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The Decline, But Not Yet Total Fall, of Foreign News in the U.S. Media

By Jonathan Randal
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"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,
"Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair."
Shelley

In my darker moments I feel like a virtual dinosaur. In fact I am a print foreign correspondent with 40 years of wars, rebellions, uprisings, crises, epidemics, disasters man-made and natural as well as bad whisky under my belt. These afflictions are not about to disappear from the face of the earth any more than the pleasanter aspects of life abroad, which I also have sought to explain to readers. Yet, the obvious explanation is that classic foreign news coverage in the American media is at its lowest ebb in modern memory. This paper will attempt to explain why, note some possible repercussions and try to guess what will emerge from the present period of rapid transition in the media unprecedented since I wrote my first story in 1957.

This is scarcely the first time foreign news has been out of fashion in my career. But it's certainly the most serious period of disaffection I've survived and, except for two six-month stints, I've always worked overseas. The evidence is varied, unrelenting and overwhelming, so much so I have consigned the dreadful details to footnotes so as not to discourage readers from persevering. [FN 1] Fewer Americans read newspapers, look at what remains of network television news or seem interested in any form of news, especially from abroad. And that is despite cable and even the Internet, hailed as "the savior of the news business" by no less an authority than Matt Drudge himself. [FN 2]

I personally think the late Joe Alsop probably got it right when he entitled his memoirs "I've Seen the Best of It." But there is no sense in fighting the inevitable, especially when unparalleled technological change has coincided with greedy media owners' obsession with double-digit profits and the end of a half

century-long Cold War that was our bread and butter. Taken alone, each of these factors was highly disconcerting. Technological change was, is and will be an inalterable fact of life. The end of the constant threat of global nuclear annihilation can only be applauded. But the profit-driven shift from family ownership to publicly held media corporations has served principally to justify a shameless race away from journalistic excellence. How can news, foreign or domestic, prosper when NBC spends \$500 million for the rights to broadcast the National Football League season?

But handwringing solves few problems. Our calling is called news quite simply because it deals with what's fresh and previously unknown and that for better or for worse includes the changing tools of our trade. Miniver Cheevy would not have lasted long in my league of foreign correspondents.

Still, near instantaneous communications and other technological advances may prove intrinsically harmful to the practice of thoughtful, thorough and thus often time-consuming, reporting. Less than two decades ago, VCRs, laptop computers, cable or digital television, modems, the Internet, digital cameras, cell phones and other wonders of modern science didn't exist to distract from following- or gathering- foreign and other news.

Working in my branch of Third World reporting, often meant more time, thought, sweat and money expended getting the news out than gathering it. When I started out the world conjured up by Dick Tracy's long since overtaken radio-cum-wristwatch was the stuff of comic strips, not of today's glossy four-color advertisements for satellite telephones. Still, pleasant though it is to be relieved of that drudgery, we've also lost the time for digging and reflection that came with it.

Business news only increases the instantaneity...and the distraction. In 1990 Michael Bloomberg start his financial news

empire. It now fields 229 correspondents in 62 foreign countries and has extensive radio and television interests as well. With the surge of small investor interest in Wall Street and financial markets overseas, The Washington Post, The New York Times and other major newspapers have added staff and muscle to challenge The Wall Street Journal and similar specialized business publications which once had the field pretty much to themselves.

In a way the boom in financial reporting is a throwback to serious 19th century newspapers in the world's great ports and their dependence on shipping news. In the post-Cold War age of globalization, stepped up financial and economic reporting has moved into foreign crisis reporting once reserved for power politics or war. The likes of Calpers, California's fabulously rich retirement fund, wield enormous power abroad thanks to hard-nosed attention to the bottom line traditionally unheard-of in overseas markets. Long exempt from systematic journalistic scrutiny, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international financial institutions are coming in for sustained criticism, as it becomes clear that they exert vast, largely unregulated global power with major repercussions on the daily lives of Americans and foreigners alike. [FN 3]

It's too early to bet on the durability of interest in financial news from abroad or gauge whether it will survive an inevitable downturn in the economy, much less a full-blown recession. I have my doubts, mindful that not for nothing long ago was economics dubbed the "dismal science." But financial reporting is the one obvious bright spot in an otherwise dimming foreign news firmament. Still such coverage scarcely makes up for the American public's glaring alienation from more classic foreign correspondence.

Perhaps more tellingly, this array of technology and business changes arrived roughly when for the first time in a half

century many Americans- encouraged by the man they twice elected President- felt safe in turning away from the foreign entanglements suspect in our national psyche since Washington's farewell address. Indeed it's often argued the Cold War period represented an aberration in a more deeply ingrained American isolationist tradition.

The Vietnam war fiasco reinforced that credo. Among Vietnam's many legacies, none is more ingrained than the policy makers' conviction that the United States should never again embark on sustained military operations abroad without a clear public mandate. It's hard to dispute that view even if keeping abreast of what's going on overseas logically should help contribute to finding solutions to problems before use of force need be considered.

Indeed I perceive a trap. The vast majority of Americans seem dangerously ill informed and thus very probably unwilling or unable to meet future challenges sure to be mounted from abroad. Pessimists throw up their hands, lamenting that the United States has entered a self-satisfied period of accelerating late Roman decadence. O.J. Simpson's trial one year, Lady Diana's death the next, the White House sex scandal this year insinuate their way into what purports to be the most serious journalism in a media illustration of Gresham's Law, leaving little room for foreign news.

If this narcissistic self-absorption and the Vietnam syndrome persist, American governments are likely to be hard put to sustain a broadly based foreign policy necessary for world leadership. (Witness how reluctantly the Clinton administration committed troops to Bosnia for what turned out to be virtually casualty-less peace enforcement). Allowing elitist specialists to formulate and execute foreign policy would square the circle by default in latter day vindication of "the Best and the

Brightest"... who bogged the country down in Vietnam. Beyond this Catch 22, born of foreign policy out of focus groups, lies another danger.

With the greater public increasingly turned off and the media largely absent, foreign policy professionals now devote ever more time to dealing with the growing influence of pressure groups. They range from ethnic lobbies claiming to defend Greek, Irish or Israeli interests, for example, to human rights activists, an ex-president in the form of Jimmy Carter and much less savory interests. In the present lotus land mood, much of this jockeying for influence takes place far from the public gaze.

The fact is most Americans seem bored by the complex responsibilities that accompany the wealth and power this country enjoys. It's ironic that the U.S. as a nation seems so apathetic about the rest of humanity just when the outside world is fascinated as never before by all things American and Americans are living and travelling abroad and learning foreign languages in unprecedented numbers. [FN 4]. Notwithstanding the brave talk of less than a decade ago, history has not come to an end. If events overseas suddenly produce a serious crisis that catches Rip Van Winkle Americans by surprise, the media will have to share the blame. The 20th century's record shows democracies indulge in such wool gathering at their peril.

Were such curmudgeonly ruminations not proof enough, I also certainly qualify as a dinosaur because the world of American foreign correspondents I entered so long ago has changed so vastly. It was dominated by three networks, two wire services, two or two-and-half newsmagazines, three of four major newspapers. It was an overwhelmingly white, male, infrequently college-educated, but often wonderfully raffish world (and a perfect habitat for retarded adolescents). Even then, the nature of foreign correspondence was changing.

The advent of jet air travel in 1960, decolonization accompanied by its often violent aftermath and especially the "Fire In The Ashes," in Teddy White's memorable phrase about the reconstruction and stabilization of post-World War Two Europe, shifted interest away from pure politics, diplomacy and economics in temperate climes. I have spent most of my career in places like the Congo, Algeria or Kurdistan where few of my American predecessors set foot.

