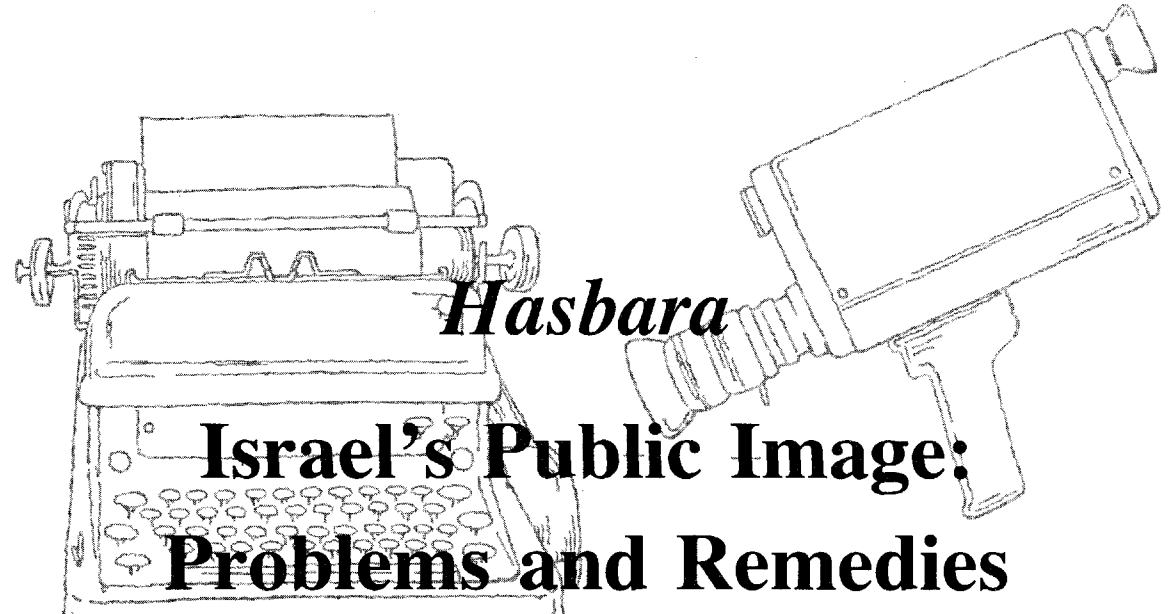


# CONGRESS

M O N T H L Y

## THE 19TH AMERICA-ISRAEL DIALOGUE



### Israel's Public Image: Problems and Remedies

Yonah Alexander/Phil Baum/Dan Bavly/Joseph Block/Elias Buchwald/Ze'ev Chafets/David Clayman/Irwin Cotler/Barbaralee Diamondstein/Simcha Dinitz/Mordechai Dolinsky/Judith Elizur/Yoram Ettinger/Martin Fenton/Erwin Frenkel/Moshe Gilboa/Yosef Goell/Shmuel Katz/Paul Kedar/Yosef Lapid/Nehemia Meyers/Paul Miller/Menachem Milson/Stan Moss/Joshua Muravchik/Ehud Olmert/Dan Pattir/Elad Peled/Ari Rath/Shalom Rosenfeld/Irving Rosenthal/David Rubin/Kalman Siegel/Henry Siegman/Hanoch Smith/Carl Spielvogel/Howard M. Squadron/Mark Stroock/Eliyahu Tal/Ben Wattenberg/Leon Wieseltier

Drawing for Congress Monthly by Jana Peiss

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# Israel's Public Image: Problems and Remedies

By Carl Spielvogel

**B**y way of introduction to this year's Dialogue on *Hasbara*, I offer my personal view on the molding of public opinion — which is at the heart of *Hasbara*, Israel's information department. What I have to say is based on my own 30 years' experience in journalism and advertising. One must differentiate between making government policy and explaining it. I open with this point because I don't want my friends and colleagues here in Israel to feel that a group of Americans have come here to tell the Government of Israel how to make policy. Rather, we'd like to discuss how Israel presents and explains its policies.

Two: Given the nature of mass communications, one must understand that being right is not enough to explain or gain support for particular policies.

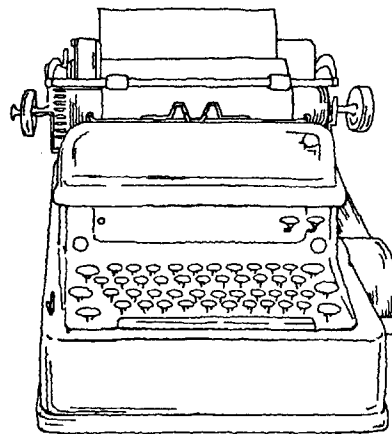
Three: If one doesn't make written plans, nothing constructive can be done.

Four: There is nothing less worth doing well than something which shouldn't have been done in the first place.

Five: One must differentiate between strategy and tactics.

Six: If one wants to be liked and understood, one's hopes and dreams must be expressed in the form of someone else's needs.

Economically, Israel and the United States are tied together. It is therefore in Israel's best interests that the United States understand the policies of its Government. Too much public opinion and public policy in the U.S. and Israel is formulated through the process of what I like to call "ready-fire-aim." I would urge the creation of a Cabinet post dedicated exclusively to the communication and interpretation of Israeli policy. Again, the minister who holds this job would not be setting policy, but presenting it in the most attractive way to the rest of the world. If a Ministry of Communications were to be established, the appropriate minister would have to be supported by a staff of Israeli professionals, trained in the contemporary skills of communication. It is no longer enough to be right: You must explain why you are right. Almost everyone accepts the need for war colleges, places to develop plans for effective defense in the near and distant future. Would it not make sense to have a similar college in Israel dedicated to training public affairs specialists who would develop "what-if" strategies and scenarios for a wide range of contingencies? I am



**'It is no longer enough to be right: You must explain why you are right.'**

the first to admit that one cannot sell political beliefs and actions the way one sells toothpaste, but one can plan strategies and implement tactics for key issues.

The people of Israel have shown that they can plan and organize for their survival and prosperity better than anyone ever dreamed. And the world has learned a great deal from Israel. But now I would like to suggest that some of us feel a need to repay Israel for these lessons, with some skills in the marketing, advertising and communications areas in which we in the United States excel. One of these will, I hope, be the start of a program, ideally administered by the American Jewish Congress, that will bring to the United States each year a minimum of five Israelis to be trained in the most advanced skills of public affairs communication. I certainly would be very willing to have one of these people working with me over an extended period of time, and there are many people in the communications business in the United States who would be equally willing to do this. This type of on-the-job training could produce an elite corps of information specialists, whose careers in Israel might be as important as political, military, diplomatic or teaching careers.

# **The Possibilities and Limitations of Hasbara**

*Combatting the psychological threats of anti-Zionism*

**By Howard M. Squadron**

**H**asbara — the perception of Israel — is important for the entire Jewish world. It is a problem for the victims of violent acts of anti-Zionism/anti-Semitism, such as those who were wounded or killed in the synagogues in Rome and Vienna. It is also a psychological problem. When I was in Dallas a couple of weeks ago, a woman there told me that she was reluctant to talk to her friends about her visit to Israel during the war in Lebanon because she sensed their resentment vis-à-vis the Israelis' presence in Lebanon and her willingness to visit Israel during that period. I am going to raise some of the Hasbara difficulties knowing that the Dialogue will deal with possible answers.

The outside world is correct in perceiving that there is a blood relationship between Israel and the world Jewish communities. When the anti-Israelis attack Zionism we know that they are expressing anti-Semitic views. So, while Jews around the world take enormous pride in Israel and derive strength from its existence, they also have a stake in the image Israel projects. It is, in fact, quite personal.

Diaspora Jewry is concerned with the very security and survival of the state and therefore willingly shoulders a very important part of Hasbara, that is, the views expressed within the Diaspora communities, particularly within the United States. This is crucial because public opinion in the United States influences policy.

Israel and the world Jewish community have been struggling with the problem of Hasbara since the founding of the State. During the 1982 war in Lebanon, this problem reached crisis dimensions. It was not, however, the first crisis. When the Iraqi nuclear reactor was bombed, everybody thought that we had reached a low point.

In dealing with Hasbara, I think we must avoid becoming involved in policymaking or criticizing policy. We must simply face the fact that there is and always will be a prob-

lem in presenting the case for Israel and that that case has some merit. It is too easy for us to attack a policy, and say: "That would solve everything." The manner in which a policy is presented is enormously important. When I was chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, during the 1981 bombing of Beirut, it was nearly impossible to convey to Israeli policymakers the difficulties Diaspora Jewry had in defending such an action. Newspaper headlines focused on the number of casualties in Beirut, not on the bombing of settlements in northern Israel. It took three full days before we could get anybody to understand the public relations impact of the policy. At that time the Israeli Ambassador was not even in the United States. No one attempted a public explanation at first. No one had prepared the ground ahead of time.

When the Reagan plan was proposed in September of 1982, I happened to be interviewed by a reporter while watching the President on television. When asked what the objections of the Israeli government would be to the Reagan plan, my remarks were duly recorded. After the camera went off, the reporter said to me, "Well, how will Israel react?" I said, "It'll overreact." I tried to reach somebody to say, you know, it would be a good idea for the Prime Minister to continue his vacation in Nahariya. He should study it and not say anything until after the Arab League meeting in Fez, Morocco. Let the Arabs reject first. But, of course, the Israelis rejected the plan first.

If June 1967 represents a public relations high point for Israel, June 1982 represents the low point. During the 1982 bombing of Beirut, NBC's Jessica Savitch declared on the nightly news that one must "wonder what there is left of West Beirut to bomb." John Chancellor, also of NBC, called Bashir Gemayel "a blood-thirsty young Christian." Chancellor, with West Beirut in the background, asked: "What in the world is going on here?" He supplied the

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## Israel is no longer perceived to be 'little David,' but Goliath steamrolling across the map, against an enemy which, although dedicated to the destruction of Israel, was outgunned, outclassed and outmanned.

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answer: "An imperial Israel solving its problems in someone else's backyard." Those are not PLO spokesmen speaking. Those are supposedly reputable, dispassionate and serious journalists.

All of the casualty figures issued by the PLO, no matter how unbelievable, were repeated and accepted, as accurate by the world's most prestigious publications. The claim, for example, that there had been 10,000 Lebanese civilians killed during the first week of the war was repeated in a *New York Times* report from Damascus. A few days later the newspaper exposed that figure as a gross exaggeration. When Secretary of State Alexander Haig Jr. resigned, the front page of the *London Sunday Times* did not publish anything from its correspondent in Washington. Rather its reporter in Beirut, an individual known to be sympathetic to the PLO, stated that Haig had resigned under pressure. "On Friday," the writer explained, "as friction grew between Haig and the rest of the Reagan team, some 2,000 victims are estimated to have been killed or wounded in Israeli shootings." This report appeared under a photograph of a ten-year-old boy whose arms had been amputated. That same day, the *London Times* reported: "The Zionists opened up on the remaining defenses of West Beirut." Clearly, this was fantasized, exaggerated; yet it was printed in newspapers in England.

Earlier, two American network television crews traveling in Lebanon came to Nabatiye, a predominantly Moslem town in Southern Lebanon. Israeli troops had already passed through the area. The journalists interviewed an elderly woman who complained tearfully that she had been robbed and beaten, and that her children had been abused. When one reporter asked her exactly when these terrible events occurred, she explained that they had happened before the Israeli invasion. At that point the television network crew shut off the cameras. The material never saw the light of day. How can we explain that? How can we explain the French government comparing Israel's actions to those of Hitler? How can we account for the accusation of genocide?

Israelis doubt the value of Hasbara. They feel that, when under siege, they must do whatever needs to be done. Hasbara is not a factor. In Lebanon, military censorship helped to obfuscate matters. In the beginning, the Israeli government announced that it planned to go only 40 kilometers into Lebanon. Just why the Beirut-Damascus road was blocked was never answered. There was no coordination among the Ministries. Information was unavailable or confusing. It took weeks before the actual casualty figures in Sidon and Nabatiye were available. Only ten people were killed in Nabatiye — not the hundreds of thousands reported by the American press.

Where did these figures come from? Most reporters get their information from government press offices or from informal tips. When the Administration in Washington, D.C., began to worry that the Israelis were proceeding beyond the 40-kilometer limit originally announced, members of the White House staff notified their favorite correspondents. In Europe it was even worse. In Italy, the treasurer of the Socialist Party predicted in an article last summer that if the government continued to criticize Israel so severely, Italy would become the scene of anti-Semitic acts of violence. Shortly after that, the synagogue in Rome was bombed during the Jewish high holidays. Government influence on the media and on the people was plain to see.

Since 1964, the perception of Israel has changed. Israel is no longer the little David, but Goliath steamrolling across Lebanon, against an enemy which, although dedicated to the destruction of Israel, was outgunned, outclassed and outmanned. The enemy, according to the media, had no capacity to resist. Sympathy for the Palestinians, conversely, soared, along with the enormous amount of guilt many nations bore toward Lebanon because for the previous seven years they had ignored that country's destruction.

Complicating this swing in sympathy was the need of many American Jews to disagree publicly, to influence the general press to criticize Israel. Those people in the Jewish community did us a terrible disservice. If we disagree in that way, it is very difficult for us to conduct Hasbara effectively.

The real question is whether Hasbara, either in Israel or in the Diaspora, can, by addressing all of these elements intelligently and creatively, influence world opinion vis-à-vis Israel.

I will conclude by mentioning two additional factors. One, there is a continuing effort in the world to delegitimize Israel. Virtually all U.N. activities are geared to achieve this. And, even though we are now in a period of remission, in terms of the relationship of Israel with European countries and with the United States, such efforts continue. Jean Kirkpatrick and Yehuda Blum perform a lonely, unrewarding job in defending the State of Israel. The rest of the world stands by. Two, there is a syndrome in the world community which I call the "gotcha" syndrome. In other words, the world delighted in finding Jews in what it considered compromising situations. If Israel's government did not accurately present its goals in the Lebanese war, or bombed any part of Lebanon, other nations were quick to call Israel a liar and to doubt its moral credentials. This hunger in the world to somehow catch Israel committing an error poses a serious problem for Hasbara in Israel and for the Diaspora. □

# Setting Goals For a Hasbara Campaign

*A consensus among Jews in Israel and the Diaspora is mandatory*

By Ehud Olmert

I plan to raise only basic problems so as to examine crucial, sensitive issues. I will not attempt to analyze in depth all the different elements confronting Israeli Hasbara. I want also to note that I am not a professional public-relations person. I am a politician.

From the outset of the war in Lebanon, Israelis and non-Israelis criticized the war. Many supported the Israeli government policy but felt that we should have limited the campaign to 40 kilometers; others believed that the campaign should not have stopped at the 40-kilometer mark. The latter felt that Israel had to remove the terrorists from Beirut. Those who supported the war from the very beginning must have understood that it would extend beyond the pre-designated limit. But whatever the differences concerning the correctness of the war's objectives and its achievements, it is universally accepted that, as a result of this campaign, Israel faced Hasbara problems to an unprecedented degree.

What could we have done differently? How could we have influenced the process? Did we fail with this Hasbara challenge in explaining the problems, objectives, and achievements of this war?

I would like to say from the outset that I share the opinion of those who say that we did indeed fail. Having said that, I also feel that the international media distorted many of the events in this war. Ever since the war began, much of the world press has adhered to some of the lowest standards of journalism seen in recent history. We can all recall descriptions that were malicious and false. America's most prestigious magazines published reports that 600,000 people were made homeless in the invasion. Yet the area only contains 150,000 people! Anyone who visited the area would have known the published figures to be quite fantastic. This was no mere mistake. Yet even though these errors were probably not committed in good faith, we still can't escape the question: How do we deal with the challenge at hand? How could we have done better?

I would first criticize those whose job it was to anticipate

international needs from the start. Israel is reputed to have one of the best armies in the world. It must prepare for every eventuality. Army planners try to think of all the possibilities and develop a plan to deal with them. A plan requires previous thought, discussion, meetings, debate, counter-suggestions and propositions. Yet, I would bet that no one in the Government of Israel discussed the communications aspects of the invasion before the war. And we are not talking about a war that took us by surprise. We are talking about a war which had been discussed, at length, over a long period of time, not only in the closed circles of government, but in the press and in public meetings. Yet, during all this time not a single politician tried to think of a way to present the policy in a manner that would win some sort of understanding in the world. Thus, we were not prepared to deal with Hasbara effectively from the first day of the war.

Unbelievable as it may seem, the PLO in West Beirut courted the international press corps throughout the war — a press corps that was very sympathetic to its cause. We made almost every possible effort to alienate a large number of foreign correspondents in Israel — people who could have been friends of Israel if they had been handled more effectively. We kept them away from the front and from scenes of war which would have made them more sympathetic to our cause. No one tried to engage their sympathy or invite their cooperation on the frontline. Rather, they were sometimes objective observers, sometimes hostile observers, and sometimes sympathetic to the other side.

Some say that for reasons of security, the press could not have been treated differently. As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Knesset, I would dispute such an argument. An appeal to security and secrecy is very hard to oppose. What can you say when someone declares "We had to keep it secret?" But in many instances, those secrets are leaked out within a few hours, while in the meantime we lose the chance to win over those journalists who are so

essential afterward. I think that it would be correct to say that, as the result of the damage Israel suffered because of war coverage, some people may realize that Hasbara is something that is essential in certain circumstances — even crucial to the functioning of the democratic government of Israel.

The second question we must consider is whether, if we had done all we should have done to enhance our relations with the press, Israel would have been depicted in dramatically different terms. I doubt it. The reason? Lebanese, not Israeli cities were under attack. Under these circumstances, it was almost impossible to try and convince a world which is at least partially hostile from the outset that the attacker's

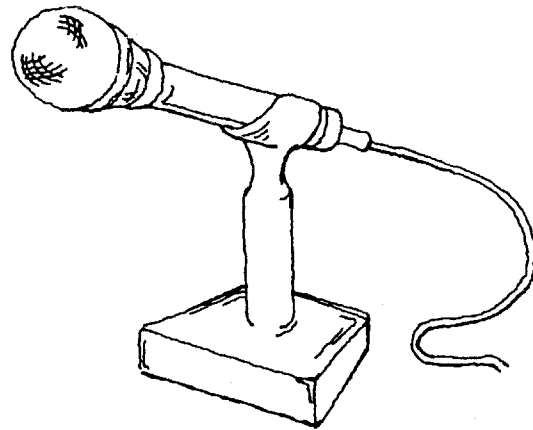
are principally targeted to appeal to the United States, because of its political influence on the world community and because of our own economic and military dependence.

To achieve what we want we must set modest goals, keep things in perspective. No Hasbara effort can ever convince the entire world that we are absolutely correct in striving, for example, to settle "*Eretz Israel*" — Hebron, Nablus and so forth. But I don't think we need unanimous support for the settlement policy in any event. The aim of Hasbara should be more modest, namely, to make the world reconsider its position — to raise doubts, to alter the approach taken toward our adversaries.

If enough people in the world will say, "Yes, we may

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### **Hasbara should strive to make others reconsider their attitudes toward our adversaries.**



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cause is just. Since the Six Day War this factor had become the basic problem of Israeli Hasbara.

The world has changed since 1967 — the United States is different, the European countries are different, and, let's face it, Israel is also different. We now appear to the rest of the world to be a military superpower. That view is not totally incorrect. Israel is a state that can destroy an atomic reactor in Iraq, that can destroy Russian missiles in Syria without losing a single Israeli airplane. Americans have joked with us, saying that it is a shame that America could not have sent Israelis into Teheran to save the American hostages.

If Israel is so strong and powerful, then perhaps it was correct to expect that Israel should make certain political concessions — as is deemed appropriate for a military power. The tragedy is that, while we are strong, we are also weak and vulnerable in ways that no other country in the world is vulnerable. Hasbara's main challenge is to reconcile these two extremes, to present our weaknesses to the world realistically. The other side includes not only circumstances in which Israel appears to be powerful and on the offensive.

Under the circumstances, I still believe there is an opportunity, and a good opportunity, to create an effective Hasbara mechanism for our cause — at least to generate enough understanding to maintain our ties with the United States. And, of course, although we are interested in winning over nations from all over the world, Hasbara efforts

disagree with Menachem Begin about settlements, but his view is not totally incomprehensible," it is not baseless; we will have made a step forward. In order to achieve this, we need first to achieve a national consensus in Israel on the issue. The more controversial a policy becomes in Israel, the more difficult it becomes to defend outside of the state. Our critics ask, "How can we be so sure that we are right when 40 percent of the Knesset opposes you?" Thus Israeli and Diaspora Jews have a joint responsibility. Israel must try to achieve a national consensus. We need a Jewish consensus in the Diaspora as well.

One of the most crucial services that Jews in the United States render to the state is that of Hasbara on behalf of the State of Israel. Perhaps there is no duty more critical for Diaspora Jews, whose influence can immediately be felt on the policies of their own country. But without an agreed platform between Diaspora Jews and the State of Israel, Jewish Hasbara abroad will be ineffective. And if it is ineffective, then Israel's position in the United States will be significantly impaired. One of the greatest achievements of 1982 was the willingness of the U.S. Jewish community to stand behind the State of Israel — despite our internal differences and disagreements, and despite the variety of public expressions by a wide range of elements within the Jewish community in the United States. In the eyes of the Reagan Administration, the Jewish people had developed a consensus. □



# A Case Study: The Media and Lebanon

*Criticisms of NBC were unduly harsh*

By Paul Miller

**W**hen I first saw "NBC in Lebanon," a film criticizing NBC's coverage of the 1982 war that was produced by Americans For a Safe Israel, I was astonished at how phony and completely misleading it was.

