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**YUGOSLAVIA: DID THE MEDIA FORMULATE  
U.S. FOREIGN POLICY?**

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YUGOSLAVIA: DID THE MEDIA FORMULATE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY?

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ABSTRACT

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For almost four years the international community could not reach a consensus for a regional Balkan policy after the disintegration of the Former Yugoslavia (FY). As a result, the media, principally the U.S. television media, attempted to exercise decisive influence on political decision makers and on military and humanitarian organizations in Bosnia. This paper will show how the media, intentionally or unintentionally, attempted to influence foreign policy. This paper will provide specific examples in which the media misrepresented the facts. Additionally, media bias will be shown when atrocities committed against one warring faction were sensationalized and similar acts committed by the same warring faction were downplayed.

## SETTING THE STAGE

"English persons, therefore, of humanitarian reformist disposition constantly went out to the Balkan Peninsula to see who was in fact ill-treating whom, and, being by the very nature of their perfectionist faith unable to accept the horrid hypothesis that everybody was ill-treating everybody else, all came back with a pet Balkan people established in their hearts as suffering and innocent, eternally the massacre and never the massacerer."<sup>1</sup>

Rebecca West made the above observation in her book Black Lamb and Grey Falcon in 1938. Her remarks were concerning the events of the First and Second Balkan Wars (1912 and 1913) and the years prior to World War II, but her observation could have just as easily been written for the present and pertain to U.S. politicians and, especially, the media.

For almost four years the world watched with impotence as the agony of the former Yugoslavia unfolded in newsprint and on television screens. Debates raged in many western capitals over what the United Nations and the international community should do, as increasing numbers of nations urged their leaders to "just do something." During this period the U.S. government attempted to lead the international effort in finding diplomatic solutions to end the war in the former Yugoslavia. No concensus could be reached with our European allies on a regional Balkan policy until the summer of 1995. After three years of U.S. government involvement, supporting ongoing U.N. operations in the Balkans, this administration yielded to advocates of intervention. Did the media, primarily the electonic media [television], play a

role in the formulation of a U.S. government policy that favored the government of Bosnia? In most media accounts, particularly television, the aggressor in this conflict has almost always been identified as Serbian or Bosnian Serb. After thorough research, it appears that early in the conflict the television media chose the side of the government of Bosnia (Muslims) and identified Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs, and to a lesser extent the Croats and Bosnian Croats, as the "bad guys."

Throughout this conflict, Television has shown immediate, graphical, and emotional images that reach out and influence public opinion and policy. The competitive nature and immediacy of television to present the news, has sometimes neglected proper analysis and research. It can be argued that television in particular has not always presented responsible journalism.

This report will show seven specific examples and results of irresponsible media reporting and attempt to highlight the media's role in influencing the U.S. government's Bosnian policy. The following examples will show image, cause, effect, and results of irresponsible journalism:

1. Starvation In the former Yugoslavia
2. Safe areas/enclaves
3. Martyred image
4. Sarajevo massacre
5. Bihac pocket
6. Krajina offensive
7. Bosnian snipers

## STARVATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Reports by the press of starvation in the former Yugoslavia during the present conflict have been continual. In fairness to the media, they could not physically reach certain areas during periods of intense conflict, especially the designated safe areas, to verify reports of starvation. They were forced to rely on information that was being given to them by the Bosnian government. However, the media left themselves open to charges of presenting "advocacy journalism" when they did not qualify their assertions about starvation.

One of these reports was the unsubstantiated reporting of starvation in Sarajevo. This was the catalyst responsible for the U.S. participation in the airlift mission into Sarajevo that commenced July 2, 1992, and the airdrop mission, a later U.S. commitment, into the "so called" safe areas or enclaves which began February 26, 1993. Peter Brock reported that an article by the Associated Press was one factor in the initiation of the U.S. airdrop mission.