The provenance of the craft's practitioners also started changing radically two decades ago. Women, some 7 per cent of the total of American foreign correspondents little over a generation ago, especially have made their forceful presence felt. Now they account for a good third, if not more. [FN 5] Younger correspondents now boast infinitely more diplomas than the often self-taught reporters who helped me break in. Third World locales are awash with eager, often talented and much diplomaed stringers trying to get started. For what it's worth- and I firmly believe I am not guilty of reverse ageism- I somehow doubt my younger colleagues possess more inquiring minds and I feel for certain that they have less fun than we did when we were their age.

Amazingly only in the last few years has other professional scenery of my youth shifted with the slow agony of United Press International and the surprisingly quick near total eclipse of network television correspondents overseas. The demise of Colliers, The Saturday Evening Post, the Chicago Daily News all diminished foreign coverage, but they slipped more or less gracefully from sight without creating major shock waves. But network television news came out of nowhere, often called the shots in the late 1970s and early 1980s thanks to talent and money galore, only to exit almost entirely. In the "Morning in America" of President Reagan, with a little help from the business school bean counters, greed got the better of public service notions at

the Federal Communications Commission. Deregulation, which started off fostering competition among airlines in the Carter administration, was enshrined as an absolute good. Out went the networks' real and perceived obligation to produce serious news, including foreign coverage, even at a loss as the price for access to the airwaves. [FN 6]

That access long was literally a license to print money. Between 1976 and 1984 the networks' profits increased 324 per cent, according to Ken Auletta who chronicled their subsequent travail. [FN 7] All three networks changed hands in 1985 with the owners, newcomers to broadcasting but not to maximizing profits, taking charge only to discover that their expensively acquired franchises were losing their Midas touch with every passing year. Determined to make news pay its own way, the new owners turned their backs on what passed for noblesse oblige and public service. William Paley, boss of CBS in its palmy days, once loftily brushed aside complaints about the cost of his network's news operations. That, he famously opined, was what the Jack Benny show was for.

The new owners ruthlessly slashed the networks' long extravagant foreign news operations and inaugurated bland "news you can use" to conform to the focus groups beloved of advertisers. Serendipitously for the owners, the focus groups preferred cheap local reporting to more expensive foreign correspondence. Minute-by-minute ratings applied to the evening news shows. Since the new owners initially knew little about the intricacies of newsgathering, their pruning eventually came to resemble scorched earth tactics.

More than a decade of constant retrenchment later so parlous are the networks' finances that last year only NBC made money. Although the networks still command the single biggest audience, digitalization, cable, satellite, VCRs, video and the Internet have sliced the market into niches ever more lucrative

for these new competitors. Vastly inflated salaries for network news anchors and top talent reflected the networks' odd response to their predicament, a desperate effort to turn journalists into latter day equivalents of Hollywood stars at \$7 million dollars a year for the happy few. With a steadily shrinking audience now mostly in its 'fifties, [FN 8] no less a practitioner than Garrick Utley, a veteran NBC and ABC foreign correspondent who now works for CNN, is convinced that "the sun has set on network news." [FN 9] With only 15 per cent of Americans still relying exclusively on nightly network television for their news, even ABC anchor Peter Jennings, once the most dedicated to foreign coverage, of late has been heard wondering out loud if network news will survive another five years.

Such pessimistic talk may sound a tad premature. But the sun has set for sure on the Cold War, a now increasingly distant ideological struggle that seems as remote to many young Americans as World War Two did for my generation when we started out in the late 1950s. All the years I spent chronicling wars at the periphery ended up as mere footnotes to a much predicted and feared total global conflagration that thankfully never occurred.

Absent the US-Soviet rivalry, in the 1990s the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Somalia, Chechnya failed to persuade editors, the White House or the Congress that Americans risked getting involved in a Third World War. So much the better, you might say. Indeed so might I, given the increasing danger for war correspondents covering many recent conflicts. With every passing year I felt there were fewer coupons left in my ration book. That reading is not just a function of increasing age.

The armaments became more deadly, the belligerents' less willing to accept any but the most flattering accounts of their often villainous actions, and increasingly sophisticated communications relayed stories back by fax or e-mail in

disconcerting "real time." I found myself pining for my days covering freshly independent former European colonies whose new masters felt only the onetime metropole's print press counted. Then sometimes weeks passed before an offending clip of mine arrived by surface mail from an embassy in Washington. By that time some recent offender was catching the heat in my place.

Most worrisome of all, correspondents themselves were turned into prized hostages in Lebanon, Chechnya and elsewhere. In the 1980s Terry Anderson of the Associated Press, Charles Glass of ABC and a French television team were incarcerated in Beirut for months and, in some cases, years. I myself was a ten-day guest in the late and very eccentric Emperor Bokassa's jail in his self-styled Central African Empire in 1977 and have been detained for shorter times in a wide variety of climes by more gunmen than I care to recall. [FN 10] I mourn more than my fair share of Absent Friends gone before their time. And that may explain why foreign correspondents, especially war correspondents, often privately feel more immediate loyalty to colleagues who share danger and stress in the field than they do to their own organizations. Such are the idiosyncrasies of what one colleague called "the order of flagellant monks."

Professional occupational hazards have increased for field hands. But foreign editors, once ever ready to prod their charges into the cannon's mouth while sanctimoniously urging utmost caution, now are hard put to stifle yawns. "The tingle is gone," an editor friend recently told me in tones suggesting genuine regret for the receding threat of Armageddon. "No one thought or thinks the Balkans could entangle the U.S. in war," he explained. [FN 11] Indeed for the time being no major foreign threat looms on the horizon sufficient to concentrate the nation's mind.

Nor do editors seem galvanized by what my late colleague Dana Adams Schmidt once called the mission to "shine a light in

the dark corners of the world." Schmidt specifically was writing about the Kurds in the 1960s, but his phrase could have applied to just about anywhere at anytime. His very language probably seems oddly formal and suspect for turn-of-the-century Americans grown blase about the rest of the world because of easy jet travel and a self-satisfied conviction they already know all they need to know.

The collapse of Russian reform, the Asian financial crisis, the Kosovo imbroglio, Saddam Hussein's repeated challenges were assimilated this year with an aplomb bordering on indifference unthinkable only a decade ago. [FN 12] That certainly was not the case back when I was a footloose young Harvard graduate genuinely convinced that events abroad were of vital interest to his fellow citizens as well as an interesting way to make a living. After all, hadn't Henry Luce proclaimed this the "American century?"

Had I doubts, the simultaneous crises of Suez and the Hungarian uprising happened during my military service in the infantry in Europe in 1956. That concentrated my mind and decided my vocation as a foreign correspondent. In my naivete I then was convinced that what I was reporting really mattered and would be read by many Americans, not just an elite. As it turned out, I could not have been more mistaken. I didn't cotton on for a very long time, possibly because I was too busy covering crises.

What had happened with ever accelerating speed, in the words of a prominent media critic, was that the United States became a "two tier society" for foreign news. [FN 13] By that is meant an ever more knowledgeable elite tapping into a multiplicity of news sources on and off the information highway as distinct from a "dumbed down" mass of citizens increasingly alienated from once regular links with the outside world provided by newspapers and especially network television news. Consistent studies confirm media owners are right to worry about the disappearing

reader/viewer. Without constant exposure to serious news on television it's questionable whether young Americans will feel any temptation, much less obligation, to keep up with news of any kind on the Internet or elsewhere.