Now I was not sent here to shoot down the film or to rebut it. I came here because I wanted to discuss the film with you. Further, what I am presenting here is my own personal opinion. Many of the criticisms made in the film were valid. But I have about 40 comments to make showing how invalid other criticisms in this film were.

I was worried that this film would become a cause célèbre because we have enough problems covering the news in this country. It's that much more difficult when the public is hostile toward us. I personally don't usually feel it because I am a bureau chief and I rarely leave the office. I don't go where people are shooting guns. But our people who work in the field, most of whom are Israelis (that is, the camera crews, soundmen and the drivers — correspondents and producers are Americans) very definitely felt public hostility from time to time. I would not like this film to be perceived as an accurate depiction of NBC coverage of the war in Lebanon, from my point of view as bureau chief for NBC in Tel Aviv. Much of the criticism in the film and elsewhere focuses on editorial comments on the "Nightly News" or the "Today Show." My point is that coverage of the war in the "Nightly News" was accurate. I don't think the "NBC in Lebanon" film, in fact, paints an accurate picture of the war itself.

The main fallacy of the Americans For a Safe Israel film, as far as I am concerned, is the initial assertion that NBC covered the war as if it were an onslaught against the civilian population of Lebanon. The film never presents one shred of direct evidence to support this assertion, nor does it ever show a report from which the audience can infer that Israel was attacking the civilian population of Lebanon. All the film ever demonstrates is that we reported that there

were attacks on the civilians of West Beirut. Nowhere does this film give evidence to support the view that NBC reported that Israel attacked civilians in southern Lebanon. The film jumps from Beirut — where you all know that many civilians *were* killed because the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) attacked PLO fighters hiding in hospitals and apartment buildings in Sidon and Tyre. Therefore, the film's anchor people conclude the Beirut reporting just wasn't true. At this point, the film mentions two VIPs who toured Lebanon. One a chaplain, and the other Ted Wilson, a congressman from Texas. Neither went to West Beirut or to any of the Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon. They only toured the areas of Lebanon where the damage was minimal. These men stated that they were surprised to see how little damage had been inflicted in Lebanon. NBC, in fact, reported very extensively on how the war was conducted in southern Lebanon. Congressman Wilson's press conference was not particularly newsworthy — his first-person experience was limited, indeed.

The film pretended that what NBC reported in Beirut also applied to its reports on southern Lebanon. The reality down here is different. The war in Lebanon was conducted with several different strategies. The Israeli Army conducted itself very humanely in southern Lebanon. One of the failures of the IDF's information campaign was that it didn't tell us to expect the Lebanese civilians to welcome the Israeli Army — we discovered this accidentally. And that was only after a five-day news blackout, during which none of the foreign press was allowed in Lebanon. The press was not allowed to cover the invasion in Lebanon. This is one important aspect of the war.

The second aspect of the war involved the Palestinian refugee camps of Southern Lebanon — which were not mentioned at all in the Americans For a Safe Israel film. Many do not know even now what happened there because the IDF and the Government do not allow — even now, except in very unusual circumstances — reporters to visit the



camps. The fact is that Ein Khilwe, for example, was almost completely destroyed. The reason the Government gave is that this was where the PLO was.

The third aspect of the war is the siege of West Beirut, which was very controversial not only in the United States but also in Israel — even within the Israeli Cabinet. The siege was violent, lasting more than two months. It dominated the news daily from mid-June through August.

The fourth aspect of the invasion involved the war with the Syrians in the Bekaa Valley. That was a completely separate war. I want you to keep in mind that NBC only reported that the Israelis treated the enemy along with their own casualties. It claims that we did not report about captured documents linking the PLO to world terrorist groups and points to plans for the destruction of Israel. It claims that we did not report about the arms caches. It claims that NBC did not report that the civilians returned to their homes

after the Israeli Army passed through. All of these claims are completely false because all of those facts and events were covered repeatedly in the "Nightly News." The makers of this film have chosen for their own reasons to ignore these reports.

The one NBC policy I would criticize was the decision to announce that Israeli officials had censored film clips from the war in Lebanon. Reuven Frank who was then the newly-appointed president of NBC News instituted this policy. He would have applied the same policy to any war and a report that was subject to censorship. It was not the same policy we had before he became president. On June 26 Mr. Frank discontinued the policy, and I think that if you spoke to him about it today, he would admit that it had been a mistake.

These are the areas I wanted to highlight — there are many more points I could cover, but this is the essence of what I wanted to say. □

## JERRY FALWELL AND THE JEWS

By Merrill Simon

Merrill Simon, a man deeply involved with Israel, is also attuned to the pulse of Christianity. He questions the suspicion with which many Jews view Falwell, and feels that the friends of Israel and the Jews are far too few to reject out of hand such an important personality.

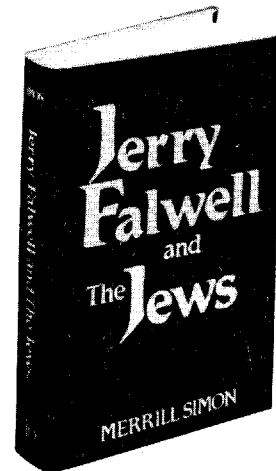
Over the past two years, Simon has met with Falwell numerous times and posed penetrating questions demanding direct and honest answers. The questions were not patronizing:

- Are Jews practicing an "incomplete" religion?
- Are Jews and Israel being subjected to a double standard of morality?
- Should Judea and Samaria be part of the State of Israel?

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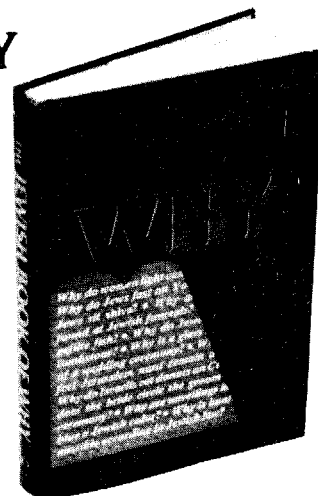
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# Discussion

**August 16, Morning I**

**Irwin Cotler:** America and Canada have legalistic cultures. Therefore when the term censorship is used, it has a prejudicial impact on the audience. I think it is equally important to note that the "censorship" tagline on reports from the Israeli side of the war had an asymmetrical impact on reporting, which you did not mention. Reports from Beirut were described as censored. Therefore an American audience seeing a report favorable to Israel, but listed as censored, was perceived differently than a report from Beirut that was not so listed and not as favorable from the Israeli point of view. Factual reports cannot easily be abstracted or separated from the editorial comment that surrounds them. You argue that "NBC Nightly News" coverage was factual and that editorial comment cannot and should not be confused with factual reporting. That is very difficult.

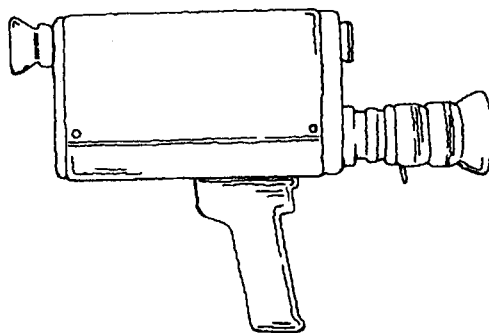
**Simcha Dinitz:** How is television equipped to deal with the more profound question of censorship in cases where journalists may not gain access to people in their homes, or to particular countries? A large number of people belonging to the Bahai faith were killed in Iran. But because camera crews cannot get into Iran, this has not been recorded — nor was the massacre of millions of people in Cambodia. Therefore, these are non-events. Is there any way television can deal with this problem?

**Howard Squadron:** In the United States, those of us concerned about how the coverage of the Lebanon war affected Israel's image were just as anxious as everyone else to get accurate casualty figures. By the third week, June 18, we did not have those figures. I would suggest that your statement that NBC corrected these figures in September and could have done even better with a year's research is a bit disingenuous. Secondly, I am a little concerned by your assertion that the visit of an American congressman to the area during the war was not newsworthy. This congressman and I

had private conversations with Lebanese away from the Israelis and got a unanimous response concerning their relief at the presence of the Israelis. It is all very well for you to say, Mr. Miller, that NBC had already reported that the Lebanese were grateful to the Israelis for having ousted the PLO. But this was the first American congressman on the scene. Even though he did not get to Beirut, as you said, I

war without indicating any other views. In Beirut, Steve Mallory repeatedly ran from place to place after a shelling or bombing, and announced that there were no military targets there. No one else did that. It certainly wasn't clear to me how he could have known that there were no military targets there.

The footage from Beirut was much more visually and emotionally gripping



**Because T.V. camera crews cannot get into Iran or Cambodia massacres there go unrecorded.**

do not understand why this makes his visit unnewsworthy.

**Joshua Muravchik:** I can recall seeing just about everything Paul Miller has shown here this morning. What's missing, however, when we view some of this footage (which is rather good) is the sense that the viewer got at home, seeing the footage sent not just from Tel Aviv but also from Beirut and Damascus. Given that context, I don't think it would be very hard for anyone to come away feeling that NBC had a particular bias. That bias or attitude was not conveyed by the coverage from Tel Aviv. Roger Mudd, for example, was, in my opinion, unprofessional with his relentless sarcasm. Then we had John Chancellor's commentaries, which, in my view, were unbalanced, polemical and unanswered. Then we had Jessica Savitch, who apparently was more glib, sometimes repeating PLO casualty figures in the early weeks of the

than the footage sent from Tel Aviv. A good deal of that paled next to the blood and gore of Beirut, with Jessica Savitch saying, "You have to wonder what's left to destroy in Beirut." On top of this, NBC announced on film sent from Israel that it had been censored — something Mr. Miller notes was new at NBC, but which none of the other networks did. The other networks simply printed on the screen the fact that it had been cleared by the Israeli Censor. NBC began its reports: "This is so-and-so with a censored report." But viewers don't know exactly what had been censored or by whom. On the other hand, NBC did not neglect to note that material sent from Damascus had also been cleared by Syrian censors, but ABC did neglect to note that.

But NBC never mentioned the PLO censorship that is achieved through its intimidation and control of the wandering news corps. The overall impres-

sion one gets from watching NBC is that it had a particularly strong attitude toward the war, although it did manage to film some good footage, as Mr. Miller pointed out.

**Simcha Dinitz:** Network influence on audience reaction to its reports was also brought to bear on a very subtle level. Commentators and reporters frequently interlaced their reports with "Israel claims," "Israel says," "Israel hopes." Such qualifiers appeared even when reporters were dealing with known, concrete facts. For instance, when reporters finally discussed documents about planned terrorist activities and sponsorship of terrorism, they emphasized that Israel *said* it had captured the documents, as if they were doubtful as to whether the documents had in fact been captured. Subsequently, they said that Israel "hoped to show" that these documents would demonstrate the involvement of international groups in terrorism aimed at Israel.

What does that mean — Israel "hopes to show" this link? Did Israel do that? The reporters read the documents and shared them with others. Why did journalists cast a shade of doubt as to the correctness, the authenticity, the credibility of the information? This was not done when referring to information from the other side. For instance, Arab officials in Beirut who work for the Red Crescent were sometimes responsible for outlandish casualty figure reports. No one mentioned that Yasir Arafat's brother heads the Red Crescent there.

**Paul Miller:** Our inability to cover stories because a government is hostile to the press is one of our biggest weaknesses. NBC news doesn't have a single bureau in all of Asia except for Japan and Moscow, and we don't have any journalists in India. We only have one bureau in Africa and that's in Johannesburg. It is unfortunate that one story receives more coverage than another simply because of accessibility. And with respect to the war in Lebanon and how coverage of this has affected Israel's image, some suggest that Israel should never have allowed the press to be in Lebanon at all. I think this is wrong. In fact, we should have had better access to the stories in Lebanon that were favorable, because no one can prevent the press from

reporting from the other side. No one could do what the British did in the Falklands, and cut off everyone from the source of news. You need to consider whether you want a free press and what the implications will be as a result of reports from the other side.

I do not think our reports on the casualty figures were disingenuous. You, in fact, are being manipulated into believing that the figures were much lower than they really were, since your figures do not include peo-

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**'There is a big difference between being accurate and being truthful, and that affects viewers' opinions.'**

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ple killed in refugee camps or in Beirut.

As for the newsworthy quality of Congressman Wilson's visit to Lebanon, you must remember that that took place in the beginning of July. In July and August we did our job with respect to covering events in southern Lebanon. But the lead story practically every night during the months of July and August was in Beirut. What Congressman Wilson had to say was old news. He didn't go to Beirut. He didn't go to refugee camps. You may say that his visit was important in forming public opinion. That may be right. Painting public opinion is a very tricky area for us.

You say that we incorrectly analyzed the situation in Beirut. Whether the coverage was fair or unfair, it is important to acknowledge that the siege of Beirut was extremely controversial; it was ugly. Many people were killed. Even in cases in which your criticism of the press is accurate, this will not explain away Israel's public relations problems with respect to the war.

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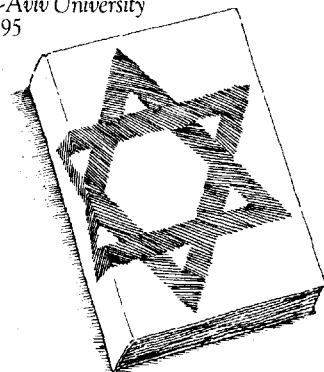
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No one from this group or any of the other critics of the press in Israel has ever called me or my office to ask us about a story that we did, or about our general coverage. I am inviting you to do that because I am not afraid to talk to you about the stories that we do, because I feel that we do a good job.

Another major problem of television journalism is gauging our impact on viewers. I am perfectly aware that there is a big difference between being accurate and being truthful, and that that affects viewers' understanding and opinions. A reporter must ask him- or herself whether the telling of the story is most important. Someone can report the facts and show a baby that has been maimed and orphaned. Is it my job to worry whether the American public will be offended by that shot or is it my job to show it because it happened? Every case is different.

Some of the maddening things about covering the news here in Israel are the restrictions the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman places on the press corps. The spokesman gives very selective amounts of information, and even one year later we encounter the same problems as we did one year ago in covering southern Lebanon, for example, and how the Israeli Army is keeping Druse and Christians apart in the Shouf Mountains and what is likely to happen once the Israeli Army leaves. I would like to do a story now about how life has changed since the eviction of the PLO. I would like to return to do another story about people recounting what it was like under PLO domination. But the IDF places such restrictions on our movements and activities that we cannot do it.

As for the documents you mentioned, about which we heard a great deal from the IDF, I'm sorry, but what you said we knew for a fact we did not know for a fact. I didn't know where those documents came from or how they were prepared. I still don't. I believe that they were reliable enough to put on the air. Maybe we did issue too many disclaimers in the broadcasts. But the reason for that was that the Israeli Government pushed it so strongly and in such a propagandized manner that I was a little suspicious. □

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# Can a Deputy Foreign Minister Help?

*Selecting key points around which we can rally is vital*

By Simcha Dinitz

**H**asbara cannot provide the solution to all ills. By itself it can accomplish little, if anything, unless it is accompanied by a policy that can be explained. Hasbara is a bottomless barrel. No matter what we do, we will always be criticized.

The war in Lebanon was the most complicated war in which Israel has been engaged. It was not the most devastating war, not the most dangerous war, not even the most costly war. It was the most complex war because Israel was fighting in Lebanon but not against Lebanon. We were fighting against an apparatus of terrorism which had developed in Lebanon under the auspices of the Syrian occupation. Further, for the first time since the War of Independence, Israel fought in densely populated areas. And, for the first time Israel was fighting against a complex network of enemies — terrorists plus some groups of Lebanese plus Syrians — in front of television cameras. Television sent back images to the masses that were never fully explained.

In general, the print media filled in the details, giving depth to a story in its background reporting. But when Israel invaded Lebanon, it turns out that the best correspondents were in Europe with the President of the United States. The war in Lebanon was therefore covered primarily by television crews and other correspondents who were stationed in Beirut. They reported stories with instant pictures, instant drama, instant blood, instant murder, instant destruction.

During the first few days of the war, we imposed what I call an "information fog," in other words, we didn't allow journalists to advance with the Israeli Army for the first week of the invasion. We did the same thing in 1967 in the Sinai and in the Golan Heights. The only difference in 1982 is that television crews were broadcasting the news from the other side. I met the correspondents based in Beirut, and never did I meet a more prejudiced group of people in my life. Their questions were shocking. One person asked why Israel burned the bodies of the Syrian soldiers that were

killed. "Is it part of the liturgy of the religious practice or whatever it is of your people?" He never asked if it was true that we burned the bodies of the Syrians.

Who were these reporters? Many of them had lived many years in Beirut, living and socializing with the PLO and their sympathizers because the PLO was controlling the situation. Naturally, reporters cultivated friendships with them, and their sympathy and empathy grew for the PLO — independent of the war in Lebanon. The fact of the matter is that reporters in Beirut have been systematically silenced. The greatest sin they have committed was one of omission. They never reported the story of the seven years of violence and intimidation of the PLO that the Syrian invasion of Lebanon had imposed beginning in 1975. The atrocities went largely unreported. I believe that reporters made it look as if Israel, for example, had razed Damur in 1982 simply because they had failed to report on the terrible battles and massacre that took place there in 1975.

Some reporters claim that they did write stories — "Didn't you see my June 21, 1976, piece?" one would ask. Others said that their editors didn't consider the material newsworthy. One reporter was much more frank, saying, when Arabs kill Arabs it is not news. When Jews kill Arabs it is news. At best, Hasbara can effect editorial opinion; most often it cannot. It is more important that we be able to effect the way reporters cover events on the scene.

From the start, there was conceptual confusion in the way we approached Hasbara. The Israeli government announced that its objective was peace for Galilee. Yet the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continued to advance into Lebanon. How can we separate policy from pronouncements? This confused people. Were we in fact invading Lebanon to free the Lebanese from foreign occupation, or to establish a new order in the Middle East? Depending on the spokesperson, the objective changed.

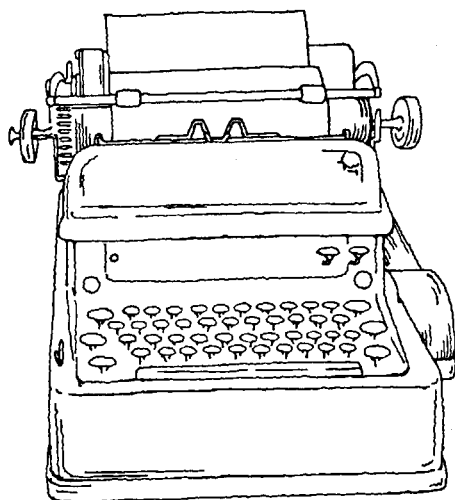
I do not wish to comment here on the policy itself. Rather, I wish to point out that if a decision had been made

to embark on a major military campaign, then there should have been an accompanying plan explaining why Israel invaded Lebanon. It had to be explained to the world at large as well as to the citizens of Israel. Israelis themselves were confused. How can we expect the rest of the world not to be confused? By the time we decided to explain what the IDF was doing on the Damascus Road and why we were besieging the city of Beirut, we had lost our credibility. Without credibility, Hasbara is completely ineffective.

We also have a problem with style. Frequently, we sound harsher than we are. Sometimes the pronouncements that accompany our policy decisions produce opposite effects to the policy itself. When we basically accepted PLO demands we did it in such a manner that everyone thought we were

was an impressive sight. When I returned to this place later with some correspondents, the tunnels were empty. "Why was the place empty?" I asked an Israeli official. "This is a terrific thing to show correspondents." He replied, "Orders from above." The maker of this decision continues to elude me.

It seems to me we need a Minister of Information with the apparatus to disseminate information abroad — in embassies, consulates and press offices, all of which fall under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Ministry. Naturally, any mention of a Ministry of Information incurs the wrath of the Foreign Ministry. This is not unreasonable. After all, this will deprive from the post of the Foreign Minister some of its territory. It may make the Foreign Minister's job



**If Israel had decided to embark on a major military campaign then it should have also made a Hasbara plan.**

about to invade Baghdad. Or when we decided we would redeploy independent of Syrian moves, we announced: 'We will redeploy whether they like it or not.' From a Hasbara point of view, the redeployment could have been handled more positively. Israel was showing flexibility. Previously we had said that we wouldn't budge until the Syrians did.

What are the Hasbara lessons of Lebanon? Consensus during a war is essential. The burden of acquiring such a consensus is on the government. Second, we should never allow ourselves to lose our credibility at home or abroad. Promptness in delivering information is critical. With the casualty figures, for example, the IDF spokesperson should have issued ballpark figures and then worried about honing them. We must coordinate our informational apparatus more efficiently. Reporters gathered information from the IDF spokesman, military intelligence, the Government Press Office, the Foreign Ministry spokesman and the Secretary of the Cabinet. At times, one source would be unable to comment on the information distributed by another. We should designate one person to coordinate what different branches of the Israeli government and army are doing. This person would decide the timing of particular releases, for example.

When I was in the mountains east of Beirut, I saw a cache of arms that had been stored by the PLO in tunnels cut through the mountainside. It required sophisticated training, and was done under the supervision of the Russians. It

more difficult if he does not have complete control and responsibility for the total operation of an embassy. Therefore I suggest we appoint a Deputy Foreign Minister in charge of information whose office would be a part of the Foreign Ministry. My idea, I believe, would overcome any possible clashes in jurisdiction and enhance our Hasbara efforts.

Regarding our general information activity abroad, we must distinguish between the essential and the marginal. I believe Israel has five essentials which must be understood in the world at large: 1) Israel must maintain its military strength, and cannot rely solely on treaties and security arrangements with the U.S. or anybody else. 2) Israel must have secure and defensible borders. Israel cannot be expected to return to the vulnerability of the pre-1967 lines. 3) An independent Palestinian state cannot be established between Israel and Jordan. 4) The PLO cannot and ought not to be a partner in negotiations. 5) Jerusalem must not ever be divided either politically or geographically.

