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### Edward S. Herman and David Peterson: Open Letter to Amnesty

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David C site administrator	<p>□ <a href="#">Post subject: Edward S. Herman and David Peterson: Open Letter to Amnesty</a>    <a href="#">Quote</a></p> <p>Open Letter To Amnesty International's London and Belfast Offices, on the Occasion of Noam Chomsky's Belfast Festival Lecture, October 30, 2009 [1]</p> <p>Edward S. Herman and David Peterson</p> <p>[Available to download as pdf: <a href="http://www.medialens.org/downloads/pdfs/letter_to_amnesty.pdf">http://www.medialens.org/downloads/pdfs/letter_to_amnesty.pdf</a> ]</p> <p>In his wild and slanderous "Open Letter to Amnesty International" (signed, fittingly, "Yours, in disgust and despair"), [2] The Guardian - Observer's veteran reporter Ed Vulliamy explains that two "main concerns" motivated him to draft his repudiation of AI's choice of Noam Chomsky to deliver this 2009 Stand Up For Justice lecture: One is that the "pain" individuals such as Chomsky are alleged to cause the "survivors and the bereaved" of the wars in the former Yugoslavia is "immeasurable," and Vulliamy feels some kind of need to help mitigate this pain; the other, apparently, is that the "historical record" as it pertains to these wars is too precious and too fragile to be left in the wrong pair of hands. "For Amnesty International, of all people, to honour this man is to tear up whatever credibility they have estimably and admirably won over the decades, and to reduce all they say hitherto to didactic nonsense," Vulliamy writes. "By inviting Chomsky to give this lecture, Amnesty condemns itself to ridicule at best, hurtful malice at worst—Amnesty joins the revisionists in spitting on the graves of the dead."</p> <p>To spit on the graves of the dead is a ghoulish act, and Vulliamy makes a serious charge—against both Noam Chomsky and Amnesty International. Yet, it is notable that Vulliamy offers not a single quote or even paraphrase of what Chomsky has written or said about the former Yugoslavia to back-up this charge; and in his writings for The Guardian - Observer over many years, we are unaware of a single published item under Vulliamy's byline that criticized, let alone excoriated, Chomsky. [3] Vulliamy's Open Letter to AI complains that "Chomsky [has] said many things, from his ivory tower at MIT, to spur them [the revisionists] on," but Vulliamy never provides specifics—just insults. This possibly results from the fact that Chomsky has never written or said anything remotely like what Vulliamy imagines and alleges—Chomsky has never denied or questioned whether there were displaced persons- and detention- and POW-camps in Bosnia - Herzegovina during the wars there (1992-1995), never denied or questioned whether Bosnian Muslims were massacred following the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, and so on. But from the standpoint of a writer aiming solely at denigration, it is necessary to leave it that "Chomsky said many things," and insinuate the worst.</p> <p>A second fact relevant to the vitriol that Vulliamy expresses towards Chomsky and AI, and to Vulliamy's work overall, is that Vulliamy admits to being a "journalist of attachment." [4] He has written proudly that "In 1996 [he] was the first journalist to testify" for the prosecution at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). "There are times in history when neutrality is not neutral at all, but complicity in the crime," he explained. "I do not want to be neutral between the camp guard and inmate; the woman raped seven times a night every night, and the beast who rapes her." [5] In fact, Peter Brock notes that Vulliamy has been "surprisingly frank and passionate...about his own abandonment of objectivity" at least since 1993, when he wrote in The British Journalism Review that he was "embarrassed...by how objective" he used to be. But "with Omarska and Trnopolje objective coverage of the war became a rather silly notion," Vulliamy proclaimed, and he was now "on the side of the Bosnian Muslim people against an historical and military program to obliterate them." [6] Writing in The Guardian around the same time, Britain's Foreign Correspondent of the Year, who, his editors falsely claimed, "broke the story of the Serbian concentration camp together with [Independent Television News]," Vulliamy struck an equally committed pose: "[T]he horrors of war have taught me that there are things that are worse than war, and against them determined and careful war should be waged, in the name of the innocent and the weak. My father had the honour of fighting fascism; I have instead the strange privilege of meeting the people who are fighting a pale but unmistakable imitation of the Third Reich but have only the sons of the appeasers of 1938 to turn to." [7]</p> <p>Over a very long period of time, Ed Vulliamy's attachment to Bosnian Muslims victims has been matched only by his hatred for "Serbian barbarism" and the "sons of the appeasers of 1938," including the "objective" journalists whose ranks he deserted long ago. It is within this camp of alleged appeasers of "Serbian barbarism" that Vulliamy now places Amnesty International, right alongside Noam Chomsky; and Vulliamy's Open Letter repeats each of these convoluted themes. Theoretically, a political commitment like that of Vulliamy</p>

would not necessarily result in serious bias in reporting news, but in his case, we have a paradigmatic illustration that it can do so in practice. As we will show in what follows, his attachments have led him to concoct, distort, and suppress evidence related to the former Yugoslavia for the better part of two decades.

Thus it is a notable fact that while Vulliamy was “there” on August 5, 1992, at both the Omarska and Trnopolje camps for the Bosnian Muslims in Bosnian Serb-controlled territory, and Chomsky most certainly was not, Vulliamy repeats a stream of falsehoods about the events of that day and their follow-up, confirmed by people who were “there.” Second, he conflates those events with alleged denials and claims of “fakes” about the “concentration camps” that he and his colleagues with a British Independent Television News (ITN) crew allegedly helped to “discover.”[8] Vulliamy admits that Chomsky didn’t—unlike Thomas Deichmann writing in *Novo* in Germany, and later reprinted by LM in Britain (see below)—propose “that these camps were a fake,” nor use “grotesque arguments about fences around the camps,” claims that “were beaten back in the High Court in London, by a libel case taken by ITN.”

Note Vulliamy’s use of the plural “camps,” when the issue was solely about one camp, Trnopolje, and his one visit to this camp on August 5, 1992. In the very first report he ever published about this camp, Vulliamy had written that “Trnopolje cannot be called a ‘concentration camp’ and is nowhere as sinister as Omarska: it is very grim, something between a civilian prison and transit camp.”[9] What is more, nobody (and certainly not Chomsky or Deichmann) has ever contended that these camps themselves were “fake,” though there always has been a dispute over the nature of the camps, the “fences around the camps,” and what purpose(s) they served in the civil wars in Bosnia - Herzegovina during the second-half of 1992. In his Open Letter, Vulliamy makes all of the camps out to be concentration camps, with this term’s ominous overtones of possible Nazi-like death camps. But this was manifestly not true of Trnopolje, which served as a transit center, and most of the people Vulliamy actually saw at Trnopolje were internally displaced persons fleeing the violence of the civil wars. Indeed, Vulliamy testified to this very fact the first time he acted as a witness for the prosecution at the ICTY in June 1996, in the trial of the Bosnian Serb Dusko Tadic, where Vulliamy referred to Trnopolje variously as a “staging post,” “transit camp,” and “distribution point.”[10] Only in his writings and reporting for *The Guardian - Observer* and other venues (for example, in his 1994 book *Seasons in Hell* [11]) did Trnopolje become fixed as a “concentration camp,” with the Nazi-allusion firmly in place, a status that it retains in his Open Letter to AI: “places of extermination, torture, killing, rape and, literally, ‘concentration’ prior to enforced deportation....”

The other big issue was whether the famous images of an emaciated man, Fikret Alic, the “symbolic figure of the war,” as Vulliamy once described him, “on every magazine cover and television screen in the world,”[12] who seemed to stand behind a barbed-wire fence while interviewed by the British reporters, were deceptive and misleading.

The simple answer is: Yes. First, it is well established that Fikret Alic’s physical appearance—often described as “xylophonic” because his ribcage showed prominently through his extremely thin torso—was not representative of the rest of the displaced persons seen at Trnopolje by the British reporters on August 5, 1992.

More important, it is also well established (in the face of fanatic denials to the contrary) that Alic at no time while he was photographed and interviewed that day by the British reporters was standing behind a barbed-wire fence that enclosed him and the other Bosnian Muslim men. In fact, the actual fence used in the famous shots of Alic and the other men consisted of chicken-wire that stretched from the ground up roughly as high as the men’s chests, with three strands of barbed-wire above the chicken wire, both affixed to the side of the fence posts facing away from the British reporters. In other words, this fence enclosed the area where the British reporters had positioned themselves to interview and film the Bosnian Muslim men, and these men—Fikret Alic included—stood outside the area enclosed by the fence.

