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## BRIDGING CULTURES

*In late March of this year, the annual conference of the International Press Institute (I.P.I.) took place in Jerusalem with the participation of over 300 publishers and editors from 47 countries as well as leading opinion-molders and political leaders in their respective countries and in the Western world generally. The conference was addressed, inter alia, by Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Foreign Minister Ehud Barak.*

*Most of the discussions centered on political and economic issues related to the peace process in the Middle East. A special discussion, however, led by Professor Max L. Snijders, lecturer in journalism at the University of Groningen in Holland, was devoted to the subject: "The Journalistic Profession in a Market Culture." Participating in it were Henrikas Yushkiavitchus, assistant director-general for communication and information, UNESCO Paris; Bruce B. Brugmann, editor and publisher of the alternative paper, San Francisco Bay Guardian; Hugo Butler, editor in chief of Neue Zürcher Zeitung; Pedro J. Ramirez, editor in chief of El Mundo, Madrid; Stewart Steven, editor of Associated Newspapers, London; and Shalom Rosenfeld, head of the Journalism Studies Program at Tel Aviv University.*

*A working paper provided to the participants stated:*

*Increasing economic pressures are creating new tensions between what editors and journalists feel are their professional responsibilities and what they are called upon to do as employees of market-oriented media organizations. They believe that the unrelenting drive for profits is affecting editorial decisions in ways that erode the quality of journalism. Consequently, many journalists are less and less proud of their work, while the public's confidence in the media is at an all time low. The panelists will, amongst other things, explore ways in which quality journalism can be maintained in a market culture.*

*With prior coordination with the moderator of the discussion, Prof. Snijders, Shalom Rosenfeld focused his remarks on the press and television coverage of the recent suicide bombing incidents in Israeli cities in the context of "market culture," or the culture of ratings. A slightly expanded and updated version of his address at the conference follows.*

Allow me first to compliment the person who so skillfully managed to condense the essence of the topic before us into a working paper — that topic being the potential and often actual conflict that faces writers and editors in an era when every type of media is becoming increasingly market- and profit-oriented. It is an era in which more and more means of communication are concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, and where media pluralism is giving way to the monopolization and manipulation of news and opinion not only in content but also in form, not only in word but in pictures as well. This is precisely the situation which can cause serious harm to what is defined in the working paper as quality journalism and the professional responsibility of the journalist in our time. And perhaps worse still, market culture — here the intention is not the market in its metaphorical sense or in its negative connotation, but in its positive sense, that is, the free economic market — has led to a situation where the owners and shareholders of the giant communications corporations no longer need dictate to the editor — whom they themselves appointed and whom they can fire at will — which material to use in order to boost the sale of their papers, improve their radio and TV ratings, or increase their slice of the advertising pie. Some editors already know this by themselves, and act accordingly.

As someone who has been involved in writing for, and editing, newspapers for decades, I must confess in all modesty and with a measure of despair that I no longer know what our professional responsibilities are in this period, or what has remained of them. It is a period when more and more pace-setters in the media believe that our responsibility is to the public's lowest common denominator — the readers, listeners and viewers who generally disdain anything that smacks of seriousness, depth, balance or old-fashioned values and seek the trivial, the entertaining and the vulgar — or, in short, what Carl Bernstein (Bob Woodward's partner in the Watergate affair) called the "Idiot Culture."

I used to know, or to believe, that our profession has a responsibility, inter alia, to enlighten society and enhance its awareness of the political and social forces that propell it. I believed that we have a virtually absolute responsibility to freedom of expression and to the right of the public to

know everything — everything except that which harms the vital interests and survival of the people and the state, or the dignity of man. Every man. I am aware that the phrase "vital interests and survival of the people and the state" is open to various interpretations and misunderstandings, and evokes associations with periodic debates over the necessity or the justification for "self-restraint." But I come from a country and a political and defense climate in which the words "vital interests and survival" do not constitute a worn out phrase, and it would seem that what happened in the major cities of this country during the past few weeks are sufficient testimony to this.

How does all this relate to the "Idiot Culture" that is enveloping us — or, to be precise, that we media people are aiding in imposing on society through millions of tons of paper and thousands of radio and television stations day by day, hour by hour? I don't know the full answer. But I do know that the term "quality journalism" that appears in our working paper, even if it does not depict an existing situation, certainly encapsules a burning need within us. For, what right of existence do we have if we lose our limits and proportions through a growing succession of compromises over quality in the name of what our working paper terms the unrelenting drive for profits? I believe that we will be doing the public a service if from time to time, at conferences devoted to this topic, we define our professional responsibilities and the ethical and esthetic codes by which we work and which we expect our employers to honor. The more successful we are at codifying these principles on an international level, the easier it will be to resolve disputes in this field.

I should like to share with this forum something of the impassioned debate which took place in our intellectual community, in the press and in the public at large during the last few weeks in the wake of what happened here, in this city where our conference is being held, as well as elsewhere in Israel. I refer specifically to a debate relating to a professional stock-taking, which I should like to link to the central theme that we have been asked to discuss in this session. After the suicide bombing in Tel Aviv in the first week of March, which claimed so high a toll in human life, a dramatic debate flared up on our national TV channel between one of the country's distinguished authorities in the field of political science, Professor Shlomo Avineri of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the person who is considered our "Mr. Television," Hayim Yavin. The debate is actually not only between these two personalities, but indirectly between a

considerable proportion of public figures and the media regarding the coverage of recent events.

Professor Avineri accused Mr. Yavin, whom he labeled "the national crybaby," of distorted coverage of the events, to the extent that he viewed him as nothing less than a "collaborator with Hamas." Avineri implied that the media grievously violated its social and national responsibility to uphold public morale at difficult moments, or at least not weaken it, and not play into the hands of the terrorists by repeatedly airing actual and reconstructed scenes and stories of the atrocity at the site of the blast in the center of Tel Aviv, thereby handing the microphone — or, if you will, the megaphone — to the injured. Some of these witnesses were small children who focused on detailed descriptions of decapitated or limbless bodies flung into the air, while others were passersby who took advantage of the situation to air venomous and inciteful views.

Another scholarly expert, historian Professor Michael Harsegor, accused radio and TV of "sado-masochism" that leads to demoralization and thereby serves to encourage the perpetrators. Quite a number of people, including many in our profession, agreed with the critics, even if they might have phrased their criticism more moderately. For what is the goal of terrorism? Lenin once gave the answer. It is the sowing of fear, confusion, panic and despair. Naturally, one of the goals is also to show up society, which is the victim of terror, as helpless and desperate, and the terrorists as omnipotent, thereby granting them not only satisfaction but also the motivation to increase the doses of atrocity. And we, by our radiophonic voices, our pens, our graphic talents, the "objectivity" of the camera and of our body language on the screen, the panic-mongering press headlines in blood red along the lines of: "Country in Fear" or: "Fear of Death," the terrible cinemascopic pictures on television — provide them with a platform, or, as Margaret Thatcher once said, with an "oxygen tube."

Brigadier General Ya'akov Amidror, chief of research in the army's Intelligence Branch, who has a reputation for original and bold assessment, was quoted in *Ma'ariv* as commenting on the coverage of the incidents by the media: "It assists terror. If we were capable of biting the bullet and of reporting the event without major headlines, without color, without close-up photos of the dead and wounded, the terror would be a lot less successful." Prime Minister Shimon Peres, in a dialogue with author S. Yizhar in *Ha'ir*, stated: "In the past, every war was conducted twice over: first on the battlefield, and then in the history books. One could win on the battlefield but lose in history. Today,

too, every war is conducted twice, first on the battlefield and then on the TV screen. The TV screen and the history book are at once the same and opposite. Everything must be shown that same evening so that everyone can see what it looks like. And what can be seen is more important than what actually happened. When ratings are what count, and the TV screen shows the same incident 24 hours a day, the impression is of 24 incidents, each one new." (The two segments above depict observations published a week after my remarks at the conference. I have added them because of their relevance to the discussion. S.R.)

Let us return to the discussion. Hayim Yavin reacted sharply to his critics both orally and in print in an article titled: "We are all Collaborators." He viewed the political scientist's approach as that of a commissar or politruk, for even if errors were made here and there in the heat of the events, in his view this is the price of democracy and of freedom of speech. "People connect to the tragic event by means of television," Yavin claimed in his article. "The broadcasters experience the tragedy as well. They, like the police and the first-aid teams, must function quickly yet judiciously and with balance in the midst of trauma. But in contrast to first-aid personnel, their task is to translate the act into pictures, words, sounds. They must transmit the pain, the rage, the message of the leadership but also the criticism of the opposition."