We can convey these five points with the help of all of our friends in the world, instead of sending them on errands to defend the habitation of this house in Hebron or that house. Let us not discredit Jews in the Diaspora by making them give a rubber stamp of approval to every utterance that comes out of Israel. In this way we will strengthen our credibility and effectiveness in getting our vital points abroad. □

# Confronting the Press With the Facts

*Today's journalists tell us how the facts fit together*

By Joshua Muravchik

**M**embers of the press have responded to criticism of the coverage of the war in Lebanon in one of the following manners: They say, "Yes we've made some mistakes, but we are working under difficult conditions, must meet deadlines, and are often in danger. Or they say, "The nature of television is that it is inevitably drawn to present to its viewers the most dramatic, visual footage it can get. Nothing is more dramatic than people who are dying and bleeding and screaming." Yet another response asserts, "Sure we make mistakes; everyone makes mistakes. But that doesn't prove that we were biased." I think these are important arguments, but I think that they are inadequate and unresponsive to the heart of the criticism.

When newsmen explain that working under the pressure of a deadline is difficult, particularly when the story is in a war zone, those two facts have no bearing on the significant number of errors in background news reports on the Middle East. Thus when Prime Minister Begin spoke at the United Nations in 1982, the U.S. press corps reported that numerous delegations had walked out to protest the invasion of Lebanon. Even the *New York Times*, which was generally accurate in its coverage, misreported this, as did ABC News which showed delegations walking out of the U.N. ABC reported: "Because of the war in Lebanon, much of the world has come to see Israel differently." But these were the very same delegations that have walked out every time Israeli speakers have addressed the General Assembly throughout the history of the U.N. The number of delegates was enlarged somewhat because the entire Soviet bloc walked out with the Arab bloc. Should this be attributed, as ABC implied, to moral outrage on the part of the Soviet bloc over Israel's use of violence? That does not always happen.

NBC and *Newsweek* reported that Israel had invaded Damur and destroyed it. Damur had been largely destroyed

seven years before that during the civil war. The press reported more than once that problems in this region began when Israel "took over" Palestine in 1948, driving out the Palestinians. John Chancellor declared on NBC news: "The Israelis are destroying a city down there; nothing like that has ever happened in this part of the world before." Such errors can hardly be excused by deadline pressure.

The argument that the television camera prefers drama — whether or not the visual shot is representative of the situation — presents a more difficult dilemma. It is hard to think of remedies that would not be worse than the disease, at least from the point of view of maintaining freedom of the press. I think, however, that we can still say to television newspeople: We recognize that your medium is drawn to violence and other scenes of high drama. You, as professional journalists, ought to be aware that there is something in your medium that tends to distort the facts and you ought to bend over backward not to compound the distortion. That's not too much to ask of them, although during the Lebanon invasion television did just the opposite. I will cite only one example.

One night CBS' Bob Faw came on the broadcast reporting that he was, "in Tyre, or what's left of it." He then interviewed people who didn't have any food or water and people who were injured during the invasion. "The one thing that's clear here in Tyre is that the survivors are the losers," he intoned.

The last argument we hear from the press admits error but not bias; errors are made in good faith. In 1982 we saw too many examples of errors that couldn't be said to have been made in good faith. The casualty figures are a case in point. In the beginning of the war there was considerable confusion — the press received and reported casualty figures from the Red Crescent, the Red Cross and the famous, elusive Lebanese government sources and the PLO. After a couple of weeks, Israel released casualty figures. The *Washington*



*Post* reported these, as it had the others, but added that the Israeli figures "were obviously doctored." Israel released more figures. The *Post* wrote: "It's hard to see why the Israelis think that they will be able to solve their public relations problems by releasing figures that are as questionable on their face as the PLO's." This was the first time that the *Post* had informed readers that the PLO's figures were questionable — although they had been repeated more than a dozen times in the paper.

Another gauge to determine bias was the way the media responded when one side or the other sought to give it a story. When Israel put out a story, the press emphasized the source rather than the substance. Twice, for example, when ABC reported that Israelis captured caches of weapons and documents tying key PLO activities to international sources, it prefaced the story by saying: "This war is generating a flood of propaganda from all sides. Here is the latest Israeli version."

NBC's Roger Mudd introduced a story about the PLO "RPG Kids" — that is, youngsters trained to work such weapons as rocket-propelled grenades. But in issuing the story, Menachem Begin incorrectly stated the number of RPG kids that Israel had captured. Roger Mudd used this error as an opportunity to ridicule the Prime Minister. He never focused on the children's story.

In contrast, when the PLO put out a story the press often emphasized substance, not the source. In the same broadcast on which Mudd had ridiculed Begin, NBC featured a story from Beirut on Israeli use of cluster bombs. It said, "Israel has been using cluster bombs," and then the cameras showed a bomb shell, a shell casing, unexploded, and a little bomb. "People say," the broadcast continued, "that these bombs were made in the U.S.A. 'This is what you Americans are sending us.'" No one explained how NBC was able to find and film all these cluster bombs.

Another network showed the same footage of cluster bombs that night, but explained that it was a part of a PLO press conference.

Perhaps the best example revealing press bias can be seen in an interview I had with the spokesman for *Time* magazine. I noted that, unlike the *New York Times*, *Time* never ran a story on the civilians in southern Lebanon who were glad that the Israelis had routed the PLO. The spokesman said that he had read David Shipler's reports in the *New York Times* but, "I really didn't want to run that story without checking it out for myself." He added, however, "I didn't have any staff free at that time to go into southern Lebanon and check the story for me." But the very same week, *Time* noted in the context of one of its stories that it had sent four correspondents into Lebanon to improve its coverage of destruction caused by Israel. Apparently *Time* had more staff time available for some stories than for others.

I am not sure that we can precisely label this type of reporting "advocacy journalism." Nor do I agree with those who say that this was the worst press coverage of a major event ever seen in recent memory. In fact the coverage was typical of foreign policy coverage in the American press. Israel was treated no differently than the United States or any Western nation that resorts to force. There are two roots to this problem.

One has to do with attitudes that have become prevalent in our society and are sometimes called the "Vietnam syndrome." Ever since the Vietnam War members of the press and the American elite have recoiled reflexively at any use of force on the part of democracies. The misreporting of Lebanon was so widespread that the anti-Israel bias cannot account for it. The second has to do with the press's view that its proper role is not merely to report events but to interpret them. Rather, journalists simply opposed the war in Lebanon. They thought that Israel was wrong in 1982. They may not even have held very strongly to this point of view, but like many Israelis, they were against the invasion — certainly, in any event, beyond the 40-kilometer point. Reporters then felt it was their job to get their interpretation across to the public in their news stories. I prefer to call it interpretative journalism rather than advocacy journalism because I am not sure that there was a longstanding preconception.

Interpretative journalism has deep roots in the U.S., especially since the McCarthy experience when the press underwent considerable self-criticism retrospectively because it had unintentionally played a major role in promoting McCarthyism, merely by reporting charges whether or not they were valid. The Vietnam experience reinforced this course of introspection. An ethic developed among journalists which asserts that the role of the journalist is not just to tell the facts but to give the viewer or reader a picture of how the facts fit together. In the case of most American journalists covering the war in Lebanon, their idea of how the facts fit together was that Israel had done something wrong, and they wanted to convey that message.

Why were the reporters so nearly unanimous in feeling that Israel was wrong? This attitude had more to do with opinions that had grown from the Vietnam War than from the Middle East situation. The abhorrence of the use of force is pervasive. In June 1982, Meg Greenfield, the editorial-page editor of the *Washington Post*, wrote that, while differing points of view may exist regarding the invasion, the bottom line is that when a nation has resorted to force it has already lost the game. The decent, human way to solve national problems she opined, is to talk about them. Many feel that all Israel needs to do is to sit down with the PLO to make peace. Trying to destroy the PLO is wrong. I don't think this attitude is unique to the Middle East. American press coverage of Central America also indicates a similar stance. The United States should negotiate with the guerrillas in El Salvador and make sure that the Government of El Salvador negotiates with the guerrillas.

I think this view is wrong, whether applied to El Salvador or the Middle East. There are certain kinds of enemies who have ideologies which simply don't allow for compromise. They may enter negotiations, but never with a bona fide aim of reaching a real and lasting compromise, only as a tactic to gain their armies a complete victory.

We have some difficult work ahead of us. The problems we face with the press have been symptomatically expressed in the Middle East. If we are to improve matters we must confront the widely held beliefs among the American elite concerning the use of force and then confront currently fashionable views among members of the American press about their proper role in reporting on world affairs. □

# Discussion

August 16, Morning II

**Dan Bavly:** Can any nation wage war, a just war, a long-term war when it is being photographed day by day? The aversion to the war in Lebanon mounted little by little. In June we felt the first repercussions. In July, the anger mounted. In August our relations with the outside world plunged.

I think it is unfair to hark back to the creation of Israel in an attempt to trace the state of mind that allowed for the harsh criticisms of Israel. I don't think we even need to go back to the bombing of the nuclear reactor in Baghdad. Prior to the invasion, newspapers, magazines and television news shows were already featuring endless numbers of shots of the troubles on the West Bank. We saw Israeli soldiers confronting Arabs in Bethlehem and Nablus; the evacuation of Rafiah and Yamit, which was very traumatic and sad for most Israelis. Then, suddenly, we were witness to a "television war," a war which, to most, seemed to have occurred overnight. Most viewers, particularly those unfamiliar with the complications of the Middle East, probably did not realize that these separate events reflected different aspects of the Middle East conflict. The evacuation was an act of peace, the war a reaction to the continued threat on our northern border.

When does Hasbara begin? The war in Lebanon seemed to be a shock to the American government, to the Israeli government, to Israel's Hasbara forces as well as to the Foreign Office. Only Moshe Arens, after his appointment as Ambassador to the United States, warned the U.S. in February 1982 that the situation in the north was "untenable." No one paid attention. No one did any homework — about Damur, Sidon or any aspect of the political disarray in Lebanon and the PLO. As the military made its plan to destroy the PLO, the Hasbara department did little.

When the war broke out Hasbara was given the task of making it acceptable. But that task should have begun in the winter or spring of 1982,

when Hasbara could have helped to establish a state of mind in America that would have made it seem to the people in the U.S. that this war was a just and even an inevitable war. I feel that our friends in America were remiss in not having helped to make it clear early on that this war was inevitable.

For the past 35 years, it has practically been official government policy to disregard Hasbara. The Hasbara campaigns we have conducted, successful or unsuccessful, have been conducted in spite of the government. If we did accumulate any Hasbara successes in 1967 and after, it was not because of what we did in Israel, but because our good friends in America acted on our behalf. This was especially true of the Entebbe raid. But although American Jews have remained our friends, they have not been spontaneous cheerleaders.

**Yosef Lapid:** I oppose having a Minister of Information. Just imagine how the three major American networks would portray an Israeli Minister of Information. Ministers of Information are not natural products of Western societies; they are natural products of totalitarian societies. Certainly no one would rely on such an individual as a news source. Further, if Hasbara falls to someone who doesn't even come from the professional realm, but from the political, there are grave risks of being misrepresented. Israeli society is pluralistic — can we truly concentrate all of Israel in the mouth of one individual?

When we take into account the failures of the American press, I think we need to note that it is the worst press for us in the world — not in the sense of being malevolent, but simply from a professional point of view. The American press is shallow and sensationalistic. The Israeli press holds to a much higher standard. And the average Israeli knows far more, for example, about the conflict in Afghanistan than the average American does.

**Ehud Olmert:** Our greatest sin was one of omission. Why wasn't the story of the 19-year-old boy fighting in Tyre, who, gun in hand, hesitating, asking himself "Should I or shouldn't I kill?" ever told? Why weren't his concerns about the civilian population described in the media? We all know

many soldiers — they are part of our society, they are our children, our friends, our brothers. The American correspondent didn't write that story because his theme wasn't about this soldier. And he wasn't there because we didn't know enough to make friends with correspondents in the same way the PLO did in Beirut.

We don't need a Minister of Information or a Deputy Minister. We need someone who will be aware of the fact that we have 300 correspondents here who must report daily to their editors all over the world, and that no one really cares about them on the political level. For example, during the course of the entire war the Minister of Foreign Affairs never gave a single briefing to a group of correspondents. He had meetings here and there on an individual basis, but not meetings for the entire press corps. Only the deputy spokesman for the Foreign Ministry briefed correspondents on a regular basis. Where were all the other ministers? Who had so many beautiful ideas about the needs and worries and problems and solutions? Who regularly sat with those correspondents day and night, briefing them, and feeding them and telling them stories? No one. They were led here and there, ad hoc, on guided tours every now and then.

We did little to win over the sympathies of these 300 foreign correspondents — men and women who prefer to live in Israel rather than in one of our neighboring countries because it is much more comfortable here, with greater luxuries and conveniences.

**Simcha Dinitz:** Mr. Bavly asked whether Israel can sustain a long war from a Hasbara point of view. I think not. Mr. Bavly also asks when does Hasbara begin. In fact Hasbara never ends. If we were to wait for a crisis in order to launch a Hasbara campaign, then we are already too late. Hasbara is a continuous process.

Assertions that the war in Lebanon came as a complete surprise are inaccurate. The possibility of this war received more attention in political and journalistic circles than any other war in recent memory. The Foreign Ministry had indeed prepared a considerable amount of background material on the situation. Some of it was never used or disseminated.

As I stated earlier, I support the

introduction of a Minister of Information. Perhaps I did not make myself clear — I do not want a Minister of Information for “national guidance.” The propaganda minister Mr. Lapid describes in his remarks is as much an anathema to me as it is to him. The damage that one Minister of Information can wreak in a single sentence is greater than that which the three networks can do together. Can you imagine how much havoc 17 Ministers of Information (which is what we have today) can cause us in a single day? And do you think that if we have one Minister of Information the other 16 “unofficial” ministers will keep silent? At least if we had one official spokesman it would be more difficult for the others to speak: We would never be able to excuse ourselves by saying the press had never received the official line. For heavens sake, we all know it isn’t the only line. The point is, however, to articulate clearly for the press just what government policy is.

A Minister of Information would not dictate a single opinion to the Israeli public; there would not be one newspaper called *Pravda*. There is a difference between unity and unanimity. No one expects unanimity. We take pride in our heterogeneity and our democratic ways.

Simply put, I advocate the coordination of Hasbara activities on a ministerial or sub-ministerial level. You don’t have to call him or her the Minister of Information. Call this person the Lighthouse. I don’t care. Just let’s make someone responsible for articulating government policy.

As Ehud Olmert stated, Hasbara begins at home. And I was not completely convinced of the need for a Minister of Information until I heard Mr. Olmert describe how hundreds of correspondents roam the country with no one to see to their needs. I ask you: Who should be responsible for seeing that a correspondent is given an opportunity to report on the personal story of one of our soldiers? The Minister of Foreign Affairs? The Minister of Agriculture? Clearly, someone has to be in charge of this as a primary, not a secondary task. This is job of coordination, not instruction or apology. Does anyone here actually think that Israeli television or radio will only report the statements of a Minister of Informa-

tion? Obviously the rest of the world won’t.

**Joshua Muravchik:** I do not think that our efforts to increase the effectiveness of Israel’s presentation to the American press will be enhanced by underestimating the quality of the press corps. There were instances of good journalism during the war in Lebanon. At least one *New York Times* correspondent did a story on an Israeli bomber pilot and how he felt about flying over cities, and the decisions

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**‘No one expects unanimity. We take pride in our heterogeneity and our democratic ways.’**

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that he had to make regarding whether or not to drop his bombs. Also, I think we all ought to be impressed by Paul Miller, who I believe came here as a matter of personal pride. He regards himself as a conscientious journalist trying to do his job to the best of his abilities. He felt his work was being maligned and he had the courage to defend it.

**Carl Spielvogel:** I find criticisms of the American press symptomatic of indigenous problems of Israeli Hasbara. The criticisms were free-wheeling, scattershot, emotional and inaccurate. To denigrate the entire United States press in one fell swoop, treating it as a monolith, is fundamentally wrong and dangerous to Hasbara efforts.

**Shalom Rosenfeld:** If Joshua Muravchik is correct in asserting that in post-Vietnam America journalists will always react negatively to the use of force, then this poses grave consequences for Hasbara efforts here in Israel. Another war in this region is not impossible — will the press cover it in the same manner as the 1982 war in Lebanon?

Perhaps the one ray of hope is the 1982 Falklands war, which was much

more favorably covered. I think the Jewish community in America needs to find out why correspondents, editors and television anchors reacted one way with respect to the Lebanon war and yet another to the Falklands war. Is anyone in the press accountable?

**Yosef Goell:** Do any of you remember whether any American television stations presented balanced reports on the war in Afghanistan? How about the killing of 3,000 Bangladeshi interlopers in Assam from the point of view of the Assamese tribesman? Clearly not.

There is no such thing as a totally objective journalist. I am somewhat surprised by the naïveté of the people in this room who assume that news reporting is neutral or objective. The manner in which I would treat Israelis and Arabs differs — and justifiably so. I do not treat the two sides to the Arab-Israel dispute objectively. I have no intention of doing that.

Over the past 35 years I do not accept the thesis that Israel has come off so badly from a public relations point of view. Every now and then I stop myself and say, “Why should or does anyone in the world care about Israel?” The fact is that a large number of people do support the state. There may not be a majority of people in the world who care positively about Israel; but there is a significant number of people who do care within the minority of supporters.

One of our problems is that the Hasbara of the past has been too effective — we overplayed the wonders of the state. In this “post-Vietnam” age, there is a greater skepticism toward the exaggerated portrayals of a perfect Israel that has solved all of humankind’s problems. Israel has been discovered to have clay feet.

Finally, I would note that Israel was the primary source of its own Hasbara problems. All governments have difficulties with the media. They have a natural cat-and-mouse relationship. But the Israeli government did not understand the nature of this normal adversarial relationship. The government became paranoid about the whole thing. The Likud government was not the only guilty party; Ariel Sharon was super-paranoid with respect to the media. His paranoia was evident from his reaction to press coverage of the

Druse strike in the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the evacuation of Yamit in the Sinai.

Israel has a credibility problem. Foreign correspondents no longer automatically believe Israeli sources. There used to be a time when the foreign press automatically assumed that the Arabs were lying and that Israelis told the truth. But for the first time, during the Yom Kippur War, army spokesmen started lying, and were caught. This was also true during the Lebanese war.

**Shmuel Katz:** The essential function of a Minister of Information would be to put an end to the situation that no Hasbara campaign is prepared. It is the job of a Minister of Information to prepare a particular kind of climate that will favorably effect public opinion.

The Lebanese war is a case-in-point. In 1981 Israel and the PLO agreed to a cease-fire. Following that agreement, the PLO took advantage of the cease-fire numerous times — although not necessarily on Israeli territory. At that time, there should have been a Hasbara campaign to publicize this. It is well and good after the war for Israel to reveal that the PLO had been stockpiling arms in Lebanon and that the Soviets were key suppliers. We need to create better means of disseminating information. We need to cooperate with American organizations to achieve Hasbara goals.

**Joseph Block:** I would like to take a more pragmatic approach to Hasbara. Thus far we have begun to develop the concept for the need of an agency or an individual to handle the dissemination of information within the Israeli government as well as assess issues and how they affect the country, relations with the United States and the rest of the world.

News doesn't just jump into a camera. It's directed. It's managed. It's made accessible. Public relations is a process that makes news available in a particular form. In the United States public relations is as important as accounting, the law and the military. Public relations is vital to any country, business or organization.

As a public relations man, I ask, why was the Lebanon coverage prejudiced? Did it result from the Israeli military censorship? Frankly, I do not

think that a policy which includes military censors is very bad. As a corporate spokesman for two of America's top fifty corporations, I wish I had a shekel for every time I said, "No comment," to a reporter. I was always careful, however, not to antagonize or intimidate the reporter. I knew I had to live with him or her.

Now, I hope that we are not naïve enough to think that NBC, ABC and CBS give balanced coverage to a sub-

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ject of their own volition. There is keen competition in the news industry, and each network fights for its audience share. Naturally, this affects the reporting. For example, several months ago I was on tour in the U.S. to introduce a new product. When I was in Oklahoma City, "NBC Nightly News" covered a press conference I was giving. Its reporters wanted to film an interview with me. When the camera began to roll I looked down at my script and said, "It's wonderful to be here in Phoenix." Then I stopped and said, "Oy, vei, I am in Oklahoma City." You see, I had been in Phoenix the previous day. That night NBC reported: "Today, American corporations are introducing so many products, executives don't know which city they are in." Then it ran the clip showing my mistake. That was the end of the report. The substance was completely lost. Sensationalism had the upper hand.

Even so, we have to respect those 200 correspondents who were in

Lebanon. If there is a story that most journalists want to cover, they will give a balanced report only if they have access to all points of view. If they don't have access to a particular spokesman, then the story will inevitably be slanted. NBC is a perfect example of this. Had Israeli officials briefed NBC and other networks appropriately, giving them documents while the story was hot — a big scoop — then a different story would have reached America's 90 million TV households.

**Joshua Muravchik:** Those who say that there is no such thing as total objectivity are saying something that is true but misleading. Perfect or total objectivity may not be achievable but it certainly ought to be the goal of every journalist. It ought to be a standard to which we are entitled to hold journalists when they fall precipitously short of the mark.

This brings us to the earlier point concerning accountability of the press which acts as a watchdog to major institutions and places of power. Who is the watchdog of the press? What kind of group or organization can we create to monitor news reporting and to which we can complain when necessary? Accuracy in Media (AIM) is one such group attempting to serve as media ombudsman, but there is room in this field for others

As for the despair some of you feel because of what I call the media's "Vietnam syndrome," I should say that the attitudes that grew and were reinforced by Vietnam are not unchangeable. In fact, attitudes toward defense questions are very different from those held five years ago. I see no reason why these kinds of attitudes can't change more.

