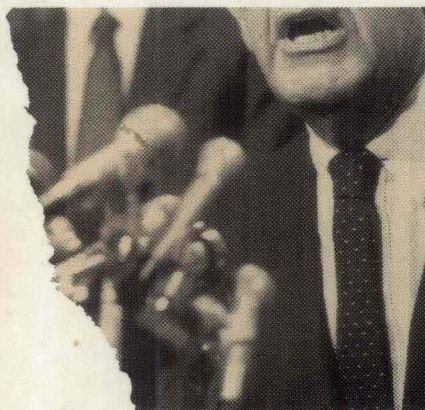


# WHO STOLE THE NEWS?

WHY WE CAN'T  
KEEP UP WITH  
WHAT HAPPENS  
IN THE WORLD

AND WHAT WE CAN  
DO ABOUT IT



---

MORT ROSENBLUM

# WHO STOLE THE NEWS?

WHY WE CAN'T  
KEEP UP WITH  
WHAT HAPPENS  
IN THE WORLD  
AND WHAT WE CAN  
DO ABOUT IT

MORT ROSENBLUM



**John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**

New York • Chichester • Brisbane • Toronto • Singapore

For Jeannette and Grabowsky, on the *quai*;  
For Goldsmith and the others, still up the road.

This text is printed on acid-free paper.

Copyright © 1993 by Mort Rosenblum  
Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

All rights reserved. Published simultaneously in Canada.

Reproduction or translation of any part of this work beyond that permitted by Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act without the permission of the copyright owner is unlawful. Requests for permission or further information should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. FROM A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES JOINTLY ADOPTED BY A COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION AND A COMMITTEE OF PUBLISHERS.

***Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:***

Rosenblum, Mort.

Who stole the news? : why we can't keep up with what happens in the world and what we can do about it / by Mort Rosenblum.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-471-58522-X (acid-free paper)

1. Foreign news—United States. 2. Associated Press. I. Title.

PN4888.F69R62 1993

070.4'332—dc20

93-15559

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## PREFACE

This book is the result of talking for twenty-five years with nobody listening. At first, I thought it was me; I talked louder, then softer. Then I realized it was the company I keep. I'm a foreign correspondent. Being ignored never used to be a problem. We got paid to lead our glamorous lives and suffer our dengue fever in silence and send back our news from nowhere. When it mattered, we were there. In the meantime, our simple presence assuaged troubled consciences in the news business.

Now it is a problem. The world is going to hell out here, and still no one is listening. The more things go on this way, the greater the inevitable price.

This book began as an update of *Coups and Earthquakes*, an insider's spilling of the beans which I brought out in 1979. That was a "media book," as the marketers say, a blend of how-to and war stories to help readers make sense of how news is reported from abroad. But today there is too much more to say.

Fragments of the old book appear in this one, here and there. In part, my purpose is to offer a new and improved consumer's guide to following world news. Beyond that, this is meant as an international thriller about a crime which affects every one of us: Who stole the news?

To situate myself as a source, I am a special correspondent for The Associated Press, based in Paris. Except for time off to edit the *International Herald Tribune* and a year at the Council on Foreign Relations, I have worked for AP since 1965. This has given me a close look at the strengths and weaknesses of the news organization at the heart of it all. That is why AP figures prominently in this book.

I feel a certain duty to avoid biting a hand that has fed me for a quarter of a century. But that hand has kept me squarely fixed on the reporter's goal: to call things as I see them. I will be forgiven, I am sure, the odd toothmark.

I've tried to skirt generality, but "many," "most" and "some" are easily overlooked. In every category, exceptions make the rule. Where one organization is picked to make a point, it might have

been another; no one is a specific target. This is to warn those tempted to read in more than I intended and to apologize to anyone who might feel tarred by too broad a brush.

My thanks go to countless colleagues and pals who helped me. Some are named, and some are cloaked in deep cover. I'm grateful to Lou Boccardi, president of AP, Bill Ahearn, executive editor, and Tom Kent, international editor, for keeping me challenged. To Charles Levine, Carole Hall and Carol Mann, for encouragement. To Bill Waller, for guidance. And to Jeannette, for everything.

