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Media duty that begins when the dying stops



Germaine Greer

ACRY 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 in disaster areas when it was actually arguing for a single secular international professional disaster relief organisation.

The argument that massive media coverage gets a degree of 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 is wrong to claim that the story is being told. 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 30 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's reports about agency blunders will have been 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 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 in use what kinds of diarrhoeal 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 to deliver hundreds of thousands of doses of vaccine. What happened in 1971-1972 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 Bangladesh. 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 told that cholera,

*They all tell the
same story:
black victims,
white saviours*

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.

TheGuardian: COMMENT

119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER
Wednesday August 3 1994

The puzzle of the Whitehall signal box

HOW MANY is it now? Ah yes, the eighth bout of railway action inaction — with a ninth, tenth and eleventh to come in short, malevolent order. Meanwhile, Jimmy Knapp is away in Switzerland, Whitehall lies comatose, Acas rests on its oars; and maybe a few more trains will run today before declaration tomorrow of the supervisors' ballot, which will probably see rather fewer run next week. A dispute, in short, drifting without let, but plenty of hindrance.

Placid inertia from on high, however, doesn't mean that nothing's happening just below the surface. It clearly is. There's a new fact of life for the Government to take on board. Not since the ambulancemen, long ago, has there been an irritatingly inconvenient national strike that wouldn't go away. No longer possible? Dead wrong. What is more (and right against the book) this one has yet to feel the lash of public opinion. The new five-day stoppage may curdle that in relentless bitterness. Jimmy's Swiss flip may not help. Nevertheless: insofar as Joe Public thinks anything, he still thinks the signalmen have been shabbily treated. So, not just a national dispute — but a modestly popular one after eight stretching weeks. Bad news for ministers claiming the head of this dragon.

How on earth has so much supposed strength been frittered away? There will be a temptation from all sides to dump on the Railtrack management. It should not be wholly resisted. Managements claim their big salaries because they're supposed to be cleverer than 4000 or so meanly paid signalmen. But there has not been a clever stroke from this lot since the trouble began. They didn't see it coming. They have oscillated between silence and hollow-sounding offers of last-minute talks. Crucial Commons' appearances have been bumblingly under-prepared. This week's gambit of front-end fivers in the West does not seem to have worked. They have never once tried clearly to explain the arcane structure they seek to replace in the hope that people outside may see their problem. Ineptitude which makes you wonder whether the HMG habit of wheeling in private sector tycoons like Bob Horton isn't fatally flawed — because these fellows know too little of politicking and much too little about industrial relations.

But that is not the heart of it. The heart lies deep within Whitehall, utterly mysterious. We do not know why the Treasury coughed and scurried the original deal. (Another of Mr Portillo's letters?) We thought John MacGregor's replacement by Brian Mahwinney at Transport might be the moment for the kind of minimal fudge peace requires. We assumed quiet burial in deepest summer. But no: someone up there appears to want to keep this trundling on. Why? Simple botchery? Horrid new union legislation just down the Portillo spout? But to make any of that credible, you have to have the public on your side. And that won't easily happen whilst it senses a deeply unpopular Government playing obscure games at the centre of this web.

Coppers at the core

DEEP inside the Home Office another Portillo exercise is underway: the internal evaluation of police tasks. Here, in principle, is an exercise to welcome. Brits do not like fundamental reviews, preferring instead pragmatic incremental change. Clearly efficiency could be improved. For too long, the "boys in blue" were the exception, the untouchables in the Thatcher revolution. They escaped the scrutiny that other services — health, education and the rest — have undergone. Any service which has received a 70 per cent increase in real resources over 14 years, but seen its best-known performance indicator (clear-up rates) decline, seems ripe for improvement. And yet, as the independent committee of inquiry into the police noted yesterday, the Home Office review failed to start from first principles: What does the public want? How can it be provided?

The Home Office started instead by separating "ancillary" from "core" tasks,

with the aim of dropping some of the ancillary roles that have steadily accreted. Undoubtedly some of the present 87 tasks could be abandoned. After all, earlier responsibilities, like sheep dipping, have been dropped without damaging the realm. The Home Office review offers prompt and decisive change. The danger, of course, is that, without firm principles, some roles will be dropped with unforeseen and damaging consequences. The main role of the police — is not just "to catch criminals". Other crucial goals involve crime prevention, public order, and an improved sense of public security. No one should underestimate the way in which ancillary roles — providing information, supporting victims, visiting schools — reinforce law enforcement by strengthening public trust.

One glaring contradiction has been tackled in the independent committee's first discussion document: the conflict between the public wish to see more police officers on the beat and the need to improve clear-up rates. Bobbies on the beat do not catch burglars. They would need to walk the pavements for over 30 years before they saw one coming out of a house. Yet the public feels reassured by their presence. So the committee sets out options — patrols by less expensive police auxiliaries or even by contracted private security agencies. What is unacceptable is the current two-tier policing service, where an increasing number of affluent suburbs hire private security firms. As Avon and Somerset have discovered, this distorts public policing because it is the police service which is called in when suspects are identified. Equal access to the police is as important as equal access to health services. The committee warns of the danger of "the anarchic emergence of unregulated self-help and private police/security services". Not the fundamental conclusion Mr Portillo might want: but unregulated markets don't work.

Yours ever, Disappointed

Dear Malcolm

I was very disappointed by the Ministry of Defence's response to our Fundamental Expenditure Review.

