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In the next issue
Issues raised by the World Summit on the Information Society, and WACC support for the Campaign for Rights in the Information Society, will be the theme of the 4/2002 issue of Media Development.
Editorial

The WACC/NARA-WACC/NCC Communications Commission-sponsored conference ‘Megaphones and Muffled Voices: What Constitutes Full and Fair Coverage of Israeli-Palestinian Issues?’ held in New York 17-18 April 2002 was part of a series of workshops on the media and conflict in the Middle East. A year earlier, in April 2001, a workshop on the ‘News Embargo on Iraq’ was organised in NY. WACC is also supporting an event scheduled to be held in Bethlehem later this year that will focus on the representation and reporting of Christian Palestinians, who have also been under siege in that troubled land.

To bring together media personnel from Jewish and Palestinian backgrounds in NY was no mean achievement. The organisers, some of whom were veteran Middle East observers and journalists, had, from the very start, no illusions as to the ‘sensitive’ nature of this project. There were many factors to be taken into account – the overall geo-political environment in the Middle East, US foreign policy, the stance taken by the churches, the impasse over sanctions on Iraq, the heightened state of tension between Israel and Palestine, along with the culture and traditions of reporting this conflict in the USA. There had to be an equal number of speakers from both communities, impartial moderation and an environment conducive to debate and the exchange of ideas. In the event, 60 people turned out for a stimulating two days at the end of which, John Zakarian, editorial page editor of the Hartford Courant presented a ‘Fair Practices Code’ for journalists covering the conflict.

It was clear from the start that one of the problems with routine, mainstream journalism had to do with the traditions of what might be called lazy journalism, characterised by short-hands and short-cuts that have, rather unfortunately, become the accepted way of reporting stories of conflict. A smorgasbord of practices: reliance on official sources, dependence on Middle East ‘experts’ who happen to have a penchant for partial truths, the tradition of the ‘parachute’ journalist whose brief, flack-jacketed appearances atop the Jerusalem Hilton rarely if ever communicates background knowledge to the conflicts, over-reliance on received understandings, routine stereotypical representations of the ‘other’ even by established journalists, lack of language skills and knowledge of local culture and local cultural practices, the existence of a singular narrative and the ignoring of other narratives and the almost reflexive tendency to not distinguish between fiction and fact, indicate some of the problems that have to be sorted out before reporting can be put on an even keel.

This remains a monumental task given the existence of a grand narrative of history, of origins, of inevitability, that are reflexively and routinely used to justify these traditions of reporting. We heard that some media in Israel routinely refer to the West Bank in Old Testament terms – Judea and Samaria. It was clear that the lack of credible information on the complex nature of this conflict has resulted in journalists merely regurgitating partisan meanings. Which is why this issue of Media Development carries a ‘Style sheet on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict’ compiled by Martin Bailey on behalf of Americans for Middle East Understanding, Inc. and first published in their newsletter The Link. It is an invaluable meaning map for journalists and, for that matter, for anyone interested in interpreting and writing about the conflict in this part of the world.

But from a communications perspective the conflict is not only about the ‘style’ of reporting, it is about journalists and their deeply held emotions, gut feelings, near total distrust of the other, psychological and social conditionings that have convinced them that what they write and how they interpret the conflict is objective reporting at its best. One participant stated in all seriousness that journalists could not be impartial and that it would be wrong to be objective because the other side had no traditions of morality let alone of journalistic impartiality and objectivity.

In spite of misgivings in the Bush administration about some of the statements made recently by Ted Turner, his comments on mutual terrorism, shared terrorism in the Middle East need to be taken seriously. In spite of the fact that his comments do not reflect the position of the CNN, the pressure that pro-Israeli pressure groups in the USA have exerted to lobby viewers to switch to the rival, Murdoch-owned, Fox News channel is a case of extraordinary censorship.

Journalists in all the media would do well to heed the words of Mitchell Plitnick, editor of A Jewish Voice for Peace, who on 22 April 2002 called for alternative voices that offer ‘a more nuanced view of this conflict... that can stand for justice and guard against the legitimate struggle for the basic rights of Palestinians being co-opted into the agenda of those who would see only harm comes to Jews and Arabs alike.’