"In mid-February 1993, The AP, citing only a Bosnian government source, reported alleged cannibalism by starving Muslims in eastern Bosnia. The story achieved instant headlines in the United States. Receiving little if any play, however, was the vigorous denial the following day by U.N. officials in Bosnia, who rushed to the scene of supposedly starving villagers and discovered them still in possession of livestock and chickens."<sup>2</sup>

A "World Food Programme" survey in May 1994 found that,

after a tough winter for Sarajevo (**the worst during the conflict**), no one in the city was malnourished. In fact, only a small percentage of the population was undernourished.<sup>3</sup> A U.S. Government Accounting Office (USGAO) investigation in April 1994 confirmed that there was no starvation in the former Yugoslavia, although there were indications of hunger.<sup>4</sup> To emphasize the last statement, there has never been any documented reports of starvation in the Former Yugoslavia.<sup>5</sup>

Another example of the "starvation theme", reported by the media, happened early in the war. Television repeatedly broadcast shocking pictures of an emaciated man in a Serb prison camp. Peter Brock alleges that the August 17, 1992, Time cover photo that showed a smiling, shirtless, emaciated man who was described as being a Muslim prisoner in a Serbian prisoner of war camp was not who he was purported to be. He alleges the man was a Serb, Slobodan Konjevic, who along with his brother were arrested for looting. Konjevic and his brother was later identified by a sister in Vienna. She claimed Konjevic had suffered from tuberculosis for ten years.<sup>6</sup>

According to Kenneth Roberts, U.N. official:

"The fact is that no one is starving in Sarajevo, or ever has been. One look at the quantity of goods on sale in the markets, or one encounter with a besuited Sarajevo government delegation visiting central Bosnia, is enough to disprove the much-peddled image of a city totally besieged and isolated."<sup>7</sup>

Actually one could come to the conclusion that the United Nations has fed the three warring factions which has allowed the war to continue. One can argue that the unsubstantiated media reports of starvation precipitated the U.S. government's initial involvement in the former Yugoslavia, the airlift and airdrop mission.

### **SAFE AREAS/ENCALVES**

U.N. Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 824 established "safe areas/enclaves" specifically to protect the civilian populations, in those isolated and unprotected areas, from the warring factions. The safe areas/enclaves were intended to be safe from hostile action from the Bosnian Serbs. Likewise, the safe areas/enclaves were not to be used by the Bosnian government for projecting offensive actions. In more than a few instances, the television media never reported who actually instigated hostile actions.

One of the more striking examples was the government of Bosnia's frequent initiation of hostilities which resulted in the establishment of "safe areas." The Bosnian Serbs have been universally assailed for shelling the so called safe areas/enclaves. In December 1993, the European Command Liaison Officer (EUCOM LNO) reported that the Bosnian Serbs had declared that for every sniper round or artillery round originating from

Sarajevo or any government of Bosnia troop position, would be answered 10-fold.<sup>8</sup> This posture statement was briefed by the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) military information officer to the press during the daily media briefings in Sarajevo but did not make the news in the international community (nor the U.S. community). This oversight becomes important when one attempts to fix responsibility to certain precipitous events such as occurred in Sarajevo, Bihac, Srebrenica, Gorazde, and other "safe areas" established by UNSCR 824.<sup>9</sup> The explosive actions that occurred in each of the above cities was instigated by Bosnian Government troops shelling Bosnian Serb positions or "kicking off" an offensive from within established "safe areas", but that was not how those actions were reported by the press.

Many UNPROFOR personnel recognized the fact that government of Bosnia troops were violating the designated "safe areas." In April 1993, United Nations spokesman Larry Hollingsworth was quoted by the press as saying he wished that the hottest place in hell was reserved for Serb gunners responsible for shelling Srebrenica and killing 56 civilians. But absent from the news reports were allegations by him and other officials that "the Bosnian army inside Srebrenica had fired its tanks on Serb positions first, triggering the Serb artillery response, as the U.N. was attempting to broker a ceasefire."<sup>10</sup>

It was a rare event when the print media published a report

unfavorable to the Bosnian Government, but one such instance occurred in Sarajevo on July 22, 1992, when UNPROFOR commander, Canadian Maj. Gen. MacKenzie, was quoted in the Guardian, "Mortars are set up beside hospitals, artillery beside schools, mortars and other weapons are carried in ambulances. I've never seen the Red Cross abused like that, on both sides."<sup>11</sup> As early as July 1992, senior Western diplomats had publicly stated that,

