinton administration had resisted,³⁷¹ while beginning to come round to the idea of giving more US political clout to UN peace efforts. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd then travelled to Washington in the week before the massacre to reinforce the European pressure. By 5 February "the US was already beginning to stiffen their position".³⁷²

Then came the market massacre. "It helped the [French] argument," confirmed White House Communications Director Mark Gearan.³⁷³ Taking its cue from the incident (not the TV pictures), France led the way in demanding that the West threaten air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, who were immediately presumed responsible for the firing the mortar. The French used intense diplomatic activity in person and by telephone to force US agreement and involvement.

Graham Allison, Assistant US Defense Secretary at the time, confirmed that: "France was pressing for action. The Sarajevo market massacre crystallized for the Clinton administration that it had to do something; that we could not do nothing. Those who wanted to do something seized on it".³⁷⁴

Within two days, US caution dissipated. According to Hans Binnendijk, Acting Director of Policy Planning in the State Department at the time, in the end: "TV did turn things around. The US was only being supportive in negotiations. Redman [the US special envoy] was supportive but not taking an active role. If the outrages continued, then vital US interests would be at stake".³⁷⁵

Four days later Clinton backed NATO in issuing an unprecedented ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs: withdraw your weapons or they will be the target of air strikes.³⁷⁶

Despite the impression Clinton wanted to give, TV pictures had played a part, but more because of their claimed impact on the public rather than the US administration. Sources told this author that a sense of the "public relations" needs was moving policy more than strategic thinking.

A further factor eased the US government's dilemmas. Their ability to threaten air strikes so rapidly was strengthened because unlike during the previous three years NATO had already prepared an operational plan. It had been authorized during the brinkmanship over the Sarajevo siege in July and August 1993. During the intervening six months aircraft and military equipment had already been pre-positioned in Italy and the Adriatic.

As US Secretary of State Warren Christopher reflected some time later: "Television images moved forward a policy we had clearly started on".³⁷⁷ But he added: "Television should not be the sole determinant of policy".

But the question must be asked: how determined would the west's response have been if there had been no real-time television pictures of the massacre? Graham Allison was Assistant Secretary of Defense at the time. In his view: "If a shell had fallen in Sarajevo and 68 people had been killed, and there would have been no pictures of it, would the US policy have changed? I do not think it would have".³⁷⁸

In retrospect, however, there may be a convenient rewriting of history on diplomatic activity following the mortar attack. Three days after the carnage, the Clinton administration seemed to be having second thoughts. By this time TV coverage of Bosnia in the US was virtually nil having been relegated by the Harding/Kerrigan skating drama and the East Coast's enormous snow storms. Despite the contention of US ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright that "the polls are showing increasing public support"³⁷⁹, public opinion quickly became indifferent once again. The impact of the Sarajevo market pictures had reached its natural 'half-life'. For a time there were signals that the administration's intent no longer matched the rhetoric.

On the record, administration officials discreetly signalled that the US would permit the tough NATO ultimatum³⁸⁰ to be moderated to a "looser interpretation"³⁸¹. The Bosnian Serbs therefore believed they keep their artillery loaded and targeted because of "wariness on the part of President Clinton . . . to commit the US, NATO or the United Nations to goals they fear cannot be carried out".³⁸²

Within hours the mistake of sending such conciliatory signals undermined fatally the high stakes NATO/UN bluff and/or ultimatum on air strikes if the Bosnian Serbs did not withdraw their heavy weapons. The damage from the remarks reported on 16 February was done. Within hours, the Clinton Administration realized its error. They quickly denied that "the US was willing to give Serbian forces extra latitude in meeting NATO's ultimatum".³⁸³ Two days later the President made a nationwide broadcast openly backing the West's determination to use air strikes. For perhaps the first time in three years of war, the Serbs could be in no doubt.

The contrast with the British reaction to the mortar attack was stark. Although the atrocity took place on a Saturday when ministers and officials were involved in private weekend domestic activities, the British Foreign Secretary and a single official moved rapidly to condemn the mortar attack. However, neither had seen the horrific pictures aired on the lunchtime TV bulletins. "It [the bomb] triggered an immediate response diplomatically," said one of the senior officials concerned. "None of us had seen the pictures when we did what we did. I knew what it would be like. I knew that it was going to be shocking, ghastly scenes. Some things you cannot ride."³⁸⁴

Mr. Hurd and his officials based their decision to act on radio and agency reports of the incident when the death toll was thirty. "Those who fired the shell carry a fearful responsibility for murder," the Foreign Secretary declared in a written statement. His official conceded, however, that if the incident had been of an equal level of carnage yet away from Sarajevo in an area not readily accessible to TV cameras then probably the response would not have been as swift and emphatic. He added, however, that at the EU foreign ministers

meeting two days later, the ghastly TV images were an important factor in making ministers feel they should do more than just issue a routine statement of condemnation.³⁸⁵

So, once again, the fickle nature of the relationship of real-time television to policy making was highlighted. In April 1993 Serb shelling of the Srebrenica 'Safe Area' had killed 56 Moslems and injured 90 more. But there were no television pictures, and the slaughter led to no dramatic international response. At that time Larry Hollingworth, the senior UNHCR official, had said of the Serb commander who ordered the bombardment: "I personally hope he burns in the hottest corner of hell. I hope that their [Serb] sleep is punctuated by the screams of the children and the cries of their mothers".³⁸⁶ But as there were no TV images of the carnage, there was no enduring international outrage.

While in people's minds the pictures of the market massacre seemed to mark a turning point and watershed for Sarajevo's plight, it was the incident itself more than the TV coverage as such which began to give a momentum towards a fragile peace for the city. The market bombing was part of a convergence of disconnected events and political forces, some of which were already underway.

The UN's new, robust commander Lt.General Sir Michael Rose -- who was formerly a British Special Forces commander -- had just arrived. Rose carried no political baggage with any side to the conflict. He had the self confidence and determination to "tell the Bosnian Serbs that if they continued to behave in a savage way they would themselves suffer savagely -- and to mean it".³⁸⁷ Rose stood up to Bosnian and Serb leaders where others might have recoiled.

Also, after three years of war, all the institutional instruments in the diplomatic orchestra were playing the same tune: the United Nations, the European Union, NATO and the United States. This enabled a unique diplomatic window of opportunity to be seized. The United States, through its special ambassador Charles Redman, became engaged and assumed a leading role as a peace negotiator. Then, upset by what they perceived as the inconsiderate elitism of the big western powers at the United Nations, Russia took umbrage. Moscow unilaterally deployed its own Russian peacekeeping troops and dispatched its envoy Vitali Churkin to counter balance and at times upstage Redman's efforts.

The NATO ultimatum against the Bosnian Serbs worked. Using a masterly mix of ultimatum, bluff, brinkmanship and half-truths General Rose forced them to withdraw their artillery from the mountains around Sarajevo and corral some of it under UN supervision.³⁸⁸ Using the same tactics Rose, and later others, also forced the Bosnians to the negotiating table. Six weeks after the market massacre, the Bosnian government and the Croats surprised most observers by signing in Washington an agreement to ally themselves in an unlikely Croat-Moslem federation.

However, the full story of the Sarajevo market massacre has yet to be told. All the indications are that in some important respects the story is different from what many assume. For the UN, the immediate international outrage and levelling of blame at the Bosnian Serbs served an important purpose. It gave General Rose vital negotiating leverage to force the Bosnian Serb artillery and mortars off the hill tops around Sarajevo, and later to impose a wider exclusion zone. It was leverage that Rose used brilliantly.

Yet who fired the mortar? Was it indeed a Serb emplacement, or was it a mobile Bosnian mortar? The question remains unanswered. Following a series of independent crater analyses and investigations by military experts, UN officials no longer say categorically that a Serb mortar killed the 68 people. They say their verdict is "neutral". That is a significant word for any UN official to use. While being non-committal in one sense in that "neutral" does not identify the Bosnians as responsible for the mortar, in another sense "neutral" sends a clear signal. The UN is no longer convinced that the mortar was fired from a Serb position.

It is an ambiguity which poses a vital and awkward question in relation to the power of real-time TV coverage. The immediate assumption on 5 February was that the mortar was planned, authorized and fired by the Serbs. The later evidence questions that. But what if world leaders like Clinton, Major and Balladur had felt themselves forced by public anger over the TV images to launch air strikes against the Serbs, when later investigations questioned the Serb culpability for the market massacre?