In other words, fair and balanced reporting whose motives are shared understanding and the eventuality of peace.
What constitutes full and fair coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian issue? It goes without saying that the question can never fully be answered in a democracy. And it cannot be answered without context. There are two relevant contexts: One has to do with the structure of the media and the second with the post-Cold War and post-September 11 geopolitics of the United States. After exploring these and related issues, the author offers several ethical points for journalists and the media.

International media coverage and changing societies: The view from Canada
Haroon Siddiqui

To begin with, some statements of the obvious about the media. Media are a business. But media are more than the business of manufacturing widgets. Being in the business of news and opinion, they play a crucial role in a democracy. Indeed, they proclaim just such a role but tend to be cagier when it comes to fulfilling their concomitant responsibilities.

In Canada, there are at least Press Councils (not government bodies, but voluntary associations of member-newspapers), which adjudicate reader complaints and members are obligated to publish the findings in a prominent spot. But given the different traditions in the United States – all the arguments surrounding the Fourth Amendment – readers and customers are, by and large, at the mercy of the media.

As a business, media must make money. They do so delivering audiences to advertisers. It is human that some advertisers would be tempted to penalize the medium that may bite the hand that feeds it. The bigger and more economically stable the medium, the more likely it is to resist such pressures and be editorially independent, if it is so inclined, i.e. if its owner is so inclined.

Being a business, media are not in the business of offending clients to the point of driving them away. So they go with the flow. Too many cater to the lowest common denominator. Only some aim for the highest common factor. Very few lead, and take the risk of telling the truth the public, or to powerful people and lobbies who may not want to hear the truth.

The notion of journalistic objectivity has been oversold. Journalism is subjective, hopefully practiced fairly, based on news value. There are guidelines on what constitutes news. But news judgments reflect the biases of the editors, who reflect the biases of the owners.

Monopolisation and pluralism
None of this is new. What is new are the four C’s of journalism: increasing corporatisation of media; increasing concentration of ownership; increasing convergence of media; and, in the case of ideological owners, creeping censorship. Monopolies in the media are worse than monopolies in other industries.

Something else is new: Our demography is changing dramatically. Both sides of almost every international issue are present in Canada and the United States: Serbs and Kosovars, Serbs and Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats; Greeks and Macedonians, Greeks and Turks; Kurds and Turks; Sikhs and Hindus; Indians and Pakistanis; Chinese and Taiwanese; Arabs and Jews. The list is long.

But the media are slow to catch up. They rarely portray the extraordinary pluralism of their societies. They are also peddling outdated narratives, domestically and internationally, at a time when the domestic and international have never been more fused than in today’s global village.

Even the domestic factions of many of the world’s most divided societies find an echo here: Sri Lankan Tamils and Sinhalese; the supporters and opponents of Islamic Iran; and of India’s Hindu nationalist government; and the whole range of the political spectrum of Israeli politics.

Beyond these pockets of particular interests, there is a growing constituency keen on international issues. Yet such an informed and involved citizenry rarely gets the in-depth foreign news coverage and variety in opinion and analysis that it deserves. What it often gets instead is reportage of breathtaking shallowness, and limited commentaries. Outside of a handful of newspapers, what audiences have been given since Sept. 11 is not journalism but American jingoism.

Add to this the context of post-Cold War America, the rhetoric of ‘clash of civilizations’ and the identi-
fying of Islam as the new enemy of America, more precisely, militant Islam, loosely defined as anyone that does not agree with American hegemony or opposes Israel. Add September 11 – 19 hijackers, all Arabs and all Muslim – and you have the full backdrop against which to judge media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

George Bush said the war on terrorism was not a war on Muslims and certainly not a war on Islam. But most of the American media seem not to have heard it. Muslims and Arabs have been relentlessly demonised. They are tarred with the broad brush of group guilt for the evil deeds of some. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation printed bumper stickers that read, ‘Terrorists come in all colours – and religions’. But in the media, it has been perfectly acceptable to talk about Islamic terrorism, as opposed to Christian terrorism or Jewish terrorism or Hindu terrorism, just as it was earlier acceptable to magnify the holy terror of an Islamic bomb as opposed to the presumably benign Christian bomb, or a Jewish bomb, or a Hindu bomb.