**Simcha Dinitz:** In theory, I support the concept of a Ministry of Information. But how do we incorporate such an agency into the existing Foreign Service apparatus? No Foreign Minister or Ambassador can run things if the press officer receives instructions from another channel. The problems such a ministry would solve would be nothing compared to the problems it could very possibly create. But if we designate a special deputy within the Foreign Ministry who would participate in Cabinet sessions, that may work. □

# Presenting Unpalatable Policies

*The press has become increasingly adversarial*

By Ben Wattenberg

**A**lthough I am not an expert on settlement policies in Israel, I can address Hasbara issues affecting our perception of this thorny issue. First I would like to address what I call the "transmission belt" of the facts — that is, the media. Second I will discuss the object of the transmission belt — the receivers. Third, I will touch on the substance of the settlement policies themselves.

I have many problems with the American press. At times, many would say, I make my living by criticizing the press. Even so, I feel that the American press is probably the best in the world. Technically it is the most proficient; it is keenly competitive, and it is afforded more access in the United States than any other press system I know of. The great central paradox of the free press in the free world is its ability to be so very wonderful and so very terrible at the same time.

In most of the free world, and certainly in the United States, the press has a number of problems. It has a liberal bias, just as one might say that other American institutions, perhaps the business community, have conservative biases. This may be good; it may be bad. It certainly exists and it is not going away. Nor are its policy implications going to diminish.

The press has become increasingly adversarial. Joshua Muravchik and other people have pointed out that this is part of a post-Vietnam syndrome. I think it probably antedated Vietnam. The basic attitude reflected in the press is consistently mistrustful of government. Government officials are assumed to be crooked or biased.

The press suffers from shallowness — particularly the television journalists. Television reporters make excuses, saying: "We only have one minute and 20 seconds in which to report a news item." But you can say a lot in one minute and 20 seconds. For example, you could recite all of the Ten Commandments in that time.

And finally, the press as it is constituted today is a bad news press. This has been amplified by the increased availability of the news, particularly through television. Just three or four years ago three nightly newscasts dominated the news scene almost exclusively. Now we have expanded morning news shows and 24-hour-a-day cable news pro-

grams. The basic thrust of most television news is bad news with respect to Israel and every other part of the world — including Vietnam and Central America. In El Salvador, for example, press coverage is less realistic and more inflammatory. Five hundred journalists are covering 50 military people. When Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State, agreed that Soviet influence was threatening Central America, the press asked him to prove it. He couldn't prove it. How do you prove something like that? His lack of proof then became the subject of a story. Another major story on American television about El Salvador was whether or not a United States Marine was carrying a gun in El Salvador. Disproportionate coverage of trivial events threatens the credibility of the press. But that, alas, is the price that democracies pay for the glory of a free press.

These factors adversely affect coverage of the settlements, for example. They will almost invariably be bad news, no matter what the Israeli government does. American television will always feature stories about stone-throwing or tire-burning. That is in the very nature of the media system. From an Israeli point of view, this is particularly important and unfortunate. The media, particularly television as we all know, influence public opinion, which influences political attitudes. In spite of all these negative factors affecting coverage of Israel, public opinion polls during and after the war in Lebanon reveal that the impact of this sort of hothouse, violence-prone journalism is transitory. Thus, while approval for Israel did diminish substantially during the 1982 Lebanon invasion, public approval has sprung back, practically to where it originally stood. That is not to say that the media did not have a lasting impact on American public opinion in general or American political opinion vis-à-vis Israel. Although opinion polls don't reflect a significant change in support for Israel, the shift in the public mood has given the President and the State Department more latitude. Each has been able to present ideas and moves previously more difficult to do from a political point of view.

At the crux of this discussion is concern with the media's effect on American attitudes. In talking about American public opinion, certain things ought to be said immediately. First, believe it or not, Israel is not the most important issue. It is fairly far down the list — as is the entire Middle

East situation. Second, the average American (who is not Jewish) sees the story differently. Israel is a small, threatened ally. That's the basic gist of that story, as I sense it. From that point of view, Israel's problems are not perceived to be as important as Central America's. I think it would be very interesting if Jewish organizations in the United States and Israelis were to link the Middle East issue with the Central American one under the general rubric of "Small allies threatened." It may even lead to some precedents in U.S. foreign policy. American liberals dream that the U.S. can maintain two foreign policies: One which is very hawkish and tough and assertive on behalf of Israel and another which is dovish and passive. Some of these liberals believe the U.S. can maintain two defense budgets: one building a monumental military force to patrol the Mediterranean and another that cuts back on defense spending.

What does the average American think about Israel? We have heard from other participants that Americans are "sacrocanophiliacs" — lovers of the underdog. That's why they like the story of David and Goliath. But I would assert that our understanding of American admiration for the underdog is inaccurate. We don't, in fact, like underdogs. We like underdogs who win. Those are two very distinct ideas. Nobody in the United States particularly likes El Salvador right now. I guarantee you, however, that if the El Salvadoran army were to mop up the Communists in the hills the way the Israelis have done in the past, everybody would say: "Hey, those are our fellows. Terrific!"

The David and Goliath metaphor, I think, is particularly interesting. We like David because David won. There may have been hundreds of young shepherds who got killed by Goliath. We don't honor them and the Bible doesn't mention them. We honor the one who killed Goliath. It therefore seems to me that it is inaccurate to say Israel was formerly David and now is Goliath. The proper analysis would cast Israel first as David the shepherd and then as David the general.

People like winners and they like success stories. And Israel — originally because of the American media and now in spite of the American media — is still regarded as a great success story. That is the source of Israel's strength in Hasbara. Now let's turn to the settlements policy.

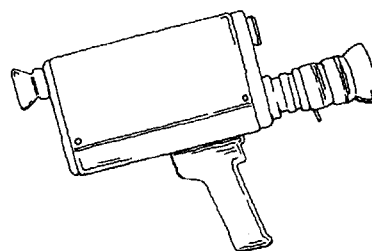
Before this particular trip to Israel, I must say that, roughly speaking, I was in favor of the settlements Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Then Mort Dolinsky, director of the Israeli Press Office, escorted me on a trip of the settlements so that now I am for the settlements Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Shabbos. We drove through the West Bank, and, as I took a look at it, the settlements are not a bad success story. Strangely enough, I discovered that all the things the Government of Israel had been saying about them was true. As a journalist I had become so accustomed to assuming an adversarial relationship that I was rather astonished to find that most of the settlements are on either unoccupied land or in sparsely populated areas. I was also surprised by the extent of the economic interdependence between Israel and the West Bank. Further it became apparent that the area is not unsafe — as it is portrayed in the media. It is probably safer than some areas of major American cities. Most striking, however, is the view from the pre-1967 border of the narrow neck of Israel where the

observer can look across Israel into the Mediterranean.

Perhaps the alternate selling point for the settlements is the effect it has on passively forcing the Arabs to negotiate. Whether one opposes or support the settlements, everyone must realize that they act as a club against the Arab world.

In general, I think the best way to present the settlements policy is to physically demonstrate to journalists the points I have just outlined. Further, it would be extremely helpful if Israel would make some major decisions even if it meant taking heat for a day or a week or a month. Then it would become old news. As it now stands, every new development on the West Bank is major news. It's rather like the old Chinese water torture, the story dribbles out drop by drop.

The approaches suggested may not be completely effective from a Hasbara standpoint, but there are times when policy is more important than public relations.



I would like to add that, as a visiting journalist, I have been impressed at how many services the Israel Government Press Office provides for the foreign press. Israel is a very good place to be a journalist. There are regular translations of the local press, transportation is made available; people are around to answer questions, and so on. This relationship probably began when everyone was writing stories about how the Jews in Israel were making the desert bloom. What a contrast to the Arabs! At that point, it was good policy for Israel to be very friendly to journalists. The question to consider now is whether the government should provide such a good press office, particularly when all news these days is bad news. It is now very easy, for example, for any foreign journalist to cover any rock-throwing incident in the West Bank. It is probably faster and easier to cover that sort of event here than in any other democratic nation in the world. In many ways I salute Israel for that. But is it productive?

Others have suggested that Israel appoint a Minister of Information. In the United States there is an individual who fills that role — although not at the Cabinet level. My friend David Gergen is the current Communications Director. Theoretically, he determines who should go on "Meet the Press" or "Face the Nation," what the official line is and who are the press spokesmen. Frankly, it really doesn't work. It hasn't worked under any President. It's not a bad idea in its own right, but it's my sense that politics and public relations in a free country work differently from one another.

I take a dimmer view of the American public relations profession than has been expressed by some of my colleagues. Commercial advertising is one thing — and many excel at that. But whenever these same individuals become involved in political public relations, the results are not overwhelmingly positive. Do you want the folks who promoted Vietnam and El Salvador to teach Israel how to promote its policies? □

# The Settlements: No Obstacle to Peace

*Counteracting Arab propaganda is critical*

By Shmuel Katz

**T**oday we have a tactical advantage in developing the settlements since President Reagan, before and after his election, defended their legality — as has Secretary of State George P. Shultz. In other words, Jews have the right to settle anywhere in *Eretz Israel*.

This contrasts very sharply with the Carter Administration, which embarked on what I would call an unscrupulous campaign to show that the settlements are illegal under international law. The State Department's legal adviser produced a brief in the late 1970s bolstering this idea. It was indeed a fatuous, hollow attempt to make black look white.

During that period, Israel did very little to counter the Carter Administration campaign. Nor did the leaders of the Jewish community in the United States, who, after all, have at their disposal a considerable Hasbara machine (or a number of machines).

This brings me to the essential point relating to Hasbara, not only with respect to the settlements, namely, that we need to use the Jewish community in the United States to our advantage more effectively. The leaders of the Jewish communities and its organizations are responsible for disseminating information and for influencing Jewish public opinion. Inevitably, they are the bearers of the Israeli point of view, if they accept it, of course, on behalf of the whole community. I don't know how many Jewish organizations exist in the U.S. — there are 36 members in the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. These individuals can use the numerous Jewish newspapers and other publications, Jewish television programs and cable stations as well as Christian television stations. They can reach, I imagine, a great part of the Jewish community, and even to some extent the non-Jewish community, without ever appealing to the general media.

Although the Reagan Administration has agreed that the settlements are not, technically speaking, illegal, there is still one other Hasbara problem to solve: convincing the public that the settlements are not an obstacle to peace. Before someone else attacks our policy, we must launch a campaign in favor of the settlements. We should not be in

the position of apologizing for them. After all, whether the settlements are an obstacle to peace is a subject to debate. Jewish organizations should launch a campaign in support of the settlements, opening it with the question, "Why are they an obstacle to peace?" No one who asserts that they are an obstacle to peace ever explains why. It's simply become an incantation which, I am sorry to say, even many Israelis accept.

What has our experience been in the past in relation to Judea and Samaria? When was there fighting? When did we have to fight over Judea and Samaria? When we had a Jewish presence there? Or when Jews were absent from Judea and Samaria? Each time we were attacked — in 1948 and 1967 — Israel did not have any settlements there. We had no control over the area. In 1973, when we fought the Egyptians and the Syrians, as everybody knows now and everybody knew then, we were in very, very difficult straits in the first phase of the war; but King Hussein didn't risk crossing the Jordan. The memory of 1967 was still too vivid for him. But in 1973, our victory depended on his refraining from an attack across the Samarian and Judean mountains, which form the backbone of our defense. In sum: When there weren't any Jews living in Judea and Samaria we were attacked. When Jews lived there, we were not attacked. Control of Judea and Samaria, in fact, of western Palestine, is essential at a minimum to Israel's security. Even those who believe in territorial compromise insist on a military presence on the Jordanian border as well as on a civilian presence. These people argue for Israeli sovereignty along the Jordanian border and for the complete demilitarization of the remaining area.

As part of a Hasbara campaign, I would not, as many others do, ignore our historical presence in western Eretz Israel. I think it is dangerous to rely solely on the argument that Judea and Samaria are essential to Israeli security. My friends in Israel and the States frequently advise us not to talk about history or the Bible. The Bible has become a pejorative for many in political debate. Such an approach is dangerous because we are, in effect, helping the argument of those who insist that we have no historic right to this



country. We are involuntarily bolstering the Arab claim to a historical right to the land. The Arabs claim that we appeared on the scene only after the Holocaust, and that we are buying our security here at their expense: Western imperialists foisted the Jews on an Arab country. Why, they ask, should we have to pay for Jewish security because the Jews were persecuted in Europe?

We must stop being shy about the Bible. What are we doing here if it weren't for the Bible? The Bible, however, does not provide the ultimate political argument. If, for example, after the decline of the last Jewish Commonwealth, another people had settled the country and built up a state, we would only be able to weep about the loss of

ancient Israel. But this did not happen. No other people established itself or claimed this country as its national territory. Modern leaders of the Palestinian movement only now make that claim. In the 1970s Yasir Arafat delivered a speech filled with fantasy at the United Nations describing how Palestinians had lived here and built factories and universities over the past 1,300 years. His speech was a wonderful example of Arab propaganda. That it was so well received is one of the failures of Israeli Hasbara in the earlier years. We allowed the Arabs to spread such mendacious propaganda without refuting it. This omission must be corrected and incorporated into the campaign regarding the settlements which, after all, are at the root of this conflict. □

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# Discussion

## August 16, Afternoon Session

**Carl Spielvogel:** Those of us who have worked in the news business know that in order to conduct a successful public relations campaign, you have to make friends with the press, especially when you don't need it. The time to have lunch with a journalist, give background reports and provide general information is when you least need the media.

When Simcha Dinitz was Ambassador in Washington he understood how to get things done in the United States. He was available for breakfast, lunch, dinner; he answered questions on topics far afield from the subject he may have been discussing. I think Mr. Dinitz is right: We need someone who can say "There are X number of things worth doing, and there are Y number of things not worth doing. This is what we will do."

**Martin Fenton:** I am bothered by the use here of the word "Hasbara." "Propaganda" is not a dirty word, and it is what we are talking about. Although I admit that I would hate to have something called a Ministry of Propaganda, the old Zionist approach to public relations, Hasbara, which explains what we are doing after the fact, no longer works. It's dated. We've got to stop looking at things the way we once did. Face it: We are in the game of changing people's minds, of making them think differently. To accomplish that we need propaganda.

**Menachem Milson:** We have already heard other participants explain why the media's coverage of the war in Lebanon was frequently so slanted. I would offer yet another reason. Namely, that a great number of stories originate with correspondents in Arab countries. Everyone knows that none of these countries are democratic. What many people don't realize is that with respect to the media, these countries practice the worst despotism. For example, journalists may never question certain public or political dogmas. Those who deviate from this principle — be they local or foreign residents, visitors or journalists — are, at best, ostracized, and at worst killed. It is in representing (or not representing) this fact that inaccuracy creeps into the film produced by Americans For a Safe Israel. The producers wanted to stress how journalists in Arab countries were intimidated, so the film presented a list of journalists who were murdered as a result of their reports. They did not fully present the other ways in which a journalist may be terrorized or intimidated.

One of the basic dogmas, which a journalist cannot afford to challenge in an Arab country, is that Israel is wrong, and that the Palestinian cause is just. Journalists may not challenge, criticize or be sarcastic about this, or about the image of the country in which they dwell, or about the honor of the Arabs. That would be heretical.

Fortunately this is not the case in Israel. Any journalist in Israel who doesn't question the country and its policies would appear to be stupid. A journalist who is critical of the country will still have access to whatever he or she may need. In fact, there are many people here who say that Israel's critics ought to be cultivated even more than its supporters. This is not so in the Arab world. American correspondents, in particular, must lean over backward to prove that they are not slaves to the Jewish lobby, to the Israeli cabal. All of their reports are carefully screened. As a rule of thumb I would say that if a foreign correspondent stays in an Arab country for a period of time and is regarded as a success, as a person who has contacts, that person is highly biased and betrays the basic rules of objective journalism every day in order to operate. This is even true of Israeli correspondents covering the West Bank. In a society where these conventions are so strong, there is no need for forced censorship.

We must expose this situation and put pressure on the media to effect some kind of change. The context from which journalists report in Arab countries explains in part why the story of Beirut and the war in Lebanon was presented as it was — why certain events were covered and others were not; why certain questions were asked and others were not.

**Irwin Cotler:** I would like to discuss two incidents which have had serious implications for Hasbara matters here, and which during the war in Lebanon had a serious impact in Canada.

At the beginning of the war a Canadian doctor named Christopher Giannou who worked with the Red Cross in Sidon was detained by the Israeli authorities. He was quickly released. Shortly after that he returned to Canada. Late in June, during the third week of the war, Dr. Giannou held a press conference in Canada to describe Israeli atrocities committed against Palestinian detainees. At that point the Israeli authorities did not issue a rebuttal.

On his own initiative, a Canadian lawyer named Donald Karr came to Israel to investigate this doctor's bona fides — more information was not available. Karr even placed advertisements in Israeli Hebrew and English newspapers. Only a few people responded.

In the meantime the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee invited Dr. Giannou to testify. Suddenly his report became internationally known. A *New York Times* correspondent called up the Israeli embassy in Washington to inquire about Dr. Giannou. A representative at the Israeli embassy responded: "First you should know that this man is a member of an international terrorist organization." When asked if he could prove this, the embassy spokesman said "No." The Canadian government then protested to the Israeli government about the defamation of a Canadian citizen. Three days later, I might add, the Foreign Ministry of Israel repudiated the official in Washington for his assertion about Dr. Giannou — who then launched a legal suit against the Israeli government. To date, no one has provided an authoritative rebuttal to Dr. Giannou and his stories.

The second incident is somewhat more serious. The Canadian Ambassador to Lebanon stationed in Beirut, Theodore Arcand, was the last ambassador to leave Beirut. He became something of a folk hero in Canada. His name, and consequently his every utterance, became household words in Canada. He was not terribly complimentary to the Israeli position and he

regularly held briefings for reporters at the Commodore Hotel in West Beirut where he became a kind of spokesman for the PLO.

Rather than issuing a formal protest to Canada, some Israeli soldiers, whether ordered or not, stopped Mr. Arcand's car and seized some of his materials. Given matters of diplomatic privilege and immunity, Israel ended up apologizing to Canada.

I will close by noting what some may find to be humorous incidents. In 1981, when Israel bombed the PLO headquarters in Beirut, the Western summit of the seven major industrial nations was being convened in Ottawa. The bombing dominated the agenda and was front-page material in all seven nations' newspapers. In 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon, the summit was at Versailles. Then, too, the invasion was front-page news. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau said at the time: "You know, at the 1983 summit we'd better invite Menachem Begin."

When asking Israeli authorities about this coincidence they said that they were unaware of the timing.

To my mind, the incidents described here point to a need for Israel to make Hasbara a priority — to develop a particular mind set. Further, someone or some agency must be responsible for its coordination. Further, regardless of political differences, Israel must arrive at a normative consensus.

**Dan Pattir:** No one asked the right questions with respect to how the war in Lebanon was covered. In fact, it wasn't the coverage *per se* that was so objectionable but its presentation. Editors were flooded with information. The real problem began with the decision editors and producers made back in the States. They decided what should be printed on the front page and where, and how news items should appear on television news programs. I once asked a very highly placed network official why the war received so much attention. He responded quite bluntly (and probably truthfully): "After Vietnam, we give priority to the bang-bang . . . Passion and murder and blood," he said, "receive priority."

**Moshe Gilboa:** I had the impression that this was supposed to be a dialogue, based on reciprocity: that we

are here to counsel one another. But the trend and orientation has been so far entirely one-way. Our American brothers and sisters who come for the Dialogue, tell us Israelis what and how to manage. Some Israelis who might not have enough opportunities to speak in governmental circles — join them in giving the government their piece of mind. Then some government officials who don't want to sound absolutely unpopular here join in equally in the criticism. Thus, the picture becomes unfortunately unbalanced.

I would like to refer to Mr. Olmert's assertion that our story on Lebanon wasn't told and the American media were so negative vis-à-vis Israel on the issue because American journalists did not have access to it. Isn't that too naïve a perception? Do we really think that American journalists and editors are so incompetent that they need us to show them the real story?

After the horrible massacres at Sabra and Shatila the American Jewish Congress issued the following statement which was circulated in the US to the media, a copy of which reached us in Israel: "There are no words to describe the horror of what has happened in Shatila and Sabra camps . . . We do not believe for a moment that Israeli forces were involved in this tragedy in any way. Nevertheless, certain conclusions are inevitable, even before the facts are in. Israel must get out of Beirut if it is not to be dragged into that city's bloody situation. Even more important Israel has an obligation to its own honor, and to the honor of the Jewish people everywhere to sever all of its ties with murderous forces of Major Haddad and of other Christian militias responsible for this outrage. Otherwise Israel will be seen as an ally and supporter of killers of innocent men . . ."

I ask you, how can a Jewish organization issue such a statement when, at the same time, Israel is attacked vehemently by a hostile front in the United Nations, smeared publicly and indiscriminately by the majority of the American media and besieged by an aggressive unholy alliance of the Arab-Communist bloc at a crucial moment?

Aren't Jewish leaders accountable for what, where and when they say about Israel at a time of crisis? And furthermore: Do they want (as I

believe they basically do) to help Israel with its Hasbara challenge or do they aspire to dictate to a democracy a course of action? The delicate yet important line and distinction between helping in Hasbara in the United States and interfering in the policy-making in Israel should be clearly set — and this will help to achieve better cooperation and work for our common goals in this vital sphere.

**Judith Elizur:** Ever since 1967 Israeli Hasbara has become more and more two dimensional. Israel is constantly explained with respect to its military versus its actual power. Perhaps American Jewry can contribute to Israel's image by discussing this country's many other qualities and endeavors.

