

NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. 53 No. 2 Summer 1999

Five Dollars

International Journalism

War Crimes, Human Rights and Press Freedom: The Journalist's Job



Journalist's Trade
Reforming Welfare, Reporting on Poverty

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War Crimes, Human Rights and Press Freedom: The Journalist's Job

Ethnic conflict in the Balkans provides examples of crimes of war and abuses of human rights that journalists are being increasingly called upon to cover. A new book entitled "Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know," edited by Roy Gutman and David Rieff, was created to educate the news media and others about violations of humanitarian law. This book is commented on by **Ellen Hume**, former Executive Director of PBS's Democracy Project and Harvard's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, and by **John Shattuck**, United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic and the former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

Our focus then turns to examining the plight of journalists and media institutions covering the war in Yugoslavia. **Dragan Cicic**, a Yugoslav journalist who worked for B92, an independent radio station that was shut down by Pres. Slobodan Milosevic, writes about the death of journalism in Serbia. **Ardian Arifaj**, Editor of the Albanian-language newspaper KOHA Ditore, once published in Kosovo, tells of its rebirth in exile in Macedonia. **Chris Hedges**, who reported on the Balkans for The New York Times, explores dilemmas journalists confront in writing "the truth" of what they see. **Michael Kirkhorn**, Director of the Journalism Program at Gonzaga University, questions the role journalists should assume as moral arbiters. **Mark Lewis**, a former Voice of America correspondent, offers a glimpse at how VOA brings news to Balkan listeners. Reflections from **Balkan journalists**, compiled from excerpts of their Internet correspondence, follow. Then photographer **David Brauchli** shows in his images and tells in his words what it's been like to cover this story. Finally, **journalists** talk about how they cope with their emotional reactions while reporting on the casualties and cruelties of war.

Journalists then address the topic of press freedom and media responsibility. Ugandan newspaper editor **Charles Onyango-Obbo** reports on how his government took him to court as an act of intimidation after an unfavorable story was published. **Wilson Wanene**, a Kenyan-born freelance journalist, writes about a media journal in Kenya that is keeping a watchful eye on how doggedly journalists are using their emerging press freedom. In Chile, **Mirko Macari**, a reporter with the magazine El Sábado, explains why it is so difficult for reporters to write about the current court case involving General Augusto Pinochet. And **Dimitri Mitropoulos**, a political correspondent for To Vima, a newspaper in Athens, uses the experience in Greece to offer insight into how media might handle the arrival of Balkan refugees into their countries. ■

The Journalist as a Witness to War Crimes

A New Book Helps Reporters Define What They See

Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know

Edited by Roy Gutman and David Rieff

W.W. Norton & Company. 399 Pages.

\$35 hc. \$19.95 pb.

By Ellen Hume

In this century's seemingly endless cycle of crimes against humanity, journalists sometimes can make a real difference. "Crimes of War," written by seasoned combat reporters and other experts, advises journalists how to advance justice by using international law as a context for coverage.

Editors Roy Gutman, a correspondent for *Newsday*, and David Rieff, a freelance author, have organized an alphabetical encyclopedia of atrocities, legal definitions and practical advice. The book offers firsthand experiences with organized barbarity: machete massacres in Rwanda, genocide in Cambodia, the Serbian sniper siege of Sarajevo, rape camps, slavery in the Sudan. In telling their war stories, the contributors often describe their own helplessness. The writers have covered many war crimes over the years, "without any particular expectation that the perpetrators would ever be brought to justice," Lawrence Wechsler, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, concedes. Part of the problem, as David Rieff explains, is that "humanitarian intervention is at once an immensely powerful and a terribly imprecise idea."

But now the international community appears more responsive, the authors observe, and that is why they have created this guide. International laws are actually being used to punish some war crimes, thanks to the special international tribunals investigating Bosnia and Rwanda. There also is the pending effort to create an international criminal court. "By virtue of their profession, war correspondents may well find themselves among the first

outside witnesses on the scene at war crimes. As such, they're going to need to be informed witnesses, and the rest of us are going to have to become a far better informed and engaged public," Wechsler asserts.

This book tells journalists what to look for to determine whether a war crime may have been committed. Was there a machine gun emplacement hidden in the rafters of the targeted hospital? Were armed troops accompanying refugees who were fleeing? Had the defenders of a town raised a white surrender flag before they were shot? Was the radio station broadcasting journalism or propaganda incitements to murder? Was the electrical station used by the military or only by civilians?

Knowing the international laws regarding war crimes might even help to persuade some combatants to desist, one contributor suggests. "I was present as a nonpartisan journalist, but found myself unexpectedly faced with situations where I felt a moral obligation to save lives," writes Jon Lee Anderson, a freelance writer, recounting gruesome civilian executions in Sri Lanka. "I had no primer like this one, where the laws are clearly outlined, to help me formulate my arguments more convincingly. It is difficult to know whether men who feel themselves to be above the law can be persuaded by legal arguments, but it is certainly worth a try."

The book is compelling, but also frustrating at times. Some contributing authors suspend their neutrality to settle old scores, while others barely get started on the topic they've chosen. Benny Morris's chapter on the 1948

Arab-Israeli war is a comparatively lengthy polemic against Israeli atrocities, while Terence Taylor's too-brief article on biological weapons doesn't go far enough to tell journalists what to look for when seeking evidence of biological weapons. The book seems to be an eclectic compendium of what each journalist wanted to write rather than an integrated or complete analysis of what they actually needed to address. But despite these drawbacks, "Crimes of War" makes a valuable contribution.

Most importantly, "Crimes of War" shames the journalist who relies on descriptions of anarchy or "ancient hatreds" to describe what is happening on the ground at the present time. The editors cite British journalist Lindsey Hilsum's belief that when a journalist reports in this manner, "chances are that he or she has not fully understood what was going on."

The challenge to look more closely at what is unfolding, and understand it more clearly, infuses each chapter. For example, Israeli photographer Alex Levac describes in chilling detail how he rescued his film from confiscation by Israeli security officers, only to discover later, when he developed it, what he had: clear evidence that a Palestinian bus hijacker was murdered by the Israeli Shin Bet security service.

The book stresses basic common sense about preserving legal evidence. "Mass graves can be easily tampered with and the evidence they contain lost forever," cautions Elizabeth Neuffer of *The Boston Globe*. Instead of digging around the site themselves, journalists should photograph the suspected mass

grave and mark its location on a map. They should then contact a credible investigating unit. [For more details about mass graves see Neuffer excerpt on page 9.]

Journalists are often caught up in these catastrophes and must make life-and-death choices that affect themselves and others. "We underwent many blindfolded interrogations, and were later brought to Baghdad and imprisoned. During one particularly severe interrogation, I was accused of being a CIA agent," recounts Frank Smyth, a freelance journalist whose photographer comrades did not fare so well. "...Saddam released us. But Iraqi authorities kept Gad's camera bag. His remains have yet to be recovered."

International law may not provide the neutrality protection that American journalists expect. Journalists who are accredited by and accompanying an army are legally part of that military entourage, "whether they see themselves that way or not." They should expect under the Geneva Convention to be treated as prisoners of war if captured by opposing forces, advises New York Times reporter William A. Orme, Jr. Their notebooks and film

may legally be confiscated by military personnel under these circumstances.

One of the most powerful stories in the book is also one of the most disturbing. South African judge Richard Goldstone, the first prosecutor of the International Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, describes in his foreword how his court in South Africa received anonymously a videotape which showed police lining up before a crowd. This videotape proved they were criminally responsible for shooting the civilians.

"One can imagine the agonizing which preceded the decision on the part of the reporting team to send me the videotape—how they weighed the general rule of not providing such evidence for court proceedings against the unique proof they had of the events in question," Goldstone writes. He deduces that the film was produced by an American television company crew. "Whoever they were, I was most grateful for their action, which enabled many innocent victims to obtain a large measure of justice," he says. But the fact that the tape was never broadcast "illustrates the uncertain tension that journalists feel about publishing or broad-

casting controversial events without knowing the precise limits of the law or law enforcement."

This book is, for all of its horror stories, a triumph of hope over experience. Even as he concludes that barbarities like the Khmer Rouge genocides haunt every era, battle-worn Sydney Schanberg, who reported for The New York Times, exhorts reporters to renew their efforts to expose them. "Is it hopeless, then, to try to strengthen both the international law and its enforcement? No, never hopeless, not if you believe in the possibility of improvement, no matter how slight. Journalists are by blood and tradition committed to the belief, or at least to the tenet, of trying to keep bad things from getting any worse than they already are." This book just might help them do that. ■

Ellen Hume was Executive Director of PBS's Democracy Project and Harvard's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, and a reporter for The Wall Street Journal.

Confronting the Abuses of Human Rights

In the Post-Cold War Era, Ethnic Conflicts Result in War Crimes

Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know

Edited by Roy Gutman and David Rieff

W.W. Norton & Company. 399 Pages.

\$35 hc. \$19.95 pb.

By John Shattuck

August 1999 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, the first systematic attempt to establish a legal firebreak between barbarism and civilization in the wake of the Holocaust and the Second World War.

Paradoxically, international humanitarian law based on the Conventions

has steadily grown over the last half century, while the scope and number of crimes against humanity have simultaneously increased. "Crimes of War" tells the sobering story of this paradox, defining modern crimes against humanity and recounting the chilling circumstances of their commission.

At the heart of this story is a series of

reports. In 145 entries by journalists, lawyers and scholars, Roy Gutman and David Rieff have assembled succinct and devastating accounts of modern genocide, apartheid, collective punishment, disappearances, torture, wanton destruction and other violations of the Geneva Conventions. They have coupled this with methodical descrip-

tions of how these crimes have been committed in Bosnia, Rwanda, South Africa, Colombia, Cambodia, Chechnya and other places in our world. By doing so, they provide an impressive foundation from which editors, reporters, producers and others whose job it becomes to tell these stories can construct accounts that have a basis both in the reality of what they see and the legality of what it means.

Since all human rights work begins with reporting, let me briefly supplement the Gutman-Rieff anthology of war crimes with three accounts from my own experience:

- In May 1994, President Clinton sent me to Central Africa to meet on an urgent basis with regional leaders about the massive killings then going on in Rwanda. As I flew over the Rwanda-Tanzania border in a small plane, I saw what looked like logs floating down the Kagera River. Flying lower, I realized that the river was choked with corpses, the product of a ghastly campaign of genocide.
- A year later, in July 1995, I traveled to the then-isolated Bosnian town of Tuzla to interview refugees streaming in from Srebrenica. I had gone to investigate reports of atrocities. What I learned was staggering. The survivors, including three men who had escaped their own executions, recounted to me in graphic detail the torture and cold-blooded murder of thousands of unarmed Muslim men by General Ratko Mladic and his Serb troops. Srebrenica would prove to be the largest single act of genocide in Europe since the Second World War.



From top to bottom: Victims of the fall of Srebrenica in the mass grave at Pilice Collective Farm; view of the mass grave at Ovcara where the Serbs murdered patients and staff from the hospital in Vukovar; forensic scientists Dr. Clyde Snow and Bill Haglund and their team examine the mass grave at Ovcara. *Photos by Gilles Peress/Magnum Photos.*

- In September 1998 I went on a fact-finding trip to Kosovo with former Senator Bob Dole. Our mission was to interview internally displaced persons to find out why more than 250,000 Kosovars had fled their homes. We heard and reported accounts of the systematic shelling of Kosovar villages and unarmed refugees by Serb paramilitary forces and the rounding up and execution of military-aged men—part of the ongoing campaign by Serb President Slobodan Milosevic to terrorize and drive away the Kosovar population.

The post-Cold War world was not supposed to turn out this way. Less than a decade ago, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, events appeared to be heading in a very different direction. Changes not expected in this century had transformed the world in a matter of months. Commentators pontificated about “the end of history,” as if the expansion of democracy and universal recognition of human rights were inevitable byproducts of the end of communism. But events in Bosnia, Rwanda and now Kosovo turned these unrealistic hopes into dust. By the mid-1990’s commentators had shifted away from proclaiming the end of history to predicting the advent of global chaos, from the wave of democratization to the clash of civilizations.

Which will it be? During the last decade there has indeed been a real and measurable trend toward greater global democracy, but the tensions and pressures of globalization have also generated unprecedented upheavals. There are more democracies, but there are also more conflicts. The repressive but relatively stable Cold War system has disappeared, but no other form of international order has yet emerged to take its place. This uncertainty has thrust human rights issues to the forefront and made the protection of them far more complicated. For every Mandela, there is a Milosevic. For every Velvet Revolution, there is a vicious civil war.

Human rights work in the post-Cold War era not only draws upon the principles of the Universal Declaration of

For every Mandela, there is a Milosevic. For every Velvet Revolution, there is a vicious civil war.

Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions; it also requires strategic action to counter the efforts of cynical leaders who manipulate change to instill fear, revive repression and promote genocide.

Today, a whole new set of human rights challenges confront the world, stemming from the growing clash between globalization, on the one hand, and national disintegration, on the other. Countries are engaging with each other in an enormous range of activities that transcend their borders. National economies have become increasingly intertwined. Trade, the environment, security and population issues have become powerful forces for global integration. New technologies of communication, transportation, satellite television and the Internet bring people of different countries and cultures together.

Yet as globalization creates opportunities for economic growth and the flow of ideas and blending of cultures, it also produces powerful reactions in the form of nationalism, religious fundamentalism and political repression. People in the throes of disorienting change (like the breakup of Yugoslavia) seek refuge from an uncertain future in their own national, ethnic or religious identity. Cynical political leaders like Slobodan Milosevic enhance their power by preying on popular insecurities and fanning the flames of communal violence.

In Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo and other places described in “Crimes of War,” we have seen where all of this can lead. Genocide or other crimes against humanity can be committed with frightening efficiency and little technology in just a few weeks—as was the case in Rwanda—or over several years, as in the case of the former Yugoslavia. For those who were not

slaughtered, there is the misery of the refugee camps and the continuing crises wracking the Balkans and Central Africa. Other post-Cold War conflicts involving war crimes have oc-

curred in Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Haiti, Burma, Afghanistan, Colombia, Liberia, Sudan, Sierra Leone and East Timor, to name just a few from the “Crimes of War” anthology.

Countries in conflict today operate as the human rights equivalents of astronomical black holes, destroying the very moorings of civilization from within and spreading negative influences across entire regions. If these modern conflicts are to be contained and war crimes curtailed, the international community must develop an approach to human rights crises that, in the short run, can limit their negative influence on other countries and, over the long run, can respond to their peoples’ democratic aspirations. This is the challenge implicitly thrown down by the editors of “Crimes of War.”

Three broad strategies are essential if it is to be met: early warning, intervention and justice.

Early Warning

How can we develop better early warning systems to predict the outbreak or recurrence of what happened in Bosnia, Rwanda and Kosovo? During the past five years the international community has begun to institutionalize the use of human rights and refugee missions as early warning mechanisms. The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as the human rights field operations of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have established early warning systems in dozens of potential conflict areas.

In East-Central Europe, the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities and the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights have played a similar role, and in Latin

America the Organization of American States (OAS) is increasingly a regional resource for early warning and conflict prevention.

Once forwarned of a potential conflict involving human rights crimes, preventive action can be mounted in a number of forms. Measures such as visa and arms restriction and the conditioning of access to international financing and bilateral assistance can be used to put pressure on leaders who are promoting conflict. At times, mediation can be brought to bear on the crisis. In Guatemala and El Salvador the United Nations and the OAS negotiated an end to conflicts involving massive human rights abuses. Behind-the-scenes mediation often goes unreported. In Estonia, for example, the OSCE quietly sponsored a series of local open forums on minority rights in 1993 and 1994 that brought together Estonians and Russians and effectively defused the explosive potential for violence.

Intervention

When early warning fails, more active measures such as economic sanctions may become necessary, especially when a large portion of the population is threatened by violations of international humanitarian law. But sanctions are most effective when they are broadly multilateral—for example, when they were aimed against the apartheid regime of South Africa—and that kind of success is difficult to achieve.

A more effective mechanism than sanctions can be the creation of a coalition of states to take collective action in response to massive human rights abuses. The larger the number of countries involved in this kind of intervention, the greater its legitimacy and potential for success. In Haiti, for example, the United States worked with the United Nations, the OAS and regional leaders to respond to the violent overthrow of a democratic government and an ongoing systematic pattern of human rights abuses. In Mozambique and Namibia, United Nations and African leaders backed by an international coalition brokered the settlement of vio-

lent conflicts and the transition to democracy.

But these success stories are overshadowed by the failure of early interventions in Bosnia and Rwanda. A lesson of these failures is that traditional peacekeeping with its limited rules of engagement is inadequate and sometimes even counterproductive when a conflict at its very root involves crimes against humanity.

That lesson is powerfully recounted in the chapters on Bosnia and Rwanda in "Crimes of War." Beyond the inability of traditional peacekeeping to respond to modern war crimes, it is also true, as Gutman and Rieff graphically illustrate, that outmoded interpretations of the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of states has inhibited international efforts to address these situations. As the Kosovo crisis also demonstrates, national sovereignty can no longer be permitted to shield crimes against humanity from international scrutiny and response.

The events in Rwanda, Bosnia and Kosovo have clear repercussions for international security. The failure of early peacekeeping efforts in these situations reflected a reluctance by the international community to use force as a last resort in response to massive violations of international humanitarian law. By contrast, the multinational force that entered Haiti in October 1994, the NATO force that was deployed in Bosnia to implement the Dayton Accords in November 1995, and the NATO air strikes on Serbia that began in March 1999 were all authorized to respond directly to massive human rights abuses. The decisions of the international community to intervene in Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo signal what could be the beginning of a fundamentally different approach to addressing crimes against humanity—an approach that draws its legitimacy and mandate from the international humanitarian law summarized in "Crimes of War."

Justice

Another lesson of Bosnia, Rwanda and Kosovo is that conflicts involving geno-

cide or crimes against humanity cannot be resolved without the involvement of institutions of justice. Revenge may offer the victims fleeting satisfaction, but only at the cost of a perpetual violent cycle of hate. Justice can offer survivors an opportunity to right the wrongs committed against them by holding accountable those who were responsible. Justice can be equally important to innocent members of national or ethnic groups involved in the conflict because it can help remove the stigma of guilt by association that settles over an entire group when some of its members have committed war crimes. Justice can also serve as a warning to others who might want to engage in similar acts in the future.

For all these reasons the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are essential to the resolution of conflicts involving crimes against humanity. As Gutman and Rieff point out, the international community must help these tribunals to function as key elements of an evolving global response to war crimes—for example, by facilitating the arrest of indicted war criminals. What makes the two tribunals remarkable is that they are charting completely new territory in international law. Not even the Nuremburg trials involved bringing justice to an ongoing conflict as a means of ending it, and certainly no other international institution of justice has ever tried to do so.

Of course, international justice by itself is not enough. Over the long run, the only way to deter war crimes is to build indigenous national institutions that foster the rule of law in countries that are emerging from conflict. Truth Commissions in South Africa, El Salvador and elsewhere have played a critical role in uncovering and rectifying human rights crimes. National courts must also play their role, as can national human rights commissions. For this reason international donor countries are now programming substantial amounts of foreign aid to support the rule of law in post-conflict and transitional countries. This aid is used, for example, to support the training of judges, court administrators, prosecu-

tors, defense lawyers and the police. It also provides assistance for legal education and the writing of constitutions and a wide range of other law reform activities designed to create new institutions of domestic justice and human rights enforcement.

As the bloodiest century in history comes to a close, it is imperative that the promise of the Geneva Conventions be fulfilled. To do so we need a better understanding of modern war crimes and a stronger commitment to the evolving strategy for addressing them. "Crimes of War" is a solid contribution to the former and a provocative inspiration for the latter. ■

John Shattuck is United States Ambassador to the Czech Republic and former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 1993-98. He and Hume have been married since 1991.



Skeletal remains of bodies exhumed from a mass grave in Sanski Most, Bosnia, in March 1999. Photo by Radivoje Pavicic, courtesy of *The Boston Globe*.

Book Excerpt

In "Crimes of War," journalists describe their reporting experiences with events that involve war crimes and offer suggestions about how reporters can create linkages in their coverage between information they uncover and possible violations of international law. What follows is an excerpt from the book regarding the discovery of mass graves. Elizabeth Neuffer served as European Bureau Chief for The Boston Globe and is the Edward R. Murrow Press Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. She is working on a book on post-war justice issues in Bosnia and Rwanda.

Mass Graves

By Elizabeth Neuffer

You could smell the mass grave at Cerska long before you could see it.

The sickly, sweet smell of the bodies came wafting through the trees lining the dirt track up to the grave. The killers had chosen their spot well, an obscure rise off a rutted road few needed to travel.

Investigators with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) had discovered the grave. And the stench that hovered in the air indicated they were exhuming it, collecting evidence for war crimes cases.

The corpses were dressed in civilian clothes. They had gunshot wounds to the back of their heads. Their decaying hands were bound behind their back. These men and boys, forensic experts at the scene said, had been gunned down in cold blood.

The Cerska grave is one of several exhumed in Bosnia that help explain

the fate of approximately seven thousand Bosnian Muslim men and boys from Srebrenica, who disappeared after Bosnian Serb forces overran the UN safe area in July 1995. Bosnian Serb leaders asserted that Srebrenica's men, wielding arms, were killed in combat.

The grave proved otherwise.

Individual and mass graves provide vital evidence to war crimes prosecutions, especially those involving extrajudicial executions and targeting of civilians. Forensic experts over the last twenty years have worked to exhume and examine graves in Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Ethiopia, Mexico, and Iraqi Kurdistan. Exhumations in Argentina, for example, helped show that many of the thousands of civilians who disappeared during the juntas had been executed; that forensic evidence was presented during the 1985 trial of nine Argentine generals, five of whom were later convicted.

In recent years, forensic teams have exhumed mass graves in Rwanda and

the former Yugoslavia, some of the largest graves yet discovered. Evidence from the exhumations will be a key part of upcoming war crimes cases. For example, evidence from graves like Cerska, combined with witness testimony, would be part of the case against former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and army commander Gen.

will help identify which grave is which. Even then, the mass grave may not be obvious.

Experts often comb through a field or forest to find a mass grave. They will look for abrupt changes in vegetation to indicate recent burial activity, or changes in the texture and color of earth. Depressions or mounds are an-

ing the grave, often with a metal rod, seeking to test its consistency and detect the smell of dead bodies. Once investigators have dug down to the level of bodies, they will sift the earth for shreds of evidence and dust off each body. Bodies are carefully examined before being removed. Valuable evidence can include blindfolds, bullets, and bonds that indicate how a victim was killed. Jewelry or papers help with identification.

The science of determining the cause of death is complex. An expert examining a bullet wound can determine where a person was shot, the range of the shooting, and the angle at which the bullet entered—all clues to whether someone was executed or not. Identification is the next step. Experts rely on witnesses, who may know who is in which grave. Accurate dental records help to make a match between a body and a missing person. DNA testing can also be used to help identify victims.

Success varies. In Rwanda, identification is almost impossible, due to a

Reporters who come across what they believe to be a mass grave should not interfere with it.

Ratko Mladic. Both men have been charged with war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

To prove genocide or crimes against humanity in the case of Srebrenica, prosecutors would have to show that Bosnian Muslims were deliberately targeted for mass executions. Forensic evidence will help establish that the dead in a mass grave are Bosnian Muslim civilians and that they were executed.

Mass graves themselves can be a violation of international law. The Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I contain provisions governing the proper burial, identification, and registration of those killed in war. Prisoners of war, for example, must be “honorably buried” in graves that bear information about them.

But the right to exhume a mass grave or to halt tampering with a grave is not clear under international law. UN General Assembly resolution 3074, adopted in 1973, calls for States to cooperate in war crimes investigations. Articles 32 and 33 of Additional Protocol I require parties to search for missing persons after hostilities end, and otherwise assist in finding out their fate. But an individual country does not have to allow suspected mass graves to be examined.

Not all mass graves contain victims of war crimes or atrocities. Some may hold the bodies of hurriedly buried combatants. Witnesses and survivors

other sign digging has recently taken place.

Reporters who come across what they believe to be a mass grave should not interfere with it. Mass graves are often mined or strewn with unexploded ordinance. Disturbing a mass grave might also compromise the evidence it contains. Do not try to excavate, or collect anything protruding from the

Each part of the human skeleton—some two hundred bones and thirty-two teeth—has its tale to tell.

grave. Only photograph the grave and mark its location on a map.

Mass graves can be easily tampered with and the evidence they contain lost forever. It is important to exercise judgment about whom is notified of a suspected mass grave. Two starting points are the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Boston-based Physicians for Human Rights, which sends forensic teams to examine graves around the world, is another. Once forensic experts arrive on the scene, they will conduct their search with an archaeologist’s precision. Each part of the human skeleton—some two hundred bones and thirty-two teeth—has its tale to tell.

A forensic team will begin by prob-

lack of records and the vast size of graves. But experts are optimistic they will be able to identify most of the two hundred bodies exhumed from Ovcara, Croatia, thanks to a list of who was in the grave. They are less optimistic about the Cerska grave, given how many people have gone missing.

But grieving mothers and wives still hope they will succeed. “Bring his body to me,” said Hatidza Hren, a Bosnian Muslim searching for her husband. “I will recognize his bones.” ■

A Serbian Journalist Ponders What Has Been Lost

‘What,’ he asks, ‘does courage mean in the face of repression?’

By Dragan Cicic

There is no more journalism in Serbia.

Nothing that resembles what is usually understood as being journalism has existed there since the last week of April. That’s when Tomahawk missiles slammed into a number of transmitters of Serbian television, following a deadly attack on the network’s headquarters in which eight people were killed.

But I am not saying that journalism in Serbia is dead because of that. After all, however regrettable the death of civilians, the destruction of Serbian state-run television can hardly be seen as a fatal blow to the freedom of the press. Serbian TV was a powerful and brutal propaganda machine in the service of President Milosevic’s regime.

But Serbia did once have quite a few real journalists. In fact, until recently a number of highly professional dailies, radio and TV stations and magazines flourished there. President Milosevic did his best to strangle that vibrant scene which was so incongruous in the otherwise bleak landscape he created. His henchmen worked hard to persecute Serbian newsmen, but many news organizations still managed to operate. Soon after the first NATO sorties, Serbian police closed down B92, the radio station I worked for, and then nationalized it.

But that wasn’t what killed Serbian journalism, either. In the end, for Serbian journalism to die, it had to commit a suicide.

The story about this suicide is a painful one for me. I know, or I believed that I knew, many of the prominent journalists in Belgrade. Some of them I still consider to be very close friends. But despite knowing those people well, today I can hardly recognize them. Ever since the NATO air



Serbian children flash the Serbian three-fingered symbol at a passing army tank in March as it passes on the road outside of Klina, a town some 50 kms. west of Pristina. *Photo by David Brauchli/The Associated Press.*

strikes began, all those voices of dissent, so important in the years of Milosevic’s oppression, started condoning his policies of confrontation and ethnic cleansing. These are some excerpts from the recent writings of my friends and colleagues who once were the standard-bearers of free thought, independent and professional, masters of critical journalism. The readers will forgive me for not naming names. (If I did, I would feel like a denunciator.) So here are some quotes from Serbian reporters that are not attributed.

“In a savage attack of the NATO aggressors last night the targets were civilians.” (At that time, in the first week of air strikes, no civilian targets were hit.)

“Those who are watching the scenes with Albanian refugees on satellite channels believe that NATO itself considerably contributed to that, that it positioned itself as an ally of the Albanians, and therefore their expulsion is justified to some extent.”

“In Kosovo there are no demolished mosques. Villages are not destroyed, although that could have easily happened, because KLA [Kosovo’s rebel army] was there. The only damaged houses in Pristina [capital of Kosovo] are those struck by NATO bombs.”

Some of our colleagues did not even hesitate to point at those who did not change their views so dramatically. One of them found it necessary to remind the Serbian public (and authorities)

“What would I be doing,” I asked myself, “if I were there?”

that Veran Matic, the Editor-in-Chief of Radio B92, the spiritus movens of unbiased professional journalism in Serbia whose station was closed down and nationalized, failed to start publishing eulogies to Milosevic's regime. He wrote: “Matic and others are really lucky that the atmosphere in Belgrade is relaxed. The West expected, actually desired, that democratic opposition and journalists be persecuted. They wanted to use that to justify the NATO intervention. But the [Serbian] regime made no such moves.” (Three days later, the leading Serbian publisher was murdered in Belgrade.)

“This [NATO] intervention has nothing to do with morality. The existence of Albanian refugees is used to cover the real aims of this war.”

“The execution of the Serbs is seen [in the West] as a natural right of the superior class and race.”

None of those whom I've quoted reacted to the murder of one of our few colleagues who failed to praise Milosevic's wisdom. Slavko Curuvija, a journalist and the owner of the biggest Serbian daily, stopped publishing the day the air strikes began. In his only public statement he claimed it was in protest against the NATO intervention, but told his staff that things were going to turn very nasty and that they would not be able to work professionally. So he told them they better stop working altogether. And he went quietly away.

But Milosevic's family did not forget him. Mira Markovic, Milosevic's wife, wrote an article which was read out with gusto on Serbian state television, while it was still unscathed by NATO. She reminded the public that Curuvija criticized her and her husband and harbored sympathies for Western democracies. That meant, she went on, that he gloated over NATO attacks and favored them. “He will be punished,” concluded Markovic.

Four days later, two men approached Curuvija as he was entering his apart-

ment and shot him dead in front of his girlfriend. Slavko Curuvija was not criticizing the government during the last days of his life. His sin was simply that he did not join the choir.

My colleagues and friends from B92 are among a very few who did not join it either. I felt good that at least this little group of people still resists. Then I said to myself: “Resists? They are just keeping their mouths shut! So there's our country in which the highest form of civic courage is to keep quiet.”

In the tiny republic of Montenegro, another unwilling part of Milosevic's Yugoslavia, journalists are bravely defying his army by writing about all the horrors of Kosovo.

Then it struck me that one could find it easier to stick to principles when one is looking at things from the safety of the United States instead of being caught between the hammer of NATO air power and anvil of the regime responsible for tens, if not hundreds of thousands of deaths. In Montenegro, the government is democratic, and it showed determination to use its police force to protect its citizens from Milosevic's troops stationed there. In Serbia, journalists are completely on their own.

“What would I be doing,” I asked myself, “if I were there? What would my U.S. colleagues and friends do under similar circumstances? Would I be prepared to risk my life and the safety of my family to wage a battle that seems already lost?” Another friend of mine, also a journalist, managed to flee Belgrade. Ironically, she found refuge in Sarajevo. She wrote to me from there, claiming that while in Belgrade she was more afraid of her neighbors whipped into a nationalistic frenzy by media than of Milosevic's police.

Again, what would I do? I am not sure that I would show any more courage than my friends and colleagues in these circumstances.

So were all of us so-called independent journalists wrong? Had we been deluding ourselves when we proudly drew a distinction between us, the professionals, and Milosevic's propagandists on Belgrade television? Actually, they showed far more commitment to journalism, to their work, than did any of us. Spitting at NATO warnings that they would be attacked, they carried on doing what they believed in, fully aware of possible consequences.

However, this may not be a valid comparison. Real journalists are always full of doubts, constantly questioning everything around them, even their own most fundamental beliefs. This inquisitiveness is also the source of our incredible strength, but sometimes it can temporarily result in a pitiful weakness. On the other hand, the casualties buried under the ruins of Belgrade television were propagandists who harbored no doubts. They believed in their leader, followed him unswervingly, and in the end sacrificed their lives for him. We, the journalists, showed less physical courage, but we have survived to be able tomorrow to scrutinize mercilessly all the horrors that will someday be behind us—the responsibility of our politicians and soldiers and even the consciousness of our nation.

Hopefully, we will then find more stamina than we have recently shown and be able to look as mercilessly into our own souls. ■

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An Albanian Newspaper Is Reborn

Kosovo Refugee Journalists Refuse to Let Their Reporting Be Silenced

By Ardian Arifaj

On the 24th of March, NATO airplanes began their campaign against Serb forces in Kosovo and in all the territory of what we call “Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.” On the same night, Serb paramilitaries—or militaries—or police, it doesn’t matter after all, attacked the premises of the Albanian Daily KOHA Ditore, in Pristina, capital of Kosovo. The night guard was killed. The computers were smashed. The archives destroyed. The printing house was destroyed, too.

Everything burned down.

“Don’t go in the office,” I recall my colleague telling me on the phone the next day. “Rexha [our night guard] was murdered. Everything was destroyed. And, they [Serbs] might be after us.”

This did not come as a surprise to us. Only four days earlier we were in court, involved in a trial against KOHA Ditore and its editor-in-chief. On that Sunday, when all state and public institutions were closed, the court rendered the verdict against us.

It said that we were disseminating ethnic hatred. One of the stories that was found to be incriminating was a story taken from the Serbian news agency BETA. It was a story that even Belgrade state TV ran. Only when it appeared in our paper, it became incriminating.

It didn’t matter that our solicitors gave arguments that this trial was illegal and gave strong arguments for it to be at least postponed. The judge simply replied, “I must finish this today!” Even before this, we knew that we were considered “an obstacle” to the Belgrade regime. And we were happy about that.

Actually, being “an obstacle” to the regime in Belgrade was our main motive in our work.

“KOHA Ditore, a radical Albanian

newspaper...,” a journalist once wrote about us from London. And yes, we were radical. We were radical in our demand to change the way things were going in our country. We were against hate and war and violence.

For two years, since April 1, 1997, when we published the first issue of KOHA Ditore, we wrote about everything that was happening in Kosovo and in Belgrade. Telling it all. Speaking loudly, and because of this approach the life we had was anything but nor-

mal. In the beginning, we sold 5,000 copies a day. After five months, we were selling 30,000 copies each day.

