

# COLDTYPE

Issue Five

Fall, 1996

# WORDS OF

# WAR

*Eye-witness  
reports from  
Lebanon  
Vietnam  
Ulster &  
Bosnia*

**“And all this madness, all this rage,  
all this flaming death of our civilization  
and our hopes, has been brought about  
because a set of official gentlemen,  
living luxurious lives, mostly stupid,  
and all without imagination or heart,  
have chosen that it should occur  
rather than that any one of them  
should suffer some infinitesimal  
rebuff to his country’s pride”**

*Bertrand Russell, British philosopher, in a letter to the newspaper  
Nation, written August 12, 1914, eight days after the outbreak  
of World War I.*

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**Page 11** — *“On the highest of the surrounding hills are fortified lookouts from which British soldiers survey the countryside. The soldiers are usually flown in by helicopter because even armored vehicles are easy targets for bombs on these narrow roads. Local history is a sniper here, a car bomb there, and a mortar attack from behind that hill.”* — By **John Gray**

## BOSNIA

**Page 14** — *“Delic said she thought she could maintain a certain distance from her charges when she started her job earlier this year, but now finds herself crying at home after work. ‘Sometimes they just want to talk, or show you an old photo album and pour you a cup of tea.’”* — By **Mark Fritz**

LEBANON

# SEVENTEEN MINUTES IN QANA

*The massacre last April of refugees in a UN base in the Lebanon shook the Middle East. This is the first full account of what happened, as told by the survivors to **Robert Fisk** of The Independent of London.*

**MOST** of the people in Qana remember seeing “Um Ka’amel” above them that morning. It had rained earlier, but Haj Qassem Azam, who had brought his family down from the hill village of Sid-diqin to seek safety in the Fijian UN base eight days earlier, clearly saw “the Mother of Ka’amel” over the town at mid-morning. The 70-year-old ex-foundry worker was to recall that it trailed a thin stream of gray smoke from its propellers. Kamel Saad, a 16-year-old schoolboy, saw it too. Colonel Wame Waqanivalagi, commanding officer of the UN’s Fijian battalion (Fijibatt), whose 150 soldiers at Qana were caring for 560 Lebanese refugees under the United Nations flag, was told by two of his soldiers that the Israeli MK pilotless reconnaissance aircraft was flying over his base. A mile away, at UN post I-15, next to the headquarters of the UN’s Force Mobile Reserve, a Norwegian soldier also noticed the MK moving over the valley towards Qana.

MK is the technical name for the drone that artillery men use for spotting targets. But the hill villagers of southern Lebanon, many of them illiterate sheep farmers and agricultural workers, had humanized the sinister presence of Israel’s state-of-the-art spy-in-the-sky in order to reduce the children’s fears. M sounds like “Um” — Arabic for “mother” — and the K — the letter kaaf in Arabic — was extended to make a boy’s name, Ka’amel. Saadallah Balhas had taught his 20 children and grandchildren that they had nothing to fear from the “Mother of Ka’amel” as it buzzed above them. “It was around all that morning,” he remembers. “There was a helicopter, too, to the west of the village and, very high, a bigger plane, making a mist behind it.” UN observers noted that a high-altitude AWACS aircraft circled southern Lebanon during the morning, its contrails streaming across the sky.

Hours before the massacre of April 18, a unit of Fijian soldiers noticed another sinister presence: three bearded Hizbollah men firing two Katyusha rockets from the old cemetery 350 meters from the UN base. Captain Pio of the Fijian Battalion noticed later, close to the main road east of Qana, four more Hizbollah men. “I could see them firing mortars,” he says. “They had flak jackets and steel helmets. I watched them through my binoculars.” They were perhaps 600 meters from the UN compound. Captain Ronnie, the UN’s communications officer, received no “shell warning” from Israel — the usual practice when the Israelis planned to fire artillery in a UN battalion’s area of operations — but the Fijians were worried enough after the Hizbollah mortar fire to make an announcement over the Tannoy system, ordering all their soldiers to put on flak jackets and prepare to move the refugees into the bunkers.

It was just after 2 p.m. “Because Fijian soldiers have been in Qana for 18 years, many of the villagers

have picked up the Fijian language, and they understood the words on the Tannoy,” Kamel Saad says. “We all went to the rooms where our families were living.” Saadallah Balhas thinks that they had about five minutes. A Fijian soldier was to recall with shock that many mothers could not find their children — they were playing in other parts of the five-acre compound — and refused to go into the bunkers. “We were pushing them into our own bunkers, squeezing them in until there was no room for us,” the soldier said. “There was crying and we were telling the others to go into the places where they were living.” The refugees were crammed shoulder-to-shoulder in the hot interiors. “Our bunkers were for 150 soldiers and we had pushed 400 into them, maybe more,” Colonel Wame says. “There was no more room.” In the two minutes that followed the Fijian warning, up to 300 more people who had remained in the village around the UN base ran in panic through the gates for shelter, along with — so another

er soldier recalled — at least one of the three Hizbollah Katyusha men. There were now around 850 civilians in the UN base at Qana.

All who survived the coming horror would remember where they were in the following seconds. Haj Azam sat on the floor of a UN officer’s room near the back gate, along with his wife, Rdiyeh, his son Mohsin and Mohsin’s wife, Leila. Kamel Saad took refuge with his 50-year-old mother, Fawzieh, and one of his cousins in a neighboring room along with 20 others. Sulieman Khalil, a 23-year-old laborer from the much-bombed village of Jebel al-Butm had just received his lunch packet and returned to the UN soldier’s billet in which he was living. Saadallah Balhas was still recovering from a bone implant operation that followed wounds he had sustained in Israel’s 1993 bombardment of southern Lebanon and had to be carried by his children — his right leg in a plaster cast — into the Fijian battalion’s conference room, a rectangular building of corrugated iron with a wooden roof.

His extended family all squeezed into the same room and sat around him; his wife Zeinab, his sons Ghalib, Ali, Fayadl, Merhij, Khalil, Mohamed, Ibrahim and Mahmoud and his daughters Najibi, Nayla, Fatmi, Zohra, Amal, Khadijeh. Many of the children were still young — Fatmi was 16, Amal 12, and Mahmoud was only five. Ali’s wife Zohra was also crammed into the room along with their children seven-year-old Zeinab, six-year-old Abbas, five-year-old Fatmi, three-year-old Saadallah. Their youngest child, Hassan, was only four months old. Also in the room were Saadallah’s brothers Mohamed and Rahamatallahu and the latter’s wife and five children and a granddaughter and great-granddaughter. Some of the children were crying. Most sat in silence.

Nayla Berji’s family was in the same tiny room as Balhas and his children — her 90-year-old father, Abbas, her mother, Khairiyeh, her two brothers, Hussein and Mustapha, Hussein’s wife, Fatmi, and their three children — Manal, aged 15, Mariam, 11, and Ibrahim, just six. Also there were Nayla’s 20-year-old sister Ghada and her two children and a 30-year-old niece, Skayneh, along with four cousins. Nayla was standing at the door of one of the bunkers.

At 2.08 p.m. — Colonel Wame, the CO, is certain of the time — the first Israeli shell exploded near the UN’s water tower, 10 meters from where Captain Pio, the soldier who had seen the Hizbollah through his binoculars, was standing behind the battalion’s outdoor food refrigerator near the main gate. “I found big slivers of shrapnel in my jacket three days later,” he said. “But it didn’t touch me. I ran round the building and told the other Fijian soldiers to stand close to the walls. There were two Lebanese refugees there, too, and I told them to get under cover — they ran to the conference room. When I reached the bomb shelter, it was packed. I tried to push more people in. Then the shells poured in.”

