

vagueness, Burr forced the issue by demanding an apology for any derogatory rumors that any remarks by Hamilton might have inspired during their long rivalry. Refusing, Hamilton accepted Burr's challenge, thus complying with what he called the "public prejudice" regarding honor and preserving his "ability to

be in future useful" in public affairs. At the same time, however, he resolved to adhere to his principles and withhold his fire in the field. Though Hamilton was mortally wounded in the duel, Freeman writes, Burr lost the subsequent battle for public approval. He became "a failed duelist."

Congress on the Big Screen

"Hollywood Goes to Congress" by Tom Rosenstiel, in *Media Studies Journal* (Winter 1996), Columbia Univ., 2950 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

The conviction that there is something rotten in Congress is nothing new. Consider Hollywood's first major movie about the institution, Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), in which a Boy Scout leader (Jimmy Stewart) is named to fill a vacancy in the Senate and finds mostly corruption and greed there. Although usually remembered as a celebration of naive idealism, notes Rosenstiel, a congressional correspondent for *Newsweek*, the film endures "because it depicts the subtle and credible humanity of the hack reporters, the bad senator, the overly partisan opposition leader, and the taciturn vice president." Capra's Senate is corrupt, but it also is finally honorable, and the film is "an appeal for people to aim high and not compromise too easily." In the decades since, Rosenstiel contends, the "take" on Congress in this most American of popular art forms has changed, tracing a disturbing arc from hope to despair.

The Senator Was Indiscreet (1948), written by Charles MacArthur (co-author of *The Front Page*) and George S. Kaufman, is a sophisticated farce in which a senator is undone by his diary, filled with Senate secrets. The film "describes a political world filled by hacks and phonies rather than bright but misled men," Rosenstiel notes. But it's all harmless fun: politics "doesn't much matter in people's lives."

The Cold War changed that. Otto Preminger's *Advise and Consent* (1962), based on

the Allen Drury novel, portrays the Senate as it grapples with the controversial nomination of a liberal intellectual for secretary of state. For all the film's melodramatics, Rosenstiel says, it "celebrates the subtle, cold pragmatism of the Kennedy age. . . . The film admires the subtle and complex dimensions of Congress—the friendships between political enemies, men who lead with their minds rather than their emotions."

Fast-forward to the post-Watergate era. Hollywood provided *The Seduction of Joe Tynan* (1979), "a cautionary tale about what happens to a decent senator when he begins to become a national figure," Rosenstiel says. Power (and a beautiful civil rights lawyer) seduce a senator played by Alan Alda. But ultimately, the senator's private sins are forgiven. His country needs him.

That is definitely not the outlook of the most recent film about Congress, *Distinguished Gentleman* (1992), in which a smalltime Florida con man, played by comedian Eddie Murphy, is elected to Congress, where his crooked skills serve him well. The corruption, Rosenstiel points out, now involves not ideology or power but money: "The whole system is rigged, voters are idiots, and campaign rhetoric is laughable. . . . The film is pure anger against a system that seems unredeemable." What is new, in both the public mood and the films that reflect it, Rosenstiel laments, is this sense of "utter hopelessness."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Limits of Global Compassion

"Distant Compassion" by Clifford Orwin, in *The National Interest* (Spring 1996), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Ever since the United States sent 28,000 soldiers to Somalia in 1992 to avert mass starvation in that unhappy African country,

there has been talk about the "CNN factor" in foreign policy—that is, the influence of TV images of the suffering of distant inno-



CNN's Christiane Amanpour reports from Bosnia in 1992. Would the West care about Bosnia were it not for TV?

Somalia and the tribal slaughter in Rwanda would not have made much impression on the publics in the Western democracies; nor would the "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia have elevated Bosnia to the summit of foreign policy concerns. No national interests are at stake, Orwin observes. "The widespread response to them has . . . been 'humanitarian,' and has been stimulated

cents on the public and thus on policymakers. The CNN factor is real, but not all it's cracked up to be, argues Orwin, a political scientist at the University of Toronto.

Without TV, he says, the starvation in

largely by televised images."

But such compassion for people suffering in remote corners of the "global village" is likely to be extremely tenuous. It is generally based only on feelings of common

What Are Soldiers For?

Writing in *Chronicles* (May 1996), A. J. Bacevich, executive director of the Foreign Policy Institute of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, questions the sentimentalization of the American soldier.

