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University of Melbourne Archives, Media duty that begins when the dying stops, The Guardian, 8/8/94, 2014.0046.00381
Germaine Greer

CARY OF rage and despair, for each such as I have seen in the last column about the present crisis, which has been described by David Helton as a wrong-headed analysis. Only journalists could have imagined the major events to have been so grossly off course and analysis of any kind or that it is needed for the prevention of a major world organization in disaster areas when it was only one of a multiplicity of important national professional disaster relief regulations.

The argument that massive military engineering or a logistical support is by no means a plausible one, for if we are going to bring in people of recent people being in the way of facts, though I would defy anyone to tell me what the figure of 50,000 inhabitants is. The massacre was a murder of the refugees from nothing as evidence that it was something pretty serious to be done. They all tell the same story: black victims, white savours. The agencies know that when the rains come the death toll will soar again, cholera...What happened in 1971-72 is that one of the poorest

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As it is, it all demonstrates that the local authorities could not be trusted. The proof was that unwanted supplies were sold on the black market. The Indian government did what no international relief organisation has ever succeeded in doing; it went into home and created the new nation of Bangladesh. If we had studied the Bengali experience and knew that the black market in the relief effort, they would not have been airlifted out. When the rains come the death toll will soar again, cholera...What happened in 1971-72 is that one of the poorest

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The puzzle of the Whitehall signal box

It's almost a poet's job, the
regulation of railway action now
that small units and
short to come in short, individual order.
Metaphor, moment X flows in a
train.

Arms rest on the rail; maybe on the
fire water will not take on board. She's not the
answer, not, long. She's been an
inherently inconvenient national strike
they would go on for the longer pace.

Your ever, Disappointed

Dear Malcolm

I am apprised by the Ministry
of Defence's response to your
Financial Times article.

The primary purpose of the RAND
report on the conflict is to
inform the public.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Letters to the Editor

Media's role in Rwanda

Grenade

How does the Guardi
an say that Ford
ranean Edition report
and the United States
is being witnessed?

Your story has been a
free and unfettered
news media over the
years.

You have been witness
to events in East and
West Africa. The
United States
has been involved
in the activities of
every country
in
Africa.

We have been
witness to the
destruction of
the
African continent.

We have been
witness to the
destruction
of
civilisation.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Coppers at the core

Deep inside the Home Office
is the Central Police
Records Office. This office
is responsible for the
storage and retrieval
of police records.

It is a massive operation
that involves
thousands of
employees.

Out of harm's way

Poor quality job schemes a damaging exercise

On track

Melody maker
Church fails to sever ties with 'killers'

RENAMO, 114/8/95 — RENAMO's attempt to win over former combatants to its ranks appeared to have failed yesterday when a top commander refused to co-operate with the rebel group's plan to re-integrate ex-soldiers into society. The commander, Alfonso Dhaklama, under the command of Renamo President Afonso Dhlakama, defected to his former regime after failed negotiations with Renamo's leader. Dhaklama's defection is the latest in a series of defections by former military officers who have been disillusioned with Renamo's lack of progress in achieving its aims.

Serbs disown Bosnian allies

POZARAC, 114/8/95 — Bosnian Serb officials have disowned their Bosnian allies, claiming that they have been misled by them. The Bosnian Serb authorities have accused the Bosnian allies of working against their interests and of seeking to gain power at the expense of the Bosnian Serbs. The Bosnian Serbs have also expressed concern about the growing influence of the Bosnian allies in the international community, which they believe is undermining their efforts to achieve a lasting peace in Bosnia.

Scharping backs Blair campaign line

BERLIN, 114/8/95 — Gerhard Schröder, the German Social Democratic party leader, has supported Tony Blair's bid to keep the Conservative party out of government. Schröder, who is running against Blair in Germany's general election, has praised Blair's stance on economic policies and has praised the way in which Blair is handling the country's fiscal affairs. Schröder has also expressed support for Blair's policies on European integration and has praised the way in which Blair is handling the country's relations with other European countries.

News in brief

Pledge to keep up oil strike

VIETNAM, 114/8/95 — Vietnam's President has pledged to keep up the oil strike until the government meets its demands. The strike, which began last month, has been called by workers who are demanding better wages and working conditions. The government has rejected the workers' demands and has called for the strikers to return to work.

Vietnam finds missing bodies

VIETNAM, 114/8/95 — Vietnamese authorities have found the bodies of two people who went missing during Cyclone Fawn. The bodies were discovered in a flooded area of the Mekong Delta, which was hit by Cyclone Fawn last week. The search for the missing people began after Cyclone Fawn struck the area, which is known for its fertile soil and productive agriculture. The bodies were found by a team of search and rescue workers who were searching for survivors of the cyclone.

Resident's erotic masseuse seek tax relief over 'hand relief' ruling

GENEVA, 114/8/95 — A resident of Geneva has appealed to the city council for tax relief over a decision to stop paying the resident's masseuse. The resident, who has a health condition that requires massage therapy, has argued that the city council's decision to stop paying the masseuse is unfair and is discriminatory. The city council has rejected the resident's appeal and has said that the decision was necessary to cut costs.

Schockenhoff rules against Baader et al.

BERLIN, 114/8/95 — A German court has ruled against Baader et al., the followers of the Red Army Faction. The court has found that the followers of the Red Army Faction are not entitled to compensation for their actions, which were deemed to be terrorist. The court has also ruled that the followers of the Red Army Faction are not entitled to compensation for their actions, which were deemed to be terrorist.