In the conference room Saadallah Balhas sat with his family, almost 40 strong, clustered tightly around him. The wooden roof above him could not even withstand a bullet, let alone a shell. Several of the women were praying in Arabic for God’s protection. The second Israeli shell was fitted with a proximity

*“I saw this man go up into the air. The blast of the explosion just made him fly. He went up and up and up, and his head came off and caught in the burning tree and the rest of him fell to the ground. My elder brother was telling me to find his wife, Manal, and Fatmi, their daughter. They were both dead, their bodies burnt black. I found my niece Mariam but couldn’t recognize her and shouted: ‘Are you Mariam?’ When I found my father, I tried to lift him up but his intestines spilled out over me. When I found my brother, I tried to lift him up but all I lifted was his lower half. There was no head, no arms. My brother was lying there and his guts were coming out of his stomach.”*

fuse; the round would burst seven meters above the ground and amputate the limbs of any humans beneath it. It exploded directly above the conference room.

“There was a terrible explosion, and the first thing I felt was hot, wet liquid all over the right side of my face,” Saadallah Balhas was to remember. “I couldn’t see out of my right eye. There was a great flash of fire and I felt myself burning. I was deaf. There were more shells — there was no space between the sound of the explosions. I was still conscious and I felt blood, so much blood running down my face. I pushed the blood away with my hand and wiped my hand on the mattress. Everyone was shrieking and crying.”

In the Fijian radio room, the windows broken and pieces of shrapnel hissing above them, a lone Fijian officer crouching on the floor blurted out a plea for help. “Our headquarters are under fire,” he shouted to the UN operations office near the Israeli border. “One of our headquarters buildings has been demolished.”

An Irish UN officer at the UN’s command headquarters 15 miles away tried to calm him, then a Lebanese army liaison officer attached to the Fijian battalion cut into the radio channel from a building opposite the UN’s Qana compound. “People are dying here,” he said. “I hear the voice of death.”

The senior Lebanese army officer in Qana, who was standing beside him, saw the rear gates of the UN compound burst open and a mass of wounded people storm like cattle out of the base, without arms, several without feet, running on the open stumps of legs, leaving behind them “rivers of blood.” In Sulieman Khalil’s room, his friend Ibrahim Taki was catapulted to the floor with his throat cut open. “I didn’t know he was already dead and wanted to help him,” Khalil remembered. “I ran into the open, across to the UN clinic, but no one would come to the door. I threw stones at the windows and broke them but there were only civilians there and no one would come and help.”

Khalil decided to run back to his room. “But as I turned, a shell fell near me, maybe only 3 feet away. I fell over. I looked up and couldn’t see my left leg. I realized it had been blown off. I was stunned and tried to stand on it — tried to stand on the leg that wasn’t there — but I couldn’t so I started crawling away in case a second

shell hit me. I crawled as far as a container and sat in its shade and the moment I sat down, three shells exploded where I had been hit. The moment I saw that, I became unconscious.” At that moment, the Fijian assistant medical officer, Warrant Officer Apirneleki, was in the bomb shelter of the first aid post close to the conference room. “After the first shell hit the room, I heard terrible screams from inside — animal screams,” he said

“There were people inside who had been cut to bits but were still alive. Then a second shell hit the building and that stopped the screaming. There was quiet after that.” The second shell had smashed the roof off the conference room, torn off most of the steel walls and set fire to what was left. Inside this charnel house Saadallah Balhas was still alive. “The second shell exploded very near me,” he said. “I looked around me with my left eye. The place was swirling in smoke. The second shell — how do you say it? — had ‘completed the job.’ I looked at my children to see who was still alive. They were all round me, little people, and I shook each one — Khadijeh, Ibrahim, Amal, Mohamed ... I was crying so much and each one I shook, they didn’t move. I started turning them over and they were all dead on top of each other. They lay there in front of me like dead sheep, my whole family.”

Fawzieh Saad, schoolboy Kamel’s 50-year-old mother, ran out of the neighboring building. “It was a horrible sight,” she said. “A man was lying in two pieces. There was a woman who was pregnant and I could see the arm and leg of her unborn baby poking out of her stomach. There was a man who had shrapnel in his head. He was not dead but you could see a piece of metal in his neck, like he’d had his throat cut. He told his daughter to come to help him and lift him up. And I heard her say: ‘Wait a minute, I’m trying to put my brother together — he’s in two pieces.’ There was another brother holding a child in his arms. The child had no head. The brother was dead, too.”

The woman trying to assemble her dead brother was 35-year-old Nayla Berji who had been at the door of the bunker when the two shells smashed into the conference room. “I tried to pull my mother out of the fire but I couldn’t because she had no arm and I couldn’t lift her up,” she was to recall days later. “It was then that I saw my father, Abbas, on the ground and two of my brothers. I tried to rescue my sister-in-law Leila but her face was completely cut away and burnt. She had been hit by the shell. I wanted to see if there was anyone else but there was fire all around and I couldn’t get any closer.

Even the trees were burning, their leaves all on fire. The shells were still landing.”

Across the valley in the base of the UN’s Force Mobile Reserve, a Norwegian soldier had begun to make an amateur videotape of the Israeli attack on the Qana compound, his camera catching “Um Ka’amel” as it buzzed low over the sky above the camp — evidence that would later be used by the UN’s inquiry team to refute repeated Israeli denials that there was a “spotter” drone over the scene of the massacre. A mile away, at UN position 1-15, a Norwegian soldier could hear human shrieks of pain after a shell exploded above the flimsy wooden battalion restaurant in which another 50 refugees were sheltering. “It may seem unreal,” he said, “but we actually saw with our own eyes what seemed to be an animal thrown into the sky — 50 feet, probably more — right out of the UN base. But then we realized it was colored blue and that it was a human.”

There was nothing unreal about it. Nayla Berji was only yards away. “I saw this man go up into the air,” she said. “The blast of the explosion just made him fly. He went up and up and up, and his head came off and caught in the burning tree and the rest of him fell to the ground. My elder brother was telling me to find his wife, Manal, and Fatmi, their daughter. They were both dead, their bodies burnt black. I found my niece Mariam but couldn’t recognize her and shouted: ‘Are you Mariam?’ When I found my father, I tried to lift him up but his intestines spilled out over me. When I found my brother, I tried to lift him up but all I lifted was his lower half. There was no head, no arms. My brother was lying there and his guts were coming out of his stomach.”

Nayla Berji gave this terrible witness to her family’s catastrophe as she talked to me, heavily sedated, in the Jebel Amal hospital. “I don’t see where I got the strength to see these things,” she said, her voice rising to a wail. “Those people were very, very dear to me and when I saw them like that, I cannot tell you what I suffered. What I have seen and what I experienced — I tell you, it has ruined the rest of my life.”

Dozens of terribly wounded civilians were now crowding into Warrant Officer Apimeleki’s small medical center. “One of our Fijian soldiers came in with his left arm hanging on by a piece of skin — the bones had

been torn out,” he said. “Then people just flooded in, there was blood all over the floor and the walls. There were children, babies, old women. There were such screams. And people kept shouting: ‘Fiji why? Fiji why? Help us.’ They couldn’t understand why the UN base was being targeted. Eventually we reached the restaurant to look for wounded, but there were just corpses. We never thought they would all be killed in there.”

Haj Azam, who had seen the Israeli drone earlier in the day, lay on the floor of the Fijian officer’s room where he was billeted, but pieces of shrapnel began to cut through the walls and roof. “A woman was hit in the head and part of it was sliced away. Her husband lay down beside her and held her. He was shouting for help and crying. Their two-year-old son was with them. She died later in the Hammoud hospital in Sidon.” A Fijian soldier fought his way into the smoking embers of the conference room and dragged Saadallah Balhas out of what had been the door. “I saw my nephew wounded and told the Fijian to help him first — he died later,” Balhas said later. “Then I found my old crutches by the door and hobbled out on my own. And what I saw — even if you have a strong heart, you would collapse at what I saw.”

Balhas could see with only his left eye — he did not yet realize that his right eye had been blasted out of its socket into the fires by the second shell. “There were pieces of meat, bodies without arms, corpses without heads. I tried to get to the clinic and I found my son Ali alive. He took me by the arm and started to show me the corpses, to identify them. He would say, ‘this is your son Ghalib, he is dead.’ Then he would point to a girl and say, ‘this is little Khadijeh, she is dead, too, and ‘this is your wife, Zeinab, she is dead.’ We found little Mahmoud alive and Merhij and Ali’s son, three-year-old Saadallah, alive; they had been protected by their brothers and sisters, heaped on top of them, all dead.”

