
Reflections from the Field: Ethical Challenges in Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Interventions

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CHAOS AND INTOLERANCE NOW REIGN IN KOSOVO DESPITE U.N.'S EFFORTS.

Hundreds of thousands of Albanians driven out by the Serbs have returned from refugee camps, and the Serbian and Gypsy minorities continue to be harassed and attacked. Justice is rare and court trials nearly nonexistent, so few are punished; robberies, apartment thefts, extortion and even murders take place with near impunity, some of it a function of organized crime.

—Steven Erlanger, *New York Times*, 22 November 1999

Ethics is a discipline that deals with moral duty and obligation. It also encompasses the principles of conduct governing an individual or profession. In practice, it may be more difficult to find the “least bad” option, than to judge between good and bad. I would like to compare some specific challenges to the general problem of competing goods and illustrate these challenges with three sets of vignettes from recent peacekeeping experience.

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In describing how good people make tough choices, ethicist Rushworth Kidder suggests three sets of rules for making choices. “Ends-based” thinking seeks some desirable outcome, such as the greatest good for the greatest number. “Rules-based” thinking seeks to abide by immutable rules, or in other words, do the right thing regardless of the consequences. “Care-based” thinking puts the decision-maker in the place of the subject—do to others, as you would have them do to you.¹ But in the confused world of peacekeeping we may not even recognize that fate is presenting us with choices, let alone a dilemma soluble by rules.

In my experience as a peacekeeper, the ethical challenge stems from at least three problems that are not well explained in armchair ethics texts. The first challenge derives from the fact that peacekeeping is always a third-party action. Whenever two or more parties are in conflict, there are competing ideas about good or desirable outcomes. The peacekeeper must be impartial and frequently has to find a way to reconcile the conflicting objectives sought by the parties to the conflict. Alternatively, the peacekeeping mission may pursue some righteous cause such as order or stability sought by the international community sponsoring the intervention. Despite the impartiality demanded of peacekeepers, their actions might be inimical to the interests of *all* the parties to the conflict.

The second challenge is that “good” and “bad” for the peacekeeper can change over the life of a peacekeeping mission, sometimes with startling rapidity. They may do so because spokesmen for the international community need to cloak today’s political necessity in the language of a just cause. They may change because interventions in conflict almost always represent compromises, and the terms of the compromise change over time. As it becomes possible to do more (or less), the mission’s objectives and the language of the normatively desirable may change. Rules of engagement work the same way. A tank commander and a liaison officer in a jeep may both fire in self-defense; returning fire makes more sense for someone in a tank and turning back makes more sense for someone in a jeep! The “protection” a mission can offer with unarmed observers is not the same as the protection afforded by a well-armed combat formation.

The third challenge is that things may not be as they appear to be. Information that has a bearing on good and evil, such as the wartime history of individual interlocutors, is all part of the conflict. The conflict continues after the peacekeepers arrive. People tell lies and misrepresent the truth, both about each other and about the peacekeepers. Language and culture can act as barriers to effective communication, exacerbating the lack of honesty. Finally, as parties to a conflict appeal to the international community and the international community appeals to the parties, a lot of dust is kicked up that makes it difficult to discern a good path. I will illustrate these three problems with some examples from my own time in Bosnia as a peacekeeper.

LEGITIMACY AND THE CHALLENGE OF EVIL LEADERS

A jaded political officer in the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Zagreb told me in 1995 that in the Balkans, the people are sheep and the leaders are wolves. In an intervention, we often have to deal with people in positions of authority who are morally bad, angry or spiteful, and whose actions cause harm to others. Sometimes, leaders represent “competing realities.” The Serb reality was that Prijedor was a Serb town (as it had been before the Second World War). The Muslim reality was that it was a Muslim town (it had had a Muslim mayor in 1992). The local leaders championing these competing realities had considerable popular support, however garnered. The chief of police in Prijedor and the Mayor of Sanski Most in 1996 were two such leaders. Sometimes such leaders, like the director of the Muslim Aid Society in Prijedor, are not evil, but neither are they as good as we need them to be. Sometimes we can foil their schemes by refusing to deal with them.

How do we deal with competing realities? Serbs, Croats and Muslims have good reason to see reality differently in Bosnia. With ends-based thinking, we are caught in a web of nested minorities and victims. With rules-based thinking, we have competing rules. Even the human rights protocols listed in the General Framework Agreement for Peace conflict with each other. As for care-based thinking, it is difficult to identify with people so consumed by hatred that some want revenge more than a future for their children. Kidder’s rules did not help me to decide who to help or how to act in Prijedor.