**Ben Wattenberg:** I do not believe that Israel's settlement policy is absolutely unpalatable and therefore indefensible to the American public. Anyone who stands on the settlement of, say, Elchana and looks to the west after sunset and sees the lights pointing the way to the sea will understand why Israel cannot agree to return to the pre-1967 lines. No one would want Yasir Arafat standing on that piece of land.

**Shmuel Katz:** We are not engaged in a public relations effort. We are engaged in a war. The whole world is conducting a propaganda war against us. We are being attacked from all sides. Israel may not be a superpower in the military sense, but it certainly is a superpower in the amount of time and space it occupies in the electronic and other media. Therefore, I say that it is essential that we treat Hasbara with the same seriousness with which we treat our security problems. Most would argue that the defense of Israel should not be in hands of the Foreign Office — even though it is an extension of foreign policy. Hasbara requires not only its own minister, but also a different, larger and more effective machine.

**Howard Squadron:** For the record I would like to note that I did not approve of the statement AJCongress issued concerning the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Nor did any counsel at the American Jewish Congress approve of the statement, which will soon be modified. □

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# Seizing the Initiative

*Israel has a basic grass-roots level of support which it needs to use more aggressively*

By Dan Pattir

**W**e need to refresh our memories with regard to the past. Israel has had Ministers of Information. First in 1973 and 1974 Shimon Peres served as a Minister of Information under Golda Meir. Later, Aharon Yariv served in the same position in Yitzhak Rabin's cabinet. Each time the job was short-lived.

Peres never actually had a structure to support him — there was no Ministry of Information as such. But he definitely functioned as a Minister of Information in the sense that he presented informational concerns at Cabinet meetings and he spoke for the government, expressing its views in important matters. But then his job was scrapped.

But he was again a victim of the government's inability to set priorities in terms of policymaking and in terms of budgeting. Because of this, Yariv tendered his resignation. Personally, I thought it was a terrible mistake. Once a precedent had been set in which the government could function without a Minister of Information, the dismantling of the Ministry itself soon followed. Its functions were, in fact, dispersed throughout the government. For example, the information center for domestic affairs was shifted to the Ministry of Education. Why? I don't know.

I don't think that a Ministry of Information in Israel is anti-democratic. Nor do I think the values of democracy are in danger because Israel has only one television channel and one radio channel and one military radio channel. For the last 30 years or more, all political and military information was filtered through the military, not through civilians.

The question of who controls the flow of information in Israel has always been one that turned on political rivalries. Throughout the years, many have tried to set up a Ministry of Information. During the seven years I spent in the Prime Minister's office we tried numerous times. But it became a political liability. It was feared that such a minister would have undue leverage and that he would not speak for the government as a whole, but for a political party.

Government bumbling or inaction throughout the last 35 years has been typical of our Hasbara efforts. It is interesting to note that not until 1975 did the Prime Minister of Israel (who happened to be Yitzhak Rabin) create the posi-

tion of a press secretary.

We need to consider the history of Israel's image and how it affects its Hasbara efforts. 1967 was a landmark year because Israel ceased to be an underdog. In 1973 Israel once more began to be perceived as very vulnerable. This lasted until 1975, when Israel became the target for almost unrestrained attacks, especially when it suited the United States. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger brought about this change in attitude toward Israel when his first round of shuttle diplomacy was deemed a failure. In March of 1975 he returned to the U.S. to "reassess" the situation. It was Kissinger who legitimized, if not encouraged, the actual terms of attack against Israel. He encouraged attacks in areas where Israel is most touchy, areas in which Israel had formerly won the sympathy of Congress and the media.

The Carter Administration continued to wage a public image war against Israel to achieve its policymaking goals. When I was privately engaged in research in Washington, officials of the Carter Administration admitted to me that throughout the Camp David negotiations the Administration exerted pressure on Israel by depicting Israel in the worst possible light and enhancing the role of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat beyond what would have naturally developed in the American media. Administration officials waged this image war precisely in areas in which it would be politically unfeasible to have the Congress bear direct pressure. I think that this kind of negative image-making continued throughout the first two years of the Reagan Administration.

Let me hasten to add that I am not blaming anyone in particular for this public relations war. It is a legitimate way to gain one's ends. As far as I am concerned the trouble is that Israel has too often played into the hands of those who wish to spoil its image. Let me give you two such examples.

The first concerns whether during the Camp David negotiations Menachem Begin promised to freeze settlements for three months or for five years. President Carter maintains that Begin promised a five-year freeze. Begin says he agreed to a three-month freeze, during which time Egypt and Israel had agreed to conclude the peace treaty. The issue was debated for four years. At risk here is the honesty of

one's negotiating partner, not just the details of the peace treaty. The argument contributed to the public's perception of the negotiating participants. "Does Israel keep its word?" was the underlying question.

I remember the evening when that point of the treaty was negotiated. I did not attend the actual negotiations, but at 1:00 a.m. the Israeli delegation reported that they agreed to a three-month freeze — the time between the signing of the treaty and the time for Israel and Egypt to conclude it.

I talked to each of the participants concerning this point. Nobody, including the President, with whom I talked personally and on the record, stated that there was an agreement for five years. Carter's most extreme expression to me was, "This was my interpretation." And of course there is an important difference between interpretation and fact.

One day after Camp David, the then-head of Egypt's information authority told me in Washington that President Sadat had just held a briefing for the Egyptian press. He informed them that they had agreed to a three-month freeze.

I asked Dr. Butrus Ghali, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, this past year whether he remembered this briefing. "Of course I do," he said. "Not only that," he continued, "but while flying back from Washington to Cairo, I asked President Sadat why he had said three months. That wouldn't help Egypt to present the case." Sadat replied: "Because a) it is true, and b) this is not an Egyptian problem. Let the Americans and the Israelis fight it out."

This may be a footnote in history, but it isn't without significance. The dispute over whether Begin had agreed to a three-month or five-year freeze was used against Israel over and over again.

Let me cite another example of how Israel does not take advantage of opportunities to enhance its image. The State Department published a poll coordinated by the Roper Organization in January 1983 — just six months after the war in Lebanon — on issues in world affairs. One question asked what the most important forces are today. Number one was the United States. Number two was Russia. Number three was China. Number four was Saudi Arabia. Number five was Japan. Number six was Israel. Then came Germany, Britain, Mexico, Canada and France.

The second question asked who are the closest and friendliest allies to the United States. Great Britain was number one, Canada number two, and Israel number three. Then came Germany, Japan, France, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, mainland China and the Soviet Union.

That Israel was considered the third friendliest ally is truly remarkable. It is particularly striking if you realize that since the poll was published in January 1983, it was conducted sometime in the fall of 1982. At that time, Israel was suffering one of its lowest ebbs of popularity in the United States. I think that this shows grassroots support for Israel in the U.S. Israel needs to tap into this reservoir of support.

To conclude, I would like to make some suggestions in three areas — the Israeli side, that is, the producer of the information; and the two recipients of this information, the Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. On all three fronts I believe there is much to be observed.

It is imperative that Israel establish a Ministry of Information. I don't care what its actual name is, but there should be an agency with a mandate to coordinate the flow of

information. Just last year I had to sit down with the Minister of Defense to chart how the spokesman of the army should perform vis-à-vis the West Bank. Who speaks for the operation of Israel in the West Bank, the army or the civilian administrator? This is an absurd in-house problem typical of the fragmentation of the state. I don't think it is healthy or right that the defense establishment disseminate military information. It should be handled by civilians. I don't think that the Israel Defense Forces spokesmen should have so much power and authority over the military establishment.

It is equally important that the Israeli government give the ministry ample authority and importance to achieve its

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## **The question of who controls the flow of information in Israel has always turned on political rivalries.**

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goals. It must be adequately supported both politically and economically.

As for the American Jewish community, I note the following not with the intent of criticizing a particular individual or organization. But the U.S. Jewish community has performed an inadequate Hasbara job. In fact its efforts are practically nonexistent. I know that I am being harsh. Five major organizations have established a task force on Hasbara. But this is not sufficient. I do not want you to infer from my remarks that I think that the Jewish community must speak with one voice on behalf of Israel. But there are basic areas which could be channeled through one coordinated informational Jewish body in the United States. I don't think it was too difficult to appoint the Presidents' Conference as an umbrella organization for political presentations. Nor do I think it should be too difficult to have a similar body or authority for information. That which has been accomplished in America to date has been fragmented. No matter how fine the intentions, such an approach cannot meet the needs of today or tomorrow.

I would also argue that we could all reach the most important audience of all — the American public at large — more effectively if the Israeli government were to make a concerted effort to distribute accurate and timely information in an authoritative manner. □

# Firming Up the Consensus of Support For Israel

*American policy was never based on Israel being its sole strategic asset*

By Leon Wieseltier

**I** speak now largely to the American Jewish community with respect to Hasbara and American public opinion.

How should American Jews react to events in Israel? Obviously, we should not react to everything. That would be unhealthy; I don't think that even we Jews could sustain such a level of hysteria. I want to provide some guidelines describing what American Jews might do well to react to and what they might not do well to react to.

There are two extreme cases in which Hasbara clearly will not work. The first is a situation in which we are confronted with anti-Semitism, and the second is when Israel is clearly and plainly wrong. Many of the Jewish right, that is, those sympathetic with the Begin government, have frequently imputed all Hasbara failures to anti-Semitism. Those on the left have frequently imputed Hasbara's failures to moral and political deficiencies in Israeli policy. Both of these extreme views are wrong. Most of the Western world is not anti-Semitic, and most of the time Israel has not been wrong. Between these two extremes — between the refusals to acknowledge any good or any bad in Israel — is where Hasbara must enter the scene.

What should be the subject of Hasbara, at least for the American Jewish community? I submit that there are two kinds of propositions about Israel that may become the subject of Hasbara. The first involves the basics about Israel: that the Jews are a people or a nation, that as a people or a nation they deserve a state, that the state should be exactly where it is right now, that the state should be strong and secure, that those who deny the legitimacy of the state or its strength or security cannot be dealt with (particularly the PLO), that the legitimacy of the Jewish national identity and the Jewish state are unimpeachable.

Then there are other propositions which are sometimes put forward as tasks for Israel's *masbirim* (those who conduct Hasbara campaigns) in the States that consist of comment upon specific Israeli government policies. Some of these are quite ridiculous; the American Jewish community

for example is sometimes called upon to defend the construction of a few houses in yet another corner of "Judea and Samaria."

The basics, however, are the key. This cannot be stressed enough. Polls indicate that most Americans support Israel's legitimacy, that they recognize its high moral quality and support Israel's political merit. A consensus of some sort does exist in America. It is dangerous for the American Jewish community, therefore, to overreact to negative signs in the U.S. But also be warned that the consensus which exists now — despite media vilification of Israel during the war in Lebanon — may also disappear. It is not eternal or God-given. This consensus was the product of decades of hard intellectual and political labor that developed an orthodoxy in the American perception of Israel. The most dangerous thing that can happen to Israel in the United States is the erosion of that orthodoxy.

This is dangerous because in the final analysis, Israel has only two claims on American sympathy. They are strategic and moral. The strategic claim, however, is only partial. American policy in the Middle East was *never* based on Israel as its sole strategic asset. The United States also had Iran as an ally, a country in the region that was not at war with Israel, and that is not an Arab country. When the Shah fell, it seemed inevitable to some of us that the United States would look for another strategic asset in the region. And that is one of the reasons why the U.S.-Israel partnership has been in so much trouble for the past four or five years. This time the search would take place among countries who were at war with Israel.

It is the moral claim, then, upon which Israel can state its argument for unambiguous support. But there are very important sectors of American culture and politics working to erode Israel's consensus of moral support, and they are, to put it mildly, strange bedfellows. The erosion of this consensus is something on which George Ball and John Connally agree. It is something upon which the extreme left and Mobil Oil agree. This has implications for Hasbara.

Is it not better to focus on Israel's basics at the expense of defending the settlements on the territories? Is such a defense worth the popularity in America of fundamental propositions regarding Israel's existence?

We cannot have it both ways. As Jews we must understand how properly to make an argument for Jewish rights. Congressmen are confused by all the ideological and historical and Biblical arguments for Israel. Although Jews have an obvious right to live in the West Bank, this does not necessarily enhance its acceptance. Nor should it. I have a right to jump off a roof. The possession of a right is not sufficient justification for the wanton exercise of it.

This brings me to the question of dissent in the American

pre-1967 borders a swindle. Second, it said no to the absorption of 700,000 to a million Palestinians by the Jewish State. It is not obvious to me that those who opposed the Reagan Plan but who supported the annexation of the West Bank know what to do with the Palestinian Arabs living there. I have never heard a good solution to that problem. Some say these Arabs should be expelled, which is shameful for a Jew to say.

Fifth, in some cases American Jewish and Israeli dissent have strengthened the Jewish position in the United States. For example, when Tom Dine, head of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee, came out in favor of the Reagan Plan, he was excoriated by the American Jewish commu-

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## **'One of the real deficiencies of Hasbara in the United States has been its indifference to its own intellectual quality.'**

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Jewish community. I would never belittle the fears and anxieties of people who worry about what will happen if serious splits occur in the American Jewish community, but there are some aspects of the problem of dissent that must be noted.

First, the rules of the "dissent" game are fixed. For example, it's perfectly all right for Tehiya, a far-right political party, to send someone to the United States to attack Camp David. It is not all right for Shalom Achshav (Peace Now), a leftist movement, to send someone to attack the settlement policy. And this is an old story. Before he was Minister of Agriculture, Ariel Sharon was calling for a Palestinian state. In a 1977 speech Sharon gave to the United Jewish Appeal he said that if such-and-such settlement didn't happen, Jews should simply stop giving money to the bonds. Neither Abba Eban nor Mordecai Bar-On could ever have given such a speech without becoming diabolized in some of the American Jewish community.

Second, dissent in the American Jewish community will always exist in one form or another. We have, as is well known, an appetite for argument.

Third, we should not flatter ourselves that the dissenters are all that important. The impact of 36 or 57 or 120 American Jewish intellectuals who sign a letter against a settlement such as Elon Moreh on the West Bank is not nearly as damaging, for example, as Mobil Oil and Aramco's whisperings into the ears of Washington's policymakers.

Fourth and most fundamental: American Jewish dissent rarely challenges the basic facts or needs of Israel.

Over the next decade Israel faces difficult questions. Debate in these areas is legitimate and necessary, as are the differences of opinion that must inevitably emerge. For example, when the Reagan Plan was announced in September 1982, Jewish opposition was almost uniform. Now whatever you think about the Reagan Plan, the fact is that the Reagan Plan included two elements. First, it declared the

nity. But Dine's response was plausible at the very least. And its appearance indicated that there were people in the American Jewish community who are not marionettes, who do not automatically reject what the White House suggests with a *shrei* and a *gewalt*.

Similarly, the Shalom Achshav demonstration after the massacres at Sabra and Shatila had an edifying, indeed a salutary effect on the general American public, as well as on the Jewish community.

Many American Jews who dissent are not happy to dissent. They don't choose to dissent because it makes them feel sexy.

I would urge that we worry first about the Israeli situation before worrying about the American Jewish situation.

Menachem Begin felt that the Jews of America would eventually save Israel. My friends on the left also have the feeling that the Jews of America will save Israel. In fact, nothing that comes from the United States, Jewish or non-Jewish, is going to save Israel. Only Israel will save Israel.

Let me move on to discuss "selling the settlements," or more generally, selling the annexation of the West Bank. In a word, you can't. It simply cannot be done. This will please some people in the Israeli government; it will confirm their view that all the world is against Israel. I can tell you that this suspicion is wrongheaded. Many of those in the West who will not accept the annexation of the West Bank are not anti-Semitic or PLO supporters. Nor are they timid Jews who want to please the *goyim*. Most are people who are sincerely concerned that absorption of the Palestinian Arab population will either destroy or distort Israeli society, or they are people who are sincerely concerned that the Palestinian Arabs who live there and claim to be part of a nation also have a right to some satisfaction of their national identity. As a Zionist, it always strikes me as odd when people say that the latter point is preposterous.

Therefore I say that if you intend to concentrate Hasbara



on selling the settlements, then, as the American expression goes, you will pay where you live. The people who will pay in the opinion polls of the West are not those living in Ariel and Tekoa and Ofra. Those people don't care anyway. The people who will pay are those who live in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and Haifa. Their legitimacy will be impeached in the eyes of the Western world. The Jewish state itself may lose some of its moral credibility.

Another important facet of Hasbara involves the role intellectuals play. The political culture of the Likud has had a strong anti-intellectual tilt. Some of this anti-intellectual feeling is justified in the sense that many of the ideas from which Israel has suffered, in terms of moral and political credibility, were introduced into the debate by intellectuals. We must not underestimate the importance of intellectuals. But, the war of ideas, as my neo-conservative friends like to call it, is a very important war. Its consequences are not generally immediate. The introduction of new ideas into the bloodstream of a culture is powerful and lasting. After all, the basic orthodoxy concerning Israel's right to exist was built after Israel's founding largely by intellectuals, writers, editorialists and scholars, who kept harping away at these themes. One of the real deficiencies of Hasbara in the United States has been its indifference to its own intellectual quality

Palestinian Arab supporters have focused greater attention on this. The *Journal of Palestine Studies* is one such example. Anyone who is involved in Israeli politics should read the issue of this journal published about the war in Lebanon. It is the single most sophisticated intellectual and scholarly piece of propaganda I have ever seen. It includes clippings from the media as well as historical, philological, economic, sociological, moral and psychological analyses of the situation. It provided a day-by-day chronicle of the war. Imagine: a day-by-day chronicle of what happened in Lebanon from the time Operation Peace for Galilee started until the day the *Journal* went to press.

When we talk about the PLO in the American Jewish community, we use slogans. Advertisements employ sophisticated words like terrorist, totalitarian, barbarian. They may be true. The PLO is obviously a terrorist group, an ally of the Soviet Union, and an immoral and unscrupulous organization. But the truth alone will not do. Such slogans are inadequate.

If you were to place the *Journal of Palestinian Studies* next to the slogans of the Jewish community before an American who is predisposed toward Israel but who thinks that the Palestinians are the Jews of today, or that they got a raw deal (which they did), it will not be clear who is the good guy and who is the bad guy. It would not be difficult for a sophisticated audience to choose.

We have heard a good deal about what happened in the media during the war in Lebanon. Joshua Muravchik's article is filled with the most damning details. But the lies and distortions were brought to light. We fought the media quite successfully. We will not know just how successfully, of course, until the next crisis. Nonetheless, I think we succeeded in making our point.

I want to emphasize the need not to overreact to the media treatment of the war in Lebanon. I say this for two reasons. One, because the media are only the media. There are more important things. There are events in the real world that happen even if reporters aren't there. In other words, there are the media, but there is also reality.

More importantly, we should not allow Jonathan Randall or John Chancellor or John Le Carré to determine what we Jews think is best for ourselves.

In conclusion, I would say that American Jewish Hasbara can be proud of what happened in the wake of the media's distortions during the war. The counter-campaign was very successful. It's time to move on, however. Don't let what happened in the summer of 1982 become the collective obsession of the Jews. There are more important questions facing us. □

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## Discussion

### August 17, Morning Session

**Henry Siegman:** What determines attitudes in the United States toward Israel? Specific political events? Or are there certain fundamental affinities which have very little to do with day-to-day developments? The question is an important one. Dan Pattir noted that, despite the public relations beating Israel took during the war, polls indicated that American public support for Israel had not been seriously eroded. The damage to Israel's image was not as great as we had feared. This suggests to me that public relations is not determined by the course

of daily events but by certain fundamental values. It is more important that the American public feels it shares democratic and other values with Israel than that it agree with specific policy positions of a particular government. If this is true, then it seems to me there are two specific consequences. One, in organizing a Hasbara effort, we ought not to focus our fire on discrete events, but rather on fundamental considerations that ultimately shape the ongoing support and friendship between Israel and the United States. The second consequence is that we

ought not to become hysterical when confronted with policy differences between Israel and the U.S.

I would now like to address several points raised in yesterday's presentations. In particular, I want to comment on Moshe Gilboa's criticism of an American Jewish Congress statement issued after the Sabra and Shatila massacres. That statement contained essentially three points. The first asserted that it was utterly inconceivable that Israel itself would have been involved in any way in this tragedy. The second point was that those who were in fact

responsible for this horrendous tragedy are the kind of barbarians with whom civilized countries, and particularly Israel, ought not to be associated. The third point stated that it is clear that Lebanon is the kind of swamp that can only lead to grief and mischief for Israel if it remains there. Therefore, Israel should leave as quickly as possible.

With respect to our suggestion that Israel withdraw from Beirut, which so upset Mr. Gilboa, I am pleased that the Begin government eventually accepted that advice. The second point, which described the murderers of Sabra and Shatila as uncivilized barbarians, incorrectly mentioned the Christian forces of Major Haddad among those forces that entered the camps. In fact, they were Phalangists with whom Israel also had unfortunately close associations. The third point of the statement that Israel was in no manner involved in what had happened was unfortunately also mistaken. As you know, the Kahan Inquiry Commission found otherwise. That is a mistake in the AJCongress statement on which Mr. Gilboa chose not to comment.

Mr. Gilboa would have the Hasbara role of American Jewry be that of a loudspeaker, an inanimate object that does no more than amplify whatever is said in Israel. In his view this role exhausts the justification for Diaspora existence. American Jewry by definition opposes it. I suggest to Mr. Gilboa that in addition to the very important Hasbara job it must do for Israel, American Jewry has integrity of its own. It has its own Jewish life that leads it to engage in activities and actions extending far beyond Hasbara, and occasionally, perhaps, even causing Hasbara problems for Israel.