The primary purpose of the fundamental reviews is the simple need to get public spending under control. When we discussed this recently you gave me the impression you believed that the Ministry of Defence could show an example. You may imagine that the news that the 77 senior commanders of our armed forces are spending our money on their houses like there was no tomorrow, which in their cases I regret to say there is not, was not what I had in mind.

You say you agree that we need to be seen to be making choices about public spending. However, I do not accept your argument that the £140,000 spent on Field Marshall Sir Richard Vincent's domestic furnishing embodies the MOD's ability to face tough decisions about the colour schemes for pelmets and piping in official residences. Nor do I agree that the decision to build the five new kennels at the Dartmouth Naval College in mock-Victorian rather than neo-classical style involved a decisive re-evaluation of design priorities in the post-Cold War world. I fail to see how the Dartmouth commanding officer's new 1890-style private double garage typifies the flexible response to the challenge of working with new building materials in a traditional setting which you claim has made the Royal Navy such a force in exterior landscaping throughout the Nato alliance.

As you and I both agree, most of the time individuals and businesses do things better than government ever could. I cannot, however, concur that this wholly justifies the claim that the Ministry's decision to invest in all-weather surfaces for its 400 private tennis courts has had incalculable benefits both in the penetration of senior ranks' second serves. I am also unpersuaded that it explains why the Second Sea Lord is second to none in his innovative use of private caterers who do ingenious things with roulades and finger buffets.

Nowhere in your report is it suggested that the best example we can give to other departments is to encourage a new approach to interior decoration and reconceptualise the most effective use of servants at official functions. Nowhere is the assumption that it is government's proper task to intervene in the reupholstering of official furniture actually questioned.

I might be useful for us to meet again, once the refurbishment of my new office is complete.
Yours ever
Michael

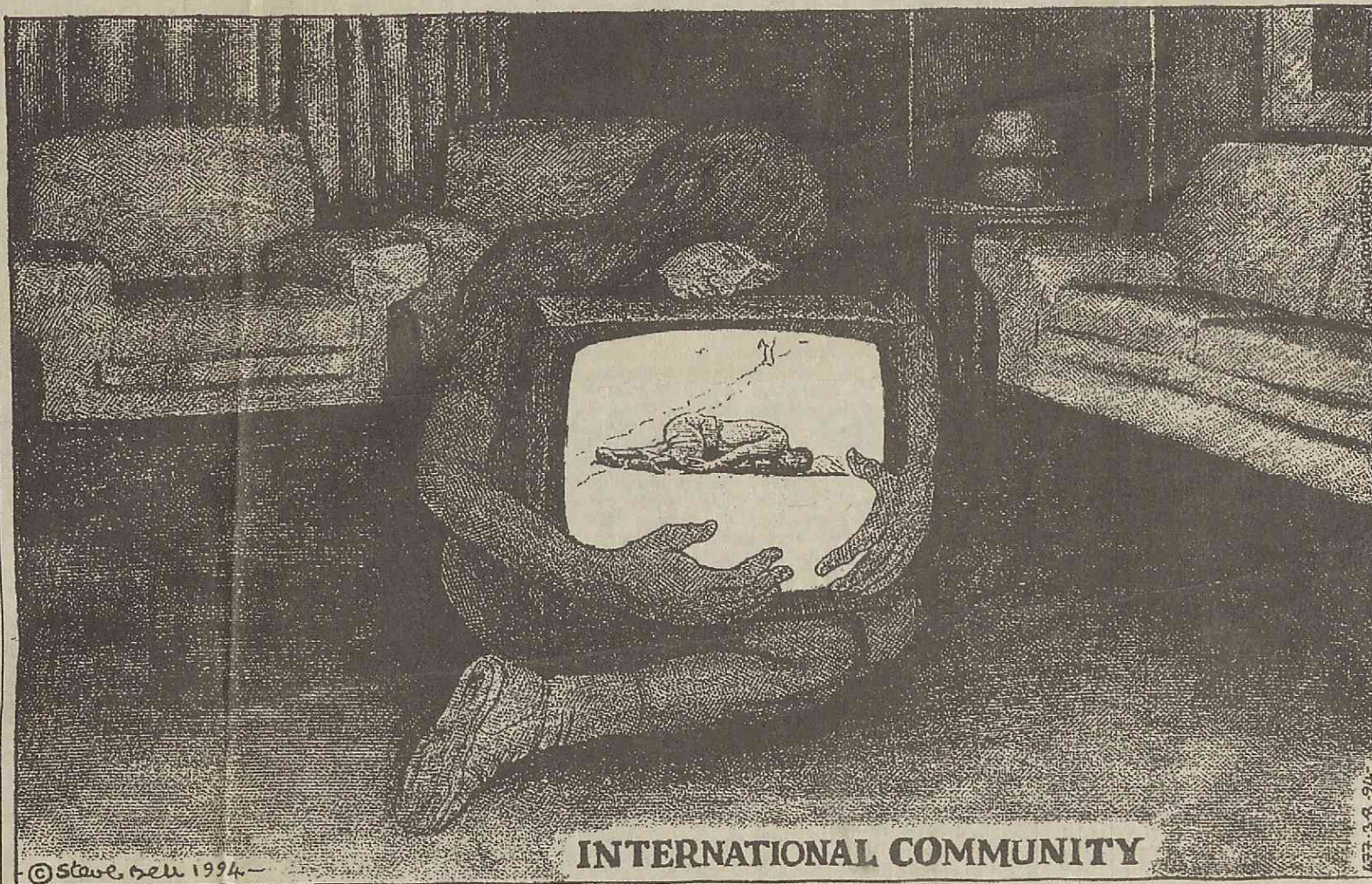
A Country Diary

OXFORDSHIRE: My hopes that the usual more colourful butterflies would appear when the precocious flowering buddleia was over, seemed to be nearing fulfilment, for a day or two after my piece had appeared, red admiral, peacock, brimstone and several small tortoiseshells were present, but only one each of the first three. I have seen the odd single peacock since, but not the expected increase. All were in mint condition, suggesting that they were newly hatched natives. A recent visitor, who has an allotment just outside The Forest (Wychwood) informed me that he had had several large tortoiseshells there, and when I queried this, since this species has been almost extinct here