This is what Thomas Deichmann’s original debunking of “The picture that fooled the world” argued correctly[13]—much to the chagrin of the British reporters, to ITN, and to the British establishment, which resorted to Britain’s onerous libel laws to punish LM magazine for publishing Deichmann’s work in 1997, and used the British High Court to exact from LM the ultimate price: LM’s bankruptcy and liquidation.[14] Deichmann, who studied a copy of the unused film shot that day by ITN cameraman Jeremy Irvin, wrote:

When Marshall, Williams and Vulliamy entered the compound next to the camp, the barbed wire was already torn in several places. They did not use the open gate, but entered from the south through a gap in the fence. They approached the fence on the north side, where curious refugees quickly gathered inside the camp, but on the outside of the area fenced-in by barbed wire. It was through the barbed wire fence at this point that the famous shots of Fikret Alic were taken....

[Thus] an important element of that “key image” had been produced by camera angles and editing. The other pictures, which were not broadcast, show clearly that the large area on which the refugees were standing was not fenced-in with barbed wire. You can see that the people are free to move on the road and on the open area, and have already erected a few protective tents. Within the compound next door that is surrounded with barbed wire, you can see about 15 people, including women and children, sitting under the shade of a tree. Penny Marshall’s team were able to walk in and out of this compound to get their film, and the refugees could do the same as they searched for some shelter from the August sun.[15]

The journalist Phillip Knightley also acquired the film shot by ITN’s Jeremy Irvin that day (the out-takes included) and “examined it frame by frame.” In an affidavit he filed on behalf of the LM defense, Knightley wrote:

The barbed wire turns out to be only symbolic. Were all the inmates starving? No. Fikret Alic was an exception. Even in Marshall's report other men, apparently well-fed, can be seen, and the out-takes reveal at least one man with a paunch hanging over his belt. Phil Davison, a highly-respected correspondent who covered the war from both sides for The Independent says, "Things had gone slightly quiet. Suddenly there were these death camps/concentration camps stories."....

When...the ITN report was hailed as a great image, should the team have stood up and publicly said, "Hey, hang on a minute. It wasn't quite like that." In an ideal world, yes.... But given the commercial pressures of modern TV and the fact that to have spoken out would hardly endear the ITN crew to their employers and might even have endangered their jobs, it is understandable but not forgivable that no one chose to do so.[16]

This misleading use of a mostly chicken-wire, and only part barbed-wire fence that enclosed the reporters but not the Bosnian Muslims, and the selective focus on a single emaciated individual, were also established by the presence of a second team made up of a reporter and a cameraman working for Radio Television Serbia (RTS), which had accompanied the British reporters on their August 5 visits to Omarska as well as Trnopolje, and eventually released a documentary in Serbo-Croatian about the events of this day under the title *Presuda* ("Judgment").[17] In the many years that Ed Vulliamy has protested—as he did in his Open Letter to Al—that he was "there" at Trnopolje when the British reporters' encounter with Fikret Alic occurred, Vulliamy has never acknowledged that the RTS reporter and cameraman were also there, frequently right beside him and the other British reporters, interviewing and filming the same groups of individuals—but also filming some of the activities of Vulliamy, Marshall, Williams, and Irvin. This film, shot by the RTS (or second) cameraman, shows conclusively where the British reporters stood when they first happened upon and filmed Fikret Alic and the others. The impression of a "Belsen 92" (*Daily Mirror*, August 7, 1992), the evocation of Nazi-style death camps, the military-interventionists' question "Must It Go On?" (*Time*, August 17, 1992), and the subsequent awards and fame bestowed on these British reporters—all must be understood as artifacts that resulted from their work inside the small enclosure at Trnopolje that day, and of their reluctance or fear to leap-off the "concentration camp" bandwagon the instant that it started to roll on August 6-7, 1992, to tell the truth to the world about what they really found at Trnopolje when they were there, and how they constructed something politically useful out of it. Instead, as ITN reporter Penny Marshall explained ten days later, by the time she and her three British colleagues arrived at Trnopolje, "There [had] been many images of horror from the war in what was Yugoslavia," and "Public opinion throughout the civilised world [had] been outraged, yet governments [had] remained reluctant to intervene." But what differed this time was that she and her colleagues "had come away with powerful images," images "to move world opinion." After Trnopolje, "British newspapers were calling for military intervention; within 20 minutes of the [ITN] report being re-broadcast on American television, George Bush promised to press for a United Nations resolution authorising use of force." [18] Thus had the journalism of attachment been placed in the service of one of its favorite objectives: Western military intervention.[19]

In his book *Seasons in Hell*, Vulliamy states explicitly that the Trnopolje camp was "surrounded by barbed wire fencing. And behind the wire, standing in a close-knit crowd under the impenitent sun, thousands of men and women, boys and girls of all ages, as dumbstruck to see us as we were amazed by what was before our eyes." [20] This is a lie, implicitly repeated in his Open Letter to Al, where he talks about "grotesque arguments about fences," not openly claiming that the camp was surrounded by that fence, but suggesting that the counterclaim of Deichmann and other critics was false. Perhaps this is why Vulliamy never acknowledges the RTS crew whose work beside the British reporters at Trnopolje that day shows so clearly who stood inside the area enclosed by the part chicken-wire, part barbed-wire fence during the moments when the images of Fikret Alic were taken, the fence behind which the British reporters positioned themselves.

In yet another falsification, Vulliamy refers to the March 15, 2000 Judgment delivered by Justice Morland in the British High Court of Justice as supporting the "libel case taken by ITN" against LM over its reprint of Deichmann's original reporting. But Vulliamy suppresses the fact that Justice Morland found only that the British reporters' "intent" to deceive had not been proven, not that the factual substance of their work on August 5, 1992 had been accurate or had not been fundamentally misleading.[21]

Vulliamy is also deceptive about the "concentration camps." He inflates their importance and character and of course fails to mention any but Serb camps. There is no evidence that thousands were killed in these camps in Bosnia - Herzegovina; and the International Committee of the Red Cross reported the total number of prisoners known to the ICRC for the year 1992 in all camps, Serb, Muslim and Croat, to have been approximately 10,800.[22] Nor is there any evidence that conditions or killings were more severe in Serb than in Muslim or Croat prison camps, but Western reporters such as Vulliamy were interested only in Serb camps.[23]

This same point extended to alleged Serb-run "rape camps," where Newsday's Roy Gutman led the charge over rape as a massive, deliberate, and uniquely Serb instrument of state policy, although he carried out this campaign in close coordination with Bosnian Muslim and Croatian propaganda agencies.[24] These charges reached a frenzied level in early 1993, with the media and women's groups mobilized and calling for action against these horrors, and their service to the Serb demonization process rivaled that of the Fikret Alic photo at Trnopolje. The number of Bosnian Muslim women allegedly raped by the Serbs ranged from 20,000 to 60,000 or more, based entirely on a small number of claimed victims plus unverified hearsay and wild extrapolation. One of the media agents for this story belatedly mentioned that "too many reporters quoted the Bosnian government's patently unconfirmable claim that 50,000 Muslim women were raped by the Serbs." [25] But the media didn't insist on confirmation—they sought emotionally supercharged stories about atrocities, and then only when the atrocities could be attributed to Serbs. There is not a

shred of evidence that rapes by Bosnian Serb forces were more substantial than by Bosnian Muslim or Bosnian Croat forces—or anything more than crimes of opportunity. In fact, the Serbs put together a larger dossier of hard evidence of rapes of Serb women in the form of affidavits and documented testimonies than did the Bosnian Muslims,[26] but the media were not interested.

As with every other major theme of these wars, the rape allegations were a propaganda coup—and media failure—greatly helped by the journalists of attachment. Vulliamy of course gets on this Serb rape bandwagon in his Open Letter to AI, but confines himself to a reference to “the succulence of 14-year-old girls kept in rape camps.” This is mendacious demagoguery that would be hard to surpass.

While claiming to be worried about the impact of Chomsky's Belfast lecture on Bosnian victims, it is notorious that Vulliamy's choice of victims is so ethnically selective. He doesn't mention the thousands of Serb victims, and has never discussed the operations of the Bosnian Muslim commander Naser Oric, who actually bragged about killing Serbs in the vicinity of Srebrenica.[27] Oric even showed videos of his slain Bosnian Serb trophies to Western reporters Bill Shiller and John Pomfret, and the UN Protection Force commander for Bosnia - Herzegovina, the French General Philippe Morillon, even testified before the ICTY that he was certain that vengeful Serb actions at Srebrenica in July 1995 were traceable back to Oric's earlier massacres.[28] But these victims are unworthy for Vulliamy, and mentioning them would disturb his journalism-of-attachment model of one-sided villainy and victimization.