This is the ultimate fear of ministers, diplomats and the military. It is the fear that emotive pictures provided by real-time TV coverage forces them into an impulsive policy response when the reality on the ground is different.

Rarely does television portray the complete story.

APRIL 1994

Gorazde: The Bombardment and the Provocations

In April 1994 western intelligence intercepts confirmed that the Serb leaders, President Milosevic, Dr.Karadzic and General Mladic had set themselves the objective of seizing all but the center of the Gorazde 'Safe Area'. The Serb plan was motivated in part as revenge for the Bosnian success in capturing territory near Maglaj in central Bosnia.

However Bosnian Serb intentions became blurred by the efforts of the Bosnian forces in the town to provoke the Serbs into attacking Gorazde. UN military sources confirm that despite widely-held impressions to the contrary this is what the Bosnian Moslem army did. The Bosnian forces "orchestrated their defeat" in the hope of forcing NATO air strikes that finally would bring the involvement of the outside world into the war.³⁸⁹ Until the Serbs withdrew, western governments had been taken in by the Bosnian tactics. There was a "massive overreaction" by the West which could have led to disaster for the whole UN operation in Bosnia.³⁹⁰

On television the twenty-day Serb offensive was widely reported at a distance from Sarajevo using secondhand information from UN aid workers and emotional ham radio reports which claimed a dreadful amount of bloodletting. TV and newspaper reporting stoked pressure on the West to act decisively with the military might it had long threatened. The role of Bosnian provocations in starting the Gorazde crisis went virtually unreported, even after the Bosnian Serbs withdrew.

During the bombardment one senior UN official believed that had there been Birtley-style real-time TV images from inside Gorazde while the town was being shelled they would have prompted a more defiant

UN military response, as happened with Srebrenica. But had those same TV images existed they would also have confirmed the reality. Conditions in Gorazde were terrifying but -- as happened with the exaggerated radio appeals from Zepa a year earlier -- they were not as awful as the emotive radio reports suggested.

Subsequent reporting confirmed that the level of destruction and casualties in Gorazde was "a fraction" of the high levels claimed during the panic.³⁹¹ UN officials later told visiting US congressmen that Bosnian casualties in Gorazde "were closer to 200 than 2,000" and that "the extent of the...fighting around the east Bosnian town was exaggerated by UN officials there".³⁹² With the benefit of hindsight, the extent of that exaggeration is now clear. Yet the claims at the time and the emotion being stirred daily by TV and press reporting went a long way to forcing the UN and NATO perilously close to military action. It is now known that such action could in no way be justified by the reality in Gorazde.

THE POWER . . . AND THE RESENTMENT

While the work of TV crews, journalists and UN operations in Bosnia increasingly became mutually complementary, at times the relationship was marked by resentment. There was not only friction over interpretations of events.³⁹³ There were also moments when both the UN military and humanitarian operations cursed activities that any self-respecting TV team must always consider legitimate journalistic activity and enterprise.

Often the military were positively delighted when cameras accompanied them³⁹⁴ and witnessed the events unfolding, like the Serb shelling of Konjevic Polje in March 1993.³⁹⁵ On occasions they actively encouraged TV coverage to achieve their own tactical goals.³⁹⁶

One example was the 400-vehicle humanitarian operation known as the "Convoy of Joy". It was halted by Croat forces in an enclave they controlled near Novi Travnik in the summer of 1993 and UN forces could not negotiate its release.

In the hope of putting pressure on the Croats the UNPROFOR chief of staff, Brigadier Hayes encouraged British UN troops to take a TV crew to the location. In the midst of chaos, and at great personal risk, they filmed several Moslem truck drivers being hauled from their cabs and shot or pitch-forked to death. The images were transmitted worldwide and led to the Croat leadership ordering the HVO Vice President Dario Kordich (a former journalist) to release the convoy forthwith. "Kordich realized the world was watching," said one senior UN officer present at the time.³⁹⁷

"Because of the media attention and the reaction to people being pulled out and killed, Kordich was ordered to get the convoy together", Brigadier Hayes confirmed. "TV had exactly the effect we hoped it would have. It gave the convoy an insurance policy".³⁹⁸ There was a belief among UN officers that Kordich had been encouraged by Croat leaders to seize a portion of the Moslem food on the convoy. The original Croat permission for the convoy to pass through their enclave had thus been a ruse to grab food supplies which they could get in no other way. The Croats had never expected a TV crew to be present.³⁹⁹

On other occasions, however, the military were resentful when -- in their view -- TV teams inadvertently created incidents that left an impression of conflict or desperation where the reality was less dramatic. They claim the resulting coverage not only gave a false impression in western capitals. More significantly it caused costly and time consuming diversions of hard-pressed troops and aid officials from planned humanitarian operations, thereby disrupting schedules.

They cite three examples to illustrate the complaint.

In late autumn 1992 a BBC TV team filmed and broadcast a harrowing news story about a mental hospital in the town of Tarcin. Conditions for patients were miserable. According to a senior military officer,⁴⁰⁰ the BBC correspondent Kate Adie tried to persuade Lt.Col Bob Stewart, commander of the British Cheshire regiment, "of the critical importance that he should do something about that".

The Danish UNHCR representative Anders Levinson was also pressed to respond. "Anders rushed into the Cheshire's mess. Bob Stewart and the officers were having tea. Anders said that Kate Adie has discovered a mental hospital near Tarcin and I have to go to deliver aid and blankets".⁴⁰¹ The British force commander for Bosnia and Croatia, Brigadier Andrew Cumming, was in their Vitez base at the time. He asked Anders Levinson whether he already knew about this hospital and the conditions. Levinson said he had known about it for some time. Brigadier Cumming asked: so why do something now? Levinson is said to have replied: "Because Kate Adie has been there".⁴⁰²

According to one officer, Colonel Stewart and the Cheshire Regiment "had to drop everything and do something about it". The resulting aid mission to Tarcin was considered both good profile and TV exposure for the recently-arrived British forces. But it irritated UNPROFOR and the UNHCR, not least because a British convoy was having to enter an area assigned to Spanish UN forces. "It deflected UK forces off their main job of escorting food to warehouses," said one senior British officer.⁴⁰³ "It was a one-day wonder; a pain in the arse. London asked what we were doing up there. We got our fingers rapped on that because our reconnaissance squadron [diverted to Tarcin] was doing alot of important work. It took away UK forces from Zenica and Vitez. [Planned] UNHCR operations were delayed for 48 hours".

Any journalist's view, on the other hand, will be that TV coverage brought a modest degree of comfort and aid to the mental patients which otherwise might have taken weeks.

A second incident took place in the Central Bosnian town of Gornij Vakuf in January 1993. UNPROFOR forces claimed the arrival of a BBC TV crew unintentionally started a battle.

At the time the peace was delicate and the town in a state of high tension. Following recent publication of the Vance-Owen Plan both Croat and Moslem forces were determined to control Gornij Vakuf. "It was a town where nothing was moving except the dust and tumbleweed. Eyes were looking at each other in the dark".⁴⁰⁴

In the military view, the BBC crew precipitated fighting which probably would have happened eventually but not necessarily at that moment. British UNPROFOR troops believed they knew what was going to happen because they had contacts with both warring parties. The Croat/Moslem tension was high. "It could have been anything that set off fighting".⁴⁰⁵ For that reason they had warned journalists to keep out.

Yet it is the prospect of confrontation that attracts a TV team. According to one British officer, Kate Adie and her crew "drove into this in their two BBC Land Rovers and fighting erupted. Kate was caught [by the fighting] and bundled into a cellar, then rescued in a Warrior [armored personnel carrier] after six hours. It endangered our guys. Kate shattered our efforts to broker peace".⁴⁰⁶

A third example is the well-documented case of five-year-old Irma Hadzimuratovic. Irma was severely injured by what could be classified as a routine mortar attack in Sarajevo on 30 July 1993 which received just three lines of coverage in a Reuter wire story. Shrapnel was lodged in the girl's spine. For eight days she had fought for her life in hospital. Despite the many other casualties in his care, on a Saturday evening one Bosnian doctor took it upon himself to try to save Irma and bring her condition to the world's attention.