Inside the Fijian base, the shells had cut off all electricity and damaged the UN’s radio network. Colonel Wame was using his back-up radio, his messages relayed through the officer commanding a UN convoy passing through a valley five miles away. On the UN’s Channel 6 radio, Commandant Eamon Smyth of the Irish Army was recording that “Fijibatt headquarters is still under fire.” At UN headquarters, another Irish voice tried to comfort the desperate Fijian soldiers at Qana. “Help is on its way,” it said. An appeal had been sent to the Israelis to stop firing. But the shells continued to fall.

Inside the Qana compound, the Fijian soldiers who ran to help the wounded found themselves slipping on pieces of flesh. Wounded men and women were crying,

“ya Allah, ya Allah” — “oh God, oh God.” Several of the Fijians, recognizing the bodies of babies whom they had cradled in their own arms over the previous week — the Fijians liked to help the mothers by rocking the younger children to sleep each evening — broke down in tears and wept in front of the refugees they could no longer protect. Like the south Lebanese, the Fijians are primarily subsistence farmers, whose families form the center of their lives.

In his room inside the compound — along with 20 other people — the 16-year-old schoolboy Kamel Saad was one of the last to be hit. “I heard a lot of screaming, people shouting ‘Help me!’ and ‘My children!’” he said. “There was a father who came into our room to see his son. As he came in, a shell burst and his leg was blown off, just like that. I was hiding as best I could, lying flat on the ground, but a piece of a shell cut through my thigh. I was screaming myself now and my father bandaged my leg with a towel. He carried me out of the room, and outside there were people crying ‘Come and help us, please help us.’” Lying on the ground, Kamel Saad could see the burning conference room.

“There were people carrying their children who didn’t seem to understand that the children were dead, that they had no heads or arms. I didn’t know who was dead or wounded. There was blood everywhere and people were shouting, ‘God help us, please help us.’ But no help came right away because people were looking after their own families.”

The last Israeli shell fell at 2.25 p.m. The bodies still in the conference room were now on fire, cremated by the burning roof that had crashed upon them. In the restaurant — once an ornate Fijian-style barn with a sloping roof — heaps of dead lay piled together, their arms wrapped around each other. Colonel Wame wept openly. One of the Hizbollah men who fired the mortars was later seen by a Fijian soldier running into the Qana camp to find his whole family dead. “These are my people,” he kept shouting. When the first UN soldiers arrived to help, they found more dead than wounded; the Israeli proximity shells had seen to that. Several of the soldiers just sat down and put their heads in their hands.

The news agencies would later say that at least 100 died. The United Nations sent 75 body bags out of Qana but many were filled with the corpses of three, even four babies. The Lebanese army compiled a list of 84 names of dead, including those of two children, Aboudi and Hadi, from the Bitar family, who had arrived in Lebanon from their American home only days earlier. Their 90-year-old grandmother had pleaded with their Lebanese-born parents in Detroit to send them to Qana so that she could see them before she died. She lost an arm in the Israeli massacre but survived. The children died. A list of missing people — and a body found outside the camp more than two weeks later — suggests

that up to 140 civilians may have been massacred by the Israeli shellfire.

Haj Azam from Siddiqin lost his granddaughter and her husband and their 20-day-old baby and two brothers. Nayla Berji lost 16 members of her family: they included her father, Abbas, her sister-in-law Fatmi, her brother Hussein, his daughter, Manal, her other brother, Mustapha, his wife, Leila, her sister Ghada, and her nine-month-old son, Hassan, along with Nayla’s niece Skayneh and four cousins. In all, Saadallah Balhas lost 31 members of his family. When he talked for the first time about the massacre, he asked only that as many as possible of their names should be published, as a memorial to them: they include his wife, Zeinab, his sons Ghalib, Fayad Mohamed, Ibrahim and five-year-old Mahmoud, and his daughters Nayla, Fatmi, Zohra, Amal and six-year-old Khadijeh. His son Ali’s wife, Zohra, died. So did their six-year-old son Abbas, five-year-old Fatmi and four-month-old Hassan. Saadallah’s brother Mohamed was killed, as was his brother Rahamatallah and his wife and all his five children, along with the daughter and son of one of his children.

The Israelis blamed the Hizbollah for the slaughter, claiming their artillery had fired into the camp owing to technical malfunctions while shooting at the source of the Katyushas, and insisted that there was no “mother of Ka’amel” over Qana during the day. The UN videotape proved conclusively that the Israelis did use pilotless aircraft over Qana on April 18 — the Israelis changed their story when they learned of the tape. UN investigators stated that 13 Israeli shells had hit the Qana compound, eight of them fitted with the deadly proximity fuses. It was “unlikely,” their report concluded, that the massacre was an “error.” The Hizbollah denied that any of its members had fired Katyushas or mortars from the area of the UN camp. The United States refused to condemn Israel or the slaughter; the State Department spokesmen said, “You don’t lecture your friends” and Washington continued to support Israel’s military operation in Lebanon.

Its name, Operation Grapes of Wrath, was taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, which is filled with blood, Biblical ire and promises of God’s vengeance. Chapter 32, the song of Moses before he dies leading his Jewish people towards the promised land, speaks of those who will be destroyed by the wrath of God. “*The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs,*” says Verse 25.

Could there be a better description of those 17 minutes at Qana? ♦

*“There were pieces of meat, bodies without arms, corpses without heads. I tried to get to the clinic and I found my son Ali alive. He took me by the arm and started to show me the corpses, to identify them. He would say: ‘This is your son Ghalib, he is dead.’ Then he would point to a girl and say: ‘This is little Khadijeh, she is dead, too, and ‘This is your wife, Zeinab, she is dead.’”*

# TWENTY-EIGHT TET, TRUTH IS ST

*On January 31, 1968, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong attacked the U.S. Embassy during the celebration of the Lunar New Year. When the smoke had cleared, military analysts realized now that the NVA and Vietcong won a critical psychological victory. Twenty-eight years later, a former ABC News correspondent in Vietnam for ABC and NBC News, recalls the way it was at the U.S. Embassy that night.*

**THERE WOULD** be no truce for Tet 1968. The North Vietnamese artillery attack on Khe Sanh during the afternoon of January 30 made sure of that. ABC News cameraman Peter Leydon and I dove into a trench as shells rained in. We weren't hurt, but the lens of our 16mm film camera was broken off. We were there to cover the expected big push against Khe Sanh, but without a camera we were out of business and would have to return to Saigon for repairs. We caught a medevac chopper flying back to Danang with wounded Marines, and connected with the C-130 "milk run" back to Saigon that night. Flying the length of Vietnam, it seemed as if the whole country was under attack. As we took off, the Danang Airbase was taking incoming rockets. Flying over Nha Trang, we could see fires blazing and hear about the attacks in radio contact with ground control. Thirty-six provincial capitals and 64 district towns would be attacked before dawn.

In the Stanley Kubrick film, *Full Metal Jacket*, a U.S. Marine combat correspondent is seen talking about the Tet Offensive, and he says, "the civilian press are pissing their pants." Well hardly, Stanley. Any journalist with decent sources was expecting something big at Tet. The ABC bureau was on full alert, R&Rs were canceled, and I had celebrated Christmas with my kids in nearby Kuala Lumpur on December 1, so as to be ready for the big push when it came sometime before, during, or after Tet.

1968 would be the Year of the Monkey. It was to be the year we all experienced more history than we could digest. Only General William Westmoreland and President Lyndon Johnson seemed oblivious to the intelligence reports pouring into MACV headquarters on a suspected enemy buildup. General Westmoreland had joined President Johnson in selling the Vietnam War to Americans at home. Westmoreland spoke to Congress and the National Press Club in November, and he painted a rosy picture. President Johnson had enlisted the general in his spin campaign to put the war in its most favorable light. In his State of the Union address just days before Tet, President Johnson did not tell Ameri-



# TEN YEARS AFTER TILL A CASUALTY

*ambassy in Saigon and over 100 other targets during their Tet Offensive, named after analysts called the offensive a military defeat for the enemy, but there's little doubt eight years later, Don North, a Canadian who spent three years as a reporter in morning and says the flak is still affecting news coverage of U.S. military activities*

cans what his advisors were telling him, "... expect a big enemy offensive, there are hard times ahead in Vietnam."