Vulliamy mentions Milosevic's alleged aim of an “ethnically pure Greater Serbia,” but he fails to point out anywhere that the ethnic cleansing that occurred in Croatia, Bosnia - Herzegovina, and Kosovo never happened within Serbia proper (exclusive of Kosovo). This point is awkward for a journalist of attachment as it conflicts with the ethnic-purity aim alleged of the Serbs and suggests that the civil wars in Bosnia had more complex roots. Also awkward is the fact that the greatest single case of ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia was Operation Storm of August 1995, when clearly coordinated Croat and Bosnian Muslim offensives drove some 250,000 ethnic Serbs out of the Krajina region along both sides of the Croatian and Bosnian borders, and the fact that the greatest proportionate case of ethnic cleansing has occurred in Kosovo, as the ethnic Albanian majority drove out ethnic Serbs and Roma after NATO occupied this province of southern Serbia from June 1999 on. These Serb victims have also not been able to return to their former homes. But those killed in these big time ethnic cleansing operations and those permanently exiled are no more upsetting to Vulliamy than are the victims of Naser Oric.

In practicing the journalism of selective demonization / selective victimization, Vulliamy even peddles gross hearsay concocted by others. For example, back on July 8, 2001, he wrote that “Once Milosevic had back-stabbed his way to power and had switched from communism to fascism, he and Mirjana set out to establish their dream of an ethnically pure Greater Serbia cleansed of Croats and 'mongrel races' such as Bosnia's Muslims and Kosovo's Albanians.”[29] We have searched extensively for confirmation of this alleged reference to “mongrel races,” and found a total of four different instances in which the phrase was attributed to Milosevic and/or his wife by another reporter prior to Vulliamy's use of it,[30] but we were unable to get either Vulliamy or anyone at The Guardian - Observer to share Vulliamy's source with us, and we suspect that its use is apocryphal. Nothing like it is to be found in the 49,000 pages of the Milosevic trial transcript at the ICTY, and the prosecutors would have welcomed something like this in supporting their charges against Milosevic. On the other hand, we have the wartime Bosnian Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic's statement of intolerance from his Islamic Declaration of 1970 (re-issued in 1990) that Vulliamy has always dodged and misrepresented, wherein Izetbegovic affirmed the “incompatibility of Islam with non-Islamic systems,” and rejected both peace and coexistence “between the ‘Islamic religion’ and non-Islamic social and political institutions.”[31] And we have the wartime Croatian President Franjo Tudjman instructing his military leaders in the days immediately before Operation Storm to “inflict such a blow on the Serbs that they should virtually disappear.”[32] But Vulliamy appears to have missed both of these, while repeating the “mongrel races” line against the couple he despises.

In *Seasons in Hell*, during what he called “the height of the war in July 1993,” Vulliamy reported “hundreds of thousands of Muslims dead;” and at the start of the Milosevic trial in February 2002, in recounting the “Bosnian chapter” of the breakup of Yugoslavia, Vulliamy reported “some 200,000 deaths.” Then in November 2005, Vulliamy quoted the High Representative to Bosnia - Herzegovina, Jeremy “Paddy” Ashdown, as Ashdown reflected on life “10 years after a war in which 250,000 people were killed;” and as late as July 2007, Vulliamy once again recounted the “killing of hundreds of thousands...all over Bosnia.”[33] But in 2005-2007, two establishment sources concluded that the number of deaths on all sides of the wars in Bosnia - Herzegovina from 1992 - 1995, including soldiers as well as civilians, was on the order of 100,000.[34] This dramatic downward revision in the death-toll badly deflated the longstanding establishment narrative of 200,000 or more deaths (not to mention Vulliamy's “hundreds of thousands”). But we have never been able to find any reference in Vulliamy's work to this sharp reduction in the Bosnian deaths or to the names of the researchers responsible for it.[35] Isn't this refusal to correct an historical fabrication (mainly a product of Bosnian-Muslim propaganda) a form of genocide inflation, and in its own way as contemptible as “genocide denial”? In his Open Letter to AI, Vulliamy used forms of the word ‘revisionist’ no fewer than seven times. But isn't what Vulliamy repeatedly calls “revisionism” and “revisionist” in truth a point of view or even the correction of a previous error that Vulliamy himself simply doesn't want to see expressed or corrected? Surely both groups of researchers who have revised the death-toll in Bosnia - Herzegovina to approximately 100,000 are revisionists in any reasonable sense of the word, but as they did their work on behalf of the establishment, they cannot be so designated. What an independent journalist or historian would call correcting the record, a journalist of attachment calls “revisionism.”

While inflating and lying about Serb villainy, Vulliamy also protects his favored leaders and team by misrepresenting their position on the issues and their role. Thus, again in his *Seasons in Hell*, he explains Alija Izetbegovic's serial rejection of peace plans from Lisbon in early 1992 onward as a result of Izetbegovic's devotion to a "multi-ethnic republic," and his belief that any kind of partition would be "impossible without ethnic cleansing"[36]—when in fact Izetbegovic explicitly excluded "foreign ideologies" from his planned Bosnia, wanted a partition more favorable to the Bosnian Muslim side, with war and ethnic cleansing flowing predictably from his April 1992 declaration of independence, and he did a thorough job of removing Serbs from the Sarajevo area after the 1995 Dayton Accord.[37] Former National Security Agency analyst John R. Schindler shows in detail Izetbegovic's attachment to the Islamic Republics of Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and how he helped introduce Al Qaeda into Europe during the local civil wars that Vulliamy and his fellow "journalists of attachment" eagerly supported. An excellent case therefore can be made that many of the deaths in Bosnia during the 1992-1995 years, over which Vulliamy has shed so many bitter tears, were fomented by the same journalists who swallowed the claims of the Western and Bosnian Muslim hawks that Izetbegovic was a committed democrat and that the peace plans supported by Western negotiators such as Cyrus Vance, Jose Cutileiro, David Owen, and Thorvald Stoltenberg were the work of the "sons of the appeasers of 1938," and simply wouldn't do.

#### Concluding Note

In sum, we have shown that in both his Open Letter to Amnesty International and in his record of reporting on the former Yugoslavia and on Bosnia - Herzegovina specifically, Ed Vulliamy has been a highly unreliable "journalist of attachment"—that is, a journalist of open bias, and one who relentlessly rewrites the historical record in pursuing his villains and ennobling his victims. He touches nothing in this field without distorting it, creating and inflating evidence to his liking, swallowing hearsay, and ignoring and suppressing evidence that does not fit the desired line.

In the final analysis, Vulliamy's single citation from Noam Chomsky for which Chomsky ought to be criticized was Chomsky's statement in passing that Vulliamy is a "good journalist." And if Vulliamy is telling the truth about Amnesty International once offering him a "full time job as media director," then AI looks bad for this reason alone. That would have been a poor choice for an organization that does not believe in selective justice and no-holds-barred propaganda service.

#### ---- Endnotes ----

[1] See "Amnesty International Annual Lecture: Noam Chomsky -- 'Hopes and Prospects'," Amnesty International - U.K., October 30, 2009, [http://www.amnesty.org.uk/events\\_details.asp?ID=1332](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/events_details.asp?ID=1332) .

[2] A copy of Ed Vulliamy's undated letter to Amnesty International - U.K. can be found posted to the Samaha website, "Open Letter to Amnesty International Regarding Chomsky's Invitation to Speak, By Ed Vulliamy," October 30, 2009, <http://samaha.wordpress.com/2009/10/29/open-letter-to-amnesty-international-regarding-chomskys-invitation-to-speak-by-ed-vulliamy/> . From here, it received further circulation.