In March 1998 the first massacre took place in one of the villages of Kosovo. Twenty-one people were killed. A pregnant woman was among them. And we were there to take pictures of her. They were published in our paper the next day. The horrible pictures of a pregnant woman, who was described by her killers as a “terrorist,” were on our Web site, too, and



A shadow of an ethnic Albanian Soldier cast on the Albanian flag during a memorial service held to commemorate the killing of 24 people by Serb police. *Photo by David Brauchli/The Associated Press.*

so people throughout the world could see it.

At that moment we knew that war had really started in our homeland, although the signs of it had been obvious for years. In Belgrade, there was a regime whose policies had resulted in thousands of ethnic people becoming victims and refugees during the last 10 years in the former Yugoslavia. Power resided in a man whom Western politicians were calling a peacemaker. We knew he was a criminal.

Since then, we have reported about killings, violence, repression, all that has become our reality. We tried to remain objective—if something like this exists. This means that we tried to represent the views of all sides in conflict, without commenting on anything. We still believed that diversity of cultures, religions, opinions adds richness to our lives and is not a reason for hatred and blood feud.

We were there only to report. We even stopped publishing editorials in the newspaper, because we didn't want to engage directly in the events. What we wrote was criticized by everyone and yet our paper was read by all. This was a good sign, we said.

Journalists who worked for KOHA Ditore were usually prevented from getting information by Serb police. Luckily they would only be turned back at the first police checkpoint, and they were only psychologically mistreated, rarely beaten up. Then we discovered a different way of getting the information we wanted to report—some of our journalists went to work as interpret-

For us, publishing the paper is all that matters.

ers for foreign journalists. No longer did they need to tell authorities that they are from KOHA Ditore. Having a foreigner alongside made Serbian police think twice before harassing them. And for our colleagues from abroad, this meant they would have an interpreter who was also a journalist, so they could help each other to get the

What we wrote was criticized by everyone and yet our paper was read by all.

story. We all benefited from this arrangement.

In October 1997, a draft was being prepared for a settlement on Kosovo. There were 15 Albanians on the negotiating team, representing all Albanians of Kosovo. By the time the negotiations ended, there was only one left—the one who only said “yes” to everything. And he was negotiating the settlement. Everything was done in secret. We got hold of the draft, and of course we published it.

People were furious. Those who prepared the draft and also Albanians of Kosovo. The ones who prepared the draft because they didn't achieve what they wanted—to go back home as successful politicians who would have successful careers in their country.

The ordinary people were furious because they didn't believe that after all that had happened, the solution to be found wouldn't even mention the name Kosovo, and wouldn't give any form of self-government to Albanians of Kosovo.

After this, the draft had to be changed substantially. We showed to all that we were to be asked about Kosovo, as well. Now we had even more enemies, but they knew that they would have to fear us even more. We were on nobody's side.

After all this, I thought to myself:

“This is not a joke.

This is our future that we are talking about. And I'm only 25. I still have a life to live and I want to live

it. I didn't have a life until now.”

During the days following the NATO air strikes, I had to go into hiding. The phone lines were cut, and I lost all the connections with my colleagues from the office. On the second week of the air strikes, I found myself among thousands of other deportees waiting to cross the border with Macedonia. So

were many of my colleagues.

Eventually some of us met in Tetovo, a small town in western Macedonia. And, of course, we decided to revive KOHA Ditore. “We will survive,” we said. After four weeks of not being published, KOHA Ditore appeared again. Now we are living and working in exile, in Macedonia, among tens of thousands of deportees from Kosovo. “This is about survival,” I say to myself. “The survival of KOHA Ditore as an institution, but also of Albanians of Kosovo as an entity.”

Our political and social structures were all crushed and disintegrated. We were collapsing as a nation, losing our identity as a people. We had to enable our voices to be heard, voices calling for rebuilding our political and social structures. This is the only way we will survive.

Now we have a funny office in Tetovo. Some 13 computers—for the journalists, editors and layout people—are placed on top of some very uncomfortable tables. We don't have a phone at all, but even if we did there is no way to connect it to phone service. By coincidence, an Internet cafe is located beneath our office, and now there is a cable that goes from our office into this Internet cafe. This is our only connection with the rest of the world. Some colleagues from our office in Pristina are here. We work every day, seven days a week, without being paid, and when my workday ends I must look for a place to stay. For now, I am homeless. But for us, publishing the paper is all that matters.

Other colleagues are missing. They are somewhere in Kosovo. Hopefully, they are still alive, in hiding or running. But surviving. ■

Ardian Arifaj is Editor of KOHA Ditore, a daily Albanian-language newspaper that was widely read in Kosovo and is now being published in Macedonia.

In Yugoslavia, the Consequences of Not Reporting the Truth

Journalists' Failure to Report Honestly Empowers Tyrants

By Chris Hedges

I first stumbled onto the Kosovo Liberation Army in the small village of Orlane about 30 miles from Pristina. It was February 1997, and a thin crust of snow blanketed the rolling hillsides. The crude wooden houses, all with teetering outhouses, barren dirt yards and braided briar fences, were surrounded by mourners attending the wake for one of three armed militants killed in a gun battle with Serb police. Along the road grim men in nylon sweat suits stood every 20 or 30 feet providing a cordon of security.

The story I wrote for The New York Times from Orlane, and several that soon followed, angered the pacifist Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova and no small number of Western diplomats and reporters who insisted that the guerrilla group was a creation of the Serbian state security. It was over a year before the rebellion that gripped the province, and there was still a forlorn hope that a negotiated agreement with Belgrade could be worked out. Rugova, with backing from the U.S. Embassy, was trying to get Belgrade to reopen schools for Albanian elementary students. Such reporting, he told me, was not only inaccurate but unhelpful.

"The Serbs have created the Kosovo Liberation Army to give themselves an excuse to ethnically cleanse Kosovo," he said, "just as they did in Bosnia. I know my people and they do not support the use of violence." How does one cover such a story, one that because of its implications, both real and perceived, erodes the beleaguered forces struggling to prevent a slide to intolerance and war? What does one

do when the stories one writes become grist for the Serb propaganda effort, or any effort, to foment conflict? What moral obligations do we, as journalists, have to those we are writing about? It is one of the hallmarks of our trade that stories we report can assist, in the short term, those we would least like to empower.

Belgrade was elated with the first reports about the small armed bands, citing them as evidence that there were "terrorists" in Kosovo that they had a right to root out by force. I saw the same reaction from Baghdad when I wrote about the splits between the two main Kurdish factions in northern Iraq that eventually led to street fighting. I sat on floor cushions in a room one night in northern Iraq, thick with the bluish haze of acrid cigarette smoke, as armed Peshmerga guerrillas listened

policemen ushered us through checkpoints towards villages held by armed rebels with unusual courtesy. Clearly the idea was to allow Western reporters to send out stories and footage of the ragtag insurgents in the hopes that the Western alliance would excuse Belgrade when it began to depopulate and raze the rebel zones.

And it was axiomatic that, as in Bosnia, once Milosevic cranked up his machinery of death and mayhem we were expelled, left to lick around the edges of his killing fields, struggling to distinguish rumor from fact in interviews with disoriented refugees, but essentially cut off from firsthand accounting, just as we were during the Serb massacres in Srebrenica. Reporters in Belgrade now get bused around to see civilian casualties, just as they did in Iraq, but are kept far from the

It is one of the hallmarks of our trade that stories we report can assist, in the short term, those we would least like to empower.

to Baghdad's Kurdish-language propaganda radio station read every word of stories I had done on the feuds and growing corruption in the Kurdish safe area set up by the allied coalition following the Gulf War. The bearded Kurdish fighters shifted uncomfortably and glowered at me in disapproval.

In the summer of 1998, during the early stages of the Kosovo conflict, before Slobodan Milosevic ordered his troops to raze villages and drive out tens of thousands of people, burly Serb

muddy fields where perhaps hundreds of Kosovar Albanian men lie in mass graves.

There were few stories out of Kosovo when I began reporting on the rebels, in part because the Bosnia story had cooled and there were few reporters around. It was widely believed that the Kosovar Albanians had no stomach for a fight and conventional wisdom took the place of investigation. It was hard to get anyone to pay attention. When I made the first trip by any reporter

inside Kosovo in the spring of 1998 with an armed guerrilla band my paper held the piece for nearly three weeks, only running it after Milosevic launched the spring offensive that triggered the province-wide rebellion.

The lines blur between reporting and propaganda in such a controlled atmosphere. Yet the consequences of not having such information reported, in the long term, are devastating. It may have been disruptive to acknowledge the rise of an armed militant faction in Kosovo, but it also was true. And it was the last warning light given off before war, one that was sadly ignored by Rugova and his Western backers. Instead of acknowledging these reports as the rumblings of a coming catastrophe, they turned, as often happens, on the messengers.

When it came time to walk three or four miles into towns where the Serbs had butchered women and children in Kosovo our reporting stung, precisely because it had refused to serve any one particular cause. While many diplomats and Rugova supporters chastised us for our coverage, our refusal to consider the implications of our coverage gave us credibility when we wrote of killings by Serb forces. Credibility is a fragile and delicate commodity and once damaged is very hard to repair. Indeed, it is against the credibility of Western reporting that the Serbian regime, like most regimes, has waged war since the fighting began eight years ago. It behooves us not to assist them by bowing to what, in the short term, is politically expedient.

The temptation every reporter faces is to paint the world in his or her own image, or the image we would like it to

assume. Thus rebels in Nicaragua, Muslims in Sarajevo or even Serbian opposition leaders in Belgrade have sometimes been portrayed more as we wish them to be, or they ought to be, rather than as they are. This is the



Devastation of houses in the village of Kozarac, Bosnia, taken in March 1999.
Photo by Radivoje Pavicic, courtesy of The Boston Globe.

disease of our profession, one exacerbated because such reporting allows us to be celebrated by people under siege, people whose adoration we find gratifying.

But by failing to turn with equal ferocity on all sides we distort these conflicts and discredit the values of tolerance and forbearance by ascribing them to people who do not, in fact, share them. Indeed, the failure by many reporters in Belgrade to recognize that the political opposition in Belgrade, who for three months in the winter of 1997 took over the streets of the capital, was at its core nationalist made it impossible to grasp a fundamental fact about the Serbs. Most Serbs, even those who detest Milosevic, willfully ignore the scope and extent of the atrocities carried out in their name in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. In this sense they are like the Turks who cling to the

fiction that the Armenian genocide earlier in the century never took place. Most Serbs nurture the absurd belief that they are the real victims in the war.

The problem in Serbia is not only Milosevic, but the refusal to come to grips with how the enthusiastic embrace by the Serbs of ethnic triumphalism resulted in the destruction of Yugoslavia and mass murder. Until this is understood, with or without Milosevic, the Serbs are doomed to carry on a dialogue with outsiders that resembles that between Alice and the March Hare.

"Have some wine," the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. "I don't see any wine," she remarked.

"There isn't any," said the March Hare.

It is not for us to decide what people should or should not know. This kind of ma-

nipulation is the work of advertisers and propagandists. Lies, including the lie of omission, do work briefly, but once uncovered sully the values they may have been employed to protect. The failure to report honestly erodes the concept of dispassionate truth and ironically empowers tyrants like Milosevic, who seek to avoid its scrutiny by denying its existence. ■

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The Journalist as Moral Arbiter

A Consideration of How Reporters Use the Word 'Evil'

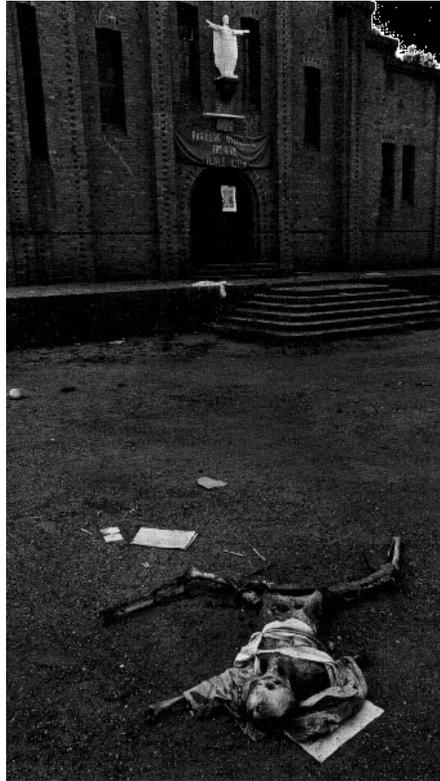
By Michael J. Kirkhorn

In April Newsweek magazine published a report on Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic that described his bad-boy frown as "the face of evil." The American press is now routinely accused of "demonizing" unappealing foreign fanatics, but defining someone as being "evil" is a more serious matter. Applied, often casually, to a violent defier of the United States's wishes, the excursion into language of denunciation suggests unpardonable behavior that requires the strongest punishment.

The word "evil" stretches the fabric of the journalistic vocabulary, which usually tends to be political, not moral in its characterizations of leaders and their actions. Before journalists resort to using this word, as they have done frequently to describe Milosevic as the Kosovo crisis deepened, they often need prodding from propagandists and politicians. Their use of it does not occur in a vacuum. Nor are journalists much good at defining the word, even as they are using it. But they recognize the circumstantial evidence.

Before the American press describes a foreign leader as an "evil" figure, he must reveal the recognizable characteristics. This leader must be portrayable as a mad personality beyond repair, reform or redemption, a person who deserves the worst punishment the Pentagon or the CIA can devise. Journalism provides the omens and sets the stage for promise of such retribution. "One day," Newsweek concluded, "evil will get its just reward."

Such a leader must also exhibit a combination of pathological symptoms perhaps complicated by bad habits. Milosevic has been portrayed as an unstable character, clinging to power at any cost, and a bit of a drunk. To earn such a designation, a leader must do things that can be explained only as



Unhallowed ground: A corpse outside the parish church of Nyarabuye offers a grim foretelling of the thousand more slaughtered inside by Hutu militia. *Photo by James Nachtwey/Magnum Photos.*

products of an evil nature. He must deliberately create enough suffering to take his place with the procession of cruel tyrants who have brought chaos to the 20th Century. Two men, Stalin and Hitler, whose names are synonymous with evil, lead this procession. And whatever its ruling ideology, national traditions, politics, laws or customs, the nation he dominates must be strictly under his sinister thumb, as the Soviet Union was when The New York Times's Walter Duranty described its communist government as "applied Stalinism."

An evil leader must be so thoroughly nasty that he makes his adversaries look good by comparison. No matter how dismal their reputations were before the conflict, now they can claim the moral high ground as "Western leaders" reluctant to apply force until goaded to action by the evil figure. Newsweek described Clinton as the leader of a "case of unmilitary characters" who surprised subordinates with the calm judgment and fortitude with which he was said to calm "his agitated crisis team."

Whatever an evil leader has to say will be considered propaganda. If it is transparently false, it will be scoffed away; if believable it will be considered skillful propaganda. But never will anything he says be considered credible.

What emerges here is a composite portrait of Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, Iranian mullahs, Somali warlords, Afghan plotters, Japanese subway bombers or Sudanese terrorists, a list of villains stretching back at least as far as Iranian Premier Mossadegh, about whom, TIME magazine observed in a 1952 cover story, when he was its Man of the Year: "In his plaintive, singsong voice he gabbled a defiant challenge that sprang out of a hatred and envy almost incomprehensible to the West." The truly evil act that Mossadegh committed was to nationalize Western oil interests, an understandable action evilly motivated.

The use of moralizing language makes the press susceptible to propagandists, who of course don't mind seeing the enemy leader portrayed in a way that makes him eminently killable. This complicity by journalists, which I believe is unintentional but probably inevitable in the poisoned political atmosphere of the post-Cold War period, is perilous in a war, in which, as



A militiaman from Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front shoots an unarmed prisoner. Liberia, 1997. *Photo by Corinne Dufka/Reuters.*

National Public Radio foreign correspondent Sylvia Poggioli observed in these pages in 1993, "there are no innocents." In that article, Poggioli went on to observe that "while there is widespread agreement that the Belgrade government and Serbian fighters have been the major culprits in the conflicts, the Serbs' entrenched attitude toward the outside world may have contributed to their being demonized and perceived by world public opinion as the sole culprits in the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia."

The journalistic sketch of the evil figure often describes a turbulent personality in the grip of primitive and conflicting urges. The portrait is likely to consist of conjecture and analogy, often colored by the political views of the sources. In a Washington Post report before the United States's hasty withdrawal from Somalia, about which we hear little these days, Farrah Aidid, the Somali "warlord," was compared with Mohamed Abdullah Hassan, the "mad mullah," who fought a guerrilla war against the British in Somalia early in the century. One of those always-convenient U.S. government sources was quoted as saying of Aidid, "This guy is crazy." No elaboration or evidence was offered.

When reporters or editors try to explain the journalistic view of the word "evil," they describe behavior that is incomprehensibly bad. TIME magazine essayist Lance Morrow put it this way: "Evil is the Bad hardened into the absolute. Good and evil contend in every mind. Evil comes into its own when it crosses a line and commits itself and hardens its heart, when it becomes merciless, relentless.... Evil is the word we use when we come to the limit of humane comprehension."

This explanation is not very helpful. If journalists made up their own minds about matters like these, Morrow's definition might be serviceable. But the government, which produces the propaganda that influences journalistic judgment, may reach its limit of "humane comprehension" when it decides that violence will be more effective than negotiation. Should reporters and editors automatically follow the lead?

In defense of moral labeling, it might be noted that early in the Nazi leader's career, reporters as astute as Dorothy Thompson and Janet Flanner found Hitler laughably miscast as a world-threatening dictator. The evils of Nazism only became clearer when foreign correspondents such as The Chicago

Tribune's Sigrid Schultz witnessed Brown Shirt terrorists attacking Jews in Berlin, but The Tribune never allowed Schultz to depart from the moderate language and editorial distance of political observation. As the Second World War began, another Chicago reporter, Edmond Taylor, put it all together and labeled what was happening as a "strategy of terror" consisting of incessant propaganda backed by violence. Edward R. Murrow and his CBS News team knew the truth about the evil roots of the Holocaust, but New York headquarters forced them to report with such restraint in terms of emotional content or moral condemnation that the truth never quite came through in the late 1930's.

As despicable as some of the brutality attributed to Milosevic appears to be, he is not equivalent to Hitler, even though propagandists would like him to be seen as such. The resemblance to Mussolini seems closer. Mussolini was an apprentice dictator who could never have spread his doctrines or influence much beyond Italy, except through force, as he did in Ethiopia and Libya. A good reporter named Bill Bolitho saw through the fascist revival-of-the-imperial-glory-of-Rome facadé and called Mussolini an ordinary thug.

Perhaps the pendulum has swung too far, too fast, from a time when reporters were forbidden to define in moral terms the horrors of what they saw to a time when too much is too readily and too sloppily defined by the language of morality. If journalists today sense the need to render such judgment, then perhaps we, as readers of this news, ought to expect that reporters always show us that this characterization of "evil" surfaces not from the desired beliefs of his adversaries but from evidence of the leader's actions. ■

Michael J. Kirkborn, a 1971 Nieman Fellow, is Director of the Journalism Program at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. He's working on a book on the independence of the press, which includes a chapter on moral judgment by journalists.

Penetrating Milosevic's Wall of Silence

Voice of America Finds Creative Ways to Reach Balkan Audiences

By Mark B. Lewis

Since the NATO bombings began, the Kosovo crisis has dominated Voice of America news broadcasts to the Balkans as well as the worldwide broadcasts of VOA's 53 language services that reach, according to VOA, some 83 million listeners each week. "Our challenge," according to VOA News Director Sonja Pace, "is to bring not just the American and Allied point of view but all views, including the Yugoslav."

Has VOA met that challenge? And how effective has VOA been in getting its reports to people who live in the Balkan region, especially to those who are in Serbia and thus have been cut off from receiving reports from journalists there who were once independent of government control?

An examination of daily VOA news files, beginning in the fall of 1998, when Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic began his now-comprehensive crackdown on the independent media in Serbia, shows conclusively that VOA news and information to the Balkans have been presented in a professional, unvarnished manner. In short, the news on VOA has been told in what skeptics of a government-funded broadcasting organization would fairly call "the truth," in adherence with VOA's guiding charter which stipulates that "the Voice of America must serve as a reliable, authoritative source of accurate, objective and comprehensive news." There has been no obfuscation or equivocation for propaganda purposes on the part of the U.S. government or the NATO alliance.

Listeners of VOA can hear the words of President Clinton and the NATO officials every day, as well as briefings from the White House, State and Defense Departments and NATO headquarters in Brussels. Reports on the

exodus of ethnic Albanian refugees have, of course, been told continuously as their flight continued and their plight deepened. And reports of alleged Serb atrocities and ethnic cleansing have been aired.

All this has been covered in VOA broadcasts, including U. S. and foreign editorials supporting the strategy and mission of the Clinton-NATO action as well as VOA editorials expressing the policies of the U.S. government. At the same time, this international radio system, whose work is funded by American taxpayers at a cost of \$100 million per year, has aired the views of those whom the war is being waged against and those who disagree with aspects of U.S.-NATO strategy. Qualms and questions about strategic decisions have been expressed by experts such as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft. So, too, has the skepticism about strategy by leading U.S. senators such as Richard Lugar and John McCain. With an eye on credibility, VOA has also reported criticism of Clinton for publicly ruling out, very early, the use of ground forces. VOA also reported independent analysis of

emotional Balkans story requires some degree of sensitivity on the part of the reporters sent to do this. As a way of trying to remind its reporters and listeners of the human dimensions of this story and the emotional connections that underlie any attempt to report on this conflict, VOA has devised a provocative reporting technique. VOA has put on the air joint interviews with Serb and Albanian journalists.

One such broadcast was called "A Tale of Two Women"—one Serb journalist and one ethnic Albanian journalist. These journalists found common ground in their belief—backed up by their reporting—that Belgrade's independent journalists, those most targeted in Milosevic's media crackdown, are angry at the United States and the West because of NATO air raids. "You have united all Serbs, nationalists and moderates alike," these journalists agreed. "You have ruined everything the opposition [to Milosevic] has done in this country in the last 10 years," the Serb journalist told listeners. The ethnic Albanian journalist, who was manager of an Internet radio service (Radio 21) in Kosovo, gave the VOA inter-

VOA has put on the air joint interviews with Serb and Albanian journalists.

dozens of experts at universities and think tanks around the world. The Yugoslav side of events has been reflected in interviews with former Deputy Prime Minister Vuk Draskovic, with the Yugoslav Ambassador to the United Nations, and with the President of the Democratic Party of Serbia.

Handling such a controversial and

viewer a firsthand account of the ransacking and burning of her offices in Kosovo and confiscation by Serb forces of birth certificates and personal papers of ethnic Albanians as she and they fled Kosovo for Macedonia. The Serb journalist did not respond to the description of these events.

Milosevic's manipulation of Serbian

To do their job well requires them to submerge their personal, visceral and emotional ties to the story....

public opinion through tight media control has affected how effectively VOA is able to report the story and transmit its news reports. Along with other reporters from NATO countries, the VOA correspondent in Belgrade was expelled. So VOA turned to Serbian stringers, but they soon stopped filing reports as a way of expressing opposition to the NATO bombing.

"Stringers in both Belgrade and Serbia are either in hiding or scared to file for VOA," a staff report advised VOA's director. VOA also has been without a correspondent in Kosovo. And VOA was excluded by the Yugoslav government from a guided tour of Kosovo that was provided to other members of the international press. VOA does have an American correspondent and a stringer in Macedonia and they have been consistently filing reports from the refugee camps.

Soon after the war began, Milosevic shut down the best-known independent radio station in Belgrade, Radio B92. It had been a VOA affiliate, re-broadcasting VOA news. The other 29 VOA affiliates in Yugoslavia bowed to Milosevic's earlier media crackdown, which began last fall, and stopped carrying VOA programming. VOA still has 50 affiliates in Bosnia and 10 in Croatia which have continued to broadcast VOA news daily during the crisis.

Given these circumstances, VOA has been relying on short wave, medium wave and satellite broadcasts to the Balkans. Engineers at VOA have not detected radio jamming by the Yugoslav government. In addition, VOA has taken several positive steps to get more news to more Balkan listeners. It expanded its Albanian and Serbian broadcasts by 15 minutes a day, bringing 2 1/4 hours of Albanian and 2 3/4 hours of Serbian daily transmission via short wave and medium wave to listeners. VOA also broadcasts to the Balkans in Bosnian,

Croatian, Macedonian and Slovene.

To break the Milosevic-imposed media blackout, the U.S. government also announced that broadcasting by VOA and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty will beam 24 hours a day of FM programming into Serbia from transmitters to be erected in nearby countries. Fifty-two percent of Serbs listen to FM, according to U.S. officials. VOA also has turned to television to get into Serbia. Signals are picked up in Serbia through the use of home satellite dishes. VOA estimates that 10 percent of Serbian homes have dishes capable of picking up their broadcasts. Additionally, all of VOA news can be picked up contemporaneously on the Internet.

During this crisis, VOA has been adjusting creatively to provide comprehensive coverage. But there can be no conclusive answer to the question of whether the broadcasts are getting through. However, there have been some signs. From mid-March to mid-April, VOA had 2.1 million "hits" on its Internet Web site, and 4,000 of them came from the former Yugoslavia. Also, a great deal of hate E-mail has been received at VOA Serbian Service from Serb listeners protesting NATO air strikes. And VOA's Albanian-language service has received cellular phone calls from Albanians on mountain tops as they flee Kosovo, asking plaintively, "Where is the United States?"

It has been a wrenching and painful story to cover for the able and experienced heads of the VOA Serbian and Albanian-language services. As Maya Drucker, Serbian-American, and Elez Biberaj, Albanian-American, sat side by side for an interview, both acknowledged the human dimensions of their challenge. To do their job well requires them to submerge their personal, visceral and emotional ties to the story and rely on the kind of professional detachment needed to direct a bal-

anced and comprehensive coverage. This is hard—though not impossible—for each to do. Drucker's mother and four sisters are in Belgrade. Biberaj has friends in Kosovo. Both contend that they never let their private grief or their emotional ties to their heritage interfere with their VOA responsibilities. Both noted that they work for VOA, not for Serbia or Albania, and insisted that there is no place for emotionalism in their business.

Drucker explained one aspect of her professional approach to this coverage: "I watch the Serb translations of the news stories from the VOA central news desk like a hawk," making certain that emotions and personal animosity do not creep in. These language chiefs meet daily with their staffs to keep foremost in their minds the need for professionalism; they say they have had no staff problems. "I tell my staff to think of how you'd cover the violence and atrocities in Rwanda," said Biberaj. The story does become quite personal, however, when the voices of refugees themselves are heard as they try to locate lost family members.

An important step taken by VOA's Albanian Service was to establish a refugee hotline to help Kosovar Albanians locate missing relatives. Hundreds of calls arrived each day (202-205-0611) with messages that VOA records and then broadcasts on its 30-minute refugee hotline daily. One example is: "My name is Xhavit Ekelija and I am from Vushtri. My two sons were lost on April 2; Agron, 6 years old, and Arben, 3 years old. If you have information, please contact International Red Cross." One week after VOA set up its hotline, the BBC established a similar arrangement through its network.

Without Voice of America's creative attempts to keep credible information from all sources flowing into the Balkan region, the wall of silence that Milosevic tried to erect in Yugoslavia would have remained even more impenetrable. ■

Mark B. Lewis is a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer and former VOA correspondent who reported from the Middle East and the White House.

Reflections of Balkan Journalists

When the Personal Becomes Part of One's Profession

The Global Beat Web site* became a place to which Balkan journalists could send reports about their personal and professional experiences in the midst of covering the crisis in Kosovo. This site, which is a resource service for journalists covering international news, is administered by the Global Reporting Network, a program at New York University's Center for War, Peace, and the News Media. Here are excerpts from some of these dispatches:

"Escape from Pristina: Letter from Skopje," by Gjeraqbina Tubina, a correspondent for the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting. She began her coverage from Pristina on the first night of the NATO air strikes.

"...it didn't become real until they came to our house. By then, I was desperate to leave—I was frightened and wanted to live. But I still had some kind of hope. I could never imagine myself and my parents just walking like that to the station, with our dignity and pride destroyed, losing everything.

"It was a 'normal,' quiet day. We had three other families living with us—15 people crammed into our small flat. We had become an extended family. It was lunchtime. My mother was preparing a meal of meat and rice. Then we heard a commotion on the floor below and we knew.

*www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/#regular

"I wouldn't say they were polite but they weren't abusive. We were surprised. There was no shouting, no pointing of machine guns. Four young soldiers in the dark blue uniforms of the Ministry of the Interior just knocked hard on the door and said, 'You have to go. You have 15 minutes.' The soldiers waited patiently. We quietly moved to pick up some things. My computer was still on, so I sent off one last, short E-mail to say I couldn't file a story that day: 'Pray for me,' I wrote."

"War Propaganda in Serbia," Anonymous. The author is a media expert in Belgrade, whose name was withheld to protect against the extreme penalties threatened against independent writers by the Yugoslav government.

"News programs are designed to show the illegitimacy of NATO aggression on Yugoslavia, the unity of the Serbian people in resisting the enemy, and Serbian invincibility.

"The news media have numerous ways to describe most Western nations: killers; death-disseminators; fascists; dictators; criminals; villains; bandits; vandals; barbarians; gangsters; vampires; cowards; perverts; lunatics, scum and trash. The West wants to destroy the small but honorable, dignified and freedom-loving Serbian nation.

"This unprecedented barrage of hateful speech is directed against all NATO nations but especially against the United States. ('Only a dead American is a good American.') It is also combined with an almost mystical elevation of the Serbian people: They have hate, we have love; they have rockets, we have heart; there are no computers in the world which can calculate the depth of the soul and the width of the heart of the Serbian people fighting for their homeland....

"All Serbian television networks

downplay the issue of Albanian refugees. There have been no pictures of the thousands of Albanian refugees fleeing Kosovo. The 'Kosovo humanitarian catastrophe' is referred to as an issue either made up or overemphasized by Western propaganda.

"Any coverage of the Kosovo refugee situation shows both Serbs and Albanians fleeing to Belgrade and being helped by the authorities here. Reports from Kosovo are designed to directly refute the Western claims about the Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing."

"Letter from Pristina," by Dukagjin Gorani, who is Editor of Pristina's KD Times, the English-language edition of KOHA Ditore. He is also a reporter for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting's Balkan Crisis Report.

"There is barely any information about what's going on.... Tuesday [March 24] was the last day of publication for KOHA Ditore, an Albanian-language newspaper here, as well as my own newspaper, the English-language KD Times. KOHA Ditore had been fined for publishing a public statement by KLA leader Hashim Thaci and ordered to shut down by Yugoslav authorities. Last week, three other Albanian-language papers were also fined and closed. A few days ago, I was beaten by police outside my newspaper's offices.

"But frankly, in the present situation, newspapers are a luxury. The time for such communications is finished. There is no Albanian-language electronic media in Kosovo. Any kind of news that you can get is like a breath of fresh air.

"Now there are different priorities: How to protect yourself; how to find shelter in the coming days. For the present, we are thinking of fundamental survival, of running for our lives."

“Letter from Belgrade,” by Petar Lukovic, a columnist for Feral Tribune, Editor of the Belgrade cultural magazine XZ, and a writer for Balkan Crisis Report.

“Since the attacks began, most of Belgrade’s television stations have abandoned their own programming and merely rebroadcast state television, RTS channel one. RTS, an infamous nationalistic stronghold, was one of Milosevic’s most potent weapons during his previous wars. Now it stirs up national feelings through unbearable displays of patriotism. There is absolutely no news of what’s happening in Kosovo, the province Serbia supposedly cares so much about. There is no concrete information on what damage has been done by the bombing.

There is not even any news about what’s going on in the Serbian and Yugoslav governments.

“Instead, it broadcasts hard-core propaganda, celebrating ‘the firm, dignified politics of Slobodan Milosevic.’ NATO nations are now ‘fascist aggressors.’ The President of the United States now has a range of new titles: ‘Killer Clinton,’ ‘Satanic Clinton,’ ‘Scumbag Clinton,’ ‘Worm Clinton,’ ‘Mental case and sexual deviant Clinton,’ and best of all, ‘Adolph Clinton, the biggest criminal in the history of the world.’

“The bombing has also destroyed the last vestige of the independent print media. Only government-controlled publications are issued on a regular basis.

“Some people talk about how the bombing has created a sense of war-

time solidarity, with friends and neighbors coming together to cope with adversity. But if you’re like me and tend to express your opinions about the regime, the media and the general insanity of Serbia, it’s impossible to get through the day without getting in a furious row. Your nerves end up being completely shot—a particular problem since cigarettes are not available.

“At least the telephone lines, in general, are working, and Internet links continue. This makes the war even more unreal: One can communicate with the United States, a country with which we have broken off diplomatic relations, but it is very difficult to call a friend 100 kilometers south of Belgrade. Not to mention Kosovo, about which we know nothing.” ■

Images and Words From the Balkan Conflict

Journal Excerpts

Photographer David Brauchli is documenting the Kosovo crisis for news organizations, as he did during the Bosnian conflict and in other war zones, such as Chechnya. As he works to visually convey what is happening to the people who are victims of these wars, Brauchli keeps a written journal. It is his way of trying to absorb all that he and other journalists observe and confront as they tell the stories of war.

By David Brauchli

—March 28, 1999, Podgorica, Montenegro.

“Paranoia had been gripping Pristina, capital of Kosovo, since U.S. negotiator Richard Holbrooke walked out of a meeting with President Slobodan Milosevic and announced that he had failed to secure a peace deal. Actually, since the OSCE pulled their monitors out of Kosovo, the situation had rapidly deteriorated, but it was possible to still the paranoia and work. But when Holbrooke left, it became impossible.