M. R.

## CONTENTS

Preface	<i>v</i>
1. Who Stole the News?	<i>1</i>
2. West Malaria Revisited	<i>24</i>
3. Know Your Dirty Bird	<i>39</i>
4. The Boys on the Boeing	<i>61</i>
5. Snappers	<i>82</i>
6. Getting the Story and Getting It Out	<i>94</i>
7. Censorship and Other Assorted Pressures	<i>116</i>
8. Gatekeepers	<i>142</i>
9. Television: Real Time	<i>162</i>
10. Radio: Drive Time	<i>184</i>
11. Digging Deeper	<i>194</i>
12. Beltway Blindness: The Washington Filter	<i>206</i>
13. How Others See It	<i>223</i>
14. War and Mayhem	<i>233</i>
15. Covering Economics	<i>250</i>
16. Human Rights Reporting	<i>259</i>
17. Whatever Happened to Development Journalism?	<i>269</i>
18. Getting Back the News	<i>280</i>
Index	<i>293</i>

## Chapter 1

# Who Stole the News?

“Whenever you find hundreds of thousands of sane people trying to get out of a place and a little bunch of madmen struggling to get in,” an old pro named H. R. Knickerbocker once cracked, “you know the latter are newspapermen.”

That was when faraway news came home in dots and dashes. These days, flights to mayhem are packed solid. Knickerbocker’s madmen are a multinational swarm of dual gender, which moves by mysterious radar to some stories and ignores others of greater moment. They are still the Press, but the term hardly applies anymore, not even to the newspaper people. Dispatches were once set in lead and pressed onto paper as though meant to last; now computers and cameras do it, offset and offhand. Correspondents in tight spots tape their car windows and roofs with a new message, clearer to assorted gunmen in the bushes: “TV.”

In H. R.’s day, a bird was a pigeon. It carried only as much news as could fit into a tiny tin capsule. Today, a bird is a satellite which can show not only war as it happens but also the weathered grain of a correspondent’s leather jacket. Yet, at the core, nothing has changed. People who need to know how the world is shaping their lives have two choices. They can depend on the government, in which case God help them. Or they must resort to Knickerbocker’s madmen. This thought ought to terrify us all.

For all of its flash and promise, much of our coverage of news from beyond our borders is hardly better than it was in the days of Morse code. Television lets us watch the volcano erupt; it does not show the lava as it is overheating, while there is time to react. Newspapers, better equipped to probe deeply, too often scratch at the surface. Too many news executives believe that people want domestic, not foreign, news, as though there were any real difference between the two.

For years, the correspondents' rueful rule of thumb was that all anyone cared about was coups and earthquakes. Now even these don't necessarily qualify. Only major upheavals in prominent places need apply. "You can't even be Haiti," Cheryl Gould, senior producer of NBC's "Nightly News," remarked to me with a cheerless laugh. A Haitian dictator had fallen on a busy news day, and the coup was not important enough to make the cut. Days after the San Francisco earthquake of 1989 dominated the news, a tremor of similar proportions shattered Algiers. It was grist for those newspaper columns labeled "The World in Brief."

In 1979 I lamented in a book called *Coups and Earthquakes*: "Each person who reports foreign news is part of a process which is riddled with failings, beset by obstacles and tailored largely to wheedle attention from a public assumed to be apathetic and only mildly literate. This system is geared as much to amuse and divert as it is to inform, and it responds inadequately when suddenly called upon to explain something . . . complex and menacing."

This process, despite great strides forward, is still shot through with failings. The good news is that we reporters are now able to explain—and to show in full sound and fury—complex events as they happen. The bad news is that we seldom do it. Blame for this failure is shared all down the line, from purveyors to consumers, and everyone pays the price. Partly, the problem is simple inattention by people with a lot to do. But much of what goes wrong is the result of deliberate decisions; it is neither willful deceit nor conspiracy, yet it amounts to a theft of information that everyone badly needs.

By understanding how this process works, readers and viewers and listeners can make the best of it as it is. And they can stop it from going even more dreadfully wrong. This book is meant as a user's manual, a program to help you spot the players and follow the changing rules of the game. It can help you find the solid re-



porting and the background you need to keep up with the world. But more, it is a hard look at who is stealing the news.

