

No. 15, May 1994

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the Jewish Press

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Typesetting and Production: Mofet-Rosmarine

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NEWSPAPERS: POSTMORTEM

Recently, we acquired lists of Jewish periodicals, primarily from eastern Europe, that are in the main no longer extant. These lists were received from various sources. Some contain many repetitive names of newspapers that appeared in Yiddish or Hebrew but whose titles are spelled in Latin or Cyrillic letters, sometimes with unfortunate errors. Some of the lists refer to single surviving issues of newspapers that were published over a period of years. Some contain first and last issues of short-lived newspapers. Some are arranged chronologically, or in Hebrew and/or other alphabetical listings, all of which will require considerable research and bibliographic work in order to be recorded properly.

The common denominator in all these publications, with the possible exception of a few survivors, is that they represent a Jewish reality that no longer exists. A world that was destroyed. Fortunately, at least from the point of view of journalistic research, a portion of the periodicals in those lists were physically preserved, either in their original form or on microfilm, and I hope that free access to them will be made available to researchers.

Unlike periodicals on the American continent or in Eretz Yisrael, most of the periodicals in these lists were wiped off the face of the earth, along with their readers, during the two world wars, especially during the second, or were victims of the Bolshevik revolution and its aftermath. By way of contrast, dozens of periodicals, including dailies, both in the Americas and in Eretz Yisrael before and after the founding of the State of Israel, closed down mainly for financial reasons, or occasionally for demographic or political reasons. I am not referring here to the dozens, if not hundreds, of local papers of no significance that closed down as rapidly as they were launched, unlamented. What I am referring to are the many periodicals, including serious newspapers that became practically institutions in terms of their role in society and in public life, that disappeared from the journalistic landscape during the past decade.

Why? How did this happen? Who is responsible for their disappearance? We sought answers, if only partial, in a symposium we held at the university about two months ago with the participation of four experts in various fields whose views are reproduced in this issue of *Qesher*.

My own introductory remarks at that symposium on the expiration of newspapers appear below, with slight changes:

However contradictory this may sound, newspapers actually do not die. I may not have thought so during the long years of my professional work when I participated in the last rites of at least half a dozen periodicals, dailies, weeklies and others for which I had worked as reporter, columnist or editor, and which are no longer extant. I can testify that one of them expired in unique circumstances, and included among the murderers of its soul — you will understand immediately why I use such a cruel simile — was I myself. I am referring to the Jerusalem daily *Hayarden* (“The Jordan”), which closed in 1935. An article I wrote, titled “To the Murderer of My Brother’s Soul,” written in an outspoken vein unusual even for then, and even in comparison with a number of lead articles that we published at the time in May 1935 in reaction to the murder of Betar member Kalman Shapira in Jerusalem, evoked a drastic response by the British District Commissioner, who issued a closure order for the paper on the grounds of “incitement and endangering public safety.” To say that we had no regrets whatsoever then over the closure of the paper is an understatement. Our sages said that “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” clearly implies a pleasant death for him. In the event, it was best for *Hayarden* to have died a heroic death, for if not for the closure order, the paper would have died of shame over its chronic poverty, especially at that particular time.

This chronic poverty was an illness endemic to a large number of newspapers that disappeared. Possibly because they were so poor, many of them were considered dead even when they were still alive. But as I said at the start, newspapers do not die. In contrast to people, whose souls’ destiny is unknown to us once they leave the body, newspapers continue to exist, to publicize news and opinion, to stimulate, to amuse, even after they cease to appear. As someone presently engaged in research to a certain extent, I can

testify that the yellower the pages become — even if they were not “yellow” journals in their previous incarnation — and the more they crumble to the touch, the more interesting and stimulating they become. At the Institute for Research of the Jewish Press which we are establishing here at the university — with we have, rigorous fidelity to the tradition of poverty — devoted a special section to final issues of various periodicals, which support the thesis that not only don't newspapers die, they actually turn into a rare trove of knowledge and information after they cease to appear, in contrast to what Job said to his three friends, possibly with some irony: “Wisdom shall die with you.”

Several days ago I received, via a colleague who visited the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw at our request, photocopies of several Jewish newspapers from the past. One example is a Warsaw Jewish weekly, *Warschauer Judische Zeitung*, founded in 1867. At the start of its second year of existence, it announced to its readers that it was forced to close. “We do not wish to boast,” the editorial stated, “but every professional and well-informed reader of the paper will testify that our primary goal was to encourage progress, and indeed we could have accomplished a great deal in this area had we gained widespread backing. But something unexpected happened: the more the newspaper progressed and became interesting, the fewer subscribers it had, for a substantial portion of our coreligionists did not understand or did not want to understand the importance and the necessity of this newspaper, and unfortunately are so backward that they see no need to read a newspaper at all, for whatever does not fit into their outdated mode of thinking they brand as heresy.”

“It is no wonder,” the newspaper continues, “that during the entire period of our activity we struggled greatly until we had barely 180 subscriptions (of a total Jewish population of 700,000), which is insufficient to cover even printing costs.”

A Yiddish weekly published in China — yes, in Shanghai — by immigrant journalists and writers from Poland who reached the Far East in the course of their wartime wanderings and travails, closed itself down more elegantly. An editorial announcement in the issue of August 2,

1946, read: “We announce with regret that due to financial difficulties we are forced to temporarily discontinue the appearance of our weekly *Unzer Velt* (‘Our World’)” — apparently its world that had been destroyed — “and hope to renew it soon.” It is perhaps unnecessary to state that this hope was not fulfilled.

This “Our World” is actually a whole world that constitutes a supreme witness to that terrible chapter in Jewish history which today is the subject of films but which then was written in blood and agony in what we call “real time.”

But why look further afield? Since one of the participants in our symposium is Amos Schocken, I shall quote several excerpts from the daily *Hadashot* (“News”) which he published and which closed on November 29, 1993. Its lead headline that day was: “Despite the Crisis in the Talks, Rabin Instructed the Delegation Not to Compromise.” Another headline was: “With ‘Meretz’ Opposed, the Government Approved the Law Banning the Import of Nonkosher Meat.” Or: “Fighter Planes Attacked Terrorist Targets South of Sidon.” As if the world had stopped at that point in time.... And on the last page of the issue, which was to be the last issue the reader would read, what bitter irony by the composers of the notice: “Readers interested in reporting good news are requested to call *Hadashot*, Tel. 565 6555.” Interesting what good news the editor anticipated receiving, knowing that it was the last day of the newspaper.

We also have a copy of the last pathetic issue of *Ha'olam Hazei* (“This World”) in its magazine format of February 25, 1993, still edited by Rafi Ginat, before it changed format and passed on to Reno Zror for the last chapter of its existence. The “Gossiping Rachel” column is still there, as are all the other columns, but a special macabre humor column has been inserted, devoted to the termination of the newspaper, a kind of lighthearted, frolicsome self-funeral.

I have referred to only a fraction of the collection. See what can be learned about the world, about the Jewish people, about the press and about any subject at all from these yellowing issues of newspapers that ostensibly have died but actually continue to exist and, like good wine, the more they age, the better their taste to the

palate of the researcher who seeks to learn from the past about the present and the future.

* * *

Is it axiomatic that newspapers must expire when they encounter financial difficulties? Some say yes. With the press increasingly turning into an industry, or a branch of commerce, it is managed and maintained like any other industrial branch: if it is profitable, it continues to exist; if it loses money, it comes to an end. The Darwinian law of the survival of the fittest determines its future.

A month ago, I had occasion to meet with the Czech Minister of Culture, Pavel Tigrid, who paid a short visit to the university. When, in a discussion with him, I referred to this phenomenon of the disappearance of newspapers, including leaders in the field, because of financial difficulties, he asked why we do not use the system followed in today's democratic Czechoslovakia of subsidizing newspapers. It is not an original Czech idea. Several of the Scandinavian countries used various systems of subsidization of weaker newspapers. A similar idea was raised recently, according to an article in the *Washington Post* last November, by American jurist Prof. Edwin Baker of the University of Pennsylvania in a new book, *Advertising and a Democratic Press*, in which he decries the serious drop in the level of newspapers in terms of content and social message, due, inter alia, to pressing competitive constraints, especially in the area of advertising. Newspapers thus turn into the "lapdogs" of the giant advertising agencies, and cease fulfilling their sociopolitical function — facilitating and promoting the participation of the general public, and not only certain classes and sectors, in the political process.