Touched by the doctor's unannounced visit to the BBC office on the evening of 7 August, correspondent Alan Little delayed closing up the office. He and a Reuter cameramen visited the Kosevo hospital and prepared what he assumed would be a routine report of the suffering of one Sarajevo victim for a weekend evening bulletin. He could never have expected the response. News desks in London were moved deeply by the story. Within hours Irma became the focus of extraordinary media attention as a symbol of Sarajevo's apparent hell.⁴⁰⁷

At the time Western capitals were on holiday. There was no domestic political activity. There was, therefore, the usual seasonal shortage of news stories. Thousands of Bosnians faced a similar medical misery that Saturday night. Yet suddenly Irma's case was generating a remarkable news-making momentum of its own. It was momentum no correspondent in the field could ever plan for.

Fuelled by the obvious possibilities to boost both summer circulation and TV viewing figures, Irma's case became issue of the week. The media could blame everyone for Irma's plight -- governments, the United Nations, doctors, the Red Cross -- along with the apparent failure of the system to evacuate patients like her to the safety of European hospitals.

Irma's name quickly became a cynical acronym for **I**nstant **R**esponse to **M**edia **A**ttention. The switchboard at 10 Downing Street was inundated on Sunday night by callers asking how the government planned to help Irma. On Monday a UNHCR official accused the BBC of cheap journalism as some newspapers vied with each other to provide an evacuation aircraft.

The British Prime Minister John Major had already been sufficiently moved (or politically motivated, say the skeptics⁴⁰⁸) to organize a military airlift for Irma and 40 other cases. Western governments offered hospital beds they had refused to offer until the reporting of Irma's case. Within 48 hours a lone initiative from a single doctor in Sarajevo had exploded out of political and journalistic control.⁴⁰⁹ As Maggie O'Kane expressed it: "Irma's story was a newspaper classic. She had it all: children, foreigners not doing anything, a hero PM, bureaucracy and mercy flights".⁴¹⁰

Simultaneously a heated inter-agency and inter-governmental row ignited over accusations of inaction and failures in UN evacuation procedures. Angry UN officials and medical staff accused Britain of choosing evacuees according to its political priorities, not assessed medical needs. They resented the fact that

one girl's plight had grabbed world attention, distorted the real medical problems in Sarajevo⁴¹¹ and by-passed an evacuation list of another 400 deserving cases.⁴¹² They rejected British claims that Whitehall had been unaware of the medical crisis until television showed pictures of Irma.⁴¹³

"Because you can't help everybody doesn't mean you shouldn't help somebody," was how the British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd justified what the cynics decried as blatant political exploitation of the Bosnian misery for quick headlines. The UNHCR spokesperson Sylvana Foa responded bitterly: "Sarajevo is not a supermarket, where you can say 'I will have that one and this one'. What are the criteria here? Why not just children with blond hair and blue eyes?"⁴¹⁴

Irma's case and the media response exploded spontaneously from a unique convergence of circumstances and one journalist's chance response to them accompanied by a TV camera. The resulting British evacuation mission probably prevented several deaths.⁴¹⁵ Yet it alienated many who continued to risk their lives to remain in the heart of the Sarajevo misery through further periods of shelling and sniping.

It also appalled many journalists who have risked their lives and distinguished themselves covering Bosnia. The BBC's Martin Bell encapsulated the feelings. "Never mind the thousands of others who suffered unheeded. I happened to be in central Bosnia at the time - a time of unusually heavy fighting with casualties to match. And the flight of 10,000 Croats in desperate circumstances from their homes around Bugojno. From our base in Vitez we were actually able to see some BBC programmes. That the BBC on that Tuesday night should devote more than half of its main news programme to the plight of a single five-year-old girl struck me as daft. I felt like a humble foot soldier in an army whose high command had taken leave of its collective senses -- and I told them so".⁴¹⁶

However, it must be said that journalistically a personalized human-interest drama like Irma's did more to highlight the misery of Sarajevo than the usual round of news stories covering atrocities in a depersonalized way. Martin Bell accepts that. But like many colleagues he points to the ephemeral nature of the government response, which fades once the media agenda changes.

"If it takes Irma to connect the government to the feelings of ordinary people; to alert them to what is happening in Bosnia; and to conclude that if you can't help everybody that doesn't mean you can't help anybody, then clearly there is no harm done -- provided that there is a follow-up; that it isn't just a conscience-clearing exercise done for publicity".⁴¹⁷

The coverage of Irma's case underlined once again both the fickle power of TV and the resulting institutional resentments. Many more Bosnians were maimed in the same way as Irma. Apart from the brave, effective but controversial single-handed mercy missions of the British nurse Sally Becker,⁴¹⁸ they received virtually no media attention and no special treatment. Once Irma had arrived in Britain with other evacuees, media concern for those left in Sarajevo faded rapidly. As one British official reflected: "The UK has a wounded heart for a very short period of time".⁴¹⁹ The observation was both correct and a useful insight into the kind of calculation governments make when for just a few days TV coverage creates an issue like Irma.

On the humanitarian side the publicizing of Irma's plight did, however, bring one significant bonus which delighted the agencies. As Sylvana Foa, spokesperson of the UNHCR, put it three months later: "Little Irma gave us [the UNHCR] the boost we needed. It got us offers of 1800 beds around the world".⁴²⁰

And while Sally Becker's missions infuriated the UN military for the risks she took in cities like Mostar and the way she expected them to help her, they did succeed in evacuating sick children. In Sylvana Foa's words: "Sally Becker turns up in Bosnia with a TV crew, and sixteen sick children get promises of admission to the UK in three days, including visas for relatives. It usually takes at least three weeks, and usually the Health Secretary does not get involved personally!"⁴²¹

The chance presence of a camera has also saved lives. One example was Spanish coverage of a column of Moslem prisoners being marched up a hill out of Mostar by Croat forces on 11 May 1993. The crew from TVE had been tipped off about the forced exodus by Spanish UNPROFOR troops. They feared the scores of men would be executed but had no power to intervene under the UN mandate. The column was only seen at a distance in long shot, and the total footage was minimal. Worldwide transmission, however, shamed the Croat leadership. They had believed the forced expulsion was taking place in secret. In an attempt to save face internationally they ordered the immediate release of the Moslem prisoners. Some time later the wife of a man was in the column told an ITN producer that had it not been for the Spanish coverage her husband "would surely be dead".⁴²²

And then there was the exasperation. The British government -- like the US in Somalia -- became frustrated that "saving lives by UN convoys made less headlines than dead bodies", as one official put it.⁴²³ "UNHCR successes have been very under sung," said another.⁴²⁴ "We had great difficulty getting TV coverage on convoys. Endless meetings concluded with instructions to the ODA [Overseas Development Administration] press officers to get positive coverage of convoys. We could not get a more positive picture of UK policy."⁴²⁵

Another official said: "A convoy getting through is not a good story. Steady good news is always outweighed by startling images of a catastrophe".⁴²⁶ Lt.Colonel Alistair Duncan, commander of Britain's Prince of Wales regiment in UNPROFOR, said his troops successfully escorted more than nine hundred convoys during their six month duty. "Convoys were happening unreported and unsung every day over huge distances. All convoys during my period got to their destination."⁴²⁷

However, television coverage suggested otherwise.

Hence both the power of TV. . .and the official resentment.

CONCLUSION

This paper has challenged the conventional assumption of a profound, automatic cause and effect relationship between real-time TV coverage and foreign policy making. In doing so, the conclusion might

seem to endorse the views of cynics that little has changed since dispatches from the Crimea or the Spanish-American war. That is not the case.

Those dispatches took days or even weeks to reach their newspapers, by which time war had moved on. TV coverage of Vietnam was not 'real time' either. It was constrained by the need to develop film or ship video to limited satellite feeding facilities -- often a plane ride away in Bangkok, Hong Kong or further a field.

Similarly, coverage of the Falklands war was sanitized as much by time delays as the tiny number of journalists accompanying the British forces. Because of logistics and a degree of official 'obstruction', the most gruesome images of British guardsmen being brought ashore after their troop ship was bombed in Bluff Cove were not transmitted until ten days after the Argentine surrender.⁴²⁸ The only unexpurgated images from the Gulf War which showed the destruction of two Iraqi tanks and US soldiers killed by Iraqi fire was filmed by a freelance "unilateral" and were not transmitted until well after the event.⁴²⁹

Hence the crucial new role of real-time TV coverage transmitted from a conflict zone by 'fly-away' satellite dish.