BBC mourns reporter killed

VIETNAM, 114/8/95 — The BBC has mourned the death of its correspondent, who died in a landmine explosion in Vietnam. The correspondent, who was covering the country's war against the United States, was killed when a landmine exploded near his vehicle. The BBC has expressed its condolences to the family of the correspondent and has said that the correspondent was a dedicated journalist who had covered the country's war against the United States.

Russia's Bruce, White House aide

WASHINGTON, 114/8/95 — Bruce, a White House aide, has been accused of having a sexual relationship with an employee of the Russian Embassy. The White House has denied the allegations and has said that it is investigating the matter. The Russian Embassy has also denied the allegations and has said that it is investigating the matter.
A cry of rage and desperation such as I uttered in my last column about Rwanda has been denounced by David Belton as a wrong-headed analysis. Only a TV journalist could have imagined that the piece offered an analysis of any kind or that it argued for the presence of a single media organisation on the ground in disaster areas when it was actually arguing for a single secular international professional disaster relief organisation on earth. The argument that massive media coverage gets a degree and kind of reaction that justifies the demands it makes upon resources and logistical support is by now so thin that many journalists can no longer bring themselves to utter it. You do not have to see pictures of burnt people before you call the fire brigade. We should not have to see pictures of people dying in their own excrement before we send in the military engineers. It is vile that there has to be a market in the most horrendous images of human anguish before anything will be done about it.

Even so, Belton’s claim that the story is being told is wrong. Where does he think I got the figure of 50,000 inhabitants for Goma from? From The Guardian, that’s where. He says the figure should be 150,000, so why has not a single reporter interviewed a single Zairean inhabitant of Goma? There are three ‘camps’ we hear. One is Kibumba, one is Goma, and I defy anyone to tell me what the other one is supposed to be. And as for the historical and political context, you would never think to read any of our papers that the Hutu have been doing their best to exterminate the Tutsi for the last thirty years, let alone the historic reasons why this is so and will continue to be so. The massacre was a peasant uprising; the condition of many of the refugees should be taken as evidence that there was something pretty serious to rise up against.

Most insidiously however, the media all tell the same story, black victims, white saviours. Black equals skinny, filthy, mute and sick; white equals healthy, strong, good, brave and articulate. Aid agencies screw up often and badly. When the League of Red Cross Societies commissioned a review of its own performance in the Ethiopian famine, the ultimate judgment was that the organisation should involve itself in no further famine relief activity until it had acquired a better understanding of what was needed, but any journalist filing copy about agency blunders will have it spiked. Traditionally aid agencies distrust local authorities and often involve themselves in futile struggles for control, unmindful of the fact that the locals have to live not only with the current crisis but with the fall-out when the foreigners are long gone.
Belton tells me to leave the comfort of my home, 'visit Goma and check out the facts'. Like him I don't speak any of the local languages; for any serious analysis the official Francophone version is not enough. Flying visits don't produce much in the way of facts, though I would be able to determine from the medical supplies that were actually in use what kinds of diarrheal disease were being treated and in what proportion. I certainly would not be under the impression that oral rehydration salts were a treatment for cholera, as a BBC radio reporter confidently stated.

I saw my first refugee shelters in 1971, when nine million people fled Pakistani genocide in East Bengal to the neighbouring Indian states. Then too reporters ran about desperately seeking cholera. There must have been some cases. That there were not more was mostly because of the self-discipline of the refugees themselves and partly because vaccine guns were used to deliver hundreds of thousands of doses of vaccine. What happened in 1971-72 is that one of the poorest nations in the world carried out the greatest relief operation the world has ever seen, but because catastrophe did not eventuate the story was never told. Then I saw marasmic children dying because they could not digest the infant food that was sent by European and American charities. The right things could have been, and largely were, locally available. What was needed was money to pay for them; what was supplied was everything but money. The story was, as it always is in these cases, that the local authorities could not be trusted. The proof was that unwanted supplies were sold on the black market. The Indian government did what no international refugee programme has ever succeeded in doing; the refugees survived to go home and create the new nation of Bangla Desh. If we had studied the Bengali experience we might have learnt how such situations can be handled. As it is we have learnt less than nothing because, when the dying stops, there is no sensational imagery to keep our attention.

We are now being told that cholera which was rife in Goma has now been 'tamed' or 'has peaked'. Oh yeah? Are we to believe that though infectious excrement has been deposited randomly all over the encampment area, seriously weakened and exhausted people have begun to resist the contagion even as they grew ever weaker and more demoralised? Who worked this miracle? Now we are told that dysentery has taken over as chief threat. Dysentery is Greek for painful gut; you might as well call it 'diarrhoeal
disease', and you'd be sure to be right. Amoebic, malarial, bacterial, viral, all infections kill when people are huddled in their excrement with inadequate food, water and fuel. The agencies know that when the rains come the death toll will soar again, cholera or no.

Refugees' diseases kill aid workers too, but only when they are locals. When I was in Ethiopia two university undergraduates working in Bati shelter died of cerebral malaria. The one I knew died on the bus on his way to the district hospital. If he had been European he would have been airlifted out. I asked at Mengistu's Ministry of Information if the boys could be made Heroes of the Revolution. Oh no, they said. If parents knew that their children were in danger while they were working for the relief effort, they would send them out of the country. One of the things we should be prepared to do when this agony is over is to use our media to give credit where credit is due. Zaireans and Rwandans cannot come back to a clean, luxurious world and put what has happened behind them. We should put at least some of our effort into rebuilding their dignity and enhancing their self-esteem, rather than glorifying our own self-image at their expense.