**Short historical memories**

Media are apt to argue that more Muslims go off on Jihads than others. But if history is any guide, Christians killed more Muslims and Jews in the name of religion than the other way around. Then there is the discourse on Islamic suicide bombers. Lest we forget, the first Palestinian suicide missions were mounted by the godless, Marxist Front for the Liberation of Palestine, headed by George Habash. When the Hezbollah suicide bombers emerged in Lebanon, the media attributed the phenomenon to the peculiarities of the minority Shi’ite concept and complex of martyrdom. Since Sept. 11 here and more recently in the occupied territories, the vile practice is now blamed on Islam itself.

Yet the same practice used by the Tamil Tigers was, and is, never attributed to Hinduism, even though Tamil Tigers have carried out by far the most suicide terror acts, about 230 vs. about 75 by Muslims, according to the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Nor was the general terrorism of the IRA on behalf of their co-religionists ever blamed on Catholicism itself.

So, we do have a special problem here. In an earlier era, we had to battle anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism in society and the media, and, in some ways, still must. The societal and media challenge of this age is to battle anti-Islamism and anti-Arabism, which is the latest unacceptable face of racism. There is no other way to say it.

**Strategic interests**

I want to turn to the domestic implications of this American media mindset, which has a direct bearing on the topic at hand. There has been relentless pressure, overt and subtle, on American Muslims and Arabs to condemn Sept. 11 terrorists, which they all have. Almost every religious authority in the world, plus all of the Muslim and Arab groups and organizations in North America, have done so repeatedly and without reservation.

Yet this does not seem to be enough. They are still asked to ‘take responsibility for Sept. 11’ and ‘own up to it’. This is nonsense. Ordinary law-abiding Muslims and Arabs are no more responsible for Sept. 11 than Japanese-Americans were for Pearl Harbour, or German-Americans were for the Nazis. Law-abiding Muslims and Arabs are, obviously, as keen as any other citizens that terrorists be ferreted out and punished. In fact, the sooner this is done, the more their civil liberties will be protected.

Muslims and Arabs are also accused of having few ‘moderates’. Moderates are then defined as those who not only condemn terrorism, which almost all do, but who 1) can confirm prevailing prejudices against Islam and Arabs, and 2) can also exonerate American foreign policy, which few can. Failure to do so is offered as proof that Muslims are crawling with militants. This is a media game that Muslims and Arabs cannot win.

Similar distortions dominate the debate on democracy in the Muslim world, especially the Middle East. Muslims are justifiably berated for the absence of it. But in the next breath, they are told that they cannot be trusted with it – like colonials telling the natives they were not ready for independence.

In its strategic interest to protect oil supplies, America sustains oppressive military or monarchical regimes, not unlike what Washington used to do in Latin America. The policy has failed spectacularly. In Iran, it produced a revolution. In Algeria, it produced a brutal civil war. In Saudi Arabia and Egypt, it produced the Sept. 11 hijackers.

Yet intellectual sophistry has it that Muslims may use democracy to get power only to kill democracy. Some might. But where tried, democracy has proven the dictum that power tames. Post-revolutionary Iran, for all its faults, is arguably the most democratic Muslim nation. It certainly has produced an elected class of moderates who are leading the intellectual debate on democracy in the Muslim world.

Jordan, where the late King Hussein co-opted the Palestinians into the parliamentary process, has a peace treaty with Israel and has developed a less militant society. Egypt also has a similar peace treaty, but is one of the most oppressive regimes, and...
bristles with militancy. Yet we rarely hear these perspectives in the media.

This, then, is the backdrop to media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially the latest round of hostilities. It proved the perfect backdrop for the American neo-conservative and Israeli hard-right agenda for piggybacking on the anti-terrorism war to quash Palestinian resistance, and derail the Oslo peace process, which they never really did like.

**Distinctions and dilemmas**

Media coverage of the Middle East was never a level-playing field, but the field got tilted ever more in recent months. There is obviously no excuse for brutal, savage, inexcusable Palestinian terror. But the fact also is that innocents have died on both sides, including women and children, thrice as many on the Palestinian side. Or, is it that Palestinian lives are worth less?