While this paper has challenged the conventional wisdom, there is no doubt that for some policy makers real-time TV coverage does have a defining role in policy. As former US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger put it: "If you're on the receiving end; if you're trying to figure out what the policy ought to be, let me tell you: I would love to have had the period of time it took to decide we were going to war with Spain. When you have something like the Sarajevo event, and the President is in the office fifteen minutes later : come on! The time frame and the amount of time you're permitted to think through the consequences of what you're going to do is much reduced".⁴³⁰

But such a candid insight leaves unanswered the fundamental question of television's role in the immense, looming foreign policy challenges in the growing global instability.

It is estimated there is a potential for 2,000 ethnic conflicts in Africa⁴³¹ and 260 conflicts in the Russian 'Near-Abroad'⁴³². If the "battle lines of the future" are being already drawn and the "bloody conflicts"⁴³³ have already begun, is real-time television merely highlighting conflicts which western governments ultimately have no ability to prevent, or political will to solve?

The evidence is not encouraging. The answer is probably yes. As British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd repeatedly made clear on Bosnia: "We have not been and are not willing to begin some form of military intervention which we judge useless or worse, simply because of day by day pressures from the media -- pressures which I repeat are understandable, perhaps inevitable."⁴³⁴

For many reasons history is likely to show that the war in Bosnia was a watershed. It has defined starkly the limits to any moral imperative for foreign intervention in the new generation of regional conflicts.⁴³⁵ It has highlighted the high price of international multilateralism in institutions like the UN, EU and NATO -- a price which in Europe will become higher as more nations join the EU.

Without a determined international commitment the chances for effective diplomacy are small, if not negligible. As Ambassador Herbert Okun put it after being involved in two years of UN shuttle diplomacy in the former Yugoslavia: "Diplomacy without force is like baseball without a bat".⁴³⁶

In the international community (and therefore at the UN) there is a new realism. More than ever, leading governments fear committing themselves to any peace keeping or peace enforcing operations which ultimately seemed doomed to fail. A resolution passed in the UN Security Council does not necessarily signal a political will to take action.

In May 1994 the United States grouped together the whole range of options under the rubric peace operations.⁴³⁷ In defining her new criteria and "even stricter standards"⁴³⁸ for approving any future peace operations, the US seems to have further narrowed the chances of any being launched. The minimal international 'fig leaf' response to the Rwanda carnage illustrated the new pragmatism and reluctance. It underlined the unwillingness of any nation -- large or small -- to back policies which might commit them to a military quagmire and political humiliation in a distant land of which their electorate know either little or nothing.

Real time TV coverage of armed conflicts like Bosnia or Rwanda helps those people know a little more, but not enough to persuade governments to show greater political will. It also generates a new factor which must be considered when drawing up a policy: the fear of a steady rate of casualties being seen regularly on TV before all political and military goals have been achieved. In Somalia the video of one dead US soldier in humiliating circumstances was enough to force a policy change. By their nature, military 'peace operations' in the new generation of conflicts can never be of the short, sharp, overwhelming kind that politicians and military planners now believe is vital to sustain a public consensus for involvement.

When he announced US Presidential Decision Directive 25 on US involvement in Peace Operations, the US National Security Adviser Anthony Lake said: "When I wake up every morning and look at the headlines and the stories and the images on television of these conflicts, I want to work to end every conflict, I want to work to save every child out there, and I know the President does, and I know the American people do. But neither we, nor the international community have the resources nor the mandate to do so".⁴³⁹

On another earlier occasion Mr.Lake had made clear one key defining limit in the new world disorder. "Effective diplomacy is linked to practical calculations of power".⁴⁴⁰ His view reflects that of many leading governments, although some may not be as willing to be so candid.

The ultimate validity of this view seems to be confirmed by the war historian Sir Michael Howard. "As in all cases of civil conflict, outsiders, however powerful and well-intentioned, can only limit the damage and do what they can to bind up the wounds. . . We cannot solve the problems of the world, even if CNN brings them every night into our sitting rooms".⁴⁴¹

In other words, inherent in the cause and effect relationship between TV images and foreign policy are sharply defined limits -- just like the limits to the ultimate ability of ministers and diplomats to end a war.

Future real-time television coverage of the proliferation of regional conflicts will create emotions but ultimately make no difference to the fundamental calculations in foreign policy making. No journalist should believe otherwise, however ghastly the horrors he witnesses and reports on.

It is likely something will be done, but not much.

ENDNOTES

1. Background interview, 21 January 1994.
2. A comparison with the concept of radiation 'half-life' in physics. "The time required for half of something to undergo a specific process, especially for half the nuclei in a sample of radioactive material to undergo decay". In Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary.
3. The Video Vise by Michael Beschloss in The Washington Post, 2 May 1993. Later expanded into Presidents, Television and Foreign Crises, by Michael Beschloss. Washington: The Annenberg Washington Program (1993).
4. Quoted in Beschloss (1993) Ibid.
5. A lexicon used by the US State Department.
6. "The United Nations in the post Cold-War era". Speech by Sir David Hannay to the German-UN Association in Bonn on 11 April 1994.
7. "Bosnia: Television's War" by Martin Bell. Presentation to Wilton Park conference on 28 February 1994.
8. Speech by Ted Koppel of ABC News after receiving the Goldsmith Career Award for Excellence in Journalism at the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center, Harvard University on 10 March 1994.
9. Background interview, 22 April 1994.
10. US official quoted in "Low Marks for the Hack Pack" by Tom Rosenstiel, of the Los Angeles Times, reprinted in The Guardian on 3 February 1994.
11. Background interview, 13 April 1994.
12. "Playing To the Heart of the Nation", by Edward Bickham, Special Adviser to the British Foreign Secretary 1991-93. Published in Spectrum, Autumn 1993, p.3.
13. Desiderus Erasmus, Adagia, 1508.
14. The definition of "these current threats to peace" is taken from President Clinton's Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) No.25 on 'Multilateral Peace Operations' published on 5 May 1994.
15. For greater precision on the explosion of conflicts and their genesis see "Causes and Implications of Ethnic Conflict", by Michael E.Brown in Ethnic Conflict and International Security edited by Michael E.Brown (1993) pp.3-27.
16. Quoted with the permission of Michael Brown, Senior Fellow in the Center for Science and International Affairs during his presentation on "Ethnic Conflicts, Who Cares?" at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University on 19 April 1994.

17. Confirmed by senior government officials from several countries in background interviews for this monograph.
18. Human rights organizations estimate 100,000 Rwandans were killed in the first two weeks of carnage following the shooting down of a plane carrying the country's President on 6 April. The UN Secretary General later announced that an estimated 200,000 people had died in the first three weeks of violence. See "UN Council Urged to Weigh Action on Saving Rwanda", by Paul Lewis in The New York Times, 30 April 1994.
19. Human Rights Watch/Africa estimates that between 30,000 and 50,000 people were killed in Burundi in one week in October 1993. Data quoted in "Two Nations Joined by Common History" by Jerry Gray in The New York Times on 9 April, 1994.
20. "Diplomacy and Deceit", presented by the author. An ITN production for Channel Four TV, broadcast on 2 August 1993
21. Op Cit : "The Video Vise" by Michael Beschloss in The Washington Post, 2 May 1993.
22. Meeting at the Kennedy School, Harvard University, 3 May 1994.
23. See p.16 in External Intervention in the Yugoslav Wars by Professor Lawrence Freedman, of the War Studies Department at Kings College, London. This paper was prepared for the Humanitas conference on the Former Yugoslavia from 25-27 February 1994. Reproduced with the author's permission.
24. Award-winning images shot by ITN cameraman Nigel Thompson suggested the systematic destruction of Dubrovnik. Detailed examination of the city long after the siege was lifted showed that damage was less than the dramatic pictures indicated.
25. Background interview, 23 December 1993.
26. Op Cit : Background interview, 13 April 1994.
27. "The Ethics of Intervention" by David Fisher in Survival vol.36, No.1 Spring 1994 pp.51-59
28. "Dictating the Global Agenda" by Nik Gowing in Spectrum, Summer 1991, Reproduced by the Royal Institute for International Affairs in The World Today, June 1991 p.111
29. More than two years after Kuwait was liberated, organizations like Amnesty International declared bitterly: You've probably never heard of the Marsh Arabs before. You probably never will again. A full page newspaper campaign to alert the world to the continuing plight of the Shias.

See The Guardian, 14 April 1993, p.11.