Many of the most committed Jews and Israelis understood that it was more important to respond to the tragedy of Sabra and Shatila as Jews than to distort that response by Hasbara considerations. Cabinet ministers resigned. Important army officers said they could no longer serve; 400,000 Israelis took to the streets of Tel Aviv and expressed their outrage. The significant thing was not only that these protesters ignored Hasbara, but, that by doing what they did, by acting on their instincts as Jews, they unwittingly

fashioned a Hasbara victory that I suspect many Government officials, including Moshe Gilboa, do not understand to this day.

The fact remains that American Jews are profoundly committed to promoting Israel's image and probably invest greater energy, resources and emotion into that task than in any other. It virtually defines their Jewish activity in the United States. They do so not because they see themselves as public relations experts; they do so because they are acting out their Jew-

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### **Public relations is not determined by the course of daily events but by certain fundamental values.**

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ish passions and convictions. There is a price that Israel must pay for that passion, however, for it will occasionally lead to expressions that are critical of Israeli positions. It would be well for Mr. Gilboa and those who share his point of view to understand that this critical passion is the great strength of Israel, not its weakness.

During the course of his presentation, Ben Wattenberg said that American liberals have the strange notion that American policy can be liberal when it comes to Central America and other areas of the world, and hawkish when it comes to Israel. Or that liberals can insist on cutting defense spending in one area of the world but lobby for increased defense spending for Israel. Such obvious inconsistencies, he said, do not work in real life. I take exception to that.

This statement assumes that Ameri-

can domestic and foreign policy is a seamless web of consistent ideas and activity. Nothing could be further from the truth. American domestic and foreign policy is absolutely full of contradictions. To cite but one example, the most anti-Soviet president we have had in a long time also vigorously advocated large grain sales to the Soviet Union. He sees nothing inconsistent in that. Those senators and congressmen who have historically been the most supportive of Israel are precisely the liberals who have been most critical of American policy in Central America.

Moreover, the inconsistencies Mr. Wattenberg criticizes are really no such thing. The argument that it may not be in the American national interest to engage in a war in Central America is entirely consistent with the argument that it *is* in the American national interest to support Israel. The same is true of defense spending. One does not have to support every new missile or defense system — about which there are serious doubts among military people themselves — in order to advocate the deployment of effective armaments capable of intervening in the Middle East.

Shmuel Katz argues that it is terribly important to convince the American public that the settlements are not the obstacle to peace in the Middle East. From a P.R. point of view, the problem of the settlements is not whether settlements are an obstacle to peace or not. It is not even whether the settlements are legal or illegal. The problem isn't even whether Israel will annex the territories. The real Hasbara problem is what happens before and after annexation. The problem is the day-to-day experience of administering those territories. Most damaging to Israel's reputation are the regular television reports which picture Israel as an occupying power that must beat up children who throw stones and destroy the houses of the families of arrested terrorists. The picture of Israel as an occupying force, continues to be the festering public relations problem for which there is no simple solution.

Shmuel Katz' presentation struck me as an elegant restatement of an entirely anachronistic conception of Hasbara. I understood him to say that if we were only to expose our enemies to the overwhelming, ineluctable force of our

argument, they would have to capitulate. They would inevitably see that truth is on our side. Modern Hasbara is not an exercise in polemics. Hasbara is a far more complicated and sophisticated enterprise.

**David Rubin:** Mr. Wieseltier, you say that we can't make the West Bank annexation palatable. Instead, you urged that we focus on issues basic to Israel's security. Is it not possible that certain issues, such as the West Bank annexation, will constantly appear in the next few years, and that they would, in fact, be dangerous for us to ignore? These very issues may erode the needed consensus.

Also, is it not possible, perhaps, to bolster the consensus within the context of discussing these issues as they arise? Do we have to separate them from the issue of Israel's security? The media will still want to know the position of Jews in the U.S. as well as in Israel on contentious issues.

**Leon Wieseltier:** You want to come to the American media and say, "We need the settlements for Israel's security." All right. You can point to the settlements on the Jordan Valley, such as Kalkilya, which can be defended on security grounds. But can you defend the settlements in Shechem — in the heart of Arab territory? The Israeli government prides itself on these settlements — as do the settlers. It is difficult for the American public to understand what the Israelis are doing.

**Mark Stroock:** The problem with trying to bury an issue which you may find unsavory or difficult to explain is that the opposition will never let you get away with it. Charges will be made. You'd better be prepared to answer the charge ahead of time.

**Leon Wieseltier:** We may not have the luxury of setting an agenda. For example, we will probably have to discuss, if not the legality of the settlements (if annexation occurs), at least the nature of Jewish-Arab relations. For example, American journalists will inevitably compare Jewish-Arab relations with Black-White relations — whether or not the parallel is an exact one.

Let me ask Mr. Rubin a question. What would you do if in explaining the settlements you were to eat into the support of Israel-supporters who are confused and are therefore losing

their enthusiasm for Israel? In my understanding of the public opinion situation in the United States, you would run a very high risk of losing a lot of basic support by talking about the settlements and annexation.

**David Rubin:** I don't see this as an either/or choice. My sense of it is that if the settlements continue and annexation occurs, discussion of long-range policy toward the Arabs is inevitable.

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### Often, journalists are the victims of terrorist intimidation. Their editors frequently squelch these stories.

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**Irving Rosenthal:** There is something very unrealistic about this discussion. It sounds good to say, "Let's not talk about the settlements because there is no good argument for them." But the media will pay attention to the settlements no matter how hard you try to emphasize the basics. This stonewalling will only contribute to the erosion of support for the basic attributes that should be part of the image of Israel.

**Kalman Siegel:** I am a firm believer in effective Hasbara. I regard Hasbara not only as desirable, but as a vital function for any nation, major corporation, indeed, for any social or political activity. Israel has demonstrated it can be effective in ways that some of us feel are counterproductive: Israel can win wars. Can it also win hearts and minds? It will be this ability, I think, that will in the end permit all of our children to grow up in peace.

I want to disagree with those who criticize the professional qualities of the American press — it is too easy a

whipping boy. I also want to state that the American Jewish community is not guilty of foot-dragging with respect to Hasbara. At the *New York Times* I was personally the object of American Jewish Hasbara efforts, and I can testify that no group in America reacts more effectively to protect its interests than the American Jewish community.

It would be too easy, I think, to simply say that we must do a better job with Hasbara; the matter is too complex. I will say that there is a need for professionals in Hasbara who can deal with the army and with military leaders who are not adequately prepared to attend to the press. There also is a need to develop a cadre of experienced escort officers or military public information officers. Israel needs funding for such a Hasbara program. Israel needs a network of media watchdogs who can reflect for government officials public opinion. In short, Israel needs to plan Hasbara on a continuing basis, to recognize the existence of a foreign press corps and to service it regularly. In sum, I support the creation of some ministry of information or whatever — as described by Simcha Dinitz.

**Yochanan Manor:** I see four major flaws with Israeli Hasbara. One, too many people appear to speak on behalf of the Government. This is an institutional problem. Two, no one devotes his time completely to Hasbara. Three, foreign correspondents do not receive adequate attention and care. Four, there seems to be a concerted effort to delegitimize the State of Israel for which we have not developed a strong response. We must supply remedies for each of these problems by establishing professional teams who can focus on these problems.

**Mordechai Dolinsky:** I think time spent debating whether Israel should have a Minister of Information or not is basically wasteful. This forum will not determine whether that's a good idea or a bad idea. But this group can decide whether or not to set up a professional panel on Hasbara, an idea that has been mentioned during these discussions.

The perceptions of our friends from abroad concerning Israel's public relations needs are, in many ways, radically different from our own. For example, most American Jews think

that Abba Eban is the best representative of this country since Abraham. Israelis view him differently.

The other misunderstanding relates to determining just who our audiences are — a basic determination for any P.R. man. The American Jewish community believes that the United States is the most important member of our audience. But our principal audience may not necessarily be the United States. It may well be the Arab world. The fact is that the perception of this country by Arab countries surrounding us is at least as important as how many planes we can purchase abroad. The image we are forced to project to this world has nothing to do with how democratic or liberal we are, but how strong we are. If we do not project strength, then we will be in serious trouble, perhaps even inviting new wars.

**Ben Wattenberg:** I want to comment briefly on Henry Siegman's feeling that Jewish organizations in the United States ought not to be mere loudspeakers amplifying Israeli government policy. I think I lean the other way. As a columnist I will write what I want to write, obviously, about the situation in the Middle East. As private individuals, Jews will make up their own minds and speak both publicly and privately about these situations.

It seems to me, however, that the role of a *mainline* Jewish organization ought not to be policy pronouncements for the Israeli government. For example, let's reconsider the American Jewish Congress statement about the Sabra and Shatila massacres. I think it is perfectly legitimate for the American Jewish Congress to say: "Surely, the Israelis did not have any part in this massacre." But it is wrong for the American Jewish Congress to say that the Government should therefore sever further relations with that "gang of bloodthirsty murderers." Plenty of governments maintain relations with a number of bloodthirsty people around the world. But that is a policy which, it seems to me, should not be determined on Israel's behalf in New York City.

Further, I sensed that Mr. Siegman favors inconsistency in American policies. Or, rather, he felt that what I call inconsistencies are not inconsistencies

at all. I think such an attitude easily becomes the object of scorn. Inconsistencies in America's defense and involvement around the world will, in my opinion, ultimately lead to substantive changes that will weaken American defense. A weaker American defense is not in Israel's best interest. A less internationalist American policy, again, no matter how you gussie it up, is a less internationalist policy.

**Howard Squadron:** I disagree with Ben Wattenberg's comment on "inconsistencies" in the American Jewish community's stand on defense. One can support an assertive American foreign policy and still, for example, oppose American involvement in Vietnam. At that time many argued that if we wanted U.S. support for Israel we had to support American policy in Vietnam. I rejected that position then and I do so now. Today, I think that an assertive American foreign policy in Central America is called for. Nonetheless, I think the particular Central American policy that the U.S. advocates should be judged on its merits. The Jewish community should not support U.S. policy based merely on its concern for Israel. Nor should we support every line of the defense budget because we support Israel.

The American Jewish community needs to coordinate its Hasbara efforts. It has and must continue to be the source for the orthodoxies Leon Wieseltier described earlier. I also think Israel needs to think about Hasbara in its policy-making process — something it has not been doing. The manner in which the United States government manipulates images is very serious; Israel must be more concerned with it.

There is another problem that hampers Hasbara efforts. Frequently we feel that Israelis do not think that our opinions are worth hearing, that the Israelis, who are obviously more concerned than others about issues or crises in their country, know best how to deal with the press and the U.S. government. After the Sabra and Shatila massacres, the Israeli government ran a dreadful advertisement in American newspapers saying that the state had been smeared with a blood libel. I advised against such an advertisement. The advice was ignored. □

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# 'Ready! Fire! Aim!'

## *The strategy of Hasbara*

By Hanoch Smith

**M**any have said that Israeli Hasbara operates as if someone had ordered: "Ready! Fire! Aim!" In the world of political consulting this is very true. A client calls a political consultant only when a fire has been started. The consultant then explains what the client aims should be and how they should be achieved. By the time the consultant has explained this strategy the crisis — whether it's an election or a scandal or whatever — has passed, and the consultant duly tells his client, "Now we are ready to shoot." This is also true for Hasbara.

Today, I want to talk about consensus among American Jews, among Jews in Israel, and — where it exists — between American and Israeli Jews.

Based on data here in Israel and in the U.S. I have developed what I call "the iron laws of the joint enterprise of Israeli and American Jews." The "first iron" law declares that U.S. support of Israel is in the best interest of the United States. Second, Jews in both countries worry about the United States withdrawing its support from Israel. Third, Jews in both countries recognize that the fate of the United States Jewry is closely linked to the fate of Israeli Jewry. And vice versa. These laws provide a solid basis for the two groups to work together. It makes a dialogue very easy. Outside these areas of consensus there is room for considerable disagreement. For example, American Jews do not consider it calamitous for American Jews to express opposition to Israeli government policies. They see it as part of the game. American Jews also do not see any reason why Israelis should not do the same.

Israelis do not uniformly agree with this point of view. Those who support the Government would like to see less free discussion of sensitive issues both in Israel and in America. If we were to ask Jews in America and Israel: "Are the policies of the Israeli government hurting Israel in America?" Americans would be divided; Israelis would be terribly polarized. Overwhelmingly, people supporting the Begin government would say: "Nothing Israel does is damaging in the United States." The opposition Labor Party coalition would almost overwhelmingly say the reverse. *What's going on here?*

Allow me to retrace my steps a moment. There is one area on which Israeli Jews do not agree. When asked: "How powerful is the Jewish community in the United States?" Israeli Jews and the American non-Jews think that

the American Jews in the United States are quite powerful. Only American Jews themselves don't believe this. American Jews themselves are quite worried. They worry about anti-Semitism and about the non-Jewish world's exaggerated perception of their power. American Jews operate on the assumption that if they don't continue the struggle for survival, their future will be bleak. Further, American Jews do not like to criticize Israeli leaders or Israeli policy. They want to look up to Israel. Israelis are highly critical of the leadership and its policies. Israelis are merciless on this — they cut to the bone. Howard Squadron mentioned that we need a consensus in Israel so as to provide the basis for some sort of Hasbara policy. But never have Israelis been more polarized.

On the basis of Israelis' answers to the following question, I can tell which political parties they belong to: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The Israeli government should continue settlements in the West Bank with continued vigor despite peace negotiations or any other consideration?'" Even if the respondents hedge in answering this question, I can categorize them politically. Never was this true before.

When I began polling in the 1960s, and all through the 1970s, I observed that there were hawks and there were doves, but their party allegiances was varied. Perhaps the opposition tended to have a few more hawks than doves when Labor was in power. Today, party identification is unbelievably polarized and ferocious. This was not true even one year ago. And what's even more interesting is that it's the opposition (the Labor alignment) that has become more set in its beliefs.

Two years ago you couldn't get two percent of the population to say anything nice about the Peace Now movement. A poll recently showed that 24 percent of the population has positive feelings toward Peace Now. When asked about specific stands of Peace Now, the support increases. The results of this poll are symbolic of the opposition's willingness to use any kind of opening to be provocative. This trend presents a real stumbling block toward the development of any kind of consensus. This applies to policy regarding the West Bank and the economy. Any Hasbara campaign will have to be carried out in the face of vociferous opposition at times in Israel. This is something American Jews are used to, even expect, but which Israelis have difficulty in accepting. □

# The Perils of a Youthful Press Corps

*Although notions of objectivity are important, the press' historical memory is short*

By David Rubin

**J**ournalism is a young person's business. Paul Miller, the man who responded to criticisms concerning NBC's reporting of the war in Lebanon, is bureau chief, and he's only in his early 30s. What does this mean for Israel? What kind of impact will it have on the type of reporting done here? First, it means that the journalists who are already here and who are going to come here have no direct connection with and probably no knowledge of the birth of Israel. They will relate to the Holocaust from textbooks. They will not have experienced it either in the U.S. Army or any other way. They probably know nothing about the 1956 Suez invasion. In fact, they come to Israel as they would come to most other countries: pretty blank. They don't carry the emotions that you have. It's also likely that they won't be Jewish Americans either.

This means that Israelis must educate journalists as they arrive so that they understand the context in which they report. You can't take for granted that they will have certain kinds of facts at their fingertips or particular kinds of feelings and emotions. Never lose sight of the youthfulness of the press corps. It is unfortunate that the press loses its historical memory so quickly because of the reporters' regular rotation. I wish that there were more people in their 50s and 60s who would stay and report.

American journalists are different from European journalists, and they are different from Soviet-bloc journalists. The notion of objectivity is still very important to most American journalists. It is for this reason that Paul Miller opted to speak to us. Mr. Miller came here because he cares about facts, he cares about being right; he doesn't think he has a point of view. And I suggest to you that Mr. Miller is not unique among American journalists. You can get to people like him with information, with hard evidence.

European journalists, people who may work for *Le Monde*, for example, and similar papers, are somewhat more subjective. European journalists write from a particular point of view, because that's why they are read. Their audiences would be shocked if, all of a sudden, the political positions of those journalists changed or were muted. Since

I don't deal with European journalists, I can't help you in developing a strategy to cope with European journalists.

Soviet-bloc journalists are probably the easiest to deal with. They have the least amount of freedom in what they do. They must interpret events here through the lens of the Soviet party line.

The point of these observations is to indicate that all of these journalists are not part of some monolith. Israel needs to be sophisticated in its approach toward them. The results will be markedly better than if you treat them all uniformly. Now let us consider specifically what attitude Israelis might adopt with American journalists. How should you deal with them?

First, I think it is wrong for Israel to try and persuade journalists to join the Israeli team. You will not succeed in this — American journalists do not want to be on your team. They don't want to be perceived as being on *anybody's team*, except that of the United States.

Second, American journalists do not want to be pals with you. They don't really want to become our friends. That isn't to say that friendships might not grow between some of you and some of them. That happens. But in fact they are not here to make friends, either. American journalists also do not want to be outwardly or obviously manipulated or patronized. When we talk about public relations and what public relations can do, you have to be very careful in how you conduct your public relations efforts, because American journalists are fairly sophisticated about it, and will easily become annoyed when they feel they are being manipulated.

American journalists want straight answers and consistency. Inconsistency makes them look bad at the home office. They want access to information, an occasional scoop, an exclusive story that will make them look good at home. They also want what I call "stroking," that is, they would like to go to lunch now and then, just to stay in touch. This is different from a friendship, it is a business relationship.

In spite of some of the remarks we have heard, I would say American journalists maintain a reservoir of good will toward Israel. In 1979-80 Robert Lichter conducted a study

called "Television Coverage of the Middle East" in which he polled foreign correspondents about their attitudes toward United States policy. He found that American foreign correspondents were strongly supportive of the U.S. obligation to protect Israel. The press corps, in fact, was more strongly supportive of that obligation than the American public in general.

Most importantly, no matter how a journalist feels toward Israel, no major American journalist is likely to stray too far from the U.S. government position in his writing about Israel. If you detect a chill, for example, in American press coverage of Israel, then you will also be able to detect a parallel development in the Reagan Administration. It takes a very courageous journalist to assume a different position or stance from his or her own government. U.S. coverage of the Soviet Union waxes or wanes, depending on whether the American Government is focusing on the Soviet Union as our partner in detente or as our most feared enemy. Therefore, we must recognize that if relations between the United States and Israel deteriorate, it is going to be exceedingly difficult to maintain good relations with the American press. You will have to work doubly hard.

I want to emphasize the journalists' need for a consistent framework in which to present the actions of the government they are covering. Let me give you an American example.

Stephen Hass, an analyst with the Brookings Institution, theorizes that the American press in Washington measures any administration by its consistency in articulating its policy, and then in living up to and adhering to that policy. Governments become the objects of criticism when spokespersons contradict one another, when it becomes clear that the articulated policy is not in fact the policy that's been worked toward, that there are hidden agendas, that in fact there may be no consistent policy at all. At that point the American press moves in to announce that the Administration is in disarray, that it has no policy. This happened to the Carter Administration very early on. It happened to the Reagan Administration later, although with lesser severity.

The press needs a consistent framework. It is its security blanket. It would be very useful for Israel (to try to the extent that it is possible) to outline some sort of framework with respect to its efforts to achieve peace. I select this issue in particular because one public opinion poll reveals that 44 percent of the American public believes that Israel's leaders do not want peace with the Arabs. If that figure is true, and if that figure were to grow, then the American press would not remain friendly toward a country it views as being belligerent.

Let us move on to procedures and techniques of Hasbara. Israeli censorship is a particularly sensitive issue. On the NBC clips we saw yesterday everything was marked "censored by Israeli authorities." I think that damaged other, favorable information enormously. It also gave the impression to Americans that Israel is a society in which censorship is practiced to the same degree that it is practiced in Arab countries. We all know that is not the case. But the average television viewer may not know this. As a result, I would say, procedurally, the first thing that Israel ought to consider is how to eliminate as much censorship as is possible.

When President Reagan moves to close off information on

the Pentagon or to mark things "Top Secret," the press immediately becomes upset. Attempts to narrow the press's access to information constitute one of its few rallying points. The American public may not understand a great deal about democracy, but it certainly understands that censorship has no real part in a democracy. One of the most valuable things Israel could do would be to review its policy on what information must absolutely remain secret and what can be opened to the public without endangering security. Others have admitted that censorship in Israel on many questions is impossible. Frequently, within hours of an event, information leaks. In that case, it seems better to avoid censoring such material at all, and to make it available right away.

Many argued that live television coverage of the war in Lebanon should not have been allowed. Not too long ago everyone avowed that the presence of American television in Vietnam was instrumental in ending the war, because it brought the war's ugliness into the living rooms of Americans all across the nation. We had massive television coverage in the United States of the Vietnam War, night after night, for at least six years — and the war didn't end. In fact, the Vietnam War was the only war aired daily on television.

It is very simplistic to assert that television coverage of a war will hasten its end. The American experience contradicts such a belief. Does Israel plan to wage a war of that magnitude over a six-year period? I doubt it. Therefore, I would say that you don't need to fear television coverage at the front.

The next question to consider is where Israel should focus its Hasbara efforts — in Israel or the United States? I personally would start with the international press corps here in Israel, if for no other reason than that the journalists based here are interested almost exclusively in you. Journalists in America are interested in a variety of subjects and events. Many crises will emanate from there. And Washington will always have its own peculiar view of things which you will be less able to affect than the interpretation of events occurring here.

My next priority would be in placing well-trained people in Washington, D.C., who can brief Pentagon and State Department reporters in the U.S. My third priority would be placing people in key European capitals and other world capitals. My last would be to focus on other American cities outside of Washington.

In dealing with American journalists, you should distinguish between two types. One communicates principally with large masses of people and the other deals with a particular audience. The former work for network radio, television and the wire services. They require basic "breaking" news and pictures — nothing very sophisticated. Deadlines rule their lives. The latter — who work for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, the news and opinion magazines, European publications — need a different approach.