Since interest in current events is an addiction rather than an inherited gene, I am also deeply worried by statistics about the constant, if slower erosion of newspaper readership over a generation despite a steadily growing population. But network news' agony is especially ominous because during its long ascendancy the evening shows did hook average people on news and for much of the past 35 years that included heavy doses of foreign reporting. The subsidence of network news is momentous because since 1963 it displaced newspapers to become the main provider of news for Americans. As a print journalist who has many friends in network news, but long envied only their salaries, I admit to smiling at a recent New York Times headline describing the accelerating decline of the evening news as a case of "From Luxury Good to Expensive Wrapper." [FN 14] Schadenfreude on my part, no doubt.

It was always easy for print journalists to criticize network news for its oversimplified, blunt instrument approach to complicated events, a failing accentuated by a growing distaste for foreign news. But evening network news shows at their best were a sort of High Mass with the nation in attendance. Magisterial, top to bottom and often arbitrary, their fare doubtless was. But they reached more Americans at the same time than newspapers or radio ever did. Those shows thus sowed the seeds of wider collective curiosity. At its best cable news provides near instantaneous access to events without having to wait for the evening network news bulletin, but not that sense of national communion. At its worst cable news comes across like a

vapid video version of those old news-on-the-cheap "rip-and-read" radio stations totally reliant on the wire services.

By now both network television and newspapers are "mature" industries, sharing the key problem of how to hook and hang onto the increasingly elusive loyalty of young Americans. Study after study show their alienation from news of any kind. That alienation has set in motion further studies purporting to show that foreign news is of little reader interest (as well as other studies indicating the opposite). That "no interest" finding conveniently comforts the bean counters' obsessions with maximizing profits by cutting news gathering costs-and the newshole- to the bone.

A generation ago newspaper owners, fearing network television would bury them, survived by buying out the local competition- often afternoon papers most vulnerable to the blandishment of the box- and turning two digit profits in the process. (It was not always thus as my ex-newspaper and novelist friend Ward Just has noted. In his novel "A Family Trust," he described the ethos of his father's daily paper in mid-century Illinois where a six per cent profit was considered a good year, an eight per cent year cause for breaking out champagne.)

Shaking up what long has remained a print and network television closed shop of sorts are radical technological advances that are changing the news game as never before. Today's foreign correspondents are being challenged to come up with different ways of making themselves indispensable to a public so fragmented as to defy easy claims to enduring loyalty- or more than 30 seconds of their attention. I sometimes have to pinch myself to remember the years when my Washington Post editors were so impressed by network coverage that I had to devise often tortuous ways of telling the story so as not to appear to be copying my television colleagues' work.

the reader informed. There was no time for the politically correct attitudes so much in vogue of late in many newsrooms. I certainly haven't gotten rich nor have any but a handful of foreign correspondents working for television. Had I been more calculating I would have come in from the cold years ago and cashed in on my bylines. Many of my friends did.

But I did get to know the places I covered and the people who made things happen over a very long period of time. I like to think that improved my reporting. Long ago I ceased being surprised by many Third World sources' propensity for only leveling with key information after making me come back time and time and time again. Similarly, a willingness to risk my hide on numerous occasions has persuaded many Third World sources to tell me key facts against their better judgment. [FN 16] It's a reportorial trick I don't necessarily recommend.

In Lebanon alone I have talked my way through Israeli army checkpoints and extracted confessions about murder and mayhem from all manner of Lebanese warlords simply by "being there." As I got older and older, my age also turned into an advantage. Even strenuous effort sometimes helped. Innocent of visas I crossed from Turkey into Iraq and walked across a mountain range into Kurdistan in 1991 and was treated royally by Kurdish leaders for making the effort to come see them.

But in between the bangbang stories, I loved returning to small countries at irregular intervals to write offbeat stories about a favorite hotel in Khartoum, a former Tunisian education minister who fought Islamic fundamentalism by inserting Rousseau and Voltaire in the curriculum, how a Ghanaian military ruler cancelled Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's visit because he had a boil on his backside, or the deadly savant calculations involved in a Mossad assassination of two PLO agents in Cyprus. How better to convey the horror of a cholera epidemic than to

watch an African girl instructed to write down the number of dead and realize she'd dropped her pencil and was staring blankly at the accumulating bodies all around her on the ground.

It was this kind of story that made the effort all worthwhile- and I suspect also conveyed something a bit special to readers. Sheer adventure was always a comeon. In my tenth Harvard reunion report, I wrote, if memory serves, "I sold my soul to Henry Luce and TIME sent my body to 37 African countries." I didn't- and don't- shed tears over leaving TIME for The New York Times, especially when I see the trivialization that has befallen Luce's flagship magazine, which even in its prime was not without grave faults.

But Luce and TIME encouraged, indeed obliged, me to do rigorous reporting even if in the rewriting in New York the results sometimes came out bassackwards in what we correspondents accordingly called "The Weekly Astonisher." During the early 1960s I repeatedly spent months on end in the Congo, frequently travelling all over that sprawling land every week, returning to the capital only to file and head out again. I ended up knowing the country. Such attention to detail paid off time and time again.

Similarly, I spent years getting to know Lebanon. When the Israelis invaded in 1982 I knew the country's terrain and its inhabitants and had trusted sources all over. So did the other members of The Washington Post's Middle East team-- William Branigin, William Claiborne, Edward Cody, Loren Jenkins and David Ottaway- as well as foreign editor Jim Hoagland, himself a former Beirut correspondent who deftly worked the Washington scene feeding back leads and facts to us in the field. The Post repeatedly was accused of pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli bias, but our coverage stood up because we knew the place and where to go to get the stories. Someone once said reporters should only

trust what they themselves see in the Third World. I would add, and then only believe half of what they see.

I didn't regret a thing then and I don't regret a thing now, many years later. It was better than working in an office and still is as I remind myself every time I hear the BBC World Service theme song Lily Bolero or listen to Willie Nelson singing On The Road Again. Gertrude Bell, an eccentric British Arabist, perfectly caught the mood in "The Desert and The Sown," a book she wrote in 1907: "For those born under an elaborate social order few such moments of exhilaration can come as that which stands at the threshold of wild travel." Half a century later, in 1958, Nigel Ryan, a young Reuters colleague of mine, justified his calling to the disapproving wife of the British pro-consul in Baghdad. "When I came down from Cambridge," he said, "I had to choose between boredom and vulgarity and I chose vulgarity."

In much the same spirit I unashamedly pine for the old cable office or the telex in the Third World that shut down at nightfall in the 1950s and 1960s and allowed me to get drunk or read poetry without fear of an editor's intrusion until the next morning. That free time also allowed me time to meet and read about the people I was covering. I curse the day direct dial international telephone service arrived in the 1970s and satellite telephones made their first bulky appearance in the 1980s. The dreaded foreign desk could find me around the clock. But computers, when they worked, quickly proved a blessing. I never regretted the Olivetti portables once the correspondents' trademark or the old pre-transistor Zenith short wave radios that weighed a ton and aroused custom inspectors' most sadistic instincts.