Lulled by the optimism of the President and the U.S. Commander in Vietnam, the events of January 31st would horrify Americans.

**A**t 2.45 a.m. on January 31st, 1968, 19 Vietcong sappers of the C-10 Battalion wheeled up to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in a truck and a taxicab and opened fire with AK-47 machine guns. That moment would be the beginning of the end for U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

It would probably be the most important news story I would ever cover. It would also spark the most bitter criticism American journalists covering any war would hear ... a bad rap for the news media that lingers almost 29 years later.

Two American MPs returned the fire but were cut down as the VC blew a hole in the wall and entered the embassy compound.

Sp.4 Charles Daniel, of Durham, NC, and Private Bill Sebast, of Albany, NY, were the first of seven American soldiers to die that morning at the embassy. Before they died, they killed the two leaders of the VC assault team. Seventeen of the attackers would be killed and two others wounded and captured, and would never be heard of again as they disappeared in the Saigon prison system.

Barry Zorthian, the chief U.S. embassy spokesman, from his home a few blocks away, alerted news bureaus to the attack by phone about 3 a.m. Zorthian had few details, but he told us what he knew ... the embassy was being attacked, and there was shooting.

ABC News Bureau chief Dick Rosenbaum called me after Zorthian called him, and by 3.30 with cameraman Leydon and a new camera, I was heading for the embassy in the ABC News jeep. Just off Tu Do Street, as we were about three blocks from the embassy, somebody — VC, ARVN, police, or U.S. MPs — opened up on us with an automatic weapon. A couple of rounds pinged off the hood of the jeep.

I killed the lights and reversed out of range. We returned to the ABC Bureau to wait for first light around 6 a.m. This time we walked, and as we approached the

embassy, heavy firing could be heard as tracer bullets cut into the pink dawn sky.

The embassy wasn't the only story; at about the same time, other VC units hit Tan Son Nhut Airport, the Presidential Palace, and the National Radio Station.

The importance of the U.S. Embassy as an enemy target was enormous. It had been completed three months earlier for \$2.6 million. Its six-story chancery building loomed over Saigon like an impregnable fortress, a constant reminder of the American presence, prestige, and power. Never mind that Nha Trang or Ban Me Thout or Bien Hoa were also under attack that morning. Most Americans couldn't pronounce their names, let alone understand their importance. But the U.S. Embassy in Saigon? For many Americans, it may have been the first understandable battle of the Vietnam War. And for once, this was a story we could walk to, just four blocks from the ABC bureau in the Caravelle Hotel.

**A**s dawn broke, I joined a group of U.S. MPs moving up to the embassy front gate. I started my tape

*“This was the turning point of the war. It could have been the turning point for success, but it was the turning point for failure. By virtue of the early reporting of the war, which was gloom and doom and which gave the impression that Americans were being defeated on the battlefield, it swayed public opinion to the point that political authority made the decision to withdraw.”*

recorder for ABC Radio as the MPs loudly cursed the “ARVN” (Army Republic of Vietnam) who were supposed to provide embassy security. The MPs claimed the ARVN “D Dee’d” (Vietnamese war slang for running away under fire) after the first shots were fired. VC tracer bullets were still coming from the embassy compound, and, from across the street, someone was returning fire. We were in a cross-fire. Crawling up with me to the gate was Peter Arnett of associated Press, who was in a jovial mood. Peter had been covering the war for more than five years and, lying in the gutter of Phyl Bu Trong Street that morning with the MPs, he knew it was the big story. Several MPs rushed past, one of them carrying a VC sapper piggy-back style. The VC was badly wounded and bleeding. He wore black pajamas and an enormous red ruby ring.

I interviewed the MPs and recorded their radio conversation with others inside the embassy gates. They believed the VC were in the chancery building itself, an impression that later proved false. A helicopter landed on the embassy roof, and troops started working down the six floors. MP Dave Lamborn got orders on the field radio from an officer inside the compound. “This is Waco, Roger. Can you get in the gate now? Take a force in there and clean out the embassy, like now. There will be choppers on the roof and troops working down. Be careful we don’t hit our own people. Over.”

“Okay, how much film have we got left,” I shouted to cameraman Peter Leyden as we prepared to rush the gates with the MPs. “I’ve got one mag (400 feet) how many do you have,” he replied. There was no time to argue about whose responsibility it was to have brought the film.

“We’re on the biggest story of the war with one can of film, so it’s one take of everything, including my standupper.”

I stepped over the Great Seal of the United States which had been blasted off the embassy wall, and we rushed through the main gate into the embassy garden. It was as UPI’s Kate Webb, in the best description of the morning, said, “like a butcher shop in Eden.”

As helicopters continued to land troops on the roof, we hunkered down on the grass with a group of MPs to watch and describe the action. The MPs were firing into a small villa on the embassy ground where they said the VC were making a last stand. Tear gas canisters were fired through the windows, but the gas drifted through the entire garden.

Colonel George Jacobson, the U.S. mission coordinator, lived there, and he suddenly appeared at a window. An MP threw him a gas mask and a .45 pistol. Colonel Jacobson was on the second floor, and three VC were believed to be on the first floor and would likely be driven upstairs by the tear gas. It was high drama, but our ABC camera rolled film on it sparingly.

I continued to describe everything I saw into a tape

recorder, often choking on the tear gas. I could read the embassy I.D. card in the wallet of Nguyen Van De, whose bloody body sprawled beside me on the lawn. De was later identified as an embassy driver who often chauffeured the ambassador. The MPs told me he had shot at them during the early fighting and was probably the “inside” man for the attackers.

I was distracted watching the biggest frog I had ever seen hopping and splashing through pools of thick blood on the lawn. It was one of those frozen images on the wide screen of your life that never gets properly filed away in the computer of your mind and keeps coming back at odd times.

A long burst of automatic fire snapped me back. The last VC still in action rushed up the stairs firing blindly at Col. Jacobson, but missed. The Colonel later told me, “We saw each other at the same time. He missed me, and I fired one shot at him point blank with the .45.”

**O**n the last 30 feet of film, I recorded my closing remarks or “standup-closer” in the embassy garden. *“Since the Lunar New Year, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese have proved they are capable of bold and impressive military moves that Americans here never dreamed could be achieved. Whether they can sustain this onslaught for long, remains to be seen. But whatever turn the war now takes, the capture of the U.S. Embassy here for almost seven hours is a psychological victory that will rally and inspire the Vietcong. — Don North, ABC News, Saigon.”*

Not a brilliant analysis, but an honest attempt to put the story in some perspective even in those early hours of the offensive makes a first draft of history.

A month later, when the last enemy troops were overcome in Hue, the story of Tet was a clear-cut American military victory but psychologically a decisive defeat. In the wake of Tet, U.S. strategy was subjected to a new and searching re-examination.

My instant analysis in the carnage of the embassy garden that morning never made it on ABC News. Worried about “editorializing” by a correspondent on a sensitive story, someone at ABC killed the on-camera close.

Ironically, the closer and other out-takes of the story would end up in the Simon Grinberg film library in New York, where it was later found and used by Peter Davis for his Academy Award-winning film, *Hearts and Minds*.

The rest of the story, however, fared well. The film from all three networks arrived on the same plane in Tokyo for processing, causing a mad competitive scramble to be first film on satellite for the 7 p.m. (EST) news programs in the States. Because we had only 400 feet to process and cut, ABC News made the satellite in time and the story led *The ABC Evening News with Bob*

*Young*. NBC and CBS missed and had to run catch-up specials on the embassy attack later in the evening.