THE SERB POLICE CHIEF

Prijedor, a town in Northwest Bosnia, was one of the places where ethnic cleansing started in May 1992. You may remember the names of death camps in Keraterm, Omarska, and Lubijja. The men who led the town in 1992 were in power there when I arrived as a civil affairs officer in January 1996, before the first IFOR Battalion deployed. The challenge I faced was to deal with the leaders without enhancing their power and legitimacy. It might be seen as a short-term *versus* long-term dilemma. Was I simply holding my nose and dealing with the butchers until the peace became stable enough for the bad leaders to be snatched away to The Hague? As I came to understand the local dynamics, my perception changed. The Serbs in Prijedor saw themselves on the losing end of a struggle for survival. They felt genuinely threatened by hard-line Muslim leaders, who wanted to drive them out of Prijedor as they had driven out Muslims in 1992.

The Chief of Public Security in Serb Prijedor, Simo Drljaca, had orchestrated ethnic cleansing. He had commanded Karadzic’s bodyguard, and was controlling much of the black economy. His counterpart was the Mayor of the Muslim town

of Sanski Most. Mayor Alagic had risen to command the VII Muslim Corps, and had kept fighting two days after the final cease-fire to try to reach Prijedor. He took over Sanski Most by quiet coup in February 1996, replacing all its civilian officials by his retired corps officers. According to the International Criminal Tribunal, Alagic was not indictable as Drljaca was. His actions, however, were no less coercive. Each leader perpetuated the conflict tenaciously by violence and intimidation. Each represented, to some extent, "good" outcomes for their supporters—Drljaca the defensive objective of keeping the Muslims out, Alagic the offensive one of driving the Serbs out and returning Muslims to their homes.

All my decisions and challenges in the first six months of 1996 were shaped by this continuing conflict between Serb and Muslim interests. Refugee return was stifled. The economy was stalled. Riots were fomented on the inter-entity boundary line (IEBL). People could not cross from one side of the IEBL to the other, to work, shop or return home. The police on both sides used fear and intimidation to control people.

In July 1997, Drljaca was shot by SFOR troops trying to arrest him on a sealed indictment from The Hague. I returned to Prijedor in January 1998 to find a drastic improvement. Muslims shopped in Prijedor because the meat was cheaper. Federation license plates were common, showing movement and a return to normal. Had we delayed all this by tolerating Drljaca for 18 months? Did we have the option of removing him earlier? Under the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the parties themselves had the responsibility to arrest indicted war criminals, but it was always disingenuous to suggest that they would or could. What Bosnian authority would arrest Drljaca while he controlled the local security apparatus and protected intransigent leaders? The longer we dealt with him as a legitimate official, the greater the resistance (by Serbs and international officials alike) to forcefully remove him.

THE MUSLIM AID SOCIETY

Meetings with international officials enhanced Drljaca's legitimacy with the local population. Merely by meeting with them, peacekeepers can elevate the status of marginal players, affecting the political balance and empowering people better left out of the reconstruction process. People make deals to survive nasty, internecine conflicts. One must assume that the survivors will seldom be pure, but one has to find people to deal with, especially people representing vulnerable groups and minorities.

Before the war, there were about 40,000 Muslims in Prijedor.² Most left between 1992 and 1994. Only about 1500 self-identified non-Serb families remained by January 1996. The Muslim Aid Society *Merhamet* claimed to speak for them and aid them. Benko was the local director of *Merhamet* in Prijedor. He vis-

ited the Civil-Military Co-operation Center (CIMIC) frequently, and we became accustomed to working with him. I realized by April 1996 that we were spending a disproportionate amount of time and resources on Benko. The Serb population of my area, at 256,000, was also suffering from the effects of the war and sanctions.