Thirty years later, now elevated to positions of prominence, those who evaded service [during the Vietnam War] now truckle and fawn to demonstrate the depth of their regard for men in uniform. Whether to assuage their consciences, remedy past injustices, or just cater to the folks back home, the motives hardly matter: the effect is to sentimentalize "the troops" in a way that society would never dream of sentimentalizing other professionals—the police, firefighters—upon whom in extremis it must rely.

The military itself is only too happy to play along. The moral leverage embedded in "the troops"—manifested in a sensitivity to casualties without precedent among history's major military powers—provides the Pentagon with enormous political clout. Senior military leaders do not hesitate to exploit that clout for their own purposes. They deflect or modify tasks not to their liking—contributing, for example, to the months of government hesitation and indecision over Haiti and Bosnia. They pass off on others the responsibility for failure—as was the case, for example, when Les Aspin absorbed the blame for botched operations in Mogadishu. . . .

The real culprit lies not in the Pentagon but in a polity that does not take seriously—indeed does not acknowledge—the imperative of defining the prerogatives and obligations of a professional military force in the new circumstances that exist following the Cold War.

The imperative transcends partisan politics, arguments over foreign policy, and the debate over specific controversies such as Bosnia. Indeed, absent a commonly accepted understanding of the risks inherent in being a soldier and the role that Americans expect their military forces to play, coherent debate over policy becomes next to impossible.

humanity, without more specific shared identities (such as being fellow Americans or fellow anticommunists) to reinforce them. "To find, as the Good Samaritan did, a single victim by the roadside is one thing," Orwin notes. "To confront a succession of them on television, widely scattered around the globe, is something else. Our humanitarian impulses may fire, but they will also tend to sputter."

Because humanitarian intervention is not based on pressing national interests, he points out, its viability "depends very much on the perception of it at home. Here too the role of television is both crucial and ambiguous." Underscoring "the ruthlessness of an oppressor" on TV may well provoke more indignation with him and evoke more compassion for his victims, but "it also highlights the risks inherent in continued intervention."

"It is hardly surprising," Orwin says, "that the responses of Western governments to the Balkan war have deferred" to the ambivalence about intervention that viewers feel. When a high official of one European country was asked, off the record, why his government neither intervened in force in Bosnia nor refrained from intervening, but instead intervened ineffectually, he explained "that such was the policy dictated by the CNN factor." Western governments, Orwin observes, wanted "their interventions to be [tele]visible, while avoiding [tele]visible losses."

It is possible that television's influence will diminish in the future. Ironically, Orwin points out, the medium's constant stream of disturbing images from around the world may eventually have the effect of inuring viewers to distant suffering.

Let 'Em Fight

"The Interservice Competition Solution" by Harvey M. Sapolsky, in *Breakthroughs* (Spring 1996), Defense and Arms Control Studies Program, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 292 Main St. (E38-603), Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

For many years, reformers attacked "wasteful" interservice rivalries in the U.S. military. Then, in 1986, they won a significant victory. The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act strengthened the position of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and ushered in "jointness": the armed services were supposed to put aside juvenile interservice rivalries and work together to define military needs. Although the services opposed the legislation, they have since become "champions of jointness, their shield against being played off against one another by civilians," writes Sapolsky, a political scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In his view, however, more interservice rivalry would be a good thing.

Interservice competition offers civilian defense leaders several important advantages, he argues. For one, it helps them to get vital information. "What the Navy will not tell us about its vulnerabilities, the Air Force and Army might," he notes. Competition also gives civilian leaders more leverage in their effort to control defense policy. "Ranks of medal-bedecked generals and admirals agreeing on the same position are a formidable force to confront

in any Washington policy battle," Sapolsky points out. Civilians do better with "informed and powerful military allies in defense strategy and budget discussions."

Interservice rivalries also spur innovation, he argues. "It was the Navy's fear of losing the nuclear deterrent mission entirely to the Air Force in the 1950s that gave us the Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missile, which in turn reduced our need to deploy hundreds upon hundreds of vulnerable and costly strategic bombers and most of the liquid fueled missiles the Air Force was developing."

The Pentagon's civilian leaders may not be keen to bring back the good old days, Sapolsky says. "Interservice friction produces a great deal of political heat because it usually involves appeals to Congress and the recruitment of partisans among military retirees, contractors, and friendly reporters." Instead of being viewed as the necessary prelude to informed judgment, the political conflict may leave the impression of bad management on the part of the civilian defense officials, especially when accusations begin to fly about "wasteful duplication."

Fortunately, Sapolsky says, there is