No one of sound mind waxes nostalgic about the time wasted waiting to punch telex tape, bribing your way to the head of the line of deadline-nervous correspondents, waiting again to feed

tape at 65 baud a minute and anxiously waiting yet again until the operator at the receiving end got through straightening out garbles and confirmed reception. [FN 17] Nor do I miss the hassle of trying to shout copy down scratchy telephone lines letter by letter during wars and crises when the telex traffic backed up near deadline. [FN 17A] Jefferson Price, the Baltimore Sun foreign editor and an old Middle East hand, remembered the bad days when filing from Khartoum could mean an all day vigil on a recalcitrant telex in a stifling central post office. "Now my man opens his sat phone on his hotel balcony and whoosh, off the copy goes into the ether." [FN 18]

Still, I relish my otherwise dangerous assignment in Iraqi Kurdistan during the Gulf War because it was a throwback to pre-electronic reporting in a country deprived of telecommunications by allied bombing. Two bulky, early generation satellite telephones died within a day of our crossing into Iraq on inflated inner tubes across a swirling Tigris river amid an occasional Iraqi army mortar round shooting up small geysers in the water. We wrote our stories on primitive AA battery-powered Radio Shack laptops before printing them out on battery-run printers. Then the Kurds "pigeoned," that is hand-carried, the copy across the border to Iran to that modern-day equivalent of the 19th century cable head-- a fax machine. Amazingly, about 75% of my copy landed in Washington.

When President Bush allowed the rump Iraqi army to crush the uprising he had openly encouraged, two million Kurds fled to the mountains on the Turkish and Iranian borders. So rapid and complete was the Kurds' collapse that our small group of journalists eventually had to walk across the mountains to safety in Turkey. The mood was ugly, but we were almost all veterans of other wars. In our group there were no prima donnas. [FN 19] And

there was no US military and no pool system to tell us what we could and could not do.

By way of contrast, my colleague Edward Cody, an old Middle East hand fluent in Arabic as well as other languages, was then in Saudi Arabia, caught in the riptide of advanced technology, the Pentagon's constraining rules on reporting and editors infatuated by technology at home. In Washington, The Post's top brass was glued to CNN's live coverage of the daily Pentagon briefing bamboozled by "smart" bombs that supposedly went straight down chimneys and miraculous Star Wars Patriot missiles that reputedly never missed incoming Scuds. The editors convinced themselves they had a better overall grasp of events than their men on the spot and wrote the overall lead story from Washington.

"They used to call me up and order the equivalent of a hamburger," Cody said, recalling his travail in trying to prevail in his on scene views of the news. "I tried to persuade them- and occasionally did- that on that particular day it was more of a ham on rye." [FN 20] In fact, some of the best reporting was done by American and other reporters who took the measure of the Pentagon's pool system and decided to cover the ground war with less hidebound allied armies. Cody, one of the first reporters into newly liberated Kuwait city, got his copy out thanks to his fluent Arabic which impressed a Saudi Air Force crew into flying him back to Dhahran where he filed hours ahead of the competition. Being resourceful- and lucky- never hurt. Those qualities are the best argument against penny-pinching editors who invoke computer-linked constantly updated data bases, potted histories and other electronic age information wonders to justify cutting back on on scene foreign assignments. There never was anything to rival shoe leather reporting and I doubt there ever will be.

Television coverage evolved even faster than print. When I started out, network foreign correspondents were still largely ex-

print reporters working in radio. To broadcast their stories they were chained to the local radio station for prearranged daily booked slots. Many television stories were thoughtful, non-perishable feature or background pieces known as "evergreens" shot and shipped by air even after the advent of commercial jets in 1960. The first satellite transmissions in the mid-1960s were prohibitively expensive and reserved for major events such as Winston Churchill's funeral in 1965. (Not to be outdone, LIFE extravagantly chartered a Boeing 707 to fly text and pictures from London to Chicago for printing).

Even the Vietnam war television footage that so dramatically brought the conflict into Americans' living rooms was almost all shot and shipped. But television is at its best in evoking drama and emotions and the impact of that film packed the wallop of immediacy. A decade later film gave way to video. Bulky video editing equipment allowed correspondents to put together their stories in the field and satellite broadcasts became the norm. CNN's landmark live broadcasts of Tiananmen Square and the Gulf War of not even ten years ago now are considered old hat.

Whether "going live" routinely will produce more information and understanding is questionable. Its practitioners claim it's exhilarating, but a bit like a trapeze artist performing without a safety net because of the lack of time to reflect and exercise editorial judgment. Others have. In wartime, for example, armies have plans to prevent satellite telephones and television "uplinks" from sending out embarrassing or sensitive text or footage. [FN 21] In 1996 I got a taste of things to come. The attaché case-sized satellite telephone I was using to transmit copy from Iraqi Kurdistan was "fried" by an U.S. Air Force AWACS surveillance plane intent on scrambling Iraqi radar signals. In the constant competition between that most absolute of authorities, the military, and the media, I doubt that our offense

will triumph over their defense. They simply have bigger battalions and much better technology that comes with more money.

But the theoretical capability of covering wars "live" simply reflects the fact that journalists- and governments- have always adopted the newest technology. In 1980 the Carter administration used BBC World Service Radio to advise their local intelligence agents- as well as the few Americans left in Tehran- to take cover because the operation to rescue the American embassy hostages had failed in the desert. This fall CNN's Brent Sadler reported from Baghdad on Saddam Hussein's 11th hour backdown on inspections. President Clinton cancelled the cruise missile strikes against Iraqi targets which had been scheduled barely an hour after Sadler's broadcast.

Every incremental technological improvement is immediately put to use- sometimes with perverse effects on the quality of reporting. A seasoned American television colleague was horrified when obliged to perform live just eight minutes after arriving in besieged Sarajevo for the first time in 1993. He, of course, knew nothing, but breakfast television back home demanded sustenance. [FN 22] Thus "feeding the goat," as providing faraway editors with copy is known, is becoming around-the-clock snacking.

Essential reporting risks being shortchanged and manipulated by spinmeisters wise to the fact that correspondents are prisoners of the new technology. They are not the only ones. Bernard Gwertzman, a legendary New York Times State Department reporter and foreign editor, who now runs his newspaper's web site, said recently he would love to have correspondents filing early short versions of their stories just for him. If he gets his way, that almost certainly would cut into reporting time and very likely end up hurting the quality of the day's main dispatch. [FN 23]

The enemy is not always in one's own camp. Nik Gowing, a veteran BBC reporter, still waxes indignant when he recalls how Rwanda's Tutsi-dominated government played him like a violin by feeding him tidbits minutes before his deadline. That left him no time to report. The Rwandans knew Gowing had state-of-the-art equipment that allowed live broadcasts. They correctly figured that the producers back in London would demand instant coverage for fear that the similarly equipped competition would scoop them.

Bright young television journalists even now are re-thinking foreign coverage with an eye to injecting spontaneity and imagination into stories without lowering standards to the level of infotainment news magazine shows. Joel Brand, who showed up in Sarajevo in 1992 with no experience in journalism, since has worked for Newsweek, The Washington Post, CNN and more recently a California-based educational television company doing 12 minute segments on foreign subjects for high schools. He insists that \$3,000 digital cameras will give enterprising correspondents a freedom and leeway to allow them to go about their craft unobtrusively. [FN 24]

The technology gets cheaper and smaller with every passing year. A satellite telephone system like Iridium now offers instant communications from virtually any place in the world. In 1991 four trucks were needed to edit and send live television coverage during the Gulf War. Today a two-man team can do the same job thanks to small cameras and laptop editing machines weighing less than 100 pounds. [FN 25]

In any event the old American TV network circus-- producer, correspondent, sound and cameras persons, fixers, drivers and hangers-on with eyes fixed on the suitcase of \$100 bills dispensed to "get the story"-- was asking for trouble. With all that expensive equipment to protect, it was only a question of time before network television teams fell prey to scheming gunmen

in the field and cunning bean counters back home. In 1993 Somalia cost the networks a pretty penny renting pickups dubbed "technicals" and their greedy armed guards.