Most in the American media have fallen into the trap of defaming the entire Palestinian struggle as terrorist. And they’ve lost the distinction between a commitment to Israel and a commitment to the Sharon government.

One fully understands the dilemma of Jewish Americans and Jewish Canadians who feel duty-bound to stand by Israel, even while totally disagreeing with Sharon’s policies and tactics. But the failure of the media to navigate that distinction is more regrettable. Even the range of opinion within the Jewish community here is rarely reflected in the media. One gets a well-balanced presentation of this very democratic range of views from the Israeli media, but not in the North American media. I rarely read here about B’Tselem or other brave human rights and women’s organizations.

Anti-Israeli demonstrations here are rarely covered or covered adequately. Opinion pages are replete with columnists whose only view is that right or wrong, Israel is right. When a so-called Muslim or Arab opinion is solicited, it is generally sought from those who can confirm prevailing prejudice, such as Salman Rushdie and Fouad Ajami. Neither is reflective of either Muslim or Arab opinion. In fact, quite the contrary. They are obviously entitled to their opinions, but they are not representative of Arab or Muslim opinion. So the eagerness with which they are sought tells us more about the media than them.

If one follows the news coverage, as well as commentary, presented in American mainstream media, both in print and electronically, one would assume the presence of a monolithic, uniform view of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But this is not so. America is rich with a range of views, pro-Sharon, anti-Sharon, pro-Israeli and anti-Israeli, pro-Arafat and anti-Arafat. But these are rarely reflected in the media.

There is a growing body of opinion in America that American mainstream media are out of sync with their customers. The media face a growing credibility crisis, especially with the only growing segment of the market, which is immigrant and urban.

To try to remedy this situation, I should like to submit the following ethical points for consideration by journalists and the media:

Ignore the propaganda of either side and tell the truth. You are not a partisan for either.

Apply the principle of sanctity of human life equally to both sides.

Record the human rights violations of both sides.

Beware of anti-Arabism and anti-Islamism as much as anti-Semitism.

Avoid group guilt. Do not tar all Arabs and Muslims with the brush of terrorism.

Beware that a growing number of Americans feel that they are being shut out of news coverage and the business of opinion-making.

Balance the commentary and opinion sections of newspapers and/or segments on radio and TV with a wide range of views. Too many of your columnists and regular contributors sing the same tune.

Open up the Letters to the Editor sections and have a more open, honest, free, and democratic debate.

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The following article argues that despite its peculiar political, cultural and religious dimensions, the Israeli-Palestine conflict should be reported as any other: fairly, without bias and offering balanced coverage of all sides of the case. The problem is, it isn’t.

I follow news of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict closely. Like many Americans, and certainly like many in this room, I consume the usual ‘name-brand’ U.S. mainstream media sources of information. But I don’t consider my daily briefing complete until I have read the English-language Israeli press online. It is here one finds the very small details that generate the dramatic events we are witnessing now – the suicide bombings and military incursions and diplomatic initiatives. But many of these details are rarely reported by mainstream American media.

In July 2001 the Israeli newspapers Ha’aretz and the Jerusalem Post published English-language online reports of an incident that was also reported by the Associated Press. Despite the exposure, then, that American foreign correspondents and editors had to the story, it was not picked up widely by U.S. media. The incident is symbolic, emblematic, a corroborative piece in a larger pattern that has gone all but unreported by most U.S. mainstream media in any significant detail.

The 300-word AP report, dated July 30 and written by reporter Laurie Copans, can be found in the Lexus-Nexus database. It reads:

‘The Israeli army said Monday that a group of soldiers beat a Palestinian traveling in a taxi, forced the passengers to beat each other, and slashed the tires of a vehicle.

What constitutes full and fair media coverage of Israeli-Palestinian issues?

Marda Dunsky

‘Responding to a complaint by an Israeli human rights group, the army acknowledged the soldiers ‘acted with brutality toward passengers’ and said it was investigating the July 23 incident outside the West Bank city of Hebron.