"Bosnian Muslim forces in Sarajevo were repeatedly provoking Serb shelling of the city to trigger Western military intervention. But few wire stories from Sarajevo bothered to establish that the almost daily artillery barrages and ceasefire violations were not always started by Bosnian Serbs, who often, officials said repeatedly, were returning fire from Muslims who had fired on Serb targets and neighborhoods first."<sup>12</sup>

It is evident the safe areas/enclaves were abused by both sides in the conflict, but the Bosnians were not generally taken to task, by the media, for their actions. Each of the events resulted in increasingly stringent U.N. Security Council Resolutions. Those increasing mandates tended to direct NATO to primarily focus on Bosnian Serb actions.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the fact that in many instances the Bosnian government initiated actions against the Bosnian Serbs, the resultant shelling of cities and non-combatants was not justified.

#### **MARTYRED IMAGE**

There is evidence that the Bosnian government perpetrated hardships on their own people for the so called "CNN factor."

During the winter of 1993-94, the Government of Bosnia and the city government of Sarajevo helped to deny water to its citizens. The International Relief Committee (IRC) provided funds for the manufacturing and transportation of three water purification units to Sarajevo. These units were reassembled and in working order but were refused permission to augment the city water system.

Not to be hindered, water samples were transported to Rhein Main, Germany for testing, but before the test results were obtained, the Bosnian government allowed water to be pumped into the city system. Rumors had been leaked to the Bosnian government that U.S. officials were testing the water supply and were going to publish those results.

Again the press was aware of the governments' refusal to allow water to be pumped to its citizens' but did not report these facts.<sup>14</sup> The sight of Sarajevans lining up at water distribution points, sometimes under mortar and sniper fire, was a more poignant image.<sup>15</sup> The image also sold more newspapers. [A March 1994 issue of The Spectator, an IRC official said, "The government doesn't want to diminish the suffering Muslim image."<sup>16</sup> This is the only time this story appeared in print and at no time did it receive the attention of television media.]

## SARAJEVO MARKET MASSACRE

The Sarajevo market massacre is the one of the most horrendous atrocities committed during the conflict. There has been all manner of speculation as to who perpetrated the atrocity. The truth of the matter is the guilty party is unknown, but almost all the media reported that the Bosnian Serbs were responsible for the act.

On February 5, 1994, the infamous Sarajevo market massacre took place, killing 68 people and wounding approximately 150 others.

Three UNPROFOR "crater analysis teams", two French and one Canadian, were dispatched to the massacre site to attempt to determine whether Bosnian Serb or Bosnian Government troops were responsible for the atrocity.

The two French teams, one headed by a captain and the other a lieutenant, arrived first and completed their crater analysis. Major John Russell, Canadian armed forces, leading the third team, arrived later.

During January, February, and March, Major Russell was instrumental in determining the parties responsible for closing the airport by indiscriminate shelling and consequently stopping

the flow of humanitarian aid into Sarajevo. His pronouncement of the alleged guilty party resulted in the U.S. government insisting that UNPROFOR command issue appropriate "demarches" to the responsible parties. Previously the U.S. government had been satisfied with his decisions.

Two of the "crater analysis teams", Major Russell and the French lieutenant, were close in their analysis of the firing point. Those two teams determined that the minimum and maximum range put the firing point approximately in the middle of the confrontation line between Bosnian Serb and government of Bosnia troops.<sup>17</sup> The team headed by the French captain was not close to the other two teams and his analysis was later proven faulty by a subsequent investigation team. UNPROFOR command's official position was that the guilty party could not be ascertained. After reviewing the reports, deputy UNPROFOR commander Canadian Maj. Gen. MacInnis recommended to French General Cot, U.N. force commander, that an independent international investigation team be formed from Zagreb headquarters personnel.

On February 11, 1994, the Zagreb investigation team arrived in Sarajevo and performed their independent investigation, six days after the incident.