for some years, convinced me that he had not been mistaken. I remembered that about 10 years ago, I had released seven adult large tortoiseshells (raised from eggs by a Diary reader) not a mile away from the alleged site. Alas, I cannot pursue the matter by a personal visit. In the duller days recently the chief insect phenomena has been the abundance of the hoverfly which resembles a small wasp. But the most interesting incident of the past week has been the re-emergence of an old word, which I had heard used about 60 years ago. I was being taken for a ride around my old haunts, and noticed that a large field near the moated farmhouse was an even crop of golden barley, into which the

combine harvesters were just moving. I remembered that this had been a field that had been allowed to "tumble down" in the pre first world war agricultural depression. Almost certainly, from the equally spaced settlement of a flock of fieldfares, it was now a grove of equally spaced small Hawthorn about a yard apart, and whilst I was examining a willow warbler's nest at the foot of one of them the smallholder appeared and expressed his opinion of the deterioration of what had at first been "As good a piece of ground as you saw". I realised that I was hearing the correct pronunciation of greenward, probably as used by Shakespeare.

WD CAMPBELL



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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Letters to the Editor

Media's role in Rwanda

GERMAINE Greer's wrong-headed analysis (July 25) has crudely exposed her own ignorance of the refugee crisis in Goma.

First, she argues for a single television news organisation to cover the crisis. Does she want a single newspaper correspondent too? Or just one photo-journalist? Perhaps Pravda could do the job for everyone.

Second, she would be correct to call the television coverage "pornography" if it had sought to focus solely on the misery that has afflicted the refugees. But their exodus and subsequent hardship is a direct result of careful planning by the former Rwandan government who have actively forced the Hutu population to flee their country. The news media has been rigorous in ensuring that the horrific images shown to their audiences are placed in that full vertical context.

Third, she is quite wrong to state that "cholera" is a word seized upon by journalists to sensationalise the story and is a word not used by aid workers. Both UNHCR and MSF stated on July 20 that cholera was rife in the camps and they have been saying that ever since.

Fourth, the population of Goma is 150,000, not 50,000.

Fifth, Miss Greer may dismiss the effect of the television reportage of the crisis but President Clinton and Baroness Chalker have publicly stated that it was the television pic-

tures from Goma that forced them to act. If Miss Greer had her way it is likely that the hundreds of thousands of refugees would face an even bleaker future than the one already open to them.

Before Miss Greer sounds off again on the subject I invite her to leave the comfort of her home and visit Goma, check out the facts, and then attempt to write a column that approximates something close to the truth.
David Belton,
BBC Newsnight Goma.

DAVID Beresford's excellent article on the Rwanda tragedy (July 30) suggests first that the global community should have moved much sooner when genocidal killing began inside the country and, second, that a Nuremberg tribunal should be set up to try those responsible for the atrocities.

But the immediate task, if the UN Declaration of Human Rights is not to go the way of the League of Nations in the 1930s, is to get a much stronger commitment to international action when governments can no longer protect their citizens or actively oppress them. Governments and NGOs should remember that the UN is not the only body with a responsibility here, and may not always be the most effective instrument.

For example, the Commonwealth has set up an expert

group under Bryce Harland, respected former New Zealand High Commissioner in London, to build a consensus on when and how to take humanitarian action in Rwanda-type cases. The 51 Commonwealth states form a global cross-section, and several have contributed to recent peace-keeping operations. Frankly, without Commonwealth support for agreed criteria and a willingness to pay the idea of global humanitarianism will be corrupted by big power politics on the Security Council.

And of course the Commonwealth, too, faces challenges. The recent coup in The Gambia means that three out of four West African Commonwealth countries are under military rule, without respect to the wishes of their inhabitants and in defiance of the last two declarations by Commonwealth leaders. The overthrow of President Jawara by force is regrettable since it was he, reacting to Idi Amin, who persuaded the OAU to adopt the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and led an unsuccessful campaign for a Commonwealth Human Rights Commission.

It is time for determination and fresh ideas in the preventing of tragedies, instead of always reacting too late to them.
Richard Bourne,
Ex-Director,
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative,
London SE10.

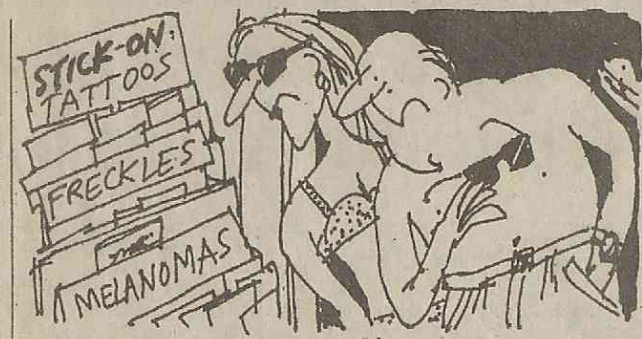
A literal God

THEY'RE as slippery as eels, subjectivists like Cupitt, Freeman, Worham and Stubbs, setting up either/or when it is both/and, and introducing red herrings such as freedom of discussion and the authoritarian misuse of "literalism" (July 30).