According to this same article, Prof. Baker proposes a sophisticated system of government involvement, on the one hand, and the rejuvenation of the political

party press, on the other, by means, inter alia, of a redistribution of advertising income in order to reduce newspapers' dependence on commercial interests. Similar ideas have been raised in our country recently, with variations suited to our particular situation, especially with the introduction of commercial TV, which might eat into a substantial portion of press advertising. I suspect, however, that this solution contains the seeds of a new problem and that in this case the solution may be graver than the problem.

I find it difficult to believe, in light of disappointing experience in our country with politicians of all parties, that a fair arrangement can be reached guaranteeing the ongoing existence of a truly free and independent press if representatives of political parties will be the distributors of subsidies for needy newspapers, or will compensate newspapers for loss of revenue, according to criteria devised by the politicians themselves. We face sufficient existing as well as proliferating dangers to the freedom of the press without inviting additional ones.

Independent newspapers are dangerous to politicians — and that is good. Politicians who hold the key to the very existence of newspapers are dangerous to the freedom of the press — and that is bad. I suspect that an equitable system has not yet been devised to address both the problem and the proposed solutions, so that we shall have to periodically reinstitute discussions on the hows and whys of the expiration of newspapers and on their contribution to scholarly enlightenment, knowledge and wisdom after their death.



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SYMPOSIUM: ON THE EXPIRATION OF NEWSPAPERS

This symposium, sponsored by the Journalism Studies Program at Tel Aviv University, was held on March 16, 1994, with the aim of examining the economic, societal and professional aspects of the closure of newspapers. It was prompted by the recent closure of the daily *Hadashot* ("News") in Israel, as well as other newspapers. Participants were **Yishayahu Ben-Porat**, a journalist; **Efrayim Reiner**, an economist; **Dr. Dan Caspi**, a scholar of the media; and **Amos Schocken**, publisher of the daily *Ha'aretz* ("The Land"). **Shalom Rosenfeld** delivered opening remarks (see the opening article in this issue). **Dr. Mordecai Naor**, editor of *Qesher*, was the moderator.

* * *

Since 1908, when the first daily appeared in Eretz Yisrael, 55 Hebrew-language dailies have been published in the country, of which 44 are no longer extant. Today there are 11 Hebrew dailies, as well as four in Russian, one in English, one in Arabic and two additional Arabic dailies published in East Jerusalem. Most of the closures, noted **Dr. Naor**, were attributable to economic causes.

Efrayim Reiner raised the question of whether the press can be regarded as a business in the sense that the making of money is the primary aim. The answer he offered is that the vast majority of businesses are actually motivated by a variety of factors, and that these fall into two general categories: the desire for fulfillment as the culmination of a major effort, and the desire to realize an investment, namely by selling it. Creating a political party and marketing its ideology, for example, is a kind of business, requiring money, but its aim is fulfillment not related to the making of money. Even the manufacturer's aim, according to the Protestant ethic, is not the realization of the investment but the accumulation of property, a kind of combination of fulfillment and realization.

The commercial press is viewed by its publishers as fulfillment and not realization, whether its backers are ideologically motivated or "business"-motivated. For example, Reiner noted, Shalom Rosenfeld had been one of the rebels from *Yediot Aharonot* who had left that paper to start a new one (*Ma'ariv*) not in order to make money but to create a better paper. Ironically, however, the press, which is considered vital

to the existence of a democracy, is dependent upon the commercial marketplace for its survival, although other components of democracy — education, for example — are government-subsidized. Until now, entrepreneurs and businessmen have managed to keep the press afloat: although some newspapers close, others emerge. Should the day come when this no longer occurs, the taxpayer will have to subsidize the free press.

Dr. Dan Caspi put the issue of the closure of newspapers in the context of the influence of any given paper on the press and on journalism. What, he asked, was the legacy of *Hadashot*? The answer, he suggested, was that *Hadashot* served as a kind of importer of local-newspaper conceptions to the national daily press, and these conceptions induced a process of rejuvenation and adaptation on the part of the press to the other media. Three of these successfully transplanted conceptions were a heightened economic orientation (profitability at the expense of professional journalistic considerations); breaking the hold of the union on employment practices in the field, leading to greater flexibility in job definitions, greater mobility of journalists, the introduction of younger workers into the field, journalistic ethical flexibility, feminization of the field and possibly a lowering of the status of the journalist — practices that were admirably suited to business considerations, as they cost less and enhanced competitiveness; and adopting the new journalism style of personalized commentary rather than factual reportage, along with a revolution in graphics.

Regarding the last facet — graphics — Caspi pointed out that *Hadashot* tried out a theory that graphics are more important than content, but this approach failed.

Amos Schocken, publisher of the defunct *Hadashot*, took issue with Dr. Caspi on the extent of the influence both of the local press and of graphics on *Hadashot*, noting that it was *Hadashot* which was closed down by the censor for its revelations on the "Shabak" (Secret Service) affair, while the other papers gave in to pressure by the defense minister. *Hadashot* really did have a non-establishment point of view, but, since it had no political backers, it had to compete on the commercial level. There is no easy solution to this dilemma, and sometimes economic constraints lead to negative manifestations in the media. Conceivably, this is an unavoidable price that must be paid in order

to maintain the other, more important communications elements in a democratic society.

In Schocken's view, the closure of *Hadashot* had no implications for the Israeli media; it resulted strictly from the lack of a sufficiently large readership in a country with a small population and two well-established competitors with large budgets.

Yeshayahu Ben-Porat rephrased the central question regarding the closure of newspapers to: Why are new papers started? He related that when Uri Avneri was about the sell *Ha'olam Haze*h (see abstract below), he proposed to Avneri to sell shares in the paper to his readership and thereby raise the funding he needed. This, in fact, had been put into practice in France in 1984 when *L'Express* was taken over by a businessman who set about imposing his economic and political beliefs on it. Reacting to this development, a small group of prominent French journalists got together, secured bank loans and established a new weekly, un beholden to any publisher. After the first

issue, the public was asked to acquire shares in order to guarantee the continuation of the magazine. Close to 30,000 shares were sold in France, and today, 10 years later, the magazine is still independent, to the extent that any newspaper can be independent. Ben-Porat's ideal newspaper is one that would be owned by its editors and readers.

Why then, he inquired, did Amos Schocken start *Hadashot*? Surely not merely out of business considerations, because he must have known that the business of providing information via newspapers is a losing prospect — the public does not want to be informed. In order to please the public, a newspaper must continually lower its standards. Had Schocken really believed in his paper, why didn't he offer it to the staff so that they could try to carry on?

Schocken's reply was that collective efforts inevitably end badly, and, moreover, the financial investment required made this possibility unfeasible.

“HA'OLAM HAZE”H”: POSTMORTEM

*Ha'olam Haze*h (“This World”), a controversial anti-establishment weekly published in Israel from 1937 and edited by Uri Avneri for 40 years, closed in late 1993. An editorial written by Avneri marking the 10th anniversary of the reconstructed version of the

weekly, titled “The Antagonists” (see below), reflects his political, social and especially journalistic philosophy. Prof. Ya'akov Shavit provides a perspective on the periodical.

THE ANTAGONISTS: EDITORIAL MARKING THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESTRUCTURED “HA'OLAM HAZE”H” (APRIL 7, 1960) / Uri Avneri

The week the restructured *Ha'olam Haze*h (“This World”) marked ten years (the weekly had actually existed for 23 years in all) was an ordinary one. Otto Preminger's press officer had called up to warn the paper that it would be sued if any segment of the script of the film “Exodus,” which had fallen into the newspaper's hands, was reproduced. However, an issue of the paper containing a critique of the banal script was already on the newsstands, and as a consequence Preminger eventually saw to it that corrections were made.

Haifa Mayor Abba Khoushi had called a press conference to deny — vainly — the disclosure of a

serious accident on the “Carmelit” (Haifa's subway), an incident suppressed by the rest of the press but exposed by *Ha'olam Haze*h. Khoushi revealed that new security measures would be taken to insure the safety of the passengers.

A woman writer mentioned in an article on lesbian love that was published in *Ha'olam Haze*h was beaten up by anonymous assailants “for what (she) wrote in *Ha'olam Haze*h.”

The latest issue of the Italian weekly *L'Espresso* contained an article on Israel praising *Ha'olam Haze*h's views as the only commendable ones in the country.