At 9.15 a.m. in Saigon, the embassy was officially declared secure again. At 9.20, General Westmoreland strode through the gate in his clean and carefully starched fatigues, flanked by grimy and bloody U.S. MPs and Marines who had been fighting since 3 a.m.

Westmoreland was popular with most of us in the news media and was usually ready for an interview. Standing in the rubble he declared: “No enemy got in the embassy building. It’s a relatively small incident. A group of sappers blew a hole in the wall and crawled in, and they were all killed. Don’t be deceived by this incident.”

I couldn’t believe it, Westmoreland was still saying everything was just fine. When I produced a TV documentary on the Tet Offensive 10 years later that included an interview with the retired general, he was still bad-mouthing the media for the events of that morning.

“This was the turning point of the war,” he told me. “It could have been the turning point for success, but it was the turning point for failure. By virtue of the early reporting of the war, which was gloom and doom and which gave the impression that Americans were being defeated on the battlefield, it swayed public opinion to the point that political authority made the decision to withdraw.”

**T**wenty-eight years after Tet, most U.S. Army officers who served in Vietnam share Westmoreland’s grim view of the media performance there. Retired General Douglas Kinnard, in his book *The War Managers*, which polled the 173 Army generals who commanded in Vietnam, said that 89 percent of them expressed negative feelings toward the press and a startling 91 percent were particularly negative about TV news coverage.

General Kinnard said that the importance of the press in swaying public opinion was a myth, fostered by the press itself to increase its importance. However, Kinnard says it was important for the government to perpetuate that myth so it could say that it was not the real situation in Vietnam that Americans reacted against, but rather the press portrayal of that situation.

The bad rap we got in the wake of Tet 1968 and the attempt to shoot the messenger by General Westmoreland have soured the relationship between the U.S. military and the news media to this day.

The fallout of Tet 1968 is still with us, and censorship by denial of access is the result. Where American interests are at stake, the American public should be trusted to weigh the evidence. If TV reports of battle are too much reality, then war is indeed hell. News coverage didn’t make it so. ♦

# CONSCIOUS OF THE TROUBLES

*For more than two decades the British government has been trying to find a balance of power in Northern Ireland that will suit both Protestant and Catholic communities. So far, it has proved elusive, wrote **John Gray**, of Toronto's Globe and Mail in an article that won him a Canadian National Newspaper Award in 1990.*

**THE STRANGE**, sad story of a beautiful land and the loyalties of its people is painted everywhere in large and defiant letters, in vivid images. To the outsider they are incomprehensible tribal incantations. To those who live in Belfast, they reinforce 300 years of history, with all its loves and hates and desperate fears. No Surrender. Ireland Unfree Shall Never be at Peace. 1690 God Save the Queen. Out of the Ashes Came the Provos. Hang All IRA Murderers. Welcome to the Loyalist Heartland of Ulster. Shankill Road No Surrender. IRA 1 RUC 0. Join the UDA. Tiochfaidh Ar La — Our Day Will Come. One Faith One Cross. Taig Scum. Belfast says No.

There are giant paintings that cover a building: King Billy's triumph for Protestantism at the battle of the Boyne in 1690, masked IRA gunmen preparing to murder for the sake of a republican dream, Union Jacks, young men who starved themselves to death in prison.

On the few occasions when there is even a shred of humor, it is grim. On a wall in the Falls Road there is a sign that says Semtex is Ozone Friendly. That is not really funny: Semtex is the gift of the now vanished Communist government of Czechoslovakia to the world of terrorism, a high-powered and almost undetectable explosive that has killed scores in car bombs throughout Northern Ireland.

These are the mean streets, the streets that shape the country, though most of the people of Northern Ireland are never there; they know what

*“On Kimberly Street, as in every other mixed neighborhood of Northern Ireland, there was a low-grade war. The kids were the worst — ‘I thought I was a punching bag until I was 16,’ Mr. O’Reilly says. Once he and several friends were shot at. The adults were not much better. Led by a pipe band and a thundering lambeg drum whose sound still gives him the shivers, Protestant parades would detour to march menacingly up to the Catholic houses. The O’Reilly family finally moved out after Protestant vandals broke every window in the house.*



they know from newspapers and television.

A lucky visitor is hardly aware of The Troubles. Away from the newspapers and television, almost everywhere you go there is a deceptive normality about the place.

The green hills roll endlessly into each other. Hedges and stone walls and wandering country lanes divide the peaceful patchwork quilt. Nobody ever calls the North the Emerald Isle, because history has made it different. But it is the same island, and it has the same soft beauty.

As anywhere else on the island, the practiced tippler will find the easiest avenue into a conversation is through a pint of Guinness and into a debate on the nature of the rich stout that is forever Ireland. They will tell you how it has to be drawn from the cask with care, in stages, and that if the froth is right you can draw your initial with your finger on the froth and it will remain legible until the bottom of the glass.

It is not a great leap from the dark mysteries of Guinness to the beauty of the island and expressions of sympathy for a visitor who must make his home in London. It is all more welcome than the daily news.

The places that have put Belfast on the consciousness of the world — the Falls Road, the Crumlin Road, Ballymurphy, Andersonstown, Ardoyne, Shankill — are where the Protestant and Roman Catholic working classes live, each locked into its own ghetto, the ghettos divided by a 10-metre steel-and-concrete “Peace Line.”

Elsewhere there are few slogans on the walls, little barbed wire, no carpet of broken glass on the streets. And the pubs and drinking clubs are not divided by religion. Waves of sectarian sympathy wash into the plush-east corners of the land, but the war itself is working class.

One of the most-wanted men of the Irish Republican Army lived for months in the middle-class comfort and three-piece respectability of Belfast’s Malone Road area because it never occurred to his neighbors that a terrorist might be living in their kind of neighborhood.

As Aidan O’Reilly says: “Money transcends these stupid things.” If not a lot of money, then a little money and some distance. Out in the neat suburb of Carryduff, where Mr. O’Reilly, an ambulance driver, lives with his wife Heather and their 2-year-old son Christopher, Ballymurphy and Shankill are a world away. Life in Carryduff is, as he says, very normal.

It is a mixed Protestant and Catholic area, and when the neighbors get together everyone is careful not to mention politics or religion. There are enough remin-

ders of Northern Ireland’s problems in the newspapers and on television.

The O’Reillys are a mirror of the neighborhood: he is Catholic, she is Protestant. Christopher will go to the integrated school that is just down the road and, with luck, his father says, “he won’t have the experiences I had.”

Even if he escapes those experiences, when Christopher finishes school his father will urge him to leave, as the Irish have done for generations. Mr. O’Reilly’s older brother is in Calgary, a sister lives in Britain, and he thinks a younger brother and sister may leave soon.

“The whole idea is to get educated and leave.”

Mr. O’Reilly would leave for Calgary tomorrow, but his wife, who grew up in middle-class comfort, is happy enough in Carryduff. She has no demons to flee.

He grew up in a predominantly Protestant neighborhood in East Belfast, where they still talk about largely Catholic West Belfast as “the Irish side.”

It was not too bad until he was in his teens, in the late 1960s, at the beginning of the Catholic-led civil rights movement. The Troubles began, and “suddenly we had to choose sides.”

On Kimberly Street, as in every other mixed neighborhood of Northern Ireland, there was a low-grade war. The kids were the worst — “I thought I was a punching bag until I was 16,” Mr. O’Reilly says. Once he and several friends were shot at.

The adults were not much better. Led by a pipe band and a thundering lambeg drum whose sound still gives him the shivers, Protestant parades would detour to march menacingly up to the Catholic houses. The O’Reilly family finally moved out after Protestant vandals broke every window in the house. Elsewhere, the same kind of thing happened to Protestants, of course.

Everything is history in Northern Ireland, and everyone has a different starting point. Nationalist political leader John Hume says despairingly: “Our respect for the past paralyzes our attitude to the future.”

Mr. Hume may be right. But respect for the past — sometimes it seems like wallowing in the past — is comforting. It can make the present understandable and even bearable.