After Somalia, the American networks never again seriously staffed important foreign stories such as the Rwanda genocide in 1994 or the war in Bosnia. An ABC producer's death in Sarajevo in August 1992- David Kaplan had brushed aside advice to put on a flak jacket and was shot driving in from the airport- served to dissuade the networks from providing consistent coverage of Bosnia for more than six crucial months. [FN 26] Without competing network correspondents thick on the ground Bosnia figured little in the Clinton-Bush presidential campaign that fall. Their absence also allowed Clinton to avoid formulating policy for Bosnia for many months after he took office in 1993. It was left to CNN's Christiane Amanpour to confront Clinton in a famous exchange in which she accused his administration of "flip-flopping" over Bosnia.

The failure of US network television to provide persistent coverage of foreign trouble spots- say Turkey's civil war with its Kurdish minority or Algeria's bloody conflict between Islamic fundamentalists and the ruling military, to limit the discussion to the Islamic world- has serious consequences. Lack of television footage basically guarantees that these - and other conflicts uncovered by television- rarely achieve that critical mass that forces reluctant governments to act. Put another way, absent television coverage incumbent powers are virtually assured of impunity. Repressive regimes have learned they can ignore the most eloquent print correspondence.

Thus, first-hand television coverage is arguably more important than ever before. Yet, to save money, for foreign stories the networks rely increasingly on film shot by two television agencies-- Reuters and AP. In the Balkans such film was

often shot by complaisant crews in the good graces of the belligerent who controlled access. In other cases, such out sourcing has produced totally staged film.

Increasingly, the networks' own input is limited to London-based correspondents providing "voice over" words to lend verisimilitude to a story they have not covered and film shot in conditions they could not vouch for. London is the center for "voice overs" because all manner of film gets beamed in there from the world over. Such cheese paring practices represent a throwback. In the era between the two world wars parsimonious wire service cable desks in New York received bareboned cables from far-flung correspondents overseas and "upwhomped" them into often sensationalized copy.

With only a handful of network television correspondents overseas, even a titular Moscow correspondent may spend much of his time in London doing "voice overs" to justify his keep. Even using full-time crews to shoot stories in London itself can prove too strenuous for the networks. William McLaughlin, a veteran CBS foreign correspondent now teaching journalism, recalled that on Oct. 16, 1996 all three networks' evening news aired the same film, the same interviews and in the same sequence on a London story about gun control. Only the "voice over" script differed. The networks had simply picked it up from the BBC or ITN rather than send their own staffers out on assignment by taxi. [FN 27] Sometimes the "voice overs" on foreign stories are done entirely in the U.S.

In such circumstances it's no wonder that few television correspondents build up the contacts and feel for a place that gives their work the ring of authenticity. Veteran correspondents once were valued because they returned to places over a long period of time and caught the often outwardly only glacial changes

in foreign countries that bespoke meaningful movement. It's what I call "watching the lizards on the wall."

By now the networks are so thin on the ground that former foreign correspondents assigned to domestic bureaus occasionally are dusted off and sent overseas since they retain vestigial knowledge of working abroad. [FN 28] Whatever their stopgap efficiencies, such practices do not train younger correspondents to handle foreign stories. And "parachutist" reporting often shows itself for what it is on the air or in print. [FN 29] Recurring reports suggest the networks now want to get out of foreign reporting entirely. CNN, Time-Warner's often uneven cable partner, is reported angling to provide foreign coverage for all three networks. It is worth noting that CNN is better known abroad than in the US where, except in moments of extreme crisis, it averages only 420,000 viewers.

Still, all is not lost.

The great newspapers- The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times and the Wall Street Journals - have not sworn off foreign news, although foreign datelines feature less often on front pages and in some notable cases the foreign newsholes have shrunk. [FN 30] The great foreign news budget slashes, downholds and even firings of correspondents in the middle of this decade are receding in the current buoyant economy and era of cheaper newsprint. The New York Times still maintains 37 time foreign correspondents, The Los Angeles Times 28, The Washington Post 25, The Wall Street Journal 22 (and a total foreign-based staff of 100). All but the Washington Post see virtue in maintaining a dedicated corps of men and women switching foreign posts throughout their careers. Such continuity enriches readers as correspondents gained in experience, sometimes returning to earlier stamping grounds with sharper insights. [FN 31]

Major regional newspapers in Boston, Chicago, Baltimore and elsewhere are also staying the course with the Christian Science Monitor fielding 12 correspondents and many more stringers. USA Today, no longer McPaper and diligently trying to improve, fields six permanent overseas staffers, plus the four Washington-based reporters who long passed for its only foreign correspondents. Knight-Ridder cut back drastically in mid-decade, most notably in firing 300 staffers at the Miami Herald. Still, the 35-paper chain now maintains 16 staffers regrouped around a centralized desk in Washington, a reorganization designed to get more timely and often shorter stories into smaller member papers. (The downside was that the chain's four big papers cut back on their own foreign staffing- four overseas bureaus with 8 correspondents- with the Miami Herald most notably sharply curtailing its once own extensive Latin American coverage).

In some cases, foreign coverage is cited in reader polls to explain why the public buys a paper. The Baltimore Sun, whose foreign staff was cut back earlier in the decade, is slowly building back up with foreign editor Price arguing that foreign coverage is essential in the circulation battle with The Washington Post. Ann Marie Lipinski, the Chicago Tribune managing editor, said recent, sophisticated yearlong studies commissioned by the paper indicated that readers often specifically chose the Tribune because of its foreign coverage, wanted it maintained and even expanded. [FN 32] Increased foreign travel and the local impact of multinational corporations' overseas operations helped explain why.

Nor are such newspapers likely to change their minds in the foreseeable future (although some foreign editors worry their budgets and newshole may be slashed in case of economic downturn). The Internet every day adds new web sites offering more information on more subjects, a not inconsequential niche dealing

with foreign news from corners of the earth rarely mentioned these days even in The New York Times. Still, these serious American newspapers, it seems to me, print less hard news from abroad than in the past and less than do first class newspapers abroad (although The New York Times and The Washington Post now publish extensive daily foreign news roundups to compensate). The Internet, specialized newsletters and a whole new thriving industry of semi-financial, semi-intelligence risk analysts in Washington and on Wall Street have stepped into the breach.

If I have misgivings about foreign coverage, it's because even great newspapers seem less willing to trust their correspondents than in the past. Back in the fall of 1972, within days of Henry Kissinger's promise that "peace was at hand," I learned on unimpeachable authority that the North Vietnamese were going to walk out of the Paris peace talks the next day. The Nixon White House was claiming that it had just caught The Post out on a minor wrinkle in Watergate story. My foreign editor didn't want to run my story for fear of making two mistakes in a row. "Run it," I insisted, "and fire me if I'm wrong." He finally agreed. I was right and I kept my job. [FN 33]

Today I also doubt The Washington Post would dare publish the equivalent of the long dispatch I wrote in 1974 predicting that Lebanon would descend into civil war. I had been in and out of Beirut for decades and I had talked to dozens of sources, some of them old friends from other conflicts. Washington this time never queried my call. For better or for worse, I was proved right within barely six months. That conflict was to last more than a decade and a half, kill 241 American Marines and more than 150,000 Lebanese and Palestinians, durably tarnish Israel's reputation and destroy the last charming vestiges of the old Levant. Years later, one of my less clever foreign editors, who went on to better things, asked why I was always "trying to be ahead of the curve."

"I thought that is what I was paid for," was my reply. He was not amused. Times had changed.