[3] See Ed Vulliamy, "Chomsky takes his language theory back to basic ABCs," *The Observer*, December 6, 1998; and Ed Vulliamy, "Bestseller success for anti-U.S. war books," *The Observer*, April 20, 2003. Neither of these two Vulliamy-bylined articles took any noticeable issue with Chomsky's work. However, Vulliamy was "withering in his contempt for those supporting LM" in its defense against the libel suit brought against it by Independent Television News after LM published Thomas Deichmann's "The picture that fooled the world" in February 1997, and Chomsky had joined other writers in signing open letters against ITN's libel suit as a "very significant impediment to freedom of speech," in Chomsky's words. (Vikram Dodd, "Now for the moment of truth," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2000/feb/21/pressandpublishing.mondaymediasection6> .) Vulliamy also joined 24 other signatories to a deeply inquisitorial letter of complaint to his own newspaper, *The Guardian*, back in late 2005, which accused *The Guardian* of "bestow[ing] a stamp of legitimacy on revisionist attempts to deny the Bosnian genocide and minimise the Srebrenica massacre"—the familiar litany of complaints repeated by Vulliamy against Chomsky in his Open Letter to Amnesty International. For more on this latter episode, also involving Chomsky, see "Corrections and clarifications: *The Guardian* and Noam Chomsky," *The Guardian*, November 17, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2005/nov/17/pressandpublishing.corrections> ; Marko Attila Hoare et al., "Protest to *The Guardian* Over 'Correction' to Noam Chomsky Interview," *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network*, December 8, 2005, <http://birn.eu.com/en/15/10/751/> ; James Bisset et al., "In response to: 'Protest to the *Guardian* Over 'Correction' to Noam Chomsky Interview,'" *Balkan Investigative Reporting Network*, December 25, 2005, <http://birn.eu.com/en/1/285/1486/> ; and, finally, John Willis, "External Ombudsman Report," *The Guardian*, May 25, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/readerseditor/story/0,,1782133,00.html> .

[4] See, e.g., Philip Hammond, "Moral Combat: Advocacy Journalists and the New Humanitarianism," in David Chandler, Ed., *Rethinking Human Rights: Critical Approaches to International Politics* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 176-195, especially Hammond's discussion of "New humanitarianism," pp. 191-195, <http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?pid=264674> . Along with the "explicit rejection of neutrality," the "journalists of attachment" have also "tended to follow the agenda of powerful Western governments," and their eagerness to "frame conflicts in terms of a good-versus-evil discourse of abusers and victims and call for ever-greater Western

intervention performs a valuable service to governments which, having lost the stable framework of the Cold War, couch their foreign policy in the language of human rights and morality" (p. 191). According to Hammond, *The Guardian - Observer's* Ed Vulliamy once "accuse[d] the entire 'international community' of 'meddling with the truths of the war [in Bosnia - Herzegovina] to stifle intervention and foster appeasement' and of 'spreading...lies and distortions that would equate aggressor and victim'...Western 'neutrality', he charge[d], amounted to de facto support for the Serbs" (p. 182). We believe that Ed Vulliamy's journalistic career since roughly the second-half of 1992 serves as a very good illustration of everything that is wrong with the "journalism of attachment."

[5] Ed Vulliamy, "I must testify—Why one journalist is giving evidence against alleged war criminals," *The Guardian*, April 22, 1998.

[6] Peter Brock, *Media Cleansing: Dirty Reporting. Journalism and Tragedy in Yugoslavia* (Los Angeles: GM Books, 2005), p. 57, <http://www.gmbooks.com/product/MediaGM.html> .

[7] Ed Vulliamy, "A destiny worse than war," *The Guardian*, April 10, 1993, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/itn/article/0,,191234,00.html> .

[8] The British reporters who Vulliamy accompanied to the Omarska and Trnopolje camps on August 5, 1992, consisted of the Independent Television News (ITN) reporter Penny Marshall and the cameraman Jeremy Irvin, and the BBC Channel 4 News reporter Ian Williams.

[9] Ed Vulliamy, "Shame of camp Omarska," *The Guardian*, August 7, 1992, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1992/aug/07/warcrimes.edvulliamy> .

[10] See Prosecutor Against Dusko Tadic (IT-94-1-I), ICTY Transcript, June 7, 1996, pp. 2125-2126, <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/tadic/trans/en/960607ed.htm>. In his testimony for the prosecution, Vulliamy described the nature of the Trnopolje camp that he visited on August 5, 1992 as "by this time the staging post, the transit camp, the place from which people from all sorts of different circumstances in the Prijedor region...were coming to for a variety of reasons....Trnopolje was, if you like, the distribution point for this process, or one of them—one of the many, I should say" (p. 2125, line 16 - p. 2126, line 5).

[11] See Ed Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), especially Ch. 5, "The Camps, Echoes of the Reich," pp. 98-117.

[12] *Ibid*, p. 202.

[13] See Thomas Deichmann, "The picture that fooled the world," LM97, February, 1997, [http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-f97/LM97\\_Bosnia.html](http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-f97/LM97_Bosnia.html) ; and the earlier Press Release, LM, January 27, 1997, [http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-f97/LM97\\_Bosnia-press.html](http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-f97/LM97_Bosnia-press.html) . Also see Thomas Deichmann, "Exactly as it happened?" LM100, May, 1997 [http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-100/LM100\\_Bosnia.htm](http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-100/LM100_Bosnia.htm) .

[14] See, e.g., Mick Hume, "Spare any change guv?" *The Times*, March 17, 2000; Helene Guldberg, "Media—Question and be damned," *The Independent*, March 21, 2000; Matt Wells, "LM Closes after losing libel action," *The Guardian*, March 31, 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2000/mar/31/medialaw.media> ; and Mick Hume, "Some last words on that libel trial," *Spiked Online*, May 24, 2001, <http://www.spiked-online.com/Printable/0000002DOE3.htm> .

[15] Deichmann, "The picture that fooled the world," LM97, February, 1997, [http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-f97/LM97\\_Bosnia.html](http://www.srpska-mreza.com/guest/LM/lm-f97/LM97_Bosnia.html) . Also see the "Site plan of Trnopolje, based on U.S. satellite photo, 2 August 1992, three days before British journalists arrived," which is reproduced along with Deichmann's analysis, specifically the lower right-hand corner of this diagram, where the relative positions of the Bosnian Muslim refugees (outside the area enclosed by the fence) and of the British reporters (inside the area enclosed by the fence) are both depicted.

[16] Phillip Knightley, submissions for the LM defense, December 28, 1998.—Reproduced in Alexander Cockburn, "Storm Over Brockes' Fakery," *CounterPunch*, November 5/6, 2005, <http://www.counterpunch.org/cockburn11052005.html> .

[17] See the documentary *Judgment: The Bosnian 'Death Camp' Accusation: An Exposé, Emperor's Clothes*, 2000 and 2008. Originally produced by Radio Television Serbia (Belgrade), but available at YouTube in the English translation by Petar Makara, and narrated by Jared Israel, this documentary can be viewed in three parts:

Judgment, Part One: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xox7TR11evI&feature=related>

Judgment, Part Two: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_eOjxauzsn8&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_eOjxauzsn8&feature=related)

Judgment, Part Three: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yg9ZQP6CGZU&feature=related>

We strongly recommend this documentary. In Part Two, from roughly the 4:44 minute-mark on, the physical location of the British reporters and cameraman is unmistakable: They set-themselves-up inside the area enclosed by the chicken-wire and barbed-wire fence which, shortly thereafter, they would incorporate into their Fikret Alic images.

[18] Penny Marshall, "ITN's Penny Marshall tells how she made the world wake up," *Sunday Times*, August 16, 1992.

[19] See our treatment of how the Western media encouraged Western military intervention in the civil wars that accompanied the breakup of the former Yugoslavia at Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, "The Dismantling of Yugoslavia," *Monthly Review*

59, October, 2007, <http://www.monthlyreview.org/1007herman-peterson1.php>, especially Part IV, "The Role of the Media and Intellectuals in the Dismantlement," <http://www.monthlyreview.org/1007herman-peterson4.php>.

[20] Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell*, p. 104.

[21] For a repeat performance of several layers of lies, see Ed Vulliamy, "Poison in the well of history," *The Guardian*, March 15, 2000, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2000/mar/15/pressandpublishing.tvnews>.

[22] See 1992 Annual Report (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1993), p. 95. There we read: "In all, 5,540 detainees were released under ICRC supervision and some 2,500 were freed without [ICRC] participation," and at the end of 1992, "2,760 people known to the ICRC remained in detention...."

[23] For an extended discussion of Celebici, a camp run by Bosnian Muslims in which large numbers of Serbs were beaten, raped, and killed, see Carl Savitch, "Celebici," *Serbianna*, undated, <http://www.serbianna.com/columns/savich/047.shtml>. In his book, *Seasons in Hell*, Ed Vulliamy never mentions the Bosnian Muslim camp at Celebici; and as best we can tell, he has on only one occasion mentioned the camp at Celebici in his voluminous reporting for *The Guardian - Observer*. Here, in a long profile of the Bosnian Serb wartime President Radovan Karadzic after his arrest in Belgrade in July 2008, Vulliamy lamented how nobody talks about the massacres committed by Bosnian Serbs "at Zvornik, Vlasenica, Brcko or Bijeljina," and then he devoted six words to "the Bosnian Muslim camp at Celebici." (See "The edge of madness," *The Guardian*, July 23, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/23/radovankaradzic.warcrimes>.) We base this on a search of the Factiva database search for everything published under Ed Vulliamy's byline on the pages of *The Guardian* and *The Observer* (i.e., rst=(grdn or ob) and ed w/2 vulliamy and celebici for all dates).