These events, according to the author (editor of

*Ha'olam Haze*h), were proof that the staff was as alive and effervescent as when the paper had been restructured ten years previously. Then, no one believed that an independent weekly with no funding or institutional backing could survive the physical, economic and psychological pressures brought to bear on it, and were convinced that the paper would disappear, as every other independent venture in the country had. Later, the critics allowed that *Ha'olam Haze*h might continue to function, but its staff would inevitably mature, become self-satisfied and seek to join the establishment. This too did not happen.

The founders' goal was to turn the paper into a fighting publication that would challenge the party-dominated Israeli scene and tell the unvarnished truth. They did not, however, anticipate the intensity of the reaction to the paper. Articles critical of army procedure were threatened with censorship or were actually censored. Efforts to realize the rights of the disadvantaged through exposés of abuses by the establishment elicited punishment of the paper. The staff had to organize itself as if for war.

This war had many fronts: incidents of physical violence, slander, the closing off of sources of information, court action and the economic arena — the last including the army's cancellation of its subscription, the refusal of government bodies to advertise in the paper, and the allocation of funding to prop up other periodicals and various ventures that were expected to squeeze out *Ha'olam Haze*h from the market. The paper survived financially due to exceptional readership loyalty that reflected total commitment to the continuation of the paper. Its financial survival, in fact, may have exemplified the only instance of a serious enterprise in Israel functioning outside the establishment economy.

The paper has been exceptional in other ways as well. It has functioned as a joint staff effort, with the editorial content a product of constant consultation and

revision. There have never been any stars on the paper. Moreover, it has developed a character of its own, unconnected with the particular individuals who work on it.

A newspaper must fulfill the same function nowadays as prophets filled in ancient times, acting as the social and national conscience, criticizing tyranny and defending the helpless. No one wants to be an antagonist; being part of the establishment is much more pleasant. But a decent journalist has no choice, certainly not in Israel where there is no tradition of independent thinking and free criticism as yet. For lack of an alternative, the staff of *Ha'olam Haze*h are contentious: exposing conventional lies and sacred cows is much more difficult than building from scratch. The journalist, then, cannot expect to be popular.

False prophets in ancient times, like journalists with sponsors nowadays, were part of the establishment, receiving honor and recognition for blindly commending the acts of the ruler or the masses. True prophets, by contrast, were hounded and degraded. The false prophets invariably sided with the strong, the true prophets with the weak. Similarly, *Ha'olam Haze*h has consistently fought for the underdog against the establishment. Often, it has found itself alone in this fight, incurring the hatred of the rest of the press, although many colleagues on various newspapers often provide news items that their papers will not publish. The reason for this hatred is pangs of conscience on the part of the editors of those newspapers, who resent that *Ha'olam Haze*h, being unsponsored, can publish the whole truth.

Another lesson that can be learned from the ancient prophets is that they addressed themselves to the masses, using every possible means, including sensationalism, to get their message across. *Ha'olam Haze*h has adopted the same technique. Once the establishment ceases to be shocked by the appearance of *Ha'olam Haze*h, the time will have come to take stock anew.

A PERSPECTIVE / Ya'akov Shavit

*Ha'olam Haze*h may have been the first periodical depicted by its editor as a collective prophet. Uri Avneri attributed this calling to his publication on the basis of three traits that typified it: It was explicitly anti-establishment, and exposed official failings and corruption fearlessly; it was hounded relentlessly

by the establishment; and it utilized gimmicks and sensationalism to highlight its message.

The periodical became a significant force in public life, both because it exposed corruption and scandal and perhaps even more so because it made no differentiation between the personal and the public aspects of political

life. Revelations about the bedroom behavior of public personalities was a potent, sometimes frightening, weapon in Israel's puritanical, ideologically oriented society of the 1950s.

Ha'olam Hazeḥ quickly became an institution, introducing atypical, prescient norms. Placing itself squarely outside the establishment, it was free of the restraints spawned by vested interests. The portrait of Israeli society reflected in it was vastly different from that portrayed by the conformist media.

In addition, *Ha'olam Hazeḥ* was the only newspaper to document the development of Israel's urban bourgeoisie, its "high society," its "bohemia" and its "dolce vita" during the first decade of the existence of the state, aspects of Israel's social history that were presented dispassionately, not judgmentally. Moreover, the paper also introduced and sponsored various recreational and entertainment events, such as car racing and beauty contests, making it not only a social commentator but also an integral part of, and sometimes initiator of, Israel's evolving social life.

Still, the paper had high-flown intentions, as befitted a prophet. In the beginning, it set out to be a medium of public protest against the domination of Israeli life by old political parties which shut out the young

generation of veterans of the War of Independence who had shed their blood to establish the state. As time went by, this mission became more generalized: the young and the new vs. the old and the sullied.

Although Avneri depicted himself and his medium as apolitical, in reality, by exposing the weaknesses of the regime, the paper aided alternative political elements, whether intentionally or not. These elements had a single common enemy in the early years: David Ben-Gurion and his "republic." A particular target within this constellation was the security services, accused by the paper of demonic acts.

The widespread image of *Ha'olam Hazeḥ* is that more than any other medium, it spoke for the dissonant, nonconformist elements of Israeli society in the 1950s, spearheaded the protest against Ben-Gurion's dominance, and pioneered efforts to liberalize society. However, it itself often took radical and elitist positions that belied its purist self-image. In the end, the paper was sold to interests that were dramatically opposite to Avneri's, and, paradoxically, the old *Ha'olam Hazeḥ* turned into a sacred cow of Israeli journalism, symbolizing not what it actually was but what it aimed to be.

JOURNALIST WITH A CAMERA / Sraya Shapira

Sraya Shapira, a Russian-born journalist, has been writing for the Israeli press for 60 years, his first piece published in Eretz Yisrael in 1934. Although not a professional photographer, he always had a camera with him, whether on assignment or at leisure, amassing over the years an extensive collection of portraits of journalists, writers, actors, artists and assorted members of bohemia in the milieu of old Tel Aviv.

Shapira was educated in Hebrew in Moscow from the age of 5 (1917). Russian was his native language, but he acquired French when his family moved to Paris, and English when he worked for the *Palestine*

Post (later the *Jerusalem Post*) from 1947 onward. His first steady job in Eretz Yisrael was for the daily *Haboker* ("The Morning") from 1935, followed by *Yediot Aharonot* and then *Ma'ariv* (1948), whose editor, Ezriel Carlebach, was a singular influence on him and others. There, Shapira wrote a daily column, "Eye Witness," which included a photo with the text — possibly his favorite assignment ever.

Although Shapira never dreamt that his photos would be of interest to anyone, he arrived at the conclusion that the picture has proved more durable than the written word.

THE FEMINIZATION OF THE ISRAELI PRESS / Yehiel Limor and Dan Caspi

The systematic entry of women into the field of journalism in Israel first became evident in the early 1980s, gaining momentum at the end of the decade. For example, of the 211 new members registered

in journalists' associations during 1989-90, 93 (44%) were women, a development borne out as well by the personnel picture in the six largest dailies. This development gained further momentum during 1991-94,

when the number of women members in journalists' associations grew from 581 to 702, and the proportion of women in the field rose from 31.2% to 34.2%, compared to only 7% during the 1960s and 16.2% during the early 1980s.

However, although women have increasingly assumed higher positions in the press, the key managerial posts have generally remained in the hands of men, a situation which holds true as well in other fields that have become feminized, such as teaching or social work.

The increasing feminization of the Israeli press may be attributable to overall societal factors as well as to developments within the media itself. Four factors stand out in the former category: the rise in the number of Israeli women joining the work force (56% of newcomers to the work force during 1991-92 were women); the rise in the proportion of salaried women, especially in the public service sector, to which the mass media belongs (88% in 1992, in contrast to 78% of men); the entry of women in Israel generally into professions previously considered the preserve of men; and the parallel feminization of the field of communications elsewhere in the world, including increasing female enrollment in journalism and communications programs of study at institutions of higher learning.

Specific developments in the communications field that account for the feminization of this area include the rapid expansion of the profession, leading to greater employment opportunities; new, flexible employment arrangements (personal contracts, part-time positions and free lance arrangements) that offer less security to the primary (generally male) breadwinner; ongoing erosion of journalists' salaries; the growing importance of graphics and computerization in media production, both of which attract women; increased opportunities

to work from the home or to work flexible hours as a result of new technology in the media; the emergence of new formats within the press focusing on women's interests, offering new employment opportunities to women; and the growing importance of "soft" instead of "hard" news, allowing for more convenient work hours and a more "feminine" approach.