The Church does believe in God "out there" and in "God in Us". The imminent God is still objective, distinct from his creation. The Sea of Faith is a network claims to be containing the ancient theological discussion of how language refers to God but never before have theologians denied that God is objectively real.

Workham writes that "it is wrong to label Freeman or Cupitt as atheists" but they declare repeatedly that "God is a human creation". The projectionist view of God goes back to the 19th century. For Feuerbach God was a projection of human ideals, for Durkheim the voice of society and for Freud the voice of our fathers.

Of course the Church "is saying no to the humanist view of God". Without its faith in the God of Jesus, a God both imminent and transcendent, it would have no *raison d'être*.
B J Fair,
London NW7.



Out of harm's way

APROPOS Miranda Sawyer's article in G2 (July 28), the real argument against topless sunbathing, or any sunbathing, is a medical one rather than a moral one.

We now know that the sun's rays are harmful to the human skin rather than beneficial, especially since the depletion of the ozone layer. The harm done ranges from simple ageing of the skin to life threatening melanoma (skin cancer). In the light of this it amazes me that so many people are eager to strip off as soon as the sun shines!

Why is sun-tanned skin regarded as a thing of beauty? In Tudor times women whitened their foreheads to make

themselves attractive! The inhabitants of hot countries tend to cover themselves up rather than strip off. Indian women use their saris not only to cover their bodies but also their heads. But mad dogs and Englishmen...

Just over 50 years ago I was badly burned on the back, not from deliberate sunbathing, but from stripping to the waist while working stooking sheaves of corn. It was noticeable that the farm workers whom we were assisting kept themselves well covered up! I have not stripped in the sun since.
RA Toy,
25 Elmwood Road,
London SE24.

Poor quality job schemes a damaging exercise

WHY does the Guardian think that "compulsion" has to be the starting point for any left-of-centre debate about solving unemployment (Making the principle of work fair, Guardian, August 1)?

You were correct to say that claimants should look for work, and take suitable job offers. But forcing unemployed people into poor quality job schemes is a futile and damaging exercise.

By quoting just two policy offerings, you wrongly suggest that a consensus has emerged which favours a "job guarantee" which must be compulsory. Many institutions — local government, trades unions, the voluntary sector — understand that compulsory attendance is a blunt weapon with which to tackle the reasons that some long-term unemployed have for not participating in government schemes or for leaving them early. Only 40 per cent get a vocational qualification from "Training for Work", barely a

third are employed within six months of leaving the programme and 40 per cent quit early. Little wonder that, after 15 years of failed schemes, few people have any faith in them.

Our work with unemployed people shows that the existing level of compulsion has undermined claimant confidence in the advice and guidance of the Employment Service, it results in people taking up places on inappropriate schemes to protect their benefit, and has reinforced widespread scepticism about the value of the training and employment schemes on offer.

There is no evidence that the unemployed need to be forced to attend high quality schemes. Compulsory participation also interferes with an individual's job hunting whilst financial pressures mean that government will use a compulsory system to force people off benefit.

The most compelling argument against compulsion comes from the experience of unem-

ployed 16- and 17-year-olds who were excluded from benefit in 1988 and given a "guarantee" that they would be able to find a suitable place on Youth Training. The impact, in the midst of a recession, has been to do great damage to the credibility of the scheme, which has been forced to become an inadequate benefit substitute, and has left some 70,000 young people without a job, income or training place. Instead of solving problems this form of "workfare" has given the young unemployed and society new problems and made the existing ones worse.

Unfortunately, the new Employment Secretary, Michael Portillo, was the junior Social Security Minister who implemented the legislation which took most 16- and 17-year-olds out of the social security safety net.

Paul Convery,
(Dr) Dan Finn,
Unemployment Unit,
London SW9.

Pensioners' shattered security and Mrs Maxwell's sorrow

FOR Roy Greenslade, who extols his apparently impeccable credentials as a believer in free speech and an opponent of censorship, to call for the banning of my forthcoming autobiography, is rich indeed (Why Betty's book must be banned, Guardian, July 29).

His position is quite untenable given the censorship he imposed upon himself by taking, by his own admission (page 273 of Maxwell's Fall) "hush money" from Mirror Group Newspapers, following the cessation of his employment as a short-lived Editor of the Daily Mirror.

It is extraordinary that a supposedly reputable journalist can quote, out of context, leaked initial extracts from an

unpublished and incomplete manuscript which he clearly has not read in its entirety. If he had done so, then he would know of my deep, personal concern and never-ending sorrow for all those pensioners whose security has been shattered following the collapse of the Maxwell Group.

There are many other inaccuracies in the article which readers of the Guardian will be able to judge for themselves when my book is published. As for there being "a rule for those who are critical of Maxwell and another for those who defend him", I only know of one rule of law and I shall abide by it, as will my family.
(Dr) Elisabeth Maxwell,
London W11.

Redundancy in focus

WRITING about the management of redundancy at Anglia Television (July 30), Lisa Buckingham chose to rely entirely on the views of anonymous complainants as the basis for presenting a range of serious and damaging criticisms. The management of redundancy is a critical issue for many companies. At Anglia we have followed best practice.