Consider these basic paradoxes:

- Correspondents are better equipped now than they have ever been, steeped in background, driven to excel and supported by technology only dreamed about a decade ago. And yet few Americans are able to follow distant events which shape their lives. Most are shown generalities, simplicities and vast empty spaces, a parody of the real world beyond their borders.
- Many news executives believe that Americans do not really care about world news, that they block out news with no obvious impact on themselves. Their organizations scrimp on the space they devote to serious news, favoring impact over information and neglecting the subtle but vital undercurrents. They slash away at the corners, gambling that no one will notice. In doing this, they reinforce the ignorance they assume.
- The goal of news executives is to increase their ratings or circulations and to enhance their organizations' standing. If convinced that people wanted better coverage of the world, they would hurry to provide it. Surveys suggest that the demand is out there. If so, people had better speak up. This is easier than you think.

The danger here is obvious enough. Things go on abroad whether or not Americans pay attention. Foreigners started the last two world wars without us. They quietly eclipsed American industry to the point where the world's richest nation now has bread lines. Political brushfires escaped our notice, in Asia and Central America and the Middle East, until they raged out of control. In most cases, had Americans seen what was coming, they could have headed it off. Or at least ducked in time.

Long before American involvement in Vietnam grew into war, reporters warned that the ideologically committed and well-supplied guerrillas who had humiliated the French would do the same to us. Our allies were corrupt and disunited; it would be our war, not theirs. We lost, far more than militarily. And then, despite fresh warnings by some of the same reporters, we headed into yet another

proxy war with Nicaragua. And so on. Japan did not awake one morning and torpedo the American auto industry. The Deutsche mark did not muscle aside the dollar overnight. We exported jobs in plain sight. The “economy,” that domestic issue which dominated the 1992 presidential elections, went to hell overseas while we kept our eye on America.

Contrary to common wisdom, citizens can do a lot about events abroad. They can insist that their leaders shape policies that address the real world, keeping their economy competitive and their society humane. They can save millions of lives; eventually, perhaps, even their own. To do this, they need a complete and reliable running record of what is going on. And they are not getting it.

If anything, the nation’s level of world awareness is dropping. Surveys show that two-thirds of Americans depend mainly on television for news, and more than a third read no newspaper at all. Whatever its value for immediacy and visual context, television can only cover part of reality. Relying on it alone is like trying to see the Mona Lisa at night with only the help of disco strobes.

During 1992, as World War II rekindled in Yugoslavia, as neo-Nazi zeal fired teenagers and as Charlemagne’s dream of European unity began to take shape, NBC had only two “Nightly News” correspondents based on the continent of Europe, both in Moscow. It had no one in Japan. Around the world, CNN often beat the swarm when the madmen scrambled. But stories got priority based not on import but on whether they came with pictures. Crucial economic and political issues, hard to film, are not good TV. As Dan Rather of CBS put it, “You can’t take a picture of an idea.”

Newspapers have their own limitations. Most offer only pieces of the mosaic—generally on days when supermarket ads mean more pages—without an overall pattern to give them meaning. Nor do magazines fill in all the gaps.

These failings are often evident. On August 1, 1990, Saddam Hussein was to most Americans yet another faceless despot in a dishrag, at best a second-string news item. A day later, Iraq was big domestic news. When it was over, Walter Cronkite made a point: Had news executives used a fraction of the resources they spent on the war to report on what was about to cause it, war might have been averted. Hindsight taught us little. After America celebrated victory, the cameras moved on. Two years later, pilots were at the bombsights again, protecting Kuwait’s unreconstructed autocratic

sheikhs. At the beginning of 1993, Saddam still had his job, but George Bush did not.

Slow-moving trends, with a far more lasting impact on Americans' lives, can go all but unnoticed. Long before the Berlin Wall fell, people up close felt it tremble. Western Europe was ready, and North America was not. The irony is harrowing. At a time when jobs and buying power and even the climate depend on global decisions, when the world is changing shape violently and whole peoples are at risk, many news organizations are closing bureaus and slashing the budgets of correspondents who remain on watch. If the volcano blows, the theory goes, reporters can get there from home. That they will be unbriefed and probably untried and almost certainly too late does not seem to matter.

We are sometimes sabotaged by our own technology. When communications were precarious, correspondents told their editors what was news. With satellite phones, editors talk back. They see events unfold on screens above their desk and filter them through their own cultural prisms. Reality is distorted by assumption and accepted wisdom back home. It is also easier, now, to send back words and pictures. During crises, we run on at length, confusing as much as we inform. In the end, more is less.