It would also help if Israel had a chief spokesperson in charge of communicating with the press. Those who served in this capacity for American presidents and cabinet officers performed an important role and continue to contribute to America in significant ways. Consider a recent roster of press spokespeople: Pierre Salinger for John Kennedy,



James Hagerty for Dwight D. Eisenhower, Bill Moyers for Lyndon Johnson, Hodding Carter for Cyrus Vance. During the Iranian hostage crisis, the American government's performance was, overall, horrendous. But Hodding Carter's sophistication and intelligence presented the best face possible to the press corps. These are the kinds of people needed in Israel.

A single spokesperson would not work. No such person

exists in the United States. Rather, we have a main spokesman at the White House, one at the State Department, one at the Pentagon. I think, however, that the White House does coordinate all these activities to some degree. In sum, Israel needs to train people who can assume responsibility for setting an agenda and priorities, and who can articulate its goals through level-headed and sophisticated spokespeople. □

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# Discussion

## August 17, Afternoon Session

**Dan Pattir:** I think that David Rubin's model of an American correspondent is missing some important characteristics. Foreign correspondents, particularly American ones, coming to Israel are the victims of their own milieux and cultures. The Americans' terms of reference are applicable to the American socio-political scene. Members of the electronic media are more apt to fall prey to this influence since they must summarize complex situations in 60 or 90 seconds at best. These journalists unwittingly use terms familiar to viewers in the U.S. but which are not exactly applicable to events here. They inadvertently misrepresent the facts, and, in their own turn, Americans misinterpret the information they receive.

American correspondents have also refined the crafts of nuance and insinuation. When they want to attribute a report as official, but it's not official, they say: "Israeli state radio says" or "Israeli state television said." Everyone here knows very well that Israeli state television is not the mouthpiece of the Government. It is as "official" as the BBC in London, and is more often critical of Israeli government policy than the BBC is of British policy. But to those living in the United States, such an attribution lends the aura of government authority. To complicate matters further, when major events take place, the "big stars" replace the local correspondents who were better acquainted with the situation.

The expectations of American and most Western journalists are unrealistic. They expect unlimited access, freedom and advanced technol-

ogy. Sometimes I feel that American correspondents demand that Israel provide the service of any state in the U.S. — they expect a perfect telephone system, instant satellite transmission all around the world. In most cases, I think, Israel provides more than most countries. When correspondents are confronted with reality they become disenchanted and then they become critical.

**Irwin Cotler:** I want to return to the notion of dissent which Leon Wieseltier discussed earlier. The word dissent is used widely in the Jewish community to signal disagreement with Israeli government policy. I believe we need to refine what we mean by dissent. Otherwise the Hasbara effort in America will suffer.

For example, we ought to distinguish between dissent in an Israeli Jewish context, and the notion of dissent in what I would call the public arena. While criticism of any Israeli government policy or practice may be called dissent within an Israeli Jewish context, it is anything but that in a public one. Criticism from American intellectuals of the Begin government does not constitute dissent as such. On the contrary, such views are applauded among academics and representatives of the media. In America, dissent is valued. Therefore the "dissenting" views in Israel are more highly respected in the U.S. Frequently, Israeli mainstream or governmental views do not receive an adequate hearing. Ironically, anyone who supports the Likud in America is a dissenter within mainstream American political culture. Peace Now maintains an exalted political status. The result: Hasbara efforts

are discriminated against because the spectrum of legitimate political discourse is contracted. Also, Americans receive a misleading impression as to what the majority of Israelis believe. Finally, it tends to distort the general spectrum of public debate in America. What was previously an even-handed discussion on the Middle East has now been cast as pro-Israeli, and what was previously regarded as pro-Arab is now considered even-handed. We have got to try and change this, and present what, in fact, is the majority viewpoint in Israel.

Dan Pattir touched on how Israel is portrayed and perceived. This battle of images is crucial. Of late, the media have focused on an Israel that is against human rights. That is not too surprising. Israel originally based its claim to survival on grounds of morality. Human rights have been its organizing idiom. Further, America is a legalistic society. It is obsessed with due process. Portraying Israel as a state that prohibits or limits human rights is a very effective way of undermining the country. I recently went to Kramer's, a well-known book store in Washington, D.C. — popular among the foreign policy elite. In its Middle East section the books focus on human rights problems in Israel. The question of the settlements is a particularly popular point of debate. Whether or not the American population understands the technical arguments regarding the alleged illegality of the settlements, they do understand the basic point. Israel doesn't belong there. By inference, Israel itself has become some kind of illegitimate entity.

**Eliyahu Tal:** I am an ex-advertising man, now engaged in propaganda, a word which I do not shun.

The Arabs have been mounting a very successful propaganda campaign against us. They have printed numerous posters showing Arafat with a dove in one hand and a gun in the other. Another poster depicts Ariel Sharon with the dead of Shatila and Sabra. Behind him are a Magen David and an American flag. Yet another shows an Arab being crucified — an appeal to the Christian world. The Arabs have about 50 different posters which they distribute through their 80-some offices all over the world. We have only three or four such posters. American Jews should hold an international poster contest in which hundreds of artists could participate. Surely some person or group could sponsor such a contest. It should cost about \$60,000. I don't think we should produce posters like those of the Arabs, but we should have some touting our point of view. We need something to counter the poison the other side is spreading.

I am further bothered by the distorted images of both the Arabs and the Jews living in Judea and Samaria. On the one hand the press describes poor Arab inhabitants of the so-called West Bank in the so-called Israeli occupied territories. How we ever let these two concepts become established by the media in the minds of the public is beyond my understanding. I suggested a few years ago that any document addressed to the words West Bank be returned with the stamp "address unknown." Television programs show only the unsympathetic faces of a Rabbi Levinger or Rabbi Kahane. We never see the real pioneers, ordinary people who are roughing it out in the Judean Desert. It would be more appropriate to compare them to those who first explored and settled the wild West. We need to talk about individuals and their sacrifices.

Arabs' images do not fare much better. Few people outside the Middle East realize that about 70,000 Arabs rise early every morning to go to their jobs on the coast in Israel. During the war in Lebanon these Arabs didn't strike for one single day; they didn't perform a single act of sabotage when their self-styled leader, Yasir Arafat,

was trapped in Beirut. Can there be any better proof that the Arab majority in Israel doesn't truly identify itself with the PLO? A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Why doesn't the press discuss the establishment of six universities in June 1967? King Hussein allowed only one university to exist because he knew universities would be centers of unrest and ideological debate. Why don't we read about the Bedouin boy who became the largest earth-moving contractor in Israel? Or the headwaiter at the Sharon Hotel, an Arab, who won the distinction from the Ministry of Tourism for being the outstanding waiter in Israel? He was very proud of the award. Why are there no stories about the two Arab players in our national soccer team? Although we may not have the financial resources of the Arabs, we do have the allegiance and intellectual resources of Jewish communities around the world. We must use them to our own best advantage.

**Ze'ev Chafets:** In response to what was said I want to make some comments on PLO intimidation of Western reporters in the Middle East. Not enough has been written or said about this. I will mention only a few examples — some of which have appeared in the press.

In 1975, Ibrahim Amar, a Egyptian correspondent for a Yugoslav publication, was murdered in Beirut by a PLO group, Saika. They locked Omar and his co-workers in their office, which they doused with kerosene and set aflame. In 1973 Phillip Caputo, then a correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, and now a novelist living in Florida, was kidnapped and held prisoner by the PLO for the better part of a week. In a series of articles published in the *Tribune*, he described how his life was threatened during the captivity, and that as a result of that captivity he had contemplated suicide. Several years later, left wing gunmen shot him as he was walking down the street from his office in West Beirut. After he was released from the hospital, he left Beirut for good. The *Tribune* moved its office from Beirut to Tel Aviv.

Arab journalists have also been victims of terrorism. In March 1980, Salim Lawsi, editor and publisher of

*El Hawadess*, a weekly Lebanese magazine, was kidnapped at a Syrian road block near the Beirut International Airport and murdered; his mutilated body was found later in July 1980. Riyad Taha, who was the head of the Lebanese Press Association and one of Lebanon's most prominent journalists, was murdered in broad daylight in the streets of Beirut.

Bernd Debusmann, Reuters' Beirut bureau chief, was shot and badly wounded after a party at the home of the BBC correspondent in June 1980. Syrian intelligence had threatened him earlier because of articles Debusmann had been writing about the political difficulties of Syrian President Assad.

Harrassment of reporters in the Middle East extends beyond Beirut. At the time of the attack on the Iraqi reactor, two NBC staffers were arrested and held incommunicado by Iraqi authorities. At the request of NBC, this went unreported until they were released. Throughout the week in which the two NBC employees were held hostage, NBC not only failed to report the fact, but continued to report on the situation as though nothing had happened.

**Yosef Goell:** I have the impression from recent lecture tours and meetings with people in America and various other countries, that interest abroad in the Arab-Israel dispute is declining. People have tired of the issue. After all, why should other people be interested in this? How many take an active interest in Afghanistan? It is natural for our interest to wane eventually in such far-off disputes. The Arab-Israel confrontation has been a major exception until now. At some point, a third party will lose or lessen its interest in such things. I would argue that this decline in interest is to our benefit. Anything that we can do to direct other people's attention away from the Arab-Israel conflict is good for us.

In the United States, "settlements" has become a dirty word. Why has it become a dirty word? *In part* because of the work of Peace Now and other opposition spokesmen from Israel who visit the States to propagate their point of view. But I would argue very strenuously that it is *largely* due to the Gush Emunim settlers themselves, who invited publicity for activities which should have been carried on

without any fanfare at all.

For example, for many years now Israeli Jews have been building settlements in the Golan Heights. Yet these settlements have largely passed without attention from the foreign media. The Golan has not been settled secretly. Any foreign correspondent who wants to can go there and write whatever he wants. No one bothers, however, because it hasn't become an issue. By contrast, whenever a group of people plan to establish a settlement on the territories, one of the first things it does is to call CBS and the *New York Times* to tell them that it plans to plant a flag on top of a hill. In such cases, publicity is unhelpful, particularly since nearly all the foreign correspondents oppose the settlements.

We should concentrate our Hasbara efforts on things we do well. For example, when people come to visit and are given an exhaustive three- or seven-day tour of the country, they inevitably come away impressed with our geographical and political problems, and with our achievements. Such tours are not a panacea for Hasbara ills, but they are helpful.

Hebrew University had a summer program called Journalism in Jerusalem that was begun by a professor of journalism at Boston University. American and other foreign journalism students would stay in the country six to eight weeks, during which time they took two very intense academic courses for credit. They traveled extensively around the country. They interviewed Israelis and Arabs and even had the chance to live with Israeli families in different settings. Some of these students will be important journalists in ten or fifteen years. Their experience in Israel will, I hope, color their writing on Israel.

**Yoram Ettinger:** I believe that Hasbara is a form of education par excellence. Propaganda is counterproductive as far as Hasbara is concerned, particularly when directed toward intelligent audiences. Our Hasbara efforts should be targeted to a particular audience rather than to a massive number of people whose contribution is, at best, doubtful.

I believe our Hasbara efforts should recognize that even intelligent observers — media people, activists, policymakers — are not well-versed in

the basic facts of the Middle East. Many erroneously assume that these people are well-educated in the history and politics of this part of the world. We should never assume that anything is obvious or self-evident. Hasbara should devote itself to clarifying or at least highlighting the many aspects of complex issues.

I would also suggest that we should focus more closely on inter-Arab affairs. We need to help explain why King Hussein has not joined Camp David, why he hasn't embraced the Reagan Plan. From such an explanation it would become evident that internal Arab politics, not the settlements, are preventing King Hussein from joining in the peace process.

**Ben Wattenberg:** American journalists get a lot of their information from Israeli journalists, who are often intensely critical of their government. I wish I had a dollar for every time I heard an Israeli reporter call a government person a thug or a fascist. Unfortunately, these are direct quotations. American journalists pick up on these statements. I'm not trying to put a muzzle on these Israelis, but we ought to recognize that the foreign press gets most of its material from Israelis.

**Nehemia Meyers:** One way to mobilize American Jewish opinion is through the American Jewish press. The problem is that the Anglo-Jewish press is substandard. I frequently write for these newspapers myself. I am well acquainted with them. The reason for their poor level is lack of funds. They live on a hand-to-mouth basis, making their money primarily from notices about bar mitzvahs and weddings and other such things. They don't have the money or the time or the talent to deal with news in a proper manner. Therefore, most intelligent Jews do not read the Anglo-Jewish press. University people and other intellectuals may or may not read *Commentary* or *Present Tense* or one of the more sophisticated publications. They certainly don't read the Anglo-Jewish press.

The American Jewish community ought to think about putting a great deal of talent and money into improving the level of the Anglo-Jewish press, at least so that someone who reads the *New York Times* won't feel ashamed to pick up the local Jewish

newspaper.

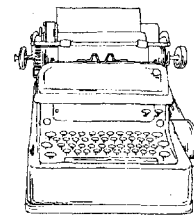
**Erwin Frenkel:** Because Israel is very dependent on how the world press portrays it, I think we ought to concentrate on the accountability of the media. No matter what most believe, the media are, in fact, responsive to criticism. I would suggest the establishment of a sophisticated apparatus of accountability. Such an apparatus would be very complicated and costly. Can we afford not to do it?

In the Diaspora, especially in the United States, the political system is accountable. Perhaps we can develop a system that would translate this accountability in a systematic, consistent fashion. Such a structure of accountability could not focus on Israel alone.

Why hasn't it ever been done? During the first week of the war in Lebanon, I rushed to the Columbia School of Journalism with ideas. But the school has limited funds. Moreover, it has to worry about its donors.

I went to the *New York Times* with an article critical of the press. I was told that the *Times* wouldn't criticize other news organizations. The press has no internal system that regularly investigates itself. We are in need of an outside institution, connected, perhaps, to universities, to act as an independent observer.

The National News Council in the United States is an institution which tries to make news organizations accountable for their reporting. It is an American clone of the British Press Council. These two institutions have not been overwhelmingly influential. These institutions are not the answer. □



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# Summary and Recommendations

## A Hasbara Office

By Elad Peled

In 1969 I chaired an inquiry commission on Hasbara which submitted its report to the late Golda Meir, who was then Prime Minister. In rereading the report submitted in December 1969, I found that I could present it here today as if it were written yesterday.

This surprised me because in 1969 we were still basking in the afterglow of the Six Day War. In studying the 1969 report I sought to determine whether or not its recommendations depended on a particular political environment. At that time Israel was still considered the underdog. Neither the settlements issue nor the Lebanon engagement had spoiled our image in the eyes of the world. Yet even at that time, the report referred again and again to *mechdelai hasbara* — Hasbara failures. In fact, that phrase practically became a slogan. The committee did find, however, that criticisms of government-sponsored Hasbara were fundamentally unconscious criticisms on policy.

On the eve of the Six Day War, world sympathy toward Israel was at its peak. Since then, this sympathy has declined. This has been expressed in several ways — through criticism of Israel's policy on the territories, of our dedication to make peace, and of our relations with Arab states and the Palestinians. In addition, the world perceives Israel as a state using power, with little consideration for morality and justice. Many feel, even Israel's friends, that in its effort to retain the territorial gains of the Six Day War, Israel prefers to maintain the status quo, and obstructs proposals leading to peace, thereby endangering world peace.

This change in attitude, the committee found, was a consequence of Israel appearing to be a military power that didn't need international support. Israel was a dynamic state, with advanced military, scientific, technological and moral potential. The Arab states were depicted as having inferior military, scientific, technological and moral capabilities.

The report found that temporary problems, such as a statement by some government official, were not the principal source of trouble for Hasbara. Rather, the main problem was that we are in a real conflict between two groups fighting for the same piece of land. Each party is convinced of the justness of its claim. We think we are more just, more right. The Arabs probably think the same thing. This creates a basic problem for Hasbara, a problem which I do not believe an advertising gimmick can easily solve.

Another cause of Hasbara failures was our indifference to our actions' appearance to the outside world. Demolishing the home of a terrorist looks bad, no matter what. You can't

explode a house in the middle of a crowded neighborhood and sell it like toothpaste. Nothing can compete with the television camera focusing on the explosion and then on children and women crying.

This is a major weakness. Both Labor and Likud are guilty of this. The attitude since the days of Ben Gurion has been that we don't care what the *goyim* think, we only care about what the Jews do. But much of the success of Jews in Israel depends on what the *goyim* are saying.

Hasbara suffers from organizational limitations, insufficient personnel and sometimes unclear political guidelines. Strengthening Hasbara in these three areas is vital. Therefore, as far back as 1969, we recommended that the government form a Hasbara authority in the Prime Minister's office. Let me explain briefly why we proposed that kind of a bastard organization. In a period of nine months the committee interviewed more than 50 people from Israel and abroad to discuss our Hasbara problems. Our conversations with these people made us realize that "Ministry of Information" smacks of totalitarianism. Instead of recommending a separate ministry, we suggested an office under the Prime Minister's purview.

We also recommended that this office be represented in every policymaking body — from the inner circle of government to the Foreign and Defense Ministries to military headquarters dealing with operations which have a Hasbara impact. This requires professional coordination from the top.

We realized at the time that any Minister of Foreign Affairs would strongly object to the usurpation of Hasbara functions. To fend off such fears we recommended two lines of operation similar to those in the army. A military organization maintains a command line on the one hand, and a staff or professional line on the other. For example, there is a medical officer in the Northern Command in charge of that area. His boss is the Chief Medical Officer of the Israel Defense Forces. But his immediate superior is the General Commander of the Northern Command. Similarly, we described a Hasbara attache — or minister or whatever — working abroad under the Ambassador, but professionally under the guidance of the Hasbara authority in Israel.

Finally, we found that 70 to 80 percent of Hasbara which is targeted for audiences abroad is prepared here in Israel. That being the case, we said, we should focus on improving our efforts here. We should work harder to improve our contacts with representatives in Israel. Someone should be coordinating the various ministries and overseeing dissemination of material to foreigners. □

# Dissonant Images

By Judith Elizur

**B**efore analyzing the roots of the media's attitude toward Israel, I first want to address the fragile nature of Israeli democracy today. Some of our American friends assume that a Ministry of Information would be in no danger of becoming a Ministry of National Guidance. If this Ministry of Information were mandated to do Hasbara work for overseas consumption only, then I would have less of a problem with it. The U.S. Information Agency operates under such a stricture. In fact, when it made a Kennedy assassination film, it had to get a special Act of Congress in order to receive permission to show the film in the United States, lest it be construed as political propaganda in favor of one political party.

But we know that every Knesset member feels he or she has a God-given right to attack the press on every possible occasion. This sentiment isn't confined only to Knesset members. Just recently, for example, Ariel Sharon asserted that 50 journalists here in Israel were responsible for sowing national discord. This hostile, antagonistic attitude toward the free press is typical. This lack of appreciation for the functions a free press performs in a democracy has trickled down to the street. It has also affected the army.

On several occasions I have given lectures at the army staff college. Every year I feel the audience is that much more hostile to the critical function of a free press in a healthy democracy. When citizens feel hostile toward the local press, it isn't surprising that they also feel hostile toward the foreign press. This affects our care and handling of foreign correspondents.

Israel's attitudes toward the media are just one side of the coin. The other side, of course, is the media's attitude toward Israel. On the first night of the Dialogue, Howard Squadron mentioned what he called a "gotcha" syndrome. One partial explanation for this could be linked to the notion of ambivalence, i.e., that when you react to an object toward which you are initially ambivalent, you overreact. Other objects have not elicited such reactions. For instance, when France set off H-bombs in the Pacific — despite the protests of the islanders there — the international community did very little about it. They shook their heads, but that was all. When Israel bombed the nuclear reactor in Iraq, the sky fell in. Feelings toward France are not ambivalent to begin with, whereas toward Israel, there is considerable ambivalence, and this is one source of amplification for the negative response.

I believe the root of this ambivalence is the existence of Israeli power. The very fact of Israeli military power creates for most Christians, including Eastern Europe, a deeply felt dissonance.

Israeli power cannot be separated from Jewish power. For the Christian world, the notion of a Jewish State has a very deep resonance, harking back to a stereotype that antedates

the state. The old stereotype of the Jew saw him as the embodiment of weakness and vulnerability. If Israel is seen as the Jewish State, it should logically therefore be the collective embodiment, the representation of those same "Jewish traits." I submit that in 1948, when the State of Israel was founded, it was precisely this perception that made the state acceptable to the Christian world. Israel provided a refuge for Holocaust survivors.

Every other modern nation-state in the world is characterized by sovereignty, that is, it is expected to embody some element of control, of power and strength. In this sense, Israel's image at the outset was abnormal, since weakness was its central characteristic, as perceived by the Christian world. Weakness and vulnerability are the secular parallels for the negative religious characteristics of the traditional Jewish stereotype. Many Christians believe that Jews committed deicide and deserve to suffer for their continuing denial of Jesus' divinity. When Israel became a state in 1948, the deicide doctrine was still dogma for the Catholic Church. Its attitude affected the rest of the Christian world, too. In 1965 Vatican II altered this view. But a 1970 study reveals that American Protestants and Catholics persist in this condemnatory attitude toward today's Jews.

The 1967 Six Day War transformed Israel's image into something akin to the normal images of any other state. The exercise of power was dazzling, irrefutable, indelible. We are still living with the results of that war today. Yet this image normalization caused tremendous dissonance with the old stereotype which still lurks behind the image of the Jewish State. Jews weren't supposed to be strong or exercise power. Subsequently, every time that Israel has demonstrated its might, this dissonance has been exacerbated.