The feminization of the media often evokes a fear on the part of males in the field, who still constitute the majority, that the status of the journalistic profession will drop, as happened in other areas, especially education. The argument is that the entry of women into a field results in salary erosion. The opposite condition, however, is equally likely, i.e., that women enter a field once its status has already been lowered. In any event, women's salaries in this field, as in others, are generally lower than men's, which is the case elsewhere in the world as well. The example of the field of education may not be relevant to the communications field because the inherent dynamism and competitiveness of the media encourage advancement based on achievement alone rather than gender.

Another fear raised by men regarding the feminization of the media is that the entire approach to communications in terms of content as well as style will change, reflecting women's rather than men's perceptions. This possibility, of course, ought not necessarily be viewed negatively, as women might display greater sensitivity than men in documenting social realities.

Two aspects of this topic merit further study: Is the feminization of the Israeli press limited to lower-echelon tasks and free lance status in the field? And, will women change accepted norms in the field in terms of content and style, or will they perform in the same way as men?

THREE GERMAN JEWISH JOURNALISTS DURING THE WEIMAR PERIOD

The following group of articles on the contribution of three Jewish journalists to the general German press, written by three professors of journalism research at the Free University of Berlin, forms a continuum to *Qesher's* double issue on the German Jewish press published in May 1989 (No. 5, Hebrew-English and German).

The publication of these articles was made possible by the Jacob and Shoshana Schreiber Journalism Fund.

THE "MOABIT'S" VIGILANT CONSCIENCE: PAUL SCHLESINGER AND HIS ARTICLES ON COURT PROCEEDINGS IN "VOSSISCHE ZEITUNG" / Bernd Sösemann

With the fall of the German empire and the revolutionary events of 1918-19, the German judicial system, along with press reportage of court proceedings, were the targets of sharp criticism up until 1933 both by the left, which branded the courts reactionary, and the right, which warned against a takeover of the law by the "parliamentary rabble."

The issue of court reportage in particular occupied court administrators, political parties and various organizations, which called for the banning of journalistic sensationalism and insisted on a commitment to reporting the truth subjectively by reporters with a legal background.

One of the champions of this demand was a multi-

faceted Berlin-born Jew, Paul Schlesinger (1878-1928), who was a writer, publicist, humorist, actor and music and theater critic. It was in his capacity as legal reporter for *Vossische Zeitung* from 1924, under the pen-name Sling, that he made a singular contribution to journalism, fighting to focus the attention of the press on the ills of the judiciary system. He criticized nitpicking and ignorance within the criminal justice system, distortions which he had observed as an apprentice for a textile firm which required him to attend sessions of the "Moabit" (a Berlin quarter) criminal court.

Sling directed his wide-ranging criticism, written in a humoristically skeptical vein, at all the players in

the judiciary system alike: judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, juries and the experts. Even the public that was present at the sessions, and colleagues in the press, were viewed skeptically. However, his criticism, while explicit, was never slanderous, self-righteous, judgmental or malicious. Even his sharpest attacks were devoid of journalistic belligerence.

Opposed to sitting back and waiting for the necessary judicial reforms, he advocated imposing at least some of them from above with an "iron broom." Yet he avoided hurtful aggressiveness that could lead as much to terror from the left as from the right. His was a "laughing

philosophy," reflecting a warm and understanding heart but devoid of sentimentality. A well-aimed prick with a supple rapier typified him rather than a heavy blow with a blunt sword. He was able to depict justice and decency fairly from all points of view, and, when necessary, to justify both the murderer and the judge.

Sling was admirably called the "Moabit's vigilant conscience," but his activities were branded "political journalistic terror" and "Slingism" by his opponents, with the Nazi *Völkischer Beobachter* defining him as the archetype of Jewish destructiveness, in the "front line of social evil-doers."

EGON ERWIN KISCH, THE POET-JOURNALIST FROM PRAGUE / Erhard Schütz

Egon Erwin Kisch (1885-1948), a noted German-language journalist and writer, was born in Prague to a wealthy family which belonged to the German-speaking elite of Prague society yet simultaneously to the Jewish minority, a fact which society would not let Kisch evade. The period was one of intense anti-Semitism, but Kisch had a sheltered upbringing and a privileged education.

He studied journalism in Berlin, began to publish short stories, and in 1906 joined the staff of *Bohemia*, a Prague newspaper. Soon he published collections of his articles in book form. Moving back to Berlin in 1913, he began writing articles for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, plays for a Berlin theater, and a novel (1914).

He was seriously wounded during World War I and was assigned to the military press office in Vienna where he came into contact with a group of pacifists and with the radical left. He joined the leadership of the Red Guard, wrote for the democratic leftist *Der Neue Tag*, and eventually joined the Austrian Communist Party. After a period of imprisonment, he was expelled from Austria (1920) and settled in Berlin. There he wrote for the *Prager Tageblatt* and especially for *Lidove Noviny*, a leftist Czech newspaper, his subject matter the arts, cultural life, social commentary and the world of crime and punishment in Berlin.

A favorite topic of Kisch's was the important and beneficial influence of Czech arts and culture on German life, primarily by way of Czech immigrants who held key positions in these areas in Berlin. Another major topic was German xenophobia, especially anti-Semitism, which he variously treated sarcastically and gravely.

He noted that while Prof. Albert Einstein's physics lectures had become a tourist attraction, they were nearly unattended by the students, who did, however, fill the lecture hall on one occasion to deny the veracity of the relativity theory, shouting "Jew, out!" and "Jews have no place in a German university!" and threatening the professor. Writing about the assassination of the German Jewish statesman Walther Rathenau, he concluded that the man was murdered by the blind hatred that erupts against those who have insight into the future. In this he unconsciously foresaw his own future as well.

In 1922 he published memoirs of the war — *A Soldier in the Prague Army* — and in 1923 a unique analysis of his profession, *Classic Journalism*, including collected excerpts by writers from antiquity to modern times. At that point, Kisch seemed to have given up the idea of becoming a writer of literature and focused instead on refining his journalistic output, which would turn him into one of the most important German-language journalists of all time. He wrote for every conceivable newspaper and magazine during the brief, heady years that followed, and became one of the central figures in Berlin's cultural life.

In 1924 he published a collection of articles he had written in various places in the world, *Der Rasende Reporter* ("The Wild Reporter"), which became his calling card. The book, which was later to be burned by the Nazis, was, inter alia, a rationale for Communism as the way of the future.

Another collection of articles, *A Hasty Hunt Through Time*, appeared in 1926. By then, Kisch stayed in Berlin

just long enough to write books, and then was off on travels. Visiting Moscow that year, he called it "the most beautiful thing in the world." Following a trip to the US in 1928-29, he published another collection of articles, *Paradise — America*. He traveled through the Asiatic area of the Soviet Union during 1931-32 and from there illegally to China, later producing two books about this journey:

Arrested and imprisoned by the Nazis in February 1933 during the reprisals for the burning of the Reichstag, he was released several weeks later after official intervention from Prague. His last article to be written from Berlin was an eye-opening piece on Nazi imprisonment. Thereafter, his books were condemned to be burned, and he began a long period of wandering, to Prague, Paris, the Congress Against War held in Melbourne, Spain (1937) — where he joined the civil

war as a reporter — New York (1939) and Mexico (1940), until he could return to Prague in 1946. He died there two years thereafter. While in Mexico, he wrote an anecdotal tour de force, *Marketplatz der Sensationen*, comprising imaginary and true stories of Prague whose hero is Kisch himself.

He was widely acclaimed while in exile as a great journalist, loyal to facts, committed to reality, a seeker of truth. Then, and today still, he was considered in Germany as the creator of the journalistic article. Yet, paradoxically, his pieces, when closely analyzed, contained a great deal that was imaginary. This was typical of the 1920s, the golden years of the newspaper article, when the line between fiction and factual reports, and between novelists and journalists, was blurred. Kisch had always wanted to be both.

KURT TUCHOLSKY: "TO SPEAK, TO WRITE, TO BE SILENT" / Hermann Haarmann

Kurt Tucholsky (1890-1935) was a noted Berlin poet, journalist, publicist and polemicist during the Weimar Republic period. Born in Berlin to a wealthy Jewish family, he studied law and received a doctorate in 1914. Writing was a favorite pastime from his youth, however, and in 1912, at the age of 22, he published a light satire, *Reinsberg, A Picture Book For Lovers*, which enjoyed immediate success. While still a student, he was hired by Siegfried Jacobsohn, the noted Berlin theater critic, to work for his theater weekly *Die Schaubuehne* ("Stage"). Jacobsohn acted as guide and advisor to Tucholsky, encouraging his many talents, and Tucholsky became an accomplished arts critic. After World War I Jacobsohn renamed his paper *Weltbuehne* ("The World Stage"), turning it into a vehicle for serious commentary on politics, literature and the arts. Tucholsky continued as a regular columnist, while also working as editor in chief of Theodor Wolfe's *Ulk* ("Joker") during 1918-20. Sent to Paris in 1924 as a correspondent for *Weltbuehne* and for another paper, *Vossische Zeitung*, he returned to Germany thereafter only for visits. In 1926, upon Jacobsohn's sudden death, he filled the role of publisher of *Weltbuehne* for 10 months. During the period from 1928 to 1931 he wrote a series of novels on diverse subjects in varied styles, reflecting the changeability of persona that typified him all his life.