30. Quoted from personal interview with Michael Brown (Op Cit) at Harvard University on 19 April 1994.
31. Op Cit : Background interview, 13 April 1994.
32. Op Cit : Background interview, 13 April 1994.
33. Background interview, 14 April 1994.
34. Based on background interviews with many politicians, officials and military officers who requested anonymity.
35. "Keeping our Heads in a Nightmare" by Douglas Hurd in The Guardian, 1 July 1993.
36. Background interview, 19 July 1993
37. Interview with author, 6 May 1994.
38. Background interview, 23 March 1994.
39. Op Cit : Background interview, 21 January 1994.
40. Background interview, 6 January 1994.
41. Background interview, 26 January 1994.
42. News that Matters by Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder. (1987) Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p.2
43. Ibid : p.5
44. Untransmitted part of on-the-record taped interview with Mohamed Sacirbey for Diplomacy and Deceit Op Cit
45. Op Cit : Background interview, 13 April 1994.
46. Interview with the author, 6 May 1994.
47. Op Cit : "Bosnia - Television's War" by Martin Bell. Presentation on 28 February 1994. p.12
48. "The Clash of Civilizations" by Samuel Huntington in Foreign Affairs, Vol.72, No.3, Summer 1993. pp.22-49
49. Professor Stanley Hoffman, presentation at Harvard University, 15 March 1994.
50. "The Coming Anarchy" by Robert Kaplan in Atlantic Monthly, February 1994.
51. Op Cit Michael Brown (1993)

52. "The New World Disorder". Speech by Douglas Hurd to the Royal Institute for International Affairs, London on 27 January 1993.
53. Ibid
54. Op Cit : Huntington (1993) p.29
55. Ibid
56. When this conclusion was put to many of those interviewed for this paper there were no voices of dissent.
57. Professor Sir Michael Howard, Lovett professor of Military and Naval History at Yale University. "Cold War, Chill Peace" was delivered as the Ditchley Foundation Annual Lecture on 9 July 1993.
58. See Second Front : Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War by John R. MacArthur. Berkeley: University of California Press (1993) p.146 and p.199.
59. See transcript of former US Secretary of State (1992) Lawrence Eagleburger during debate on Reliable Sources, broadcast by CNN on 13 February 1993. p.3
60. See Op Cit MacArthur (1993) p.138.
Also "The Media's Role in US Foreign Policy" by Edward S.Herman. Journal of International Affairs, Summer 1993, 47 No.1 pp.37-43.
61. Public Opinion, by Walter Lippmann. New York: MacMillan (1961) pp.31-2.
62. Op Cit : Herman (1993) p.29
63. Confirmed by Philip Zelikow, member of National Security Council and adviser to the President during the Gulf War (1990-91). Interviewed by author on 24 March 1994.
64. Author's interview with an official who was in the Oval Office at the moment it was realized the 100th hour of land battle was imminent. Confirmed by Philip Zelikow *Op Cit*.
65. Author's interview with Marlin Fitzwater, Press Secretary to President Bush, on 6 May 1994.
66. See MacArthur (1993) Op Cit for full discussion of Gulf War controversy.
67. Op Cit : Herman (1993) p.25
68. See, for example, "Follow the Leader -- when covering the Third World, Major Newspapers Take Their Cues from the White House" by Ken Silverstein in The American Journalism Review, November 1993
69. See, for example, "Awash with War Correspondents" by Commodore Christopher Craig and "The Media in Modern Warfare - Friend or Foe?" by Wing Commander Hugh Piper in Despatches published by TAPIO at the Ministry of Defence. No.4. Autumn 1993 pp.34-44

70. For a vivid description of the new relationship see: "You against us. The Army, Television and the Real World" by Martin Bell. Presentation to the Army Staff College Higher Command and Staff course in February 1994.
71. Interview with author, 5 May 1994.
72. Interview with author, 21 April, 1994.
73. "Testament of an Interventionist", by Martin Bell. British Journalism Review Vol.4 No.4 1993 p.8.
74. Broken Lives by Lt.Col.Bob Stewart. London: Harper Collins (1993) p.103
75. Background interview B, 17 January 1994.
For color, see "White Warriors Lost in the Ether" by Maggie O'Kane in The Guardian, 19 June 1993.
76. Background interview, 16 March 1994.
77. For a detailed exposition of government attitudes to the 'Something must be done' pressures, see "The Power of Comment", a speech by Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary to The Travellers Club, London on 9 September 1993.
78. Background interview, 21 January 1994.
79. John Mills, spokesman for the peace talks, in an interview with the author. 17 January 1994.
80. Interview with the author, 6 May 1994. Mr Fitzwater's posts in the White House were:
1989-93 Press Secretary to George Bush
1987-89 Press Relations Assistant to President Reagan.
1985-87 Press Secretary to Vice President Dan Quayle
1983-87 Deputy Press Secretary for Domestic Policy
81. Speech to CNN's 4th World Report Contributors Conference in Atlanta, 5 May 1993.
82. "Operating in Bosnia". Presentation by Colonel Alastair Duncan to Royal United Services Institute, London on 23 February 1994.
83. Op Cit Douglas Hurd speech on 9 September 1993.
84. Background interview A, 13 January 1994.
85. Op Cit : Transcript of CNN's Reliable Sources, 13 February 1994, p.1
86. Theodore H. White Memorial Lecture by Daniel Schorr, 18 November 1993.
87. Various conversations by the author with Non-Governmental humanitarian organizations.
88. "1,000 Estimated Dead in Burundi". Reuter report from Bujumbura quoted in The Boston Globe on 24 March 1994.

89. "Follow the Leader" by Ken Silverstein. American Journalism Review, November 1993 p.35.
90. "Algeria is said to be Moving Towards Break Up" in The New York Times, 4 April 1994.
91. In January 1994, ITN's operation in Bosnia, based in only one location, was costed at £23,000 for a ten-day period.
(Stewart Purvis, Editor-in-Chief, ITN)
92. A Witness to Genocide by Roy Gutman, Shaftesbury: Element Books (1993) p.vii
93. "Parting of the Ways?" by Tony Hall, Director of BBC News and Current Affairs. In British Journalism Review Vol.4 No.1, 1993, p.28
94. Background interview, 6 January 1994.
95. Op Cit : Transcript of CNN's Reliable Sources, 13 February 1994, p.1
96. Op Cit : Interview with Philip Zelikow. The point is explained further in "Foreign Policy Engineering: From Theory to Practice and Back Again" in International Security, Vol.18, No.4, Spring 1994.
97. Background interview, 23 November 1993
98. Background interview A, 30 November 1993
99. Interview with author, 22 April 1994.
100. Interview with author, 21 April 1994.
101. Interview with author, 15 April 1994.
102. Interview with author, 14 April 1994.
103. Op Cit : Interview with the author, 24 March 1994.
104. Interview with the author, 13 January 1994.
105. Background interview, 15 April 1994.
106. Interview with author, 21 April 1994.
107. Op Cit Interview with Sir David Hannay, British ambassador to the UN, on 22 April 1994.
108. Ibid
109. Testimony to U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 20 October 1993.
110. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 4 November 1993.

111. Interview with author, 22 April 1994.
112. Op Cit : Background interview, 13 January 1994
113. Background interview, 9 May 1994.
114. Op Cit : Background interview, 23 November 1993
115. Background interview, 11 February 1994
116. Background interview B, 30 November 1993
117. Confirmed by John Shattuck, US Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in an interview with the author on 13 April, 1994.
118. Meeting at Harvard University, 10 May 1994.
119. Author's interview with Larry Stachewicz, former assistant to Brent Scowcroft, on 16 April 1994.
120. Background interview, 4 May 1994.
121. Ibid
122. Op Cit Interview with author, 21 April 1994.
123. Interview with author, 29 April 1994.
124. Op Cit : Background interview A, 13 January 1994.
125. The words of a senior British figure overheard by the author after watching TV images of the Omarska and Trnopolje camps. 2 August 1992.
126. Op Cit : Interview with author, 6 May 1994.
127. Op Cit : Background interview A, 13 January 1994.
128. Op Cit : Interview with author, 29 April 1994.
129. Op Cit : Background interview, 30 November 1993.
130. According to CNN's 1993 data, the National news service is received by 63 million households and the International service by 66 million.
131. Peter Vesey, Vice-President CNN International interviewed by Professor Richard Parker of the Kennedy School, Harvard University on 18 February 1994.
132. Common Knowledge : News and the Construction of Political Meaning by W.R.Neuman, Marion Just and Ann Crigler (1992), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.111