‘According to witness accounts compiled by the human rights group B’Tselem, three jeeps with soldiers detained 12 Palestinian passengers in two taxis. After letting an elderly man, a woman and a child go, the soldiers told the taxis to drive through an olive orchard to a hidden spot where two soldiers beat one man until he was barely conscious, the B’Tselem report said.

‘“Move, let me show you how to beat,” one soldier said to another when he wanted a turn at hitting the Palestinian, according to the report.

‘Pointing guns at the Palestinians, the soldiers forced the eight remaining men in the two taxis to beat one another.

‘“With tears falling from his eyes, the young [Palestinian] man started to beat us with his fist on our faces and heads,” passenger Khaled Rawashdeh, 36, said in the report. Rawashdeh said soldiers pointed a gun to the man and told him to beat harder.

‘Four of the Palestinians needed hospital treatment afterward, the report added. An army statement acknowledged that a soldier made passengers hit one another, and another soldier slashed the tires of a taxi.

‘The army statement referred to only one taxi, not two. Neither the army statement nor the B’Tselem report gave any motive for the soldiers’ actions.

‘The army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, condemned the soldiers’ actions, saying such cases cause the army great damage, the Ha’aretz newspaper reported Monday.’

What’s missing

If we are to analyse U.S. mainstream media reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then we should examine what’s not there as well as what is. Let’s consider three missing elements in this coverage.

The first of these elements is details of Palestinian daily life under occupation as it has existed in one form or another, in periods of low crisis and high crisis, for the last 35 years. I would argue that these details have been given very scant attention in the reporting of the conflict because until now they have not been deemed an important enough obstacle to the pursuit of U.S. interests in the Middle East. This has left the American public without a complete picture of why what is happening now is happening. We are seeing the effect to the near exclusion of the cause.
The pictures we see of the exploded buses and the shattered Passover seder tables and the ambulances collecting the Israeli dead and wounded on the streets of Jerusalem, Hadera and Haifa are gut-wrenching and horrific. They are an important part of the story. But they do not constitute the full picture. Where were the cameras when the Palestinian taxi passengers were made to beat each other by Israeli soldiers? What does a picture of land confiscation look like? What does a picture of the additional 90,000 Israeli settlers who moved to the West Bank, nearly doubling the settlement population during the seven years of the Oslo peace process, look like? How about the 7,000 Palestinian houses reported by Israeli and international human-rights groups to have been destroyed since 1967—-not including those houses destroyed in the Israeli military campaign of the last three weeks?

In the early part of 2002 we saw a spate of mainstream media reports under the collective headline ‘The making of a suicide bomber.’ These reports have appeared in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune and Newsweek, and on ‘Nightline’ and ‘The NewsHour’, among others.

But if the media are just finding out what goes into the making of a suicide bomber because suicide bombing has become a recurring phenomenon, then it stands to reason that something—many things—have been left out of the reporting of this conflict all along the way.

The other day I was discussing this issue with a friend of mine who is an editor on the Chicago Tribune foreign desk. He said: ‘We don’t report on the building until it catches on fire; we don’t write about the lake until someone drowns in it.’ True enough. But over time, the media should be reporting on the small details of the conflict that lead up to the large ones—before the fire becomes a conflagration and before the victims are being dragged dead from the water.

International aspects
The second element often missing in reportage of the conflict is explicit acknowledgement that a body of international law and consensus exists that is relevant to competing Israeli and Palestinian demands and claims—-but the U.S. foreign policy tilt toward Israel has consistently marginalized these important international aspects. Let me illustrate with a swatch of analysis on coverage of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

The Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza—where some 200,000 Israeli colonists live among 3.2 million Palestinians—are a key issue in the resolution of the conflict. Yet there has been a virtual absence of critical reporting in the mainstream media on the question of how, directly or indirectly, U.S. aid contributes to Israel’s ability to absorb the cost of building, enlarging and defending the settlements.

In November 2000, the Israeli organization Peace Now reported that the government of then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had earmarked $300 million for the settlements in 2001, a figure that represented a mere 10% of Israel’s overall foreign-aid package from the United States for fiscal year 2001. Similarly, reporting on the Clinton administration’s long-term efforts to advance the peace process rarely if ever analysed the inherent contradiction between extensive U.S. mediation and these facts about the settlements:

that they are illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which the United States is a signatory;
that they contravene UN Resolution 242, a pillar of the U.S.-brokered Oslo accords;
and that successive Israeli governments have continually enlarged the settlements since the accords were signed, nearly doubling their population from approximately 110,000 in 1993 to 200,000 by the time of the Camp David negotiations in July 2000.