The official findings of this team confirmed Major Russell's findings, found the French lieutenant's analysis was flawed

because his method of analyzing the crater was "suspect," and dismissed the French captain's analysis because of a serious "mathematical error."<sup>18</sup>

The official UNPROFOR position remained that the guilty party could not be ascertained.<sup>19</sup> Although, privately many UNPROFOR personnel believed Bosnian Government troops were responsible for this atrocity because "United Nations' monitors had reported no shelling from Serb controlled areas"<sup>20</sup> and Bosnian troops had been proven responsible for similar incidents in the past.<sup>21</sup>

The headlines in the major newspapers and on television the next day decried the atrocities but were generally fair in presenting the facts although the innuendo was that the Serbs were guilty.

On February 6, 1994, Carole Simpson reporting on ABC World News Sunday opened with, "Yesterday's slaughter in Sarajevo has spawned universal outrage and stepped-up demands for allied air strikes against Bosnia's Serbs."<sup>22</sup> On February 7, 1994, Dan Rather of CBS Evening News opened with, "The worst massacre of the Serbian and Croatian war against Bosnia is bringing more calls tonight for military action by the United States and Europe."<sup>23</sup> The same night, Peter Jennings of ABC World News Tonight opened with, "There has been some powerful rhetoric

directed against the Serbs who hold Sarajevo captive."<sup>24</sup>

CNN's Christiane Amanpour, frequently criticized for presenting advocacy journalism, reported on the day of the massacre that the Serbs perpetrated the atrocity.

"She was sitting in Belgrade when that marketplace massacre happened, and she went on the air to say that the Serbs had probably done it. There was no way she could have known that. She was assuming anomniscience which no journalist has."<sup>25</sup>

CNN and certain newspaper editorial writers had already convicted the Bosnian Serbs of the atrocities, even before the official UNPROFOR position was presented.<sup>26</sup> Even Secretary of Defense Perry, in Munich for a European security conference, warned Serb gunners that Western airstrikes might be launched against them if the killing of civilians continued.<sup>27</sup> An in-depth article detailing the market massacre reported that "The Clinton administration, while acknowledging there was no definitive culprit, pointed the finger of blame for the massacre at the Serbs."<sup>28</sup>

Even after the official UNPROFOR investigation was released, the media still left the public with the impression that the act had been committed by the Bosnian Serbs rather than the fact that the perpetrator was unknown. This resulted in the establishment of the "Twenty Kilometer Exclusion Zone" which required the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw tanks and heavy artillery outside that

zone.

"President Clinton and his chief foreign policy advisors used the perception of Serb culpability in successfully pressing for a NATO ultimatum demanding withdrawal of Serbian heavy artillery from the siege lines through and around Sarajevo."<sup>29</sup>

David Binder, a New York Times correspondent, completed a detailed investigation of the "market place massacre" and concluded that "the reporters on the scene expended little effort investigating or trying to reconstruct events surrounding the massacre."<sup>30</sup> His investigation corroborated the U.N.s' official position regarding the incident. No other media, print or television, ever printed the United Nations' version of the massacre.

As a result of the media's enuendo and assertions, the public was left with the impression that the Bosnian Serbs were guilty. The results were not inconsequential and resulted in the first engagement of NATO in European hostilities, American airstrikes on Bosnian Serbs, and withdrawal of Serbian heavy artillery from around Sarajevo.<sup>31</sup>

#### BIHAC POCKET

While this appears to be similar to a previous example of the Bosnian government's violation of designated safe area/enclaves, it is another example which vividly portrays media

bias.

In the fall of 1994, the government of Bosnia's V Corps broke out of the Bihac Pocket after defeating Fikret Abdic's rebel Muslim force and made significant gains in Bosnian Serb held territory.

The media praised the Bosnian Government forces and speculated that this was the beginning of a Muslim offensive that would force the Bosnian Serbs to the peace table.