The emphasis here, of course, is on the word "judiciously." Was the round-the-clock re-airing of the interviews of small children and their mothers at the site of the incident and immediately after it, when they were still in shock, judicious? Was judiciousness and professionalism reflected by the hostess of the popular investigative program, Ilana Dayan, when she interrogated Chief of Staff Amnon Lipkin Shahak about his "calmness" (in contrast, apparently, to the hysteria of the crowds and of the broadcasters), or by the question posed by veteran broadcaster Nissim Mish'al to Shimon Peres against the background of an impromptu demonstration outside the Defense Ministry: "Don't you think you've lost control over the situation?" Was judiciousness shown in screening the interview of the terrorist who dispatched the suicide bombers, when not only experienced media professionals but even ordinary viewers could readily see that the man had been brainwashed before the interview? These representative examples will suffice to illustrate my dubiousness regarding Hayim Yavin's key word in his response to Avineri. I wouldn't wish any of the injured in the bombing to receive medical care from a doctor whose

judiciousness in the midst of trauma was similar to that of the editors and broadcasters in that situation.

Neither of the two main disputants in that public debate, however — and they were not alone in the debate, as was stated — mentioned the dark shadow hanging over the controversy: the shadow of the ratings. Was all that was written in the papers, broadcasted on the radio and shown on the screen at the terrible time of the incident and thereafter the product of purely professional considerations, free of other influences? Didn't the journalists, the editors and the broadcasters ever glance over their shoulder at what the competition was doing with the sensational and shocking material that had fallen into their hands? Didn't the market culture now so widespread in our milieu have any influence? And if so, what is the solution to this dilemma?

I shall briefly outline what seems to me a reasonable way of bridging three cultures that will occupy us in our discussions today: first, what the moderator of this discussion has termed "market culture;" second, the provocatively defined "idiot culture," which I have borrowed from Bernstein — or, less pejoratively and closer to the market concept, the "rating culture;" and third, what I would term the culture of social responsibility. This is an obligation based on the best tradition of the leading communications theoreticians, broadcasters and publicists, especially in the Western world, who not only reflected public opinion in their countries but also helped mold it in a spirit of genuine concern for society's needs, namely, its right to know, but other rights as well.

I am certain that none of us will dispute the principle that the media must be profitable if it is to survive, that a newspaper must strive for more readers, the radio for more listeners, television for more viewers. A singer is not prepared to sing in front of the bathroom mirror only. Beyond profit he also seeks an audience, plain and simple. I can't imagine any journalist or editor ignoring this fact. A broadcasting station that loses money goes off the air. A newspaper that loses money closes. We in Israel, during the past two or three years, have witnessed the demise of a large number of dailies, weeklies and monthlies, including qualitative ones, for one reason only — money. We have also witnessed a process of change in various newspapers as well as in the electronic media, which have submitted to the dictates of ratings and unbridled commercial competition, depicting reality in a way that borders on pornography — a pornography of suffering and death. Can qualitative newspapers which are not at the

top of the circulation pyramid still exist? Conversely, can large, well-established newspapers avoid losing their sense of humanity in the wars of competition and not succumb to market culture in its derogatory sense?

Similar questions were asked in England at approximately the same time as the incidents that occurred in Israel. I am referring to the terrible murder of the 16 children by a psychopath in the Scottish village of Dunblane. There, too, criticism was voiced against the method of coverage of the incident, especially by the cheap newspapers that competed with each other in magnifying and intensifying the horror and exposing details to the public that were best left unshown. The emphasis there was on questions that sometimes preoccupy us as well: What are the boundaries of our right to invade the privacy of the individual, the houses of mourners, and ask a mother or father who have just returned from their child's funeral "how they feel" or what they have to say to the radio, TV or the press about the murderer or about what they know about him from the past. What right do we have to publish blown-up, embarrassing photographs of rape victims or victims of vicious murders in vulgar newspapers of all kinds? Where does the journalist in us end and the human being begin, or is there so close an embrace between them that they cannot be separated under any circumstances.

The editor in chief of the London *Guardian* is here with us now. I think he ought to be gratified by the professional and dignified way that his paper covered the terrible event in Scotland. But even moreso, he must be gratified by the professional and moral stock-taking by his paper, which devoted two pages to the subject of the coverage of the episode in Dunblane. Without going into detail, I shall quote several lines from comments by that paper's deputy

editor for news, Paul Johnson, in response to a question about the role of the media in covering a tragedy like Dunblane:

We see the role as threefold: to inform with accurate reporting of events (eschewing the tabloid language of monsters, sickos and sleaze), to reflect the tragedy and its emotional depth through sensitive, perceptive writing, and third, rigorous investigation and analysis seeking to work out the background to the calamity and establish if lessons can be learned. All of those aims can be accomplished without intruding into grief and shock.

And all of this needs to be presented with dignity.

Murderers of innocent people by means of "human bombs" destroy not just the body alone. They also seek to strike at the values that differentiate between an enlightened and a barbaric society, between a society that holds liberty as its highest goal and its *raison d'être*, and a society that strives to imprison man's spirit in dark obscurantism. I believe that we must include in our professional obligations this as well: not to let them achieve this goal. Not to make it easy for them to achieve it. In any way. And should you ask how we ought cope with the challenges posed by this cruel and despicable terror to the modern media in the market era, my reply is: with professional and disinterested judiciousness, to the extent possible; with common sense, with maximal sensitivity to the victims of tragedy and to the public generally; and chiefly, with dignity. Dignity is another key word. That is the road that will restore our seemingly lost pride without harming the livelihood we earn from our profession.



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## YITZHAK RABIN AND THE MEDIA — SANS FAVORITISM, MANIPULATION OR GRUDGES Hannah Semer

Israel's founding fathers conceptualized the press as being linked primarily to the notion of education. A newspaper, in their mind, had to be an "educator." They were familiar with, and admired, European newspapers of the turn of the century which bore the lofty messages of national liberation, the freedom of the individual and social equality, and which fought for the universal franchise and compulsory education, whether espousing a liberal or a socialist point of view. Even newspapers that espoused conservative or nationalistic ideologies still dealt with ideas; they too constituted an educational press, even if they educated to bad ends. Generally, any self-respecting newspaper dealt with public issues, identified itself with public causes, and tried to motivate its readers to identify with them as well. Most of the Jewish press, and virtually the entire Zionist press, was part of this landscape, characterized by ideological identification.

I had many occasions to discuss the state of the Israeli press with our first-generation leaders — we did not yet speak in terms of the media then — and they always attached far more weight to editorial opinion than to news. I discovered that they believed — wrongly but completely — that opinion pieces were more influential than information or even than investigative pieces (although we did not yet use these terms), and in any case were more "educational." Not only did Ben-Gurion, Eshkol, Lavon and their colleagues from various political parties hold this view, but Golda Meir, who presumably had been exposed to the American press, also identified with an educational approach on the part of a newspaper and a journalist.

Yitzhak Rabin, a leader of a new generation with a different outlook from that of his predecessors, differed from them in this area as well. His attitude to the media, and the nature of his relationship to it, however, was sharply delimited by the boundaries between the various chapters in his life.

Rabin the soldier, officer and commander in chief viewed the world of the media through the prism of the army spokesman, and established his ties with this world through the spokesman as well. This was the case until he took up his position as ambassador in the US. What must be borne in mind is that during the early decades of the state, up

until the Yom Kippur War, the army spokesman was an institution whose authority in its area was immutable. Even as commander in chief, Rabin never considered bypassing it.

### Information Became Paramount

In February 1969, with his arrival in Washington as ambassador, he was exposed to a new perspective of the mass media. In all probability, he developed a new way of viewing other areas as well, encountering different norms and work methods from those he knew in Israel. In any case, he experienced numerous and varied innovations in all that related to the media and to his contact with it, most especially, perhaps, in his encounter with television.

In Israel, television had not even begun. Only in the summer of 1968 has it begun broadcasting on an experimental basis, and only in the fall of 1969 did regular broadcasting become established. Israel lagged behind most other countries in this area because the veteran leadership of the state feared bringing the small screen into the homes of the population. Some leaders feared the negative cultural influence of TV should it establish itself at the lowest common denominator and thereby damage the population's reading habits and civic activity. Others mainly feared the development of inflationary pressures and an acceleration in the rise of the standard of living under the influence of TV. All heeded the vehement warnings of the editors and publishers of the press, who fought tooth and nail against the establishment of a formidable competitor for the favors of the consumers and advertisers. None of these fears, however, applied to educational (public) television (which, moreover, fit into the conception of the media as educational), whose broadcasts dominated the country's airwaves when Yitzhak Rabin left for his term of office as Israel's ambassador in Washington.

In the US, Rabin discovered multi-channel television powerfully entrenched as a widespread and highly influential communication tool. The Israeli information effort was interested in using this medium to influence American public opinion and American decision-makers. In his book, *Record of Service*, Rabin emphasizes that he viewed information as an essential mission in his diplomatic service.

The television stations, for their part, were interested in airing items on Israel frequently for the benefit of their viewers, and the glowing image of the victorious chief of staff of the legendary Six-Day War heightened the desirability of using the ambassador for this purpose.

Rabin quickly understood that he must face this challenge of this new medium, and, moreover, do it in a language that was new to him. He invested genuine effort in meeting this challenge. Dan Pattir, then press advisor in the Israeli Embassy in Washington, relates that Rabin equipped himself with a tape recorder which he would take with him on his trips in order to listen critically to tapes of his addresses.