He was, however, consistent in his satiric approach to weighty topics and in the typically Berlin stamp of

his colloquial style of writing. It was his use of humor that particularly incensed the German establishment, which viewed any form of mockery as a crime against the German spirit. Tucholsky was, above all, a moral man in a hard time. His jokes, his stylistic fluency and his biting satire were unfailingly on target not only then but to this day. He was the model of an incorruptible social critic who exposed the real meaning of contemporary developments — in the case of the Weimar Republic, a road to disaster.

He wrote not only political journalism but also poetry with a social message — bitingly anti-fascist, critical of the oblivion of the republic, and of the left, to the threat of Nazism. His message was more far-reaching still: an accusation of the Communists for equating the failures of the Social-Democratic Weimar Republic with the evil of Nazi National Socialism, a tragic misreading of reality that led to the fractiousness of the left and the takeover by the Nazis without any resistance.

Tucholsky used every possible literary device, including four pseudonyms, to expose these failures and to sound an alarm, and his readers responded to his message avidly. The censor too followed his output keenly. He was attacked not only by the right but by the Weimar establishment, which hounded *Weltbuehne* and its second publisher, Carl von Ossietzky. In 1928, after Tucholsky had emigrated, Ossietzky was sentenced

to 18 months imprisonment for alleged revelation of secret military information, which Tucholsky viewed as revenge by the government against all that the paper had stood for for years.

Tucholsky settled in Sweden in 1933, but by then his sojourn abroad, initially undertaken of his own free will, had become exile, as his books, along with those of many other noted writers, had been publicly burned by the Nazis and his citizenship annulled. Though other exiles attempted to continue writing, Tucholsky felt displaced professionally. The Germany he had known no longer existed, and he had thereby lost his subject-matter. He viewed Hitler's regime as

a permanent given and was convinced of the futility of an exiled German-language press railing against it. His generation of intellectuals had failed to stop the catastrophe; the word had been vanquished by brute force.

He bitterly criticized every attempt by his coreligionists to arrive at some understanding with the Fascists, and their failure to grasp the absoluteness of German anti-Semitism. He was equally incensed by the silence of the Jewish community in contemplating its increasingly ominous fate.

Depressed by illness and even moreso by loneliness, he committed suicide in 1935 at the age of 45.

ALTERMAN AND THE PRESS / Menuha Gilboa

The noted Israeli poet Natan Alterman (1910-1970) had a long career as a newspaper columnist, beginning in *Davar*, where he wrote a column in verse entitled "Tel Aviv Sketches" in 1934, followed by *Ha'aretz* during 1934-43 where his column was titled "Moments," and back to *Davar* from 1943 where he wrote "The Seventh Column" in verse as well as many articles. Finally, moving to *Ma'ariv* in 1967, he wrote ideological political pieces.

Alterman's journalistic verse reflected actualia. Often satiric and subtly worked, it was not always easily understood. With this, these poems were carefully crafted and esthetic, typified, as were his non-journalistic poems, by notable meter and rhyme.

The poet's resignation from *Ha'aretz* in 1943 and his return to *Davar* is often attributed to a desire to realize his socialist outlook, although more likely it resulted from professional differences between the poet and the publisher, Gershom Schocken.

Undoubtedly, however, Alterman was ideologically close to Ben-Gurion. A poem written in the "Seventh Column" (*Davar*) in November 1948, "On This," focusing on the dark side of victory — the brutalization of the victors — was ordered reprinted and distributed to every Israel Defense Forces soldier by then-Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion. Why then did Alterman eventually leave *Davar* (in 1967)? From articles he wrote on the intractability of the Mapai Party in 1965 in the matter of the cataclysmic bungled "Affair" (the abortive clandestine attempt by the Israeli secret service in 1954 to influence Egypt to retain the British presence at the Suez Canal), and from interviews with people who had ties with the poet, it would appear that he became increasingly disillusioned with the party's behavior, especially its unwillingness to accede to Ben-Gurion's demand for an impartial commission of inquiry into the "Affair."

FROM NEWSPAPER QUOTE TO POEM: THE MYSTERIOUS CHAIM WEIZMANN - NATAN ALTERMAN CONNECTION / Mordecai Naor

The origin of one of the late Israeli poet Natan Alterman's most famous poems, "The Silver Platter," written in late 1947, which depicted the drama of the founding of the State of Israel, has been shrouded in a literary mystery for decades. Although the central image of the poem was known to have been based on an observation by Dr. Chaim Weizmann to the effect that

the state was not given to the Jewish people on a silver platter, and would involve great struggle, researchers who combed through Weizmann's voluminous papers could not locate the actual source.

The author of the present article, using his journalistic instincts, decided to research the Hebrew daily press of the weeks preceding the writing of the poem on

the assumption that Alterman had seen Weizmann's statement in a newspaper. This line of thinking was not far-fetched, as Alterman often borrowed topics from the press as themes for his poems, and worked as a poet-columnist for *Davar* at the time (and for *Ha'aretz* previously) in addition to his other literary pursuits.

In fact, "The Silver Platter" was first published in *Davar* on Dec. 19, 1947, in Alterman's "Seventh Column" that appeared Fridays. Curiously, the poem, which can be considered the epitome of Alterman's journalistic/current affairs oeuvre and became the symbol of the historic event it depicted, was written at the very start of the War of Independence, although it prophesied the end of the war and its aftermath. Alterman's motivation for writing the poem at that tumultuous point in time, following the UN decision to partition Palestine and the subsequent violent uprising by the Arab population which marked the outbreak of war, undoubtedly was the national shock at the loss of 120 Jewish defenders' lives in the space of two and a half weeks of war. Casting about for an appropriate

historic context for his lyrical expressivity, Alterman lighted on a line from a speech delivered by Weizmann, the venerable Zionist leader, on Dec. 13 at a United Jewish Appeal conference in Atlantic City in the US as quoted in the *New York Times* the following day. Although the event and the speech were covered in the entire press in the *yishuv*, only *Ha'aretz* carried the specific quote that had appeared in the *Times* as follows: "No state has been handed to us on a silver platter...only the opportunity to build a state has been created by the nations of the world."

Clearly, Alterman had seen the quote in *Ha'aretz*. The question that remained was who coined the expression "מגש של כסף" ("silver platter") in Hebrew, for it was not idiomatic to the Hebrew language. After some detective work, the author discovered the party responsible — Shmuel Gilai, a multilinguist who worked as a foreign-news translator for *Ha'aretz* and who fathered the expression that Alterman was to turn into a symbol.

"THE ANSWER" — THE NEWSPAPER THAT SOUNDED AN ALARM / Gad Nahshon

The Answer, founded in New York during World War II in 1943, was unique in that it was the only Jewish newspaper to systematically protest the destruction of European Jewry during a period of silence and inaction on the part of the Jewish establishment in the free world.

It was established by a group of Revisionists from Eretz Yisrael residing in the US — the "Bergson Group," named for their leader, Peter Bergson (a.k.a. Hillel Kook), an Etzel ("National Military Organization") member. The ideologist of the group was Shmuel Merlin. The group and its activities were rejected by the Jewish and the Zionist establishment in the US at the time. As a result of Jewish as well as British pressure aimed at bringing about the deportation of the members of the group, who were depicted as "fascists," the FBI opened a file on the "Palestinian aliens."

Bergson, Merlin and another activist, Theo Ben-Nahum, announced the establishment in 1943 of the "Hebrew Committee for National Liberation," as well as the "Hebrew Nation" and the "American League for a Free Palestine," all represented by *The Answer*.