133. Ambivalent is a word frequently used by those in government who were interviewed for this paper.
134. Interview with author, 5 May 1994.
135. See Live from Capitol Hill by Stephen Hess. Washington DC: Brookings Institution (1991). Also The Ultimate Insiders ; US Senators in the National Media by Stephen Hess. Washington DC: Brookings Institution (1986).
136. Op Cit : Interview with author, 6 May 1994.
137. Op Cit : Meeting at Harvard University, 10 May 1994.
138. Op Cit : interview with author, 21 April 1994.
139. Op Cit : Interview with author, 7 May 1994.
140. Op Cit : Interview with author, 15 April 1994
141. Interviews by the author with former Prime Minister Kim Campbell (on 26 April 1994) and Op Cit Barbara McDougall.
142. See Epilogue in The Nixon Memo by Marvin Kalb (October 1994). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
143. Background interview, 23 December 1993.
144. Op Cit : Meeting at Harvard University, 10 May 1994.
145. 4 and 5 October 1993
146. "The Roof Falls in on Clinton's Pioneers", by R.W.Apple of The New York Times, reprinted in The Guardian on 14 October 1993.
147. Op Cit : Interview with author, 22 April 1994.
148. "Bosnia: America's Interests and America's Role". A speech by Anthony Lake at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore on 7 April 1994.
149. See The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion by John R.Zaller (1992), Cambridge, England: The University of Cambridge Press, p.311
150. Op cit : Interview with author, 29 April 1994.
151. Madeleine Albright on NBC's Meet the Press, 13 February 1994.
152. Op Cit : The White House counselor David Gergen quoted in "As US Sought a Bosnia Policy, the French Offered a Good Idea". The New York Times, 14 February 1994.

153. Op Cit : Interview with author, 24 March 1994.
154. For more details of the poll data, with analysis, see: "TV War Images Pump Up the Pundits more than the Public" by Mark Jurkowitz in The Boston Phoenix, 4 March 1994.
155. Op Cit : Interview with author, 6 May 1994.
156. Op Cit : Interview with author, 24 March 1994.
157. Op Cit : Bickham (1993)
158. Op Cit : Background interview, 23 March 1994.
159. "Exposing Genocide". Interview with Roy Gutman in American Journalism Review, June 1993, p.34.
160. Interview with author, 18 December 1993
161. Presentation by Ms.Foa to the Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers Association in London on 17 November 1993.
162. Background interview, 6 February 1993
163. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994.
164. Op Cit : Stewart (1993) p.111
165. Op Cit : Background interview, 26 January 1994
166. Peacekeeper by General Lewis Mackenzie. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre (1993) p.284
167. Interview with author, 26 February 1994.
168. Op Cit : Mackenzie (1993) pp.319 & 324
169. Op Cit : Stewart (1993) p.109 and p.138
170. Background interview B, 13 January 1994.
171. Background interview A, 17 January 1994
172. Op Cit : Background interview, 13 April 1994.
173. Op Cit : Background interview, 26 January 1994
174. Op Cit : Mackenzie (1993) p.282
175. Background briefing, 20 May 1993.

176. Background interviews A and B, 17 January 1994.
177. Op Cit : Background interview, 26 January 1994.
178. Background interview, 19 January 1994.
179. Ibid
180. Background interview, 16 February 1994
181. Op Cit : Colonel Alastair Duncan, 23 February 1994.
182. Op Cit : Background interview 21 January 1994.
183. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994.
184. Op Cit : Background interview B, 17 January 1994.
185. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994.
186. Op Cit : Background interview, 16 March 1994.
187. 27 May 1992. A Bosnian Serb mortar hit a queue outside a bakery leaving 16 people dead and more than 100 injured.
188. 30 August 1992. A shell hit a crowded food market in western Sarajevo, killing 15 and injuring more than 100.
189. Channel 4 News/News at Ten (ITN), 6 August 1993
190. Discovered 22 April 1993, described in Op Cit : Broken Lives by Lt.Col. Bob Stewart (1993) pp 294-9
191. 12 July 1993. A mortar shell hit a queue of people waiting for fresh water, killing 12 people and injuring 15.
192. 5 February 1994. A mortar attack on Sarajevo's central market killed 68 and injured more than 200.
193. "This War has Changed My Life" by Ed Vulliamy. British Journalism Review Vol.4 No.2 1993 p.10
194. "Blood Washes the Streets of Sarajevo" by John Mullin in The Guardian, 7 February 1994
195. Interview with author, 25 January 1994.
196. For a graphic sample read Seasons in Hell by Ed Vulliamy. London: Simon and Schuster (1994) pp.126-136

197. "Glamour without Responsibility" by 'Kenneth Roberts', the pseudonym for a UN official. The Spectator, 5 March 1994.
198. Interview with Zlatko Dizdarevic, editor of Oslobodenje, on ABC News Good Morning America, 10 February 1994
199. "From Bosnia, a Curse for Policy Makers" by Nik Gowing, Boston Globe, 9 February 1994.
200. Op Cit : "Glamour without Responsibility" by 'Kenneth Roberts'
201. 5 February 1994
202. Op Cit : Gowing in the Boston Globe, 9 February 1994.
203. Background interview with British official, 21 January 1994.
204. The Washington Post, 29 January 1994
205. Op Cit : Background interview, 21 January 1994.
206. In "Wide River Still Divides Mostar's Bitter Neighbors", Yigal Chazan confirmed in a report from Mostar that Moslems in the east of the city had been subject to "perhaps the cruellest siege of the war". The Guardian, 14 March 1994, p.4.
207. "Assignment" on BBC 2, 2 November 1993.
208. Described by Larry Stachewicz in an interview with the author on 16 April 1994.
209. Background interview with former UN military officer, 6 May 1994.
210. Op Cit : Interview with author, 16 April 1994
211. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994.
212. European Union mediator Lord Owen quoting humanitarian agencies in an address to Diplomatic and Commonwealth Writers Association, 3 November 1992.
213. Op Cit : Vulliamy (1993), p.7
214. Op Cit : Interview with author, 16 April 1994.
215. Op Cit : Background interview A, 13 January 1994
216. Op Cit : Background interview, 19 January 1994.
217. Interview with author, 18 December 1993
218. Op Cit : "Dictating the Global Agenda" by Nik Gowing, June 1991.

219. Ibid : Gowing (1991)
220. Op Cit : Background interview, 6 January 1994.
221. Ibid
222. President Bush quoted in the Theodore H. White Memorial Lecture by Daniel Schorr, 18 November 1993.
223. Distant Voices by John Pilger. London: Vintage (1992), p126.
224. Op Cit : Background interview, 6 January 1994
225. "Iraq Shiites Smoldering Anger" by Trevor Rowe. International Herald Tribune, 23 November 1992.
226. Op Cit : A full page newspaper campaign. The Guardian, 14 April 1993, p.11.
227. "The Proof" on the front page of the Daily Mail, 7 August 1992
228. Ibid
229. Op Cit : Speech at Johns Hopkins University on 7 April 1994.
230. Reprinted in A Witness to Genocide by Roy Gutman (1993)
Op Cit.
231. For "Shame of Camp Omarska" by Ed Vulliamy in The Guardian, 7 August 1993; then "Macabre Trade in Weary Hostages of Misfortune" on 8 August 1992, followed by reporting from other camps during subsequent months.
232. Interview with author, 14 April 1994.
233. "Bosnia: US and UK at odds" by Simon Tisdall *et al* in The Guardian on 8 August 1992.
234. Remarks made in a taped interview with Peter Jennings of ABC News during "While America Watched: The Bosnia Tragedy". Transmitted on 17 March 1994.
235. Remarks made in a taped interview with Peter Jennings of ABC News Op Cit 17 March 1994.
236. "Muslim Survivors Tell of Torture, Slaughter at Hands of the Serbs" by Dan Stets in The Philadelphia Inquirer, 24 June 1992.
237. Op Cit : Seasons in Hell by Ed Vulliamy (1994), p.97
238. Op Cit : Gutman (1993) pp.ix-xi