He was much in demand as a guest in TV studios throughout the US as well as on national networks, especially as his appearance on TV radiated straightforwardness and credibility. He was straightforward and credible as well with representatives of the press, both print and electronic. Sometimes, of course, he was unable to tell the whole truth in front of the camera and microphone or even in background talks. But he never tried to distort the truth or to manipulate journalists to suit his needs and convenience, whether personal or political. He also refused to adopt television mannerisms that media advisors favor (hand gestures to convey dynamism, for example) and he did not play to the camera — not as ambassador and not after he entered political life back in Israel.

Rabin's straightforwardness, as well as his famous analytic ability, earned him great esteem in the American journalistic community and in the upper echelons of newspaper staffs and broadcasting stations — esteem that in some cases developed into real friendships which proved valuable to him and to Israel for years.

The printed press that Rabin encountered in the US was also different from that which he knew in Israel. Today, that encounter would not have exposed such distinct differences, for the Israeli press has undergone a process of Americanization in approach, structure, to some extent style, and certainly the trend toward investigation and exposure. In the 1960s, however, the European influence on Israeli papers was still palpable. By contrast, the press that Rabin found in America was dominated by news, commentary and investigation, with limited space devoted to positions and opinion, which were to be found mainly in columns. Even the columnists were interested in news from first-hand sources, and offered their readers more information, along with background commentary,

than introspection. Rabin, during his term as ambassador, saw repeatedly that news was more likely to influence the media consumer than polemics, and that information was the central element in molding public opinion. This realization shaped his approach to the press later on in his career as well. The educational conception was distant from him; information had become the essence in his thinking.

### **He Didn't Forget, but Bore No Grudge**

I reached the above conclusion after many discussions, for in attempting to analyze Rabin's relationship with the press — both written and electronic — I did not rely only on myself or my acquaintance with him. I spoke with journalists and media people who knew Rabin from both sides of the divide. Although their phrasing differed, essentially they all expressed the same thing. One columnist who had frequent contact with him said that he had an "instrumental," as compared to an emotional, approach to the press. The director of the Government Press Office, Uri Daromi, used the expression "functional approach," and emphasized the esteem Rabin had for reporters in the field. According to Aliza Goren, his media advisor at the end, Rabin was not one of those public figures who lived from one newscast to the next, waiting to see if he had been "starred," and if so, how, but rather, his approach was matter-of-fact. Eitan Haber, his media advisor over the longest period, says that Rabin viewed the press as the "primary means for conveying information" — and who could have known the man better than the person who wrote his speeches and needed considerable empathy with him?

Rabin did not alter his approach to the media when he returned to Israel after his term as ambassador, entering political life at first unemployed, seeking his niche, and then as minister of labor in Golda Meir's government, as prime minister, as a member of the opposition, as minister of defense in the National Unity Government, and finally as prime minister again. The media, however, changed its attitude to him periodically. During certain periods they treated him with respect, such as after the Yom Kippur War and at the start of his first term as prime minister, when he was in fact the only government figure who had not been involved in the shortcomings of that terrible war. At other times he was the object of an essentially critical attitude, such as at the end of his first term as prime minister. At about that time, it was a journalist (Dan Margalit) and a newspaper (*Ha'aretz*) that were the

direct causes of a serious crisis and a temporary break in his career in the highest level of politics as a result of an expose of an illegal dollar account held by the Rabins in the US.

No one, and certainly no politician, could forget this kind of blow. Presumably, Rabin did not forget either, and perhaps he even held a grudge for a time, but he certainly did not take revenge. His attitude to Dan Margalit was correct, and in time he even appeared as an interviewee on one of Margalit's TV programs. His portrayal of the affair in *Record of Service* makes for interesting reading. In it he has criticism both of himself and of presumed information-leakers. He does not, however, criticize the journalist or the paper. Similarly, he never criticizes journalists in other episodes mentioned in the book involving peices that angered or harmed him, but rather criticized their sources and the motives of these sources.

### **Wearing a Bulletproof Vest to Read the Papers**

Rabin did not attach too much importance to the media as a source of information for himself, relying instead on the direct sources which were at his disposal. Members of his office staff recount that each morning they would place a file on his desk of daily press clippings. Most days, the file remained in its place untouched. Considering his daily schedule, this was not surprising, yet it was unusual in the political arena. The vacuum was filled by certain kinds of information gathered by his wife and his aides. He did not manage to read papers or watch TV during the week, and even if he had a chance to do so on Shabbat, he did not show any eagerness to find material on himself in them. He did not even review interviews of himself in detail. Niva Lanir, a veteran journalist who worked with Rabin during election campaigns and in the Ministry of Defense, and who was a friend of the family, says that "he did not react emotionally to what was written about him in the papers," although on weekends, he once said humorously, he needed "to wear a bulletproof vest" for reading, listening to and viewing the media.

Rabin was frequently reminded that there was no relationship between what was reflected in the media and political reality, or even public opinion. He sometimes grew angry at journalists who in his view acted dishonestly when their reports were inconsistent with the truth as it was known to them, or when their criticism was unfounded or unfair. But even in these cases he did not attempt to

get even with them, and in time he forgave and forgot.

According to Eitan Haber, Rabin attributed only limited influence — albeit of a certain importance — to the print and electronic media: it could not change reality, but it could create the atmosphere in which this reality existed. Rabin put it thus to Aliza Wallach, a journalist and friend of the family: "The media does not necessarily influence positions, but it certainly influences the mood." For this reason he devoted time to conversations with journalists, being careful not to favor any one paper over another. Often he talked with several journalists together, and during the final period he was in the habit of hosting newspaper staffs at his home for background discussions combined with evening dinners in a relaxed atmosphere. He would respond to questions as well during those evenings, but mainly he would give a talk about the current situation. Discussion about, and analysis of, current affairs dominated his social contact generally.

The get-togethers with editorial staffs at his home were introduced after his relations with the Committee of Editors of the Daily Press, a voluntary representative body, were no longer close, a consequence of his disappointment over leaks. The truth was that the Editors Committee was leak-free only during Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's era. Thereafter, the preservation of secrecy in this forum gradually waned and became selective. During a "This is Your Life" TV show in 1982 devoted to Shalom Rosenfeld [today head of the Journalism Studies program at Tel Aviv University and of its Institute for Research of the Jewish Press, which publishes *Qesher*], the moderator asked Rabin, then a member of Knesset following his first term as prime minister, about relations between the government and the media, and especially about the extent of secrecy in relations between the leadership and the Editors Committee. Rabin replied that in cases involving human life he did not recall any leaks, but in controversial domestic political matters the secrecy code was not honored fully. Nevertheless, Rabin showed an understanding of the journalistic vocation in commenting that in such cases, cooperation was difficult to expect.

His understanding of the role of the press was again reflected later in the same program when he emphasized that in his view, the goal of the cabinet's meetings with the editors (n.b., in contrast to what is commonly thought) was not to prevent publicity but rather the opposite — to create an understanding on the editors' part of the aims that the government wanted to achieve.



### Priority for the American Media

The Lebanon War, or, according to its official name, the "Peace of Galilee" Operation, reinforced Rabin's awareness, developed during the Vietnam War period, that the time had passed when defense measures could be undertaken without regard for the media, especially the electronic media. This awareness was underscored explicitly during the Intifada, when Rabin was minister of defense. Eitan Haber recalls that hundreds of journalists and television crews from all over the world came to report on what was happening in the "rebellion in the territories" then, to the extent that this massive presence renewed the debate over whether events draw the media to the arena, or whether the media, by its presence in an arena, instigates events (both tenets, of course, are correct).

Rabin, who was out in the field frequently, was an accessible figure, and when reporters would thrust their microphones at him, he did not disappoint them and would reply to their questions, in addition to countless special interviews which he granted, especially to representatives of the American media. At the time, Israel was involved in other controversial episodes as well, for example the

Vanunu affair, the Pollard affair and Irangate. Even if these issues were not structurally linked to the minister of defense specifically, they did have an explicit defense aspect, which heightened the interest of the international media, not to mention the local media, in obtaining interviews with him. It seemed during that period that Yitzhak Rabin was the most quoted and most interviewed statesman in the world, starring in broadcasts on most of the world's TV networks and featured on the pages of most newspapers.

Israel was the subject of so much reportage then, in connection with the Intifada as well as with the other less-than-salutary affairs, that Eitan Haber, then media advisor to the minister of defense, proposed initiating "media events" with more positive content, and received the go-ahead from Rabin, for example the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Entebbe rescue operation. Haber, notably, was one of that small group of advisors who was never to be seen behind the minister on screen; he always stood next to the photographer, checking that the conditions were right for photographing the minister.

In contrast to his media-filled term of office as minister



Israel TV crew photographs Rabin at home, 1974.

of defense, Rabin's term as prime minister the second time around was relatively quiet in terms of his contact with the media. This was the period of the talks with the PLO in Oslo, an especially vital and secret topic, and Rabin met with journalists infrequently. He could not tell them anything at all about the main issue, neither on nor off the record, and he clearly felt that it was impossible to expect them to keep such information secret. He preferred not to be put in a situation of having to lie, whether outright or by implication.