[24] For full accounts of this remarkable case of demonization and media willingness to report outlandish falsehoods, see Diana Johnstone, *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), especially "The Uses of Rape," pp. 78-90, <http://www.monthlyreview.org/books/foolscrusade.php>; and Brock, *Media Cleansing: Dirty Reporting*, especially Ch. 5, "Only Muslim Victims...Only Serb Perpetrators," pp. 59-72. For a sample of Roy Gutman's work, see "Bosnia Rape Horror," *Newsday*, August 9, 1992; "Victims Recount Nights of Terror at Makeshift Bordello," *Newsday*, August 23, 1992; and "Mass Rape: Muslims Recall Serb Attacks," *Newsday*, August 23, 1992.

[25] Charles Lane, "War Stories," *New Republic*, January 3, 1994, emphasis added.

[26] See Brock, *Media Cleansing: Dirty Reporting*, Ch. 5, "Only Muslim Victims...Only Serb Perpetrators," pp. 59-72, especially pp. 68-72.

[27] A search of the Factiva database for everything published under Ed Vulliamy's byline on the pages of *The Guardian* and *The Observer* reveals no record of Vulliamy ever having written about the Bosnian Muslim commander Naser Oric (i.e., rst=(grdn or ob) and ed w/2 vulliamy and oric for all dates).

[28] See *The Prosecutor Against Slobodan Milosevic* (IT-02-54-T), ICTY Transcript, February 12, 2004, p. 31,975, <http://www.un.org/icty/transe54/040212ED.htm>. At this trial, Presiding Judge Patrick Robinson asked Philippe Morillon: "Are you saying, then, General, that what happened in 1995 [after the Bosnian Serb capture of Srebrenica] was a direct reaction to what Naser Oric did to the Serbs two years before?" Morillon replied: "Yes. Yes, Your Honour. I am convinced of that" (lines 19-23).

[29] Ed Vulliamy, "Mira cracked," *The Observer*, July 8, 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/jul/08/warcrimes.balkans>.

[30] See Allan Hall, "The Glamorous Witch Wife and the Drug Lord Son," *Scottish Daily Record*, October 6, 2000; N.A., "Saturday profile: Mirjana Markovic: Spell of the Red Witch," *The Scotsman*, October 7, 2000; Vicky Spavin, "Deadlier than the Male," *Scottish Daily Record*, April 5, 2001; and Allan Hall, "Power-Mad Couple Who Ruled by Terror," *The Scotsman*, June 29, 2001.

[31] See Alija Izetbegovic, *Islamic Declaration: A Programme for the Islamization of Muslims and of Muslim Peoples*, no translator listed, 1970, 1990, p. 30 (as posted to the website of the Balkan Repository Project, [http://www.balkan-archive.org.yu/politics/papers/Islamic\\_Declaration\\_1990\\_reprint\\_English.pdf](http://www.balkan-archive.org.yu/politics/papers/Islamic_Declaration_1990_reprint_English.pdf)). Here we add that in his book, *Seasons in Hell*, while carefully avoiding quoting from Izetbegovic's *Islamic Declaration*, Ed Vulliamy asserts the falsehood that it was "a tortured attempt to propose that the Muslim faith was compatible with modern political systems" (p. 66).

[32] Franjo Tudjman's remarks derive from the so-called Brioni Transcripts of July 31, 1995; our source here is *The Prosecutor Against Slobodan Milosevic* (IT-02-54-T), ICTY Transcript, June 26, 2003, p. 23200, [http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan\\_milosevic/trans/en/030626IT.htm](http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/trans/en/030626IT.htm). In this instance, the former U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith was undergoing cross-examination by amici curiae Branislav Tapuskovic. Reading from the text of a Prosecution Exhibit that included Tudjman's words as quoted in the Brioni Transcript, Tapuskovic said: "We have the inclination of the United States if, gentlemen, you decide to engage in that attack as you did in Slavonia....That is the purpose of this discussion today, to inflict such a blow on the Serbs that they should virtually disappear" (lines 1-10).

[33] Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell*, p. 43; "Face to face with the victims of his horror," *The Observer*, February 17, 2002,

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/feb/17/warcrimes.balkans> ; "Farewell, Sarajevo," The Guardian, November 2, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/nov/02/warcrimes.politics> ; and "Scars and stripes," The Observer, July 1, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jul/01/usa.features1>.

[34] See Ewa Tabeau and Jakub Bijak, "War-related Deaths in the 1992-1995 Armed Conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Critique of Previous Estimates and Recent Results,"

European Journal of Population, Vol. 21, June, 2005, pp. 187-215, <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/klu/eujp/2005/00000021/F0020002/00006852> . —In section 3.3., "Overall Numbers" (pp. 205-207), they estimated 102,622 total war-related deaths on all sides, of which 55,261 (54%) were civilians at the time of death, and 47,360 (46%) were military or combatants (p. 207). Also see Patrick Ball et al., Bosnian Book of the Dead: Assessment of the Database, Research and Documentation Center, Sarajevo, June, 2007, [http://www.hicn.org/research\\_design/rdn5.pdf](http://www.hicn.org/research_design/rdn5.pdf) . At the time this study was released, Ball et al. estimated 97,202 total war-related deaths, of which 57,523 were military or combatants at the time of death (59.2%), and 39,684 were civilians (40.8%).

[35] A search of the Factiva database for everything published under Ed Vulliamy's byline on the pages of The Guardian and The Observer reveals no record of Vulliamy ever having mentioned the names of the five principal researchers whose work has revised the total number of deaths from the civil wars in Bosnia - Herzegovina to the 100,000 range: Ewa Tabeau, Jakub Bijak, Mirsad Tokaca, Patrick Ball, or Philip Verwimp (i.e., rst=(grdn or ob) and ed w/2 vulliamy and (tabeau or bijak or tokaca or patrick ball or verwimp) for all dates).

[36] Vulliamy, Seasons in Hell, pp. 67-68.

[37] See John R. Schindler, Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qa'ida, and the Rise of Global Jihad (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2007), especially pp. 101-106, [http://www.zenithpress.com/Store/Product\\_Details.aspx?ProductID=37578](http://www.zenithpress.com/Store/Product_Details.aspx?ProductID=37578) . Also see Ch. 5, "MOS and Mujahidin," pp. 147-175; and Ch. 10, "Europe's Afghanistan," pp. 273-324.

[ Edward S. Herman is professor emeritus of finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania and has written extensively on economics, political economy, and the media. Among his books are Corporate Control, Corporate Power (Cambridge University Press, 1981), The Real Terror Network (South End Press, 1982), and, with Noam Chomsky, The Political Economy of Human Rights (South End Press, 1979), and Manufacturing Consent (Pantheon, 2002). David Peterson is an independent journalist and researcher based in Chicago. ]

Last edited by David C on Fri Nov 27, 2009 6:13 am; edited 2 times in total

Sat Nov 21, 2009 4:31 pm

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Raoul Djukanovic



Joined: 20 Mar 2004  
Posts: 395  
Location: UK

Post subject: [Quote](#) [Edit](#)

Let's disentangle Ed Herman and David Peterson's "convoluted themes", as they call [1] Ed Vulliamy's arguments, using language best applied to their own work, which (in their words) "touches nothing in this field without distorting it, creating and inflating evidence to [their] liking, swallowing hearsay, and ignoring and suppressing evidence that does not fit the desired line."

To that end, let's stick to facts, not Ed Vulliamy's "disgust and despair" at Amnesty International's invitation to Noam Chomsky.

Herman and Peterson claim that Vulliamy's "mendacious demagoguery ... would be hard to surpass," then go on to reference an article they wrote for Monthly Review. [2]

Among its numerous other distortions [3], this work claimed that: "The claim that 8,000 Bosnian Muslim males had been executed there was based on a Red Cross news alert that its office in Tuzla had fielded 8,000 missing person requests: 5,000 for 'individuals who apparently fled the enclave before it fell,' plus 3,000 for 'persons reportedly arrested by the Bosnian Serb forces.' ... But in a remarkable propaganda coup, the thousands of escapees and the deaths from fighting were forgotten and the 8,000 quickly became victims of execution and genocide."