I did not want to minimize attention to the suffering of the remaining minority Muslims, but I could not afford to focus on their needs alone, nor could I overlook the political ties between *Merhamet* and Izetbegovic's Democratic Action Party (the SDA) in Sanski Most. By meeting frequently with Benko I was undermining the perception of balance. Serbs were beginning to say that I was there only to support return of Muslims. I began to hear disturbing rumors about Benko's connections with Serb Security and with Muslim hard-liners. Was it misinformation? Whom should I believe? I verified the numbers of people that he claimed to support by checking addresses and found some of his claims unsubstantiated. Without actually ruling him *persona non grata*, I cut back on time spent with him, and sought other partners in the local NGO community. This was difficult, because Serb Red Cross, the local Catholic charity CARITAS, and the Orthodox Church had all been compromised by their activities during the war. The influx of international NGOs in April and May 1996 gave me some more options.

THE CARPETBAGGER, AID MONEY AND CORRUPTION

Benko and Drljaca were both steady partners in the Civil Affairs dance. There were important and necessary things I could not accomplish without dealing with them. However, there were other unsavory characters that could be rejected more easily.

From January to April 1996 I lived with the Czech battalion in an abandoned sewing factory. In May 1996, a man in a suit came to my office with a bill for rent and another for compensation for damages to the building. I checked his credentials. He had been a manager at the factory before the war, but he had not been an owner, because it had been a worker-owned enterprise. Either IFOR or the Czech Battalion owed money at least for damages and possibly for rent.³ But who should be paid?

I asked the manager to come back with a worker committee, to explain how the money would be spent to benefit the workers by putting them back to work. He returned with papers purporting to show that he was the legitimate representative of the company. He refused to indicate how the money would be allocated beyond vague promises that the factory would reopen eventually. I deduced that he was an opportunistic carpetbagger and refused to deal with him. After I left, my successor was under pressure to settle bills. He paid the carpetbagger through a local bank. In February 1998, there was no activity at the factory and no sign of the carpetbagger or the money.

I think the main guideline in this case was care-based thinking, with the workers and beneficiaries in mind. How could we make sure that the sheep, rather than the wolves would benefit from the expenditure? The problem was repeated for every development aid project with which I was associated. The Canadian and UK development agencies approved about DM 475,000 over 18 months. In every case a project officer was assigned to verify that the project worked for the intended beneficiaries and that the money was spent for its intended purposes. In many cases, it was difficult to track the profit of contractors who provided materials and services. Since then, there have been allegations that wartime extremists have profited from the reconstruction aid. Being able to dispel these rumors is essential to keeping the resources flowing. The 1999 report by the International Crisis Group on implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement describes the payment of rent to political hard-liners and their supporters as a major obstacle to the peace process.⁴

The challenge with compensation and aid is to select the right recipients and coordinators, as well as to establish control mechanisms that are simple, effective and consistent with the trust that needs to exist between donor and recipient to keep projects alive.

The main challenges I faced with respect to “evil” leaders were choices between competing bad options. With whom could I deal? Did I have any choice? How could I minimize the inevitable consequences of dealing with undesirable leaders? The hardest choices related to impartiality and weighing the good of one group against another—the worldview of the Serbs *versus* that of the Muslims. The yardstick shifted over time. Was January 1996 the right time to remove Drljaca? Could he have been removed before that? How was the situation different in July 1997? The consequences would probably have been different, but they were no more predictable later than earlier.

THE CHALLENGE OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The challenge of unintended consequences is that action and inaction can be equally damaging, but the consequences of either are unpredictable. Sometimes the challenges fall into the category of short-term *versus* long-term objectives, with the corresponding problem that what is good or desirable in a mission may be perceived to shift over time. Thirty-five years after the first U.N. intervention in Cyprus, and 25 years after the Turkish intervention, we can see some of the long-term consequences of ethnic division. Would we make the same choices now? Have we already made some of the same fateful choices in Bosnia, with unintended consequences?

CYPRUS, CROATIA, BOSNIA AND ETHNIC CLEANSING

When fighting erupted in Cyprus in 1974, the Turkish forces pushed down from the North of the Island and established a new line separating the predominately Turkish-Cypriot northern third from the predominately Greek Cypriot southern two-thirds. Whole communities of Greek and Turkish Cypriots were caught on the wrong side of this line, both North and South. U.N. troops stationed in Cyprus since 1964 then helped to move people safely across the line. Eighteen years later, efforts to re-establish inter-communal relations stumbled on the isolation and hostility that ethnic cleansing had generated in each community. The unintended consequence of reuniting families with their kin was to sever the links that might have permitted dialogue over the years. Finding people to participate in the Inter-communal Conflict Resolution Steering Committee has been a constant battle. With no Greek communities in the North, nor any Turkish communities in the South, the buffer zone has become a wall that impedes conflict resolution.