After the talks reached the agreement stage and were made public, the publicity floodlights were directed toward him once again and he applied himself to the information

task — a reflection, again, of his view of the media as creating an atmosphere, and, consequently, of the importance of supplying correct information, background and analysis of developments as he saw them so that the media could convey this information to the public.

His participation in the event which turned into his deathtrap was part of this information effort. No one could have anticipated the role that the numerous media representatives present at that radiant event would play in reporting its tragic end. The nation lost a leader, and the media lost a "highly placed source" who never tried to exploit, manipulate, get even with or distance himself from it.

*Translated by Judy Krausz*

## "I'VE NEVER SEEN A PARTY ORGAN THAT ANYONE EVER READ" / Yitzhak Rabin (archival record)

Israeli political parties in the past regarded the publishing of their own organ — whether daily, weekly or at the very least monthly — as a necessity, and the lack, or closure, of such a publication as a serious failure. The party in power for over three decades — Mapai, and its successor, Labor — wrestled with this issue over a long period, publishing the ponderous weekly *Hapo'el Hatza'ir* ("The Young Worker") until 1969 and its controversial successor, *Ot* ("Letter," or "Symbol"), until 1974, nearly always at financial loss.

A discussion on the subject within the executive committee of the Labor Party in October 1974 was initiated by the new party chairman, Meir Zarmi, who proposed abolishing the weekly for budgetary reasons. One of the participants in the debate, which ranged from the content of the publication in question to the nature of the party press generally, political propaganda, and the status of political parties in the public view, was Yitzhak Rabin, then serving in his first term as prime minister.

Labor leaders such as Aaron Becker, Dov Ben-Meir, Uri Sabag, Uzi Baram, Beba Idelson, Natan Ra'anana, Abraham Givelber, Yeruham Meshel and David Kalderon acknowledged the ineffectiveness of the existing organ, *Ot*, in fulfilling its role as providing focused and balanced material on the party's views for the benefit of the membership of 20,000-30,000. Instead, its editor, David Shaham, was cited as using it as a vehicle to promote his particular point of view, which was a minority one within the party. Moreover, all expressed concern about

the party's strained financial resources. Nevertheless, most of the discussants were convinced that a published organ was necessary for any self-respecting party.

Among the few dissenters regarding this need was Rabin, who sharpened the discussion by differentiating between means — in the case under discussion, the published organ, and ends — party propaganda. Criticizing ongoing efforts to deal with party propaganda by the same means as were used 20 years previously, he asserted that a weekly organ was no longer necessarily the most effective vehicle, pointing to television and the daily mass press as more viable alternatives.

"I've never seen a party organ that anyone, or nearly anyone, ever read," he observed. By contrast, he pointed out, television and the daily press are "open to us, but we don't exploit them," referring to cases when Labor representatives were approached by TV to participate in debates on controversial issues but declined. In Rabin's view, the party's propaganda department would do well to prepare background information on such issues for internal purposes — settlement policy in the territories was singled out specifically — while the mass media ought to be used more concertedly to present the party's views.

This view proved persuasive, and *Ot* was discontinued. No succeeding party organ was published thereafter, a situation which was paralleled in the other Israeli political parties as well from that period onward in response to changing social norms generally and in the media in particular.

## YITZHAK RABIN: PHOTO FILE / Ya'akov Sa'ar

The author, today director of the Photographs Department of the Israel Government Press Office, was a new staff photographer there when Rabin began his first term as prime minister in 1974. From the start, there was chemistry between the two, which resulted in the author's appointment as the prime minister's official photographer and led to a close relationship between them as time passed.

The job required an intuitive sense of timing, for

example during meetings between the prime minister and another head of state, when a photographer's presence for a moment too long could become a nuisance.

One of Rabin's unique traits was that he was utterly without "poses." It was impossible to catch him in the same pose twice: if the photographer missed his moment the first time, there was no second chance. Rabin never thought in terms of appearances or in terms of improving

his photographs. He was, in fact, an introvert, and did not enjoy being photographed. It was his wife, Leah — outgoing and friendly — who helped in making the prime minister available to be photographed.

Having accompanied Rabin on dozens, if not hundreds, of trips throughout the country and abroad during both cadences as prime minister, the author observed his subject's unusual capacity for work at first hand. Rabin often put in 15 to 20 hours of work a day for long

stretches, yet always appeared fresh and fit. His young aides, advisers, security staff and the author himself would look worn out, while the prime minister approached each new day's work with vigor.

Returning for a second cadence in 1992, Rabin was 15 years older, more experienced and more impatient, in the writer's view, but retained his previous trait regarding an inability to posture.

## TELEVISION REPORTS — TWO JUDGMENTS IN ISRAELI COURTS / Moshe Negbi

The Israeli press owes its freedom to the judiciary arm of government, inasmuch as neither the right to receive information and publish it, nor freedom of self-expression, are embedded in any statutory document. While Israel's Declaration of Independence cites a series of democratic rights, embellished by basic laws, this one is absent. Freedom of expression does have a recognized judiciary status, but this is subject to the moral and intellectual proclivities of the individual judge.

In 1953, the Supreme Court, led by Justice Shimon Agranat, determined that freedom of expression generally, and freedom of the press in particular, fall into the category of "supreme right," which may be limited by the government only in cases of near certainty of severe harm caused by the exercise of it to any other basic right. Some quarter-century later, the seventh president of the Supreme Court, Justice Meir Shamgar, reinforced this view by attributing to freedom of expression a supra-judiciary status.

Still, the absence of a statutory basis for freedom of expression places exceptional weight on the extent of the judge's commitment to this right. This is well illustrated by two complex cases tried recently in the Jerusalem District Court.

In the first (Civil Case 405/95), the management of a major conglomerate, Clal (Israel), sued the Israel Broadcasting Authority for libel based on a report broadcasted on TV's Channel 1 in December 1994 about the firing of an employee of Clal who, as part of the duties of his job, uncovered financial irregularities — possibly criminal — by management. Judge Eliahu

Ben-Zimra found for the prosecution, in that the TV report had consciously given the impression that the charges against the concern, which were then under judicial review, were factual. Moreover, in the judge's view, even though the reporting of the case was accurate, it violated the basic law protecting the dignity of the individual, in this case the group of executives under investigation. In so doing, however, the judge relegated freedom of expression, which is also associated with the dignity of the individual, to a secondary position, thereby jeopardizing the right of the press to report on court cases centering on wrongful behavior by public figures unless it had gathered incontrovertible proof a priori.

The second case (Criminal Case 116/95), which was decided in September 1995, takes on special relevance in light of the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in an atmosphere of political incitement two months later. Three persons convicted by a lower court of aiding and supporting a terrorist organization by publicly praising the killing of Muslim worshippers at the Machpelah Cave in Hebron in 1994, appealed their verdicts. One appellant claimed that only a military court was entitled to try him, while the other two charged the state with applying a double standard by refraining from prosecuting Arabs for praising the murder of Jews. In addition, one appellant claimed innocence on the basis that the TV reporters had approached him, and not he them, in order to publicize his views.

The panel of three judges, led by Judge Y. Bazak, rejected the appeals on the basis that all three were clearly guilty of violating the law relating to the prevention of

terror. In exercising their right of freedom of speech, they endangered other basic rights — namely, public safety — by virtue of incitement, which in this case was the overriding consideration. On the question of the initiative of the TV broadcasters in airing these opinions, the judges noted that the previous court, in sentencing the accused, had taken this mitigating factor into account, inasmuch as the publicizing of incitement by the media is also in violation of the law.

The court's verdict is worrisome for two reasons. First, it stopped at a dry consideration of guilt according to the stipulation of the law to prevent terrorism, without exploring

whether the conditions in this particular instance could be considered incitement to violence. Second, the implication that television also violated the law by broadcasting the appellants' remarks calls into question the duty of the media to expose incitement in order to root it out. This duty was in fact emphasized by Justice Dov Levin in two cases before the Supreme Court, in 1982 and 1985, regarding incitement by the PLO and by the Kach movement, respectively. The court in those instances reprimanded TV for deciding to withhold reports on this topic, with Justice Levin stressing the importance of bringing such material to the attention of the public.

## THE PROLIFERATION OF PIRATE RADIO IN ISRAEL / Yehiel Limor

At least 51 pirate — i.e., unlicensed — radio stations operate in Israel today, while a similar number have discontinued operations in the past eight years. This development may be traced back to the decentralization of Israel's previously national mass media during the 1980s, when a local press and, later, cable television emerged. It reflects a new era of "territorial pluralism" not only in the media but in politics and the economy as well.

Significantly, government policy toward pirate radio has been permissive. Pirate radio heightened the illusion of media pluralism and thereby reduced public demand for deregulating the country's government-controlled broadcasting system. Moreover, the unlicensed stations were not considered a threat to the most vital aspect of this system — the monopoly on disseminating national political messages by means of news broadcasts. Indeed, the pirate stations have avoided this area, focusing almost entirely on the realms of music and entertainment. The only instances of closure of these stations by the government occurred when they physically infringed on military or aviation airwaves.