An elderly ethnic Albanian woman from Kosovo comforts a small girl in a school in Bob, a village some 50 kms. south of Pristina, as another weeps, Tuesday, March 2, 1999. The UNHCR evacuated some 350 people off of a mountainside after they fled their village two days ago because of fighting between the Kosovo Liberation Army and Serb police and armed forces. *Photo by David Brauchli/The Associated Press.*

“Wade Goodard, a freelance photographer for Newsweek and The New York Times, and I were walking down the street. A bread line had formed as people, both Albanian and Serb, realized the air strikes, threatened for so long, were about to become reality. I wanted to shoot the people standing in this bread line, not a difficult thing, but I couldn’t work up the courage to raise my camera. There was an evil in the air, an uneasiness, paranoia. I couldn’t tell who was Serb, who was Albanian. I got Wade to stand in front of me and banged off a few frames on a long lens and then ducked behind a truck.

“Wade, on a shorter lens, went up to the crowd, but as he started to shoot, a man yelled at him, ‘Hey, what do you think you’re doing?’ And a woman started to yell, ‘What are you taking pictures of?’ We scurried away from the line, the accusing looks, the wicked, evil feeling.

“But the feeling didn’t abate. It grew. And more rumors fueled the paranoia.”

—April 6, 1999, Kukes,
Albania.

“Walking through the roadside camps, I am overwhelmed. I have been to many of the towns and villages where the refugees are from. I understand their attachment to their ancestral homes, to the land and to the beauty that is Kosovo. I empathize with the dispossessed. I feel bad as I see them queue desperately for bread and milk. I think it is demeaning for these people to queue for food. It’s awful to watch as children eat prepackaged rations that are meant for soldiers in a war. It is the humiliation, or worse, of one race by another.

“When I see a small child wait, a mother silently weeping, a man too shaken to string together a coherent sentence, his hands shaking as he grips his tractor’s steering wheel, I am appalled and saddened. And yet, when I tell that same man that I am from America, his face lights up, hope gleams in his eyes, his hands steady and he asks me, ‘When are the troops coming?’ When, indeed?” ■



Vebi Regigoi, from Kacanik in southern Kosovo, Yugoslavia, cries after being expelled from his home by Serb army and police forces after arriving in Albania at the Morini border crossing on Monday, March 5, 1999. He and his family were expelled from their homes and bused across Kosovo to Albania by Serb police. *Photo by David Brauchli/The Associated Press.*



A young Kosovar boy comforts his brother crying for his father after walking out of Pec along a snowy road which goes to neighboring Montenegro on Wednesday, March 31, 1999. Thousands of refugees continue to flood out of the embattled province towards the Montenegrin border on foot, by tractor or in cars. NATO said it was expanding its bombing campaign in Yugoslavia as Western powers rejected a peace bid by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. *Photo by David Brauchli/The Associated Press.*

Dealing With the Trauma of Covering War

Journalists Talk About Ways They Cope With What They See

A few months ago, several journalists came together to talk about the personal traumas and ethical dilemmas of covering wars, ethnic conflicts and human tragedies. The seminar, "Dateline: Hell," took place in New York City on March 31, 1999. The event was produced by Center for Communication and co-sponsored by the New York University Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, NYU's International Trauma Studies Program, and NYU's Center for War, Peace, and the News Media.

The program was moderated by Ann Cooper, Executive Director of the Committee to Protect Journalists. Participants included Leslie Cockburn, Producer of "60 Minutes;" Thomas Goltz, author of "Azerbaijan Diary;" James Nachtwey, photographer, Magnum Photos; Elizabeth Neuffer, foreign correspondent for The Boston Globe, and Stacy Sullivan, consultant for the Human Rights Initiative at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Toward the end of the discussion, members of the audience asked questions. One person wanted to know what kind of psychological or emotional support journalists are able to receive, and from whom, when their jobs put them into traumatic situations.

Our excerpt begins with the panel's response.

Leslie Cockburn: Our news organizations have never been—the editors and the people back in New York—have never been in these situations. They have no idea what it's like. And the idea that there would be a support group is sort of an anathema. I think that people support each other; I think that journalists support each other. And then if you really are having problems, after having been in a traumatic



Iraqi forces killed this Kurdish woman and child with poison gas in Halabja, 1998. *Photo by Ramazan Ozturk/Sipa Press.*

situation, you go to someone else who's been there, too, or has been somewhere else.

Elizabeth Neuffer: Yeah, in the world of reporting, I'm afraid a reporter's mental health is down very much on the list of priorities. I happen to feel very strongly that's not right because I've really seen some reporters utterly destroyed by the things they've seen. And I think it affects their reporting, and I think it affects their personalities. But you have to consider that many of us who covered the Balkan War also did it without satellite telephones and without armored cars and without a lot of the basic support that perhaps at the higher end of the scale some news organizations were able to afford. The bottom line is get the story, no matter what it takes. And indeed most of our editors are clueless. Because if they have covered a war, they covered a war that is of a very different nature than the kinds of wars that are happening now. Which are more inti-

mate, more personal, or you tend to be essentially living among the people who are getting bombed, not being behind forces.

I always tell people who ask me this question a story about when I came back from covering the Gulf War, which was not actually a real war. But I just happened to see some very bad things. And I came back and was sort of finding it very difficult to talk to anyone. I mean, I just didn't talk at all basically. And I went and happened to see my old sources at the FBI, which I used to cover. And I was chatting with one of the agents, and he sort of listened to me for a while. He picked up the telephone and he said, "There's someone I'd really like you to talk to. I'm just going to send you down the hall for a few minutes." Indeed, he sent me to the FBI psychiatrist. And I was appalled. "What do you mean? I don't need any therapy. I'm fine, I'm healthy."

But, his point was—and I think it was a wise one—he said, "Elizabeth,

whenever we send an agent into danger, when they come out of the field, we send them to see a psychiatrist, because that's just our policy. It's good for you, it's good for the agency. And since your newspaper is not doing it, I'm doing it for you."

Ever since then, whenever I've gone into a place, I have gone to see a counselor on my way back. And did so repeatedly via telephone from Bosnia when things proved terribly upsetting for me, because I felt otherwise I would store up these memories. My own father was a real victim of post-traumatic stress syndrome, and I grew up with that. He was badly injured and badly affected by participating in a battle on Guadalcanal known as the Fight for Bloody Ridge. He lost an entire company in one night, and he lived with that for his life. Watching what it did to him, it's not something I would want to repeat. So I'm a little kind of overzealous on this, but I think it's something news organizations do need to address.

Stacy Sullivan: I came back from Bosnia after two years of working there for Newsweek as a freelancer. Got hired while I was there and came back to work for them in New York. When I came back to New York, I was incredibly lonely. I had nobody, except for my fellow correspondents who were in Bosnia. Elizabeth was one of them, with whom I spoke every night on the phone. We were all in tears.

I had a complete and utter meltdown to the point where I quit my job at Newsweek. I had absolutely no infrastructure. And there wasn't one editor who had ever been overseas doing that kind of reporting. It was only after I quit, I mean a real emotional breakdown, that they said, "Gee, you should have told us what you were feeling." In my mind, as a young new hire at a major newsmagazine, I didn't feel I could walk up to my editor and say, "I'm having a little problem with post-traumatic stress. And do you feel like I can maybe take a little bit of time off while I sort out my problems?"

It's something we need to get more comfortable with. But it's also something editors need to be much more aware of. I know that I and almost

everybody who covered the war in Bosnia got a therapist when we came back and dealt with it that way. I have to say it's been really helpful for me.

Ann Cooper: How would you suggest that the editors deal with it? Just make it part of the routine so that nobody feels sort of singled out?

Stacy Sullivan: I could not believe that a major newsmagazine like Newsweek, who has correspondents all over the world, and has for years, would not be aware of post-traumatic stress and the psychological problems that people [experience] who have been in a war zone. There was no awareness. It was like when I told them over a very tearful goodbye lunch, they were just shocked. You know, it just had never occurred to them.

I think just being aware and asking correspondents about it, and telling them that they shouldn't be afraid to talk about it. Or, if they need to take some time off, go see a therapist, do whatever they need to do, they should do it. And it's a perfectly normal thing to experience after covering a war.

Question: What are the actual traumas that you've experienced? What sort of help do people need? Also, in the course of your work, are you re-traumatizing the people that you are writing about or photographing?

James Nachtwey: I think it's less re-traumatizing the people we're photographing or interviewing than actually giving them an outlet. If journalists weren't there, they wouldn't have a voice. They would not have a way to let the outside world know what has happened to them and their families and their civilization. And I think it's important for them to know that someone from the outside world is interested, is willing to go to those places to share with them the dangers and whatever hardships are there at that time to tell their story. And I think they recognize that and appreciate that.

Elizabeth Neuffer: You asked about symptoms. I'm not sure I can give you a good analysis. But I think most people come back feeling very isolated, and feeling that nobody understands what they've been through, and with a sense of intense anger. Usually at one's com-

pany. Because after all they put you there, and they're not taking very good care of you once you've come home. And they don't understand. I could go to the editor of my paper and explain this to him, and he would say, "But, Elizabeth, you're on leave," and he would not understand why I took a leave or the nature of that leave. But there's panic. I'm sure—the other day there was a big crash out on the street, and I dove under my desk, just without even thinking about it, because I was convinced it was a shell landing. And, you know, it's not dramatic; it's just sort of an instinctive response. And I'm sure in time that will go away.

But, you know, what happens to us is secondary. It needs to be acknowledged, the stigma needs to be removed, but it's part of the job, too, and it's not something you want to wear on your chest to say oh, you know, I'm a victim of post-traumatic stress. It's like Jim said, a dangerous part of the job, dealing with it. It's one of the things you should know when you sign on. And it's to some degree your responsibility to take care of yourself.

The job is really to get the story out and to talk to people. And I second what he said. People I talked with I found wanted to tell their story, sometimes even more than once. And that they weren't re-traumatized. They were relieved by having someone listen. And that the key, as a reporter, is to make sure you do listen. Because I've seen many people under deadline, and perhaps who are less experienced, be reasonably callous. And one of the great things you have to learn is you really do need to sit, even if it takes an hour, to let someone spill out that story. Because otherwise you're not giving them the respect that they're due.

Question: Do you sometimes feel an irresistible urge to help the victims that you're dealing with? And does that interfere with your job?

Stacy Sullivan: I feel an irresistible urge all the time to help people that we're interviewing. It happened a lot with the victims of Srebrenica. Even months afterwards, you would go and talk to them and they still didn't know what had happened to their husbands,

brothers, fathers. I did not feel that it was any conflict with my professional—I didn't feel any ethical conflict by helping them out.

We would often collect old clothes, or buy a sack of potatoes and vegetables and drop it off at people that we had interviewed repeatedly. There have been times when I have left money in a hidden spot, on the sofa, underneath the seat cushion. What you don't want to do is to pay people for information, to talk to you. I think that would be a violation of your ethics. But if you, as a human being, want to help them out, and you're not giving them money for information, I personally don't have a problem with it.

James Nachtwey: I've been in many situations where people are severely wounded, in great distress, and their own colleagues and comrades are already tending to them. And at that point I do my job, which is to photograph it. There have been some times when I've encountered people who are wounded or who are about to be attacked by someone else, and I'm the only one who can help them. Then I stop doing my job and I help them. And that's a personal choice.

I think that theoretically, in a very

purely journalistic sense, I'm probably violating something by not allowing what is about to happen, happen. But I stop short of that. I remember a time in Haiti when I rescued someone from a lynch mob. I did the same thing in South Africa. Rather than stand around to make great pictures of this person getting lynched, I got them out of there. And I think that anyone on this stage, and probably any of you, would have done the same thing.

Thomas Goltz: I'd like to answer that in sort of an oddball way, and the question that hasn't been really asked but could be implied from yours, sir, which is when do you start to carry guns? Well, I think the answer is never. I never have in any of the sectors that I've been in. It's like one of those things that one must not do, some great unspoken rule, although the temptation is often there. And especially if you're in a tight jam with people who are carrying guns, to what extent then do you help them by picking up a box of ammunition or what?

My rule is never to touch anything military if you're in a military zone. But I'm not even sure if that is such a good rule, because if you are traveling with them, don't you owe it to them to at

least carry the ammo? I don't know, it's one of these weird ethical questions.

Leslie Cockburn: Don't carry guns, don't carry ammo. Never.

James Nachtwey: I would help carry a wounded soldier. I've put down my camera and helped carry a wounded soldier through fire, because they didn't have enough soldiers left to help. But I don't think I'd carry ammo; I think I'd draw the line there.

Ann Cooper: Why? Why would you not carry ammo?

James Nachtwey: Because I don't think it's my job to further destruction. At the same time, I recognize what you're feeling, because I've been with people who are fighting people in dangerous situations. And you become their comrade. You share with them, and they're sharing with you. So I understand that temptation very well.

Leslie Cockburn: I think that you always are obligated to—if you're the only person who can help someone, and they're in a situation—Jim was talking about a wounded person, but it could also be, for example, I was in Kabul and there was ethnic cleansing going on in Kabul. People were being taken out of their houses and shot. People with certain records. And there was someone who I was with who was on that list. And they were going to have to decide what to do and how to get themselves and their family out of the city. And I felt it was quite appropriate to help that person, because I knew that he could be dead the next morning if he didn't receive any help. So I think there are lots of situations where you do put down the camera, or your pen, and you help. And if you don't, then you're some kind of machine.

Question: When you're taking a picture, is it hard to share pain with someone, since the camera is separating you from your subject?

James Nachtwey: The connection is made with the person you're photographing before you raise the camera. It's how you approach people. You try and do it respectful of who they are and what they've been through, and you try and show them that. And I think if you've done that, then when you're using the camera, they understand. ■



A victim of an endless civil war where the government was widely accused of using starvation as a weapon. Sudan, 1998. *Photo by Paul Lowe/Magnum Photos.*

A Ugandan Journalist Is Taken to Court By his Government

Mounting a Defense to a Charge of ‘Publication of False News’

By Charles Onyango-Obbo

When I read *The Sunday Monitor* on the morning of September 21, 1997, my heart skipped a beat. A screaming headline proclaimed: “Kabila Paid Uganda In Gold—Says Report.” The *Monitor*’s senior reporter, Andrew Mwenda, wrote the story. On that Sunday, Mwenda was just 12 days shy of his 25th birthday. At that early age, he was already clearly the top political reporter in the country.

I met up with the editor of *The Sunday Monitor* on Monday morning and joked about how his lead story was going to send me to jail. (I am Editor of *The Monitor*, so under Ugandan law I have legal responsibility for what appears in any edition of the paper.) The story was based on a report in a Paris-based publication, *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*. That paper had reported that the government of the new President of Zaire, renamed Congo, Laurent Kabila, had paid Uganda in gold for “services rendered” to his rebels when he was fighting to oust the Mobutu Sese Seko dictatorship. “Services rendered” was a reference to the military support that Uganda had given the anti-Mobutu rebels during the war.

My unease was not about the facts. In any case, the story gave prominence to responses from two government officials, one of them a minister, denying that Congo had paid Uganda. It was the politics of it that worried me; the conclusion one was likely to draw was that the Ugandan government had become a mercenary outfit and had helped oust Mobutu not out of a noble aim to take out a dictator, but to earn money from the enterprise.

My fears about being sent to jail



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. Photo by Peter Busomokel *The Monitor*.

were realized a week later. President Yoweri Museveni, speaking at a military parade, went ballistic. He swore that *The Monitor* would pay for the story and that we must go to jail for it. Uganda is not a conventional democracy. The president still has the powers of an 18th Century king. And what he asks for, he gets.

Two days later, the police came to our offices to take statements. On October 24, Mwenda and I were served with criminal summons to appear in the chief magistrate’s court. Though we drove ourselves to court, immediately upon our arrival we were bundled off to filthy holding cells near the court, which were overcrowded with common criminals.

After about an hour, we were taken out to a rather bizarre court session. We were charged with “publication of false news” under Section 50 (1) of the Penal Code. This is punishable upon conviction by two years in jail. Our

lawyer was the city’s most well-known “new breed” of lawyer, but nevertheless the magistrate asked him to produce his law certificate. Thirty minutes went by before the certificate was brought from our counsel’s office. The hours were ticking perilously close to 5 o’clock, when the courts closed.

We pleaded innocent. Among other things, the

magistrate slapped a record bail of \$2,000 on each of us. That is a lot of money in a country where the per capita income is \$300. More significantly, it was the highest bail ever demanded for a misdemeanor, and the prosecution hadn’t even “opposed” bail. (In Uganda, the accused applies for bail and the prosecution can either oppose the application or choose not to contest it. It is extremely rare for a magistrate to impose a cash bail in instances where the prosecution hasn’t raised objections.) Our \$2,000 bail was even higher than had been set for anyone who had been granted bail for rape, defilement, theft and, in a few cases, murder. The magistrate must also have known that hardly anyone carries that amount of money in cash. And though *The Monitor* could raise \$4,000 for the two of us, the banks had closed three hours earlier.

In a strange request, the magistrate ordered that the people who stood as

our sureties produce legal documents indicating that they were residents at the addresses they had given. As it was a Friday, it seemed a common trick pulled by the government was working itself through this partisan magistrate. The conditions of the bail were so stiff that it was unlikely that we would meet them in the 30 minutes that were left before the court closed. The result would then have been a weekend in jail before we appeared in court Monday morning. When courts close, the prisoners—and all people like us whose cases are not concluded for the day—are herded under heavy security into buses and vans and driven off to a sprawling “maximum” prison in the suburbs of the city.

Our magistrate was, however, foiled by a piece of modern technology and wiliness of journalists. We had been escorted out of court and were sitting in the cells waiting for the guards to come. It was nearly 6 p.m., and the bus should have left an hour back. Everyone was puzzled about the delay. It turned out that dozens of journalists had come to the court and, through means that we are bound never to reveal, caused the delay of the bus's departure. And as soon as we had left the courtroom, our colleagues and lawyers went to work on their cell phones to contact bank managers. The \$4,000 in cash was brought to the court just after five and paid into the cash office.

On Monday, we began to fight back. We petitioned the High Court against the outrageous bail. Our argument was simple. To publish something that annoys the President cannot be worse than murder and rape. We won and got our money back. The bail was lowered to \$200 for each of us.

Then we took the unprecedented step and petitioned the Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court is a very awesome place, and there have been times in the past when it did not receive a single petition for two years. Our petition argued that the laws in the Penal Code that made criminal the act of publication were archaic and a violation of the democratic principles set out in the new constitution (1995).

Our audacity paid off. The Constitu-

tional Court met to hear our voluminous petition. But we emerged with only a half-victory. It refused to hear our arguments, arguing that our human rights had not yet been violated, since the lower court had not disposed of our case. In other words, until the magistrate's court had sent us to prison or acquitted, we had no case. And unless we went through the trial, we could not complain that we shouldn't have been tried. The consolation was that they agreed to hear our petition once the lower court was done, whether or not we lost the case.

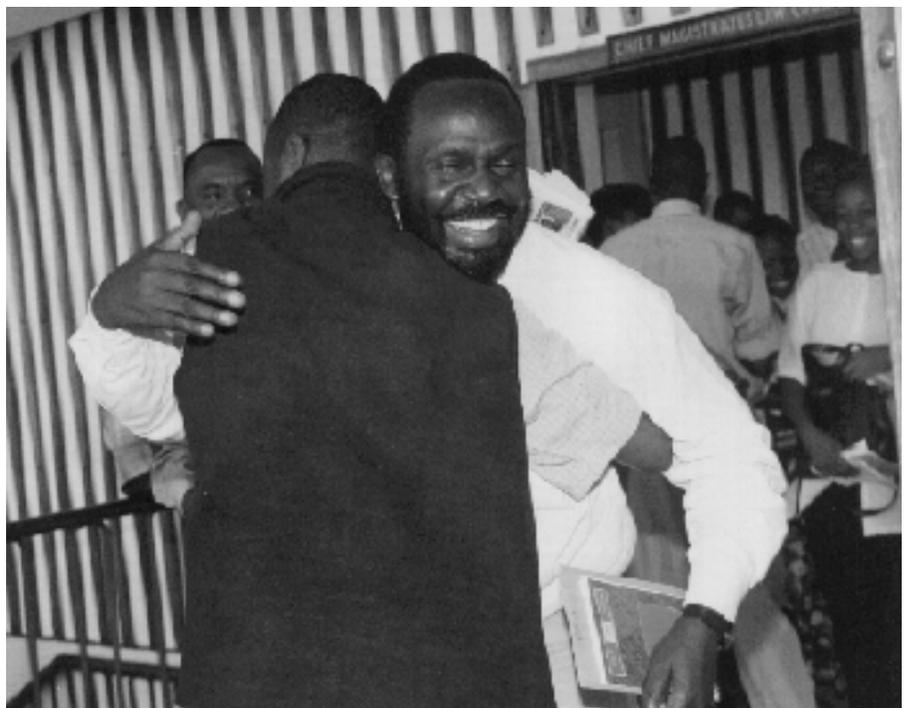
We had never understood why the “court system” was so dreaded until we entered it. On our next court appearance, the chief magistrate who had been given so much trouble was not on the case. A new one had been assigned. Then, on our third appearance, we found the case had again been re-assigned.

In the end, it went through five magistrates. In a court system where there are no juries, who sits as the magistrate is critical. And what it meant in our case was that no single magistrate could acquire an overall picture of the case, nor receive firsthand testi-

mony about the evidence. Each successive one would have to rely on reading about the endless evidence. Also, if the state has a bad time during some points in the trial, it can salvage its case by putting together a powerful summation. This would be far more influential for a magistrate who came in at the tail end and has had none of the previous argument, than it would for one who had been with the case all the way. Worse, it throws the defense in some disarray by forcing it to keep shifting tactics with every change of magistrate.

Between October 24, 1998 and February 16, 1999, when the case before these magistrates ended, we made 33 trips to the court. We therefore had to get 33 bail extensions. Going through that made our lives very difficult. I found that we watched every story we published and every action we did very carefully, lest it lead to an application by the state to cancel our bail or to pile on new charges.

We could not travel outside the city without discussing it with our lawyers. All our travels abroad during that period were built around the next trial. We had to be careful to build in several days to provide for various flight can-



Onyango-Obbo and Mwenda (back to camera) after their acquittal February 16, 1999. Photo by John Nsimbe/The Monitor.

cellations, just to ensure that we didn't miss court dates. We lost control of our schedules.

On February, Magistrate Margaret Tibulya acquitted us in a remarkably brave ruling for an officer of the court at that level. Good political judgment, luck, smart defense lawyers, and the traditional difficulties for state prosecutors in handling criminal cases against the media helped our cause immensely.

Early in meetings with our lawyers, we concluded that the best strategy was to lower the political temperature around the story. In order to do that, we chose the risky path of discouraging several international press freedom groups from mounting any protest campaigns against our troubles. This was a slippery plan because in the majority of such cases in the Third World where media freedoms are not well established, international protests by the world press freedom groups have been instrumental in embarrassing anti-free press governments into releasing and dropping cases against journalists.

We also had one of *The Monitor's* reporters and an attorney travel to Kinshasa to get more evidence. We were pleasantly surprised to find that a crusading independent newspaper, *Le Potentiel*, had published a story on September 17, 1997, detailing how much, according to what it alleged were official records, each of the countries that had supported Kabila to take power, including Uganda, had been paid in war reparations. We were also able to get a statement that had been issued by the Congolese mining authority explaining that it was not forwarding enough money to the military to pay the recently victorious soldiers because it was taking care of Kabila allies. Therefore if push came to shove, we would argue truth.

Our plan A however was to push the point that whether the Uganda government was paid in gold, or paid at all, was not critical to the case. Section 50 (1) seeks to punish not just false information, but says that it must "also cause public alarm." Our lawyers held that it was not the intention of the makers of the law to punish all false news. For

example, no journalist would be charged with publishing false news if he or she misreported the goals a rival team scored against the national soccer team in an international match—something that might indeed cause a measure of "public alarm."

The law, according to our lawyers, intended to punish only falsehoods that were "very substantial." The most important aspect was therefore not falsehood, but public alarm. The prosecution found it easier to prove falsehood than alarming the public, so they concentrated on that. They paid dearly for that tactical mistake. And they made their case worse by relying exclusively on state employees as their witnesses.

Secondly, the charges arose out of two sentences, in a story that had 60 sentences. The prosecution had to prove that the "statement" in issue was false. Our defense therefore argued that the "statement" was the whole story, not just two sentences, and that none of the state witnesses claimed to have read only the two contentious parts. All of them had read the whole story. Therefore if the "statement" was the whole story, then the prominent comments by the government minister and officials that indeed there had been no payment could not be ignored.

Thirdly, our side argued that there was nothing wrong with being paid, as long as the service was not of a criminal nature. The magistrate ruled that the prosecution and its witnesses had proved that there had been no payment in gold to Uganda. She went on to point out that the same point had been made by the government officials who we quoted in the story. However, she ruled that the state had failed to prove that any aspect of the story had caused public alarm. She noted that instead one of the state witnesses, a manager with the central bank, said that if indeed there had been a payment, then she would have been "very happy," because it would have improved the country's gold reserves.

Finally, she also found that "hand-picked" government employees, who had no option under the terms of their employment except to defend the state, were not credible witnesses in a case in

which "public opinion" was supposed to be the benchmark for proof. Therefore she acquitted us.

During the trial, Uganda and Rwanda had turned against President Laurent Kabila, whom they had helped overthrow Mobutu in May 1997. Museveni acknowledged in several statements that Uganda had indeed given Kabila military aid, and he had now become an ingrate who was biting the hand that feeds him. Kabila and his ministers kept denouncing Uganda, claiming that its soldiers had gone bad, and Ugandan troops in DR Congo were no longer liberators but had turned into rogues who were looting the country's minerals and timber.

This fed a lot of media and public interest in our case, because we were seen as being persecuted for telling the truth. The independent FM stations in Kampala, in particular, followed the trial closely. Beside the news value, they had a selfish interest. The case was a popular subject of radio talk shows and jokes mocking the government, so the stations often covered it in order to supply the raw material for the evening's phone-ins. In the state media, meanwhile, Mwenda and I were denounced as conniving traitors who had recklessly caused the story to be published in order to become "martyrs." Overstated, perhaps, but it can't be denied that we became small stars; we signed quite a handful of autographs, and the service we received in most restaurants where we went was always very good.

We were saved by the fact that the reporter called two government officials—and the Sunday Editor let their denials stand, uninteresting as they were. That was something the prosecutors couldn't get around.

The lesson here is an old one. It is good journalism to give the other side its say, however little it might seem to add to the story. This could turn out to be the only thing that a lawyer can use to keep you out of jail. ■

Charles Onyango-Obbo is a 1992 Nieman Fellow and Editor of The Monitor in Uganda.

Watching the Watchdogs

In Kenya, a Monthly Media Review Keeps a Watchful Eye on Journalists and Others

By Wilson Wanene

David Makali chose his best weapon to fight press harassment in Kenya: the pages of *eXpression today*, a monthly media review journal he edits. Using the power of his words, Makali shot back at the person who just one month earlier—according to him—had ordered a dozen men to kidnap him outside a Nairobi hotel, shove him into a van, and take him to a forest where they slapped, punched and stepped on him while he was on the ground. When they were done, they ordered him to run further into the forest until he disappeared from their sight. After a while, he heard their vehicle leave.

According to Makali, he then made his way out of the woods and found a restaurant nearby. He wanted to make a call, but there were no phones he could use. He boarded public transportation back to town. Though his ears, neck, chest and ribs were sore, he was not seriously injured. The whole experience lasted for about two hours. He gave a press conference on the same day in which he explained his ordeal. In “Point Blank: The Column That Pulls No Punches,” Makali exposed the person who ordered the beating: Fred Gumo, Assistant Minister in the office of the President, a man who has earned by his actions a thug-gish reputation.

“If Gumo thinks he can rule the streets and rule the newsrooms at the same time,” wrote Makali, “then he is quite mistaken.” In his column, he demanded to know why the police or the Attorney General had not taken any action against Gumo. It was *eXpression today* in its usual bare-knuckle combativeness. The journal is published by the Media Institute, an organization dedicated to free speech which Makali and his colleagues founded in 1996.



Above the fold of the February 1999 issue of *eXpression today*. The front-page story, “Kenya Turned Into Haven For Drug Barons,” is the story that got Editor David Makali kidnapped and beaten.

Gumo’s actions against Makali came about because of a special investigative report on drug trafficking in Kenya that appeared in the February issue of *eXpression today*. The article incensed Gumo because he was named by official police sources as a suspect. “In four months of investigations facilitated by the United States-based Fund for Investigative Journalism, we have come across a system that is so corrupt that it punishes petty addicts and vendors with stiff jail sentences while big-time traffickers slip through legal loopholes thanks to an incompetent anti-narcotics unit and a porous judiciary,” the lead story read. The issue carried eight articles on this topic.

“In every issue we want to make a special in-depth analysis of a topic that’s

not getting adequate coverage or is ignored by the regular media,” says Makali to explain why his media review devoted extensive space to drug trafficking. “Mainstream papers, like *Nation* and *Standard*, fear reprisals or legal action. There are big individuals involved in drug trafficking but they don’t want to name them.” The reference is to *The Daily Nation*, Kenya’s largest and most influential paper, and *The East African Standard*, founded in 1902, which is the oldest.

Makali believes that there needs to be a more serious effort in investigative journalism by the major dailies. He maintains that editors allow some stories to languish in computers in order to protect certain individuals. Alternatively, editors will insist that the stories

will be published only after implicated individuals respond. But some public officials, claims Makali, never respond to phone calls—especially from journalists. So what does one do? To him, the answer is simple: Go with the story and hope that they'll respond after publication.

In naming Gumo as the person responsible for organizing the beating, eXpression today was going on much more than a hunch. "Everything points to Gumo's hand. And he has not even denied it," states Makali. In fact, Gumo, after the incident, had the audacity to warn journalists from the Luhya ethnic group—to which he and Makali belong—that they would be whipped if they wrote "dirty things" about their leaders. The warning, which Gumo gave while attending a funeral in Western Kenya, got widespread condemnation in the media. Even cartoonists jumped in with drawings of a menacing Gumo, clutching a whip or club, while fuming at reporters.

"We don't play holier than thou," says Makali, 30, to explain his publication's approach. "In everything we do we believe we're doing an honest job that needs to be done. The idea is that ultimately we're trying to burst and expand the horizons of press freedom in this country by checking the excessive influence of the various forces such as the threat of advertisers to control content, and the threat by politicians to circumscribe freedom of the press through legislation. Secondly, we are dealing with a new generation of people. My generation is thinking of revolutionizing." Tsuma Charo, 26, and Ng'ang'a Mbugua, 25, are his two editorial assistants, and the three make up eXpression today's editorial board.

eXpression today, which first appeared in print in September 1997, has created a unique role for itself within Kenyan journalism. Put simply, it is a watchdog on the watchdogs. Print journalists in particular, who became more daring with the political liberalization that came when opposition parties were legalized in 1991, now have to contend with a punchy industry critique each month. Tabloid-sized and with issues that have varied in length from 28 to 64

pages, it's the most comprehensive and steadily produced media review in Kenya today. It prints 3,500 copies per issue and has plans to boost the figure to 7,000.

Priced at 30 Kenyan shillings (46 cents) per copy, eXpression today was available only in select newsstands in Nairobi when it started. Members of Parliament and journalists in the country get it at no charge. Diplomatic missions in Nairobi, some Kenyan human rights groups, and foreign organizations devoted to freedom of expression—such as Article 19 and the Committee to Protect Journalists—each receive a free copy. From April this year, eXpression today will have a distributor to carry it nationwide and to Tanzania and Uganda. Currently, the publication has 150 paid subscribers.

The publication's entire staff is made up of eight people and operates out of a modest four-room office in downtown Nairobi. It survives on funding, mostly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland. The connection with the Finns came about after Makali put out a grant proposal to start a media monitoring organization.

In the pages of eXpression today one finds stories such as: "A Peek Into the Dare-devilry of Investigative Journalism," "Gap Widens Between Journalism Training and Practice in Kenya," "Patience Is the Hallmark of a Good Editor," "Poor Remuneration the Bane of Kenyan Journalism," and "Why This Negative Portrayal of Women by Media?" But the journal goes beyond watching the media or chasing risky stories like drug trafficking. It also tackles human rights and democracy issues. Writers can submit poems and short stories. For some critics, this points to a lack of journalistic purity.

But Makali and others, especially those active in human rights issues, disagree. "Advocacy is tied to truth and accuracy but that of itself does not exhaust our duty in a changing Kenya," explains Pheroze Nowrojee, a prominent Nairobi attorney and member of the Media Institute's board. "Our professional skills—whether as lawyers or journalists—must be put to the service of certain values which will bring about

increasing democratization in Kenya." Gitobu Manyara, an opposition member of Parliament and co-winner of the 1991 Louis Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism as Editor of Nairobi Law Monthly, also sits on the 14-member board, which represents a variety of professions.

"If David Makali had started this publication when he was just a reporter, probably he would not have drawn the same attention to the publication as he did after coming from jail," says Mugambi Karanja, Managing Editor of The East African Standard. Karanja refers to when Makali worked for a weekly paper owned by a prominent opposition leader. In 1994, he and his editor-in-chief chose to go to jail for a couple of months rather than apologize and pay a heavy fine for contempt of court over an article he wrote criticizing a Court of Appeal decision.