Actually, the number comes from a list of missing people, presumed dead, and of these more than 6,000 [4] have been DNA-matched to remains retrieved from mass graves.

Ignoring the steadily mounting toll of identified corpses, Herman and Peterson wrote that: "this initial 8,000 figure for the missing, now executed, males of Srebrenica has never been revised from its initial very problematic level. It has remained firm and unchallengeable, despite the fact that nothing close to confirming evidence has been forthcoming."

Needless to say, they supply no evidence themselves as to the whereabouts of however many of the 8,000 they think weren't killed, or to show how they died if they weren't executed (a word used in an attempt to suggest that large numbers died in some other way than by being murdered by Serbs). They also ignore all the evidence [5] heard by the ICTY at The Hague, because it plays a "political role".

Later, they write about "Croatia's devastating attack and ethnic cleansing of some 250,000 Serbs from the Krajina, with over 1,000 civilians killed," and claim "It is likely that more civilians were killed in this campaign than following the fall of Srebrenica".

In other words, they're insinuating that however many were killed at Srebrenica, most of them weren't civilians. But they don't say this outright, because they prefer to goad people into denouncing them, so they can come back and "refute" those who charge them with "denial". Then they have the temerity to say that "journalists hate to abandon numbers that have fitted their biases so well." Their own bias here is well established. [6]

As for Noam Chomsky, who (to quote Herman and Peterson) "has never denied or questioned whether there were displaced persons- and detention- and POW-camps in Bosnia - Herzegovina during the wars there (1992-1995), never denied or questioned whether Bosnian Muslims were massacred following the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, and so on", he continues to claim that a Guardian interview with him was a "complete fabrication", because of one false reference to his use of scare quotes around the word massacre (in fact a fetish of Diana Johnstone, whose work he endorses), and a misleading headline based on the interviewer's misunderstanding of his view.

It is hardly surprising that she jumped to the conclusion she did, when Chomsky still [7] says things like: "the Balkans are a Holy Issue in England, far more sensitive than Israel in the US," as if insisting on accuracy were somehow deluded, when he calls Diana Johnstone's inaccurate and misleading work "careful and outstanding", though "it may be wrong." [8]

Before that, he signed a letter saying that its outstanding essence consists of "dissenting from the mainstream view but doing so by an appeal to fact and reason, in a great tradition." Would that be the tradition of "selective justice and no-holds-barred propaganda service", to which Herman and Peterson refer?

I can find no mention in their writing here of the disproportionate numbers of Muslims killed or driven from their homes during the war. Are they some of the "unworthy victims" of Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model?

The Monthly Review article deigns to mention them, but only to take issue with "the party line implication that the Serbs were uniquely killers and not major victims" of the war in Bosnia, thereby both inventing a position to oppose, and misrepresenting the known facts about who initiated a war of pre-emptive aggression. Herman and Peterson are presumably familiar enough with the modus operandi from the American emulation of it, which they oppose.

Even if Western propagandists exploit other nations' crimes, that's no grounds for assisting foreign propagandists in minimizing them, or denying the established facts, or the evidence for them.

Doing so most certainly amounts to "spitting on the graves of the dead", as Vulliamy charges, and may even be "actively aiding and abetting in war crimes", to quote a comment once publicized by Media Lens, when attacking people who tallied reported deaths in Iraq, because the number wasn't as large as the estimates they preferred. [9]

As for Fikret Alic and all the rest, from the verbiage above an ignorant reader could be excused for wondering whether anyone was killed or raped in a Serb camp.

Herman, Peterson and their acolytes should start by revising their own distortions (hint: this is really "what an independent journalist or historian would call correcting the record"), and oppose Western policy without making things up.

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#### REFERENCES:

- [1] <http://www.medialens.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=3037>
- [2] <http://www.monthlyreview.org/1007herman-peterson1.php>
- [3] <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/5972>
- [4] <http://www.ic-mp.org/press-releases/dna-results-of-the-international-commission-on-missing-persons-reveal-the-identity-of-6186-srebrenica-victims-dnk-izvjestaji-medunarodne-komisije-za-nestale-osobe-icmp-otkrili-identitete-6186-sreb/>
- [5] [http://www.icty.org/x/file/Outreach/view\\_from\\_hague/jit\\_srebrenica\\_en.pdf](http://www.icty.org/x/file/Outreach/view_from_hague/jit_srebrenica_en.pdf)
- [6] <http://www.glypx.com/BalkanWitness/Srebrenica-debate.htm>
- [7] <http://www.david-campbell.org/2009/11/14/chomskys-bosnian-shame/>
- [8] <http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/20051031.htm>
- [9] [http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/reference/pdf/a\\_defence\\_of\\_ibc.pdf](http://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/reference/pdf/a_defence_of_ibc.pdf)

Sun Nov 22, 2009 6:06 pm



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Raoul Djukanovic



Post subject:

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Media Lens has just published an alert on related issues, which is available here:  
<http://www.medialens.org/alerts/index.php>

According to the text it will shortly be archived here:  
[http://www.medialens.org/alerts/09/091125\\_dancing\\_on\\_a.php](http://www.medialens.org/alerts/09/091125_dancing_on_a.php)

Joined: 20 Mar 2004  
Posts: 395  
Location: UK

There is no facility to comment directly on alerts, except via the message board, from which I was banned several years ago. If anyone wants to copy this posting there, please feel free.

Otherwise, here seems the most logical place for it.

Quote:

Date: 25 November 2009 11:39:49 GMT  
To: [editor@medialens.org](mailto:editor@medialens.org)  
Subject: Re: Dancing On A Mass Grave - Oliver Kamm Of The Times Smears Media Lens

Dear David and David,

With respect, your conclusion to this alert is undermined by the substance at the core of it.

You say that:

"Reasoned discussion and disagreement - and respectful tolerance of disagreement - are what free speech and democracy are supposed to be all about."

But it's impossible to respectfully tolerate fabrications, at least if one seeks reasoned discussion. Disagreements of interpretation are only possible if facts are established. When people misrepresent the known facts, that's not much help to anyone, however highly you admire the authors.

Mud also sticks when you don't clean it off.

Just as Chomsky tried to have it both ways over Diana Johnstone (he said that her work "may be wrong" but it's "careful and outstanding", and based on "an appeal to fact and reason", although it misrepresents the facts, and does so willfully, thereby creating his own "smear"), you say Herman and Peterson are "perfectly entitled" not to "accept the figure cited by Kamm and others" as if the numbers killed at Srebrenica were in serious dispute (give or take the uncertainty as to exactly how many corpses will be identified - at present the tally is well over 6,000 and mounting, despite the remains being "co-mingled" across multiple mass graves, which are still being unearthed).

As you know, Chomsky disputes nothing in the established scholarship on the massacre. And there really is nothing to dispute. Herman and Peterson aren't "brilliant and courageous"; they're cynical and manipulative, and "their facts, sources and arguments" don't exist, except in a parallel world where reality doesn't. The weight of evidence against their claims is conclusive, as Chomsky accepts. The "8,000 figure" is neither a "political construct", nor "eminently challengable". It is close to being fully substantiated with dead bodies, DNA-matched to missing people's names.

Herman and Peterson's wriggling about "executions" is disreputable. They cannot prove anything about who was killed how, and they know very well that their phrasing implies that the people didn't even die, but they will no doubt when pushed assert that they're only doubting how many were bound and shot. The most cursory reading of the known facts ought to acquaint you with the irrelevance of this point. If you doubt it, then start with the U.N. report on the subject.

This means that they're engaged in deliberate misrepresentation about mass killings. If that's not in your view morally equivalent to denying the extent of any other historical crime, including the Holocaust, then you need your moral compass reset, regardless of what you think of Oliver Kamm.

Yours sincerely,  
[Raoul]

Wed Nov 25, 2009 12:56 pm



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Raoul Djukanovic



Joined: 20 Mar 2004  
Posts: 395  
Location: UK

Post subject:

[Quote](#) [Edit](#)

Thanks Rob B for posting the previous comment to the message board.

Aside from the general deference to Herman (as opposed to sourced facts), there have been some bizarre comments about suing people.

For example:

Quote:

**any lawyers out there?**

*Posted by jeff bowers on November 26, 2009, 12:41 pm, in reply to "More responses to latest alert"*

I think it would be great if someone with some expertise would help the editors proceed with some concrete legal action (assuming there really is a legal case for liable -- the moral case is obvious). I don't know if the Editors would be interested in pursuing this, but the point of medialens is to make a larger audience aware of how the media serve corporate interest not truth, and a legal action would put this message to a broader readership. It would also be satisfying to see Kamm admit he was wrong.