Another contributing factor to the proliferation of pirate radio has been the growing diversification of media demand, which the national stations — Kol Yisrael (Voice of Israel) and Galei Zahal (Israel Defense Forces Radio) — were unable to fill. This is especially true for geographically remote communities and for media subcultures such as fans of Eastern music, the ultra-Orthodox community or the Arab population.

An appreciation of the influence of the economic rather than the political market, which typifies Western countries today, is true for Israel as well. In the media market, heretofore tight government regulation of Israeli broadcasting is undergoing a revolution. This is reflected in the establishment of a second television channel and cable TV stations, and the granting of franchises to 16 regional radio stations. Conceivably, further deregulation may be in store, enabling pirate stations to become licensed and function legally, their audiences and advertisers already in place. This last aspect — advertising — is a major factor in the development of the local media, as it fills a need by local concerns for which the national media are too expensive or too diffused.

Yet another factor accounting for the spread of pirate radio is the technologically simplified and less expensive equipment required to establish a station in recent years.

From a legal point of view, unlicensed radio stations in Israel are in violation of three laws dating back to 1972, 1982 and 1990, which stipulate a licensing requirement for any "wireless telegraph," broadcasting or telecommunication station. Punishments for infringement range from one to three years imprisonment or fines. Curiously, however, none of the laws cite high sea broadcasting, even though the government was concerned, during the 1970s and 1980s, about Abie Nathan's popular "Voice of Peace" station beamed from a ship offshore. This laxity may be explained by the differentialization made by the government between the danger perceived from pirate radio — minimal —

and that from pirate television — substantial, as reflected in explicit prohibitions against high sea TV broadcasting. Abie Nathan's station was not, therefore, illegal, and it set a precedent for others to follow, including "Channel Seven," which caters to a religious audience.

The government, for its part, has three reasons for outlawing pirate radio: limited broadcasting frequencies, which are defined as a national resource; loss of royalties, which, by contrast, are paid by the newly licensed regional stations; and harmful competition to the licensed stations for advertising accounts.

Abie Nathan's "Voice of Peace" station, established offshore in 1973 along the lines of similar operations in Western Europe a decade previously, marked a turning point in radio history in Israel. Nevertheless, pirate radio did not become widespread until the latter 1980s and, unlike Nathan's station (now defunct), it was commercial as well as regional in nature.

Regarding the 51 unlicensed stations functioning in late 1995, complaints to the police were issued by the Communications Ministry against 32, and joint police and Commerce Ministry visits were paid to 24 of these, involving confiscation of broadcasting equipment. No prison sentences were handed down, however, and fines were

light. In practically every case, the stations involved resumed activity shortly thereafter. This record testifies to the fact that the government turns a blind eye to this illegal activity. In effect, it actually encourages it, for example by the regular participation of members of Knesset and other prominent political figures in various pirate-station programs. Governmental and other public bodies also place advertising with these stations.

Pirate radio has made an unmistakable impact on establishment Israeli radio broadcasting by stimulating the franchising of the commercially based regional stations; by motivating a lightening of the "educational" tone of government broadcasting, a legacy of the British style; by promoting young, non-establishment broadcasting personnel; and indirectly by providing the impetus for the establishment of regional educational stations affiliated with various colleges throughout the country.

Pirate radio in Israel is unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future, even in the face of competition by the newly established franchised regional stations, as it has proven beneficial both to its owners and its audiences. Its highly specialized programming has gained it audiences that will not be easily wooed away by the more generalized regional stations.

## THE BEGINNINGS OF THE YIDDISH SENSATIONALIST PRESS IN AMERICA / Ze'ev Goldberg

The flowering of the American sensationalist press in the 1880s, inspired by Joseph Pulitzer's *World* and sharpened during the 1890s by competition with Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*, reached a climax at the turn of the 20th century when approximately a third of the American press could be classified as "yellow" journalism. This development had a direct influence on the Yiddish press in America, which grew significantly in the early 1890s.

One of the first sensationalist Yiddish newspapers was *Der Telegraf*, a weekly that was published, edited and largely written by Y. Wagman from 1890. A typical headline was: "Discovery in the Cave of Machpelah of the Matriarch Sarah's Hat and Sabbath Candlesticks." Another item dealt with the discovery of a cave in Mexico containing the fossilized remains of Jews wrapped in prayer shawls and wearing phylacteries.

A popular Yiddish sensationalist journalist of the early 1890s was Getzel Zelikovitch (see *Qesher* 18, November 1995) who wrote for the *Yidishes Tageblat* ("Jewish Daily") and the *Yiddishe Gazetten*. A typical headline for one of his articles in 1892 was: "Terrible!!! Two Eagles Battle over a Live Baby — The Father Shoots his Child." Zelikovitch served as editor and senior writer for the *Tageblat*, the most popular Yiddish daily then. His task was to translate news from the American and European press, which was a source for news in the Yiddish press, while also writing editorials, educational pieces, a women's column, a serialized novel and other material. Under this kind of pressure, he used nearly every scrap of information as a subject for an article, i.e., the case of a woman in Galicia whose glass eye was shattered by thunder although she was unharmed, or a madman in Mississippi

who walked in his sleep to a river, caught three fish, returned to his bed, and awoke in the morning with no recollection of the event. Zelikovitch's successor as editor of the *Tageblat* in the mid-1890s was his colleague, John Paley, who took sensationalist journalism a step further, not only reporting on such events but making them up.

At the turn of the century, the *Tageblat* under Paley's editorship, with Zelikovitch rehired as staff writer in 1901 after an absence, adopted the abbreviated headline style in oversize typeface that had become popular in the sensationalist American press, e.g: "Robbery," "Destruction," "Saints or Sinners," with the subject of the article defined in a subhead consisting of several sentences. Occasionally, the paper printed a headline across the entire front page, or ran articles under the headline: "Extra." Articles were generously illustrated. Most of the Yiddish papers then, with the exception of the socialist papers, were sensationalist to one degree or another.

A critic of this press, M. Zeifert — author of numerous serialized novels himself — charged that the primary motivation of its publishers was commercial and that they would do anything to increase profits, without any concern for the betterment of the community. A local businessman who failed to advertise in these papers, Zeifert asserted, faced ruination at their hands. Moreover, staff members were obliged to write precisely what the publishers — who lacked any previous editorial experience — demanded, however falsified or fabricated, all for the sake of selling more papers. Such reports as one about the king of a tribe of savages in the East Indies who converted to Judaism in his old age and ate "kugel" prepared in the style of the Jews of Lithuania and Poland, or about an 80-year-old woman who became pregnant by the grace of God and gave birth to an eagle, perpetuated the ignorance of the

masses, Zeifert contended. He singled out Zelikovitch, Paley and Nahum Meyer Shaikevich ("Shomer") as the primary representatives of this type of journalism. Zelikovitch, he charged, had reported in *Neie Yiddishe Presse*, which he edited then, that a Spanish warship had reached the shores of Boston (in 1898, during the Spanish-American War) and had bombed the city, causing widespread panic among the Jews of Boston until they were persuaded that the report was a fabrication. Zeifert's criticism of Shaikevich focused on the abysmally low level of his serialized novels, while in the case of Paley, he questioned the qualifications of an editor with limited education and no contact with Jewish culture who wrote bombastic editorials in an Orthodox Jewish newspaper (the *Tageblat*) on the problems of the Jewish people.

That Zelikovitch was a sworn proponent of sensationalist yellow journalism was attested to by advice he offered to Menahem Dolitzki, publisher of a new Yiddish literary periodical, *Die Zeit*, in 1897. Zelikovitch questioned whether Dolitzki had sufficient "hutzpa" for his task, specifying that what this meant in American terms was the capacity for "bluff." The greater the literary talent, Zelikovitch argued, the greater the weakness of the product. Bluff was the required ingredient for success. Zelikovitch's insight proved prescient, for the periodical failed during its first year.

The extreme sensationalism of the Yiddish press in America, as of the English-language press, faded during the first decade of the 20th century. Curiously, Zelikovitch himself wrote a critical article on yellow journalism at this time, claiming that sensationalism deadened the public's reactions to genuine tragedy and censuring the Yiddish press for aping this aspect of the English press.

## THE JEWISH MINDSET IN AMERICA AS REFLECTED IN THE "FORWARD"'S "BINTEL BRIF" ADVICE COLUMN/ Gideon Spiegel

A Yiddish daily newspaper was to be found in virtually every Jewish immigrant household during the period of the mass immigration of East European Jews to America at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. It served to link the Jewish sweatshop laborer with

the greater world outside, and was a primary means of integration into the norms of the new land that the Jews had chosen as a shelter.

This role was quintessentially illustrated by the *Forward*, founded in 1897, which within a decade became the largest

Yiddish newspaper in the world. It accurately expressed the cultural and emotional essence of the immigrant Jewish society, along with the compelling but contradictory ethos of socialism vis-a-vis materialism and unbridled American free enterprise. With the passage of time, it became a spokesman for the Jewish liberal labor movement and later supported Zionism and the struggle for the establishment of the State of Israel, as did the other Yiddish papers. By the 1950s, it had, predictably, declined, the inevitable end of a gradual process reflecting the aging of the last generation of its readership.