The action received extensive coverage in the press. Makali and his editor even got mentioned in the annual State Department human rights report and that of the Committee to Protect Journalists. Amnesty International not only included them in its own report but also adopted them as prisoners of conscience. And the case was raised in the Kenyan Parliament by opposition members who were angered by the fact that Makali and his colleague were placed in solitary confinement. This forced the authorities to transfer them back to regular imprisonment after two weeks.

eXpression today has carried a number of unflattering pieces on internal developments at The Standard, which last year had a major change of senior editors. It also fired an investigative reporter for a story that claimed the managing director of Kenya Airways purchased four jets for himself using his company's money. The article turned out to be false and forced the paper to pay the director 2.5 million Kenyan shillings (\$38,000) in damages. Karanja contends that some of the early pieces Makali published about his paper were one-sided, but later ones became more well-rounded. He confesses that the review has kept him and others on their toes and that The Standard now makes an effort to respond to

queries from writers working on eXpression today stories. The Standard has realized that it's much better to get its side of a story out before publication rather than later.

Media Focus magazine is another review. It's published by the Media Development Association, an organization started in 1994 and comprised of former students of the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism whose studies were sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Members work mostly in the journalism or communication field and produce the magazine when they get the chance. As a result, only six issues have come out since it premiered in 1995. It too has a Web site. "We don't crusade for the media," says Mundia Muchiri, Editor of both The Daily Nation's Saturday magazine and Media Focus. "The main thing we do is offer a forum to journalists to discuss issues of common interests. It's not so much an issue of us and them. It's more an issue of us and us." To Makali, this is not enough. "The issues we have in this country call for confrontation," he says. "If journalists are not being paid, we say they should be paid. Media Focus doesn't prick the subject of those discussions."

Since eXpression today doesn't pay its own writers, what right does Makali have to raise the pay issue? "The point is that we would like to pay if we could pay," he answers. "But we cannot sustain the paper that way because it would be terminal. Why would it be terminal? Because by virtue of our area of coverage it's not a high-circulation area. Even if the paper sold its targeted 7,000, it's not enough to pay for the paper's printing. In the past, eXpression today has had seasonal ads but they are not anything that can change the financial position in any significant way."

Wangui Kanina is a young general assignment reporter with The People Daily, which takes a strong anti-government line. When she joined it in 1997, she was surprised to find only one other female staff writer. Though it now has three, she points out that the low number is reflective of the country as a whole where women are scarce in important decision-making positions.

She has read eXpression today since its debut and confesses to enjoy the way it probes at issues. However, Kanina—a member of the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK)—sees room for improvement. "If they could initially try and find what problems or issues are faced by women in newsrooms, for the sole fact that they are women, and try to highlight them, it could be a beginning," she adds.

Makali admits that eXpression today has not adequately addressed difficulties faced by female journalists. But he does not accept responsibility. To him, the review has created a forum and it's up to journalists—male and female—to raise their individual issues for discussion. He states, "What women journalists are doing is sitting and grumbling among themselves instead of reaching out to others to help improve the situation. AMWIK has never sought to collaborate with us on anything. They hold exclusive functions for media women."

"In Kenya, allegations are taken very seriously and counter-allegations are taken very lightly. So allegations can be very damaging," says Frank Ojiambo, Internet Publications Editor for The Nation Media Group Limited, which publishes The Daily Nation, along with other papers. He applauds the arrival of eXpression today. And he likes the way it has highlighted corruption in the media and working conditions for stringers, many of whom are poorly paid—especially in the rural areas. However, he feels that some of the critical exposés have been one-sided.

Ojiambo, a former national chairman of the Kenya Union of Journalists, believes that if a writer is only able to get one side of a story, the fact must be explained fully to the reader. And the publication should continue to try to get the other side, even after the piece has been printed, in order to publish a follow-up. Makali insists that all efforts are made to get reaction from the person being criticized, and when it doesn't appear it's because they have been unable to get one.

When tourists in Uganda were killed in March by Rwandan Hutu rebels, The Daily Nation's initial story came out

with the front-page headline: "Eight Tourists Are Massacred." The tourists were from America, Britain and New Zealand. President Daniel arap Moi, sensitive over Kenya's tarnished international image since he took power in 1978, questioned why the paper's lead story was of an incident that happened in a neighboring country.

In eXpression today's "Point Blank" column that month, the publication—in a rare turn—agreed with the President that it was an odd editorial decision. The review went on to point out that the same edition of The Daily Nation carried a story of 15 Kenyans who starved to death but it was buried inside the paper. Wangethi Mwangi, Group Managing Editor at The Nation Media Group, grudgingly concedes that the criticism had merit. But he quickly points out that right below the headline was a map of East Africa with an arrow that clearly indicated the site where the killings took place in southwestern Uganda. As a result, he feels, most readers could not have mistaken the incident to have happened in Kenya.

Funding for eXpression today runs out this summer, but Makali hopes it will be renewed for one more year. By then, he claims, the review's increasing notoriety will have attracted advertisements that, in turn, will allow it to be self-sustaining. While he edits eXpression today, he's also the chairman of an organizing committee that is launching Kenya's version of the Pulitzers. And he wants to start panel discussions in which editors field questions from the public.

"The answer is yes without any question," answers Mwangi when asked whether this kind of media review is needed in Kenya. "The greatest contribution is that it facilitates communication within the media in Kenya." Coming from a key editor at the largest media company in East and Central Africa, the compliment is a good indicator that eXpression today, despite the criticisms, isn't being ignored. ■

Wilson Wanene is a Kenyan-born freelance journalist based in Boston. He was in Kenya from December to May.

Chilean Media Work in the Long Shadow of Pinochet

Media Ownership and Government Dictate the Ways This Former Dictator Is Covered

By Mirko Macari

On the day before British Home Secretary Jack Straw ruled that General Augusto Pinochet could face extradition proceedings to Spain, a judge in Santiago, Chile, confiscated all the copies of the so-called “Black Book of Chilean Justice” from the publisher’s warehouse.

The book, which had not yet been released, is a journalistic investigation of several cases of corruption, nepotism and fraudulent practices inside Chile’s judicial branch of government. It describes judges’ ties to drug trafficking, pedophilic tendencies of certain court magistrates, and the predilection of Supreme Court Justice Servando Jordán, formerly the Chief Justice, for local whorehouses. Jordán, who gave the order prohibiting the book’s distribution, narrowly escaped being thrown off the bench two years ago after parliamentarians accused him of participating in cover-ups and protecting drug traffickers.

The extradition approval and the book confiscation took place on different days and different continents, but they must be interpreted in the same general context. If one wants to understand the stance of the Chilean media in regards to the Pinochet case, one must first understand the social context in which the media operate. On one hand, there is a legal system that imposes severe restrictions on freedom of expression; on the other hand, the media’s monopolistic ownership is closely linked to conservative sectors of public opinion. For the most part, the media are supporters of the former de facto ruler.

“Many seemingly plausible arguments can be advanced to explain the freedom of expression deficit [in Chile]. Among them are political and institutional factors, particularly political re-

straints imposed by the country’s authoritarian constitution,” observed a 1998 Human Rights Watch report entitled “Limits of Tolerance: Freedom of Expression and the Public Debate in Chile.” The report went on to say: “Government officials frequently point out that the undemocratic composition of the Senate has given conservatives and former supporters of the military government disproportionate power in government, enabling them to frustrate or dilute any far-reaching reform initiatives.”

This analysis was based on the nature of the orchestrated transition from the military to civilian governance, a change which occurred in 1989 when elected officials assumed power but within the context of a constitution that had been drawn up by Pinochet. The new constitution provided that he would continue in office for eight more years as Commander-in-Chief, unable to be removed from the post, and that subsequently he would hold the position of Senator-for-Life.

The Human Rights Watch report continues, “The need to respect this fragile consensus, it is argued, has imposed a tendency of caution, realism and deference to the middle ground, even self-censorship. It is also arguable that violations of freedom of expression arise mainly out of court rulings that reflect the conservative mentality of much of the judiciary.”

Fear of official sources’ reactions, fear of generating conflict, the fragile nature of public liberties and of democracy itself, characterize the climate in which the overwhelming majority of the press—with the exception of two small extreme left publications—reported on the arrest of the “Senator-for-Life.” In contrast, television networks such as CNN and CBS



Gen. Augusto Pinochet wipes tears away during his 1998 farewell speech when he retired as Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean armed forces. *Photo courtesy of Reuters.*

consistently refer to Pinochet as “the former Chilean dictator.” Without a doubt, this semantic difference in the treatment of this topic is symbolic of the coverage of the Pinochet case.

When newspapers such as Spain’s *El País*, *The Washington Post* or the Parisian *Liberación* carry editorials in favor of Pinochet’s arrest, they remind the public about the grounds of the accusations above and beyond the legalistic debates surrounding the arrest. They remind readers about the 3,000 disappeared people, the thousands of cases of torture, and the summary executions of those characterized as political enemies.

Frequently these news accounts have given a human face to chilling statistics and horrible histories. The world press places information about Chile in a historic context and, at the same time, gives it a personal context. Thus, it

justifies value judgments with facts and reminds the reader of how Pinochet stands as a symbol of the time when Latin America was dominated by military regimes. The world press reminds its readers that the only reason former dictator Pinochet is a Senator-for-Life is that he wrote himself into office.

In Chile, however, the impact of these reminders is limited. Most Chileans lack Internet or cable television access to foreign media and instead rely on Chilean television to get their information. Chilean media occasionally address foreign coverage of the Pinochet arrest, but such acknowledgments are rare. Thus, when the Chilean press calls Pinochet "Senator-for-Life," it situates itself in a present that is devoid of memory, conveniently forgotten by necessity. This is a form of pragmatism that takes for granted the limitations of a process marked by legal parameters, but not necessarily ethical ones. Otherwise, it cannot be understood why justice has been done in only a handful of emblematic human rights cases after nine years of democracy.

Page after page, hour after hour, in newspapers and television, are spent explaining the highly complex legal morass in which Pinochet finds himself, and yet the basic issue is somehow set aside: the recent history of Chile. In the official world, the one of the consensual transition, this theme is a very uncomfortable one for all its protagonists: 17 years of systematic violations of human rights, planned and executed by the State, against those who thought in a different way from the military government.

Even if we could leave aside discussion about whether military dictatorships are necessary, whether they are the result of processes of social breakdown generated by weak governments, and whether it is legitimate to use any means possible to eliminate subversion or other sorts of disquisitions (top-

ics that are more appropriate to the realm of political science), what is certain is that in communication things must be called by their rightful names.

In the Chile of transition, the media do not talk about a dictator or a dictatorship. They talk about a military re-

pointed out in the Human Rights Watch report, determines the course of the general narrative and the manipulation of language. It weaves an invisible thread throughout this socially constructed reality (see Berger and Luckmann, "The Social Construction of Reality.") These sectors have managed to implant the idea that Pinochet's arrest is an affront to national sovereignty: He is Chilean, most of the crimes were committed in Chile, and therefore the country's courts should judge him.

It is a dangerous premise and one that the government is obligated to adopt in order not to create conflict with the military. If the constitutional mission of the armed forces is to defend sovereignty, anyone who argues in favor of Pinochet's stay in Europe is therefore considered to be not just anti-Pinochet, but a traitor to the country and an enemy in the eyes of the military. The official way of thinking, with certain nuances, has become that the defense of Pinochet is also the defense of Chile.

The right has also been equally vehement in criticizing the judicial process against the general. It historically justified the military coup by as-

serting politicians' incapability to rule the country and comparing politics with the worst of social vices. In this vein, too, any action against Pinochet has been branded as a merely political decision. This argument has been used once again to denigrate the resolutions of the House of Lords and Home Secretary Straw. If the decision had been in favor of Pinochet, then it undoubtedly would have been viewed as one that met the letter of the law. The right, in an old but undoubtedly effective strategy, labels as political everything that does not conform to the politics of the right.

This consistent type of coverage becomes possible because the major-



A photographer takes a picture of a placard featuring a caricature of Pinochet outside the House of Lords in London. *Photo courtesy of Reuters.*

gime. The tortures which form the grounds for extradition are termed "illegitimate judicial compulsions," as the law defines them. And when it is necessary to remember why Spanish judge Baltasar Garzon is accusing the general, the media resort to the term "alleged human rights violations." The word "alleged" is consistently used despite the fact that everyone knows that the violations happened. Indeed, an official commission has set down these abuses in black and white, secure in the knowledge that the majority of perpetrators can never be brought to justice under Chilean law.

The dominance of the conservative sectors at an institutional level, as

ity of media in Chile are linked to some sector of the right. Some are linked to former members of the military regimes, which control the two largest newspaper chains. Others are connected with the most conservative sectors of the Catholic Church, which owns the largest television station.

It is paradoxical that the social and cultural world exemplified by the governing left-centrist coalition does not have its own media in which to express its perspectives. The existing public television channel must finance itself, competing in the market for advertising and administered by a seven-member board appointed by the Senate through a political quota system. This results in a virtual stalemate and a pact of nonaggression subjecting the station's journalists to a hybrid editorial policy that tries to be all things to all people. This channel is presumed to be more pluralist than the others. However, it is not allowed to show films about the period of military dictatorship such as Costa Gavras's "Missing," which depicts Jack Lemmon as a father searching for his son, a North American journalist who is arrested and disappeared in the first days of the military coup. In the film, he finally discovers the tortured body of his son.

La Nación, the only state-owned newspaper, also has its problems; the newspaper now concentrates on covering sports events. La Nación was the protagonist of a major incident concerning freedom of expression during Chile's political transition in May 1993, at the beginning of the democratic government, when it published a long article about the case popularly known as "Pinocheques." The case involved bank documents discovered in 1991, revealing Army loans to Pinochet's son, Augusto Pinochet Hiriart.

The long newspaper article, complete with photographs of the documents, was considered hostile and an act of provocation. In a meeting of generals, held in the Armed Forces building that is located in front of the government's La Moneda palace, publication of the article was interpreted as harassment of the "Army and the person of its Commander-in-Chief." To

demonstrate their anger, the generals closed off the building, encircling it with a group of 60 elite and well-equipped black beret soldiers.

Responding to the generals, government authorities gave in to some of the demands of the military, including publication of a year-old comptrollers' report which established that the "Pinocheques" operation was not a criminal act.

But that was not all.

That same day a general by the name of Concha talked directly to La Nación's News Editor Alberto Luengo to negotiate the next day's headline.

"Excuse me, general, but I have no instructions about this. We have never received an order concerning a headline from La Moneda, and we are certainly not going to receive one from you," the editor said. "We want the main headline," stressed Concha, after consulting with the generals while still on the phone.

A bit later Luengo received a call from Enrique Correa, one of the government's most influential ministers. "Alberto," he said. "It's all well and fine not to cave into pressure, but the security of the state is involved and the solution for the country is for you to publish what they ask."

The editor explained to Correa that he could not put the main headline on a year-old piece of news and that obviously the top story had to be about the unusual movement of troops in front of the presidential palace. And he said that if he was ordered to do otherwise, he would present his resignation.

"Resign then!" Luengo heard someone in Correa's office exclaim. Managing Editor Abraham Santibañez told Correa that the military wanted the headline, "Army acted according to law in the checks case." And he confirmed that the majority of the journalists would quit along with Luengo if the military got its way.

The solution negotiated by Correa and proposed by the managing editor was a Solomonic one: The edition would have no main headline. The issue came out with a large photo of one of the black berets and, in the middle of the page, the headline de-

manded by the military. Beneath that was another headline intended to please everyone: "Unusual Movement of Generals." The true story of this cryptic front page was only known behind closed doors of the seats of power.

There were no resignations at the newspaper over this incident and no immediate reactions. However, when Eduardo Frei became President the following year, the newspaper's editorial line was completely changed, and all the reporters who did political investigations and wrote about sensitive subjects left La Nación.

Today, in the Pinochet case, if one defines news as a fact, more than as a continuing narrative with an historic context, one has to conclude that the media in Chile at least collect the facts. Then they often write a story riddled with euphemisms and, in general, omit the broader context. Information is published (the text of Home Secretary Straw's last decision, for example, was printed in its entirety, as were the arguments of the prosecutor and defense).

However, the emphasis in both the headlines and the placement of the information in newspapers and magazines conveys the sense that the Pinochet case is not being handled correctly. According to polls, a majority of Chileans believe that Pinochet is responsible for human rights violations, but this same majority feel that he should be tried in Chile and that he is being held illegitimately in England. ■

Mirko Macari is a Chilean journalist who studied law before becoming a writer. He covers national and international political issues for the magazine El Sábado.

Translation by June Carolyn Erlick, Publications Director of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University. She was the Inter-American Press Association investigator of unpunished crimes against journalists in Guatemala.

Immigrants Ignite a Media Maelstrom in Greece

By Linking Foreigners With Crime, Broadcast Media Tried to Grow Their Ratings. But at What Cost?

By Dimitri Mitropoulos

It is a late August night on the outskirts of Athens. Three Albanian men, all in their early 20's, are getting ready to sleep al fresco in the terrace of a trendy bar-restaurant in the coastal area of Porto Rafti.

The air is warm, almost pleasant, as they are setting their sleeping bags on the ground for a few hours' rest. They are employed as dishwashers but, as the suntan on their naked torsos indicate, they also work in daytime, cleaning the place, taking care of the pool, gardening, carrying six-packs of beer and bags of ice to refrigerators. Eating, sleeping and essentially living in the premises, each is paid 4,000 drachmas (approximately 12 dollars) a day—less than half what Greek employees earn. As the owner freely admits, they have “of course” no legal permits.

The story of Yorgos, Yanni and Mondy, the three Albanians savoring Athenian nightlife, dates from 1997 when this reporter researched a story on immigration for a Greek newspaper. Two years later they have departed seeking different work, but a telephone call to the club verifies that other Albanians are employed in similar positions, albeit under ameliorated terms. The case is not unique. The 1990's have brought to Greece, a country of roughly 10 million people, more than 600,000 foreign immigrants. The influx of foreigners tested social attitudes, produced a torrent of sensationalist reports in the electronic media, initiated a national debate about immigration, and culminated in the creation of a Greek “green card system.”

In a sense, the whole controversy that rose up about immigration is a historical irony. Greece was traditionally a country that its people left behind, migrating to the West in search of jobs and prosperity.

In the 1990's, the situation has been different. The dissolution of the Soviet block and the growing disarray in the Balkans changed things dramatically. Albanians, Bulgarians, Poles and Russians came to Greece in ever-increasing numbers, apparently seeking better fortunes, as did Egyptians, Ethiopians, Philipinos and Kurds. (Sadly some of the latter would occasionally wander unknowingly into the minefields in the Greek-Turkish border in Thrace, along the Evros river.) It was pretty obvious almost from the start that the Greek government had no way to stem the tide. The police would round up Albanians nightly in Omonoia Square in central Athens, board them on buses and drive them across the border. Yet what came to be known ironically as the “Balkan Express” proved ineffective as did similar policies in other major cities or in the countryside. In 1991, 170,000 Albanians were expelled in one way or another. Most would return sooner or later, across a steep and mountainous border almost impossible to patrol.

This massive influx of foreigners through porous borders caused concern. Greece perceived itself as an ethnically cohesive Christian Orthodox country, and attitudes towards immigrants were essentially untested. Widespread ethnic cleansing in neighboring Yugoslavia, arson attacks on foreign hostels in Germany, and massive deportation of Albanians initially confined to football stadiums in Italy (which made for gruesome pictures), made the early 1990's ominous throughout Europe. Yet, despite worries, the transition in Greece proved to be smooth.

With “black economy” contributing, incredibly for an EU country, to 30 percent of the Greek GDP, the potential for exploitation of foreigners

proved, sadly, enormous, but also assured quick acceptance within the Greek society. Albanians worked in construction and in all sorts of odd jobs, Poles harvested oranges or olives in the Peloponnese, and the Greek lower middle class satisfied its craving for upward mobility by employing Russians or Bulgarians as house help.

This fragile equilibrium, resting on exploitation of cheap labor, was to be upset by the local media. Story after story in the press had documented rising crime rates in the 1990's, and violent crimes committed by foreigners started to catch the eye of the producers of the television evening news. The Greek airwaves had been progressively deregulated in the late 1980's, first radio and then television. Political instability during the scandal-plagued 1989-90 period, when the beleaguered socialists of Andreas Papandreu surrendered power to the conservatives of Constantine Mitsotakis after three consecutive elections, led to a free-for-all in newly privatized electronic media. Soon the country found itself with a fluctuating number of more than 20 radio stations. The television market, given the bigger start-up and operating costs and the limited size of the target audience, looked even more crowded. Three state channels were soon in competition with four major private networks, Mega Channel, Antenna TV, ΣΚΑΙ, and Star TV, and another 10 minor channels (again the numbers were fluctuating).

Conservative and, since 1993, socialist governments would allow hopeful entrepreneurs or consortia to set up stations and start broadcasting. Yet, despite a media and communications bill masterminded by Minister Evangelos Venizelos and passed in the mid-1990's, the process of licensing

has proved slow: More than 10 years since the electronic media were de-regulated the procedure for obtaining licenses has not been completed. Bureaucratic snags—and a political desire to retain leverage against broadcasters by deferring licensing—has created a de facto, rather than a regulated, state of affairs in the airwaves.

In this overcrowded and uncertain landscape, the race for ratings and advertising revenues proved catastrophic in terms of maintaining standards in news reporting. The audience, long frustrated with state monopoly, was offered choice by private broadcasters yet was soon confronted with evening news programs that “bled” profusely. Crime, accidents and human-interest stories led the programs that soon went down-market in an atmosphere of pervasive sensationalism. The coverage of the arrest and subsequent suicide of a pedophile in the Peloponnese and of the sexual abuses and murders committed by a gang of youths engaged in “satanic” rituals in an Athens suburb in 1993-94 proved milestones in the downgrading of Greek media.

Predictably, the encounter between broadcast sensationalism and offences committed by foreigners, mostly Albanians, proved spectacular. Almost every violent crime committed by foreigners was granted prime-time coverage, complete with ominous music, reenactments and special effects imported from American television. The 1997 meltdown in Albania made matters worse. With AK-47's on sale in Greece, a gun-shy country, for 10,000 drachmas (approximately 30 dollars) and scores of criminals at large after the Albanian prison system broke down, the public was warned by broadcasters to expect the worst. “Miami Vice” speedboat attacks in Corfu and a number of murderous robberies in the mainland turned Albanians into fodder for the evening news and ignited a mass hysteria amid news reports that ordinary citizens, especially farmers, were buying shotguns in self-defense.

In this sensationalist climate, the print media appeared split. Tabloids went into a down-market spiral, echoing broadcast xenophobia. But quality

newspapers such as *To Vima*, *Kathimerini*, *Ta Nea* and *Eleytherotypia* opted for high ground. A number of stories questioned broadcasts, quoting figures from law enforcement proving that the share of foreigners in overall crime was marginal, fluctuating between three and seven percent during the 1990's. True, Albanians had an increasing share in crimes committed by foreigners (in part because they outnumbered all other nationalities), but often statistics were about arrests and charges, not convictions.

The findings shed light on biases against foreigners in law enforcement and, of course, the media. Moreover, the debate about foreign crime urged the more serious newspapers to look harder into the harsh realities of the life of immigrants in Greece, to investigate possible racist attitudes among the Greeks and, ultimately, to examine the changes their influx was bringing to Greek society. News reports and features were supplemented by a steady stream of editorials and op-eds pointing to the dangers of xenophobia.

Apparently, the issue had gained prominence and velocity: The backlash was not too late in coming. Under pressure from sensationalist broadcast coverage and the assertions of television pundits of an alleged widespread public demand for law and order, the Greek police sent a heavily armed local SWAT team to storm an encampment of gypsies in search of a suspect. Television cameras followed eagerly heavily armed members of the special forces as they stormed the grounds, throwing terrorized people to the ground. In a country ill at ease with human rights abuses during the aftermath of the civil war and the military junta of 1967-74, the images of macho policing produced widespread revulsion and criticism. Alarmed by extremist “back-bench” parliamentarians demanding mass expulsions or internment of foreigners, the government, led by Prime Minister Costas Simitis and backed by prominent public figures left and right of the political spectrum, chastised xenophobia and pushed for new immigration legislation.

The proposed bill, euphemistically

called a “green card system” in the local media, was meant to provide a much-needed framework for foreign workers, acknowledging and normalizing a change in Greek society. The lawmaking tamed television coverage by forcing the national debate about immigration into the political mainstream and bringing a sense of closure. Broadcasters, apparently having no desire to be framed as extremists, toned down their coverage of foreign crime, though an increased sensationalism of the Greek evening news programs seems here to stay. As for the quality print media, liberal editorial boards are left to ponder whether Greek society is indeed becoming multicultural.

Whatever the verdict is on that question, the war of words and images among broadcasters during the 1990's alerted the Greek print media to the complexities of reporting on immigration and to dangers of succumbing to a “barbarians at the gate” tabloid mentality. As a consequence, there has been a steady flow of newspaper stories about immigrants in Greece. Most memorable are the features documenting the harshness of their everyday lives. Instead of demonizing foreigners, members of the media now seek out the voices of immigrants as they talk about their experiences and perspectives.

What has happened in reporting the immigrant story may have a good effect in preparing Athenian newspaper reporters and editors for the challenges that might be presented to us by the war in Kosovo. This ethnic conflict has sent hundreds of thousands of Albanian refugees to neighboring countries, and although Greece has not received any yet, it will certainly be affected. There is no reason to believe that our job of telling the stories of the journeys and circumstances of the refugees from this region won't intensify as we head into the next century. Let's hope the lessons we've learned will serve us well and that others might learn from the unfortunate cycle of coverage that we endured. ■

Dimitri Mitropoulos, a 1999 Nieman Fellow, is a political correspondent for To Vima newspaper in Athens.

Reforming Welfare, Reporting on Poverty:

The Challenges of Reporting This Story in Various Communities and Other Countries

Public debate about welfare—its failings, its future and its families—which had been the subject of so much media coverage for so long, was transformed into a different challenge for journalists in August 1996 when President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act. Welfare reform replaced welfare “as we know it,” and now a plethora of state initiatives are emerging to move people off of welfare and into the labor market. Now, editors, writers, producers and correspondents have had to think anew about how to report on this extraordinary shift in social policy and its affects on people in various communities.

Bill Kovach, Nieman Curator, focused his remarks at a Casey Journalism Center for Children and Families conference on the intersection of various strategies that reporters can use to chronicle this important and evolving story. **Lynda McDonnell**, who covered welfare and social policy at The St. Paul Pioneer Press, offers hints about how to weave the economic, social and political strands of this complex story. **Joe Rodriguez**, a columnist for The San Jose Mercury News, writes about the need for journalists to bear in mind the impact of immigration reform and the role cultural politics play in their coverage of Latinos and welfare reform. **William Wong**, a freelance columnist with The San Francisco Examiner, explains that members of the mainstream press don't do well at capturing experiences of Asian-Americans brought about by welfare reform. **Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.**, a political science professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, reports on findings from the first study of broadcast media to examine ways in which reporting of welfare reform is affected by perceptions of race and gender, especially when it comes to African-Americans. **Pat Gish**, Editor of The Mountain Eagle, a weekly newspaper in Appalachia, finds that few newspapers there track the story of welfare reform, and poverty remains a constant and difficult story to tell. And **Martha Shirk**, a former newspaper reporter who has written a soon-to-be published book about working poor families, offers some suggestions for those who want to do more reporting on poverty. Finally, from Europe, **Martin Gehlen**, an editor and writer at a Berlin newspaper, who wrote a book about U.S. welfare reform, reports on how European reporters are looking closer to home (rather than to the United States) for stories about how to solve their countries' problems with social spending. ■

Constructing the Welfare Story Brick By Brick

Write Up; Write Down; Write Fast; Write Slow

By Bill Kovach

I was involved in a conversation at the Kennedy School at Harvard the other day with two people who held important jobs in the Republican Party. When the conversation turned to welfare reform and I expressed some misgivings about the return of the basic welfare programs to state control, one of my companions became angry. "Don't you think the states can do a better job than the federal government has?" she asked. Maybe, I said, "But I remember when the states ran welfare programs. That's when a major piece of the welfare program of the state of Alabama was buying bus tickets to New York for their black citizens to—as George Wallace said—send them to those Yankees up there who love them so much to take care of them."

I mention this for two reasons. The first is to remind myself that we did a lousy job covering the patchwork of state welfare rules and regulations that were in place when I was a young reporter. As a result we failed to see how the disparate decisions of disparate states were creating the demography and the social and political patterns of today. And second to point out that journalism has a second chance to redeem its promise.

Year after year, Nieman Fellows lament that they have no big, broad, important stories like Vietnam, Watergate, the civil rights movement, to challenge and engage them as fully as my generation had.

I'm here to suggest that you're looking at just such a story. The truth is that as large as Vietnam and Watergate seem in that dreamy, sepia tone of hindsight, they were stories that began as tentative, probing stories pursued more to scratch a persistent itch than because there was some clear goal in mind. And they were built into national stories with far-reaching implications, ten-

diously, with a lot of plodding reporting. The broader stories that gave form to the eventual edifice were laid brick by brick the way all truly important things are built.

There's not a lot I can tell you about the details of welfare reform, or the ways in which it is playing out at the grassroots level, that you've not already heard better from experts here today. But let me just offer a few insights about constructing stories of the kind that I've gleaned from about 40 years of off-and-on thinking about it.

One of the biggest challenges that you face is the context into which you are writing the stories today. Public surveys and election results make it clear that a miserly spirit of Dickensian proportions is building in the country today. That means there is likely to be less money available for broad-based public programs, and most people in the country will have little time and little patience for the notion of organized public obligations in general.

In order to engage a public caught up in acquiring and keeping more for themselves, your coverage of the general issue of support for the less-advantaged will have to be reported and presented in ways that will put the story in a broader context. You'll be fishing in a stream of well-fed fishes, and success will depend on displaying an array of multiple hooks, showing them as many different lures as possible. And you tie those lures in a way which attaches the situation of the needy in America to as many other people and institutions and trends in this society as possible.

Your goal is to embed your story so firmly into the fabric of our times that everyone sees the connection between the situation of the less-advantaged and themselves. You'll have to forage for bricks to build these stories. And I

suggest you start with a look at history. Just study the work of photographer Jacob Riis, and read Lincoln Steffens and Charles Dickens, not because their story is your story, but because they can point you toward the shape and the dimension of the kind of story of vast social dynamic that confronts you.

Riis recognized that the story needed, first of all, to be exposed, for most people had no real idea of what went on with the Other in late 19th and early 20th Century America. Steffens recognized that the story needed exposure of the political imperatives and structures which provide the girding for the social system and which are still part of the landscape of American cities. And Dickens recognized that the story was not limited to a single class of people but needed, in order to be tellingly told, the interaction between those who have and those who need.

Producing the kinds of stories that I believe are necessary to win support for time and resources from your editors, and to penetrate the otherwise occupied minds of your audience, means that you'll have to master a number of skills and look for different kinds of stories.

Initially, you'll have to confront two paradoxes. First: You'll have to write fast and you'll have to write slow—constant and repetitious stories about the process and about the people caught up in it, while saving string for the broader and deeper stories. You have to, because your stories can't wait. The press has its greatest influence on public opinion in a program's formative stages, before issues become polarized and positions fixed. This is when people are open to new ideas and when new facts and fresh ways to see things provide them a basis on which to, as Lincoln said, think anew and act anew.

But let me offer one overarching caution: Don't prejudge the outcome of this story.

Once people think they know what everything is about, new ideas and new ways to think about the subject will grow only like stalagmites through the constant drip of super-saturated material. Unfortunately, modern journalism and modern life are much less accessible by this kind of deliberative process today.

Secondly, you have to write up and you have to write down. Stories about welfare have to be pursued on two levels. One level is the technical level of the dismantling of the national system of entitlement and the building of 50 separate state programs of limited support for cases of extreme need. The other is the more personal level that will chronicle either a miraculous end to poverty or the recreation of a class of citizens like those who stare out of Sebastian Selgado photographs.

The French essayist Montaigne has written that, "an infinity of fine actions must be lost without a witness, [for] a man is not always at the top of a breach or at the head of an army.... He is taken by surprise between the hedge and the ditch.... And if you watch carefully, you will find by experience that the least-brilliant occasion happens to be the most dangerous."

These are the stories, the stories of people taken by surprise between the hedge and the ditch that we don't often find in the daily paper. The ill-prepared single parent confronting day care, school, health care and soccer practice. An ailing mother whose only skills are useful to a telemarketer. And as I said, they're not just stories of poor people. They're stories of contrast between the haves and the have-nots: the people who organize the telemarketing calls, the people who make the calls and your readers and viewers, the people who reluctantly receive the calls.

The story of the second in that triad, the caller, is the easy one. It's too easy.

It too quickly becomes either an ennobled or a demeaned person. And too often simply closes your reader's mind.

In fact, a great Latin American writer, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, who also runs a training course for young journalists in Colombia, refuses to allow his trainees to interview poor people in doing their social stories. They're too easy to reach and exploit. His trainees must build their stories by examining and interviewing those who receive the services and who receive the products and who profit from them. It is in the interweaving of these experiences that the best kind of stories will unfold.

Because of these two paradoxes—to write fast and to write slow, and to write up and to write down—you're in a position to unite two trends of contemporary journalism that have been growing further apart for the past 30 years. One is the art of precision journalism, made popular by Philip Meyer and a book of that name back in the 1960's, which stresses the more rigorous reporting with appropriate tools of measurement and analysis. In short, it is a more scientific approach. It is the kind of careful reporting that would, if it were the standard rather than the exception, have by now moderated the fear of crime in America. It would have pointed out that in a city such as Philadelphia, the likelihood is 93 percent that the young man living next door does not have a criminal record and 98 percent that he is nonviolent.

The other technique is the technique of the 1960's called the New Journalism that encourages the uses of the techniques of fiction—narrative, character development, tension, plot—in order to hold the reader's interest and loyalty in competition with more entertaining media. You can merge these two techniques by mastering a few of the tools in computer-assisted reporting—keep running notes in your

computer spreadsheet for periodic analysis pieces while you report and write your human-interest stories, which reveal the new strands of social relationships that we are spinning to shape our country.