With few correspondents who sit still long enough to hear the world turn, there is hardly anyone to set the agenda. Someone must decide what is important and what is only dramatic posturing which will disappear without a trace. If journalists don't do it, officials are happy to oblige. Before he retired as president of NBC News, Reuven Frank once grumbled, "News is whatever the goddamn government tells us it is." He ought to see it now.

America's world is shaped and defined in Washington. But governments lie; it is their nature. When leaders do not lie willfully to their people, they lie to themselves. Self-delusion runs so deep that even leaders lose sight of what is real. Images on television can reinforce misunderstanding. Satellites transmit messages direct from the Middle Ages. Nothing in a modern family's experience prepares it to be thrust into a Somali peasant's hut or a Serbian sniper's nest. But the vital context, wordy and complex, is the first to go.

Most editors, without their own agenda, follow Washington's. When Saddam was still a U.S. ally against Iran, Moammar Khadafy of Libya was monster of the month. Then, U.S. warplanes helped the French stop him from invading Chad, described as vital to

American interests. In August 1990, Libya dropped off the planet. While American troops hurried to protect Saudi Arabia, Khadafy's proxy rebels rolled unopposed into Chad. This was noted in a few paragraphs inside the *New York Times* and hardly anywhere else.

We journalists are seldom watchdogs. More often, we are hunting hounds, howling off after each fresh scent of meat. But unless someone draws the first blood, we mostly snap and snuffle. Administration officials have not missed this point. The press corps that brought you Watergate missed the Iran-*contra* scandal until a small Lebanese weekly broke the story and Attorney General Edwin Meese stepped forward to confirm it. But few details emerged. Ronald Reagan finished his term in glory, all major questions unanswered. Bush, who was either involved or badly out of touch, was elected as a shoo-in. In his final days, when new evidence surfaced in his own notes, Bush pardoned the main players. On the way out of the White House, his aides cleaned out the computers.

Before the 1988 election, Rather tried to pin Bush down on what he had known about the illegal arms sales. The candidate and vice president cried foul. The public objected. Washington reporters steered clear, and foreign correspondents went on to other things. When I asked Rather why his interview had created no resonance among his colleagues, he was pleased that anyone even remembered it. "Nothing puzzled me more at the time, and nothing puzzles me more to this day," he said.

Rather's account is chilling: "I intended to ask the question until we got an answer or established that we were not going to get an answer. I was not aware of how poised the Bush-Quayle campaign was to make such a big issue of this. They turned their phone banks loose on us before the interview was over. Hundreds of thousands of calls engulfed us, jammed our phone lines, everyone's phone lines. At least, I said to myself, other reporters will pick up on this story. The next day, nobody wanted to touch it. The politicians want you to be fearful and obedient, and that's what they got. It dropped like a stone."

A well-placed television friend told me that Rather had irked reporters at other networks by fixing ground rules for the interview and breaking them. Rather, rival reporters say, made a deal with Bush about what would be asked. He denies it. But how does this ground rules business even get to be an issue? We have sunk too deeply into the cushions of a modern Fourth Estate. When we first

moved in, the roles were clearer: Politicians lied, and we caught them at it.

It goes beyond politics and the reporter. “Publish and be damned!” was once the industry’s rallying cry. Now, often, it is “Don’t offend.” Stories are “lawyered” not only to avoid libel but also to ward off complaints from powerful people, interest groups or sensitive collectivities. Management seldom encourages editors to aim and fire at will; a loose cannon can puncture a tight ship. When prudence is demanded at the top, those below tend to err on the side of safety. The result can be a corporate cowardice that calls a spade a digging implement.

The system can work, but only when it is clear that enough people are interested. After the Gulf War ended, reporters still commanded an audience. The cameras moved on to southern Turkey, and people stayed tuned. Despite efforts in Washington to throw them off the scent, reporters revealed how Kurds who had risen against Saddam were left abandoned in snowbound mountain passes. To the shock of old hands who had tried for years to tell their story, the Kurds made headlines across the United States.

The United Nations was forced into unprecedented action, dropping a taboo on violating borders in favor of “humanitarian intervention.” Turkey, fighting its own Kurdish insurgency, had to swallow its distaste and offer refuge. American troops scheduled to come home were diverted to help a people we had revved up and then tried to abandon. One of the world’s more tragic human problems—a political time bomb in a pivotal place—seemed headed for sustained attention.