For Aidan O’Reilly and thousands of his generation, history is places such as Kimberly Street and the start of the Troubles. For the Protestants in the Shankill, history is the paintings of King William of Orange astride his white horse at the Boyne. No surrender in 1690, no surrender in 1990.

There is a corner of Milltown cemetery in the heart of West Belfast that is a monument to Northern Ireland’s Republican and Catholic history.

There is the grave of Bobby Sands, the first of the 10 hunger strikers who died in prison in 1981, the grave of another who was hanged in 1798, the graves of three IRA gunmen who were killed by the British Army in Gibraltar in 1988, and a grave site reserved for Tom Williams, an IRA man who was hanged in 1942 and is still buried in Belfast jail.

It goes on for row after row. Murdered. Killed in Action. Shot dead by the British. Died on a prison ship. And there are lingering signs of paint bombs on a few of them, for one man’s hero is another man’s terrorist.

And high up in the Belfast sky there is the constant and unmistakable sound of the army helicopter that always hovers in search of trouble in the streets below. This is the newest of high technology in search of a peace that has eluded Ireland since the larger island to the east claimed a role here more than eight centuries ago.

An invading army from England first landed in Ireland in about the year 1170. Since then the struggle has never really stopped. They still fight about power and land and religion with a ferocity that is frightening to recall.

Ireland’s Celtic inhabitants were stubborn about their independence and about their religion. Britain became Protestant and Ireland remained Catholic. Even the terrors of Oliver Cromwell did not cure the Irish of that. Then Britain tried to overwhelm them by numbers. Boatloads of Scottish Protestants were sent to establish a plantation in the northeast corner of Ireland that is now Northern Ireland. Catholic graffiti in Belfast occasionally describes Protestants as “planters” and “visitors,” as though they arrived just last year for a temporary stay. In fact they began arriving in 1606, at about the time Samuel de Champlain was founding a shaky little settlement at what is now Quebec City.

For Britain, the solution of the Irish problem was finally partition of the island. The dividing line separated 26 largely Catholic counties in the south and north west from the six largely Protestant counties of the north east that remained a province of the United Kingdom.

But history was not so easily settled, for “largely” is not all. The Protestants who had been a minority in the whole island were at last a comfortable and unthreatened majority in the north.

But there remained a Catholic minority, about a third of Northern Ireland’s 1.5 million people. The civil rights struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s were about

blatant discrimination in housing, in education, in employment, and before the law. When those complaints were rejected by a majority that would not relinquish its advantages, the Troubles began. And once they began they could not be stopped, because on one side or the other there is always a death to avenge.

South of the village of Crossmaglen the road crosses into the Republic and then back again before you have any idea you are in another country. Only someone who knows the area can tell you where the border goes — from that fence, along the side of the barn and then the concrete wall to the middle of the road, down the road for half a kilometer and then left along that hedgerow.

But it is not what it seems. Crossmaglen is Bandit Country. The village square is dominated by a police station that looks like a fortress of barbed wire and concrete, a steel-plated lookout tower, aerials, television cameras.

On the highest of the surrounding hills are fortified lookouts from which British soldiers survey the countryside. The soldiers are usually flown in by helicopter because even armored vehicles are easy targets for bombs on these narrow roads. Local history is a sniper here, a car bomb there, and a mortar attack from behind that hill.

**A**t the headquarters of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Belfast, they assure you that the crime rate in Northern Ireland is lower than anywhere else in Britain. Homicides per 100,000 of population: Detroit 59, Washington 31, Northern Ireland 7. Anyway, less than 10 per cent of crime relates to terrorism.

Still, the toll is grim. Since the Troubles began, more than 2,800 police, soldiers, paramilitary activists and innocent civilians have died as a result of shooting or bombs. More than 33,000 have been wounded.

In the package of crime statistics distributed by the RUC, it is carefully noted that in the same period car accidents accounted for 5,500 deaths and 120,000 injuries.

But of course you don't think about car accidents the same way. They are, after all, accidents. You do not have patrols of men with dogs and automatic weapons sweeping through the commercial centre of Belfast to stop car accidents.

It pervades the society. A few days after two men had been shot on the Antrim Road within an hour of each other, several people in North Belfast were talking about adapting their lives to a society where there are deliberate assassinations and random sectarian killings.

You stick with your own kind. You drive the children rather than letting them walk or take the bus. You make

sure you don't go drinking in pubs and clubs that you don't know; otherwise you might not get home again.

"You're always listening to the news," one elderly woman said. "And I for one don't go to bed at all without ringing the whole family to see that they're all in their own homes and safe. And I suppose there are thousands like me around here."

For the better part of two decades the British government has been trying to find some balance of power in Northern Ireland that would suit both the Protestant and Catholic communities. So far a solution has proved elusive. In deference to Catholic complaints, the limited self-government enjoyed by Northern Ireland was suspended in 1972. Everything except municipal government now is run from London. Every attempt to give the Catholic community some share of power has been fought bitterly by the Protestant majority.

There was an attempt at a solution in 1985. To the consternation of the Protestants in the various "Unionist" parties, London and Dublin agreed that they should consult regularly about Northern Ireland affairs and they should co-operate on security along their unmanned and unmarked border.

The Catholic Nationalist leaders were delighted; the Protestant Loyalists were not; for the Protestants this was involving a foreign government in Northern Ireland's affairs. The result has been a stalemate.

When Rhonda Paisley talks of Northern Ireland's troubles, there seems at first a tone of conciliation and change. She is 31, an artist, and a Unionist city councillor in Belfast. An exhibition of her paintings has just opened in Dublin.

She talks of the young people of Northern Ireland who do not care about the quarrels of the past and who just want to get on with their lives.

There is no justification for killing on either side, she says. "Catholic tears are no different from Protestant tears."

It is important to understand Ms. Paisley's background. For more than 20 years her father has been the single most powerful figure in Northern Ireland. Rev. Ian Paisley, head of the Democratic Unionist Party, head of his own Free Presbyterian Church, is the implacable enemy of republicanism, nationalism and Catholicism.

British leaders have assumed that Mr. Paisley himself will not be won over. But they have always hoped that a younger generation of Unionists would view the island differently.

Ms. Paisley is clearly different. Her father has made a career of defiance and rage; he describes the Catholic Church as the whore of Babylon and the Pope as the anti-Christ. By contrast, Ms Paisley is quite moderate. But on the essentials of Northern Ireland politics, nothing has changed. North and South can be good neighbors, but there can be nothing beyond co-operation, she says.

She shrugs off Catholic concerns about rule by the Protestant majority. She is contemptuous of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Nationalist political leader John Hume has been the tribune of moderate Catholic nationalism for almost as long as Ian Paisley has been leading Northern Ireland's Protestants. He was one of those who pushed hardest for the Anglo-Irish Agreement. By rights he should be dispirited, but he doesn't seem to be. He thinks that somehow time is on his side. Northern Ireland's problem is out of date and the quarrel is out of date, he says. He returns again and again to Europe. If Greeks, Italians, French and Germans can forge new relationships, why not the two parts of Ireland?

"We need an agreement on how to share the island. Then the future will take care of the relationship, because, having extracted the poison, people will grow together at their own speed."

There is not so much optimism when Rev. Tom Toner talks about the future. In Belfast's Andersonstown he lives at the sharp end of the Northern Ireland problem. In St. Agnes parish the unemployment rate among young men is 35 to 40 per cent.


"If you scattered 100,000 jobs around, that would make a difference," Father Toner says. "The whole thing would be transformed."

At that, Andersonstown is comparatively lucky. In areas like Ballymurphy the unemployment rate is closer to 80 per cent. Some of them will never get jobs.

**B**elfast seems to be riding something of an economic boom these days, but that is not a promise of jobs for everyone. Some of the jobless, the Rev. Toner says, are afraid to leave the comfort of their own neighborhood because of the danger of sectarian attacks. Some, because of lack of education, do not qualify for work. And some have been defeated by the despair of an underachieving society.