This breakout forced thousands of Serbs to flee their homes. When they were able to return, they discovered many of their villages had been burned to the ground. The Bosnian government forces were finally contained and eventually driven back inside the former boundary of the pocket, but only after the Bosnian Serbs were able to mass overwhelming artillery and tank support.<sup>32</sup>

The media's immediate response was to castigate UNPROFOR and NATO for allowing the Bosnian Serbs to maul the V Corps and push them back into the Bihac pocket. Even though European officials pointed out to the press that the "Serbian drive on Bihac began as a counteroffensive against the Bosnian V Corps, which had attacked the Serbs from Bihac in October and scored major gains."<sup>33</sup>

Two significant points were missed by the media and politicians. First, Bosnian government forces were responsible for initiating the action in the Bihac pocket. Second, the offensive began from a UN designated "safe area" which violated UNSCR 824.<sup>34</sup> These two points were missed by the majority of the media. Bosnian government actions were clearly orchestrated to create the conditions for NATO air strikes, not a cessation of hostilities.<sup>35</sup> That was not how it was presented in the vast majority of media, print or television.

Ultimately, the immediate results were the same as shown in the "safe areas/enclaves" example, resulting in more UNSCR mandates and an increasing resolve by NATO to use force.

#### **KRAJINA OFFENSIVE**

In May 1995, the Bosnian Croat army, with support from the Croatian army, began offensive operations and proceeded to drive the Bosnian Serbs out of the Krajina region. Their success was partially due to outside efforts to rearm and train the Bosnian Croat forces and also because the threat of NATO airstrikes had thrown the Bosnian Serbs off balance. The success that the Bosnian Croats enjoyed made barely a ripple in the international community. But the international community didn't know about the ethnic cleansing that occurred in the aftermath of that offensive.

A Gernam reporter noted that nearly two months after the Croatian army recaptured the Krajina region, the area apparently has become a free-fire zone for murdering and torturing Serbian civilians.<sup>36</sup> During that period, the media did not sensationalize the genocide and ethnic-cleansing committed by the Croats as they normally did when committed by the Serbs. Retired Colonel David Hackworth, a military affairs writer, commented about television media regarding the incident:

"When the Croats blitzkrieged their way through the ancestral homes of the Serbs in the Krajina several weeks ago, the tube simply showed long lines of Serb refugees trying to flee. Their torched homes, the slaughter and the atrocities committed by Croatian soldiers got barely a frame."<sup>37</sup>

Later, Colonel Hackworth reported on the Krajina atrocities with this entry, "Last summer in the Krajina region, (Tudjman) caused more than 200,000 Croatian Serbs to be brutally bayoneted/burned/bombed from their ancestral homes."<sup>38</sup>

At almost the same time, the Croatian Army was retaking portions of Western Slavonia that Bosnian Serb forces had captured early in the conflict. Again, atrocities and ethnic cleansing were common occurrences.

"More than 90 percent of the Serbs in western Slavonia were ethnically cleansed when Croatian troops overran that UN-protected area in May. As of this writing, this Croatian operation appears to differ from Serbian actions around the UN safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa only in the degree of western hand-wringing and CNN footage the latter have elicited. Ethnic cleansing evokes condemnation only when it is committed by Serbs, not against them."<sup>39</sup>

Actually, there was no resultant action from this example, maybe, because the Federation appeared to be winning. The impression one got from reading and watching the news was the Bosnian Serbs are getting just what they deserve.

### BOSNIAN SNIPERS

As early as the summer of 1992, UNPROFOR officials claimed that Bosnian Muslim forces were provoking Serb shelling in Sarajevo and sniping at their own people.<sup>40</sup> These claims went unreported except by a few print journalists and in official U.N. reports. David Hackworth was one of a few media to report about these allegations against the Bosnian Muslims.<sup>41</sup>

In the summer of 1995, French peacekeeping troops assigned to UNPROFOR in Sarajevo concluded that, until mid-June 1995, Bosnian government troops had been deliberately shooting at their own civilians. After what was termed a 'definitive' investigation, "A French marine unit that patrols against snipers said it traced sniper fire to a building normally occupied by Bosnian soldiers and other security forces."<sup>42</sup> The French troops had placed the suspected sniper location under surveillance for some time and had actually seen the gunman. When a French commander notified the Bosnian army that they were about to kill a Bosnian sniper, the firing from the building immediately stopped. According to French officials, "Bosnian military were

shooting at civilians in an attempt to generate news coverage that increased international sympathy for the Bosnian government."<sup>43</sup>

Amazingly, The New York Times was the only major newspaper to print this story and then it did not even make the front page. One U.N. official in Sarajevo summed up the media's approach to incidents involving Bosnian Muslims:

"Perhaps driven by a natural sympathy for the abused Muslims, journalists appear to be unwilling to probe such potentially sensational scoops with the enthusiasm they normally employ in pursuit of the truth."<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, the public, for the most part, was not aware of this incident. A reasonable theory maybe postulated that many more of those sensationalized incidents purported to have been committed by the Bosnian Serbs were in fact committed by the Bosnian government.