William Pfaff, who for years has written a provocatively thoughtful foreign column from Paris, in 1989 put his finger on what he felt was a fatal shortcoming of American foreign correspondence. [FN 34] If the correspondent "introduces what he independently knows, without finding someone else to attribute it to, he is not being 'objective.' In principle the journalist is precluded from writing on his own authority. He has to find somebody else to say it- and then he has to find still another person to say the opposite so that the story will be balanced." Such would-be balancing has led American foreign correspondents to seek out often U.S.-based professors or Wall Street analysts for sound bites.

If nothing else, such practices represent a waste of space and a distraction in the telling of the story. Pfaff also disagreed with the long established habit of moving correspondents around just when he felt they were getting to know their turf. "These practices institutionalize ignorance, as people are pulled out as soon as they have a serious grasp of what they are writing about. They guarantee superficiality and perpetuate stereotypes since the correspondent has neither the incentive nor the time to get behind the stereotype and is under pressure to write what an uninformed editor expects to hear." Pfaff's highly respected column is published in The International Herald Tribune and in major newspapers in Europe and Asia, but not widely in the great American papers. He noted that "fatally" he lacks an outlet in either New York or Washington, the two most important U.S. policy-making centers. His paradoxical plight is to have his work valued abroad as that of a thoughtful American, but virtually ignored in his native land.

But as such scholars as Steven Hess have established the real problem is not the lack of availability of foreign news in the U.S., but its utilization in a form readily available and attractive to average users. Users do not necessarily mean readers. Driven by profits and focus groups, many newspaper owners and editors have convinced themselves that only local news sells. They deliberately turn their back on foreign news that's available and already paid for. The Associated Press, Reuters and other news agencies offer tens of thousands of words from abroad to their American clients every day. Newspaper web sites routinely update their pages with wire service dispatches around the clock. The New York Times web site, for example, "delivers" the day's edition four hours before the "paper" paper goes on sale at 5 a.m.

The so-called "supplemental" news agencies such as those run by the New York Times, The Washington Post-Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune have hundreds of client newspapers in this country and offer further thousands of words of quality foreign reporting every day. Indeed so much foreign news is on offer that many harried editors throw up their hands at the prospect of having to sift through it all. Often newspaper editors handling foreign news have little or no direct experience with covering the world and are too junior to have their views taken into account when fighting for space.

The Internet itself confronts users with major challenges as well as unprecedented access to information. Despite claims for exponential growth in Internet use, emerging evidence indicates few adults want to devote endless hours surfing through cyberspace for their news. Futurologists suggest that very soon cybernauts will be able to list preferences for a hand-tailored cyberspace "my paper" which would by definition exclude the edited browsing a traditional newspaper offers as one of its most seductive attractions. The danger for such readers is that they will so

tailor their news as to exclude anything other than their specific field or fields of interest. The versions on offer, if CNN's is an accurate yardstick, are little more than animated wire service dispatches collected under various headings chosen by the user.

If such fare proves to be the wave of the future gone will be the final vestiges of the "penny university" as daily newspapers were once known when they teased and coaxed readers beyond sports, the stock market or the comic strips. For the time being, unsurprisingly the busiest web sites belong to the established brand names of journalism- The New York Times, The Washington Post, the AP, CNN, etc. Most people instinctively trust the editing process of professional journalists and question the unedited and often indigestible fare on offer.

To its credit, the newspaper business is not just standing by wringing its hands. This year the American Society of Newspaper Editors under Edward Seaton and the Freedom Forum have embarked on an ambitious campaign to sell foreign news to smaller newspapers among the country's remaining 1,500 dailies (80 per cent have circulations under 50,000). They are conducting regional workshops to show editors how local angles can grab readers' attention by highlighting economic or human interest stories involving foreign countries. Seaton's common sense approach is that papers, no matter how small, have larger newsholes than television news.

Former AP foreign correspondent George Krinsky has edited a handbook for the ASNE spelling out the whys and wherefores of getting more foreign news into American newspapers. In effect foreign coverage is being promoted under the guise of local news since local news is deemed of most immediate interest to readers. [FN 35] It's the latest twist in "writing for the Kansas City milkman," the exhortation that United Press journalists of yore were told to keep constantly in mind in churning out copy.

Tom Kent, the AP's World Editor, has developed niche foreign news for AP's many smaller client papers in an age when new immigrants and seasonal visitors to the U.S. frequently go back and forth to their original homes thanks to cheap air fares. The United States is experiencing its biggest period of immigration in a century and now as during the last great wave there is plenty of interest in "the old country." A weekly column of shorts about the Philippines goes down well with California's big Filipino community. Canadian items are welcomed by Florida papers with big "snowbird" winter residents from Canada. Features about Portugal are welcome reading among Portugese-speakers in New Bedford. [FN 36]

Other traditional bedrock producers of serious foreign news are also holding their own. WGBH's much feted Frontline documentaries on Public Broadcasting Service television courageously keep on tackling foreign subjects even when executive producer David Fanning admits he senses that his board would prefer he concentrate on domestic themes to keep up the ratings. [FN 37] Only this year, Arthur Kent, who covered the Gulf war for NBC, persuaded PBS to start showing a special program devoted to foreign news. Together with Jim Lehrer's News Hour, National Public Radio, Public Radio International and the great newspapers, those programs now reach a small, often overlapping, largely well educated and/or affluent combined audience estimated at four to eight million Americans.

With some 500 affiliated stations and a dozen correspondents abroad, NPR, according to Foreign Editor Loren Jenkins, has almost doubled its daily news audience in the past decade to eight million. "Now you can almost drive straight across the United States and get NPR on the dial," he remarked proudly. [FN 38] But some purists cavil that NPR is carrying less foreign

news than in years past. NPR's rival, PRI (for Public Radio International), relays BBC broadcasts on a regular basis.

Outside these elite catchment areas, the outlook can be both depressing and surprisingly innovative. Take newsmagazines. TIME and Newsweek once kept dozens of correspondents abroad. In the early 1960s I was one of seven or eight correspondents attached to TIME's Paris office alone. Today newsmagazines have cut staffs to the bone, closed bureaus galore and run far fewer foreign stories in their domestic editions than a decade ago.

The annual number of TIME covers dealing foreign affairs plunged from 11 to none between 1987 and 1997 with editors claiming foreign covers were consistent newsstand losers. In the decade from 1985 to 1995, the foreign report in TIME declined from 24% of the magazine to 14%, in Newsweek from 22% or 12% and US News and World Report from 20% to 14%. [FN 39] But in addition to the long established Asian, European and Latin American editions, Newsweek now also publishes mixed editions in Korean, Japanese, Spanish and Russian. And all international English language editions are on Newsweek's web site. The success of these offshore editions of such quintessentially American journalism represents a fine paradox.

But while TIME and Newsweek go through such gyrations, Britain's The Economist now sells 300,000 of its total 700,000 circulation to Americans starved of foreign news and willing to pay dearly for non-discounted subscriptions. Editor William Emmott coyly recently described The Economist as a "magazine in English written by non-Americans." [FN 40] Seeking to fill a similar niche, a version of the BBC's World News started this fall serving 44 American television stations. The BBC's rival, ITN, already has clients in the US. [FN 41]

It's easy enough to understand why the BBC and ITN thought the risk worth running. What foreign news survives on the

traditional networks' nightly television news is relegated to the half hour's final minutes for fear viewers will zap to another channel. Inspired by the example of 60 Minutes' financial success over three decades, the networks' news divisions have had to become money-spinners. On the so-called news magazines that follow the news six nights a week, foreign subjects are even rarer: such programs in any event are much cheaper to produce than traditional entertainment fare and generate top dollar prime time advertising. Ratings rule supreme and are gauged minute by minute. One producer influenced by the ratings was quoted as saying that he'd done "nine stories on Bosnia and every one of them tanked." [FN 42] Exit Bosnia and the rest of the world outside the U.S.