The group of activists, which included such other well-known Etzel personalities as Aryeh Ben-Eliezer and Eri Jabotinsky, had originally been sent to the US in 1939 by the Etzel leadership to raise funds, but were unsuccessful, regarded with suspicion by the American Jewish and Zionist establishment, which was intent on maintaining a low profile. With the onset of the Holocaust, the group shifted from militant Zionism on behalf of Palestine to the goal of influencing American public opinion to rescue European Jewry by providing means of self-defense. A full-page ad toward this end was taken out in the *New York Times* in 1943. The guiding light behind this public relations campaign was the Jewish writer and playwright Ben Hecht, who gave the organization and *The Answer* an incisive intellectual thrust.

Galvanized by an offer made by the Rumanian government to allow 70,000 Jews out in return for \$50,000 per head, the group, along with Ben Hecht, mounted a rousing dramatic presentation by Hecht and Kurt Weill at Madison Square Garden and elsewhere throughout the US entitled "We Shall Never

Die," played by leading Broadway actors. Its motto was: "Action, Not Pity." The presentation became a major event in Washington where it was attended by numerous congressmen and eight Supreme Court judges. The group also established an "Emergency Committee for the Rescue of European Jewry." Shunned by the Jewish establishment, the group nevertheless managed to organize the sole conference devoted to saving Jews during the Holocaust period. The "Emergency Conference for the Rescue of European Jewry," held in New York on July 20-25, 1943, addressed the issue on a purely pragmatic basis, attended by 125 experts and well-known figures, half of them non-Jewish. Their goal was to establish a "special Allied agency for rescuing Jews."

The Answer, founded during this period of intensive activity, was published biweekly in New York for five and a half years, from April 1943 to December 1948, aimed at influencing American public opinion. It had an average of 15,000 subscribers, with offices in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago and Washington. A noted contributor was the artist Arthur Szyk, whose graphics effectively depicted the agony of the Holocaust and later that of the Revisionist victims of the British in Palestine.

Aimed at putting public pressure on Congress and the White House and breaking down psychological obstacles, such as the prevailing wisdom that the rescue of Jews would harm the war effort, the publication intended to bring about the formation of an American or American-British body that would specialize in the Jewish question as a humanitarian issue.

The Answer was consistently anti-British, first in vain appeals to Britain to open the gates of Palestine to Holocaust refugees, and ever more vehemently in opposing the British presence in Palestine, echoing the Etzel line. A play by Hecht produced on Broadway in 1947, "A Flag is Born," was the most anti-British play ever presented in the US.

Detailed information on the killing grounds of Europe constituted the bulk of the content of *The Answer* during its early years. The sole publication devoted to rescue activity, it did not view itself as a Jewish or as a Revisionist newspaper, despite material published

on that movement, but rather aimed to enlist a gamut of American groups on behalf of the Jewish and Zionist issue. The point that was highlighted was that the murder of Jews as Jews was a crime of modern civilization. As such it attracted the attention of many kinds of Americans, including the left, the liberal elite and various Jews who had distanced themselves from Judaism, such as Hecht. Its high intellectual and literary level was instrumental in this effort.

The glorification of Jewish soldiers, whether in ancient or modern history, was another theme, with consistent appeals to organize a Jewish army and Jewish commando units. The newspaper also highlighted the efforts of non-Jews in support of the group's activities, as well as such countries as Denmark and Sweden which rescued Jews. The paper vividly articulated the transition from the Holocaust to Jewish rebirth during that period.

Varied elements that were attracted to the efforts of this group and to its periodical included government personalities such as Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and especially Eleanor Roosevelt; political figures such as former President Herbert Hoover, presidential candidate Wendell Willkie, Governors John Dewey and Earl Warren (later Supreme Court justice); and Senators Edwin Johnson and Jay Joliet and Congressmen Will Rogers, Emanuel Celler and William Sommers; prominent refugees such as Kurt Weill, Thomas Mann, Emil Ludwig, Bruno Walter and especially Norwegian Nobel prizewinning writer Sigrid Undset who had opposed Widkun Quisling; media personalities such as William Hearst, John Gunther and Max Lerner; and artistic and theatrical figures such as Stella Adler, the sculptor Jo Davidson, Louis Bromfield, Pierre van Passen, Shalom Asch, Waldo Frank, Elsa Maxwell, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Muni, Marlon Brando, Moss Hart, Groucho Marx, Harry Cohen, Billy Rose, Dorothy Parker and Luther Adler. These personalities enhanced the credibility of *The Answer*.

While the publication did not succeed in halting the destruction, it did contribute toward creating a climate of moral commitment in America to the idea of establishing a Jewish state.

THE OPENING OF THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM IN 1925: A TALE OF INVITATIONS, A BANQUET AND A "PRESS SCANDAL" / Dov Genhovsky

The official ceremony marking the opening of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem on April 1, 1925, was surrounded by a series of dilemmas and crises. The very name of the institution caused controversy, as the term "*universita*" that was decided upon was not pure Hebrew, reflecting the broader struggle being waged then to modernize the Hebrew language. The question of whether Hebrew would be the language of instruction at the university was also not entirely resolved.

A major dilemma was the availability of the coveted invitations to the ceremony, scheduled to be held in a small natural amphitheater on Mt. Scopus. Anticipating this problem, Dr. Judah L. Magnes, chairman of the arrangements committee and a driving force behind the establishment of the university, appealed to the public to forbear from attending the event in order to make room for foreign dignitaries and guests. A banquet to be held following the ceremony caused a similar dilemma.

The public, however, was unmoved. *Ha'aretz* ("The Land") reported that the question of invitations had reached "*skandal*" proportions, with "*protektsia*" ("pull") sought everywhere, as the local population was determined to attend. *Do'ar Hayom* ("The Daily Mail"), Itamar Ben-Avi's newspaper, reported the same material, although it avoided using such foreign linguistic adaptations as "*universita*," "*skandal*" and "*protektsia*," choosing the purer "*mikhlala*," "*sha'aruriya*" and "*tamkhanut*" instead. It did, however, make full use of bombast to highlight the crisis wrought by insufficient and injudicious allocation of invitations.

Following the events of the opening, *Do'ar Hayom*, in addition to reporting extensively on the details of the festivities, ran an "Open Letter to Dr. Weizmann" by the editor, dealing again with the invitations "scandal." Hundreds of foreign guests had been left without invitations and were unable to attend the events, as were many local notables, Ben-Avi claimed. However, every single bureaucrat in the Zionist Executive offices, and their families and friends, did receive an invitation, he pointed out, which turned the affair into the worst

scandal in Zionist history, in his view.

Furthermore, Ben-Avi wrote, an even graver scandal had occurred. If thousands could not attend the event personally, they could at least expect to read about the proceedings in full promptly. Indeed, the Zionist Executive staff promised *Do'ar Hayom* that copies of all the speeches would be released to it when they were released to the rest of the press. Listing the various speakers at the ceremony — Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook, Dr. Weizmann, the High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel, Hayim Nahman Bialik and Lord Balfour — and noting that the event ended after 6 p.m., and that some of the speeches had to be translated into Hebrew before publication, Ben-Avi expressed astonishment that *Ha'aretz*, which had no electric press, had managed to reproduce the speeches in a special issue by 8 p.m. Obviously, Ben-Avi wrote bitterly, *Ha'aretz* had been given all or most of the material a priori by the Zionist Executive staff, a clear case of "protection" and a symptom of rot in the local Zionist offices.

Although Weizmann did not respond to Ben-Avi's letter, the staff of the Zionist Executive did, angrily denying that any promises had been made at all regarding the release of material to the press, or that any material had been released by them either a priori or post-factum.

The truth of the matter, which emerges from the reports of the events printed in *Ha'aretz* and *Do'ar Hayom* themselves, was that the staff of *Do'ar Hayom* chose to attend the events in their entirety, including the evening banquet, while that of *Ha'aretz* worked right through the day, darting back and forth between the venues of the ceremonies and the press in order to keep up with the pace of events.

Ben-Avi, rankled that the rival *Ha'aretz* — a Tel Aviv newspaper that had rented Jerusalem press facilities in order to cover the event — had bested the Jerusalem *Do'ar Hayom*, fabricated a questionable additional "scandal" and attached it to the prior "invitations scandal."

THE BRITISH MANDATE GOVERNMENT IN THE FACE OF A HOSTILE PRESS IN PALESTINE / Eytan Almog

The 1929 anti-Jewish Arab riots in Mandatory Palestine revealed Britain's failure to control the rioters and prevent the massacre of Jews. The event elicited a hostile reaction both in the Jewish and the Arab press, and the government was criticized internationally as well.