#### COMMENTS

The media's performance in the former Yugoslavia has been scrutinized by a few journalists, writers, and academics. In fact there is evidence to suggest their performance, television media in particular, has been in several instances less than professional. The following comments and quotes by several well known and respected personalities tend to substantiate the charge that the media occasionally misrepresented the facts either

through bias or unsubstantiated reports.

Peter Brock, a special projects and politics editor at the El Paso Herald-Post, chronicled more than 30 instances, where he claimed the press misrepresented the facts of stories either through bias for a particular side or not properly investigating sources and material.<sup>45</sup>

Political scientist professor C. G. Jacobsen, from Carleton University, Ottawa, condemned the manipulation and negligence of the press regarding the former Yugoslavia. "The myopia and bias of the press is manifest."<sup>46</sup> He went further to say that this media bias has not escaped the notice of a few academics and several journalists.

A study performed by Howard University Professor of International Relations Nikolaos Stravrou detected "a disturbing pattern in news coverage." He claimed most stories were based on "hearsay evidence," with few attempts to portray all sides perspectives. He went on to say that news stories portrayed ethnic stereotyping of Serbs and photographs neglected to show Serb suffering or death.<sup>47</sup>

George Kenny, former desk officer for the State Department, resigned in August 1992 to protest the Bush administration policy in Bosnia. He condemned the press for presenting circumstantial

evidence as facts. Mr. Kenny questioned the widely accepted claim, one used by the press for sometime, of 250,000 deaths in Bosnia. He calculated that the deaths would have to exceed 200 per day for the three years to approach 250,000 deaths. After meticulous search through old press reports, it became clear that the 250,000 death figure came originally from the Bosnian Government without any documentation; "journalists repeated them without corroboration, or even attribution, until the charges stuck."<sup>48</sup>

"The United Nations High Commission for Refugees has no numbers for dead Bosnians, nor does the United Nations peacekeeping office in New York. Sources at the International Committee of the Red Cross in Washington and Geneva tell me their estimates range from 20,000 to 30,000."<sup>49</sup>

National Public Radio's Sylvia Poggioli blasted her colleagues when she said that, "Reporters covering the Yugoslavia war have been better at pulling emotional strings than at analyzing facts."<sup>50</sup>

According to David Hackworth, TV news from Bosnia is distorted and misleading and CNN's Christiane Amanpour is the first journalist that comes to mind when one thinks of "the word according to TV news."<sup>51</sup> She has been accused by some of her peers as practicing "advocacy journalism", while some reporters question her commitment to objective journalism. Her work in Bosnia has reportedly earned her the mistrust of some of her colleagues, "she oversteps the traditional bounds of objectivity

and takes advantage of the freedom CNN gives her to bash whomever she considers guilty of that day's atrocities - in Bosnia, usually the Serbs."<sup>52</sup> She has also been criticized for "paying too much attention to Serb atrocities and ignoring the misdeeds of the Muslim-led Bosnian government."<sup>53</sup>

Predrag Simic, director of the Institute of International Politics and Economics in Belgrade, claims the international media was manipulated by all the parties in the Bosnian conflict, and this influenced foreign policy towards the war.

"For most of the U.S. media, however, the war in Yugoslavia and the mass suffering of civilian population there made good headlines. In absence of defined national interests, the U.S. media reported from the human side. -- The consequence was that the war was defined in humanitarian, not geopolitical, terms and mainly in black and white."<sup>54</sup>

Susan Douglas, in her article in The Progressive, denounces the media, principally the television media, for urging politicians and the public to react emotionally to the tragedy in Bosnia without understanding the historical context of the war.