The exercise of power in itself is not always perceived as bad. Entebbe was an acceptable exercise of strength on moral grounds. Israel rescued innocent victims from terrorists. This moral dimension in Israel's image keeps the dissonance with the old stereotype within tolerable bounds.

Our actions and the perception of our actions in Lebanon were too much for the outside world. The nature of Israeli democracy, our overall moral stance, were destroyed by nightly television pictures of Israel bombing Beirut — even on days when we didn't run bombing missions. Our role in Sabra and Shatila shocked all of us. And in the eyes of the world this destroyed any claim to moral superiority. The international press was able to say "gotcha."

Because so much of the international coverage has concentrated on the power aspect of our image, it's very easy for our enemies to demonize us. Lebanon was just one opportunity. The 1983 spring orgy over the alleged poisoning of Arab girls on the West Bank was yet another. The very accusation — poisoning — smacks of medieval tales of Jews poisoning wells. Only if one realizes how palpable the old stereotype still is can one possibly explain why this modern tale was bought and propagated by the media.

We are sometimes our own worst enemy. Too many Israelis follow the lead of Meir Kahane, Moshe Levinger, Hanan Porat and even Gideon Patt, in urging that the Arabs should be carted away in taxis to the other side of the Jordan River. Too many people loosely refer to our demographic problem and imply such a solution. These spokesmen ignore the fact that if such an exodus were to occur, it

would be aired live all over the world thanks to the cameras on the other side of the Jordan. Our people, of course, would never allow the foreign press to witness such a forced exodus on our side of the border. Can you imagine what would happen to our image as a democratic, moral state at that point?

Because the "power dimension" of Israel's image is so problematic, it seems to me that Hasbara must concentrate on reinforcing other aspects of Israel that have a positive appeal — medicine, agriculture, science, archaeology — which limit the dissonance that our power arouses in the Christian world. We have been too preoccupied with extinguishing political brush fires. We need to devote more of our resources to long-range image-making. We must recreate a multi-dimensional image of Israel which will assure us the basic support we require in times of crisis. □

## Defining Our Goals

By Joseph Block

I have spent most of my business career developing images that are not based on a product's attributes, but on what people perceive and desire to know about a product or concept. Image development does not rely on advertising gimmicks or the black art of public relations; it is a process within the realm of public ideas and public perceptions. A budget of \$300 million does make it a little bit easier to achieve results. There are considerable complexities to this enterprise within the corporate environment. Various government agencies — from the Federal Drug Administration to the Securities and Exchange Commission to the Better Business Bureau (not to mention the 50 state legislatures) — place all kinds of requirements and restrictions on our activities. We just don't buy air time or newspaper space and say whatever we want.

I have outlined my notes on the presentations and discussions we have had over the past three days, in an attempt to boil down statements relative to the formulation of strategy, and to draw some conclusions for the direction we might take in the future. In corporate communications we call this 'building a case study'. Nothing can be done without taking a basic, systematic approach to resolving the problem. In this case our objective is Hasbara. Probably the first strategic element mentioned was that if you speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far. Next, we heard the suggestion that a skilled communicator should be appointed to explain policy to the United States. Explain is a public relations word — it is inherent to developing an image. Professional training was another strategy. In developing a plan for Hasbara strategy, it was noted, our goals must be modest.

We also talked about our product, Israel. Although the product is not an awful one, its image has declined since 1967. We virtually all agreed that Israel has failed to use the media positively. Public relations strategies learned from the

Lebanese war include: 1) the need for a consensus when conducting a war; 2) protection against loss of credibility at home or abroad; 3) promptness with information — sacrificing accuracy (for example, giving approximate body counts before final ones are available). Promptness is critical. It was also suggested that Israel establish an apparatus to manage news information.

American Jews can be extremely effective in Hasbara. American journalists, David Rubin observed, tend to be young. We need to educate them about the basic history of the region. At the same time, American journalists don't want to be the objects of propaganda. They want to see the facts for themselves. They don't want to be patronized or manipulated; what they want is consistency and straight talk. In addition, a press office should be equipped to offer foreign journalists an occasional exclusive or scoop.

I see two needs for information. One I'll call Corporate or Public Affairs, which would deal with government policy as well as decisions made by the Cabinet and the executive branch. The other I would simply call Information. It would be charged with being the caretaker of Israel's image. Its employees would separate politics from image. Overall, Hasbara should stress the importance of Israel as a vital ally to the United States and the only democracy in the Middle East. Hasbara should reconcile the two extremes that Ehud Olmert described: military strength versus political uncertainty. Hasbara should strive to open the minds and hearts of Americans, and look ahead and anticipate future problems. Companion organization offices — one in the United States and the other in Israel — should work hand in hand to achieve these goals. □

## Taking the Offensive

By Mark Stroock

Public relations campaigns don't win every case. Neither do lawyers. It's essential, however, to recognize that if your enemy is going to engage in public relations or Hasbara efforts, then you had better be prepared to counteract what it does or you'll get clobbered.

We have all been beating our breasts about the negative media coverage during the war in Lebanon. Some of the negative coverage was, perhaps, a result of prejudice, lack of information, lack of knowledge. But some of it, I submit to you, was because the Syrians and the PLO handled the press extremely well. They allowed reporters to write from the front lines from the very start. Apparently Israel did not permit that. The result: days before stories came out of Jerusalem, they were disseminated from East Beirut.

A cardinal rule in public relations says that when you know bad news is in the offing, you had better do something about it before your enemy seizes on the opportunity to make you look bad. Publish your side of the story first. That, at least, will enhance your credibility. Observers will

say: "These guys were honest enough to tell me what was happening."

I don't think Israel has followed this rule. For example, if the government decides it is going to annex the West Bank — you must be prepared to handle the public reaction to such a decision. I am not indicating what I think Israel should or should not do. I simply want to underscore the fact a decision is one with which Israel will have to live for a very long time. Appropriate Hasbara planning is mandatory.

No one here has discussed the importance of attitude research mentioned earlier. Someone noted before that a recent Roper poll did not indicate a significant change of attitude in the U.S. toward Israel during the 1982 war. That's probably true to some extent. But that kind of research can be misleading. Israel needs to enter into what we call in-depth research, focused group research. This type of research studies the attitudes of ten or twelve people with similar demographic backgrounds. What do these individuals understand certain buzzwords and slogans to mean? What is on their minds? What are their true attitudes? What are their real prejudices — both positive and negative?

Whether or not Israel should set up a Hasbara office or Ministry of Information is for you to decide. I would suggest, however, that you begin to analyze who it is you wish to influence, your strategy and tactics. Learn to develop issues papers and "what-if" scenarios. Those involved in these activities should not be concerned with policy. They

must focus on describing a given event and its effect.

I would also recommend the establishment of a press office — that is, a place where journalists can go to receive information and be taken care of in a broader sense. In addition to this you need a press spokesperson who is involved in policy development.

To train some of the individuals who can become part of a professional Hasbara outfit, I would suggest that Israel send five interns to the U.S. to work in different public relations agencies. When they return to Israel, require that each do a public relations tour of duty for the country. Then, if they wish, they would be free to start their own agencies.

In the United States the Army, Air Force and Navy each run every fine public information schools for their officers. Perhaps the Israeli Army could run similar programs. In addition Israel should consider advertising campaigns analogous to those of Mobil Oil Corporation in the United States. Mobil publishes some hard-hitting issue advertising, but it also publishes a barrage of what I call "goo-goo advertising" through its sponsorship of high quality programs on public television. To a lesser degree, Israel can generate positive feelings about the country by publicizing its scientific, artistic, agricultural, educational and other non-political achievements. Such stories are not as pivotal as political press, but they do create a positive backdrop for what Israel says and does.

These are only a few steps Israel can take to improve its image. I believe the effort is interesting and worthwhile. □

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# Discussion

## August 18, Morning Session

**Stan Moss:** For a country as small as Israel, the number of journalists who come to this country is unbelievable. By and large, most of the work they do is quite good. But we expect quite a lot from this country — more than citizens of Great Britain or France or Germany or even the U.S. expect from their countries. I don't think any of these countries would have done much better with the media had they been in a position similar to ours in the Lebanon war. We did a fairly good job. I think the assumption that if we improve our manipulation of the press it will write stories more amicable to Israel is false. I think that Judith Elizur is right on target when she suggests that we establish a program which has long-term implications for this country rather than focusing on immediate crises. The only way to affect journalists opinions significantly is to emphasize the values of this country on a regular basis.

**Dan Bavly:** Good Hasbara cannot be wholly separated from policy. We hope that our American friends will be able to take a more activist posture as amplifiers of our policy, but they should not be regarded nor regard themselves as mere bullhorns. They have every right to voice what they think about Israel. To paraphrase Ben Gurion, we may be critical of what we see in Israel, regardless of Hasbara. But we should put up an intelligent Hasbara front, tucking away the house problems in a back room.

**Elias Buchwald:** In my business we look at the internal and external components of the institution with which we are dealing. We can't explain the importance of a corporate institution — what it stands for, where it is going, and so on — until the company's employees and officers understand what their institution is all about. Unity of purpose is critical in my field and, I would suggest, in Hasbara.

**Yonah Alexander:** We cannot isolate what is happening in terms of Hasbara in the United States from

what's happening elsewhere in the world, say, the Third World or the Arab countries. Unless we look at Hasbara as an instrument for advancing a political process, we will be missing the larger picture. I would therefore submit to you that we must reassess the perceptual approach to Hasbara in terms of political communication and persuasion.

On the tactical level, I would recommend that we organize a task force geared to deal with specific constituencies such as college students, at home and abroad. Until we develop some realistic strategies and tactics we will continue to lose ground in the information war.

**David Rubin:** I would like to pick up on Judith Elizur's comment on dissonance and the way others view the Jewish state. Howard Sachar's book about Israeli and Egyptian relations asserts that one of the factors that enabled President Anwar Sadat to come to the peace table with Israel was the small military gains Egypt won in the first days of the 1973 war. Although these victories were strategically unimportant in the long term, Professor Sachar says that they allowed the Egyptian soldier to regain pride lost in 1967 and previous engagements. The Egyptian soldier and the Egyptian people in general saw that the Jews were not superhuman, but, in fact, that they were regular people, like themselves.

We should think of our own Hasbara in Arab countries. How do the Arabs view us? Is there any way in which the ambivalence that they must feel toward us be altered so that they do not always feel in a perpetual state of war with us? Is it conceivable that other Arab leaders can make the same kind of leap that Sadat made?

**Shmuel Katz:** Sadat was prepared to come to the table because he had Sinai in his pocket. He had been promised Sinai in advance. Whatever the merits of Prof. Sachar's argument, they are only one small part of the story.

I want to comment on Elad Peled's statements. The 1969 Peled report came to nothing and would have come to nothing even if it had been improved on because the concept of comprehensive Hasbara has always met a blank wall here. Israel needs a ministerial authority on Hasbara. We

need a comprehensive machine. I think Dr. Elizur's remarks underscore the need for this. This machine requires the cooperation and collaboration of the American Jewish community, whether through the President's Conference or some other authority. Ninety percent of Hasbara work in the United States must be done by American Jews themselves.

**Yoram Ettinger:** Very little human behavior is easily understood. Elad Peled mentioned that it is difficult to explain the blowing up of houses. I believe we need to place such actions in context. We need to provide facts that will place such measures in perspective and help others to interpret their meaning. We need to draw analogies that others will understand. By doing this it doesn't mean that we are axiomatically right.

Another issue which I would like to mention regards the vocabulary we use to describe the situation here. I am not talking about whether we use the words Judea and Samaria or West Bank. In a broader sense the definitions and nuances of the words we use will vary depending on our own personal dictionaries of meaning. Most seem to believe that the Oxford or Webster dictionaries are universal. That is not the case. In Damascus the Syrians have one lexicon. In Amman, the Jordanians have another. In Riyadh, the Saudis use yet another, as do the members of El Fatah. Western policy-makers rely on a universal dictionary — a fact which outlines the fundamental drawbacks and shortcomings of their understanding of the Middle East.

**Yosef Lapid:** I am afraid that some of what our American friends said here falls into the "how-to" category. They take up a problem, break it down into six or eight or twelve points, then tell us how to handle the problem. We then try to either sell Pepsi-Cola or Israel. I am not sure that this works. I think that this is a much more complex problem; America has itself spent hundreds of billions of dollars on countries in which America is tremendously unpopular to this very day. If Americans knew how to handle this problem, then America would already have taken care of it in the Third World, for instance. America deserves far more respect than it receives in the world,



far more than we deserve.

We have been doing many of the things we have heard in these "how-to" lectures. For instance, we have a very large Government Press Office in Jerusalem. I don't feel we discussed what American Jews could and should do for Hasbara in sufficient detail. We didn't discuss the problem of American Jews distancing themselves from Israel the moment it becomes an embarrassment. We didn't consider how it came to pass that the American networks engaged in flagrant anti-Israeli propaganda week after week during the Lebanon war, and the American Jewish community — with all its influence and intellectual standing — was unable to stop it.

In sum, I think that this discussion should involve more give and take rather than Israelis accepting American "how-to" advice.

**Irving Rosenthal:** I'd like to comment on a word that has been recurring throughout the course of these proceedings. The word is accountability. Media accountability can provide opportunities for Hasbara to correct past wrongs. But accountability, if improperly applied, can also be dangerous, particularly when I infer from yesterday's remarks' strong urging that economic pressure can be exercised against the media to do what one speaker thinks can be done very easily.

In the United States there are no prior restraints with respect to the media. But certain constraints do exist. Individuals and groups who feel wronged have recourse to the National News Council. They can appeal to ombudsmen; they can write letters and do other things. But at the same time, I think it important to understand that for the most part we are dealing with responsible media people who pay attention to criticism. While it may not be easy to do what Mr. Lapid thinks can be done so easily, outsiders can have a positive effect on the press.

In reading Joshua Muravchik's pamphlet "Misreporting Lebanon" and in viewing the Americans For a Safe Israel film on NBC, I found myself asking: Where were the people who — when these events were unfolding — could have and should have contacted key media people immediately to discuss the coverage? Mr. Muravchik's

piece and the film critical of NBC came out many months after the fact.

Let me cite one example. One day CBS News Radio reported hourly that an American soldier had been hurt by stepping on an Israeli cluster bomb at the Beirut airport. I called CBS to point out that no one had established that the bomb was an Israeli one. One hour later CBS reported that an American soldier had stepped on a bomb; this time the report omitted any reference to Israel.

**Ari Rath:** To my mind, effective Hasbara and a free press have one thing in common: credibility. The moment Hasbara moves toward becoming propaganda, or an orchestrated campaign, it will lose the game even before it starts.

The essence of Hasbara is explanation; it involves correcting misperceptions as evidenced in the media's reporting and editorial policies. It was no coincidence that seven months ago a *Post* symposium on the role of the media in war in which a number of prominent journalists from England

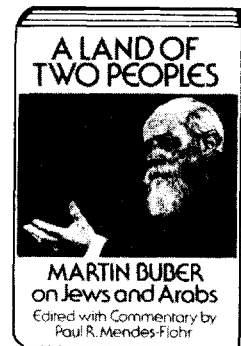
and America participated praised Israel's assistance to foreign correspondents in times of war. This is particularly true if one compares the attitude of the IDF's spokesman's office to that of the military establishment during the war in the Falkland Islands.

I also want to note that we neglect the foreign press corps here — this, apart from alienating them. This begins with very simple things. Israel is unique in the Western world in that it has press clubs, so to speak, which close at five o'clock in the afternoon. There is no meeting place for foreign correspondents where they can meet and mingle with Israeli colleagues.

As for Mr. Lapid's remarks, I reject his complaint about Americans lecturing Israel on how to do things. Not only is this complaint unfair to the organizers of this conference, it is also narrow-minded. When we need their political assistance we decide American Jews can share our problems and express their opinion on our basic policymaking. This cannot be a one-way street. □

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# The Structure of Hasbara

By Carl Spielvogel

**D**efining one's turf is a problem for every constituency. We have to recognize that Israel has its own turf just as America has its territory. This fact is one of the inhibitors of progress. Let me suggest to you, also, that at any meeting like this, that we permit problems of language and structure to interfere with basic concepts. I think the last thing we should try to do here is establish a set of tactics. But I do think structure is extremely important. I have several points to make with respect to the structure of Hasbara.

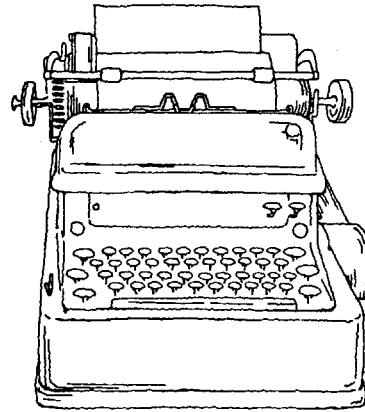
One. I feel that unless the Prime Minister indicates to his government and to the American Jewish constituency that Hasbara is one of the highest priorities on the Israeli agenda, none of your Hasbara efforts will succeed. This begs the issue of whether one should have a Minister of Information, who that person should be, what powers the person would possess. Even the chief executive officer of a corporation or a nation knows that a plan of action will succeed only to the degree that he puts his or her personal stamp on it.

Two. We must do a better job of training information specialists, making it clear to them that they have a career path in Israel equally as important as any in the foreign service. I personally believe that the military in any country cannot fulfil the information function. The interests of the military are very different from the interests of the office of foreign affairs. I would submit that if it is not feasible to have a Minister of Information, then such a structure should be established within the foreign office.

Three. One of the things that the United States does relatively well is communications training. The American advertising agency is preeminent worldwide; it may be one of the last fields that we dominate. In order to support the idea of professional training, the American Jewish Congress will attempt to coordinate a training program that will import five carefully selected information specialists who will be supervised by three U.S. professors, Irving Rosenthal, Kalman Siegel and David Rubin.

Four. We must distinguish between issues that must be dealt with on a daily basis versus those that must be dealt with on a long-term basis. I would suggest that we set up in Israel and the United States a council of ten wise persons who can project different scenarios and how to cope with them. Annexation and Jerusalem would be typical of the issues covered by such a council. I am not suggesting that we make policy. I am only saying that we should make the best minds available to help elucidate the consequences of certain policies.

Five. I think any future meetings on this subject should factor in the changing demographics of the market we're dealing with. For example, I have noted that we have had only two women who have been active participants in this



**'Hasbara needs to implant in the consciousness of the world the day-to-day existence of this country called Israel.'**

session. We have heard from very few young people. We have had no Blacks or Hispanics. And I would like to suggest to you that the constituency of the United States has changed dramatically.

When Nelson Rockefeller was running for governor of New York, I worked on the public relations end of the campaign — in fact, my last political campaign. Governor Rockefeller was 'way behind in the polls, so I asked Herta Herzog, a Viennese motivational researcher, to conduct a study on the critical issues that were working against him. The fact was that a very difficult public divorce was hurting him in the polls. I said to Herta, "How are we going to handle the problem?" She came back two weeks later and said, "I have the answer. We're going to ignore it, because there is no way to explain divorce in a 30-second commercial." Of course, she was right. My point in telling you this story is that I think we all have a tendency to say, yes, we have identified the problem. I would like to suggest to you that if this program is going to move forward, money must be found in the United States for a benchmark research study to assess what really is going on rather than what we think is going on.

Hasbara needs to implant in the consciousness of the world the day-to-day existence of this country called Israel. We need stories on the arts, business and cooking sections of United States newspapers.

It is said in the United States that, over the years, the U.S. has supported many countries around the world, but under the heading of, "No good deed goes unpunished." This is part of the "gotcha" syndrome Howard Squadron described. The American people know that. It is also a fact that Israel is a staunch political and military ally of the United States. The American people know that too. Let us be sure they do not forget. □

# Living With a Free Press

By Howard M. Squadron

I want to mention that the American Jewish Congress had invited executives of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League to participate in this Dialogue on Hasbara. They were unable to attend because of earlier commitments. I mention this because the issue of coordination is a key one. In our organization we welcome the notion of a coordinating authority on Hasbara in the United States. We regard the creation of a civilian Hasbara coordinating authority in Israel — whether a Minister or an office within the Foreign Ministry — as vitally important. Indeed, the coordinating authority in the United States without the coordinating authority in Israel would not be terribly useful.

I agree with Mr. Spielvogel that Hasbara should target not only the Jewish community for its campaigns but also groups with whom we have formed alliances in the past, such as Blacks and Hispanics. We need to deal with all of the groups in the American body politic.

Participants in the Dialogue seemed to agree that the members of any coordinating authority in the United States should continually concentrate on issues on which we can muster a consensus. Simcha Dinitz offered a good list of issues with consensus. We could start with that. In addition, I think that in Israel, the United States, and elsewhere in the Jewish world, we must constantly reply to the attack on Zionism. We cannot for a moment accept attempts to delegitimize Israel, which has become a principal problem.

As for the Hasbara internship program, I want to state for the record, that these young people will not come over only to have mentors such as Kalman Siegel or Irving Rosenthal and others, but also to work as regular employees at various public relations or advertising firms in the U.S.

Finally, I want to note that the discussion over the last few days emphasized the need for Israel to cultivate the foreign press in this country, to involve it in issues beforehand and to profit from its sensitivity to criticism. These are very important recommendations and it is important to note that both the American and Israeli participants of the Dialogue voiced these ideas.

On the whole, this group favored open access for a free press — more open access rather than less. This brings me to the final point, then, which is that the greatest selling point for Israel is that this country is a functioning democracy with an open and free debate and an unimpeded press. To this end, I say to Yosef Lapid, who felt that we could have performed a miracle, muzzling the broadcasters in the United States during the war in Lebanon, that we did respond to the coverage. We simply weren't heeded. But I suppose that some people here have some difficulty getting the Israeli press to pay enough attention to their complaints, too. That is one of the aspects of a free press with which we must live. □

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