The Hebrew press had become increasingly hostile to the Mandate government as Britain receded from the principle of the national home for the Jews. Prior to the riots, the Hebrew press had warned of such an eventuality on the part of the Arabs, while the Arab press explicitly incited against the Jewish population. These portents, however, were ignored by the British.

Subsequent to the riots, a royal investigative commission — the Shaw Commission — criticized the government for having ignored the incitement of the Arab press. It found that the existing Mandatory Press Bureau was inadequate in controlling the local press, and recommended placing restraints on the press and appointing a government press officer. A veteran in this area who had served with the British in Cairo, Robin A. Furness, was proposed for the position, but before appointing him, the government in London wanted an assurance that the Zionist leadership had no objection to him. A meeting in March 1931 between a representative of the Colonial Office and the president of the World Zionist Movement, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, confirmed that there was no objection.

Furness, arriving in Jerusalem by June 1931, submitted a Report on the Control of the Press in Palestine in which he criticized the existing state of aloofness and even animosity on the part of the Mandatory government toward the local press, noting that both the Arab and the Jewish press, which had great influence on their respective readerships, were hostile to the government. He recommended a policy of providing the press with information — “of being generous with information and instruction” —

in order, in the long run, to make the press “more amendable, more favourable and less hostile to the Government.” He also raised the possibility of bribing selected newspapers, which, he noted, was the practice in Egypt, Syria and probably most European countries, but instead recommended granting “privileges” to certain journalists — “a hidden subsidy without favouritism.” In subsequent correspondence, Furness advised cultivating a special relationship with a respected Jewish journalist — Gershon Agronsky — in order to improve relations with the Hebrew press. With this, he proposed severe punitive measures, encompassed in the Press Ordinance of 1933.

The first radio station in the country, and the first Hebrew radio station in the world, was a private commercial enterprise that began operating in Tel Aviv in 1932 by special permit from the High Commissioner. It functioned only sporadically, however, and was closed when the governmental Palestine Broadcasting Service (“Kol Yerushalayim”) was inaugurated in 1936, with Furness serving on the advisory committee that supervised it.

Following the outbreak of Arab rioting in 1936, Furness apparently became a convenient scapegoat for the deteriorating image of the British Mandatory government in Palestine, and he was replaced that year by a professional British journalist, Owen M. Tweedy, who had served as a correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* in the Middle East for many years. Tweedy managed to improve ties with local journalists and expand the activities of the press office, and in light of this success was transferred to Cairo. His successor, Christopher Holm, reverted to an assertive approach, taking control of the Palestine Broadcasting Service newsroom. During World War II, the radio news and the entire press were put under the direct control of the Government Press Office.

“SABBATH CANDLES” — A NEWSPAPER DEVOTED TO THE SABBATH / Akiva Zimmerman

News organs devoted to the Sabbath and to the Torah portion of the week, distributed in synagogues, are a

traditional part of the Jewish press, the oldest example dating back to 1846 in Germany.

A unique Sabbath newspaper that appeared biweekly in Jerusalem during 1943-52, *Nerot Shabbat* ("Sabbath Candles"), was edited by Rabbi Mordecai Hacohen (1906-72), the noted religious writer, editor and scholar. The first issue appeared at the height of World War II on March 19, 1943, and was remarkable because its contributors represented the entire religious spectrum, from Mizrahi to the ultra-Orthodox, as well as secular writers who viewed the Sabbath as an important value.

Contributors to the first issue included the first chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel; Rabbi Yehuda Leib Hacohen Fishman (later Maimon), the first minister of religious affairs in Israel; and Rabbi Abraham Zvi Shore, presiding judge of the Hassidic community in Jerusalem and father-in-law of the editor.

Advertisements appeared from the second issue onward, primarily sponsored by religious bodies. The name of the managing editor, Yitzhak Verfai (later Dr. Yitzhak Raphael), appeared from the fourth issue onward until 1949 when he became a member of the Jewish Agency Executive.

The fifth issue contained extensive reportage on a conference of religious and secular writers held in Jerusalem on the topic of the Sabbath. Participants included David Zakai, an editor of the Labor *Davar*, who was quoted as saying that "the desecration of the Sabbath in the kibbutzim is a painful mistake, with the first signs of repentance already visible."

Other noted contributors to the publication included the writer S. Y. Agnon, Tel Aviv Mayor (later Minister of Interior) Yisrael Rokah, Prof. Dov Sadan and the poet Sh. Shalom.

From the second year of publication onward, the Rav Kook Institute acted as copublisher, with the publication depicted as "the organ of Brit Ha-Shabbat — The National Center for Preserving the Sabbath." The editor's sons, Shmuel Yitzhak Hacohen (today Rabbi Shmuel Avidor) and Pinhas Hacohen (later Pinhas Peli ל"ר), initiated their literary careers in *Nerot Shabbat*, eventually joined by the youngest son, Menahem Hacohen, today the rabbi of the moshav movement.

With the release from Latrun of the Jewish prisoners arrested by the British on the "Black Sabbath" of 1946, Jewish Agency legal advisor Bernard Joseph (later Minister Dov Yosef) was quoted by *Nerot Shabbat* as saying that throughout his incarceration he knew that the land was in Jewish hands by the view he had of traffic on the Tel Aviv—Jerusalem road from afar:

when there was traffic, he knew it was a weekday, and when the road was empty, he knew it was Shabbat — the best proof of Jewish territorial possession.

A special hundredth issue cited a subscription figure of 5,000 — impressive for the period (1947) — comprising religious as well as nonreligious readers. Later that year, an entire issue was devoted to a bitter protest against the scheduling of the massive Dalia Folk Dance Festival on the Sabbath, and a directive by the two chief rabbis of Israel to every synagogue to voice protests during services the following Sabbath.

The problem of army draft for yeshiva boys, as well as that of the drafting of girls, issues that remain unresolved to the present day, were raised in the newsletter as early as 1947, before the establishment of the state. With the declaration of the state, *Nerot Shabbat*, as all other newspapers, had to contend with a shortage of paper, and was forced to cut back from 12 to 8 pages as well as print on poorer-quality paper. Later, the publication was forced to cut back to publishing only monthly or even less frequently.

A new contributor in 1949 was the young Yitzhak Alfassi, later to become an authority on Jewish heritage and the history of the Hassidic movement.

An issue discussed in the newsletter that year, controversial to this day, was the role of the local religious councils in Israel. Similarly, the question of public transportation on the Sabbath was raised, with opinions quoted by members of Knesset from all factions.

Another ubiquitous issue was recurring demonstrations for enforcing Sabbath observance in Jerusalem, as reported in 1951, culminating in the torching of cars whose owners were suspected of traveling on the Sabbath, and the subsequent censure of such acts by the two chief rabbis, Herzog and Uziel. A problem of an entirely different nature was the Halakhic implications for Sabbath observance posed by the increasingly widespread use of electric refrigerators in Israel.

The cessation of publication of *Nerot Shabbat* in 1952 resulted from the editor's heavy work load as a senior official in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, along with the loss of his sons' editorial assistance as they pursued their own individual courses. Their pursuits also lay in the literary field, including the military rabbinic publication *Mahanayim*, edited by Menahem Hacohen (see article on this journal in *Qesher* 12).

HEBREW PRESS JARGON DURING THE LAST 200 YEARS / Dan Almagor

The history of the revival of the Hebrew language, as the history of the Zionist movement itself and the renewed settlement of Eretz Yisrael, is intimately bound up with the Hebrew press. Arguably, most of the new words conceived by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the modernizer of the Hebrew language, might never have been integrated into daily speech had he not been able to make use of the newspapers that he, his wife and his son published. For example, the word *re'ino'a* (cinematograph, or silent movie) was introduced in his weekly, *Ha-Zvi*, in 1900, and was to lead to many other words ending in "no'a," such as *kolno'a* (movie) and *ofno'a* (motorcycle).

Tracing the appearance of both Hebrew and foreign words in the Hebrew press illuminates not only linguistic developments but societal and ideological developments as well. A particular area that merits study is the terminology signifying the newspaper itself. All Hebrew newspapers and periodicals published until the end of the nineteenth century were called *mikhtavei-itim* (periodical letters), with dailies called *mikhtavei-itim yomiyim* (daily periodical letters). The late 1870s witnessed the emergence of a new journalistic word ending — "on" — as in *feuilleton* (newsletter, or small sheet). Several ancient words ending in *on* were also related to writing, for example, *gilayon* (sheet of paper, page). Ben-Yehuda, who formulated *milon* (dictionary) and other new words ending in *on*, named the first-ever Hebrew daily *Iton* ("Newspaper"). Other words with this ending which he introduced, all related to writing and the press, were *iparon* (pencil) and *yarhon* (monthly) — replacing *mikhtav-iti*

hodshi (monthly periodical letter). Later, such words as *shavu'on* (weekly), *shnaton* (annual) and *riv'on* (quarterly) emerged as well. Ben-Yehuda's dictionary also included *itona'i* (newspaper writer) and *itoni* (pertaining to newspapers).