And you have the tools and the resources to do this, undreamed of by reporters 20 years ago. You have organizations like Investigative Reporters and Editors that will teach you these skills quickly, effectively. And you have accessible, on the World Wide Web, hundreds of databases and analyses prepared by some of the best social researchers in the world that you can download at the touch of a button.

But let me offer one overarching caution: Don't prejudge the outcome of this story. There are many people, myself included, who believe that what we are doing as a society, in unraveling the safety net we have built over the past half-century, is a callous and ultimately destructive thing. But I also know that there are many, myself most definitely included, who have often been wrong. More importantly, I know that the most valuable thing a journalist can bring to the job each day is endless curiosity and the suspension of judgment. This may in the end prove, as its proponents argue, that the path taken in the 1930's was in error.

Let me close by suggesting a few specific areas of larger context into which I think you might weave your stories of those struggling for a minimum quality of life.

- Watch what happens to entry-level jobs. See how the new people forced off welfare are being absorbed into the marketplace. What kind of jobs are available to them? Who had the jobs before? What's happening to those people? What are the jobs like, and how do we who benefit from them, create and sustain them? How are they organized in a profit-making way for their managers? Watch what the entry of this new pool of resources for the bottom-rung jobs does to wages, to the consumption patterns. Watch what kind of pressure they put on labor organizations and how they respond.

- Watch for the issue to usher in a new era of political activism. The issues we're dealing with are things which largely affect women and touch the core of home and family values that drive more women than men into political movements. Women have for a long time been more active in politics than men at the level of making the machinery run, if not at the level of obtaining office. These new challenges to the way the home and the family are structured, to the way children are escorted into society, are likely to inspire more women to move from stuffing envelopes to setting policy positions.
- Use your stories as an opportunity to write horizontally about our society—cross sections that present rural, suburban and city in the same picture. Break us out of the urban-blight syndrome into which we've trapped ourselves for decades and let people see the ways in which the experiences of families are similar rather than focusing on the ways in which they're different. If my generation had paid more attention to and learned more about these elements of the story from two extraordinary journalists of our time who did just this—Michael Harrington and Joseph Lyford—we might very well have done a better job monitoring social change in our reporting during the 1950's and 60's. Michael Harrington, in his book, "The Other America: Poverty in the United States," developed a wealth of data on the causes and effects which produced the unseen poverty of a nation, that should have prompted stories outside of the reportorial ghetto of the poor and the alienated. And Joseph Lyford, in "An Airtight Cage" and another book called "The Talk of Vandalia," showed there was no real difference, human or otherwise, between the social blight of rural Illinois and the Upper West Side of New York City.

Finally, there is the whole question of privatization of public responsibilities. Interesting things happen to social programs when they become profit centers. There's a recent, chilling example of this down in Florida at a meeting of the private companies that were taking over prisons and jails; the story that has gotten far too little attention in the daily press. According to reports of the meeting, the keynote speaker's job was to reassure the attendees in face of what they all considered a disappointing trend: the reduction of the crime rate in the country. Don't worry, he said, the elimination of entitlements guarantees that the demand for your services will remain strong in the future. Now, just think about that. We have created a system with a vested interest in a high crime

[T]he story of what kind of a society we're building is the slug line on your story and that's the most important domestic story of your generation.

rate to create a constant demand for their services. Are we building a similar incentive into our welfare system?

Many of you, I'm sure, have read stories of Lockheed's views that privatized, state welfare programs have the potential of becoming a major revenue source for them to replace the lost military contracts.

In Virginia, according to National Child Support Advocacy Coalition testimony, Lockheed worked out a pilot study deal with the Division of Child Support Enforcement to prove their worth as managers of a privatized system. They set up two pilot offices for Lockheed to run in competition with the other state offices. But the deal was rigged. Each of the Lockheed offices had a caseload of about 500 cases per worker. The other state offices had caseloads of 1,000 to 2,000 per case worker. With state help, Lockheed identified the best state-trained staffers and hired them for their offices, leaving

other state offices with inexperienced workers in their place. And finally, when it came time to compare Lockheed's performance, they exercised "a proprietary right of nondisclosure of total and actual costs," which the children's advocates pointed out presented unfair and uneven evaluation measurements and encouraged false impressions and results. Lockheed then went around the country using Virginia's pilot project as a marketing tool demonstrating its success.

Now these are just a few areas where I think you can tie the story of the creative destruction through which our system of welfare and child support is passing into the larger stories of what's happening today.... I know that it asks you to combine journalistic skills and exercise journalistic imagination and

judgment far beyond that asked of most journalists on most stories. But that's because the story of what kind of a society we're building is the slug line on your story and

that's the most important domestic story of your generation.... If you can develop an effective approach to this story, and forge the right combination of tools with which to produce it, you might provide a new formula for journalism in the public interest for an industry that has lost its way and doubts its own usefulness. Brick by brick, you can build a new journalism that earns the public's trust and demands the support of the marketplace. ■

Nieman Curator Bill Kovach's remarks were delivered at the Casey Journalism Center for Children and Families conference, "The Well-Being of Children: Welfare Reform and Its Impact in the New England States," held at Boston University in November 1997.

The Evolving Coverage of Welfare Reform

Themes of Dependency Give Way to Complexities of Life Among the Working Poor

By Lynda McDonnell

In 1996, Peter Edelman, who was then a high-ranking official at the Department of Health and Human Services, resigned from the Clinton Administration because the President signed the new welfare law. With its time limits, work requirements, shift of power to states and end of entitlement to cash aid that poor families won in the mid-1930's, Temporary Aid to Needy Families replaced Aid to Families With Dependent Children. The passage of TANF provoked dire forecasts of families made homeless and desperate, already low wages for low-level jobs tumbling, and mayors left without resources they need to manage.

In his dissent published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Edelman mourned that Congress, Clinton and the country "have been reduced to the politics of the waitress mom." To wit: If most single mothers toil in crummy, poorly paid jobs to support their kids, why shouldn't the four million moms (welfare dads are far fewer) who relied on welfare be required to do the same? In the first two and a half years since the law took effect, some 1.7 million American families—37 percent of the total—left welfare, a huge, quiet procession driven by welfare's new rules and the welcoming arms of a robust job market. A map in the April issue of *Governing* magazine illustrates the trend with cheerful colors: yellow for states where welfare caseloads have fallen by 50 percent or more, orange for declines of 40 to 49

percent, green for 30 to 39 percent, blue for 20 to 29 percent. Only three states—Indiana, Nebraska and my own Minnesota—are purple, signifying that welfare caseloads have fallen by less than 20 percent. Even Edelman has been impressed by how quickly and calmly the change has come.

For those of us who report and write about poverty, welfare and social policy, the diaspora of welfare families presents a more fragmented, shaded story

regression analyses will tell us in vast detail how this experiment worked. Our opportunity—and our greatest challenge—is to find ways to chronicle it now, as it happens, with stories about affected families, neighborhoods and bureaucracies, as well as about the rigors of low-wage jobs, the gap between pay and housing costs, and links between trade, immigration policy and wages of unskilled American workers.

The most important stories may not be where we expect to find them. In states that have set the shortest time limits, for example, welfare officials are giving out so many exemptions and extensions that relatively few people are being cut off because their time has run out. *Governing* reports. The more telling stories appear to be about people who leave welfare voluntarily, because they found jobs, or don't bother to come back to the welfare office once they are told about work mandates, or because they're sanctioned for noncompliance. Minnesota is tracking a few thousand families to see what happens to their earnings

after they leave welfare. Many states track no one once they leave welfare.

The job falls to us, in the media, to keep a watchful eye on what is happening to those whom our social policy decisions are affecting. Where have these people gone? How are they and their children faring? How well do public policy and public agencies help them on their way? What is happening to those people who present more diffi-



School bus driver Kathryn Alexander lives in a 25-year-old mobile home. In her back bedroom is a pile of unopened mail, much of it overdue bills. "I just throw them in a pile. The ones I open are the ones I have to pay to keep my home." Photo by Chris Polydoroff/The St. Paul Pioneer Press.

than did the change in law and case studies so many of us wrote during the first year after the new rules took effect. There's an important second act in the nation's welfare drama. Covering it will require imagination and commitment in the face of our own weariness and the inevitable newsroom pressures to move on to the next trend, the bigger drama.

In time, sociology professors with

cult cases, such as a history of drug use, or language difficulties, or disabilities? Are the changes in child care and child support systems actually working to improve children's well-being? How does life change in neighborhoods that once depended heavily on welfare?

And it is important, too, to follow the federal welfare money as it enters state coffers and again as it's spent, supposedly to assist families as they make this transition. As caseloads fall, what is happening to the billions of federal dollars sent to states in welfare block grants? Are they used to provide services or direct aid to needy families? Or do they get diverted and diluted into middle class priorities—highways, tax cuts, general education funding? Sometimes this effort to follow the money can become exceedingly difficult as funds are given to private organizations to provide some of these services, making it hard to get records showing how the money was spent.

It is also critical that our reporting of this story not end when these people get jobs. What happens with wages in the industries in which many of them are being employed? How about benefits? Do their employers offer health insurance, and can entry-level workers afford to pay the premiums? Do they remain employed? Is the low end of the job market the first rung of a ladder or the bottom of a pit from which it's hard to escape? Seeking answers to such questions requires far-ranging curiosity and the ability to move adroitly between welfare offices, legislative chambers, academics' offices, public housing developments, church basements and day care homes. As someone who reported and wrote a lengthy series our newspaper did on the working poor, I can offer a few suggestions about navigating those paths.

Examine the world of the waitress mom.

Essayist Barbara Ehrenreich is one of the first to venture into this territory. In Harper's (January 1999), she wrote of a month she spent as a waitress in Key West, trying to make ends meet on one waitressing job, then adding a second

job, finally quitting in frustration and exhaustion before the month was out. Her account revealed the petty tyrannies of supervisors and camaraderie among workers—black, white and Hispanic—as well as the stinginess of pay and benefits and the need for coworkers to live in cars, trailers and shared motel rooms because they couldn't scrape together the two months' rent needed for an apartment.

Ehrenreich didn't connect her experience to welfare changes; workers struggling in the poorest jobs are often most resentful of handouts given to someone else. Nor did she take readers to an exotic location. This wasn't some fenced-in sweatshop of indentured immigrants—it was, in essence, the neighborhood Denny's. Yet we rarely take our middle class readers there.

Last year, when I wrote a piece about four people who worked but remained poor, readers told us they were shocked to learn about 11-hour days, unaffordable health insurance, continued dependence on help from family and government subsidies, and the simple things their kids coveted—Beanie Babies, overalls from Target. Unless we lead readers into that world of working poverty, we leave them comfortable with one of the most enduring American myths: that anyone who works hard can make it in America.

Recognize the shift of political weight to the suburbs and answer the question: Why should I care?

Poverty is often seen as an urban problem. But job growth in my region, and in most urban areas, is fastest in the suburbs. If an urban labor force can't easily get to those jobs, what is the cost to employers and communities on both ends? If there's a serious shortage of housing for low-wage workers, how do public fears and zoning restrictions contribute to it?

Last year, while researching a piece about a program that links city workers with suburban jobs, I was shocked to visit high-tech factories in quiet suburban office parks that employed hundreds of non-English-speaking immi-

grants, the only work force available here at \$7 an hour. One personnel manager—who was working like mad to help immigrant workers with housing, health care and language problems while continually replacing people who moved on to better jobs—described a visit by members of the suburb's human rights commission. At the end of the commission's visit, the chairwoman turned to the personnel manager and asked if this wasn't a sweatshop. There stood the personnel manager, caught between suburban sensibilities and corporate managers in California who set \$7 an hour as the most she could pay for entry-level workers. These pressures are being played out in our suburbs as well as our cities.

Deeply probe public and political attitudes.

Jesse Ventura, Minnesota's wrestler-turned-governor, has made personal responsibility a central theme of his administration. On the steps of the state capitol and in visits to college campuses, he's challenged single moms and college students to pay their own way and not look to government for help. "The free ride is over," he declared in his State of the State address.

Yet beneath his rhetoric, Ventura's budget takes a moderate stand. It doesn't trim the state's sizeable investments in student loans and child care for the working poor; it simply doesn't increase them. He isn't alone in that gap between rhetoric for political consumption and actions taken regarding specific programs.

A recent statewide poll by my newspaper showed that Minnesotans strongly agree with Ventura that fellow citizens should take more personal responsibility and rely less on government. Yet when asked about specific programs, they favored increased funding for financial aid for college students and continued funding of the state's large sliding-fee child care program for the working poor. This suggests not out-and-out opposition to government spending but a willingness to spend selectively. Good reporting about who is served by programs

and how well they work can help shape and refine public views.

Follow the money.

Federal block grants are shifting billions of welfare dollars to the states. As welfare caseloads decline, there's a powerful temptation to use these funds for other purposes. Even in Minnesota, which historically has been a relatively generous state, the governor has proposed to substitute federal block-grant money for \$45 million in state spending on daycare subsidies and social service grants, freeing up state money for other priorities. A friend reminds me of an old story about the governor who wanted to use Medicaid money to build a freeway ramp. It improved access to health care, he claimed.

For journalists, tracing what happens to block-grant money provides opportunities to examine in some depth the new federalism, congressional intent, state ingenuity and the unmet needs of poor families that are being kept from jobs because the federal funds aren't being used to subsidize day care, transit and the like.

Spend time in the bureaucracy.

Any program can look good on paper. It's how programs work day-to-day and over time that count. If job counselors have caseloads of 180 people, as occurs in some Minnesota counties, what kind of guidance can they offer? We have learned from research on non-governmental programs such as New Hope in Milwaukee and Project Match in Chicago that the advice and support of counselors is often the most important benefit received by people making the leap from welfare to work. Recognize this and report how well your welfare-to-work program delivers in this regard. If caseloads are high or counselors poorly trained and supervised, ask why and whether available funds are being withheld from training or hiring of additional workers. Perhaps the system is poorly led and managed? At the same time, recognize and report on successes within the public

bureaucracy, church programs and nonprofits. Not to do so is to contribute to the easy cynicism of the bash-government crowd.

Pay attention to the hardest cases.

As easier welfare clients have moved into jobs, states are increasingly dealing with families that have the most serious barriers—mental illness, illiteracy, chemical dependency. One important test of this new system will be how it treats these families and what states, cities or counties, churches or charities do to plug holes in the social safety net.

Don't forget about research.

The devolution projects at the Washington, D.C.-based Urban Institute, a group working with sociologist William Julius Wilson at Harvard, and many other researchers are monitoring this transition to a work-based, time-limited aid system. Like most academic research, results will come more slowly than we'd like. But keep asking what they're finding. Moreover, a large literature of informative reports from the state welfare experiments of the 1980's and 1990's is already on the shelf, and new reports continue to be issued. A recent evaluation of the New Hope project found that family heads who entered the pilot project working full-time actually cut their hours when they received a childcare subsidy and a wage supplement that helped lift them out of poverty. For the most part, they cut second jobs and overtime, and the research shows their children, especially boys, benefited socially and academically from extra time with parents. As people from all economic circumstances debate how to balance family and work, the experience and views of poor families should be included.

Tie the welfare story to large economic trends.

Wage distribution, trade policy, immigration and unionization each has big effects on the low end of the job mar-

ket. In reporting this story, we should take advantage of this fresh opportunity we have to explore these linkages. In my county, a high proportion of people who use the state's sliding-fee childcare funds work in the health care and hospitality industries. The public needs to know about this indirect government subsidy to those industries and to examine why wages aren't high enough for workers to pay for their own childcare. Or do these industries have some obligation to help pay for these essential services?

As always with the best journalism, reporting that moves a story forward and places it in a broader context (to improve readers' understanding) is driven by the commitment and ingenuity of individual reporters and editors. These are time-consuming stories, requiring tenacity and patience, an understanding of policy, affection for people, talent for telling observation, and an ability to weave narrative writing into a factual context. It's much cheaper—but far less meaningful—to fill newshole or air time by covering city council meetings or crime scenes.

When he became editor of *The Milwaukee Journal* in 1997, Martin Kaiser decided that his paper had to "own" the two social policy issues being tested in its backyard. These stories involved the use of publicly funded vouchers to enable poor kids in Milwaukee to attend private schools and Wisconsin's early, dramatic and much-watched changes in welfare policy.

Kaiser's commitment drives a consistent deployment of newsroom resources. Wherever the strongest work on this critical story is being done, at its center you will find a reporter or editor with the same devotion. ■

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Welfare Reform and Latinos = Immigration and Cultural Politics

The Story Is About More Than Moving From Welfare to Work

By Joe Rodriguez

Throw out the book on welfare. Junk that Rolodex. Learn some Spanish. When it comes to covering welfare reform's effects on U.S. Latinos, journalists will have to step beyond the anti-poverty beat. To explain what's going on, they'll also need to know the nasty cultural politics of immigration, race and ethnicity.

You didn't think the federal 1996 welfare law was only about work, responsibility and dignity, did you?

For a sizable number of Latino immigrants, it was immigration reform in disguise. Congress had two ideas in mind. One was to pay for welfare reform for American citizens by cutting assistance to immigrants. The other idea was to persuade "undesirable" immigrants to go home and discourage others from coming.

For example, let's look at Ofelia M. I met with her at a nonprofit clinic in Palo Alto, California, not long after President Clinton signed the welfare law. She and her husband had left Mexico in 1994 to clean offices and houses in the cradle of Silicon Valley. With a monthly income of \$900, they could barely meet their rent and pay for basic necessities. When she became pregnant and needed prenatal medical care, she went to the clinic for check-ups and to receive \$50 in food coupons from a federal nutrition program.

The 1996 welfare law gave the states a choice on those coupons. A state can decide to either end eligibility for undocumented women, or approve its continuation. Either way, it wouldn't cost the state a dime. The coupons are entirely funded by the federal government.

A no-brainer decision?



Pauline Flores takes a rare moment to rest between working all day and her sons' basketball practice. She had just begun working as a pediatrician's intern, a "job" for which she received no pay. From the series "Making Welfare Work." Photo by Judith Calson/*The San Jose Mercury News*.

Well, no. Pete Wilson, the Republican governor of California at the time, threatened to cut off the program to undocumented mothers. He relented only after intense political pressure.

Before Wilson backed off, I asked Ofelia in Spanish if she would return to Mexico if she were disqualified from the program. Ofelia smiled. She looked at her daughter, an American citizen by birth. "No, we wouldn't go back," she told me. "We have to think about her and our family."

The welfare law also allows states to eliminate federal food stamps for legal and illegal immigrants. Wilson man-

aged to eliminate food stamps for immigrants who have arrived since 1996.

More recently, *The New York Times* reported on how New York state is asking applicants for food stamps for proof of citizenship and immigration status—as permitted by the welfare reform law. While their American-born children should qualify, many undocumented mothers aren't applying out of fear of deportation. If the most important part of the news is setting it accurately within its broader context, then we can't write about Latinos and welfare without writing about immigration.

We can trace the federally legislated welfare mandates involving immigrants back to the passage of California's Proposition 187. Passed in 1994, the measure was a masterful piece of political scapegoating. Prop. 187 maintained that California's generous welfare system and schools were a magnet for illegal immigrants looking for a free ride. Never mind that illegal immigrants did not qualify for basic welfare, formerly called Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or for non-emergency Medicaid. Among other things, Prop. 187 attempted to abolish public education and health services to undocumented children and adults.

After 18 years of reporting on welfare and immigration policies, I have concluded that a lot of Californians were genuinely worried about the fiscal costs of immigration. But that's not all. As the number of Latinos and Asians grows, many Californians feared losing their status as the dominant culture in the state. Either way, the majority of voters believed that the state's generous welfare system was a magnet for immigrants, legal or illegal, and Prop. 187 passed.

While a federal district court quickly and decisively declared most of Prop. 187 unconstitutional, social conservatives in Congress picked up the idea of using welfare reform to control the border.

Now, welfare reform was complicated enough. With immigration in the picture, reporters—who were conscientious about telling the entire story—had to chase after welfare and immigration sources at the same time. But you know what? Nobody really wanted to hear it.

Let's face it. The public didn't want to bother with the mechanics of welfare reform. It perceived American welfare recipients as people who got something for sitting at home doing nothing while they had to work. If the public saw citizens on welfare that way, imagine what they thought about immigrants who were on welfare.

The news media's great failure in welfare coverage has been in following the policy debate and not the people. The result was enduring stereotypes,

such as the Cadillac-driving African-American welfare queen. Now we have the brown-skinned illegal immigrant crashing the border and the legal immigrant milking his green card for all it's worth.

Hopeless optimist that I am, I say we look on the bright side. In our coverage of welfare reform, we journalists today find ourselves just as smart or as stupid as those welfare researchers and think tanks whose job it is to evaluate what is happening in the wake of welfare reform. Advantage, us.

That's because the new welfare law basically lets states do whatever each one decides to do. The national think tanks that have served journalists well as ready sources, from the liberal Urban Institute to the conservative Heritage Foundation, can't possibly keep up with 50 versions of welfare reform.

I think new welfare experts will emerge at local colleges, universities and philanthropical foundations. And though these experts might not bring the sophistication of analysis that well-funded think tank studies do, they will be able to offer different and important levels of insight. They might not be

able to tell what's happening nationally, but they'll know what's happening closer to home. Of course, we will still get sweeping, nationwide looks at welfare reform, but they won't be of much help to reporters unless they are able to find a relevant local angle.

Here's an example: An Associated Press survey released this past March showed that whites are getting off welfare faster than minorities. Among the findings for Latinos on welfare:

- Sixty-four percent lacked a high school diploma, compared with 43 percent of blacks and 30 percent of whites.
- Only one-third of Latinos worked at some point during the year, compared with one-half of whites and blacks.
- Sixty percent of Latinos and 64 percent of blacks lived in a central city, compared with 29 percent of whites.

It was the kind of survey that academics might spend several years producing, then dish out the results to waiting journalists, who would write another perfunctory story about an-



An instructor observes Flores preparing a needle in her medical assistant course. From "Making Welfare Work." Photo by Judith Calson/The San Jose Mercury News.

other academic welfare finding. But because journalists got these fresh survey results dumped in our laps, why should we wait for somebody else to come up with an explanation about its meaning? Why not assign reporters to look closely at how welfare reform among Latinos is affected by the policies of their local schools and by the kind of opportunities presented by their local job markets? Why not follow a number of Latinos for a year or more as they leave welfare and enter the work force and use their experiences as the crux of our reporting?

That brings up another issue involving welfare reform. This transitory time won't last long. The real story will be what happens to former recipients in job markets for the rest of their working lives. Reporters on traditional anti-poverty beats will have to become experts on the ability of local economies to absorb all these new, mostly unskilled workers and on tracking what happens to the range of employees—former welfare recipients as well as long-time workers—who are working in low-wage jobs.

And when reporters look at Latinos in this picture, they will end up with a

panoramic view as complex as the American landscape. Welfare reform for Puerto Ricans in Hartford, Connecticut, where I reported for eight years, will be very much the story of an undereducated people, isolated in a poor city from jobs that are being newly created in white suburbs. The unique dimension, however, is that this population's traditionally high rate of moving between the mainland and the island may hamper participation in long-term job training and education programs for welfare recipients.

Reporting on welfare reform for Mexican-Americans in rural South Texas will reveal entirely different stories. With unemployment as high as 20 percent, and food stamp cutoffs to legal immigrants and underemployment for citizens coming off welfare, border community economies could be damaged and social services stretched too thin. In Los Angeles, poor Mexican-Americans coming off welfare may find themselves competing with African-Americans and immigrant Asians and Latinos for low-wage jobs with little or no health benefits. A race to the bottom in Los Angeles, my hometown, would be a dangerous thing. I've seen

two major race riots there in my lifetime. I'd rather think of new opportunities that might be presented by welfare reform in covering this story.

Welfare reform was a blunt, national instrument with an anti-immigrant mean streak built in. I'm sure it'll play out that way in some states. But I'm also confident that other states will resist the urge to single out immigrants for harsher treatment than others trying to move off welfare.

The point is, nobody is in a better position to track the progress and inequities of welfare reform and to challenge ethnic stereotypes than journalists working in local newsrooms. ■

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Asian-Americans and Welfare Reform

The Mainstream Press Perpetuates Images but Fails to Report on Real Experiences

By William Wong

During the Congressional debate about reforming welfare in 1996, a new villainous image emerged to supplement that of the former welfare queen. This image was of an elderly Chinese immigrant undeservedly getting Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This foreign-looking senior citizen should be supported by his or her middle-class children and not by the U.S. Treasury, the image implied.

Thus was born a new kind of welfare cheat. And that image helped propel

the most significant change in social legislation in decades. It was no surprise, then, that welfare reform disproportionately hurt one of the most vulnerable and least powerful groups in our country—needy legal immigrants, including many from Asia.

The mainstream press helped perpetuate this fresh symbol of welfare fraud because, according to journalistic convention, it reports what politicians say. And some politicians were either fed up with real and perceived welfare cheats or spotted a winning

issue with virtually no downside—non-citizens ripping off our tax dollars. For the most part, the U.S. news organizations played along.

That some Asian-Americans abused the old welfare system is a given. Everybody did. But did they earn the ignominy of bearing an unfair brunt of Congressional wrath? Hardly. Yet, when political and media frenzies reach fever pitches over something like anti-immigrant sentiment, it can be too much for rational voices to overcome. The press either was too impotent, too

remote from the issues, or decided to do very little to put into proper perspective the matter of whether elderly Chinese immigrants, for example, are stealing from U.S. taxpayers.

In fact, there are many needy old Asian immigrants who depend on meager SSI monthly payments to survive, but the combination of conservative political voices and compliant press reports muted the broader reality. As a result, many Asian newcomers who are legally entering this country were frightened and confused—and a few even killed themselves—over whether they could depend on the government safety net to provide for shelter and food.

Ironically, this demonizing of old Chinese immigrants was a new twist on press coverage of Asian-Americans. Historically, people of Asian descent have either been ignored by mainstream press coverage or have been targets of hostility. In the post-war era, press coverage of Asian-Americans has improved, in part because more Asian-Americans (albeit still a small percentage) are mainstream journalists. But a goodly number of stories about Asian-Americans still fall into two major categories: a “model minority” who excels in academics and business or bad guys who are either gangsters or nowadays influence-peddling political contributors and spies for China. The old SSI-dependent Chinese immigrant falls into the latter category.

Immigrant advocates fought back after passage of the 1996 welfare reform act. They worked to “massage” the press and politicians by countering the cheating-immigrant caricatures with stories about genuinely desperate old people fearing for their lives. A few articles were published about some of these legal immigrants committing suicide because they had nowhere else to turn. These real-life portraits swayed enough lawmakers to restore some public assistance benefits to legal immigrants in 1997. But the fear and confusion spawned by the 1996 battle to “end welfare as we know it” (in Clinton’s immortal words) remains, according to immigrant advocates.

Let us stipulate that reforming the network of federal public assistance

programs is an extraordinarily complex undertaking and that disseminating clear, factual and accurate information about this fundamental transformation in social policy is a Herculean task for both government bureaucrats and journalists. Additionally, reporting on welfare reform swims against the awesome tide of a cultural change in journalism.

Many newsrooms in recent years have been experiencing marketplace pressures for presenting a different mix of news that can mean devoting resources to chasing more sexy, sensational stories. After all, the competition for readers and viewers has grown intensely fierce. Thus many news organizations tend to ignore or downplay dull but important sagas like the impact of welfare reform on people who aren’t likely to be prime targets of media advertisers and who aren’t among a newspaper’s most fervent readers or a TV station’s most loyal viewers.

Compounding the problem in terms of coverage of Asian-Americans and welfare reform is the issue of language. The great immigration waves of the last third of this century have largely been from Latin America and Asia. Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Khmer, Tagalog and other Asian languages and dialects—to say nothing of a little Farsi, Russian and other European and Middle Eastern languages—are the first languages of millions who have immigrated to America for economic and political reasons. This multiplicity of languages, and the underlying cultural differences, confounds, baffles, frustrates, irritates and enrages some English-speaking Americans and makes the job of reporting on their circumstances that much more challenging.

Many immigrant advocates are now turning to the small, burgeoning news media in these immigrant communities rather than relying on coverage by the mainstream English-language press. In getting the word out about welfare reform to their constituents, Victor Hwang, a staff attorney with the Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco, said he and his colleagues don’t devote much time to interacting with the English-language mainstream news media. His

organization instead turns to the ethnic media, but even their readership is limited to middle class immigrants, Hwang contends. The Asian Law Caucus bypasses the media and instead focuses its energies on arranging numerous face to face community meetings to educate low-income Asian immigrants about welfare reform.

Karin Wang, a staff attorney and Director of the Immigrant Welfare Project of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center in Los Angeles, said her organization has also concentrated on using the ethnic media because potential clients don’t read mainstream newspapers such as *The Los Angeles Times*. She noted, however, that some Asian immigrants, such as Cambodians and other Southeast Asians, are harder to reach through even the ethnic press because publications that serve them are not as well developed as Chinese-language newspapers and TV stations.

The big untold story is how English-deficient needy immigrants will fare under the new welfare-to-work rules in which the prime objective is to move recipients off of public assistance and into the labor market as quickly as possible. Many Asian immigrants are not proficient enough in English to take advantage of the training programs that are conducted only in English. They also are disadvantaged in seeking, then securing, jobs that require a high degree of English proficiency.

Overall, the plight of non-English-speaking Asian immigrants who are dependent on public assistance may not be a story of highest priority to a celebrity-hungry news media. But given the heavy hit that legal immigrants absorbed during the debate about reforming welfare, it would only be fitting to chronicle in depth and in a balanced context the continuing obstacles they face. ■

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The 'Welfare Queen' Experiment

How Viewers React to Images of African-American Mothers on Welfare

By Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.

How we come to understand the world around us, according to Walter Lippmann, is a function of the "pictures in our heads." Lippmann hypothesized that the news media plays a critical role in the formation of these images. In the three-quarters of a century since the publication of Lippmann's "Public Opinion," a wealth of scholarly literature has supported his original formulation.

It is now commonly believed that the news media generally, and television in particular, are the primary sources for most Americans in shaping their views about public issues. Thirty or so years of communications research shows that the media can influence what issues people pay attention to (their agenda-setting role). How the media highlight issues can lead readers and viewers to make judgments about politicians and policies (their so-called "priming" role). And finally, it is clear that qualitative aspects of news reporting determine how people think about public problems and their remedies (their "framing" role). In short, as we all recognize, news coverage influences public opinion.

One of the more controversial issues on the American domestic agenda is social welfare policy. The near unanimity surrounding the "Great Society" programs and policies of the mid-to-late 1960's has given way to discord and dissonance. Conservative thinkers and politicians first launched attacks on the "welfare state" in the aftermath of the civil rights disturbances of the late 1960's and early 1970's. While Barry Goldwater, George Wallace and Richard Nixon charted the course, Ronald Reagan encapsulated the white majority's growing unease with the perceived expansion of the social wel-

fare apparatus. In particular, Reagan was able to forge a successful top-down coalition between big business and disaffected white working-class voters. The intellectual core of the movement was a well-funded punditry class that offered a theoretical vision for the "New Right." While this perspective touched on the cornerstones of American political philosophy—individualism and egalitarianism—it also carried with it a heavy undercurrent of gender and racial politics.

In the midst of this evolving political landscape on which new debates about welfare ensued, the news media played—and continues to play—a critical role in the public's understanding of what "welfare" ought to be. Utilizing a novel experimental design, I wanted to examine the impact of media portrayals of the "welfare queen" (Reagan's iconic representation of the African-American welfare experience) on white people's attitudes about welfare policy, race and gender.

My assumption going into this study was that the notion of the welfare queen had taken on the status of common knowledge, or what is known as a "narrative script." The welfare queen script has two key components—welfare recipients are disproportionately women, and women on welfare are disproportionately African-American. What I discovered is that among white subjects, exposure to these script elements reduced support for various welfare programs, increased stereotyping of African-Americans, and heightened support for maintaining traditional gender roles. And these findings have implications both for the practice of journalism and the development of constructive relations across the lines of race and gender.

The 'Welfare Queen' as a Narrative Script

Social psychologists developed the notion of scripts to refer to "a coherent sequence of events expected by the individual, involving him either as a participant or as an observer." The utility of scripts lies in their ability to distill information, thus aiding in quicker comprehension. Scripts set up predictable roles and actions that, in turn, offer clear indicators of what is most likely to follow from them.

The narrative (or storytelling) script for the welfare queen has two central features. First, it tells us that the majority of welfare recipients are women. Of course, the data show otherwise. The largest single group "on welfare" is children—about one in every four kids under the age of 18 receives welfare benefits. Nonetheless, given this script, most of the public connects welfare to gender. For instance, the "feminization of poverty" is a common explanation of American poverty rates.

This script then leads people to the next step in this association, what could be called a "gender narrative"—poor women choose to be on welfare because they fail to adhere to a set of core American values. From this perspective, single motherhood, divorce, desertion and a failure to hold the family unit together become the causes of their impoverished condition. In short, welfare dependency is a function of the moral failings of poor women. Their unwillingness to adhere to the principles of hard work, family values and sexual control thus deem them as undeserving.

The second key image that emerges from the welfare queen script is that most women on welfare are African-

American. While African-American women do represent more than one-third of the women on welfare, in census data released in 1998 they accounted for only a bit more than 10 percent of the total number of welfare recipients.