The role of the *Forward* went far beyond providing news and commentary. Under Abraham Cahan, who edited the paper for nearly half a century, it became a guide and mentor to its immigrant readership in a milieu that was alien and even unwelcoming. Its letters column, published under the title "*Bintel Brif*" ("packet of letters"), was a forum for self-expression by the masses of Jewish immigrants cut off from their home in Europe and desperately in need of guidance in the harsh environment of New York's Lower East Side. Many of the letters were haltingly written, while others were composed by professional "street writers." So popular did the "*Bintel Brif*" column become by the early years of the 20th century, that Yiddish signs appeared in the streets of the Lower East Side reading: "Letters to *Bintel Brif* written here for 25 cents." Other readers came directly to the editorial offices of the newspaper and asked staff members to help word their letters. Today, these preserved letters help reconstruct the momentous beginnings of this community in America.

By the 1950s, the column reflected a changed reality. The Lower East Side had long since been abandoned by the Jewish immigrants, who had moved "uptown" and out to the comfortable suburbs. Their problems had become more "normal," reflecting a stable lifestyle, sufficiency and even affluence.

In 1906, a reader wrote on behalf of coworkers in a raincoat factory on Bleeker Street, describing the case of a 13-year-old worker amongst them who labored for \$2.50 a week. One day the boy had arrived at work 10 minutes late, and the boss punished him by deducting 2 cents from his wages. Was this not scandalous, the reader asked rhetorically.

A newcomer from Russia who had barely gotten settled asked whether he must send the few dollars he had managed to earn to his blind father and stepmother back in Russia, as he had promised, or put the money aside

for himself in the event of hard times that may lie ahead. The editor's reply: He must send it to his father, for as a young man his prospects of earning more money were better than those of his blind father.

A young man who married a gentile woman whom he had met at work was increasingly concerned about his wife's changed attitude toward religion now that they were expecting a baby. While beforehand she had been open-minded and flexible, now she went to church every Sunday and was plainly upset over this issue. The writer did not want to convert to Christianity. The editor's reply: Unfortunately, the problem was not unique. His advice was to move to a Jewish neighborhood where the husband's influence over the wife would be reinforced.

A typical letter in 1907 from a girl of 14 describes the difficult circumstances of her family, which consists of five children, a sick father and a mother who is pregnant. The writer is a good student who would like to pursue her studies, but feels she must leave school in order to help support her family. Her mother, however, insists that she continue her studies. The editor advises the writer to obey her parents and continue her studies, and thereby bring them the greatest possible fulfillment and happiness. It was this impetus for education which accounted for the unique success and status achieved by the Jews in America.

In stark contrast to these poignant letters are those of the 1950s and 1960s, for example from the father of a bride whose wife and daughter insist on arranging an expensive wedding even though his means are limited; from a husband who complains that ever since he acquired a television, his wife is addicted to it; or from grandparents whose successful son, a lawyer, has transmitted a request from his wife that they limit their visits to the grandchildren. In the last case, the intent is to prevent ruining the children's diction by overexposure to their grandparents' broken and accented English, as well as to avoid embarrassing the upscale young family by the presence of the grandparents. The grandmother uses the *Forward* as a means of sending a message to her daughter-in-law: In our day we had no opportunity to learn English properly because we worked night and day so that your husband could reach the level of success that he has attained. Is this the gratitude we get?

Other problems stemmed from the disappearance of whole neighborhoods and communities of the immigrant generation through death or relocation to better areas, for example the question of selling property acquired by a burial society, which has been unused.



## "BEREISHIT" MARKED THE END: RECOLLECTIONS BY MOSHE HIYUG OF THE LAST HEBREW PERIODICAL IN THE SOVIET UNION / Hagit Halperin

The last Hebrew periodical to be published in the Soviet Union was discontinued exactly 70 years ago, in 1926. The difficulties encountered in publishing it reflect the demise of Hebrew culture in the Soviet Union then and the disillusionment of local Hebrew writers who had been ardent believers in the Russian Revolution.

The founder and moving spirit of the magazine was Moshe Hiyug (Abramson; 1895-1968), a Hebraist who was a confirmed "Octoberist" and who saw no conflict between his devotion to the Russian Revolution and Russian culture, and his commitment to Hebrew literature and language. Even after the Revolution, he continued sending his short stories abroad to be published in such Hebrew periodicals as *Hashilo'ah* and *Moznayim*. Hiyug's letters to his brother, Shalom Ben-Avram, also a Hebrew writer, as well as written and taped reminiscences by him, provide a rare insight into the fate of Hebrew culture in that time and place.

Early in the 1920s, Hiyug became convinced that inasmuch as the Communist state allowed writers of various nationalities to express themselves in their native languages, they would by the same token recognize the role of Hebrew literature. In this way, he believed, it would be possible to preserve Hebrew culture while also creating a synthesis between the Revolution and the "new Jew" of the Communist era. Recruiting the Hebrew poet Shimon Haboneh (Tarbukov), Hiyug founded the "*Bereishit*" ("Genesis") group in 1923, joined by Avraham Kariv (Krivorotchke), Yosef Leib Tcheftman and Yitzhak Norman (Simanovski), with the aim of publishing a Hebrew magazine.

Obtaining a permit from the state censor proved a formidable obstacle, as the "Yevseksiya" — the Soviet department for Jewish affairs — which was led by Jews, was more extreme than other branches of the government in its determination to destroy Zionist institutions and Hebrew culture. Hiyug, who was on the staff of the Military Revolutionary Council at the time, used every possible contact in high places to help him obtain the permit. Eventually, it was granted through connections at the Leningrad censorship office.

This, however, was only the first of a series of

obstacles. Printing the Hebrew-language publication was the next problem, namely, finding a press that had Hebrew letters and that was willing to undertake the job. In the end, the few suitable presses in the Soviet Union refused, apparently out of fear, and the solution was a press in Berlin. Because of poor communication links between the Soviet Union and Germany, however, the typeset text could not be proofread, and was received from Berlin with multiple errors.

Another difficulty was funding the publication. An approach by Hiyug to the Moscow Jewish community was rejected on the basis that the publication, which was unreservedly pro-regime, made no effort to portray the difficult situation of the Jews in the Soviet Union. Hiyug also corresponded with the Hebrew Writers' Association of Palestine — even though at the time he opposed Zionism — and although that body had no funds available, it expressed support for the *Bereishit* group. He did receive a small amount of funding from the Zionist Hehalutz movement in Russia, which was devoted to Jewish land settlement. The Habimah Theater in Moscow provided more substantial aid by devoting half the proceeds of a performance of "The Golem" to Hiyug's cause.

An additional difficulty was ideological differences of opinion between the founders as to whether the publication would be Communistic — the point of view espoused by Hiyug — or would present varied representative views of Jewish life in the Soviet Union, the view supported by the Zionist faction led by Avraham Kariv. Hiyug held Communist discipline as supreme, declaring a willingness to accept even the sacrifice of Hebrew culture in Russia for the sake of that cause — a view that was unacceptable to the Zionists.

None of these difficulties, however, were as distressing to Hiyug as the poor reception afforded *Bereishit* when it finally appeared in 1926. Few Hebrew-speakers were left in the Soviet Union, and those who remained were apparently fearful of acquiring a Hebrew publication.

Hiyug had devoted over three years to publishing the magazine. Its failure represented the end of any hope of Hebrew-language self-expression in the Soviet Union.

The magazine contained close to 200 pages, and

included works by Hiyug, Tcheftman, Haboneh, Norman, Kariv, Yokheved Bat-Miriam, Shmuel Novik, Dan Pines, Gershon Hanovitz, M. Bat-Hama and Yitzhak Cohen. Several stories of Isaac Babel's also appeared, translated by Hiyug from Russian to Hebrew with the author's approval. The revolutionary aspect of the magazine was reflected in its futuristic cover and poems written in the style of Mayakovski, all emphasizing the "new man." However, a manifesto-like article by Hiyug, while bravely calling for the unity of the "Hebrew Octoberists" throughout the world, reveals the palpable sense of the impending end of Hebrew self-expression conveyed throughout the publication. Hiyug urges the abandonment of the past, but cannot assure a positive future.

With the death of Trotsky (whom Hiyug admired) and the rise of Stalin, the Soviet Union hardened its policy toward the Jews and declared Hebrew a counterrevolutionary language, making the continuation of the periodical impossible and resulting in the disillusionment of the "Hebrew Octoberists." Some of them emigrated to Palestine. Those who remained discontinued their Hebrew endeavors. But the advent of World War II and the Holocaust impelled the survivors to renew their Hebrew

literary efforts and a small group, which included Hiyug, reorganized in 1943. However, a secret agent had been planted in the group, and the result was their arrest and eventual exile to Siberia, where most died. The few who survived, including Hiyug, were released in the post-Stalin era, broken in body and spirit.