"What we got to see on TV, after the war broke out, were sensational, graphic images of brutality, torture, and rape. What we didn't get was an overview of the political, economic, and cultural contexts that had produced such images."<sup>55</sup>

Some would agree with Thomas Weiss's observation regarding the media's role in Bosnia.

"There is widespread agreement that the media exercised decisive influence on political decision makers and on

military and humanitarian organizations alike in Somalia and Bosnia. If the wrong conclusions are drawn about these operations and publicized by the media, these actions may come to represent the high-water mark of assertive post-cold war actions by the U.N. in civil wars."<sup>56</sup>

The following quote by a U.N. official captures the essence of how the media is perceived by many United Nations workers.

"As well as dramatizing needs, publicizing human rights abuse, stimulating action, and generating resources, the media have distorted the kinds of assistance provided, skewed the allocations of resources and personnel among geographical areas, ignored the role of local humanitarians, and focused international attention on the perceived bungling of various agencies."<sup>57</sup>

In May 1993, the Secretary General admonished the media for breaking their first commandment -- objectivity.

"Today, the media do not simply report the news. Television has become a part of the events it covers. It has changed how the world reacts to crisis. Public emotions become so intense that United Nations' work is undermined. On television, the problem may become simplified, and exaggerated."<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From a historical perspective, the media's capacity to influence foreign policy is not new. William Randolph Hearst is reported to have told his staff, "you furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war", referring to the Spanish-American War.<sup>59</sup> But the media's current influence in places like Somalia and Bosnia is much more powerful than earlier crises. The power of the modern media, particularly the television, is nowhere more

apparent than in Bosnia.

The Bosnian Muslims became very proficient at manipulating the press. They were at an distinct advantage because most of the reporting originated in Sarajevo and the reporters were virtual prisoners in the city. "Ninety percent of the stories originated in Sarajevo, but only 5 percent in Belgrade."<sup>60</sup> The Bosnian government became very adept at setting the stage for the media. When the city was shelled then the reporters were also shelled. The press identified with the Bosnian Muslims because they shared the every day horrors experienced by the average person on the street. As a result the press adopted the Bosnian Muslims as the "underdog" and embraced their cause.

"Much of the early war was fought not on the battlefield but through high-powered (and high-priced) lobbying firms. Since late 1992 there has also been a splendidly effective volunteer army of journalists, think-tank analysts, Capitol Hill staff and administration hawks pushing the Bosnian, and secondarily Croatian, causes."<sup>61</sup>

By contrast the Serbs were their own worst enemy, never attempting to cultivate the press and always appearing sullen and distant. "The Serbs, unlike the Croats and Muslims, had little understanding of the propaganda war and, without patrons to guide them, quickly lost it without firing a shot."<sup>62</sup>

The clear purpose of much of the media has been to force governments to intervene militarily to stop the atrocities. But instant reporting precludes analysis and verification of events.

The fact is that the public must rely on the individual reporter's integrity and diligence to relay the whole truth regardless of the consequences. Such reliance has few parallels in public life. A recent Harris Poll report regarding the media showed that "only 14 percent of the people surveyed had 'a great deal' of confidence in the press, while 57 percent had 'only some' and 30 percent said 'hardly any'." <sup>63</sup>

The evidence that has been presented strongly indicates that television media has been less than responsible in reporting certain incidents in Bosnia. There is also strong evidence that the majority of the media picked the side of the Bosnian Muslims early in the conflict and some are guilty of "advocacy journalism." There appears to be a "cause and effect" relationship between certain events misrepresented by the media and the subsequent responses by the U.N. or NATO, although it can not be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt. While the evidence is insufficient to substantiate a charge that the press formulated U.S. foreign policy in the former Yugoslavia, it does appear that the media may have influenced it, to what extent is not known. As time passes the linkage between the media and the development of U.S. foreign policy in the former Yugoslavia may become clearer.

## ENDNOTES

1. Rebecca West, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon (New York: Viking Press, 1941).
2. Peter Brock, "Dateline Yugoslavia: The Partisan Press," Foreign Policy 93 (Winter 1993), 167.
3. General Charles G. Boyd, "Making Peace With The Guilty," Foreign Affairs 74, no. 5 (1995): 23.
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