This narrative script—skillfully locating the “intersection” of race and gender—was given its most public voice by then-candidate Reagan on the 1976 campaign trail. During that election Reagan often recited the story of a woman from Chicago’s South Side who was arrested for welfare fraud. “She has 80 names, 30 addresses, 12 Social Security cards and is collecting veteran’s benefits on four non-existing deceased husbands. And she is collecting Social Security on her cards. She’s got Medicaid, getting food stamps, and she is collecting welfare under each of her names.” David Zucchino, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, spent a year with two welfare mothers in Philadelphia and wrote “The Myth of the Welfare Queen.” According to Zucchino, “[T]he image of the big-spending, lavish-living, Cadillac-driving welfare queen was by then thoroughly embedded in American folklore.”

The implicit racial coding is readily apparent. The woman Reagan was talking about was African-American. Veiled references to African-American women, and African-Americans in general, were equally transparent. In other words, while poor women of all races get blamed for their impoverished condition, African-American women commit the most egregious violations of American values. This story line taps into stereotypes about both women (uncontrolled sexuality) and African-Americans (laziness).

Patricia Hill Collins, a leading feminist scholar, professor and author of the book “Black Feminist Thought,” outlines this script when she observes: “[S]he is portrayed as being content to sit around and collect welfare, shunning work and passing on her bad values to her offspring. The welfare mother represents a woman of low morals and uncontrolled sexuality.”

It does appear fair to conclude that the welfare queen narrative script has



Gilliam altered the race of the woman portrayed in a welfare reform TV story to test viewers’ perceptions of gender and race.

succeeded in imprinting stereotypic racial and gender images in the minds of many Americans.

Welfare Attitudes and the News Media

There is little doubt that the media contributed to conveying the narrative script about the welfare queen. An exhaustive content analysis of welfare stories in newsmagazines and network television news was done by Yale political scientist Martin Gilens. The content analysis of print covered the 1960’s through 1992; the TV content analysis covered 1988-1994. The studies, which were published in 1996 and 1997, found the following:

- Sixty-two percent of poverty stories that appeared in *TIME*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report* featured African-Americans.
- Sixty-five percent of network television news stories about welfare featured African-Americans.
- Fewer African-Americans are portrayed in “sympathetic” stories about poverty and welfare
- Newsmagazines depict almost 100

percent of the “underclass” as African-Americans.

Gilens concludes, “Clearly then, the overrepresentation of African-Americans found in weekly newsmagazines is not unique to this particular medium but is shared by the even more important medium of network television news.”

Thus, as seen through the eyes of the media, there are more blacks than whites who live in poverty. Gilens also found that the public dramatically overestimates the number of African-Americans in poverty and similarly, in our surveys, we find that people underestimate the number of poor whites.

Preliminary evidence suggests that the type of coverage that Gilens found does have an impact on public opinion about race and welfare. For example, in a series of laboratory experiments, Shanto Iyengar found that by seeing a black welfare mother in the television news, viewers were more likely to attribute the cause of her poverty to individual failings, rather than to any public policy. Given the lack of meaningful inter-group interaction, most white Americans learn about blacks



(and other minorities) through the lens of a distant camera. What this camera focuses on, who it gives voice to, and what it excludes all influence how people think about race-related issues.

Television News: Race, Gender and Welfare Coverage

In our recent experiment to evaluate how these ingredients of race, gender and welfare coverage intersect and interact, we conducted an experiment in which the only difference between what two groups of viewers saw involved images of race and gender. Participants watched one of four television news stories about the impact of welfare reform on a woman we named Rhonda Germaine. In the story that we created for our experimental news broadcast, Rhonda worries about the impact of the new welfare laws on her ability to care for her children. A still picture of Rhonda appears at two points in the story; each time it appears, it remains on the screen for about five seconds.

Our viewers were randomly assigned to one of four groups. The first watched this news story with Rhonda cast as a white woman. The second group saw the same story with Rhonda depicted as an African-American woman. The

third group watched the welfare story without seeing any visual representation of Rhonda. The final group was a control group that did not watch any TV news broadcast about welfare.

Each viewer watched an 11-minute videotaped newscast, including commercials, to make this experience as realistic as possible. Our report on welfare was inserted into the middle position of the newscast following the first commercial break. We described the segment as having been selected at random from a news program broadcast during the past week.

This study was administered at a major shopping mall in Los Angeles. Those people who agreed to participate were given instructions in terms of how the process would go, and then each completed a short questionnaire concerning their social background, political ideology, level of interest in political affairs, and media habits. They then watched the videotape of the newscast. At the end of the videotape, participants completed a lengthy questionnaire probing their political and social views. After completing this questionnaire, they were debriefed in full (including a full explanation of the experimental procedures) and were paid the sum of \$15.

The post-test questionnaire ex-

plored respondents' attitudes on a wide range of issues related to welfare, race and gender. Three different categories of attitudes were addressed. The first pertained to their attitudes about the causes of and solutions to welfare. I was able to measure the number of people who believe that individual failings were the cause of welfare. On their questionnaires, this group of viewers indicated that they believe welfare recipients cheat and defraud the system, that they abuse the system by staying on too long, that welfare undermines the work ethic, and that welfare encourages teenagers to have kids out of wedlock. They also tend to indicate a high level of opposition to various public assistance programs (e.g., AFDC, food stamps, subsidized housing and health care).

The second set of attitudes is related to racial beliefs. I was able to determine the percentage of people who endorsed negative stereotypes about African-Americans. I did this by eliciting responses about perceptions that African-Americans are lazy, sexually promiscuous, not law-abiding and undisciplined. I also computed the percentage of participants whose views and attitudes were described in more subtle terms. Included in this category were phrases such as "blacks don't try hard enough," "they should pull themselves up by their bootstraps," and "there is not much discrimination nowadays."

Finally, attitudes about gender were numerically measured by the percentage of people who preferred women to play more "traditional" gender roles. These attitudes emerged from responses to such statements as "the husband should be the achiever outside of the home," "working women do not have as close a bond with their children as mothers who stay at home," and "a preschool child is likely to suffer if mom works."

The Results

The first finding is that the welfare queen script has assumed the status of common knowledge. When white subjects were asked to recall what they had

[T]here is no doubt that there exists a narrative script about welfare that has taken on the imprimatur of common knowledge.

seen in the newscasts, nearly 80 percent of them accurately recalled the race of the African-American Rhonda. On the other hand, less than 50 percent accurately recalled seeing the white Rhonda.

As expected, people were extremely accurate in their recall of the race and gender of the recipient. For example, only three of 136 people in this part of the study recalled seeing a man.

When I then assessed the effects of television news on viewer opinions, I compared the responses of white participants who did or did not watch a story about welfare. The only effect was on attitudes surfaced in terms of views about gender roles. Those who saw our stories about welfare were 12 percent more likely to support women's traditional roles.

I also contrasted responses among subjects who viewed the welfare story and did not have a visual cue and those who saw our welfare story featuring Rhonda Germaine (either a white or African-American image of a woman). I expected that participants who saw a woman in the story would be more likely to endorse traditional women's roles, oppose welfare spending, and cite individual causal attributions.

Not only was my expectation wrong but two other results emerged. First, seeing a woman in the news story actually decreased opposition to welfare spending. Second, exposure to a welfare queen in the news significantly increased support for negative characterizations of African-Americans by an average of 10 percent.

Finally, I examined the racial effects by comparing those white viewers who were exposed to the white Rhonda and those who watched the welfare story featuring the black Rhonda. The general expectation was that exposure to the quintessential welfare queen script (i.e. the black Rhonda) would increase

anti-black sentiments, heighten opposition to welfare spending, and lead more people to cite individual failing as the cause of welfare.

The results were somewhat mixed. True to form, exposure to the full confirmation of the script (i.e. black Rhonda) increased opposition to welfare spending by five percent and showed a 10 percent rise in an attribution of cause to individual failings. Likewise, white participants who watched the welfare story with the black Rhonda were more likely to hold negative views of African-Americans than those who did have a visual cue. Contrary to expectations, however, exposure to the white Rhonda produced the biggest increase in anti-black sentiment. That is, watching a story with the white Rhonda increased negative depictions of blacks by 12 percent compared to the black Rhonda and by 23 percent over the story without a picture.

One speculative explanation builds on results from other parts of this study. For instance, white subjects who watched the white version of the welfare story—compared to those who watched the black version—were most likely to see women as violating the “family ethic” of the story. Thus, in a perverse way, white women were “privileged” or valued in a way that African-American women are not.

Most interestingly, people who espouse the most “liberal” views about gender roles turn out to be the most hostile to blacks when they are exposed to the white Rhonda. Put differently, the most gender-liberal white participants appear to be most likely to implicitly blame African-Americans for the plight of their racial peers, and there is early evidence to suggest that this tendency is most pronounced among women.

This welfare queen experiment yields several important insights that

pertain to media coverage. First, there is no doubt that there exists a narrative script about welfare that has taken on the imprimatur of common knowledge.

Second, when this script is fully realized (i.e., with the black woman shown as the image) it leads viewers to oppose welfare spending, cite individual attributions as causes for social problems, and endorse negative characterizations of African-Americans.

And gender plays an intriguing role in all of this. Seeing any welfare story apparently makes viewers more supportive of traditional gender roles for women. But it is exposure to the white version of the welfare story that heightens support the most. Depictions of white welfare queens also seem to induce whites who describe themselves as having liberal views about gender roles to arrive at extremely harsh views of African-Americans.

These findings—that exposure to this script encourages viewers to perceive welfare as being caused by individual shortcomings, to oppose federal spending on welfare programs, and to prefer that women play traditional gender roles—have implications for the practice of journalism.

First, broadcasters should be encouraged to more accurately reflect the real world of welfare. Most welfare recipients are children and most welfare recipients are not African-American. Second, the knee-jerk response of simply showing more white women on welfare would not reduce polarizing racial effects. The evidence from this study suggests that exposure to white welfare mothers actually makes white viewers feel more negatively toward blacks. Third, the welfare script, as seen frequently on broadcast news, contributes to racial hostility.

These findings should, by themselves, prompt journalists to become ever more vigilant in assessing the potential consequences of the visual cues they send out. ■

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In the Midst of Poverty, People's Stories are Hard to Tell

Small Staffs, Lack of Resources, and Families' Fear of Reprisals Add to Difficulties in Coverage

By Pat Gish

Twenty-one Appalachian counties lie along or near eastern Kentucky's border with Virginia. It was the people who live here who gained national attention in the early 1960's when New York Times reporter Homer Bigart came to the Kentucky mountains and reported what he saw and heard. Bigart was drawn to eastern Kentucky by the book "Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area," written by Harry M. Caudill, an attorney who grew up in one of those counties and came back home to practice law.

What Bigart saw and reported became fodder for policy discussions in the Kennedy White House when the first of his articles appeared on a Sunday in October 1963. President Kennedy moved immediately to get help into the area, and those 21 counties later became a principal focus of President Johnson's War on Poverty. In the nearly 35 years since that war was declared, many things have changed for the better. But much of the deep poverty and the consequences it brings to families who experience it remains.

The Kentucky State Data Center in Louisville, which keeps track of population and social circumstances that the census tracks, reported in April that the poverty rate had decreased in all but one of these 21 Appalachian counties from 1989 to 1995. The center keeps records by groups of counties known as "area development districts" (ADD), and the 21 counties are divided into three such districts. The decreases are not large—one percent in one ADD, 2.5 percent in another and 2.7 percent in the third—but at least

they are decreases. During this same period the median household income rose by more than \$6,000 in each development district.

Beneath those statistics there lies a continuing thread to the stories that Bigart uncovered. In these three districts live nearly one quarter of Kentuckians whose incomes place them at poverty level or below. In 1989 the total was 165,856 persons, or 24 percent of all state residents in poverty, and in 1995 it was 162,496, or 23.5 percent of the state number. And four of the five Kentucky counties with the highest percentages of residents at poverty level are included in these districts. Three of these counties are included in the Kentucky River ADD, which has an overall poverty level of 33.6 percent, the highest of any development district in the state.

In Owsley County, the state's poorest, 46.6 percent of all residents and 65.4 percent of residents under 18 are considered to be living at poverty level or below. In adjoining Lee County, 39.1 percent of all persons and 54.7 percent of those under 18 are poor. In Wolfe County, which lies next to Lee County, 38.9 percent of all residents and 57.2 percent of all under 18 live at poverty level or below. Magoffin County, the fourth in this group, is a part of the Big Sandy district; 38 percent of all its residents are considered to be in poverty and 51.2 percent of those under 18.

In January, payments to families in Kentucky's Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP), formerly known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), averaged \$224.15 per family,

or \$94.69 per person. All of these families are past the first 30 months of the five-year period during which they can receive their lifetime allotment of welfare money. State family services workers in public assistance programs in all

Why Identify Welfare Recipients or Quote Incorrect Grammar?

At The Mountain Eagle newspaper we do not use photographs of welfare recipients as welfare recipients. It's hard enough to have to be one without having to face the prospect of someone taunting you or your kids over a circumstance beyond your control. We do, of course, use their pictures in different circumstances, such as a birthday, engagement, wedding or school honor.

We also use correct grammar when we are quoting someone, welfare recipient or not. Our observation is that newspapers generally do not quote any other group of Americans in dialect whether they are Kennedys in Massachusetts, Dodger fans in Brooklyn, Mexican-Americans in California, or African-Americans in Alabama. We see no reason why Appalachian residents should be challenged for speech brought here by settlers from the British Isles centuries ago. ■

21 counties are trying to find ways of getting jobs for these families when their five-year transition period ends. Committees which include workers for the Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children and interested private citizens are meeting frequently to look at possible solutions, but so far the results are discouraging. In my county, Letcher County, a new data entry company has set up shop and has hired some workers who were receiving K-TAP money. But those 15 jobs represent only 2.3 percent of the 680 families in the K-TAP program in this one county. The question now is what to do about the other 97.7 percent.

Two years ago, a group of citizens in Letcher County, where I live, got to-

mothers to care for other people's children in their own homes; classes to move welfare recipients into jobs in the health care industry; creation of wood industry jobs by expanding existing businesses or helping people create new ones to use the area's large supply of timber, and establishment of a "one-stop shopping center" where welfare recipients trying to make it on their own could get help with counseling, education, job placement and other services.

A representative of the state Cabinet for Families and Children has promised to come to Letcher County soon to look at possible quarters for the one-stop center. The other proposals in the plan are still being discussed. Mean-

two or three issues a week. There are two small dailies. When I asked whether papers had provided coverage and if they had any difficulties getting information, these were some of the responses:

"We haven't covered it as much as we should. We've included all the wire-service [AP] stories. It's hard to get a local angle and we're kind of short-staffed. In the near future we're going to do an in-depth story on it."

"No, not really. That's on my list. It takes so much personal research."

"A lot of people in our area are shifting from AFDC to SSI (Supplemental Security Income). It doesn't have any cutoff date." (We agreed that we admired their ingenuity.)

"I don't expect we'll get people complaining to us until the [five-year] deadline gets nearer."

"We've had a little coverage, but nothing lately, nothing we have generated. It's difficult to devote reporter time. We don't have enough staff to give time or attention to issues beyond breaking news. It's sad to say when there are so many people involved, but it's hit or miss with us."

"We have an interest in it, but have we covered anything? Not really. I would want to devote study to it. Local people here are afraid to have their names out."

"It's hard to get much out of the local social services department, but we have done some coverage on a welfare-to-work program and the area development district has been very helpful to us. We have only two people, and we haven't had much time to devote to it."

"We have stayed on top of Vision 2000, but information from that is a lot lighter now. They've let up on what they're sending us." (Vision 2000 is a state-set standard for local welfare reform efforts.)

"We've had a couple of stories, but our coverage has been kind of limited. The biggest problem is that some people don't want to be identified. We don't get a lot of releases from the local agencies, and also we're limited on space."

'We don't have enough staff to give time or attention to issues beyond breaking news. It's sad to say when there are so many people involved, but it's hit or miss with us.'

gether to write a proposal to the state Cabinet for Families and Children on how welfare reform might be carried out in our county. I was not a part of that group, but The Mountain Eagle, the local weekly newspaper that my husband and I have published for the past 42 years, carried the proposal in full. And since its publication, we have followed its slow progress. The group spent five months developing the plan, which was completed in October 1997. The planners had three goals: to create a diversified, strong local economy, to find new ways of attracting capital into the county, and to assure a better way of life for Letcher county children.

The plan proposed a new local credit union to help low-income families; a new small business technology cooperative specializing in digital service industries; a business development network using retired and active businesspeople as trainers; a program to train people to repair existing homes and to build new ones; more child-care services, which also could train welfare

while, several groups of interested citizens have been meeting every month with the state workers responsible for getting the 680 families in our county off welfare and into some kind of work.

The fundamental problem is that the jobs are not here, and the families are not equipped to move away. One group of local businessmen is meeting every month to look at possible job development. Another group of church and welfare workers and interested citizens meets to look at problems and possibilities; I have attended most of this group's meetings. The Eagle tries to keep up also with what the businessmen's group is doing, but it meets on Monday night, which is deadline night at the newspaper, and we can't always free someone to attend.

This problem of small staffs and little time is one that was cited frequently by editors and writers at other eastern Kentucky newspapers when I called to find out what problems they were having in covering welfare reform. Most of the papers are weekly; a few publish

"I have found people very willing to talk and give information."

"To tell you the truth, we haven't really tried."

"We've done a few stories. We've talked with people who would lose their welfare and what alternatives they

pleted a six-month study of welfare reform in eastern Kentucky and published the results in a three-day series titled "Welfare Dilemma in Eastern Kentucky." In the paper's issues of May 2, 3 and 4, that series took up a total of eight and a fourth full-size newspaper

Families and Children in Frankfort (our state capital) the woman would no longer return the reporter's telephone calls. Presumably she had been told by someone in the state or local welfare office that she should not talk with reporters.

'Cover welfare reform? Not really, other than releases. I hadn't even thought to check into that.'

might have. We've also used AP stories. We should probably deal with it more than we have. It seems always to be there."

"We haven't run into too much of a problem. We've been to two years of meetings. We got into doing that and have been fairly successful in getting most of the information we've needed. Last year in our 'progress edition' we did a whole section on welfare reform. We haven't done too much lately."

"Cover welfare reform? Not really, other than releases. I hadn't even thought to check into that."

The Wall Street Journal recently carried a long, moving article describing the trials of one eastern Kentucky woman who accepted a grant from the state of Kentucky and relocated to the Cincinnati area after receiving training in her home area. That article, which followed the woman and her family over an entire year, would have filled a large part of the news space in any eastern Kentucky weekly and certainly took more time, energy and money than small county newspapers can afford.

A reporter for The Cleveland Plain Dealer recently spent a week in Letcher County looking at welfare reform issues and other aspects of eastern Kentucky life. He did this story as part of a series of articles about the 35th anniversary of the War on Poverty. He also had ample time and resources to assemble the information he needed.

The Louisville Courier-Journal, Kentucky's largest daily, recently com-

pleted a six-month study of welfare reform in eastern Kentucky and published the results in a three-day series titled "Welfare Dilemma in Eastern Kentucky." In the paper's issues of May 2, 3 and 4, that series took up a total of eight and a fourth full-size newspaper

pages. It required two reporters, a photographer and a graphics artist. The small newspapers in eastern Kentucky do not have the resources to provide that kind of coverage.

A reporter for a large Kentucky daily newspaper said it was difficult to find welfare recipients to be interviewed for feature stories on the problems or the successes of welfare reform. Cooperation from local offices of the state welfare system was not good. Local

Fear of losing jobs or benefit checks is not new to people in the Kentucky mountains. For many years local politicians and/or coal company officials had almost total control over the lives of many mountain families. A coal miner who did or said something his bosses didn't like could find his furniture out on the street when he returned to his company-owned house. For many years, local political powers had a major say about who received welfare—and who didn't. Those lessons were absorbed quickly and thoroughly. Tales about such punishment perhaps have become embellished over the years, but they continue to affect mountain residents' actions.

Welfare recipients who live here have good reason to be hesitant about talking to reporters. It's part of the legacy

Welfare recipients who live here have good reason to be hesitant about talking to reporters.

state employees were not willing to ask questions of recipients and relay information to reporters. Recipients were afraid to talk to reporters and didn't want their pictures taken. State welfare officials were upset by questions from news reporters and tended to be "a little bit defensive."

In eastern Kentucky jobs are scarce for everybody and especially for untrained or inexperienced workers. "You can't put a person in training on how to work a mop for five years," the reporter at this large Kentucky paper pointed out. "It's a national issue. State officials shouldn't be so thin-skinned." In one instance, this reporter had been talking with a welfare recipient for some time about her problems, but after a call from an official in the Cabinet for

of their forebears' lives and circumstances, but it does make it difficult for those who genuinely want to learn about their situation and tell others so that positive changes can occur, as Bigart's effort shows they can. ■

Pat Gish has lived in Letcher County for the past 42 years. She grew up in central Kentucky and her husband, Tom, grew up in a Letcher County coal camp. Married since 1948, they bought The Mountain Eagle in 1957, a weekly which they and their children still operate.

Portraying Poverty in the Face of Newsroom Pressures

Demand More Time. Agitate for More Space. And Revisit the Subject Often.

By Martha Shirk

Newsroom clashes over time and space are laughably predictable. Editors complain that reporters want too much time to write and space to fill. Reporters gripe that all editors want to know is “How soon can you get it done?” and “How tight can you write it?”

After 22 years of meeting daily deadlines at The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, I undertook a complex reporting project last year that promised the twin luxuries of time and space. I collaborated with researchers at the National Center for Children in Poverty on a book that aims to put a human face on the numbing statistics of child poverty. The goal of the project was to help Americans more completely understand the daily struggles of the poor, the impact on their children, and what might be done about these conditions.

This was the same goal to which I aspired throughout my newspaper career as I wrote hundreds of stories about this or that problem of the poor. Sometime the issue involved the difficulty poor parents had finding affordable, quality childcare. Or I wrote about their struggles to find obstetricians who would accept Medicaid payments, or their frustrating search for jobs in rural counties or depleted cities. But writing a book was going to be different. I would be able to really get to know the families I was profiling, instead of moving in and out of their lives quickly in order to meet my deadline. I would be able to finesse the ever-

tricky challenge of generalizing from a single family's circumstances by generalizing from those faced by 10 families. I wouldn't have just 30 inches to tell the story of a family's life. I would have 25 or 30 pages in a book.

For most of last year I immersed myself in the complicated lives of 10 families who shared the common ground of poverty but whose individual circumstances differed. One family lived in a public housing project in Honolulu, another in a battered old trailer in Basalt, Colorado, and another resided in a lace-curtained bungalow in

working poor,” comprised of those who have for many years worked in low-wage jobs and those who are trying to leave welfare.

I spent up to a week with each of the families, filling dozens of notebooks with the minutiae of their daily lives, and then talked with them regularly over the ensuing months. And then I put it all down in black and white, but mostly in shades of gray. Along the way, I learned a couple of things that I think are relevant to anybody trying to practice journalism today, especially given newsroom pressures to write about solutions and to tell every story in the narrative form.

Race Matters

Race matters. We've known this for a long time. Institutionalized and individualized acts of discrimination hamper the life prospects of people of color. But race also matters in another way: Many journalists have become unwilling to talk about it for fear of being accused of perpetuating stereotypes. Yet statistics about poverty remind us of why this topic cannot be pushed aside. In 1996, 44 percent of non-Hispanic black children (under

6) and 42.4 percent of Hispanic children (under 6) were being raised by families whose incomes fall below the poverty level. The corresponding figure for white children was just under 13 percent. Of course we need to show our readers that poverty crosses racial lines. But we can't continue to dance



Em Pen consoles Anthony, one the grandchildren whom she takes care of almost every day. Sometimes she also cares for neighbors' children. *Photo by Scott Takushi/The St. Paul Pioneer Press.*

Randolph County, Illinois. Four of the families I chose to profile were white, three black, two Hispanic and one Asian/Pacific Islander. One was dependent on welfare and one on a combination of welfare and disability benefits; the rest belong to the ever-increasing segment of our population called “the

around the disproportionate impact this situation is having on blacks and Hispanics.

Other things besides race matter, too—geography, educational attainment, the age at first pregnancy, the presence of a supportive family or community, and the personal resources (optimism, common sense and determination) that individual poor people bring to the task of rearing children and living life. Except perhaps for teen pregnancy, journalists don't do a very good job in helping readers (and viewers) understand the impact of these other factors.

Understanding What Poverty Means

The “federal poverty line”—that magic number that justifies labeling a family as “poor”—is useful for setting thresholds for entitlements and gathering statistics. But it doesn't tell us much about the material conditions of a family's life, and journalists should stop writing about it as though it does. (Sometimes I wonder how many reporters even know how the poverty line is determined or that both conservative and liberal poverty experts consider this formula to be extremely flawed.)

You can live a pretty comfortable life on a poverty-level income in rural Mississippi; conversely, in Santa Clara County, California, the high cost of housing makes it difficult to subsist on an income well above the poverty line. The federal poverty line doesn't reflect variations in the cost of living from place to place, nor the fact that how far money stretches varies dramatically from family to family. (“There's poor, and there's po', and we're just poor,” a catfish worker in Mississippi told me as we sat in her surprisingly comfortable living room.)

Reporting on Poor Children

For all of us who write about the working poor, one of the most important issues is what growing up poor means to children. The best advice I can offer here is to know the research on long-

term effects and use your best powers of observation to make connections between what you know to what you see. Children can't always articulate the impact of their circumstance, especially when they have had limited exposure to places and people apart from their neighborhoods and families. Engage children in conversation, but recognize that they often don't do well with interviews. If they are preschoolers, get down on the floor and play with them; if they are adolescents, hang out with them at the mall.

What will bring these stories to life are the details of their daily lives. Do they sleep on the floor because there is no bed? Do they eat Ramen noodles during the last week of the month because food stamps have run out? Or does the older child have to give up high school football because his family can't afford the required fee?

Lives Get Complicated: Stories Should, Too

Be wary of the push in newsrooms to write stories with happy endings (preferably incorporating redemption). The path from welfare dependency to self-sufficiency is littered with minefields, and there will be few welfare recipients who are going to be able to step around all of them. People's lives are constantly evolving. While readers might prefer to feel good at the end of a story, most people can spot a contrived ending when they read one.

The rub is that newspaper stories have to end. Try to make better use of endings that capture the true uncertainty of tomorrow: for many poor people, the multiple challenges they face mean that the next day could go either way. So what if you leave readers wondering what will happen in a family's life? They know their own lives are like that, too.

The 10 profiles I wrote for my book were verbal snapshots of each family at a particular time in their lives. I could have pulled together happy endings—in almost any life, you can find reason for hope—but careful readers would call me on it when they read the future paperback edition in which I hope to

show what's happened to these families three years later. Some of my 10 families are better off now than they were when I met them 18 months ago. But most have already suffered major setbacks, some predictable, some not.

The lives of poor people are complex, which is extremely important to remember as your editors exhort you to write about “what works.” Providing a poor family with subsidies for child-care might solve one problem, but it might not do a lot to help find a reliable caregiver who will work the night shift. Establishing a program to enable low-income children to obtain health insurance may ensure that their medical provider gets paid, but it won't necessarily mean that they get treated for strep throat before it turns into rheumatic fever. Increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit may help a family's income rise above the poverty line, but it probably won't change the quality of their daily lives, since my reporting shows that many use their EITC checks to pay off debts.

There are no silver bullets, and we do a disservice to both poor people and our readers when we write stories that suggest that if only such-and-such a program were implemented, everything would be okay.

The bottom line is that when you write about poor people, the best you can do is demand more time, agitate for more space, and revisit the subject frequently enough to help your readers understand that poverty has multiple causes, multiple manifestations and multiple solutions. We can hope for happy endings, and occasionally we will find them. But for many people making the transition from welfare to work, it's probably not time to write them yet. ■

Martha Shirk is the co-author, with Neil Bennett and J. Lawrence Aber, of “Lives on the Line: American Families and the Struggle to Make Ends Meet,” to be published this summer by Westview Press. She was a reporter for The St. Louis Post-Dispatch from 1975 to 1996. She is now a freelance writer in Palo Alto, California.

European Reporters' Views of America's Welfare Reform

Media Coverage Shifts From Looking Abroad to Looking Next Door

By Martin Gehlen

Ideas travel. Historically, political entrepreneurs on both sides of the Atlantic have pointed to the effectiveness of practices that were developed on the other side as evidence of the feasibility of their favored policies.

In the 19th Century, Friedrich List, long-time German advocate for national tariffs, went to the United States, became actively involved in the American tariff debate, and on his return campaigned for the adoption of a national economic strategy on the basis of the American success. At the turn of the century, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce wanted to import the German apprenticeship system, so officials came to see and report on how it worked.

In the 1920's, German Social Democrats and union leaders were fascinated by Henry Ford's production philosophy, prompting the radical labor intellectual Jakob Walcher to write a book entitled "Ford or Marx: The Practical Solution of the Social Question." Ford's memoirs appeared in German translation in 1923 and ran through more than 30 reprints. Under the Nazis, Ferdinand Porsche toured Detroit's automobile factories in search of ideas for his Volkswagen project. After the Second World War, Germans considered almost anything American a model for imitation. By the 1970's, the so-called "Wirtschaftswunder" and the competitive edge enjoyed by German companies convinced American busi-

ness leaders to look at the "Modell Deutschland."

Now, America's low unemployment and economic strength of the 1990's have ignited a broad discussion in Europe on the merits of the U.S. model.

As the first political waves of Clinton's vague '92 campaign slogan "to end welfare as we know it" reached European shores, U.S. unemployment figures dropped below German figures for the first time since the early 1960's. Led by its young, dynamic president, the United States seemed willing to become fit for the global competition of the next century by rethinking the traditional balance between the welfare state and its citizens, between

that—if transferred to this country—could bring about a change of course in its economic and social policies.

Welfare reform measures—such as state-sponsored workfare projects—were examined with an eye toward their applicability in Germany. Along with looking at specific welfare policy changes that were taking place in states like Wisconsin, other economic and social issues were being covered as well. These included the sudden surge in U.S. jobs, wage restraint and social deregulation, the entrepreneurial spirit in the United States and the abolishment of the alleged welfare hammock for the poor.

Now, two years later, the situation has changed. The U.S. job situation appeared to lose its attraction when reporting about the dark side, the undesirable side effects of the American success story, started to show up in newspaper editorials and magazine stories. One reason for this change was that leading publications describe and treat the American welfare situation as an issue that is closely interrelated with other features of social policy like, for example, health care and the minimum wage. It is unthinkable in most European states that so many people would be without health insurance and work for such low wages without receiving government benefits.

Other topics that surfaced in reporting about American social policy in-



A boy waits with his mother in the hallway of a welfare office in Berlin.
Photo by Katharina Eglau.

public and private responsibility. The political and journalistic response was swift and comprehensive. Mainstream coverage in the German press focused on several features of the U.S. system

cluded high crime and poverty rates (especially among children), large wage disparities, the working poor, dismal employment protections, and low levels of unemployment benefits. And there was also coverage about the subsidies companies receive from the government through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which enables low-wage workers to inch out of poverty.

The leading motto for European journalists became "The devil is in the details." Reporters didn't pick out isolated elements to portray as models of social policy but instead scrutinized the whole picture of American social policy, and this became the focus of comparative coverage. And this was set against the backdrop of recognizing that societies whose perspectives arise out of very different cultural backgrounds have great difficulty in adopting other countries' models.

For these reasons and more, the once-popular recommendation of adopting the American approach to transforming the welfare system has been pushed to the side among politicians and business leaders. In turn, mainstream press coverage has evolved a skeptical distance, quite different than during the early Clinton years.

The short-lived enthusiasm for the U.S. model has not vanished completely, however. Certain traces of it remain. While the question of a direct transfer of U.S. welfare or employment policy has dropped from the agenda of European leaders, two subtle trends of American political thinking are taking hold in most European countries, and reporters are starting to cover them.

First, Europeans appear to be drawn to the "behavioral approach" of this new generation of U.S. social policies that are the centerpiece of Clinton's welfare initiative. President Clinton stressed the view that welfare policy is a contract between society and the individual, with the citizen doing his or her part to end dependency on public funds. This led to a politics that played on society's desire to see that people change their personal behavior, go to work, do whatever they can, before they put their hand out to the public. This attitude made possible the bipar-

tisan passage of legislation such as EITC, but it also led to the wide-scale introduction of sanctions imposed on those who do not get a job.

Imposing financial sanctions on people who depend on public help has almost always been a taboo in European welfare policy and thus has been portrayed that way in much of the past coverage. But this is no longer the case as reporters are taking their cues for story angles from the dramatic changes in the political environment since "New Left" governments have come into power in Britain, France and Germany. As a case in point, in March the head of the powerful German Metal Trade Union asked, together with several leading politicians, for strict welfare sanctions against youth who refuse to participate in the federal "100,000 jobs" program. While party officials proposed and debated a 25 percent welfare cut, the union, the most powerful of its kind in Europe, demanded a total cut-off, something that would never have been heard at other times in German political discussion. This debate quickly became front-page news.

The second influence on American social policy thinking pertains to the traditional social security mentality of European welfare systems. The use of "means testing" (assistance provided based on the financial situation of the person or family in need) as a way of determining the point at which public support is merited seems to be gaining in popularity. In the United States, many benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, housing subsidies and health insurance are means tested.

In most of the European countries, social benefits like unemployment insurance, child credits, pension payments or health insurance have the characteristics of a public social security payment to which all are entitled regardless of their financial situation. Facing considerable budget deficits and strict financial limits set by the new European Central Bank, a shift to a predominantly means testing system is on the public agenda of many European states as political resistance subsides. Once again, the topics and tone

of media coverage reflect this new and significant shift that has occurred in thinking about this aspect of social policy.