Father Toner has seen it all. He has lived in the parish all of his life. It is the kind of place you leave if you can. Only one family remains from the time when he was growing up. He has been outspoken in his condemnation of terrorism, which has won him no friends in the IRA. But he was the prison chaplain at Long Kesh when the 10 young hunger strikers died. He has had to conduct funeral services for young IRA men shot by British soldiers and he has had to comfort their grieving parents.

To the outsider it seems an unreasonable and intolerable burden. Father Toner smiles. "We are always conscious of The Troubles. But you can't afford to be obsessed with it." But his is a sad smile. ♦



*"On the highest of the surrounding hills are fortified lookouts from which British soldiers survey the countryside. The soldiers are usually flown in by helicopter because even armored vehicles are easy targets for bombs on these narrow roads. Local history is a sniper here, a car bomb there, and a mortar attack from behind that hill."*

BOSNIA

# WOUNDS OF WAR

*Bosnia is overwhelmed with the physically and mentally maimed, and their numbers will rise even if the NATO peace plan holds. Relief groups are preparing for the inevitable increase in injuries and deaths from land mines as people move more freely and for a surge in mental illness as people struggle to rebuild. Mark Fritz, of Associated Press, who won a Pulitzer prize for his reporting from Rwanda, looks into the lingering wounds of war*

**JASMINA** remembers waiting patiently in line on a pleasant spring day to buy bread at a shop near Sarajevo's main square. She doesn't remember hearing the mortar shell. She only remembers the bodies scattered along the gray flagstones. She remembers lying in a river of blood, her left leg linked only by threads of flesh below the knee. She remembers her husband frantically flagging down a car, the unbelievable pain during the ride to the hospital, the doctors struggling for three days to save her leg, the news that gangrene had set in. She remembers telling them that, yes, if they had to, they could amputate her leg where her hip met her thigh. After 15 minutes of surgical sawing, it was gone.

Midhat Kabahija is building arms for Bosnia. And legs. He is an orthopedic technician at a new prosthetics clinic that is to open the first week of January.

Unlike an overworked state-run factory, which produces crude and temporary prostheses, this new workshop is stocked with sophisticated German-built equipment purchased by humanitarian groups.

Sometime in January, Kabahija will invite the first name on a carefully compiled waiting list to the clinic. He will precisely measure the diameter of the short stump below the patient's hip and build a gypsum model of a new thigh.

He will wrap the model in a cone of high-density plastic and connect it to a powerful machine that will suck the air from between the gypsum model and the plastic cone until the latter forms tightly around the

former. He will scrape out the gypsum and replace it with more plastic, then bolt it to a titanium joint connected to an aluminum ankle attached to an articulated plastic foot meant to move pretty much the way a foot is supposed to move.

Finally, the fully assembled limb will be attached with high-grade leather straps to the left hip of patient No.1. And for the first time since May 27, 1992, Jasmina Dzozo-Hajdarpasic will be able to discard the painful, ill-fitting prosthetic device she now uses. She will be able to walk relatively normally and painlessly past the shell-shattered buildings slowly crumbling along the sloping, slush-covered streets of Sarajevo.

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An estimated 250,000 people have died in the Bosnian war, and many more than that have been wounded. Wounded typically outnumber deaths by a 4 to 1 ratio, said Beat Schweizer, head of International Red Cross operations in eastern Bosnia.

Peacetime likely will increase the numbers as refugees begin moving about more, with many walking into mine fields or stumbling over unexploded artillery shells. "You're going to have kids running into mine fields," says Gregory Roath of Catholic Relief Services, which is financing the prosthetics clinic with the Islamic aid group Merhamet.

Land mines remain the leading cause of death and injury in Kuwait, nearly five years after the Gulf War. In Cambodia, which endured three wars over the past quarter-century, one in every 236 people is an amputee. With the new Bosnian peace accord, the World Health Organization and several other humanitarian groups already have begun to shift focus from emergency health care to rehabilitation.

The prosthesis workshop so far has enough donations to provide free artificial limbs to only the first 180 people, a mere fraction of the number who need them. Children, who constantly must be refitted with new limbs as they grow, are particularly costly.

People are desperate for the devices, says Kabahija, the technician. A few weeks ago, while the place was still being built, a woman walked in holding a grenade with her one good arm. She wanted a new left arm — right now. An offer to sit and chat, a cup of sweet coffee, an explanation of the shortage and the demand, and Kabahija survived the confrontation intact.

"When peace comes, these amputees will be forgotten because there is so much to do," Kabahija says, while carpenters and electricians put the finishing touches on the gleaming new complex of rooms in a renovated building downtown. "They will be angry because they will carry the reminder of this war to the grave. In such a small nation, there are too many invalids. The whole nation is an invalid."

Less visible than a crippling wound, but sometimes just as disabling, thousands of people are expected to suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome. Studies have shown that more people suffer mental collapses after a war ends, as they move from the primal task of survival to the human tendency to remember.

"You're going to see an enormous increase," says Dr. Willy Janssen, head of the WHO office in Bosnia.

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Fatima Mustaforski is a social worker at a city-run clinic just off what Sarajevans call "Sniper Alley," a

name inspired by Bosnian Serb sharpshooters once posted in the high-rises on the city's fringe neighborhoods. Every day, dozens of people climb the steep concrete staircase to the open, cluttered office where seven people try to solve the same unsolvable problems: not enough food, firewood, money or housing.

"A lot of people come just to tell their problems," Mustaforski says. "They know we can't help them."

With the NATO peace accord, there has been a marked change in attitude. People are angrier, she says. "People are depressed because they only think about their problems now. A month ago, they only thought about their lives."

Some people who have lost loved ones just come to helplessly commiserate. "This place is so open and sometimes people want to say intimate things but they are embarrassed. We need some closed spaces," she says, gesturing to the room full of eavesdropping occupants, heads tilted as she talks. "This place also needs a psychiatrist."

Dealing with the children who have lost both parents in the war is the hardest part, she said. Sometimes, listening to so many people with so many problems drives her to distraction. "They say: 'I want money. I want firewood.' I want to shout: 'I want money, too! My flat is also cold!'"

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When Branko Bjelica rests his elbows on the tiny table in the tiny two-room flat he shares with his mother, the coffee cups rattle. Bjelica is a slight man with thick glasses, thinning hair and a haunted look. He is a 33-year-old bundle of shakes and twitches. He is an ethnic Serb, but he never left Sarajevo to join other Serbs in shelling this city where people are now mainly Slavic Muslims and Croats. Instead, he stayed in his apartment and listened with increasing agitation to the shelling outside.

"There were no warnings. It came like a storm," he says breathlessly. "I was scared. You can see it in a horror movie, in books. I had never heard these noises. Not in real life. They can shell from any position. It is easy for them to hit any apartment they want."

Bjelica, an economics graduate from Sarajevo University, expected the war to end in a few months. He became very paranoid, talking to himself and peering into the toilet and behind doors. He alarmed everybody on his floor by locking himself in a neighbor's apartment. Earlier this year, his mother and friends put him in the psychiatric unit of the local hospital. He was there two months, a time spent mostly sleeping. "It was physical," he says of the reason for his stay. "It was the pressure of war problems."

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When war broke out, Jasmina Dzozo-Hajdarpasic and her husband, Husein, had to spend most of their time inside their apartment, which meant their son Sabuhudin couldn't see his playmates. So the parents tried to play as much as they could with the boy. The bread line massacre of 1992 killed at least 16 people, wounded hundreds and for the first time riveted the world's attention on the nascent war in Bosnia. It led to Western sanctions against Serbia-dominated Yugoslavia.

When Jasmina lost her leg, she relied on her husband for comfort while she recovered. When Husein went off to fight with the Bosnian government army against the Serbs who shelled the bread line, it was up

to her alone to raise the boy and search for food and firewood. Husein died at the front in 1993. Jasmina said she was determined not to let his loss and her grief cripple the boy.

Jasmina is a lawyer by trade who has not practiced since war broke out. Instead, she spends time with her son. She has organized a volleyball team made up of amputees, called Speed. She is studying photography and takes English lessons. She just completed a computer training class sponsored by Project Hope.