The article says staff "appear to have little in the way of help as they try to find alternative employment". In fact, Anglia engaged an independent body, the Redundancy Advice Network (RAN), before any announcement about redundancies was made. On the day redundancies were announced specialist counsellors from RAN were available, on site, to see any staff who wished to see them and again over the following day. We have now held four RAN seminars to give staff the opportunity to talk informally to experts.

We are currently planning the next stage of redundancy support services with RAN which will implement the planned programme for staff actually selected for redundancy. This will include one-to-one interviews on career guidance and job search skills.

We have set up The Resource Centre, a room dedicated to service staff searching for jobs. It is equipped with a telephone, workstations for typing CVs and letters together with stationery and newspapers. There is a noticeboard for advertising vacancies from within the industry, local employers and Anglia itself. The room is staffed full-time by a secretary to assist staff. A key part of her role is to type CVs and provide a service to staff working away from base on location. She will visit locations and keep the staff informed of any vacancies which occur.

For pensions and financial advice, Sedgwick Pension Advisors made a presentation to all interested staff on June 22, followed by a question and answer ses-

sion. Both the pensions and finance advisors will be returning on a regular basis to advise staff. Staff have been offered additional training in addition to that provided through RAN. Our future plans include retirement seminars covering such topics as company pension scheme, state pension rights, income tax, investment options, health and leisure. A directory of talent will be published giving details of all staff available for freelance and permanent employment. This will be sent to all broadcasting companies, independent producers and relevant agencies.

The article suggests that redundancy notices should be handled by the personnel manager. It is recognised best practice that managers directly responsible for selecting individuals to be made redundant should convey such decisions to the individuals concerned.

The article quotes a complaint that the process is not being managed efficiently, implying that the period of "nail-biting uncertainty" could be reduced. There is a statutory requirement for a period of formal consultation with the unions before those selected for redundancy are informed. In co-operation with the unions we have been able to expedite this process and make earlier announcements.

The article suggests that 170 people are "in the process of being ousted". The number of compulsory redundancies has been reduced to 110 by finding alternative opportunities for some and accepting requests for voluntary redundancy from others.

Redundancy is a painful process for all concerned. Anglia's management team and the unions have worked hard to ensure that the process is being managed as efficiently and as sensitively as possible.

Peter Meier,
Director of Personnel and Administration,
Anglia Television.

On track

RAILTRACK is not the oppressive employer (Letters, July 29). Like many other large companies Railtrack's employees have a clause in their contract which says that they must not make statements which might damage the company's business without the permission of their management. This particular clause is part of the original British Railway Rule Book and has been in existence for many years.

We acknowledge that individuals should have the freedom to express views. For this reason we have a mechanism in place which allows employees to be actively involved, either individually or on a collective basis, through employee representation. In this way they express any concerns that they have.

David Armstrong,
Director,
Human Resources,
Railtrack,
London WC1.

Melody maker

EDWARD Pearce (Unending persecution of the melody makers, July 30) is right to spotlight the subtle suppression that is going on under our noses.

The sad fact is that contemporary "listener-friendly" composers like Frederick Stocken and Keith Burstein are shunned of any form of support from bodies such as the BBC and the Arts Council and (worst of all) denied performances, other than those of their own organising. There are no doubt other similar modern composers out there beyond the M25, writing in the romantic idiom.

Problem is: how do we get to know or hear of them?

Perhaps it is time the power of the public demand (and "market forces") was listened to.
Ray Frensham,
GBW Ltd,
136-7 Long Acre,
London WC2.

Church fails to sever ties with 'killers'

Chris McGreal in Goma, Zaire

RWANDA'S Anglican Archbishop, Augustin Nshamihigo, represented most of his congregation's views well, those that were not dead. The archbishop was good at rattling out the reasoning behind the slaughter of the Tutsis. He offered it as a historical explanation, but to many it sounded like a justification.

Archbishop Nshamihigo's Roman Catholic counterpart paid with his life for his close ties to Rwanda's bloodied former regime when the Rwandan Patriotic Front laid its hands on him. The Anglican archbishop still mingles with those accused of mass murder, meeting regularly in Goma with leaders of the defunct government wanted by the United Nations for crimes against humanity.

Other senior religious leaders believe the church has an important role to play mediating a political settlement and reconciliation, but that it cannot do so until it sheds its links with the former government.

One senior church official said those with continuing close ties to the defunct regime are an obstacle to a comprehensive political solution.

Certain members of the church at high level are very close to the [former] government. We are trying to make a difference at the lower level, trying to lessen the power of those still very close to the government. The control of the former government is still very strong," the church official said.

The Anglican archbishop declined to be interviewed but a source close to him said that although he has maintained contact with members of the former regime, the archbishop is distressed at the perception that he in any way defended the massacres.

In Nairobi in June, the archbishop refused to condemn those responsible for the massacres and blamed the humanitarian crisis on the RPF. "I don't want to condemn one group without condemning the other," he said.

There has been considerable resistance at all levels within both churches to admitting that the genocide of the Tutsis was organised. While some priests paid with their lives to save

Tutsis, it is perhaps no coincidence that many people were murdered inside church buildings. Some church officials did not understand why they were shunned on visits abroad in search of assistance.

Some church officials are attempting to organise inside the refugee camps, to build tolerance and ally the refugees' fears of Rwanda's new government. They are also establishing indirect links with the RPF administration in Kigali. But it is a difficult task in the face of the militias' campaign of fear to keep people from going home.