A new chapter in the history of the Hebrew press was marked in the early 1980s with the appearance of the local newspaper, newly termed a *mekomon* (a combination of *makom* — place, and *iton* — newspaper). This development reflected the arrival of the yuppie generation in Israel and changed journalism not only by devoting a great deal of space to what was happening in the city or region in question, but also by expanding (i.e., by lowering the age range of) the readership and the personnel that prepared and reviewed the publications. It also created a new "local newspaper" vocabulary which incorporated both youthful slang and the yuppie "Sheinkin" (a trendy street in Tel Aviv) culture and which included the emergence of many new words connected with the press and the world of entertainment. One was *hinamon* (throw-away newspaper, from *hinam* — free, and *iton*) sponsored by advertisers. Others were *tsehubon* (tabloid, from *tsahov* — yellow) and *adumon* (from *adom* — red, having the same connotation); *mashmitzon* (a slander newspaper or column); and *pirsumon* (advertisement newspaper).

Simultaneous with the ongoing creation of new Hebrew words in the press, however, has been the increasing usage of foreign (primarily English) words, which have become so integral that they no longer even appear in quotation marks.

A NEWSPAPER UNDER SEIGE: A COMBAT DAILY PUBLISHED DURING ISRAEL'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE / Alter Welner

An unusual daily newspaper appeared in the evacuated children's village of Ben-Shemen for over half a year from March to September 1948 after the village was cut off by Arab forces early in the war. The paper was edited by the author, who served in the Haganah infantry squadron, later to become part of the Givati Brigade, assigned to defend the besieged settlement. At

first, Jewish armored convoys managed to get through the seige at intervals, but when this became too risky, the only link with the outside world was airlifts of essential supplies dropped from light planes.

The two-to-three-page paper, called *Al Hamitzpeh* ("On Lookout"), was intended for the members of the squadron, a religious group, and appeared daily

except Sabbath and holidays. Its purpose was to update the isolated fighters on world and local news events. Typewritten at first, it was later mimeographed on a primitive machine donated by "Hapoel Hamizrahi" and delivered by the very last convoy to reach the village.

With paper scarce, the newspaper staff mimeographed on the backs of used infirmary reports. The primary news sources were the clandestine Haganah radio station and the official British Mandate Kol Yerushalayim radio reports, the former being more accurate than the latter but both prone to transmission problems. First-hand reports on military incidents in the vicinity and events on the base, as well as material on religious issues and a humor section, were also prepared. Publication was sometimes delayed by radio transmission cutoffs or by attacks.

An interesting national debate current then, which was reflected in *Al Hamitzpeh*, concerned the nature of the nascent Jewish army. Would it be patterned on the British model, with a pronounced military character complete with strict discipline and regulations, or would it reflect the volunteer underground spirit of the Palmah with its emphasis on moral commitment

and self-sacrifice? Or would it perhaps combine both approaches?

Another issue that was raised concerned the difficulties faced by the large number of new immigrants within the ranks, soldiers who had lived in the country less than a year. Veterans were urged to ease the absorption of the newcomers in terms of linguistic assistance as well as social integration.

Black-framed obituary notices were practically standard features in the newspaper as reports were received of soldiers in other platoons who fell in the various fronts where the squadron was assigned, from Ben-Shemen to the Etzion mountains and Jerusalem. The ongoing anxiety of the soldiers regarding the fate of their comrades in the besieged Kfar Etzion overshadowed even the declaration of the state in May.

The paper appeared regularly until the siege was broken, after which it appeared only occasionally until a final, expanded issue on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. On page 1, special wishes were extended to the members of the platoon who had survived the battle at Kfar Etzion and who had been taken prisoner by the Jordan Legion.

A NEWSPAPER CALLED "THE WESTERN WALL" / Mussia Lipman

A secular Yiddish pro-Zionist newspaper with the unlikely name *Der Kotel Ma'aravi* ("The Western Wall") was published in London during 1902-3. Edited by Kalman Marmor, a young, multi-faceted intellectual originally from Vilna, the publication was the organ of a rebel Zionist organization which he founded in 1902 — "Ha-Ma'aravi" — which opposed the established Zionist movement (and especially the Orthodox "Mizrahi" movement) and espoused secular socialist Zionist views. Advocating the democratization of the Zionist Federation in England, the first issue (November 1902) promised to publish diverse Zionist viewpoints. Another article described the difficult situation of immigrant Jews in London's "modern ghetto." Projects under consideration by Ha-Ma'aravi included the establishment of a Zionist bank in London, and of a Zionist orchestra.

In his memoirs, Marmor noted that although the "conservative" elements in the Zionist leadership were annoyed by the new publication, the Hebrew weekly *Hamagid* praised it for injecting "young blood into the

Zionist movement."

A satiric piece in the third and last issue (January 1903) portrayed Dr. Theodor Herzl as a physician called in to care for the dying English Zionist Federation, which he diagnoses as "lazy" and which he advises to cure itself. Another article criticized assimilationist Jews who join non-Jewish socialist organizations, and appealed to them to remain loyal to Zionism.

Forced to close the paper for lack of funding, Marmor, in a letter to the newspaper *Der Fraynd* ("Friend"), decried the absence of Zionists in the English Jewish establishment and expressed disappointment as well in the immigrants. Following the closing of the publication and the disbanding of the movement that sponsored it, Marmor was invited to join the Zionist Federation executive, but declined out of a sense of proletarian pride. He continued to be involved in educational and journalistic endeavors, however, and was a delegate to the Zionist Congress in Basel in 1903, during which he opposed the Uganda scheme vehemently. Attracted to the Po'alei Zion movement and

to the young author Joseph Hayim Brenner, Marmor edited two newspapers to which Brenner contributed, *Die Yiddishe Freiheit* ("Jewish Freedom") and *Der Yiddisher Advertizer*.

Price competition between the ocean liners at that time lured many Jewish immigrants in London to America (for the price of \$10), Marmor among them. He arrived in America in 1906, becoming editor of the Po'alei Zion *Der Iddisher Kemfer* ("The Jewish

Fighter") and an activist in the movement. The following year he traveled to Palestine, where he remained for about a year and befriended such young labor leaders as David Gruen (later Ben-Gurion), Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and Rahel Yana'it. Returning to the US, Marmor eventually left Po'alei Zion, joined the American Socialist Party and later became a Communist, living in the Soviet Union for three years during the 1930s.

A CAR FOR EVERY ADVERTISER / Benny Haspel

Cars arrived in Palestine relatively late, the first one brought in by an American tourist in 1908. Large numbers of vehicles were first brought in by the armies that fought in Palestine during World War I, some of which were left behind and sold as army surplus, especially to the founders of the first transportation cooperatives. Private cars became available during the 1920s, and from 1924 the first car advertisements appeared as well, followed in the 1930s by advertisements for trucks and buses.

The advertisers faced three challenges: introducing a brand new product to the public, updating the Hebrew language with the relevant technical terminology, and familiarizing the market with the brand itself. All of the advertisers were apparently convinced that too much detail would put off the audience, and instead utilized large pictures with brief messages. The idea was to bring the potential customer to the sales agency, where the virtues of the vehicle would be explained in full.

Although the Hebrew language lacked adequate

terminology to depict the workings of the car (the Academy of the Hebrew Language first dealt with automobile terminology only in 1955), the advertisers nevertheless made imaginative efforts in this area. The frame of the car was variously referred to as "board," "framework" and "car skeleton," mufflers were "noise-silencers," and brakes were "stoppers."

While most of the advertisers highlighted the foreign or international image of their product — for example, the American REO (today part of the White trucking concern), Austin, Renault and Oldsmobile — Ford, by contrast, conveyed an Eretz Yisrael atmosphere: workers wearing the pioneers' *kova tembel* (cloth hat with brim turned down) shown at a Tel Aviv-like port (1939), or a distinctly Eretz Yisrael landscape (1946). The most pronounced connection with the country was projected by manufacturers of cars assembled locally from the 1950s onward, starting with Kaiser-Frazer (1951), which later sold out to Autocars, producers of the local Sussita.

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