But then those big tents went up. The U.S. Cavalry had saved the day. It was time for something else. Forgotten again, the Kurds were caught between Iraq and a very hard place. The Turks yanked back the welcome mat. Bitter and frustrated, Kurdish zealots widened their war against Turkey, which was supposed to be the cornerstone of a restive region stretching all the way to China. Kurds would have to die, or kill, to get back on the air.

Within the flawed system, much of today’s reporting is better than at any time in the past. Sensitive, solid pieces are dispatched at great risk from remote backwaters and marbled with context by editors at home. They come from familiar old capitals, from

correspondents who might spend a month of nights worming into documents. They show up in newspapers and magazines, on television and on the radio. But you have to find them.

This is not so difficult. Simply look for what Vladimir Nabokov calls the shiver of truth. Some stories are compelling. These are what Arthur Lord of NBC describes as “Hey, Martha, take the meat loaf out of the oven and look at this.” Others are less obvious, significant for their background on something which is bound to matter, sooner rather than later.

No one has time to watch every wrinkle on a map even Rand McNally can't keep straight. The trick is knowing what to look for, and where. To follow the world, you have to separate out substance from the razzle-dazzle of packaging. You should know who is reporting and how information makes its way to you. In sum, as with everything else, you've got to know the system.

Any news organization is a cottage industry made up of individuals with different cultural and political upbringings. Among the skilled and practiced correspondents, inept and sometimes even unprincipled contributors slip into the mix. There is no “media conspiracy”; inadvertent, inherent biases spoil any harmony. For these same reasons, there is no center line.

“Press” was a general enough term, but the word “media” is about as specific as “food.” Each medium comes in varieties, and no single medium is enough. Television can place you in the thick of things. But the right word can be worth a thousand pictures. You need context and more than a few snatches of what people have to say, and yet a long printed dispatch can mislead more than it enlightens.

To understand world news, think about the individuals who bring it to you. Knickerbocker's madmen, even if they are women and work for television, are a colorful lot. Editors can be loonier still, gulping Maalox and turning fuchsia because their own correspondent missed something available from six other sources. And there are the editors' bosses, a mixed bag of real estate moguls, corporate clones and a few old hands who have risen through the ranks.

Also keep in mind that our news-gathering system is no public service. Forget the rhetoric: The news business sells a product that is blended and packaged, and the competition is cutthroat. When the product doesn't sell, its marketers tinker with the mix. Many news executives feel a special responsibility, but few can escape

their quarterly reports. News from abroad is one ingredient, usually as optional as nuts in a Hershey bar.

This book's final purpose, then, is to show how readers and viewers can improve world coverage simply by demanding it. As cottage industries, news organizations are surprisingly easy to influence. A few sensible letters can convince most editors to experiment with the mix. Aroused consumers brought back Classic Coke. They ought to be able to keep us from ignorance in a perilous world.

The news business relies heavily on high technology, but there is nothing scientific about it. "Feel" is the oldest tool in journalism. Editors are guided by hunch, gut instinct and assumptions dating back to the Cave Bear.

"News," Corker explained to Boot in Evelyn Waugh's 1936 novel *Scoop*, "is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read." They were off to a war in Ishmaelia, foreign correspondents called up from jobs each knew was more important. Corker covered politics and scandal; Boot wrote "Lush Places," a column about ferny fens and crested grebes. That baseline has not varied anywhere, before or since.

News is the exceptional, something which threatens, benefits, outrages, enlightens, titillates or amuses. Preferably, it can carry a headline: "Madonna Joins Convent," "Killer Bees Eat Akron" or "Germany Invades Poland." But it also might be a slow pattern of details, like a deadly virus gradually spreading into a worldwide pandemic.

There is no shortage of news reports. Each day, we kill a buffalo to eat the tongue. An average newspaper's editors might sift through a million words of news daily, but they have room for only thousands. In television, hours of tape are edited into seconds. Decisions are not about what is fit to print, or broadcast. They are about what fits.

The closer news is to home, according to the baseline, the greater its import. A British press lord once tacked up a memo in his Fleet Street newsroom: "One Englishman is a story. Ten Frenchmen is a story. One hundred Germans is a story. And nothing ever happens in Chile." The old *Brooklyn Eagle* had it: "A dogfight in Brooklyn is bigger than a revolution in China." Editors might take note that neither the *Eagle* nor Fleet Street is still with us. But even

those with a penchant for foreign news face an uphill fight. Where space is tight, news from far away loses on points. South Chicago conjures an image in American minds, and if a riot erupts, people know some of the reasons. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a lot of new syllables at the end of a hard day, and you could fill a fat book explaining why conflict there is so important.