<http://members5.boardhost.com/medialens/msg/1259239273.html>

And:

Quote:

**In most cases I would agree**

*Posted by emersberger on November 26, 2009, 4:37 am, in reply to "Indeed"*

that he is a waste of time, but in this case his libel was so flagrant and determined that I think it is important that the Eds call him on it. I really hope they sue even though I know (from their previous experience with the Times legal threats) that it would suck up time and money - especially time.

<http://members5.boardhost.com/medialens/msg/1259210237.html>

Why not ask Noam Chomsky what he makes of these opinions?

Those expressing them might shudder to learn that they, like Emma Brockes, are "of course free to publish them, and I would, of course, support [their] right to do so, on grounds that [they make] quite clear [they do] not understand."

<http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/20051031.htm>

Thu Nov 26, 2009 1:16 pm

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Raoul Djukanovic



Joined: 20 Mar 2004  
Posts: 395  
Location: UK

Post subject:

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The editors of Media Lens have written to The Times saying the following:

Quote:

Dear Sally Baker

You write:

"Mr Kamm refers not just to 'the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica' as you say, but to 'the recent history of the Balkans', and it seems clear to me that you do indeed claim there is no 'mass grave', not least in your March 20 2006 MediaLens article headed 'Disappearing genocide'." (Email to Media Lens, November 25, 2009)

Our 2006 media alert described how journalists had retreated from their 1999 claim that there had been a "genocide" in Kosovo. Oliver Kamm's comment came in a discussion at the end of his blog, 'The Funny side of genocide,' focusing on the massacre in Srebrenica, Edward Herman's alleged denial of that massacre, and our involvement in promoting his alleged denial. No mention whatever was made in the blog, or in the discussion that followed, of the death toll in Kosovo. Moreover, we cannot recall Kamm ever accusing us of denying a "mass grave" in Kosovo - his smears always centre around the massacre in Srebrenica. And yet you are asking us to believe that Kamm actually had Kosovo in mind when he wrote that we "dance on a mass grave that [we] claim isn't there because Herman told [us] so". Kamm was clearly referring to Herman's supposed influence over us on Srebrenica - the theme of his article.

In the 2006 article, Herman was not cited once as a commentator, only as the editor of a book containing articles by other authors we cited. Nowhere in that article, or in any other article, have we written that there was no "mass grave" in Kosovo, or the Balkans, and certainly not because Herman "told [us] so".

But anyway, Kamm is very clear about which "mass grave" he had in mind. He was asked by a reader on his blog:

"Dear Oliver, will you please retract your libelous statement about Media Lens?"  
Posted by: Josef K | 25 Nov 2009 14:25:21

Kamm replied;

"Josef K of Media Lens [sic], don't be silly. If Media Lens doesn't wish to be identified with the cause of denying war crimes and the genocide at Srebrenica, then there is an obvious course open to Cromwell and Edwards, its founders, which is to stop promoting, praising and fawning over the work of Ed Herman, which does precisely that."

Posted by: Oliver Kamm | 25 Nov 2009 15:24:30  
([http://timesonline.typepad.com/oliver\\_kamm/2009/11/try-try-try-again.html](http://timesonline.typepad.com/oliver_kamm/2009/11/try-try-try-again.html))

Again, no mention of Kosovo. Josef K did not mention Srebrenica, but Kamm cited that as the "mass grave" to which he had referred.

We understand that you can stonewall endlessly, but do you really think it is worth the damage you are doing to your own reputation and the reputation of The Times? We know that the journalist Jonathan Cook has written to you. As he says: "it is incumbent on you and the paper you represent to show unequivocally both that

"a) Mr Kamm was referring to Kosovo rather than, as appears plain from his words, Srebrenica

"b) Media Lens has denied that mass graves existed in Kosovo

"Otherwise, readers like myself will be forced to conclude that the professionalism the Times claims is a sham."

Sincerely

David Edwards and David Cromwell  
The Editors - Media Lens  
[www.medialens.org](http://www.medialens.org)



<http://members5.boardhost.com/medialens/msg/1259245590.html>

As already noted in this forum, it is untrue that journalists "retreated from their 1999 claim that there had been a 'genocide' in Kosovo," since next to none ever claimed there had been one. The facts are laid out here:

<http://www.medialens.org/forum/viewtopic.php?p=5593>

Instead of joining the editors in clutching at straws, Jonathan Cook ought to ask them why they continue to deny that by endorsing the work of Herman and Peterson (and telling subscribers that these "brilliant and courageous" apologists for Serbian warmongers are "perfectly entitled" not to accept the known facts), they are endorsing claims (for which there's no evidence) that people known to have been killed and buried in mass graves did not meet this fate.

One article, quoted above and referenced in their Media Alert, invites readers to conclude that the civilian death toll at Srebrenica was an 1/8 of its known size. That this duplicates

	<p>the modus operandi of Holocaust denial ought to be self evident.</p> <p>The editors of this website dissociate themselves from other equally unsubstantiated conspiracy theories. So why not this one?</p> <p>Why do they persist in misleading other well-intentioned readers? What happened to facts being sacred?</p>
<p>Thu Nov 26, 2009 3:04 pm ^</p>	<p><a href="#">▶ profile</a> <a href="#">▶ pm</a> <a href="#">▶ email</a> <a href="#">▶ www...</a></p>
<p>joe emersberger</p> <p>Joined: 24 Jan 2004 Posts: 454 Location: Windsor, Onatrio, Canada</p>	<p>Post subject: <a href="#">▶ Quote</a></p> <p><b>Raoul/Daniel:</b></p> <p>Hope you stop saying that they were banned from the Medialens website. I also wish you would clarify something. Do you accept that Kamm's statement that the Eds "“dance on a mass grave that they claim isn't there because Herman told them so” was a lie?</p> <p>Since you jump all over the Eds for not dissociating themselves from what you say are "distortions" and "conspiracy theories" I wonder if you would dissociate yourself from Kamm's lies.</p> <p>I also wonder if you have some kind of principled opposition to libel suits. Should I be able to make anything up about you and not face any kind of legal consequences?</p>
<p>Fri Nov 27, 2009 3:10 am ^</p>	<p><a href="#">▶ profile</a> <a href="#">▶ pm</a></p>
<p>Raoul Djukanovic</p>  <p>Joined: 20 Mar 2004 Posts: 395 Location: UK</p>	<p>Post subject: <a href="#">▶ Quote</a> <a href="#">▶ Edit</a></p> <p>Sorry Joe, but the fact is that my message board password was revoked. Therefore I was banned. That's the prerogative of the site's editors, I guess, but it remains a fact, and not one that suggests much interest in open discussion.</p> <p>Your pretence (posted to the message board) that I'm "saying that [I've] been banned from the Medialens website", as opposed to the main discussion board, shows about as much respect for standards of evidence as they seem to have.</p> <p>I hold no brief for Oliver Kamm, whose political outlook I don't share, but the literal untruth of that statement is irrelevant (and assuming he has no pictures of the Davids doing a jig at Potocari, it is literally untrue).</p> <p>Herman and Peterson are lying about something far more serious - the historical record. And Media Lens is promoting their work. There's no defence for that, and a libel action would be as successful as David Irving's.</p> <p>As for the general question about suits, I was referring to the irony of the situation. Scrolling up to revisit Trnopolje ought to make that clear.</p>
<p>Fri Nov 27, 2009 7:24 am ^</p>	<p><a href="#">▶ profile</a> <a href="#">▶ pm</a> <a href="#">▶ email</a> <a href="#">▶ www...</a></p>
<p>Raoul Djukanovic</p>  <p>Joined: 20 Mar 2004 Posts: 395 Location: UK</p>	<p>Post subject: <a href="#">▶ Quote</a> <a href="#">▶ Edit</a></p> <p>Just for the record, I should probably also point out that it's literally untrue to write, as Media Lens does, that journalists have "blood on their hands".</p>
<p>Fri Nov 27, 2009 8:38 am ^</p>	<p><a href="#">▶ profile</a> <a href="#">▶ pm</a> <a href="#">▶ email</a> <a href="#">▶ www...</a></p>
<p>joe emersberger</p> <p>Joined: 24 Jan 2004 Posts: 454 Location: Windsor, Onatrio, Canada</p>	<p>Post subject: <a href="#">▶ Quote</a></p> <p><b>Raoul/Daniel:</b></p> <p>I think this exchange makes it pretty clear why you were banned from the message board, but you should not say (as you do at the Times site where "Newspeak" was reviewed) that you were banned from the message board without adding that you remain free to post at length and debate your views on the Medlalens site - as you do now.</p> <p>I have little to say to someone who says that the truth or falsehood of Kamm's stament about the Eds is irrelevant. It certainly is relevant to whether or not Kamm is lying. He clearly did, maliciously, and is being defended by his deep pocketed employer - which highlights the depths to which corporate press, not just Kamm, can and regularly do sink. Don't understand why you feel the "lies" you accuse Chomsky, Herman and Perterson of telling are relevant white the lies told by Kamm are of no consequence.</p> <p>You snicker at the "irony" that Chomsky (whom on the Times stite you accused of lying about the Brockes interview) is opposed to libel suits. Yes, he is opposed to libel suits, on principled grounds, and I disagree with him on this. I don't think it really protects free speech to not challenge the corporate press with legal action when they or their employees deliberately slander people. Whether it is tactically wise to sue is another matter.</p> <p>You say "I should probably also point out that it's literally untrue to write, as Media Lens</p>

does, that journalists have "blood on their hands".