The Hebraists maintained contact with each other in the camps and thereafter. A dominant figure among them was Zevi Freigerson, who, while not a member of the *Bereishit* group, was close to it. He kept diaries of his experiences in the camps and thereafter until his death in the Soviet Union in 1969, including a series of discussions with Hiyug in 1964 for the purpose of documenting the latter's recollections of his activities during the 1920s. Freigerson's diaries were brought to Israel by his children when they immigrated in 1974, and parts were published.

In retrospect, Hiyug realized that there never was any chance of developing Hebrew culture in the Soviet Union or publishing a periodical. He also revised his opinion of the Zionist movement, which at the time had appeared to him reactionary but which he acknowledged as having contained a large measure of insight.

## REACTIONS OF THE BRITISH PRESS TO THE JEWISH UNDERGROUND IN PALESTINE IN THE 1940S / Shaul Zadka

Most, although not all, of the British press reacted to mounting Jewish terrorism in Palestine during the British Mandate period with near-hysteria and applied strong pressure on the government to either take harsh measures against the Jewish underground or return the British soldiers home.

The press tended to make no distinction between the three Jewish underground movements — Ezel (Irgun Zeva'i Leumi), Lehi (the "Stern Group") and the Haganah. Some papers — especially the popular mass dailies and the local press — likened the Jewish guerrilla fighters to Nazis, particularly following extreme violent acts against His Majesty's soldiers. After the murder of Lord Moyne in Cairo by two members of Lehi in November 1944, the *Observer* portrayed the Stern Group as a "product of Jewish Fascism." Following the execution by hanging of two British sergeants by members of Ezel in 1947, the

*Times* wrote that "bestial acts such as the Nazis themselves committed must not be allowed to continue."

Many papers expressed astonishment that the brothers of the victims of the Holocaust were capable of such cruel violence, and warned the leadership of the *yishuv* (the Jewish community in Palestine) that such terrorist acts would cost them loss of sympathy. The *Yorkshire Post*, a supporter of the Zionist idea, nevertheless pointed out that British sympathy for the Jews would be forthcoming only so long as British soldiers and subjects were unharmed. Furthermore, the British press accused the Jewish underground of creating anti-Semitism among the soldiers serving in Palestine as well as in Britain itself. For example, the *Spectator* predicted that "Zionist extremism" would inevitably lead to world anti-Semitism. Other papers claimed that British soldiers who had arrived in Palestine as philo-Semites, after having personally witnessed the

suffering of European Jewry when the concentration camps were liberated, turned into anti-Semites as a consequence of Jewish terrorism.

One of the few papers to call for an understanding of the motives of the Jewish underground leaders — albeit without defending their activity — was the *Economist*, which exposed anti-Semitism in Britain's Foreign, Colonial and War Offices. This bias was attributable to the close contact these civil servants maintained with the Arabs and the regular flow of reports they received from the Arab capitals, the paper pointed out. "Good relations with Zion do not play a part in British foreign policy," it observed. The most pro-Zionist of all the papers at that time, the *Manchester Guardian*, seeking to justify the motives of the underground following the explosion in the King David Hotel in July 1946, wrote: "Hitler made them desperate." It also blamed the more liberal policy-making echelon for acceding to the bias of the lower-level government officials. Even after the execution of Lord Moyne, the paper cautioned against judging a whole nation based on the activities of a few individuals. It called for bringing the murderers to judgment yet expressed support for continued Jewish immigration to Palestine.

The British press also dealt with internal developments in the *yishuv*, expressing sharp criticism of the Jewish leadership for what appeared to the British as an unwillingness to uproot the terrorism, especially during 1946-47. The Jews of Palestine, in the view of the press, should be grateful for British efforts to ensure their future. The *Observer* wrote that refusal to hand over information about illegal activity meant refusal to be a citizen. The *Times* expressed concern that most of the Jewish population would be drawn into the violence and would overwhelm the British police force in Palestine, accusing the Jewish population and its institutions of already cooperating with declared terrorists. This accusation was echoed by the *Sunday Express*, which reported that the terrorist campaign was funded and equipped by Jews abroad and hinted at

the involvement of the Jewish Agency as well.

Another concern reflected in the British press was that Jewish terrorism would elicit a similar response by the Arabs and lead the country to the brink of disaster.

British policy regarding Palestine was the target of repeated attacks by the British press, particularly following terrorist acts. The *New Statesman* wrote in July 1946 that the terrorists in Palestine had the upper hand over the British army, an assessment that Menahem Begin, commander of Ezel, read out to his subordinates with satisfaction. The high cost of the British presence in Palestine and the inability to eliminate Jewish terror prompted several papers to advocate withdrawal from Palestine. The *Daily Mail* called for withdrawal in order to avoid embroilment in the "inevitable" Jewish-Arab conflict. The *Sunday Express* demanded of the government: "Take Charge or Get Out" in order to spare British lives and preserve British prestige. Later, in March 1947, after an Ezel attack on the British officers club in Jerusalem which caused 17 fatalities, the same paper called not only for evacuation but also for revenge, namely the execution of those convicted for the deaths. Citing the figure of 73 British fatalities for the year 1946, the *Express* deplored that not a single execution had been carried out in retribution. The *Daily Mail*, for its part, criticized pro-Zionist public opinion in America.

That the British press did not react uniformly to events in Palestine, however, was illustrated by the editorial reaction of the *Economist* to the "Exodus" affair in 1947. The paper regarded the decision to deport the shipbound refugees from the port of Haifa to Hamburg as deplorable — "tragic" to the relationship between Britain and the Jews of Palestine, and a "catastrophe" to Britain's moral stature worldwide.

The one decision by London that engendered support by all segments of the British press was the withdrawal from Palestine, thereby leaving the country to the two warring camps — Jewish and Arab.

## YOUNG YIDDISH WRITERS IN THE FINAL PERIOD OF THE SOVIET UNION: MYTH AND REALITY / Genadi Ostreikh

The postwar Yiddish literary monthly, *Sovetish Heymland* ("Soviet Homeland"; 1961-91), was the only vehicle for

the encouragement of younger Yiddish writers during the final three decades of the Soviet Union, as attested to

by the personal experience of the author of the article, who served as general secretary of the magazine during 1980-91.

In 1969, under the editorship of Aaron Vergelis, the magazine began publishing material that could be classified as educational, under the heading: "Discussions About the Yiddish Language." The significance of this effort must be viewed in light of the closure by the state of the last four Jewish schools in the Soviet Union (in Vilna, Kovno, Czernovitz and Birobidzhan) in 1948. While the Yiddish "courses" initiated by *Sovetish Heymland* were amateurish, they reflected the desire of the magazine to educate a new generation of Yiddish writers.

The monthly, which contained nearly 200 generously illustrated pages printed on quality paper, was in effect a Soviet propaganda organ, the sole publication of its kind following the long series of closures and prohibitions of the 1930s-1950s. It had several dozen staff members and about a hundred contributors, and played a political role that no other Jewish publication was able to fulfill. The staff and contributors enjoyed a series of concrete benefits, including an official author's wage, which made them affluent by Soviet standards. Ties with the "aparatchiks" of the Soviet Central Committee presented an opportunity to obtain official support for several of Vergelis' projects, one of which was a biannual course for editors in Yiddish which the state granted upon the 20th anniversary of the magazine. Three beginner writing students in the course who are known today — all of them now in Israel — were Lev Brinski, Velvel Chernin and Boris Sandler. Another was Moshe Pens, then 60. Yet another, Alexander Brodsky, limited himself to literal translations from Yiddish to Russian.

Vergelis' motivation in organizing courses for Jewish writers was obvious: the magazine's circulation of 25,000 in 1961 had dropped to a fifth that number by the 1970s, while many of its contributors had died, left the country, or were on bad terms with the editor. The remainder were in their sixties at least.

In July 1986, *Sovetish Heymland* published an entire issue devoted to the works of young writers, including graduates of its Yiddish courses, an effort propelled by Chernin, who was by then a member of the staff. The impetus to demonstrate the existence of Soviet Yiddish literature produced by young writers had become so urgent, that only half the material published in the issue was actually written in Yiddish originally, and not all of it was worthy of publication. Vergelis also displayed flexibility

regarding the definition of "young" writers.

In reality, the entire "Youth Project" would probably not have been possible had a Yiddish-Hebrew dictionary not been published in Moscow in 1984, which enabled persons with only a rudimentary knowledge of Yiddish to produce more advanced texts. In any case, all the manuscripts underwent improvement by the editors of *Sovetish Heymland*. The "Youth Project" was supported by the "Yiddish" group of the prestigious Literary Institute. It also attracted the interest of the Historic-Ethnographic Committee, which consisted of researchers of Jewish history under the leadership of Mikhail Chlenov and Igor Krupnik, who in 1981 wanted to join forces with the magazine officially. The magazine, in fact, was one of the only vehicles likely to publish their research. Moreover, it could authorize both access to archives and the undertaking of field trips throughout the country. After prolonged debate, the two bodies established a cooperative arrangement. Two studies that were published in the magazine in 1982 — "Jews in the Soviet Union" by Chlenov (No. 7) and "Jewish Ethnographic Issues in the Soviet Union" by Krupnik (No. 8) — were the first evidence of the emergence of a new generation of researchers in Jewish studies. Significantly, some two-thirds of the Soviet participants in the international conference of Jewish historians held in Moscow in 1989 were contributors to *Sovetish Heymland*.