Right now, the United States's impact on all of this is less and less openly acknowledged in media coverage and public debate about European policies on welfare. This is caused, in part, by Europe's current self-absorption that has resulted from the introduction of the Euro currency and the concurrent need to harmonize the main features of each nation's economic, tax and welfare systems. This situation has triggered much more intensive coverage of the social policy agendas of European neighbors at the expense of reporting on the superpower across the Atlantic. Larger European countries, in particular, now look primarily to smaller ones for new ideas and reform approaches; Germany, for example, looks to the Netherlands and Denmark.

One of the more intriguing topics that has captured media interest is the new, flexible culture of cooperation and roundtable politics between companies and trade unions that these countries are experiencing. This kind of story would be unlikely to emerge if the focus had remained on the United States because relations between labor and management are traditionally more hostile there. And in these smaller European countries there are plenty of other stories to be found, such as ones about their remarkable success in job creation, reduction of welfare dependency, and empowerment of weaker segments of the population. At least for now, these are the stories European journalists appear eager to report, and when they do, the viewers and readers aren't confronted by the kind of distressing news that seems to accompany stories about America's transformation to a new social contract. ■

Martin Gehlen, a 1992 Nieman Fellow, is editor and writer for domestic issues at Der Tagesspiegel in Berlin. His 1997 book, "Upheaval in the American Social Safety Net: The 1996 Welfare Reform From a European Perspective," was released in Germany.

‘The Monica Thing’ and Other Observations About Journalism

In this issue, reviews of books will mingle with reflections from authors, journalists and other observers about ways in which members of the media report on events of our time.

There is perhaps no topic that so dominated the U.S. media’s attention during the past year than what former Executive Editor of TIME, John Stacks, calls “the Monica thing.”

In our lead review, **Richard Harwood**, a former ombudsman at The Washington Post, assesses the findings and suggestions of two veteran journalists, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel. In their new book, “Warp Speed: America in the Age of Mixed Media,” these journalists examine how news about this scandal was reported and what impact such coverage is having on the practice of journalism.

Following this review, **John Stacks**, who is writing a biography of former New York Times Washington Bureau Chief Scotty Reston, contemplates the different way in which coverage of “the Monica thing” might have been handled during his era. Then we hear from PBS “NewsHour” Anchor **Jim Lehrer**, who found in the midst of this coverage reason to worry about the future of his chosen profession. In remarks he made at a dinner hosted by the International Center for Journalists, Lehrer observed that “Journalism, as practiced by some, has become akin to professional wrestling—something to watch rather than to believe.” **Richard Fox**, a political science professor at Union College, watched such a wrestling match, along with student **Adam-Paul Smolak**, as members of the press questioned Reverend Jesse Jackson after a speech he gave in honor of Black History Month. What they heard—“the vapid and obsessive questioning of the journalists”—and how each reacted to it is the subject of our next reflection.

Two more book reviews follow. **Josh Getlin**, a national correspondent for The Los Angeles Times, peers inside the pages of Neal Gabler’s book, “Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality,” and uncovers evidence that news reporting is moving into “the Republic of Entertainment.” And former Los Angeles Times Washington Bureau Chief **Jack Nelson** reflects on Max Frankel’s autobiographical look at his life and his career at The New York Times. Nelson concludes that Frankel’s memoir is “a journalism classic and a compelling read not just for media junkies, but for a general audience.” ■

Searching for Facts in a Sea of Speculation

Two journalists sift through the evidence of scandal coverage.

Warp Speed: America in the Age of Mixed Media

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel

The Century Foundation. 193 Pages. \$24.95 hc. \$10.95 pb.

By Richard Harwood

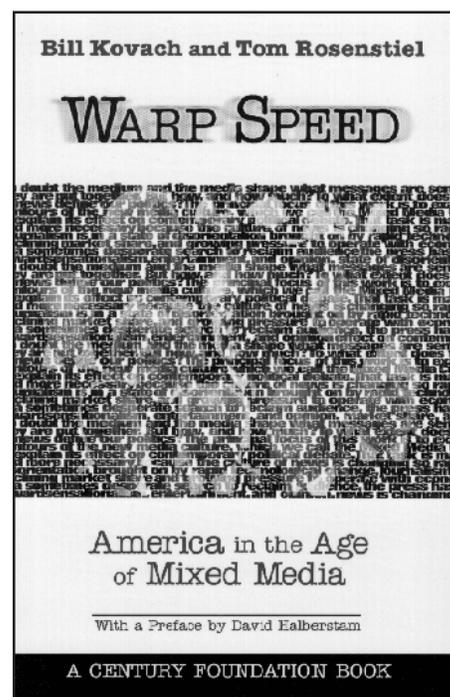
During the past half-century or so, we have created in this country an immense “mixed media” industry in which, as “Warp Speed: America in the Age of Mixed Media” reminds us, “the cultures of entertainment, infotainment, argument, analyses, tabloid and mainstream press not only work side by side but intermingle and merge.” Its products are spewed out around the clock and around the world, 365 days a year by a labor force of remarkable diversity: Scholars, writers and editors of great distinction work alongside “spin doctors and dissemblers,” “pseudo-experts,” demagogues, high school dropouts, unemployed politicians and ex-beauty queens. It is not an unreasonable stretch to say that today, virtually anyone can be a “journalist,” “commentator,” “news reader,” ideological provocateur or talk show impresario. There are no “professional” standards for entry into this “mixed media” world. There are no “professional” standards governing the quality or marketability of the industry’s output. And with the birth of the Internet the very concept of standards is an oxymoron. Gossip, rumor and fact, truth and falsehood (with rare exceptions) have equal standing under the law and, in practice, universally coexist in the unending “news” stream saturating the environment.

As Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel survey this chaotic scene, they conclude in “Warp Speed” that the news business is in a crisis that threatens its ability to influence in any constructive way the course of public affairs and at the same time is alienating the various

publics the media rely on for survival. “Excess capacity” in the “multi-media” industry is, in their view, a significant factor in its degradation. There are now thousands upon thousands of “media” entities (and potentially millions of Internet Drudges) competing for the attention of finite audiences and for shares of a finite pot of advertising dollars. “Between 7 a.m. and midnight on a typical weekday in Washington... there are now 146 hours of news, information and talk available to viewers on the local cable television system,” the authors write. “A kind of Parkinson’s Law comes into play here: The news expands to fill the time allotted—even if there isn’t really enough news.”

We saw this vividly in the endless, day-and-night news programs, talk shows and other bloviations on the O.J. Simpson case. We saw it again in the absurdly over-covered and over-talked story of Princess Diana’s life and death. And we saw and heard it ad nauseum in the tawdry tale of President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, a tale that inspired this book.

As principals in the ad hoc Committee of Concerned Journalists (on whose advisory committee I and other mostly passive news people sit), Kovach and Rosenstiel commissioned a study to find out “what the press had reported in the first week of the story, what the sourcing was, and how much was actual reporting versus commentary and opinion.” Two follow-up studies were done along the same lines, all of them underwritten by the Pew Charitable Trusts, which is also the financial spon-



sor for the Committee and for numerous other programs of journalistic uplift.

From these studies, Kovach and Rosenstiel discovered the “extraordinary degree...reporting and opinion and speculation were now intermingled in mainstream journalism. About 40 percent of the industry output on the Clinton-Lewinsky affair was not factual reporting at all...but was instead journalists offering their own analysis, opinion, speculation or judgments—essentially, commentary and punditry.” As an example they cite Evan Thomas, the Newsweek Washington Bureau Chief who was a guest on the Charlie Rose talk show the day the story broke. “I think Clinton likes to tempt fate. He

loves danger. I mean, how stupid could he possibly be? You know, he gets elected. He beats the rap. He's in the White House, assuming that this is true, how crazy it is to take up with a 22-year-old girl who's sure to have girlfriends, who's sure to blab about it. It tells you Clinton likes being on the edge. He likes danger. He's been slipping out of jams all his life, and he must get some kind of perverse thrill from it."

That is an interesting plunge into Clinton's psyche but it isn't "truth" or "fact" or "evidence." It certainly isn't "news" by any reasonable definition of the term. But much of the early "news" coverage of the Lewinsky-Clinton affair was of this nature.

That same day, Tim Russert of NBC informed his audience, "One of [Clinton's] best friends told me today, 'If this is true he has to get out of town.' Whether it will come to that, I don't know, and I don't think it's fair to play the speculation game. But I do not underestimate anything happening at this point. The next 48 to 72 hours are crucial." A few days later Sam Donaldson of ABC News declared, "If [Clinton is] not telling the truth, I think his presidency is numbered in days. This isn't going to drag out.... If he's not telling the truth, the evidence shows [he] will resign, perhaps this week."

"Reporting" and speculation of this nature "permeate[d] coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky story," Kovach and Rosenstiel write. It revealed "the degree to which the supposed information revolution is not actually about gathering information but instead about commenting on information that others have gathered."

This form of parasitism—feeding off the work of others—is one of the cornerstones of modern journalism. The vast majority of "mixed media" entities do not dispatch correspondents around the nation or the world to report on wars, disasters or presidential scandals. They rely on a few commercial news services to perform those tasks—the Associated Press, The New York Times, Gannett, Scripps Howard, Knight-Ridder, The Washington Post and so on. Or they may simply plagiarize what they learn from other me-

dia—an NBC "exclusive," election night voting returns or the progress and outcome of a sporting event. But if the supplier gets the story wrong, clients all over the world will get it wrong; these media outposts have no way to check the reliability of information pouring in from around the globe.

Ten days after the first Clinton-Lewinsky reports I wrote in a column that I very much doubted that any media organization, if hauled into court at that time, could prove the story we were reporting. So far as we knew, no journalist on the story had ever met, talked or corresponded with Monica Lewinsky or had ever discussed with the President his alleged relationship with the woman. We knew virtually nothing about her personal history, reliability or her veracity. With two or three exceptions, no journalist had heard any part of the Tripp-Lewinsky tapes—the key evidence in possession of the Special Counsel. The journalistic mob in Washington had to take it on faith that the tapes were authentic or even existed. It was working blind most of the time, and several times erroneous accounts of the White House romance appeared: a report, for example, that the lovers were seen in flagrante delicto by a presidential steward.

To limit somewhat the room for error in cases of this kind, Kovach and Rosenstiel call for a more responsible use and at least an ideological or partisan identification of "sources," anonymous sources in particular. In the early days of the scandal, their studies revealed, 40 percent of all reporting was based on information from a single anonymous source and "a large percentage of the reportage had no sourcing" at all. Only one percent was based on two or more named sources.

This was a flimsy foundation, in their view, for publishing allegations as serious as those in the Clinton case. "Six assertions or allegations dominated the coverage. The most common was that Clinton was in big trouble. The second was that Clinton was denying there was any sexual relationship. The third was that Lewinsky had alleged sex and perjury. The fourth was that Lewinsky was negotiating immunity. The fifth

was that Clinton was dissembling. The sixth was that impeachment was a possibility.

"Interestingly, three of [these] assertions...were essentially subjective or interpretive: that this spelled big trouble, that Clinton was not telling the truth, and that impeachment was a possibility."

I'm not at all sure this criticism, including my own at the time, is entirely fair. From the beginning, the behavior of the President, his lawyers and the White House in responding—or not responding—to these allegations was strange, to say the least. They contributed mightily to much of the misinformation that found its way into the media. Furthermore, the Attorney General of the United States and the special federal court supervising independent counsels took the allegations seriously enough to authorize Kenneth Starr to proceed. In that context, speculation about the President's veracity and the troubles he might be facing was not unreasonable. How could the press not explain that to the American people?

Other speculations about the meaning of it all were another matter. "At times we heard that the scandal variously would be the end for Clinton, a boon for the GOP, a repudiation of the Christian Right, a triumph for Newt Gingrich. We heard that impeachment would be short-circuited, that a Senate trial would be avoided and that live witnesses were a certainty," "Warp Speed's" authors recall. "Perhaps more important than the accuracy or inaccuracy of any given prediction is the awkwardness of the press turning public affairs into a kind of Vegas-style game of prediction."

Kovach and Rosenstiel toy with a philosophical proposition that only the most high-minded among us would entertain: Even though you wholeheartedly believe a story is true, you should not print it if it is "thinly sourced," meaning, I assume, a single source. Would those in agreement with that proposition have applied it in the case of Watergate and the source known as "Deep Throat"? Reports about a blue dress stained with Clinton's semen surfaced long before they were ulti-

mately verified by DNA tests. “Was the reporting of the blue dress vindicated because it turned out to be accurate? Some [unnamed] journalists have argued no. It is not good enough that stories turn out to be correct, they argue. ABC [first to air the report] was lucky, they contend, not good. The ends—whether a story is true—do not justify the means—a thin level of sourcing. That judgment may be too harsh. If ABC had good reason to believe its lone source—and it contends it did—that may be the result of having reliable sources, not luck.... Accuracy is certainly the first goal of journalism, but it is not the only one. Credibility and

clarity are important as well.”

This small book raises many more ethical and practical issues confronting the press today. The authors worry that we are on a slippery slope that could lead to disaster in terms of credibility and our survival as a relevant institution in a political democracy. Some of their prescriptions for reform may seem impractical in the competitive world in which we live: the proposal, for example, that news organizations should have written policies governing the relevance of “sexual behavior of public officials,” the number of sources needed to go with a story, and what reporters should or should

not be allowed to say on talk shows. But they deserve conscientious consideration and could usefully serve as an agenda for a long and thoughtful conversation among the gatekeepers of the news. ■

Richard Harwood, a 1956 Nieman Fellow, retired in 1988 as Deputy Managing Editor of The Washington Post and since then has written an editorial column on the media for The Post and its clients. He began work in journalism at The Tennessean in 1947 and was succeeded in his job as a political writer by Bill Kovach.

‘The Monica Thing’

How would Scotty Reston and his generation of Washington reporters have handled the story? His biographer looks for answers.

By John F. Stacks

It’s been more than a year that we’ve been slogging around the swamp of presidential scandal, witnessing the media exploitation of the boggy details of the Monica thing. No wonder that some of us feel the tug of nostalgia for what seem like sunnier times, when the great old barons of journalism like Scotty Reston protected us from the seamier details of our leaders’ lives.

Here’s how it worked in the old days: After Jack Kennedy became president, there was a persistent rumor that our first Catholic president had been married before he married Jackie, and to a twice-divorced woman. At The New York Times Washington bureau Wallace Carroll, Reston’s right-hand man, assigned one of his best diggers to the story, joining the snoopers from other bureaus around the capital. But when Reston found out that his boys were chasing after this piece of presidential dirt, he became quite angry. “I won’t have The New York Times muck-raking the President of the United States,” Reston declaimed. The Times’s investigation ended, but others pur-

sued the story, finding only dead ends while right wing hate sheets kept reprinting the rumors.

Or it worked this way: After Lyndon Johnson succeeded Kennedy and the civil rights movement was gathering momentum, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover sent his men around the Washington news bureaus peddling transcripts of tapes showing that Dr. Martin Luther King was sexually active outside his marriage. As Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel point out in their Century Fund study of the press’s behavior during the Monica storm [See review of “Warp Speed,” above], no one would print the story. Frustrated, Hoover called in some reporters to FBI headquarters to hear with their own ears his evidence of King’s misbehavior. Still there were no takers.

It’s almost beyond imagining what would have become of the nation had such a smear by the FBI about King’s personal life ruined him as a pivotal figure of enormous public significance. And Kennedy had enough troubles in his brief presidency managing

Khrushchev, Castro and the CIA and the Viet Cong without fending off endless stories about his marital history, which Seymour Hersh, in his book “The Dark Side of Camelot,” now insists was as the rumors had it. Had the old rules been in place, had there not been a Matt Drudge and the dueling shouters expostulating on 24-hour cable networks, would Reston and the arbiters of news that once ruled Washington have saved us—and Bill Clinton—from the national embarrassment of Monica?

David Halberstam, who worked in Reston’s bureau, says flatly that the story would never have escaped the beltway. “It would never have gotten any traction.” Not that the information would not have had an impact on how Scotty Reston, who had a strict Scots-Presbyterian sense of right and wrong, especially on the question of marital fidelity, would have viewed this president. “He would have regarded him with a cold contempt that would have affected his treatment on other questions,” contends Halberstam.

Conventional historical memory

posits that the press perfectly well knew of Kennedy's gross impropriety in the White House and beyond and simply covered it up in return for access to the president and the leaders of the New Frontier. Tom Wicker, who was Reston's man in the White House at the time, disputes that, as do others, even those who covered JFK adoringly, like TIME magazine's Hugh Sidey. Wicker argued in "On Press," his superb 1975 look at the Washington press corps, that the press was even then far too diverse in political point of view to conspire to suppress provable facts about Kennedy's indiscretions. Had the facts been obtainable and verifiable, someone would have been printed them, argues Wicker. If the dam had broken, even Scotty Reston would have been unable to ignore that story.

It is certainly true that there was a much greater sense of restraint in the Reston era when it came to printing stories about the personal lives of public figures. Reston himself was quite close to Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan and was frequently accused (falsely, my research indicates) of having actually written Vandenberg's landmark 1945 speech in which the isolationist senator embraced a new kind of Republican internationalism. However, in 1948, Reston got a tip from a highly respectable academic source that Vandenberg was under suspicion by "security sources" because his mistress was believed to be a "British agent." Reston later said the tip "didn't make any sense to him then and doesn't now," and it was never followed up. It was not the sort of thing gentlemen looked into.

Reston and most reporters in the Washington journalistic establishment of his time tended to give political leaders what we would regard today as an expansive benefit of the doubt on personal matters. In fact, the press in Reston's era was only just emerging from a period of almost stenographic fealty to the utterances of public officials. It took an unconscionably long time before the press began to call the loathsome redbaiter, Senator Joseph McCarthy, on his falsehoods.

That reluctance to write critically in

the news columns about political leaders persisted for years, although it was occasionally shaken by such extravagant lies as Dwight Eisenhower's assertion that Francis Gary Power's downed U-2 spy plane was simply an off-course weather spotter. But it was not until



Scotty Reston. *Photo courtesy of The New York Times.*

the corrosive lying that attended the conduct of the Vietnam War that the press, in general, hardened in its view that the government, given a choice between the truth and a self-serving piece of prevarication, might often chose the latter. But even then, the Reston sense of restraint persisted at The New York Times into the Nixon years when Reston acolyte Max Frankel was bureau chief, causing the paper to get beaten and beaten badly as the dirty details of Watergate got dredged up by The Washington Post.

Scotty Reston loved a good exclusive. He won his first Pulitzer Prize for printing details of the big powers' various positions on the creation of the United Nations, even as those plans were being secretly debated at Dumbarton Oaks. He always described himself as a "scoop artist" rather than as an opinion leader. He hounded his bureau into getting ahead of the official flow of news, even if the scooplet was a routine ambassadorial nomina-

tion that would be known to the world in a day or so. He believed that by breaking even small stories, he was creating the impression that The Times was hot-wired into the private workings of the government, thus improving the chances of even bigger scoops.

But the story of the President of the United States having sex—or whatever he would call it—in the Oval Office? With a woman only slightly older than his daughter? Would Scotty Reston have sat on that story if someone had come to him with the tapes? Would he have softened The Times's treatment of it as he did, at Kennedy's request, the paper's scoop on the impending Bay of Pigs invasion? Or would he have held off printing the story, again at Kennedy's request, as he did when The Times learned that the United States was about to impose a naval blockade around Cuba during the missile crisis? He would certainly have wanted to ignore it. He would have wanted to have the story be false and he would not have led the charge to expose Bill Clinton's narcissistic stupidity.

But in the end, not even Scotty Reston could have stood down on pursuit of the Monica story. In some ways, the course of the Clinton sex scandal story was like that of Watergate. There were rumors. There were small leaks. But it was not until the legal process got underway that the news floodgates opened. Once Ken Starr got himself authorized to investigate, there is no news organization at any time that could have ignored the story. Would the story have seeped past the beltway, even if Reston's sensibilities were guiding the profession today? No question. Would Reston's generation have kept their coverage more restrained? Certainly. And, in the end, had restraint been in evidence, those in the profession and their audience might not have felt like they were witnessing not only the diminishment of the presidency but also the dismantling of public trust in a responsible press. ■

John F. Stacks was TIME's Executive Editor and Chief of Correspondents. He is writing a biography of Reston to be published by Little, Brown.

Blurring the Lines Hurts Journalism

By Jim Lehrer

My message has to do with journalism. It has to do with why, according to the polls, we are now down there with the lawyers, the Congress and the child pornographers in the public's respect and esteem. There's a long list of reasons, most of them obvious to anyone who has been paying attention. Former New York Times columnist Russell Baker has been paying attention: "Later, in one of those comically solemn conclaves at which journalists ponder the philosophy of their trade and eat high on the expense account, the news industry will struggle to understand the great media meltdown of 1998. If I am asked to contribute a monograph, it will tend toward the theory that something akin to road rage occurred in the Washington press corps. This produced actions that were variously foolish, shameful, dangerous to American democracy, and destructive for the reputation of the news industry."

My monograph would begin with the additional conclusion that journalism, as practiced by some, has become akin to professional wrestling—something to watch rather than to believe. One of the reasons is the savagery that's become part and parcel of the so-called new journalism. It is marked by predatory stake-outs, brutally coarse invasions of privacy, talk show shouting and violence, no-source reporting, and other popular techniques. Another reason is something I call the new arrogance. The fact that some in my line of work have developed an approach in words, sneers and body language that says loud and clear: Only the journalists of America are pure enough to judge others. And judge we must. Because God really did die in the 1960's, and the journalists of America must take up the slack because there are no others who can, no others out there who are pure enough to do it.

Another reason could be our new

problems with entertainment. Garrison Keillor spoke of it a couple of years ago at a big dinner of radio-TV journalists and semi-journalists. He warned about the danger of trying to be fascinating rather than just informing. And trying to be fascinating has resulted in some confusing personnel moves.

Jim Squires, former editor of The Chicago Tribune, wrote about this recently: "News events spawn new celebrities, who show up at a later event with a microphone, pretending to practice the craft of journalism. Actors, comedians, politicians, lawyers, infamous criminals—and some who fit all five categories—now regularly masquerade as reporters on newscasts and talk shows. Watergate burglar G. Gordon Liddy and Clinton White House political adviser George Stephanopoulos are both now widely considered to be journalists. Former Nixon speechwriter Patrick Buchanan and civil rights activist Jesse Jackson go from being story subject one month to storyteller the next. Lawyer Johnnie Cochran may be on television standing beside a famous defendant one day and on another interviewing the same defendant from behind an anchor desk. Worse, many of the people signing the paychecks of those pretenders and making the programming decisions can't see any difference between real news and celebrity news programming.

On my list, the most serious reason for the credibility problem is the blurring of the lines among the three basic types of serious journalism: straight reporting, analysis and opinion. Here, folks, is what happened; here, now, is what it means; and here, now, is what we, or I, think about it. When I began in this business more than 30 years ago, each "here" was a very separate function. Reporting was done by reporters; analyzing by carefully labeled and credentialed analysts, and the "we" or "I" thinking by editorial writers, colum-

nists and commentators. The reader or listener or viewer knew the differences.

Now the public is very confused about what in the world is going on. They see network reporters on the nightly news as straight news reporters, then on weekend programs as commentators or pundits. They see TV anchor people on their news programs, then hear them on other programs giving their opinions about the news they reported straight. They see straight news reporters for newspapers and other publications on television or radio acting as pundits. They even see, from time to time, opinions masquerading as angles, in straight news stories in all media. The result has been a problem for some of us still trying to operate under the old rules.

At the "NewsHour" we had a situation at the beginning of the Lewinsky matter that involved one of our regular straight news contributors, Stuart Taylor, then of the American Lawyer and Legal Times. He covered the Supreme Court for us and did so brilliantly. But as the Lewinsky story broke, and then shook, rattled and rolled, he developed into a commentator about the story. Not on the "NewsHour," but on other programs and in print. I felt there was some confusion about his roles, and we dropped him from his regular reporting slot. We were attacked by many well-meaning people who saw our decision as being pro-Clinton, an effort to keep Taylor's strong views about the president off our program. I tried to explain it on the air. But I was truly swimming upstream, and I still am.

Only one person in the press came to my assistance, by the way. Howard Rosenberg, the TV critic of The Los Angeles Times, helped me explain it in a column. Everyone else who should care about such things remained absolutely silent. And by their silence, said: You're a dinosaur, Lehrer. Journalism

has changed, and you haven't. I hereby plead guilty. In doing so, I do not wrap myself in some cloak of goodness and accuse everyone who disagrees with me of being some kind of lesser person or professional. There are no evil or wrong people involved in this change, this evolution into a new journalism.

My point is that those who practice

it have an obligation to explain what they are doing and why—to bring the public under the tent with them. Because if they do not, it will continue to be one of those reasons our esteem continues to sink in the eyes and minds of the American public. And the problem with that is simply there is no room left down there to go. ■

Jim Lehrer is Executive Editor and Anchor of "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer." He gave this speech at the International Center for Journalists' annual benefit to pay tribute to newsmen from abroad on October 14, 1998, in Washington, D.C.

The Strange Questions Journalists Ask

Is it possible they heard the same speech?

By Richard L. Fox

It was a major event for our school, Union College in Schenectady, New York. Jesse Jackson was coming to give an address on the first day of Black History Month. Almost 1,000 students, faculty and administrators packed our largest lecture hall to hear Reverend Jackson. This was quite a turnout for a college with 2,000 students. Members of the Albany and Schenectady press were there in large numbers to report on Jackson's speech, including CBS, NBC, ABC and Fox News affiliates.

When Jackson arrived on stage, he was greeted with two standing ovations. I remember being a bit surprised by this, since Union College's student body is composed largely of fairly affluent whites whose experiences would seem to separate them from Jackson's core constituency and message.

Jackson started slowly by discussing what he saw as the misguided budget priorities of New York Governor Pataki. Then, as it often does, the pace of Jackson's speech picked up dramatically. He spoke with great passion about the character and health of the United States, about the dilapidated condition of inner city public schools, about the high numbers of children living in poverty, and about the burgeoning prison population. He evoked memories from the civil rights movement to explain to this generation of students how that movement is now stalled, not on racial fault lines, but on economic fault lines.

What is critical, Jackson said, is the need to find ways to close the gap between rich and poor; this, he said with great energy, is the last frontier of the civil rights movement.

One thing Jackson did not speak much about was what everyone else was talking about, the scandal involving Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. He largely steered clear of what was going on in Washington and focused mainly on race relations and the treatment of the poor in the United States.

By all accounts Jackson gave a masterful performance. For those who hadn't seen or heard him before, they couldn't help but be swept up by his oratorical skills. He was interrupted numerous times with applause. Whether members of the audience agreed with him or not, they seemed to respect the passion and dedication he exhibits. Jackson had come onto our predominantly white college campus and reached and inspired the students—not an easy task in this time of national apathy and cynicism.

When he finished his speech, and after the applause died down, he offered to take questions, first from members of the press and then from the audience. In all, the press asked six questions. The first was the perfunctory question about whether Jackson would run for President in 2000. The next reporter asked: "What do you think about what is going on in Washing-

ton?" And the next: "Do you think that the President should be removed from office?" The next: "Have you and President Clinton gotten closer since the Lewinsky scandal broke?" And next: "How would you like to see the scandal in Washington resolved?" And finally: "What team did you cheer for in the Super Bowl?"

As we in the audience watched this give-and-take, it became clear that the local journalists were taking their cues from what had by then become an obsession of the national and Washington press corps. These local reporters began to circle like a hive of bees around the story that members of their profession couldn't seem to stop themselves from talking about. They managed to entirely ignore the substance of Jackson's speech. They did not challenge any of his ideas, nor did they press for details on some of what were clearly vague proposals. They did not ask any questions about civil rights or race issues or affirmative action, which after all was the purpose of Jackson's appearance at Union College.

This evening taught me a valuable lesson, one that I wouldn't have been able to relate to my students if not for having witnessed this display of media arrogance or indifference for myself. One of the tragedies of the Lewinsky scandal is that it seems to have further perpetuated the news media's move towards simplistic sensationalism. What

I saw happen at Union College that night makes me wonder whether discussions about big political or social questions are too complicated or just too dull for members of the press corps to even bother with.

The rapid questioning by the journalists was truly put into perspective when Jackson began to take questions from the students. "How can we help to bridge the economic gap you spoke of? What can we do?" one student wanted to know. Another student challenged him to place within the context of our times words spoken three decades ago: "Martin Luther King used to refer to a 'beloved community;' what does that term mean to you?" Another

asked how it is possible to change institutions that have excluded members of minority communities for hundreds of years. These were the questions of real substance. And Jackson's answers will probably be long remembered by those who were there in the hall that night to hear them. But for those who would have to depend on the press to get the news to them, well, it is doubtful they even know that the questions were asked.

The moment of the evening belonged to the student who spoke next: "You just gave a very powerful and moving speech, and the press asked you only about the scandal in Washington. What does that say to you?" Before

this young man was finished speaking, the hall erupted in the loudest applause of the evening.

The students who turned out to listen to Reverend Jackson that night did not want to hear about Monica Lewinsky. They wanted to be challenged to think about serious and meaningful issues. The message the audience was sending to the press in attendance and throughout the country seemed clear: You speak for yourself, you do not speak for us. ■

Richard Fox is an assistant professor of political science at Union College in Schenectady, New York.

Why I Asked Jesse Jackson About the Media

By Adam-Paul Smolak

I am a political animal, so the presence of Jesse Jackson on my campus held out the promise of a rare stimulating evening of political give and take. I find that political passion is often in short supply on college campuses these days. Whether liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican, most of my peers have turned away from political involvement. So I was quite amazed and delighted when Jackson provoked passive students of all political persuasions with his message on social justice. By citing gross social and economic inequalities that reflect the consequences of various governmental policies, Jackson effectively touched a student body whose own economic circumstances make them feel far removed from the repercussions of social injustice.

As I looked around the auditorium, seeing his words being absorbed by so many of my fellow students, my thoughts turned to the possibility for action and the necessity for social uni-



Rev. Jesse Jackson at Union College.

fication. It was an exciting moment, but one that would soon be all but erased from memory by what happened next. When the speech ended and questioning by the media began, these thoughts and passions were abruptly restrained. Members of the media one by one belittled Jackson's message by not engaging him in questions con-

cerning substantive policy issues and in doing so stifled my belief in the possibilities of the political process.

In only 10 minutes of asking questions, the journalists who were there not only undermined an important policy discussion that the students might have had with their speaker about social justice but trivialized the message of a dedicated advocate for change.

Disgusted by the media's performance, I decided to rise and ask Jackson a question that emphasized the sensationalistic role that the media plays. The audience's reaction displayed to me that I was not the only one in attendance who witnessed a prime example of how the media's tunnel vision does a great disservice to our national dialogue. ■

Adam-Paul Smolak is a junior studying political science at Union College in Schenectady, New York.

'The Republic of Entertainment'

Is news reporting moving into this territory?

Life, The Movie:

How Entertainment Conquered Reality

Neal Gabler

Alfred A. Knopf. 303 Pages. \$25.

By Josh Getlin

It was just another morning at the Fox News Channel in New York: What began as a discussion of President Clinton's sexual shenanigans quickly degenerated into a nasty squabble between a conservative and a liberal who couldn't agree on anything. They angrily tried to out-shout each other, and a viewer looking for substance in the brief exchange would have been sorely disappointed. But a roomful of producers at the 24-hour cable news station were hugely pleased with what they had just seen.

"Let's make sure that we book these two guys again," said one producer. "They made fireworks together. And they looked great."

That, in a nutshell, is one of the key messages in historian Neal Gabler's latest book, "Life, The Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality." Looking at the broad sweep of U.S. history, Gabler argues that the rise of 20th Century media culture—a world of tabloid newspapers, gossip magazines, radio talk shows, television sitcoms and movies above all—has dramatically transformed the way Americans view daily reality. Once, he suggests, people focused on character and ideas as the benchmarks by which to measure their lives. But today, all that has been replaced by a hunger for amusement. The nation worships images, not ideas, and celebrities dominate the news. It is, as Gabler frequently calls it, "The Republic of Entertainment."

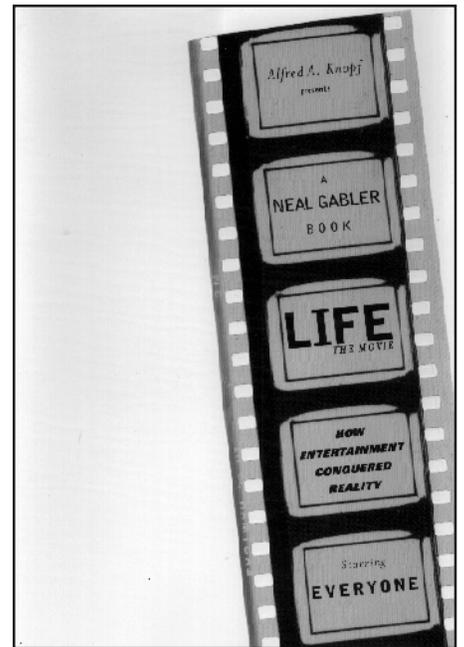
What happened at the Fox News Channel, he would argue, is just one more reflection of this sea change in

U.S. life: once a literate, word-based culture, we are now influenced by pictures, personalities and surface media impressions. And the impact on American journalism is clear: The author says news values that once emphasized hard reporting have been superseded by the desire—and need—to entertain people. In today's media, Gabler argues, the bottom line is not merely driven by dollars and profit margins; it's also colored by the need to amuse.

How else to describe a news establishment that feasts on permanent scandals like the O.J. Simpson case and the Lewinsky affair, routinely ignoring or marginalizing other, more urgent stories around the globe? What else but a desire to titillate could explain the rise of mudslinging political talk shows? Indeed, the very structure of all-news cable channels like Fox, MSNBC and CNN requires a steady diet of talk, gossip and punditry—news as entertainment—to fill a 24-hour news hole.