The churches are cautious. Few clergymen who fled with the refugees have returned to Rwanda and, in addressing past crimes, the churches are still hesitant to tell people what they do not want to hear.

The wounds are deep. We have to go step by step. It could take years. The church has to tread carefully. The militias are still powerful and there is no point in head-on confrontation. But the people have to know they did bad things, to repent, and to approach those to whom they did bad things, the relatives of those they killed. They must accept that they did wrong, they must change their ways of living," the church official said.

The British charity Christian Aid is backing efforts of those Rwandan church leaders seeking to break ties with the former regime and find a negotiated settlement.

"We are calling for a diplomatic mission on the scale of the humanitarian effort. Only a political solution can work and there's no point in rushing into it. There's no use sending people back very, very quickly because it'll just happen again. We'd like to have a lasting solution involving the regional community and the rest of the international community," Christian Aid's Ama Annan said in Goma.

In doing so the charity too has had to distance itself from some church leaders. "The church itself has identified those people with which it doesn't wish to be associated. We are working with the elements within the church who are moderate and have been calling for tolerance and peace. We are very clear we will not work with anyone who has been identified with the massacres," she said.

Renamo is still clinging on to shattered towns and remote regions, hampering the election process, and the lurking military threat posed by its soldiers is an open secret. **Victoria Brittain** reports from Mapulanguene

Rebel grip strangles quarter of Mozambique

ONCE a thriving town of 20,000 people, set in grassy plains teeming with cattle, ostrich and gazelle, Mapulanguene is now a shattered shell under the control of the Mozambique rebel group, Renamo.

In the surrounding fields lie cooking pots and bowls, abandoned as if by people fleeing in haste. Grass has grown waist-high around a treadle sewing machine and a motor bike. In the maternity clinic nest rats and bees, and only the stirrups of the delivery table are intact.

Renamo, backed by the old South Africa, seized this border town in the late 1980s, and the Mozambique government has never retrieved it, despite nearly two years of ceasefire.

But now, two miles down the long dirt road, new huts are springing up, built by peasants cautiously returning from South African refugee camps.

Three months before UN-monitored elections are due to be held in Mozambique, a quarter of the sparsely populated countryside remains in rebel hands.

Under shady trees were arranged a cloth-covered table and a few rows of battered chairs, ready for a meeting. A portrait of the Renamo leader, Alfonso Dhaklana, under the slogan "Democracy, Justice, Freedom, Human Rights", presided.

Four well-dressed, substantial-looking men stood around a new tractor and trailer — a gift, they said, from the World Food Programme.

Jose Lucas Nyantumbo, a Renamo member for six years, introduced himself as the local administrator, and his colleagues as the three Renamo advisers to the provincial governor of Maputo. The Mozambique government allows three

Renamo advisers in each of the 10 provinces, a significant concession made last September to unlock the stalled peace process.

One of the three, Raymundo Samuge, said he was a former school director in Mapulanguene and had since worked in the central and northern provinces of Manica and Zambezia, before joining Renamo in 1989 while working for ActionAid in the northern town of Nampula.

Drawing a map with a stick in the dust, he claimed the slice of territory around Mapulanguene, in north-east Maputo province, was under Renamo control and said there was no government presence except for the brigades who had come to register people for the elections. "Prelimo is afraid to come here," he boasted.

The Rome peace agreement of October 1992 provided for the Prelimo government to be the

single administration in the run-up to elections. But neither the UN, nor the weak Mozambique government, has been able to get Renamo to surrender the areas it holds.

UN estimates give the rebels control of seven district capitals and 51 administrative posts. International aid workers say the Renamo flag flies along 60 miles of road around Mapulanguene, and that the talk in the bars is strongly anti-government.

Renamo's civilian structures are generally weak or even non-existent, and a wide variety of non-governmental organisations are having to provide services and train local personnel.

But in two large areas of the central provinces of Manica and Sofala, the rebel grip is so tight that the UN has to deliver food directly to Renamo. Local people claim there is continued military training of youths in

these areas. Such reports are officially discounted by UN officials, although some say privately that it is impossible for them to know what goes on in remote regions.

Tension is further fuelled by frequent local reports of arms caches. UN officials accept that huge stocks which should have been surrendered to them lie hidden — by both sides, says Aldo Ajello, a UN special representative.

The lurking military threat is an open secret. A rebel fighter recently stopped a car carrying journalists at a log road block, clogging a lift for a Renamo officer back to his headquarters in Maringue. He told the reporters that the officer, Major Domingos, had been in Morrumbala, on the north bank of the Zambezi, "working on a hiding place for our guns, but he didn't finish the work because the tractor broke down".



Unfair shares... An elderly Russian woman demands her money yesterday while a second world war veteran shields his head from the sun at the Moscow headquarters of the MMM get-rich-quick investment fund which collapsed last week. The scandal has given outside investors the shivers, but long-term effects on foreign confidence in the country's emerging equity market are seen as limited. MMM, which promised investors 3,000 per cent annual returns, suspended trading in its shares last week. PHOTOGRAPH: VIKTOR KOROTAYEV

British troops join UN Rwanda force

David Beresford in Kigali

A SPARKLING white Land Rover edged its way hesitantly down the ramp from a cavernous Hercules C-130 transport plane at Kigali airport early yesterday, signalling Britain's first military intervention in the Rwanda catastrophe.