Four additional "Youth Project" issues of the magazine appeared, during 1986-89. However, telltale signs of the weakness of the project were evident: the list of contributors remained practically unchanged, and only a third of the July 1989 issue contained works by Yiddish writers (another third consisted of translations from Russian, while the rest of the pages were filled by an old device — reprinting segments of Yiddish classics).

A new bimonthly supplement, *Yungvald* ("Young Forest"), appeared with the *Sovetish Heymland* issue of July 1989, containing Russian as well as Yiddish material. The name of the new publication harked back to a literary periodical that had been published by Komsomol in the 1920s, but, by contrast, it did not have a defined political direction nor did it reveal new writers. It lasted until the end of 1991, its final issue published entirely in Russian. No further youth issues were published by *Sovetish Heymland* either. In truth, not only had the list of Yiddish writers shrunk, with most of them having left the Soviet Union in 1990, but there was virtually no young audience for a Yiddish publication.

The attempts to teach young Jewish writers to write in Yiddish succeeded in one respect: a dozen new writers emerged, over half of whom have continued to work in the area of Yiddish literature and Jewish academic life. This modest result, however, reflected the broader failure of the project, as well as the decline of Yiddish generally during the latter years of the Soviet era. Yiddish could not compete with Hebrew or with Israeli culture, which became integral to Jewish organizational life. The organizations that were linked to Yiddish, by contrast, were totally ineffective in furthering Jewish culture in the Soviet Union.

Why then were young Yiddish writers cultivated at all in the Soviet Union, and only there? One reason is that

the Soviet Union was the only place where the profession "Yiddish writer" was an officially recognized one, entitling such a writer to be published in the *Sovetish Heymland* and by quality Soviet publishing houses, as well as to receive a high wage and other benefits. Secondly, the training of young writers in the various languages of the Soviet Union was an established norm. Lastly, this type of literary activity was the only legal means of preserving Yiddish culture, in contrast to the option available in the Western world of pursuing this objective in academic life. Typically, a number of these Yiddish writers eventually entered the academic world in Israel and in Western countries.

## WRITERS OF HEBREW RHYMED JOURNALISTIC SATIRE: A BIBLIOGRAPHY / Dan Almagor

In this third and last article on writers of rhymed satiric verse published in the Hebrew press from the early 1930s until the present, the author presents a bibliography of 134 entries consisting of names and pseudonyms of writers along with biographic details and listings of publications in which their work in this unique genre appeared.

Some of the writers published rhymed satiric columns on a regular basis for a specific newspaper — Natan Alterman, Hayim Hefer, Didi Menussi, Yehonatan Gefen and Efrayim Sidon are examples. Others wrote for various newspapers. Still others were not essentially satiric verse writers but submitted pieces in this genre to the press on occasion. A monograph on the topic by the author is due to be published in Israel at the end of 1996.

The use of pseudonyms in this genre was widespread, and led the author to invest considerable effort in literary detective work. Assistance in this area came, inter alia, from readers of the previous two articles in *Qesher* (Nos. 17 and 18) who contacted him with new information. One puzzle that was solved in this way was the identity of the talented anonymous writer of satiric verse that appeared in the illegal wall-newspaper, *Ma'as* ("Deed"), published by the underground Lehi organization during the 1940s at the height of the struggle to oust the British and create an independent Jewish state. The writer was the young Mordecai Shalev, later to become one of the country's leading literary critics and essayists.

## "LOYAL GUARDIAN OF ZION": AN ORTHODOX JEWISH BIWEEKLY IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY GERMANY / Akiva Zimmerman

The widespread tradition of newsletters devoted to commentary on the Torah portion of the week, along with background on other religious themes, which are distributed on the Sabbath in Orthodox synagogues, traces its origin to a Hebrew biweekly titled *Shomer Zion*

*Ha-Ne'eman* ("Loyal Guardian of Zion"), which appeared in Germany as a supplement to the German-language periodical *Der treue Zions Waechter* during 1846-57.

Edited by Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger (1798-1871) and Samuel Anakh (1814-76), the bulletin was published in Altona,

where Ettlinger was rabbi and religious judge, and Anakh, who had a doctorate, was principal of the Hebrew school. A total of 222 issues were produced, printed partly in Rashi script and partly in ordinary Hebrew block print. An innovative aspect of the publication was that it constituted a joint effort by an Orthodox rabbi and a group of scholars. Its aim was to block Reformist efforts to introduce religious change, or any form of religious liberalization, and it reflected an awareness by Ettlinger — a recognized Orthodox authority in Germany and Eastern Europe — that this struggle must be widened out beyond the confines of a single synagogue or yeshiva. This was his motivation as well in launching *Der treue Zions Waechter*.

The learned commentaries on the Torah contained in the Hebrew bulletin were contributed by distinguished rabbis throughout Eastern and Western Europe and Jerusalem. A second aspect of the bulletin was problematic contemporary Halakhic issues discussed by noted local authorities, often in several consecutive bulletins. These issues included, for

example, the permissibility of traveling on the Sabbath on the newly invented railroad (no, because the ticket must be carried on the Sabbath, which is prohibited), or the permissibility of organ playing in the synagogue (no, because a Jew with conviction does not require such stimulus). Another component of the bulletin was the scholarly aspect, which included liturgical poetry as well as poetic commentary on current developments. Significantly, Hebrew was regarded not only as the holy tongue but as the language of the people, and was utilized for such mundane purposes as riddles and acrostics.

Noteworthy, too, was Rabbi Ettlinger's love of Eretz Yisrael. Several of his grandchildren settled in Jerusalem, and his descendants include Rabbi Judah Aaron Horowitz, winner of the Jerusalem Prize for Torah Literature, who republished a volume of responsa by Ettlinger. The complete set of "Loyal Guardian of Zion" bulletins was brought out in reproduced form in New York.

## THE JEWISH PRESS IN NORTH AFRICA / Hayim Sa'adon

Major archival collections of the large body of Jewish periodicals and newspapers in North Africa, especially Tunisia, are to be found in six libraries: in Israel — the Ben Zvi Institute, the National and University Library in Jerusalem, the Central Zionist Archive and the author's private collection; and in France — the Alliance Israelite Universelle library and the National Library in Paris. These are cited in a valuable bibliography titled *Jewish Periodicals and Newspapers in North Africa* (Hebrew), published recently by Robert Hatal, an authority in this field. Another important source, not included in Hatal's work, is the French Foreign Office archive in Nantes, which contains material transferred from the French protectorates, including Morocco and Tunisia, as well as from all the French diplomatic legations throughout the world. Yet another source is the Overseas Colonial Archive in Aix-en-Provence, which contains the Algerian archive.

One of the most interesting aspects of Hatal's work is his documentation of the remarkably large number of Jewish newspapers published in Tunisia relative to the output in the other countries of the Maghrib. The statistics are: Tunisia — 140 newspapers, Algeria — 48, Morocco — 41, and Libya — 15. Significantly, population figures

in these countries were: Tunisia — 105,000 at its peak, Algeria — some 165,500, and Morocco — over 200,000. This phenomenon is particularly surprising since the press as a tool of communication and publicity is a byproduct of modernization, and Algeria, the first North African country to be colonized by the French, was considered more modern than Tunisia. The explanation for this seeming anomaly lay in the differences in French colonial policy toward the two countries, as well as to variations in the reaction of the native populations to this policy.

The press under review clearly reflected the process of modernization of the Jewish populations of North Africa, which were mostly French-influenced, except for Libya, which was under Italian influence, during the interwar period. The Jewish press expanded rapidly at this time, with 41 papers published in Tunisia, 20 in Morocco, 8 in Algeria and 4 in Libya. Language of publication was also significant, with French rapidly replacing the original Judeo-Arabic of the Jewish population. This reflected the growing French cultural influence on the Jewish community; the growing proportion of Jewish children educated in Alliance schools as well as in non-Jewish French educational institutions; and the interest

of the Jewish community in establishing a dialogue with the French authorities with the aim of improving their communal situation. The proliferation of orientations within the Jewish press, ranging from literary to political, Zionist and religious, also reflected growing sophistication.

A letter written in Hebrew in 1910 by a 20-year-old Jewish journalist in Tunis to the noted Hebrew editor, Nahum Sokolow, in Berlin, illustrates the influence of the

Jewish press, both local and foreign, on the development of the fledgling Zionist movement in Tunisia then. The young writer, having read and been impressed with Sokolow's Hebrew anthologies, *Ha'asif* and *Sifrei Hashana*, as well as his articles in *Hamevasser*, requests printed materials and guidance to aid him in efforts to establish a Zionist association in Tunis.

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