In these quarters foreign news means not just bad ratings, but expensive programming to boot. Keeping a daily newspaper correspondent abroad costs between \$250,00 to \$400,000 a year and a television correspondent considerably more. Once considered a necessary ticket to be punched on the way to greater things, working abroad for network television has become a dead end for the simple reason that correspondents don't get on the air. [FN 43] (The wisdom of Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore springs to mind: "Stick close to your desk/ And never go to sea/ And you all will be leaders/ Of the Queen's navy").

Long gone are the days when network news was not expected to turn a profit, but rather to provide the public service alibi for money-making entertainment programs. In 1965 ABC's news budget was \$5 million and was a money-loser. Thirty years later the news budget was \$500 million and the profits estimated in the \$300 to 400 million range. [FN 44] But the nightly news had sold its soul and its public service mandate in the process.

Buttressed by focus groups, local news and entertainment are what television moguls and many print owners believe is their formula for profits and survival in a market where the young

seemingly have abandoned their interest in any form of news, be it print, radio, television, cable or Internet. In so doing owners have stood on its head their own power to decide what news will get printed or broadcast. What would Lord Copper, the quintessential idiosyncratic press baron in Evelyn Waugh's classic newspaper novel "Scoop," have thought about such surrender to vox populi.

Reuven Frank, a legendary keeper of network television's now much tarnished tablets, recently lamented that "this business of giving people what they want is a dope pusher's argument." "News," he added, "is something people don't know they're interested in until they hear about it." [FN 45] Sooner or later, I suspect, the pendulum will swing back if only because of human curiosity. The rising numbers of university graduates are likely to be more curious than their less well educated contemporaries about the wider world.

Puzzling over the results of studies gauging radio, television, cable and Internet usage, the greatest unanswered question is how do Americans under 30 keep informed, if at all. Studies consistently show that only the middle-aged and elderly are assiduous newspaper readers, network news television news viewers or serious news radio listeners.

So I may indeed be guilty of Dr. Johnson's description of second marriages-- "the triumph of hope over experience." But my hunch is that the cameras along with the rest of the moveable village of foreign news hacks will be back in force sooner rather than later. There is always going to be someone ready to sleep overnight in a freezing Tehran cemetery waiting for Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's triumphant return from exile. I did so in 1979 to be sure I would be on hand when he was scheduled to show up the next day. In his cemetery speech he spelled out his willingness, indeed, determination to spill blood massively to impose on Iran

the Islamic Republic he long had dreamed of. Tehran's streets were so clogged I abandoned my car and bummed motorcycle rides to cut through the traffic and get back to the press hotel just in time for deliver the pool copy. Even now the first Persian word that springs to mind is "habanegar" meaning journalist, and I shouted it until I was hoarse to make my way through the throngs.

Maybe for the next big story there won't be four or five teams per network the way the American Embassy hostage crisis was covered in Tehran in 1979 and 1980. But if Iraqi Kurds head en masse for the mountains of Turkey or Iraq the way they did in 1991, the rest of that upheaval is likely to repeat itself as well. The mountains are too foreboding, the women too beautiful, the men too colorful and the spokesmen too fluent in English to be denied coverage. And I suspect that Western political leaders, especially the American President at the time, will prove no more successful at ignoring their plight than Bush was in 1991.

So the curmudgeon in me keeps telling young men and women, who in surprising numbers ask how they can do what I did, that there is no there there. But I keep hoping I am wrong. Were I a bit more honest I'd probably tell them: "Don't throw away Dad's frayed trench coat just yet. But don't send it to an expensive cleaners either." ENDS

Acknowledgement. Giles Edwards, a Kennedy School student, helped in the research.

FOOTNOTES

FN 1- Here in no particular order is a sampler of the bad news: a- A study by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press published in October 1997 noted "much of the broader public does not consider foreign affairs important to their lives. Majorities of varying sizes say events in Europe, Asia, Mexico and Canada have little or no impact on them." "Knowledge of international

policy and events is minimal. Fully 63% support expansion of NATO, but only 10% can correctly name any of the three nations" involved.

b- In an even more pessimistic report, A Survey of News In the Next Century, published in November 1996 by the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation, concluded "the audience of news may be failing to regenerate itself."

c- The July 10, 1998 International Herald Tribune noted that number of Americans aged 21 to 35 regularly reading a daily newspaper fell from 67% in 1965 to 39% in 1990 and 31% in 1998.

d- Peter Arnett in the November 1998 American Journalism Review noted that "international news coverage in most of America's 1,500 mainstream papers has almost reached the vanishing point" with foreign stories down from 10% to less than 2% since 1972.

e- Overall network evening news viewership sank from 60 per cent in 1993 to 38 per cent four years later, according to the Tyndall Report (IHT July 19, 1998). The three networks devoted 4,032 minutes to foreign news in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall came down, 2,763 minutes in 1994 and the share continues to fall. The Tyndall report in 1997 established three categories of television network stories with foreign content- 1- "international news" (in which is U.S. foreign policy is not involved), 2- U.S. foreign policy news (involving principally Washington, but also input from foreign correspondents) and 3- Foreign Bureau News (filed by correspondents with a foreign dateline. From 1989 to 1996 total minutes decreased for 1) from 4,828 minutes to 2,270, for 2) from 2,081 to 1,109 and for 3) from 4,032 to 1,596. Tyndall noted that even the 1990 and 1991 boom years during the Kuwait crisis and subsequent notice.

f- In 1995 the three networks devoted 26 hours and 50 minutes to the O. J. Simpson trial- twice the time allotted the Bosnia war in its most virulent year involving American air strikes and commitment of American infantry to keep the peace. US News and World Report, Oct. 16, 1995

FN 2- Arnett, American Journalism Report, November 1998

FN 3- The New York Times, Dec. 3, 1998

FN 4- The International Herald Tribune, June 18, 1998. Brian Knowlton noted that: Americans held 45 million passports, one for six citizens; the number of U.S. students abroad almost doubled between 1985 and 1996, from 58,483 to 89,242 in 1996; in 1986 12 million Americans traveled abroad (not counting Mexico and Canada), by 1996 the number was 19.8 million; overseas phone calls increased from 411 million in 1985 to 984 million in 1990, then in past 5 years to 2.8 billion, according to the FCC; in the past 30 years the number of Americans living abroad more than doubled to 3.3 million; more American students are studying foreign languages than anytime since 1920.

FN 5- Until the early 1980s many media employers banned wives of staffers from working for rival organizations. Even now, husband-and-wife teams are routinely paid far less than two salaries.

FN 6- Telecommunications act 1996 accelerated disruptive deregulatory change in broadcasting, allowing further concentration in ownership, especially for radio stations, at the public's expense.

FN 7- Ken Auletta, *Three Blind Mice*, Random House, 1991 and telephone interview Nov. 2, 1998

FN 8- Audience figures, *The Economist* July 4, 1998, quoting Pew Research Center figures showing share of Americans watching nightly television news dropping from half in 1993 to 15 per cent in 1998.

FN 9- Garrick Utley, telephone interview Oct. 23, 1998. See also his article in March-April 1997 issue of *Foreign Affairs* noting that between 1989 and 1996 minutes of foreign news coverage declined at NBC from 3,351 to 1,187 and at ABC from 3,731 to 1,839. See also Lawrie Mifflin in the Oct. 12, 1998 *New York Times* reporting network television coverage had been so badly cut back that staff correspondents were present in only 5 ABC, 3 CBS and 7 NBC bureaus overseas. Staffed, but correspondent-less, bureaus were maintained in 7 locations by ABC, 5 for CBS and 6 for NBC. By way of contrast CNN has 23 staffers overseas, but the BBC maintained more foreign correspondents than all these American companies combined.