When international intervention stabilized the fighting in Croatia in 1992, Serbs were spread out in an irregular zone along the Bosnian border, with patches in Eastern and Western Slavonia and the Krajina. These zones became the U.N. Protected Areas (UNPA) under UNPROFOR. Western Slavonia straddles the E-70 motorway that connects Croatia from East to West. Serbs blocked it as a means of pressuring the Croatian government in Zagreb. In January 1993, Croatia attempted to open the highway by force, threatening Serbs in the enclave. Canadian and Argentinean troops of UNPROFOR took up defensive positions that blocked the Croatian advance, and negotiated passage along the E-70 for Croatian traffic. The arrangement was unsatisfactory, and the Croatian army attacked again in May 1995, sweeping past U.N. forces and driving Serb irregular forces across the Sava River. Most civilians left in the following weeks. By July, most villages were empty. Then the dominoes started to fall.

Serb forces attacked Srebrenica and Zepa in July 1995, forcing out civilians, and killing many men of military age. In August Croatian forces attacked in Krajina, bypassing U.N. defensive positions and shelling towns to drive out civilians. Continued Serb attacks on the safe areas in Bosnia elicited NATO air strikes in September. In October American envoy Richard Holbrooke achieved a cease-fire and the Dayton Peace Agreement stabilized the map, leaving Croatia with clear sovereignty within its boundaries and Bosnia divided among three ethnic entities. Less than three percent of refugees and displaced people have returned to their homes four years after the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed.

One of the debates that raged in UNPF's headquarters in Zagreb in July and August 1995 was whether the U.N. should assist in moving minorities out of the Protected Areas and Safe Areas in which their security could no longer be

assured. Once the exodus started from Srebrenica, the UNHCR tried to assist with transport and way-stations on the route to Tuzla. In Croatia, we eventually provided fuel and escorts to help Serbs from the Krajina move to Eastern Slavonia and Yugoslavia in mid-August.

There were both legal and ethical issues in assisting the movement of large groups across boundaries. On one hand, some argued that we were assisting ethnic cleansing. On the other hand, perhaps we were making it easier to reach a settlement to the conflict, with the troublesome and disputed enclaves out of the way. There was never the suggestion that the U.N. *wanted* to get rid of the enclaves it could not defend, but we recognized that many people penned in the squalor and insecurity of enclaves would be easier to support if they were elsewhere. For their own reasons, all the parties to the conflict appeared to want the enclaves to fall. With the U.N. Protected areas gone, Croatia stabilized its borders. The Serbs concentrated their military forces after the fall of the Krajina. The Muslims found a bigger lever for support with international sympathy for the plight of the Srebrenica victims.

War often results in displacement of civilian populations, and its costs and benefits are nested in complex ways. The immediate losers in every case were the displaced civilians who may never see their homes again. On the other hand, some of them probably survived and suffered less because they moved (for whatever reason) from the enclaves. The negotiated settlement at Dayton may have been facilitated by the collapse of the enclaves. On the other hand, there is little prospect for multi-ethnic peace four years after the agreement, and we may be stuck with another Cyprus situation of perpetual policing. Should we have defended the safe areas more vigorously? Would anyone have been better off if we had?

SAFE AREAS, SELF-DEFENSE AND AIR STRIKES.

With the ground still smouldering in Kosovo, we might pause to consider the unintended consequences of the air strikes that accompanied the exchanges of territory described above. In May 1995, NATO air strikes were authorized by the U.N. to deter Serb attacks on the safe area of Gorazde. In response, the Serbs took more than 400 U.N. peacekeepers and international staff hostage. Some of the hostages were chained outside ammunition bunkers, which were targets of the NATO bombing. NATO then stopped the bombing and negotiated for the release of the hostages. It was clear that air strikes by themselves were not an effective way of defending vulnerable people on the ground. In June and July, NATO deployed a rapid reaction force with tanks, artillery and attack-helicopters under U.N. rules of engagement (authorized to fire in self-defense). At the same time, vulnerable U.N. units in white vehicles and blue helmets were drawn into secure areas.