Its cautious arrival in a bright African dawn, amidst the nervousness with which the UK is committing a force of about 600 men to the United Nations mission in the country. Thirty-five engineers, medical personnel and technicians from 5 Airborne Brigade flew in with their equipment during the day, direct from RAF Lyneham. The rest of the men are expected to be deployed in the next 10 days under UN command. The UN force still numbers fewer than 1,000 troops.

Their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Mike Wharmby, said on his arrival that his force would be based largely in the capital and the north. "Our principal task is going to be to provide a corridor down which the refugees can be enticed to come back into the interior."

A medical treatment centre would be set up at Ruhengeri, about three quarters of the way to the Zaire border. Way stations would be set up along

the road to Kigali. "As the refugees come in, they will be given support all the way down the route," said the colonel.

The treatment centre is expected to have only 15-20 beds.

"The aim is not to give long-term treatment, but to give immediate resuscitation to refugees who literally cannot go one step further," the colonel explained. "Once they have had that immediate resuscitation, the intention is to move them on their way."

Cel Wharmby said his troops were "armed for their own defence. The security of my force is the responsibility of the UN commander and he would deploy his other forces which are here for other purposes to protect."

Asked what his men would do if they came across a Hutu massacre of Tutsis, the colonel said under their rules of engagement they could not intervene. But it would be "bloody difficult" not to do so.

On present indications the duties of the British contingent are not expected to place them at serious risk. Remnants of the Hutu militia held largely responsible for the recent holocaust are still roaming the country and there have been reports of attacks on Tutsi peasants in the fields. But there has been no serious military encounter since the civil war ended early last month.

Geneva's erotic masseuses seek tax relief over 'hand relief' ruling

Edward Luce in Geneva

GENEVA'S massage parlours appealed to the public yesterday to oppose changes to the canton's tax regulations which would class their service as prostitution while denying foreigners the right to take part in the profession.

Geneva's "erotic masseuses" denied they were prostitutes and said they found it grotesque to be put in the same category as women who solicited from kerbs. "Our masseuses do not give complete sexual services," said the director of the Venus Centre, one of the salons in question, adding that his employees never did anything more than give "hand relief" to their clients.

The Venus Centre, along with dozens of other lacquered massage salons in the Alpine city, complained that

most of the women working in the parlours were foreigners who would lose their jobs and the right to stay in Switzerland if the authorities labelled them as prostitutes.

The city's unequivocal prostitutes welcomed the changes which are to come into effect next month. Anita and Cindy, who represent more than 100 sex workers from the city's unobtrusive red-light district, told the press they could now operate as legitimate professionals without being undercut by clandestine rivals.

"These erotic masseuses have been taking money from young prostitutes," said Cindy. "Prostitution is a vulgar profession," said Alice, a Swiss erotic masseuse. "If I have to declare myself a prostitute then I will chuck this job in straight away. Frankly I would rather be a door-to-door salesperson."

Serbs disown Bosnian allies

Ian Traynor
East Europe Editor

PRESIDENT Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, responding to the heaviest Russian pressure he has ever faced, yesterday ordered his kinsmen in Bosnia to accept the latest international peace plan or forfeit all links with the Serbian heartland.

"All possibility of further relations" between Serbia and its Bosnian former protégés would be destroyed unless the Bosnian Serbs endorsed the peace plan, said a formal statement issued in Belgrade. "If you fail to accept peace, you will commit the greatest ever treason against Serb national interests."

The tough language of the statement suggests that the gloves have finally come off in a simmering power struggle between the rival cheerleaders of Serbian nationalism.

The five powers — the US, Russia, Germany, France, and Britain — who drafted the latest peace plan agreed at the weekend to tighten sanctions against Serbia because of persistent Bosnian Serb rejection of the plan.

While Western officials welcome the pressure from Belgrade, they say that Mr Milosevic must come good on his threats if the Bosnian Serbs continue to defy him and the rest of the world.

That means cutting fuel, food and financial supplies to the Bosnian Serbs from Serbia, a move that could trigger extreme nationalist opposition to the Serbian president in Belgrade, in Serb-held Bosnia and Croatia, and among elements of the military.

All the signs are that Mr Milosevic is ready for and confident of winning a showdown with the extreme nationalists he previously sponsored and who have now become a liability.

A key opponent could be General Ratko Mladic, the hardline Bosnian Serb military commander who spearheaded

the campaign last year against an earlier peace plan in defiance of Mr Milosevic.

At meetings over the past few weeks, say Belgrade sources, Gen Mladic won the support of the Yugoslav army chief of staff, General Moshilo Perisic, against the peace plan and Mr Milosevic. It seems, however, that Mr Milosevic has since talked Gen Perisic round.

The Bosnian Serbs are to convene their assembly today for the third time in two weeks to ponder their options. The previous sessions rejected the plan and today's session is to consider a referendum on the issue, a plain delaying tactic viewed as a ruse in Belgrade, in Moscow, and in Western capitals.

The diplomatic manoeuvring over Bosnia has thrust Russia, the Serbs' ally, to the forefront and, for the first time, Moscow appears determined to bully the Serbs into accepting the plan they co-authored.

"We, of course, will not allow the tail to wag the dog: this has never been a typical feature of Russia's foreign policy," said the Russian foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, after returning to Moscow from Belgrade where he apparently gave Mr Milosevic an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs.

Russian fury with the Bosnian Serbs led Mr Kozyrev to state that Moscow would henceforth boycott Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader.

"We cannot be a way in the hands of the party of war," said Mr Kozyrev. "Therefore, I am not going to hold any talks with Mr Karadzic. I expect him to say yes [to the peace plan]. His interests have been fully taken into account. This is all we could do for him."