The BBC recently announced plans to devote 50% of its domestic nightly news program to foreign news and regularly equals or betters that percentage in BBC World News which is giving CNN International a run for its money overseas. *The Independent* Oct. 5, 1998

FN 10- Bokassa. Washington Post Executive Editor Ben Bradlee, himself a former foreign correspondent, first asked what I was doing "in such a chickenshit country," then moved heaven and Maurice Tempelsman, the prominent diamond merchant pal of Bokassa's, to free me.

FN 11- David Ignatius, telephone interview, Oct. 21, 1998

FN 12- In 1996 for the first time in living memory no foreign story was included in the Associated Press list of the year's most important stories.

FN 13 -Steven Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, Brookings Institution Press, 1996

FN 14-The *New York Times*, October 21, 1998

FN 15- The *International Herald Tribune*, June 11, 1998

FN 16- Bashir Gemayel, a ruthless young Christian warlord in Beirut on several occasions threatened me because he didn't like my exposing his relationship with the Israeli military and intelligence. But if I crossed the Green Line dividing Beirut

during serious fighting, he couldn't help spilling the beans out of sheer machismo.

FN 17- Dusko Doder of The Washington Post and the late Henry Tanner of The New York Times learned the hard way in 1977. In they filed stories by telex from Berbera in Somalia that a visiting Congressional delegation had detected the presence of a Soviet navy at the port there. The correspondents waited for the "answerback," the symbol that the communication had been completed successfully. But they did not wait to have the telex operators in their respective offices type out, "all ok." That proved a mistake. When they got back to Cairo, they received near identical messages wanting to know why they had not filed since the Congressmen were back in the U.S. and had denounced the Soviets. It turned out that East German telecommunications specialists in Berbera had faked the "answerbacks" hoping the stories would be forgotten.

[FN 17A] Only in 1978 during the Iranian revolution did I finally prevail on The Post's foreign desk to purchase a dictation machine to cut down on the time and money involved in having a desk hand take down copy live. My editor kept putting me off until I threatened to go straight to my gracious owner, Katharine Graham, who once had nodded when I teasingly suggested she would like to win a "Pulitzer Prize for profits." The machine was installed and saved thousands of dollars in communications costs.]

FN 18- Jefferson Price, telephone interview, Oct. 16, 1998
Still satellite phones are not always foolproof. The United States Air Force fried my sat phone in September 1996 in northern Iraq using electronic counter-measures aboard an AWACS plane to blind Iraqi radar preparatory to a missile strike

FN 19- Gad Gross, a young Harvard graduate covering his first war, refused to heed the repeated warnings of veteran combat photographer Don McCullin to leave Kirkuk. We abandoned him to his folly. He was killed when the Iraqis overran the northern oil center.

FN 20- Edward Cody, telephone conversation, Oct. 22, 1998

FN 21- Barrie Dunsmore's doubts about live broadcasts in wartime, "The Next War: Live?," March 1996, the Joan Shorenstein Center

FN 22- Rick Davis, NBC, telephone interview, Oct. 9, 1998

FN 23- Bernard Gwertzman, The New York Times, telephone interview October 11, 1998

FN 24- Joel Brand, interview, New York City, Sept. 29, 1998

FN 25- Barrie Dunsmore, interview, Cambridge, MA, Oct. 21, 1998

FN 26- As a matter of historical record, the first time I ever saw a journalist wearing a flak jacket was in Beirut in 1975 and most of us oddly found it a needless encumbrance. Kaplan's death was not entirely in vain. He had been advised to stay at Sarajevo airport because there was not enough room in the United Nations

armored car taking correspondent Sam Donaldson and his crew into town. Kaplan turned down a lightweight UN flak jacket (which was in any case designed only to protect against shrapnel, not bullets) and took a seat in a TV pickup marked TV with tape on its rear door. He was killed by a sniper's bullet on the drive in from the airport. But the incident finally convinced some news organizations to purchase armored vehicles for reporters. The day I arrived in Bosnia in early January 1993 three correspondents were wounded- but not killed- when the Reuters armored Landrover they were riding in blew up on a mine. That prompted me to write a strongly worded note to The Washington Post arguing the newspaper should not risk putting its correspondents in harm's way without purchasing one for us. We should not be the only major news organization without one. My foreign editor's initial reaction was- "remember who you are working for." I persisted. The Post finally bought a second hand Landrover. It cost \$35,000 if memory serves. I did not endear myself to my editor.

FN 27- William McLaughlin, Quinnipiac College, Hamden, Connecticut, Oct. 2 1998

FN 28- William Blakemore of ABC, telephone interview, Sept. 17 said he had done a half dozen foreign stories in 1997 alone.

FN 29- Ben Bradlee during a periodic downhold at The Post toyed with what he called "A Dulles airport bureau" staffed by a Washington-based fireman. But as a former foreign correspondent he soon realized "firemen" who were "parachuted" in this fashion often would lack the knowledge to put a complicated story into perspective.

FN 30- In 1995, Mark Willes, a former cereal firm executive, took charge at the Los Angeles Times. Among his first decisions were firing several correspondents and axing the weekly World Report, an innovative showcase for overseas reporting.

FN 31- Tom Kent, AP, World Editor, telephone interview, Oct. 15, 1998

FN 32- Ann Marie Lipinski, Managing Editor of The Chicago Tribune, telephone interview, Nov. 23, 1998

FN 33- My story ran in Washington, but only because Buddy Weiss, editor of the Paris Herald, led his paper with it as a favor to me, forcing my own editor's hand. In Washington my byline was taken off as a precaution. I should have demanded a raise there and then, but didn't.

FN 34- William Pfaff, Gannett Center Journal, Fall 1989
"International News and Foreign Policy"

FN 35- Krinsky questions a lot of polls showing low reader interest in foreign news and wonders if such polls are not being used to "justify management policies that local news is the only thing that sells." But the ASNE project is exploiting rather than arguing that mindset "telling editors to broaden their definition

of 'local' and showing them how to find backyard connections to the wider world." e-mail to author Oct. 22, 1998.

Edward Seaton, telephone conversation Oct. 26, 1998. "If people begin to see all international forces affecting their daily lives," he said, "the dentist who fixes teeth in Haiti or the foreign stuff on sale at the local Wal-Mart, maybe they will take more interest in those places." He noted that International Press Institute said that many of its member reported similar problems elsewhere.

FN 36- Tom Kent, telephone interview, Oct. 15, 1998

FN 37- David Fanning, interview, Cambridge, MA, Oct 23. 1998

FN 38- Loren Jenkins, telephone interview, Oct. 7, 1998

FN 39- Columbia Journalism Review, July-August, 1998.

FN 40- William Emmott, editor of The Economist, talk at Shorenstein Center, Cambridge MA, Oct. 2, 1998

FN 41- New York Times, Nov. 5, 1998

FN 42- Neal Shapiro of Dateline, quoted in The New York Times Magazine, Sept. 20, 1998

FN 43- Print still rewards foreign correspondents. Joe Lelyveld was a fine foreign correspondent, among other distinctions, before becoming executive editor of The New York Times. Michael Parks served in Russia, South Africa and Israel before occupying a similar spot at The Los Angeles Times. Steve Coll, The Washington Post's new managing editor, or number two, was a distinguished correspondent.

FN 44- Dunsmore, interview, Oct. 21, 1998

FN 45- Reuven Frank, Columbia Journalism Review