The Eds have explained very clearly what they mean by that as you well know and that makes your comment very silly. Kamm, on the other hand, has gone out of way to accuse the Eds of not only denying, but celebrating Serb atrocities in the Balkans. I'm glad you're not cluttering the message board with type of "argument".

I've not looked into the recent history of the Balkans but even without doing so find it impossible to take your wild allegations against Herman, Peterson and Chomsky seriously. The cases that I have looked into closely reveal that even liberal groups like Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have a pro-western, pro imperial bias. Even these groups, never mind the ICJ or other bodies, have routinely inflated the crimes of western enemies and downplayed (or ignored altogether) the crimes of western allies. It would be extremely foolish to assume that any of these groups, posses an absolute truth about a historical record - especially about something as hard to nail down with exactitude (even through scientific methods) as a death toll.

The cases I have looked onto have shown that Chomsky and Herman (Peterson I am not as familiar with) have done careful, accurate and well argued work.

Kamm, on the other hand, when he isn't slandering people, is openly heaping praise on war criminals like Tony Blair. Not a tough call to decide whom I consider more credible. By the way, if you expect to taken seriously, as oppsed to satisfying some need to denigrate the Eds, you should, at the very least, stop saying that Chomsky "lied" about the Brockes interview. Incredible that you would say that even after the Guardian retracted the interview - which, stricly speaking, was not even an interview (with a Q/A format) but Broske's "recollection" of one.

Fri Nov 27, 2009 5:00 pm



[profile](#) [pm](#)

Raoul Djukanovic



Joined: 20 Mar 2004  
Posts: 395  
Location: UK

Post subject:

[Quote](#) [Edit](#)

Joe,

If you're not interested in facts, then there's little to discuss, I agree.

1) Chomsky lied. He called the interview "a complete fabrication". It wasn't. There was one erroneous claim, and a false headline.

2) You say you know little about recent Balkan history. You should read up on it, instead of deferring to Ed Herman's misrepresentations of the known facts.

3) Oliver Kamm is irrelevant, because denying facts about history speaks for itself (and as noted above he is only doing what Media Lens does - exaggerating for effect). The promotion of work that denies known facts by the editors of Media Lens betrays an indifference to accuracy that undermines their critique of those who propagandise on behalf of the powers that be. Why they endorse demonstrably false work is bewildering. Presumably they, like you, can't be bothered to do the necessary reading.

4) I've consistently referred accurately to my ban from the message board, the primary discussion forum at Media Lens. That you wish to banish discussion about factual accuracy speaks for itself.

5) There's nothing silly about this. It's very serious.

Fri Nov 27, 2009 11:41 pm



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joe emersberger

Joined: 24 Jan 2004  
Posts: 454  
Location: Windsor, Onatrio, Canada

Post subject:

[Quote](#)

Okay I'll deal with point 1, where you claim Chomsky "lied" about the Brockes interview

I assume this is the quote you are referring to taken from a correspondece cited in your ref #7 above

Chomsky said to his correspondent

"As for the sources you cite, one of them (the Guardian interview) was known at once to be a complete fabrication, so ridiculous that the Guardian ombudsman quickly issued an apology and it was withdrawn from their website (over my objection – I think the antics of the media should be exposed)."

Unless you are referring to another quote then it is appalling that you cite this as evidence of Chomsky lying. To do so, you must interpret his words in an utterly proposterous way - that he meant every single thing Brockes wrote from beginning to end in the article (including the spelling of his name) was false. It is obvious Chomsky meant that that interview completely fabricated his views about what took placae at Srebreniuca - which is what the Guardian ombudsman addressed.

If this is an example of how recklessly you accuse Chomsky of lying then others, if not you, will understand why I consider responding to the rest of what you say as a waste of time.

Sat Nov 28, 2009 12:18 am



[profile](#) [pm](#)

Raoul Djukanovic





Post subject:

[Quote](#) [Edit](#)

As you like, Joe. It's clearly a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts.

He also wrote to the Guardian that "Even when the words attributed to me have some resemblance to accuracy, I take no responsibility for them, because of the invented contexts in which they appear."

<p>Joined: 20 Mar 2004 Posts: 395 Location: UK</p>	<p>Which is blatantly misleading in itself.</p> <p>But I base my comment mainly on a comment he made to me personally, which he and you will doubtless object to me quoting, as he declined my request to publish it here in 2005.</p> <p>So I'll paraphrase. Nothing he said in the the interview has a remote relation to the truth. Allegedly. Except that none of his quotes were retracted by The Guardian.</p> <p>This is in any case irrelevant, and the fact you choose to confine yourself to commenting on it speaks volumes. You have no interest in the facts about the Balkans. You're just playing ideological games, like Herman, Peterson and their promoters here.</p>
<p>Sat Nov 28, 2009 12:27 am ^</p>	<p><a href="#">profile</a> <a href="#">pm</a> <a href="#">email</a> <a href="#">www...</a></p>
<p>Raoul Djukanovic</p>  <p>Joined: 20 Mar 2004 Posts: 395 Location: UK</p>	<p>Post subject: <a href="#">Quote</a> <a href="#">Edit</a></p> <p>One other thing - if Chomsky (despite his doublespeak) disputes nothing about the historical record, yet Herman and Peterson do (without evidence, let alone refutation of the established facts), how does this compute in your binary worldview (as defined by you above)?</p>
<p>Sat Nov 28, 2009 12:42 am ^</p>	<p><a href="#">profile</a> <a href="#">pm</a> <a href="#">email</a> <a href="#">www...</a></p>
<p>Raoul Djukanovic</p>  <p>Joined: 20 Mar 2004 Posts: 395 Location: UK</p>	<p>Post subject: <a href="#">Quote</a> <a href="#">Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a></p> <p>And finally, since there seems little point pursuing this any further, it's worth noting that this whole discussion stems from demonstrably false material being endorsed, repeatedly, by the Media Lens editors, who've made no apparent effort in the years they've been circulating it to acquaint themselves with basic facts about the Balkans.</p> <p>Were they to distance themselves from falsehoods, there would (and could) be no "smear" (which is an interesting choice of word, since it casually sidesteps the issue at hand - factual accuracy). Just as if Chomsky hadn't been so intent on goading Emma Brockes she mightn't have misrepresented him (though this is still questionable, since he was trying to have it both ways, as far as possible, while retaining what he saw as just enough wiggle room, which is one of his odd habits that acolytes seem to emulate, though they tend to do a more ham-fisted job).</p> <p>So if anyone's denigrating the Media Lens editors, it's themselves. Moreover, your choice of the word "denigrate" is revealing. Does Media Lens "denigrate" journalists? One need only scroll up to see Herman and Peterson's line.</p> <p>In conclusion, Andrew Marr's horror seems more insightful than you presumably imagine.</p> <p>Quote:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>"I think it is just pernicious and anti-journalistic. I note that you advertise an organisation called Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting so I guess at least you have a sense of humour. But I don't think I will bother with 'medialens' next time..."</p> <p><a href="http://www.medialens.org/alerts/01/011013_BBC_responds.html">http://www.medialens.org/alerts/01/011013_BBC_responds.html</a></p> </div> <p>As if that weren't enough, it's anti-fact.</p>
<p>Sat Nov 28, 2009 7:24 am ^</p>	<p><a href="#">profile</a> <a href="#">pm</a> <a href="#">email</a> <a href="#">www...</a></p>

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