"If the answer is no... there will be sanctions followed by other measures."

After the meeting at the weekend in Geneva of Mr Kozyrev and four Nato foreign ministers, the Foreign Office said yesterday it expected Mr Milosevic to exercise decisive influence on the Bosnian Serb leadership to accept the peace plan proposal.

Scharping backs Blair campaign line

David Gow in Passau talks to the German opposition leader about his new approach

RUDOLF SCHARPING, Germany's Social Democrat challenger to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, identified his party yesterday with the values being promoted by Tony Blair, Labour's new leader: a sense of community, social solidarity and personal responsibility.

In an interview during his three-week campaigning tour through Germany, Mr Scharping said European social democrats had chosen these, rather than the tradition of state intervention, as their big political ideas.

Mr Scharping praised the British Labour leader for developing the new thrust of the European left. "As Tony says, tough on crime but tough on the causes of crime. It's my firm conviction that the values and policies enshrined in that

phrase will be the mainstream of European social democracy," he declared.

Mr Scharping, fighting to give new momentum to his campaign in the run-up to the general election on October 16, had told 3,500 supporters in a beer-tent in the Bavarian town of Cham: "What we have to do in Germany today is not easy, but we can give you hope, bringing people together and offering them a better future."

"We must develop more sense of community, taking more account of people instead of going for the egoism of the last few years... We want a better Germany where Germans can live more at ease with each other — and more in peace with the others among them," he told another rally in Wackersdorf.

A Christian socialist like Mr

Blair, Mr Scharping moved away from the SPD's old emphasis on a bigger role for the state and stressed instead the party's co-operative roots.

A Scharping government, he said in his interview, would make the state leaner.

The Social Democrats would gradually cut taxes and contributions, make public services cheaper, more efficient and customer-friendly, support privatisations and reduce state spending on roads in favour of education and training.

A previously lacklustre campaign, focusing on unemployment, social justice and environmental renewal, saw the party's lead whittled away in the past six months to the advantage of Dr Kohl and his Christian Democrats.

The SPD leader said the new policy was an answer to the failures of Thatcherism and Reaganomics which had told people to "look after yourself and everything else will look after itself".

Dismissing the notion that it was Germans in particular who had become more selfish, he pointed out that thousands of young people had organised aid or exchanges for children in Bosnia, or set up human rights groups.

"The SPD's role is to bring all these initiatives and others together under one roof and promote a new politics," the SPD leader said.

Wolfgang Schäuble, the CDU parliamentary leader, has said that the October general election will represent a fundamental choice for German society. "He is right. This is a battle for the survival of European humanism," said Mr Scharping.

Conservatives like him behave as if the Enlightenment never took place — just take care of your own interests and the community in which that occurs is called the nation. Its destructive of co-operation and creates aggression towards others," he said.

News in brief

Pledge to keep up oil strike

THE crippling strikes in Nigeria looked set to continue yesterday: the oil workers' unions said they would stay out until the imprisoned opposition leader Moshood Abiola was released and sworn in as president, writes David Palfister.

Chief Abiola, winner of last year's aborted elections, appeared again at a court in the capital, Abuja, on treason charges. But the case was adjourned to today when the judge ordered the prosecution to answer a defence motion that the court had no jurisdiction to try an offence allegedly committed in Lagos.

Last night, the military regime, led by General Sani Abacha, tried to head off an escalation of the strikes by urging the Nigeria Labour Congress to drop plans to call out its 3.5 million members today if Chief Abiola is not freed.

Vietnam finds missing bodies

Vietnam has turned over what are believed to be the remains of as many as 10 Americans missing from the Vietnam war and recovered from four sites.

US military officials said yesterday the handover indicated Vietnam's continuing co-operation in determining the fates of Americans listed as missing in action from the war. — AP.

Seven die in raid

Six Tamil guerrillas and a government airman were killed and a helicopter was badly damaged in a suicide raid on a big military airbase in Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna peninsula early yesterday, a military spokesman said. — Reuters.

Emus at risk

Hordes of Australia's wild emus are killing themselves in a hunt for food and water as they smash into a fence that

protects the crop-growing area of Western Australia, the state's Emu Farmers' Association said. — Reuters.

BBC mourns reporter

The BBC yesterday condemned the killing of one of its reporters in Afghanistan as "a cowardly and brutal attack". Mirwais Jalil, aged 25, was killed by gunmen who captured him on his return from interviewing the prime minister, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. — Reuters.

ETA claims attacks

The Basque separatist group ETA claimed responsibility yesterday for seven violent attacks in Spain that claimed four lives this summer, including last week's assassination of a top army general. — AP.

Forward march

To make sure soldiers pass a promotion exam, the Belgian army is giving them the questions in advance — and also the answers, the newspaper *De Standaard* said. — Reuters.

MPs in boycott against Rao

OPPPOSITION parties said yesterday they would boycott parliament as part of their campaign against the prime minister P. V. Narasimha Rao's handling of India's worst financial scandal.

Mr Rao refused to accept an opposition demand that he withdraw the government's response to a parliamentary investigation which criticised the finance minister, Manmohan Singh, and six other ministers in the 1992-93 million scandal.

"The government seems to be adamant. We are walking out till the end of the session," a Communist deputy, Somnath Chatterjee, said in the lower house of parliament before other opposition members followed him out.

The opposition has a slender majority in the upper house and Mr Rao has one in the lower house. — Reuters

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.