In July 1995, as the Safe Areas of Srebrenica and Zepa fell to Serb attack, UNPF headquarters was negotiating with Admiral Leighton Smith, the Commander of NATO's Southern Forces (AFSOUTH), about the conditions for a NATO-assisted withdrawal of U.N. forces. Consideration was also given to the use of force to re-establish the Safe Areas. With the Srebrenica experience behind us, we redefined the boundaries of the Safe Areas and the conditions under which air strikes would be launched to deter attacks on them. The critical difference between May and August was that the U.N. now had a robust force on the ground capable of defending itself while transgressors were attacked from the air. It was deployed in the face of Bosnian (Muslim) government obstruction and resistance, because of its avowed impartiality. With its deployment, what had not been possible in May was now possible. The rules of engagement did not change, but their application did. In May, self-defense in Sarajevo meant hiding in a bunker when one's position was shelled. In August, self-defense meant 30 rounds of 155mm artillery fire at the offending mortar position. In July, Sarajevo averaged 2,000 firing incidents a day. By August 5th, it was down to fewer than 500, mainly "celebratory small-arms fire."

When six mortar shells landed near the French Embassy and the market-place in Sarajevo on August 28th, preparations for defense of the Safe Areas were well advanced. I travelled to Belgrade with Mr. Akashi, the Special Representative of the Secretary General. He explained to President Milosevic that there was no doubt about the origin of the shells. The conditions had been met to initiate air strikes, unless there was an immediate withdrawal of Serb heavy weapons beyond range of the safe areas. Serb forces did not withdraw and the air strikes began. After four days, the U.N. Force Commander, General Janvier, met with Serb General Ratko Mladic for 18 hours to negotiate a withdrawal of Serb forces. At the outset, Mladic insisted that we watch videos of civilians killed by the NATO bombs, and refused to negotiate until Janvier ordered the planes out of the air over Bosnia. Janvier could not command the NATO aircraft, and negotiations stalled for about four hours. The air strikes continued for another 21 days. Beyond the loss of life and damage to infrastructure in the Serb Republic of Bosnia, the command and control systems for Serb forces were destroyed. Muslim and Croat forces took advantage and regained territory lost earlier in the war. These gains were not intended, but became an important factor in subsequent negotiations at Dayton Air Force Base, Ohio.

The map negotiated at Dayton looked very much like the Owen-Stoltenberg map rejected by the parties in 1993. Even in 1995, it does not represent the full agreement of the parties. Issues such as the return of refugees and displaced people, repairs to infrastructure and even the structure of the post-conflict government rest ultimately on the international community's support for an agreement all parties avow is flawed. Who were the winners and losers of the

intervening two years? Was defense of Sarajevo right, but defense of Western Slavonia, Srebrenica, or the Krajina wrong? Was it our fault as military commanders or planners that we were unable to get our act together in time to save the men of Srebrenica? Were their deaths the unintended consequence of our effort to establish Safe Areas in the first place? Has the long-term impact of intervention been to prolong and complicate what would inevitably have been a bloody struggle, which may yet erupt again? I have no answers to these ethical challenges, beyond this. The greater the effort we expend to impose a settlement, the greater our responsibility to see the settlement through. Issues of ownership and the post-war economic order are part of the ethical challenge facing today's peacekeepers in Bosnia.

BOSNIA PRIVATISATION

Privatization of socially owned capital in Bosnia is a muddy issue, because the consequences cannot be split according to short-term pain and long-term profit. Like the Safe Areas, a more difficult question is "whose pain and whose profit?" Under the Dayton Accords, Bosnia relinquished most of its economic sovereignty. The World Bank appointed the chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Bosnia. Conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund and international creditors precluded any return to state-managed economy. Carl Bildt, the High Representative, recognized that restoring a functioning economy as soon as possible was essential to preserve the fragile peace.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees established the International Management Group (IMG) to manage infrastructure reconstruction and development. In Prijedor, the IMG identified 68 major industries with aging but undamaged capital. Without re-investment and re-opening of trade routes across the Federation and Croatia, these plants could not employ demobilized soldiers. Without employment, demobilized young men were a threat to stability and the peace process.

An infusion of private investment in Bosnian capital was desperately needed to get the economy going. Italian, German and Austrian investors came to Prijedor while I was there, looking for investment opportunities. A biscuit factory called MIRA, for example, had been an international enterprise, supplying Italian wholesalers before the war. If MIRA were to be bought, its sale would benefit those that now control the infrastructure, rather than its former workers, particularly the 40 percent of its workers that had fled Prijedor. This is the problem of the carpetbagger on a larger scale.