239. "Moslems Nightmare under the Long Hot Yugoslav Sun" by Maggie O'Kane in The Guardian, 29 July 1992.
240. 2 August 1992 in Op Cit Gutman (1993) p.44
241. Ibid : Gutman (1993) p.xiii
242. Remarks made in a taped interview with Peter Jennings of ABC News Op Cit 17 March 1994.
243. Remarks made in a taped interviews with Fox and Eagleburger by Peter Jennings of ABC News Op Cit 17 March 1994.
244. Author's telephone interview with Foreign Office official on 6 August 1992.
245. Quoted from text of UNHCR Press Briefing on 6 August 1992. UN document 3771B.
246. Ibid
247. Op Cit : Background interview, 21 January 1994.
248. Op Cit : Background interview, 21 January 1994.
249. Op Cit : Background interview, 23 December 1994.
250. Interviewed by the author, 16 March 1994.
251. Op Cit : Seasons in Hell by Ed Vulliamy (1994) pp.107-109
252. Ibid p.113
253. Ibid p.115 and p.158
254. See p.3 of transcript for Op Cit : "While America Watched: the Bosnia Tragedy", ABC News, 17 March 1994.
255. Op Cit : Gutman (1993) p.xxxii
256. Tony Birtley, on contract to ABC News and later ITN.
257. UNHCR coordinator Larry Hollingworth speaking on Channel 4 News, London, 30 August 1993.
258. "Enclave that Finally Ran Out of Luck" by Yigal Chazan and Haris Nezirovic. The Guardian, 17 April 1993.
259. "UN's Generals Who Were Unable to Call the Shots", by Ian Traynor. The Guardian, 20 January 1994
260. Op Cit : Mackenzie (1993) p.104.

261. Croire et Oser, by General Philippe Morillon. Paris: Grasset (1993) p.166-7
262. 12 March 1994.
263. Op Cit : Background interview, 13 January 1994
264. Op Cit : Morillon pp.171-4
265. Op Cit : Morillon p.180
266. Background interview, 20 December 1993
267. Op Cit : Morillon p.171
268. For more detail see unpublished speech by the author "The New World Disorder: the Media, Politics and Defence" delivered to the British Army Staff College, Camberley on 13 May 1993.
269. For more details of Tony Birtley's freelance status see "Recognition for the Freelance" by Stewart Purvis, Editor-in-Chief of ITN, in the letters column of The Guardian, 25 February 1994.
270. Speaking on the Today programme, BBC Radio 4. Quoted in "Siege of Srebrenica", The Guardian, 17 April 1993.
271. Background interview, 20 December 1994.
272. Op Cit : Author's meeting with Tony Birtley on 28 April 1993.
273. Op Cit : Background interview, 23 December 1993.
274. Op Cit : Background interview, 20 December 1993.
275. Dr.Arria clarified the circumstances surrounding the creation of the Safe Areas under his Security Council Presidency in an interview with the author on 21 April 1994.
276. According to Dr.Arria, General Wahlgren later denied to him that he had ever recommended to the UN Peacekeeping Department against the idea of Safe Areas. Dr.Arria said that General Wahlgren told him he had never expressed such a view, and that he was misrepresented.
277. Op Cit : Background interview, 20 December 1993.
278. Op Cit : Background interview, 20 December 1993.
279. Security Council Resolution 824 on 6 May 1993 declared further Safe Areas in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde and Bihac.
280. Op Cit : Interview with the author on 22 April 1994.
281. Ibid

282. "Dark Shadows over Bosnia 'Safe Areas'" by Marcus Tanner. The Independent, 26 May 1993.
283. Interview with the author, 13 January 1994.
284. British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd at EU Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg, 8 May 1993.
285. "Sleepwalkers Lost in the Nightmare of Srebrenica" by Robert Block. The Independent, 26 May 1993.
286. "Time to Put a Stop to the 'Safe Areas' sham". Editorial in The Independent, 8 June 1993.
287. "UN Fears Bosnian 'Safe Areas' Face Disaster" by Ian Traynor. The Guardian, 17 July 1993.
288. "Leaving Them to Starve". Editorial in The Guardian, 1 July 1993.
289. "Trapped by a New Enemy in the Enclave of Despair" by Yigal Chazan. The Guardian, 20 January 1994.
290. "Whatever happened to Bosnia?" by Robert Block in The Independent, 20 October 1993.
291. UNHCR spokeswoman Lyndall Sachs quoted in Yigal Chazan, 20 January 1994 Op Cit
292. "Bosnians Live Trapped in UN Zone -- Srebrenica Survives Cut Off From The World" by John Pomfret. The Washington Post, 30 January 1994.
293. "For Canadian Troops in Bosnia, UN Role is Mission Impossible" by John Pomfret in The Washington Post, 31 January 1994.
294. 22 February 1994.
295. Op Cit : Background interview B, 13 January 1994.
296. Letter from Lt.General Francis Briquemont to Mr Akashi, Special Representative to the Secretary General, dated Sarajevo, 9 January 1994.
297. "West Sets the Stage for a Human Tragedy" by Tony Barber, Robert Block and Marcus Tanner. The Independent, 8 June, 1993.
298. "Patching a Tattered Policy" by Robert Mauthner. The Financial Times, 12 June 1993.
299. Confirmed in an interview by the author with General Ratko Mladic, military commander of the Bosnian Serb forces in Zvornik, on 29 June 1993.
300. Op Cit: Background interview, 20 December 1993.
301. Op Cit : Background interview with author, 21 April 1994.
302. Interview with author, 3 May 1994.

303. For full and detailed description of the scenes discovered, see Op Cit Stewart (1993) pp.294-9
304. Op Cit : Stewart (1993) p.296
305. Martin Bell's script quoted in "The Stand-Up Syndrome" by Steve Taylor in American Journalism Review July/August 1993, p.37
306. Op Cit : "Testament of an Interventionist" by Martin Bell.
307. Op Cit : Background interview, 26 January 1994
308. Background interview, date known to author.
309. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994.
310. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994.
311. Op cit : Background interview, 16 March 1994.
312. Op Cit : Background interview, 19 January 1994.
313. Op Cit : Background interview, 6 January 1994
314. Op Cit : Speech by Douglas Hurd, 9 September 1993.
315. Op Cit : Background interview, 16 March 1994.
316. Op Cit : Background interview, 16 March 1994.
317. Op cit : Background interview B, 17 January 1994.
318. Interview with author, 13 January 1994.
319. Op Cit : "Glamour Without Responsibility" by 'Kenneth Roberts', The Spectator, 5 March 1994. p.14
320. For a vivid portrayal of life in Sarajevo, see Seasons in Hell by Ed Vulliamy (1994). p.76-79
321. Op Cit : 'Kenneth Roberts'
322. Op Cit : Background interview B, 13 January 1994.
323. Heard by Dan Stets of the Philadelphia Inquirer. Quoted during interview with this author on 15 March 1994.
324. Op Cit : Background interview, 26 January 1994.
325. Op Cit : Background interview A, 13 January 1994.

326. Op Cit : Interview with author, 25 January 1994.
327. For a fuller analysis of the ethical dilemmas and shortcomings of journalists see, for example, The News at Any Cost -- How Journalists Compromise Their Ethics to Shape the News by Tom Goldstein. New York: Simon and Schuster (1985).
328. See "Back to Baghdad?" by John Simpson in The Spectator, 19 February 1994 p.13
329. Letter from a "senior UN official with significant responsibility in the former Yugoslavia" printed in Foreign Policy No 94, Spring 1994, pp.161-3
330. Op Cit: "Exposing Genocide". Interview with Roy Gutman in American Journalism Review, June 1993 p.35
331. See the emotions expressed in "700 Days" by Zlatko Dizdarevic in The New York Times Magazine on 10 April 1994, taken from his book Sarajevo: A War Journal.
 Dizdarevic wrote: "Here in Sarajevo, hundreds of TV crews parade before our very eyes; dozens of foreign journalists, reporters, writers. Everything is known here, right down to the minutest details, and yet nothing.
 "What's even worse is that almost since the beginning of the war, this 'army of liberation' has been here with its white tanks, its armored personnel carriers showing off all over town, the fingers of its soldiers ready on the trigger, and still -- nothing. As a human being, I am stunned by all of this and ashamed".
332. Op Cit : John Simpson, 19 February 1994
333. Op Cit : 'Kenneth Roberts'
334. "Rose's Welcome Candour" in The Daily Telegraph, 28 April 1994
335. Op Cit : Background interview, 9 May 1994
336. Interview with author, 5 May 1994.
337. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994.
338. Op Cit : Background interview, 21 January 1994.
339. Op Cit : Background interview B, 13 January 1994.
340. Op Cit : Background interview B, 13 January 1994
341. Op Cit : Background interview B, 13 January 1994.
342. Op Cit : Interview with author, 25 January 1994.
343. Op Cit : Background interview, 6 May 1994.

344. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994
345. Op Cit : Background interview, 6 May 1994.
346. Ibid
347. Op Cit : General Briquemont's letter to Mr Akashi.
348. Op Cit : Background interview, 26 January 1994.
349. Interview with the author, 20 April 1994.
350. Op cit : Background interview B, 13 January 1994.
351. 4 and 5 October 1993
352. For fuller discussion of arguments see "When Pictures Drive Foreign Policy" by Jacqueline Sharkey. American Journalism Review, December 1993, pp.16-18
353. Analysis by Stewart Purvis on Medium Wave, BBC Radio 4 on 2 January 1994.
354. Op Cit : quoted in Daniel Shorr lecture, 18 November 1993
355. Ibid : p.14
356. Interview with Paul Watson of the Toronto Star in "Determined To Get The Evidence", American Journalism Review, December 1993 p.16.
357. Op Cit : Interview with Col.Bill Smullen, 5 May 1994.
358. Background interview, 4 May 1994.
359. Op Cit : Interview with author, 6 May 1994.
360. Op Cit : Interview with author, 6 May 1994.
361. Op Cit : Interview with author, 7 May 1994.
362. 5 February 1994
363. See, for example, "An Opportunity to Reshape Policy -- Graphic Bosnia Images May Shift Public View" by R.W.Apple in The New York Times, 8 February 1994.
364. Op Cit : Ed Siegel, 6 February 1994
 Walter Goodman, 14 February 1994
 Martin Bell, 28 February 1994
365. Op Cit : Interview with author, 6 May 1994.

366. The authorized statement, "The Limits to Peacekeeping" by National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, was published in The New York Times on 6 February 1994 -- the day after the market massacre. The detail and context were later updated and expanded, then published as Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25 on Peace Operations, on 5 May 1994.
367. "As US Sought a Bosnia Policy, the French Offered a Good Idea" by Elaine Sciolino with Douglas Jehl. The New York Times, 14 February 1994.
368. Ibid
369. "Blood Bath" in Newsweek, 14 February 1994 p.20
370. Ibid
371. Background interview, 3 May 1994.
372. Op Cit : Background interview, 9 May 1994.
373. Op Cit : Interview with author, 7 May 1994.
374. Op Cit : Interview with author, 3 May 1994.
375. Interview with author on 14 April 1994.
376. The New York Times, 10 February 1994
377. Interview on NBC's Today on 6 March 1994.
378. Op Cit : Interview with author, 3 May 1994.
379. Op Cit : NBC News Meet the Press, 13 February 1994.
380. 10 February 1994
381. "US Says Serbs Can Unload Big Guns of Re-Aim Them", by Douglas Jehl in The New York Times, 16 February 1994.
382. Ibid
383. "US Denies Bending On Deadline", in The New York Times, 17 February 1994.
384. Background interview, 11 February 1994.
385. Op Cit : Background interview, 11 February 1994.
386. "NATO Enforces No-Fly Zone; Serb Shells kill 56 in Srebrenica", by John Daniszewski, The Associated Press, 13 April 1993.

387. For an on-the-record synthesis of what many diplomats, politicians and UN officials were saying privately see "Literature from the Ashes" by John Simpson in The Spectator, 16 February 1994 pp.11-12.
388. Confirmed in background interview with senior UN military officer, 6 May 1994. Op Cit
389. A UN general and UN civilian quoted anonymously in "Two UN Officials Accuse US of Prolonging War in Bosnia", by John Pomfret in The Washington Post, 30 April 1994.
390. Ibid
391. See "UN Military Aide Says Plight of Gorazde Is Exaggerated", by Roger Cohen in The New York Times, 30 April 1994.
392. US Rep. John P. Murtha (D-Pa) quoted in Pomfret Op Cit
393. See, for example, Broken Lives by Colonel Bob Stewart (1993) Op Cit pp.200-1
394. See, for example, Ibid p.180
395. Ibid p.267-8
396. Op Cit : "Glamour Without Responsibility" by 'Kenneth Roberts', in The Spectator, 5 March 1994.
397. Op Cit : Background interview, 16 March 1994.
398. Interview with author, 5 January 1994.
399. Op Cit : Background interview, 16 March 1994.
400. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994.
401. Ibid
402. Ibid
403. Op Cit : Background interview A, 17 January 1994
404. Ibid
405. Ibid
406. Ibid
407. For fuller details of the chronology see "Fighting for Irma" by Maggie O'Kane and Robi Dutta in The Guardian, 13 August 1993.

408. See, for example: "Leadership Based On What the Papers Say", by Mark Lawson in The Independent on 17 August 1993.
409. The mood was summarized in "Random Compassion" by Nick Cohen and Marcus Tanner in The Independent on Sunday, 15 August 1993.
410. Ibid
411. "No Food, No Water, No Health", by Sir Donald Acheson, former government Chief Medical Officer who wrote as Special Representative of the World Health Organization in Sarajevo. His article appeared in The Guardian on 18 August 1993.
412. Dr Patrick Peillod, head of the UN's evacuation committee, quoted in "Airlift Slows Despite 400 In Need", by Patrick Wintour *et al* in The Guardian, 16 August 1993.
413. Foreign Minister Douglas Hogg quoted in "An Airlift With Odious Elements". The Guardian, 16 August 1993.
414. Quoted in "Leadership Based on What the Papers Say" by Mark Lawson, The Independent on 17 August 1993. *Op Cit*
415. For a follow-up to the evacuees' conditions see "Courage and Pain of Bosnia Child Evacuees" by Paul Myers, The Guardian, 20 December 1993.
416. Op Cit : "Bosnia: Television's War" by Martin Bell, p.5
417. Op Cit : "Testament of an Interventionist" by Martin Bell. British Journalism Review Vol.4 No.4 1993 p.10
418. For more details of evacuations and Sally Becker's missions see, for example:
 "Magnificent Bosnia Airlift Criticized" by John Ezard in The Guardian, 18 December 1993.
 "Circuses Take Priority Over Bread in Devastated Bosnia" by Colin Smith in The Sunday Times, 19 December 1993.
 "Operation Angel Flies Bosnians Out for Treatment" by Angella Johnson in The Guardian, 20 December 1993.
419. Op Cit : Background interview, 21 January 1994.
420. Op Cit : Briefing by Sylvana Foa, 17 November 1993.
421. Ibid
422. Encounter with Peter Morgan, Channel Four News producer in mid-June, 1993.
423. Op Cit : Background interview, 23 December 1993.
424. Op Cit : Background interview, 21 January 1994

425. Op Cit : Background interview, 23 December 1993.
426. Op Cit : Background interview, 6 January 1994.
427. Op Cit : Lt.Colonel Alistair Duncan, February 1994.
428. The Argentine air strike on the HMS Sir Galahad at anchor in Bluff Cove took place on 8 June 1982. The burning ship and casualties being brought ashore were filmed on video tape by the BBC pool cameraman Bernard Hesketh.
The Argentine surrender in Port Stanley was six days later on 14 June. Taped coverage was transmitted a day later having been flown off the islands by jet.
The footage of the Bluff Cove disaster -- including badly-maimed Welsh Guardsmen and ships' crew -- was transported from the Falklands by ship. It was not transmitted until 24 June -- sixteen days after the event and ten days after the Argentine surrender.
429. Cited in From The House of War by John Simpson. London: Hutchinson (1991)
430. Op Cit : On CNN's Reliable Sources, 13 February 1994, p.4
431. Background interview with senior Red Cross official, 16 December 1993.
432. Cited by Professor Nikolai Petrov, Geography Department, University of Moscow during presentation at Tufts University on 6 March 1994.
433. Op Cit : Huntington (1993)
434. Op Cit : Douglas Hurd's speech, 9 September 1993.
435. See, for example, "The Lessons of Yugoslavia" a presentation given by Cedric Thornberry, Head of Civil Affairs, for the UN Protection Force in Yugoslavia. Delivered to the Center for Defence Studies, Kings College, London on 7 December 1993.
436. Interview in The New York Times, 11 July 1993.
437. Op Cit : President Decision Directive No.25, 5 May 1994.
438. Ibid p.5
439. Briefing at the White House attended by the author on 5 May 1994.
440. Op Cit : Speech at Johns Hopkins University, 7 April 1994.
441. Op Cit : Howard (1993)