This is a basic flaw in the system. If a story is important, it is complex. But if it gets too complicated, it invites the spike. A spike was once really a spike, a great nail on which discarded stories hung all night to weigh on the editor's conscience. Now it is an electronic delete key. One punch, and the story is off to Pluto. That was what happened to Bosnia-Herzegovina, until it was too late.

Logically, Sarajevo belonged on front pages from the first whiff of trouble. For centuries, the proud city-state sought to elude the empires it fell between, Ottomans and Austro-Hungarians. A Serb hothead shot an Austrian archduke there in 1914 and touched off World War I. With dry powder all over the Balkans, it would not take many sparks for history to repeat itself.

I went there for The Associated Press early in 1992 to see if sparks were coming. Clearly, they were. Bosnia-Herzegovina was a patchwork quilt in which the colors had run together, Croats, Serbs and Slavs from both ethnicities who had converted to Islam under the Turks. "If civil war starts here, it can't stop," explained one woman, a red-haired Muslim in a miniskirt. "We all live together. Mr. Bush does not have bombs smart enough to go along apartment corridors knocking on doors."

A deranged psychiatrist who was leading Bosnia's Serbs told me he would change all that, no matter what it took. At the time, no one had ever heard of Radovan Karadzic. His little office was cluttered with maps pocked by circles and arrows showing how he would purify Bosnia if only Serb leaders in Belgrade would help him out—and if outsiders did not meddle.

If trouble began, Muslim leaders warned me, Islamic states would weigh in, involving ancient peoples stretching from Turkey to Southeast Asia. The innocent would die in large numbers, and many more would lose everything they had built in life. Conflict would test the will of a newly linked Europe, a stronger United Nations and an America selling "a new world order."

Sarajevo, in short, was news.

When the killing started in April 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina was still too many syllables. The Associated Press and Reuters were



there, but as is often the case, they were mostly alone. Reporters and television crews came and went. When the siege grew intense, Sarajevo posed a dilemma. Yugoslav madness had killed thirty journalists in eight months, as many as had died in a decade in Central America. Was it worth a sniper bullet to report yet another world brief? Early in June, John Burns of the *New York Times* and Bob Rowley of the *Chicago Tribune* decided that it was. They loaded a trunkful of food and blustered past roadblocks. Then, careering down backstreets at 105 miles an hour, they drove into town and put Sarejevo on the front page.

“It was lunacy to go in then,” said Rowley, an unlikely madman with a sparse mustache and a gentle manner, “but it was such a compelling human story it would have been greater lunacy not to. We had to go.”

A hard core of reporters fought their way in. Television teams set up shop and stayed. By then, however, it was too late to do more than catalog the carnage. Hostility had deepened into irreconcilable hatred. The disturbed psychiatrist, as planned, was committing mass murder. And still Americans watched with half an eye. After thousands had died in months of siege, Bob Schieffer, a seasoned pro anchoring the CBS “Evening News,” began, “In Bosnia, uh, Hairagovia . . .” Roone Arledge, ABC News president, insisted for weeks that anchors use a phrase to help viewers understand the besieged city’s importance: “site of the 1984 Olympics.”

By the time reports of death camps demanded attention in August, a million ethnically cleansed Bosnians were on the road, huddled in pitiful refugee camps or crowded into relatives’ homes with their lives broken. Shelling was constant. Rape was systematic. The Bush administration pretended the events were too dangerous to meddle in but not as bad as they seemed and, in any case, nobody’s fault. Only part of “the media” reflected reality, and not enough people noticed. A generation of Americans who had grown up with the promise “Never again” let it happen while they were watching. Or at least while they should have been watching.

Firm early action would have blunted the Serbs’ advance. Shots across the bow of ships shelling Dubrovnik or a few blown bridges on the Drina River might have been enough. But after a year of slaughter, Americans were still debating with themselves and their allies. By then, the situation was so out of hand that hawks and doves had broadened their range to vultures and chickens. Anyone who did intervene could not revive the one hundred thousand dead, set