The stabilization of the economy and political risk from unemployed ex-soldiers is a serious problem. Private investment might be part of the solution. But if that comes at the expense of foreign ownership under what amounts to

de facto NATO occupation, have we stabilized the situation? Intense local memories of Nazi occupation during the Second World War led to comparisons that were exploited by extremists.

NOTHING IS AS IT SEEMS

This brings me to the third ethical challenge. The foregoing description of privatization may seem bizarre to Western readers. It would be only one of many circumstances hard for a peacekeeper to understand. When one is operating in a foreign country, where the language, culture, and local history are alien, it is difficult to understand the cues that normally help one to make the right decision. Peacekeepers enter a region on the heels of war and work with those who did the fighting. There are a lot of destructive forces still at work that are trying to drag the society back into violence. Constructive engagement with destructive forces is very difficult when one does not understand all the forces involved. Whether or not guns are involved, people can be injured or killed by the wrong choices. A peacekeeper's choices between right and wrong can easily masquerade as choices between good objectives desired by competing groups, or between the peacekeepers' own short- and long-term goals. In the first example, the long-term goal of bringing communities together might have been in conflict with the short-term goal of maintaining stability. Or perhaps it was the "good" of self-defense by the Serbs opposed to the "bad" of a sneaky attack for propaganda purposes? The final example illustrates how ethical ambiguity can follow you all the way home.

THROUGH HEART TO PEACE (OR NOT)

The international intervention was intended to support the return of refugees and displaced people. They were prevented from returning by the animosity that continued to exist between the communities. As intermediaries responsible for implementing the Dayton Accord, peacekeepers looked for opportunities to bring the communities together and prove that return was possible. The carefully orchestrated riots along the inter-entity boundary line in April and May 1996 had made us cautious of outside involvement. A German NGO had been instrumental in the Muslim refugees' media campaign to paint the Serbs in Prijedor as war criminals. This predictably undermined prospects for return. That had been the aim of Muslim refugee leaders, who needed the funds provided by refugees supported by the German government.

In June of 1996, I was contacted by a U.K.-based NGO called "Through Heart to Peace." They had contacts with women's groups in Croatia, the Serb Republic and the Federation, and were planning a visit by an international group of women to support inter-communal reconciliation. They would drive from

Zagreb to an international conference in Sarajevo, planting peace trees in formerly multi-ethnic towns like Prijedor and the destroyed suburb of Kozarac, where the school now housed refugees.

I checked the group's credentials through NGO friends in Zagreb and the U.K. They had done some good work with traumatized refugees, and were recommended. After speaking to women's group contacts in Prijedor, I saw an opportunity for an inter-communal meeting that might help restore ties between Muslim and Serb communities in a non-threatening way. As I tried to arrange the visit, local Serb authorities appeared reluctant but not immediately hostile. The day of the visit, events spiraled quickly out of control.

Trouble began when one of the organizers arrived at my CIMIC center to charter a bus, because the Serb police would not let their Croatian bus across the boundary. We found her another bus, but the Serb police seized it. Undeterred, she returned to the original bus and persuaded the Canadian Brigade Commander to provide a British military driver and Czech military escort. With these additions, the convoy proceeded across the boundary. However, Serb radio and police shut the cafés in Prijedor, rounded up a crowd and blocked the convoy on its way into Prijedor. The occupants of the bus incited the crowd by throwing pamphlets from the windows. Some pamphlets called for reconciliation; others called for the arrest of Serb leaders. The mob attacked and stoned the bus and its escort, while the Serb police remained behind.

A videotape of the battle made excellent propaganda and found its way quickly to several international news channels. Despite assurances to the contrary, there had been reporters on the bus. The British NGO disavowed their Muslim affiliate, which they claimed had acted irresponsibly. Later I learned that the British woman organizing it was actually a Muslim from Sarajevo, and had allegedly worked for the SDA. Had this been another orchestrated propaganda event or a lost opportunity? In hindsight, I'm inclined to believe the former. Had I interpreted it as such, I would have taken action to deter and defuse it rather than support it. As it turned out, I had helped to put many people at risk.