Many journalists like to hold themselves apart from the shlockmeisters of pop culture. Yet even the most high-minded reporters and producers can succumb to the drumbeat of entertainment. Soon after the war in Kosovo began, for example, the media focused in a rush on the plight of three American POWs. Stories about the men, their families and their neighborhoods filled the airwaves and newspapers, as an army of reporters probed the warm and fuzzy "human angle" on a breaking story. But there was a war going on. A much bigger and more complex tale to relate.

"The press has an almost knee-jerk



need to humanize every story," said UCLA American history professor Joyce Appleby, in a prior interview with The Los Angeles Times. "It's easy to do, and so we get the human drama in everything, whether it's Olympic athletes, people on trial or captured soldiers in the army." Such sensitivity can improve coverage in the long run, she adds, but in wartime it often muddies the big picture.

Gabler finds proof of the "urge to entertain" throughout American culture, ranging from fine art and literature to advertising and fashion. He portrays it as a disease corrupting politics and education, as well as self-help psychology. It's a sprawling terrain, and to unify his findings, Gabler offers a provocative theory: Life has become

a movie, a sensational parade of film stars, soap opera crises, and contrived happy endings. If Americans seem to be thinking less and less, the author suggests, it's no surprise. For the culture that saturates us with celebrity and spectacle seems to put little value on sober thought.

Gabler, who has written critically acclaimed books on the history of Hollywood and a biography of Walter Winchell, marshals convincing evidence to argue that movies are more responsible for these changes in American life than any other institution. To be sure, he finds roots of the current fascination with entertainment in 19th Century battles over pop culture vs. high culture, and he writes colorfully about the emergence of tabloid newspapers around the turn of the century. Yet he makes his strongest case with films. Indeed, he equates reality with a "life movie," a "Truman Show" in which all Americans participate.

Beginning with a survey of silent films, which built a loyal, mass audience, and ending with modern-day blockbusters, the author writes that "over time, after tens of millions of [Americans] watched thousands of motion pictures, the movies gradually began occupying the American imagination like an expeditionary force, not only filling Americans' heads with models to appropriate but imbuing them with an even more profound sense than anyone in the nineteenth century could possibly have had of how important appearances were...."

Critics have been mixed in their appraisal of "Life, The Movie," some applauding Gabler's theories, others calling them a rehash of work previously done by Daniel Boorstin, Dwight MacDonal and Neil Postman. But one point that few reviewers have mentioned—and which should concern journalists—is that the author pointedly refuses to judge the phenomenon he has described. Rather than take sides, he suggests in his conclusion that final battle between those who favor a more reality-based culture versus the forces of Entertainment has yet to be fought. And, more important, he studiously avoids offering any suggestions for a

way to reverse the pop culture juggernaut that has hijacked America's soul:

"To pretend that one can provide a remedy would be not only naive but duplicitous," Gabler says, "since it would indulge the same sort of fantasy that got us here in the first place: that problems, like crises in movies, are susceptible to simple narrative solutions. You simply present a monster in the first reel and then have the hero vanquish it in the last."

This kind of conclusion might suffice for an academic treatise, but journalists who like to believe they live and work in the real world—as opposed to the world of entertainment—will be impatient with Gabler's views.

[N]ews values that once emphasized hard reporting have been superseded by the desire—and need—to entertain people. In today's media...the bottom line is not merely driven by dollars and profit margins; it's also colored by the need to amuse.

If anything, the trends he describes are a call to arms.

It's difficult to know where to begin, given the sprawling, hugely amorphous character of today's media. The delivery of news no longer means a handful of elite newspapers, magazines and television networks. It's a world encompassing the Internet, video culture, tabloid magazines, trash TV and other "newer" voices, along with established journalistic outlets.

A newspaper editor may be powerless to halt the nationwide slide toward sleazy, tabloid values in daily news, but Sandra Rowe, Editor of The Portland Oregonian, offers one suggestion to put the Republic of Entertainment in its place. Instead of providing knee-jerk coverage for every mega-scandal that comes along, she says journalists should keep these stories in perspective and level with their readers.

"We need to be able to say, 'Look, folks, nothing big happened on this story today, so we're not covering it

just for the sake of covering it,'" she told The Los Angeles Times earlier this year. "This is the very least we should do. And that means putting stories inside, or not running them at all. At some point, you have to take a stand."

If coverage of a lurid story is inevitable, journalists should do a better job of keeping the public's higher instincts in mind. During the Lewinsky scandal, the media kept wringing its hands over polls that showed people turned off by the story, even as they continued to watch and read. The seeming paradox is quite instructive, suggests Jacquelyn Sharkey, a journalism professor at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

Readers and viewers will dutifully

process the news put before them, she suggests, but they are keenly attuned to a news organization's integrity—or lack of integrity—in its presentation. And many will quickly lose respect for a news outlet that cheapens the news or panders to the public. Given the agonizing in many news organizations over the bottom line versus higher standards, this is important to remember.

But Gabler isn't holding his breath that the media will change. He recounts the rush by news organizations to report the Clinton-Lewinsky story, long before most of them had done any serious reporting, and argues that it was a watershed moment: "The media, so often accused of liberal favoritism, were simply revealing—and reveling in—their true bias, the bias toward any story that had entertainment value." ■

Josh Getlin is a national correspondent based in New York for The Los Angeles Times, who periodically covers the media.

Max Frankel's Life and Times

From his refugee roots, Frankel rises to the top and now reports on his journey.

The Times of My Life And My Life With The Times

Max Frankel

Random House. 575 Pages. \$29.95.

By Jack Nelson

Max Frankel's first thought when he was named to succeed Abe Rosenthal as Executive Editor of The New York Times in 1986 was how much it meant for a refugee who fled from the terrors of Nazi Germany to rise to the top of the world's greatest newspaper.

For more than three decades, ever since serving as The Times's campus stringer at Columbia University and then landing a job as a Times reporter in 1952, Frankel had marched methodically toward the top editorial post. The road to the top was rocky. In his memoir he describes in riveting detail how he and his mother escaped the Nazi horrors by fleeing to America. And in fascinating—though less gripping—detail, he tells of winning and losing battles in The Times's legendary bureaucratic wars.

An only child, Frankel and his parents were members of a tiny Jewish minority in Weissenfels, a manufacturing town and minor railroad hub for central Germany. He wrote that he was not yet three years old when Adolph Hitler rose to power in 1933 and he "could have become a good little Nazi in his army. I loved the parades; I wept when other kids marched beneath our window without me. But I was ineligible for the Aryan race, the Master Race that Hitler wanted to purify of Jewish blood...."

With the Nazis terrorizing and imprisoning Jews, his mother endured a series of harrowing encounters with bureaucrats before finagling safe passage for herself and nine-year-old Max to the States where there were cousins living in New York. Max's father, a dry goods store owner, had been forcibly

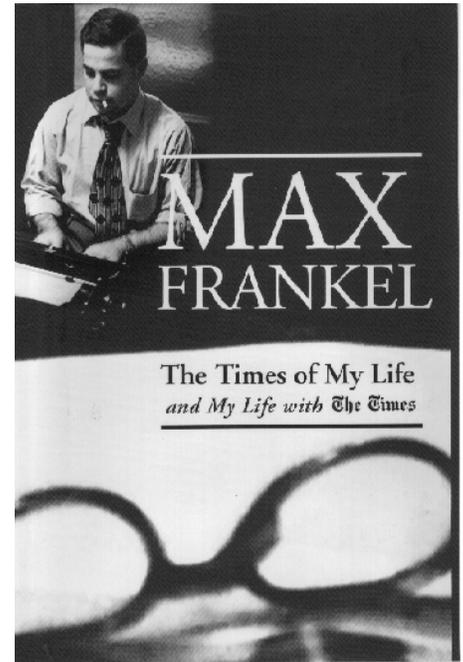
separated from them and spent time in a Soviet gulag before joining the family in Brooklyn when Max was 16.

Frankel, exceptionally candid even when his views are sure to rankle others, pointedly refuses to condemn all Germans for the Nazi horrors. He paints a poignant picture of Weissenfels as "a victim of the war where the young men and then their fathers were drafted, most never to return. And then it was the young women's turn to defend the weary town; American troops commandeered the best homes and apartments and saved the people from starvation by paying with cigarettes and chocolate bars and cans of beef for the girls' favors."

For having openly expressed such views, many Jews—even his own grandparents—accused him of dishonoring the dead. But he writes that he "cannot believe that evil resides in the genes or culture of any one people."

Such candor and the warts-and-all portraits that he draws of some of his colleagues, his newspaper and even himself, make Frankel's memoir a journalism classic and a compelling read not just for media junkies, but for a general audience. Along the way, he gives a vivid first-person account of how he and The New York Times covered some of the major events of the past five decades.

Always, he was a relentless and resourceful worker. Facing the draft as a cub reporter during the Korean conflict, he needed to keep his Times job for at least a year to legally obligate the paper to take him back. His solution: petition the draft board for a delay so he could cram a two-year master's program at Columbia University into a



single year while working full-time as a reporter.

The scheme involved all work and no play. But it paid off.

Not long after his return to The Times from Army service—with a Pentagon communications unit—he was assigned to Moscow in 1957 where, despite his acknowledged ignorance of Soviet history, he proved to be an astute student of Kremlin politics.

He clearly was impressed more than most by Nikita Khrushchev, who had denounced the Soviet system under Josef Stalin and freed millions of Soviet citizens from concentration camps after Stalin's death in 1953. Frankel thought Khrushchev ruled with a peasant's wit and cunning and that the Soviet leader believed he could reform and rescue the Communist system "by exorcising the ghosts of Stalin." And

behind Khrushchev's bluster Frankel thought he saw a "face of decency."

His opinions about some of the American political leaders whom he encountered are less charitable. He found Robert Kennedy an opportunist, Eugene McCarthy unfit to be president, Hubert Humphrey ill-disciplined and politically inept, Lyndon Johnson dishonest, Jimmy Carter ineffective, Ronald Reagan insensitive, and Richard Nixon clumsy, graceless, despicable, cunning, etc.

After Moscow, Frankel served briefly in Cuba, another assignment he felt unprepared for. Then, as now, he observed, "there was pitifully little career planning at The Times."

'[M]ere invective is no substitute for vigor and verve. We had plenty of both.'

From Cuba he went to the United Nations where he was overjoyed when Scotty Reston, The Times's legendary Washington Bureau Chief, called him to cover the State Department. Frankel idolized Reston and freely admits he imitated Reston's prose and mannerisms, even learning to "amble through the halls of government with his nonchalant gait...."

The internal politics at The Times has long been a source of fascination to outsiders. Gay Talese's 1969 classic tale of intrigue and infighting at The Times, "The Kingdom and the Power," was a bestseller. And Frankel has much to add to the genre. In particular he discloses a lot about the roles he and his archrival, Abe Rosenthal, played.

A bitter turf war broke out when New York editors led by Rosenthal tried to rein in the Washington Bureau in 1968. Four years earlier Reston had stepped aside as bureau chief, but under his hand-picked successor, Tom Wicker, the bureau had continued to operate with great independence. As Frankel describes it, Wicker and the bureau "exploded" when editors announced that James Greenfield, a Rosenthal crony and recent hire, would

replace Wicker as bureau chief.

Frankel, who felt he should be bureau chief if Wicker was going to be replaced, appealed directly to Sulzberger, who some time before had taken a shine to Frankel. Although the publisher had signed off on Greenfield's appointment, he reversed the decision. Subsequently Frankel succeeded Wicker and Reston moved to New York where he succeeded Turner Catledge as executive editor. Frankel won the battle, but it set the stage for a continuing war with the take-no-prisoners Rosenthal.

As bureau chief, Frankel won a Pulitzer Prize in 1973 for his superb reporting of Richard Nixon's historic

trip to China. But under his direction the bureau was not known for aggressive investigative reporting. Slow to take Watergate seriously, he concedes The Washington Post scooped The Times on Watergate by a ratio of least five to one. He also concedes he was "embarrassingly generous, if not naive," in his initial assessment of Nixon as a temperate President who was trying to get out of Vietnam quickly and who solved problems compassionately.

In Washington Frankel felt he was leading "the most talented newspaper team in America" and was less than thrilled in 1973 when Sulzberger summoned him to New York to be Sunday editor. Among other things, it meant losing his 200-mile buffer from Rosenthal, who was running the daily news department. Three years later he was consumed with envy when Sulzberger merged the Daily and Sunday departments and named Rosenthal to head the merged operation.

Although Sulzberger promoted Frankel to editor of the editorial pages and assured him he would one day have a role in shaping the newspaper, Frankel was not mollified and railed about the way Rosenthal had run the

news department. He argued that the department lacked vision and planning, failed to appeal to suburban readers, lagged in covering business news, and was unimaginative in sports coverage. Sulzberger was unmoved.

As a reporter and editor, Frankel was a stickler for high standards of accuracy and fairness. When he brought those standards to the editorial page he was stung when critics thought he was merely perpetuating "a myth that The Times considered all issues 'on the one hand, and on the other.'"

Defensive about his own direction of the editorial pages, he makes it clear he disapproves of the livelier, but sharpened and highly opinionated direction the pages have taken under Howell Raines, the current editorial page editor. "The myth took root even inside the Times and led Howell Raines...to promise rashly that his page would print only 'one-handed' opinions," Frankel wrote. "His fist did rattle the china for a while, but if he had read more of yesteryear's papers, he'd have recognized that mere invective is no substitute for vigor and verve. We had plenty of both."

When Sulzberger did get around to naming Frankel to replace Rosenthal, he asked the publisher what his mandate would be. "Three things," Sulzberger replied. "Make a great paper even greater. Help to break in my son Arthur as the next publisher. Make the newsroom a happy place again."

Frankel was an interim executive editor, serving only eight years until his 64th birthday. The narrative slows somewhat as he describes how he fulfilled Sulzberger's mandate, turned The Times's coverage in new directions, and brought more diversity to the newsroom. He considered the expansion of local news coverage, notably including sports, as one of his main achievements as editor. For such a fascinating memoir, Frankel's account of his tenure as editor seems anticlimactic. Nonetheless, it is a rewarding book from start to finish. ■

Jack Nelson, a 1962 Nieman Fellow, is former Washington Bureau Chief for The Los Angeles Times.

Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

Finding Stories of Common Concerns

Connecting foreign reporting to domestic audiences

By Susan E. Reed

A s bombs seared into military barracks and air bases south of Belgrade, correspondents who had been ejected from Serbia and Kosovo were now on a radio show in Boston sorting through questions from confused callers. A woman with a clear American accent, the kind cleansed by college of any regional influence, said this sudden war had taken her by surprise. "I think it's the media's fault for not keeping us informed about what's going on there," she said.

The guests she blamed for her ignorance happened to be Roger Cohen from The New York Times, Sylvia Poggioli from National Public Radio, and Kurt Schork from Reuters—all old hands in the Balkans who routinely put their personal safety in great jeopardy so that Americans can be informed. If print, radio and wires weren't enough to fill the caller's craving for information, there was the rest of the news smorgasbord, Internet, television, cable and magazines, from which she could have found some sustenance. But one has to have the desire to look and read beyond the myopia of domestic concerns with which most Americans routinely distract themselves. The caller sounded intelligent, I thought, and had no excuse not to know what was going on in Kosovo, especially during the past year.

It is the duty of citizens to inform themselves. Yet I know in a fundamental way she is right, that journalists failed to connect with most Americans in their reporting on the Balkans. This I first began to suspect upon returning

from covering that region's civil war for annual vacations in America where my mother, an inveterate news junkie, said, "I don't understand why those people are killing each other." Some of my friends couldn't keep the parties straight, didn't know the difference between a Muslim, Croat or Serb. When I lobbied the executive producer of the "CBS Evening News" to give more time to stories on Bosnia, he said, "Nobody cares about babushkas!" The special "48 Hours" on the Dayton Accord, which I stubbornly pushed for and worked on, won an Emmy Award, but it was the lowest rated "48 Hours" since the program began.

There was a collective turning away from the civil war in the Balkans. Near the beginning of the war America was fixated on its own troubling story—the beating of Rodney King by several white police officers. Riots broke out in Los Angeles after those officers were exonerated—ethnic and racial allegiances took precedence over the common identity of being an American. Blacks, whites and Koreans turned on one other. After the riots, in 1992, presidential candidate Bill Clinton used the term "Balkanization" to describe America for the first time. It was an opportunity for journalists to make a meaningful connection between this country and the civil war in the former Yugoslavia.

Ethnic fragmentation begins when the police are no longer trusted to guard the rights of all and appear instead to be targeting specific groups. Fear, a primitive emotion, creates pow-

erful allegiances propelled to fight or flight among the simplest denominators of race or religion. Abuse of police authority is the first step in the disintegration of the state and its institutions that protect human rights. It is met with equally swift reactions from citizens. This is how the nightmare began in Yugoslavia. This is one reason why America, with its many different races and ethnic minorities, must pay close attention.

This comparison, to my knowledge, was never made explicit. But now that we have the technology to instantly communicate what is going on from nearly anywhere in the world, we also have the duty to stand back periodically and survey the broader significance of a story. Civilizations, no matter where they are, require stable structures to be able to work. The meltdown in Yugoslavia was caused, in large part, by the corruption of government institutions when Slobodan Milosevic cultivated the language of hate previously outlawed by Josip Tito and turned the Yugoslav Army and the Interior Ministry on Croats and Muslims.

America periodically faces threats at home to this type of institutional corruption in each of its communities. African-Americans who especially suffer from police brutality and harassment bear testimony to this. Well before NATO began bombing Serbia, reference could have been made between the police persecution of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and the gunning down of an innocent black man in New York, Amadou Diallo, by four white

police officers. Both represent the unacceptable use of force by the state. While large street protests here were mainly peaceful and the four officers were charged with second-degree murder, the persistent lack of adjudication of human rights in Kosovo, through the courts with words instead of weapons, fueled a widening gyre of retaliation in which ethnic Albanians responded by building their own rebel force, the KLA.

Of course, the danger of making frequent comparisons such as this, between events in the United States and other nations, is that they are inevitably reductive and unable to capture the full complexity of each situation. New York is obviously not Kosovo, and it would be wrong and inflammatory to suggest that the New York City Police Department behaved as ruthlessly as the Serb police, or that blacks suffered at the hands of police to the same degree that the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo have. But the periodic use of metaphor can help to close the cultural gap, making foreign stories more accessible and perhaps more interesting to the public and editors alike.

While journalists cannot force citizens to absorb every nuance of our reporting in foreign lands (as much as we might like to), perhaps we could meet them partway by finding these areas of common concerns. The failure to do so results in the closure of foreign bureaus, the reduction of coverage, and a rise in the isolation felt by intelligent Americans who, like the caller on the radio that morning, feel unqualified to analyze or react to an international crisis. ■

Susan E. Reed, a 1999 Nieman Fellow, covered the Balkans as a producer for CBS News from 1992-1995.

Correction

In our Spring 1999 review of Richard Salant's edited memoirs we list the publisher of the book as Eastview Press. It's actually Westview. We regret the error. ■

—1951—

Roy M. Fisher died on March 25 at a hospice in Evanston, Illinois. He was 80. A former Editor of The Chicago Daily News, he held that position from 1966 to 1971. From 1971 to 1982, Fisher was Dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, where he began an exchange program for Chinese journalists. Under his leadership, in 1981, the Associated Press Managing Editors Association rated Missouri the top journalism school in the country. After his tenure as dean Fisher was overseer of Missouri's graduate reporting program in Washington, D.C., until 1989. He is survived by his wife, **Anne**, four daughters, two brothers and a sister.

—1965—

Art Geiselman had an exhibition in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in March showcasing his photography. Geiselman began his career in 1951 at The York (Penn.) Gazette and Daily, where he did double duty as a reporter and photographer. The Gazette and Daily was one of the country's most liberal newspapers, and many of Geiselman's stories and photos highlighted poverty, racial discrimination and police brutality.

When Geiselman left The Gazette in 1965 to work as a reporter for The Baltimore Evening Sun, his days as a photographer ended. Union rules at The Evening Sun prohibited him from working in both capacities. In 1998, Geiselman came across a forgotten packet of old photos from the late 1950's and early 1960's. A former colleague urged him to display the photos publicly, and this recommendation led to the Albuquerque exhibition. (See photos on this page and page 76.)

—1983—

Karl Idsvoog has left television for the Internet. He's Senior Producer at APB Online, the leading Web site for crime, criminal justice and personal safety news. His marriage has also gone electronic (E-mail and a huge phone bill). **Kath** and the kids are staying in



Charlton Heston chats with Marian Anderson inside the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington. Anderson sang that day to a huge group of marchers. Twenty-four years earlier, the Daughters of the American Revolution had barred her from singing in Washington's Constitution Hall. *Photo taken by Arthur Geiselman in 1963.*

Cincinnati while he commutes to New York. At APB, Idsvoog oversees computer-assisted investigations and develops video projects for the site. If you're interested in joining let him know (karli@apbonline.com). APB is doubling its staff by July.

—1986—

Stan Tiner is now Executive Editor of The Daily Oklahoman in Oklahoma City. He had been Editor of The Mobile (Ala.) Register.

—1990—

Mary Jordan, of The Washington Post, writes: "**Kevin Sullivan** (my husband and colleague), Keith Richburg (my colleague) and I won the 1998 George Polk Award for economic reporting for a series of stories we wrote called 'Shattered Lives: The Asian Financial Crisis.' The series consisted of eight stories detailing how the Asian economic crisis had affected the lives of ordinary people, especially the middle class. We

traveled throughout Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand for research on the pieces. The series also won an Overseas Press Club of America award, the Madeline Dane Ross Award, given annually for the best foreign reporting in any medium showing a 'concern for the human condition.' Both awards were presented in April in New York City. While in Japan I had a second child, Thomas, who is two. Kate, now four, takes pretty good care of Tom, Kevin and me."

Goenawan Mohamad is the winner of World Press Review's 1998 International Editor of the Year award. When the Indonesian government banned Mohamad from publishing his magazine, Tempo, in 1994, Mohamad responded by turning Tempo into an Internet publication. In addition, the Institute for the Study of Free Flow of Information, which Mohamad founded and directs, took the lead in creating a network of alternative—i.e. illegal—news media. In fall 1997, under Indonesia's increasingly democratic regime, Tempo returned to newsstands around the country.

—1992—

Melissa Ludtke still resides in Cambridge, now with her nearly three-year-old daughter, Maya, where she works as Editor of Nieman Reports. Her book, "On Our Own: Unmarried Motherhood in America," was published in paperback this spring by University of California Press. When she is not trying to convince journalists to write articles for Nieman Reports, she is working on projects involving the topic of children and families. Recently she wrote a report of a conference, hosted by Harvard's Children's Initiative, that examined the debate about nature and nurture in child development. She has also been a consultant to the Casey Journalism Center for Children and Families. At the Casey Center, she helped to set up conferences for journalists covering children's health and welfare reform and wrote reports on those meetings.

—1993—

Barbara Gutiérrez has been working since January as the first reader representative of The Miami Herald and El Nuevo Herald, its Spanish-lan-

guage paper. Gutiérrez looks into readers' concerns and writes periodic columns examining or criticising the newspapers' coverage. Prior to her appointment, Gutiérrez was Editor of El Nuevo Herald, where she held many

New U.S. Nieman Fellows Announced

Twelve American journalists have been appointed to the 62nd class of Nieman Fellows at Harvard University. They will be joined by approximately 12 international journalists to be named later this month. The new fellows and their areas of interest are:

Carol Eisenberg, health policy reporter, Newsday, Long Island; the market transformation of American health care and its effects.

Bill Krueger, investigative reporter, News & Observer, Raleigh; economic, medical and social issues of aging.

Mary Kay Magistad, China correspondent, National Public Radio; how societies devastated by violent conflict heal and rebuild.

Patrick J. McDonnell, staff writer, Los Angeles Times; history, economics and social aspects of immigration and assimilation.

David Molpus, workplace correspondent, based in Chapel Hill, National Public Radio; contemporary workplace issues. Funding is provided by the Stark Fellowship Fund in honor of Louis Stark, a pioneer in the field of labor reporting.

Jim Morrill, chief political writer, Charlotte Observer; politics and history of race and ethnicity.

Lori Olszewski, education writer, San Francisco Chronicle; African, Mexican and Asian history and culture, and child development.

Deborah Schoch, staff writer, environment, Orange County edition, Los Angeles Times; conser-

vation biology, environmental economics, urban planning and public policy. Funding for the environmental fellowship is provided by the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation.

Stephen Smith, health writer, Miami Herald; economic, political, historical and philosophical issues of health care.

Thrity Umrigar, feature writer, Akron Beacon Journal; identity and community; race, ethnicity, gender and class.

Michael Paul Williams, columnist/reporter, Richmond Times-Dispatch; African-American studies.

Jerry Zremski, Washington correspondent, Buffalo News; how government policy affects the nation's economy and the older industrial areas.

The selection committee included William Hilliard, Editor (retired), The Oregonian, Portland; James Honan, Lecturer on Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Angelyn Konugres, Principal Associate in Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Biology, Harvard Medical School; Bill Kovach, committee chair and Nieman Foundation Curator; and Terry Tang, editorial writer, The New York Times, and Nieman Fellow '93. Robert Stavins, Albert Pratt Professor of Business and Government and chair, Environment and Natural Resources Program, Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, assisted with the selection of the environmental fellow. ■

other news posts. She started her journalism career at The Miami Herald as a police reporter and also worked in local television in Miami.

"The biggest challenge I have is representing two newspapers," Gutiérrez said. "Each has its own set of readers with its own set of problems and concerns." She reports to the Publisher of The Miami Herald, Alberto Ibarguén, who appointed her. Gutiérrez is one of 38 reader representatives in the United States, according to ONO, the Organization of News Ombudsmen.

—1994—

Katie King has taken on the world in her work at Reuters New Media. In

Anthony Lukas Prizes Awarded

Kevin Coyne, Adam Hochschild and Henry Mayer are the first winners of three prizes awarded by the Anthony Lukas Prize Project. The Project, which is a joint effort of the Nieman Foundation and Columbia Journalism School, recognizes the best American nonfiction writing and is named in honor of Lukas, the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner who died in 1997 at the age of 64. Coyne, who is currently writing a book on World War II veterans entitled "The Best Years of Their Lives: One Town's Veterans and How They Changed The World," won the \$45,000 J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award. Hochschild received the \$10,000 Mark Lynton History Prize for "King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa," and Mayer won the \$10,000 J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize for "All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery." ■

January 1999, she was appointed Global Media Products Editor, with a brief to direct on-line news development for Reuters editorial operations worldwide. Reuters, through its NewMedia division, has become the leading provider of specialized news packages to portals and on-line publishers in the United States. King's new job is to work with Reuters editors outside of the Americas to help them learn the peculiarities of publishing for a dynamic and constantly changing new medium.

When not traveling, King can be found in Washington, D.C., where she has been based since 1998.

Larry Tye received a 1999 Sword of Hope Award from the New England division of the American Cancer Society for the "Turning the Corner" series, which he cowrote with Richard Saltus. The Sword of Hope Awards recognize "excellence in communications about cancer;" Tye and Saltus's series was an update on cancer research and treatment. **Derrick Z. Jackson**, '84, won the Sword of Hope commentary award for his op-ed pieces on tobacco issues.

Both Tye and Jackson write for The Boston Globe.

—1996—

François Marot is the first Editor-in-Chief of the French edition of National Geographic. Marot and his staff plan to adapt the U.S. version of the magazine for the Gallic audience by adding "Made in France" material to the stories that appear in the U.S. edition. Marot says that the first issue will probably be available in November, following the publication of a prototype and of a special issue that will be distributed to potential subscribers. He writes that "This adventure is very exciting, because the magazine is splendid and because we are in contact with the United States and with various local editions, such as Spain, Germany, Poland, Israel, Italy, etc."

Joe Williams writes that he and his wife, **Amy Alexander**, are the new parents of a baby girl. Grace Lynn Williams was born on Thursday, April 1, at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Williams says that mother and daughter are both doing well, and that his face "is sore from smiling so much." He can be reached by E-mail at jo_williams@globe.com.

—1998—

Four members of the class of 1998 now work at National Public Radio, prompting NPR veteran **David Welna** to suggest that NPR might also be short for Nieman Public Radio. New to the NPR crew are **Phillip Martin**, who is pioneering the network's race relations beat. Martin sees the beat as a chance "to cover race outside of the standard frameworks of assumption and in contravention to the standard black-white paradigm." His reports on "hate culture," interracial marriage and the New York police shooting of an unarmed West African man are already drawing praise from NPR editors. **Uri Berliner** is NPR's newest business editor and part of an expansion of business and economics coverage. Berliner notes

Nieman Web Site Expanding

New material is steadily being added to the Nieman Web site—<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu>

There's a "crawler" on the home page with the latest Nieman news. It's like the moving sign in Times Square. The texts of more seminars and Nieman Reports articles are regularly posted as fast as they become available. In addition, the Watchdog Journalism section is offering the latest from conferences. Keep hitting the site. More is on the way. ■

that the transition from print to broadcast is exciting so far. "I especially enjoy the challenge of writing short to capture the essence of an idea or subject and approach storytelling by listening rather than seeing." Welna returned to NPR with a new beat in Chicago. He's using his 15 years of experience in Latin America to examine how global developments affect life in the heartland, including stories about how Brazil's devaluation deepens the farm crisis and how global electronic trading threatens Chicago's traditional commodity exchanges. The other NPR veteran in the class of '98 is

Reunion 2000: A Chance To Learn About Yourself

Not getting enough out of life?

Here's an opportunity to change. As part of the Year 2000 Reunion, Professors Howard Gardner, Walter Willett and Thomas Kelly will offer ideas on creativity, music and health in a seminar titled "How to Think About Yourself."

Are you wondering about where the United States and the world are headed? The reunion will hear from Professor Sam Huntington (author of "The Clash of Civilizations") and Professor Jeffrey Sachs, cited by The New York Times as "probably the most important economist in the world."

Thinking bigger, like the universe? You will get a chance to hear from one of the best, astronomy Professor Robert Kirshner.

All this and the chance to gab with your old buddies April 28-30, 2000.

Questions about hotels? Try Kate Straus, Reunion Coordinator, Nieman2000@eventsinc.net



Howard Berkes, whose post-Nieman reporting helped turn allegations of Olympic corruption into an international scandal.

Philip Cunningham has just published his Tiananmen 1989 memoir, "Reaching for the Sky." It is available in paperback and as a digital book through www.lstbooks.com and other Internet booksellers. Because the book is being published on line, it will be available in 91 countries, including China.

Cunningham worked for BBC television in China during the 1989 student movement. The book offers a personal, close-up look at the rebellion, the media's collaborative role, and evidence of government manipulation of the protests. "If the Chinese government can infiltrate the CIA and Los Alamos, there's no reason to think they couldn't infiltrate and influence the student movement right in the heart of Beijing," Cunningham said.

Cunningham returns to China after a semester as a research fellow at Harvard's Fairbank Center on East Asian Research to teach and work on a novel. He can be reached by E-mail at jinpeli@yahoo.com.

—1999—

Chris Hedges is this year's recipient of the Hofstra University Francis Frost Wood Award for Courage in Journalism. The award is given annually to a journalist who exemplifies physical or moral courage in the practice of his or her craft. The judges lauded Hedges, who won for his coverage of the war between the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serbian military in 1997 and 1998, for risking his own life to create "a compelling series of superbly written stories remarkable both for their lucidity and prescience." Previous award winners include Nate Thayer and Veronica Guerin.

In this issue, Hedges writes about the challenges presented to journalists reporting from the Balkans (see page 15). He was the Balkan Bureau Chief for The New York Times from 1995-1998. ■



Outgoing President Dwight Eisenhower stops in York, Pennsylvania en route to his Gettysburg home. *Photo taken in 1961 by Arthur Geiselman.*

Three Fellows Win 1999 Pulitzer Prizes

Richard Read, '97 of The (Portland) Oregonian, won the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting. His series described the impact that the Asian economic crisis was having on a local french fries exporter.

Carla Robbins, '90, of The Wall Street Journal, won the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting as part of a team of reporters who focused on the economic crisis in Russia.

Lisa Getter, '95, of The Miami Herald, won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting. She worked as a member of a team of reporters whose coverage of Miami's mayor led to his removal from office.

In all, 54 Niemans (including this year's three) have won Pulitzers. ■

End Note

Using the Camera to Peer Inside

By Beatriz Terrazas

When I went to Cuba in January 1998 to photograph Pope John Paul II's historic visit, I was seeing a familiar subject—I'd been there with my camera for his visits to Mexico and the United States—but I was capturing images of him and his worshipers in unusual surroundings.

The juxtaposition of communist and Catholic icons gave the events in Cuba a sense of incredulity. From the main press platform at the site of the mass in Havana I could see a full color rendering of Jesus that hung several stories high at the altar. Then, when I looked 90 degrees to my left, the likeness of Che Guevara, also several stories high, looked down upon the crowd. Because of the tight government controls, there were no vendors hawking miters or young people wearing paper masks in his likeness as I'd seen at other papal events. There was only a set of government-approved commemorative stamps for sale.

But the biggest difference for me, as an American journalist, was found in the conversations I had with Cuban people. Some were wistful for the life I am able to live, the freedom I have to travel, and what I can afford to buy. Others wanted to reassure me about the strength of their religious belief despite their government's claim to the contrary. And everywhere I went on the street women approached me to ask for lipsticks or magazines.

The images that stand out for me from this trip are not of the Pope but of the faces of Cubans. Etched in their faces are memories I have of conversations we had, of times when strangers

approached me to share their stories and left me thinking differently about my life and aspects of it that I realized I too often take for granted. ■

Beatriz Terrazas is a 1999 Nieman Fellow and a staff photographer for The Dallas Morning News. *Photo courtesy of The Dallas Morning News.*