"Of course life is unfair, but I'm not the only victim in Bosnia," she says. "I have my son and I have things that I do." Jasmina, 35, exudes an easy charisma. She is happy about the peace accord, but too pragmatic to get too optimistic. She is willing to forgive the enemy, but not forget. "I'm trying to be tough," she says with a lopsided grin she unleashes often. "And I'm succeeding."

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## ABANDONED ELDERLY PUSHED TO THE FRINGES OF SOCIETY

**VICKA BUNTIC** is a senile old woman who lives like an animal in a lightless basement as dirty and dank as the dreariest of dungeons. She lives for the charity and chat of a young woman who is paid to bring cabbage and bread to keep her alive.

The 86-year-old Buntic is living on the margins of Sarajevan society, an elderly orphan, a fragile creature with no family.

There are thousands like her in this encircled town poking its head from the heap of a four-year siege by Serb fighters so intent on capturing the town that they wrecked it.

These were old people who never married, lost their loved ones in the war or simply were abandoned by their children.

They live in nooks and back rooms and partitioned pieces of apartments so small and suffocating that they may as well be transitional coffins.

As a peace plan settles on Bosnia, the young and the strong are scrambling for stakes in a hobbled but hardened new society, one with a re-engineered ethnicity and fierce sense of survival. But the orphaned elderly float on the fringes, victims of the old days and the old ways and dependent on the kindness of strangers hired by humanitarian groups.

"Who are you? Who are you?" Vicka screams from her bed in the darkness at the two young women who take turns visiting her every day. Then

*“Delic said she thought she could maintain a certain distance from her charges when she started her job earlier this year, but now finds herself crying at home after work. ‘Sometimes they just want to talk, or show you an old photo album and pour you a cup of tea.’”*

she stumbles to her feet and closes the door so they won't leave.

“This one needs a lot of attention,” says Alma Delic, a worker for the relief group CARE Canada. “Before the war, she used to let students live in her apartment for free. But now the students have abandoned her. I don't have the strength for these cases,” she mutters to a colleague as she leaves the suffocating basement.

CARE Canada is one of the relief groups that have tried to carve out their own niches in Sarajevo, and they have chosen old folks without family. It has been caring for 2,000 of them largely confined to their homes, most of them prisoners of their minuscule flats, and is securing donations for another 3,000.

Six of those getting help from CARE Canada have committed suicide this year, most flinging themselves from the windows of high rises.

“This is a depressing period because many expected their relatives to contact them during the peace, but they didn't,” said Vukica Kurspahic, program manager for CARE Canada.

“A lot of programs are geared toward children. It's hard to find someone to care for the elderly.”

Kurspahic said her group has opened an office in the Serb side of Sarajevo. Nationalist leaders there are threatening to pull their people out rather than let them live under the Muslim-Croat federation that the NATO peace accord says will control the whole city.

“Some people criticize us because we care for Serb parents who have children on the other side,” said Deli. She thought she could maintain a certain distance from her charges when she started her job earlier this year, but now finds herself crying at home after work. “Sometimes they just want to talk, or show you an old photo album and pour you a cup of tea,” she said.

Katica Golja, 82, lives in a tiny room shaped like a shoebox that looks like it was once a small hallway of the apartment house. It is a squalid place reeking of enclosed humanity and packed with detrius and Roman Catholic icons. During one period of the war, Golja said she didn't set foot outside for two years. “I prayed for peace every day,” says the tiny woman with huge eyes, clutching a rosary. “The Red Cross gave me food. One man gave me bread every day.”

A piece of shrapnel took 60 percent of the vision in 74-year-old Katica Juric's left eye when she ventured out of her small flat for food in 1993. She has two nieces in the town of Mostar. Sometimes, she said, they write letters which are delivered by the Red Cross.

She has relatives in Croatia but hasn't heard from them. “The whole street takes care of me,” she said.

What is she expecting from the peace agreement? “A walk in front of my door with my friends in the summer,” she said.

Aleksa Ribakov lives in an immaculate apartment with a realistic model of a spider the size of an Alaskan crab crawling up one wall. Ribakov is an ethnic Russian who was a bugler in the Yugoslav National Army and has

lived in Sarajevo since 1925.

Energetic and whimsical at 88, he looks 20 years younger. He has a granddaughter in town, but says she is busy with her own two children. “They help me when they can,” he said. Ribakov said he jogs in his apartment to keep in shape. “Nobody offered to bring me food from the Red Cross,” he said. “It was hard for me to get it. I fell once on the ice and broke my hand. I'm not so strong like before.”

Jasminka Veldan, one of the CARE Canada workers, says she faces painful uncertainty on her rounds. “Very often I think I will knock on the door and there will be no answer.”

## AS NATO TROOPS ROLL IN, BOSNIAN SOLDIERS WAIT TO GO HOME

**AFTER FIGHTING** at the front, nothing irritated Zvonimir more than walking into a cafe with his dirty uniform, flak jacket and rifle and seeing young men his own age drinking espresso, flirting with girls and wearing stylish civilian clothes.

“It's like coming back from the moon. People are sitting in bars, in cafes, and I am on the mountain sitting in a hole in the ground,” he said. “I just want to change my clothes as soon as possible.”

The Croat asked that his last name not be used because he's in the Bosnian army and — after nearly four years in which he was wounded twice and watched his best friend killed in a Serb ambush — he's trying to get out. The slightly built 27-year-old with bullet wounds in both legs says he's saving money to get a certain doctor to write him a statement saying he is medically unfit to remain in the army. “There are people who are bigger than me and stronger than me working in bookshops!” he said. “I said to my friends that I am an idiot for being in the army. I missed my studies.”

While the NATO army is just beginning *its* job, many of the Bosnian government soldiers who struggled to defend their country are obsessed with ending theirs. The buzzword among the ranks is demobilization: getting out in time to get a piece of the billions of dollars in

reconstruction money heading this way.

As the ceasefire holds, sharp social divisions between the people who fought in the war and those who managed to avoid it are coming into focus.

The Bosnian government began demobilizing students and people 45 years and older in an effort to free up the manpower needed to rebuild the country. But even during the fighting, many young men were spared active duty because, whether they were architects, policemen or other civil servants, their jobs were considered crucial to keeping society functioning.

But some soldiers complain that those rules were bent and abused by people who wanted to stay out of the trenches, even though being a civilian in this Serb-encircled shooting gallery was itself an often fatal exercise. The Defense Ministry refused repeated interview requests for information on the demobilization effort and the complaints of soldiers anxious to re-enter civilian society.

Edin Tankovic, a Muslim desperate to fight the Serbs, joined the army when he turned 18 without his parent's knowledge and immediately volunteered to be a scout, the most dangerous job of all. Tankovic, now 20, was among the first round of soldiers to demobilize under the new rules a month ago. He got a student discharge to pursue studies in criminology.

He said there is jealousy in the ranks when soldiers are discharged. “A friend of mine who is a cook in our unit tried to be demobilized, but the commander said ‘No, I need a cook in peacetime, too.’”

Tankovic is bitter about the number of people who were exempt from military service and who have a head start on rebuilding their lives. “I am very angry at these people. After the war, they live better than me. I blame the government for allowing so many to avoid service.”

The war made the cities tougher, more free-wheeling places where anything can be had for a price — including freedom from military service. One 28-year-old Muslim man with a job at a major Western relief agency said he's almost embarrassed to have been making about \$500 a month for the last two years.

“There are very high tensions,” he said. “We were working for humanitarian organizations and the soldiers were in the bunkers fighting the enemy. I hid from my friends.”

He spent 18 months in the service at the outset of the war, but said he used “connections, friends and money” — about \$1,500 — to buy his way out. In order to divulge this information, he asked that his name and that of his relief group not be used.

“Unfortunately, it's common,” he said.

He said any tension between the people who fought and those who stayed behind and managed to make some money during the war is nothing compared to the schism that will exist when an estimated 1 million refugees abroad come home after avoiding the war entirely. “Especially if they come back with money,” he said. ♦