COME TO THE PARTY

To conclude on a slightly less somber note, what harm can come from an invitation? Grozdan Mutic was the urbane Chief of State Security (the secret police) in Prijedor. He was a boxing aficionado and patron of the local boxing club, where many of the town's tough young men congregated. He asked for my help to support a boxing tournament to which he wanted to invite IFOR and Federation boxers. Coincidentally, a U.S. Civil Affairs officer in Sanski Most was a former U.S. National Heavyweight runner-up. We set him up with the boxing club and got a lot of good will from his help. On my second visit to the club, I

was invited to stay for a party, but declined because I had other commitments. About a year after returning to Canada, our National Investigation Service interviewed me about the incident. Why had I not reported an offer of sex and alcohol from a hostile intelligence service? The meeting and mention of a party had been summarized in my daily report, but at the time I had failed to make the connection between girls at a party and an offer of sex and alcohol. The story had originated after my departure with one of the local translators. Was it baseless misinformation, or had I been oblivious to an attempt to suborn me? Would there have been unintended consequences had I accepted the invitation?

This incident may have been more than a simple misunderstanding. Lies and innuendos are the tools of extremists. Reputations are used to sideline people and their work. Local interpreters' livelihoods or prospects in the community can be destroyed, undermining the ability of international agencies to function. The ripples from cultivated mistrust can undo years of work in a theatre, and even follow peacekeepers home.

ACT NOW, AGONIZE LATER

I have a lot of respect for the men and women who tried to do the right thing in the dark days of the Balkan war of 1992-1995. A host of recent books tries to justify their actions or cast aspersions on the results achieved, often in light of information unavailable at the time.⁶ Most of these books focus on the actions of the powerful. I had the good fortune to work at grass-roots level as well. I think the answer to the ethical challenge of peacekeeping can be found in communities where individuals and families live.

For those making tough decisions about defending safe areas, killing in self-defense or helping desperate people to flee, ethical guidelines like Kidder's three sets of rules will never be adequate, though they may be an essential starting point. Peacekeepers placed in impossible situations will always live with uncertainty about the justification for their actions and the consequences of their decisions over time. We revisit these decisions over and over in conferences, media trials, war-crimes investigations and the sympathy of colleagues.

As an aide in Zagreb and a civil affairs officer in Prijedor, I made a lot of mistakes. I probably remain unaware to this day of many of the things I did wrong and of the people who suffered as a result of my errors. But on balance, I hope I helped push Sisyphus's rock a little way up the hill. When we intervene as peacekeepers, we may have to deal with bad leaders who hold all the cards. We will never understand all the causes of events or all the consequences of our actions. We inevitably operate in a fog with few landmarks because the parties to the conflict use information as a weapon, as we do ourselves. Despite all this, our moral compass cannot be so delicate as to impair decisions or inhibit action.

As a simple direction-finding tool for people facing ethical challenges in peacekeeping, I would offer three questions. They are intended to take us beyond at least some of the continuing conflict that generates the problems discussed above. First, what sort of world do people in a community want for their children and grandchildren? Second, how can we get there from here? Third, what can go wrong? The first question puts us in the realm of ends-based and care-based thinking, balancing competing goods by taking a long view. The second question tries to reconcile short-term and long-term normative goals. And the third question acknowledges the inherent uncertainty of intervention, and recalls Mary Anderson's dictum: "Do no harm." ■

NOTES

¹ Rushworth M. Kidder, *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), Chapter 1.

² Population figures were often contentious. The International Management Group (IMG) published figures based on the 1991 census, showing about 40,000 people in Prijedor claiming Muslim nationality. The figure 1,500 was used by the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in April 1996.

³ Under the status of forces agreement (SOFA), IFOR units were not to be charged rent or tariffs for use of facilities in Bosnia. In practice, most were, starting early in the mission.

⁴ International Crisis Group, *Is Dayton Failing? Bosnia Four Years after the Peace Agreement*. 28 October 1999, <http://www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/bosnia/reports/bh51repa.htm>, accessed 9 November 1999.

⁵ U.N. Peace Force (UNPF) replaced UNPROFOR as the umbrella mission in the Balkans in May 1995. It had three headquarters reporting to it: UNCRO in Croatia, UNPROFOR in Bosnia and UNPREDEP in Macedonia. At the time, I was assistant to the deputy force commander of UNPF.

⁶ See Philip Corwin, *Dubious Mandate: A Memoir of the UN in Bosnia, Summer 1995* (Duke University Press, 1998) or Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (M.E. Sharpe, 1999).