From June to December 2000, six major newspapers published seven stories on West Bank settlements. The Baltimore Sun, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, New York Times and Washington Post all ran long stories datelined from different West Bank settlements during that period; the Los Angeles Times ran two such stories. In general, the pieces got considerable play: they averaged 1,300 words in length, two ran on the front page and five were illustrated with multiple photos.

All of the stories revolved around the settlers’ various points of view, religious and secular. The reporting focused on how the violence had disrupted the settlers’ quality of life and their anxieties over what negotiations could bring. Of the six papers, only the Los Angeles Times, in one of its two stories, mentioned—in a passing reference—that the settlements are illegal under international law. Only two of the seven stories (the same Times piece and the Post story) quoted Palestinians, also in passing, on their view of how the settlements affect their lives and the peace process.

Most of the stories mentioned the housing subsidies that the Israeli government extends to settlers. But none of the stories reported how much Israel has
invested in order to build and defend the 140 settlements and their supporting infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967. None of the stories explored how this investment is likely to affect the determination of final borders in a negotiated settlement. Most of the stories gave a figure for the settler population, but none of the stories put that figure into the context of the Palestinian-settler population ratio, which is 15:1.

Unequal partners in the conflict
The third missing element in mainstream media coverage of the conflict is anything approaching consistent acknowledgment or recognition that the two parties to the conflict are not equal – and that this is so largely by virtue of the fact of the historic U.S. political, military and diplomatic relationship with the State of Israel. Further, reporting of the conflict minimizes or omits altogether the fact that this relationship has continued unchanged even as the U.S. has claimed for itself the role of ‘honest broker’ in the last decade of the peace process.

Diplomatic and political coverage of the conflict rarely challenges the tone or content of official Washington parlance, which routinely characterizes the Israelis and the Palestinians as if they were equals in the war they are making on each other. From the standpoint of each side’s right to live in peace, security and dignity, yes, they are equal. But from the standpoint of the political, diplomatic, economic and military weapons each side brings to this war, they are not.

It is one thing for the Israeli government to claim that Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority are ‘not doing enough to prevent terror’ and for the American president and secretary of state to repeat this mantra incessantly. Such statements are newsworthy and should be reported as such. But where are the American analysts from beyond the Beltway – not to mention Palestinian and Arab representatives – to remind us, when this mantra is invoked, that Israel under the Sharon government has consistently and systematically destroyed the physical infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority? Israel and the U.S. expect Arafat and the Palestinian leadership to act as statesmen and security agents, but many of the physical tools to do so have been denied or taken away.

Lesson No. 1, Day 1, Reporting 101: For every argument, especially in a conflict situation, there is an equal and opposite argument. Get both sides.

Implications, qualifications, prescriptions
What are the implications of these three holes in U.S. mainstream reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which are, to recap:

The lack of the details of Palestinian daily life under occupation
The lack of acknowledgement that international law and consensus relevant to the conflict have been marginalized by U.S. foreign policy
The lack of recognition that the parties to the conflict are in many important ways not equal.

The absence of these details from our context-deficient daily diet of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict-cum-war pose several dangers. First, it leads many in this country to the mistaken postulate that what we are now witnessing can be distilled into an Israeli war against Palestinian terrorism, much the same argument that has been made for the U.S. military campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan – even though the two phenomena are but superficially similar. This line of argument leads to the inevitable conclusion that military force should be the prime instrument in finding solutions to these conflicts.

The second danger is that the absence of these details exposes those who would reveal them – be they individuals, news organizations or even whole societies (in Europe and the Arab world) to charges of anti-Semitism and other epithets.

But the third danger is perhaps the greatest. It is that the absence of the three elements in U.S. mainstream media reporting of the conflict analyzed here has retarded to near paralysis the ability of American citizens, as individuals or in groups, to demand and receive accountability from their government for a failed U.S. Middle East policy. It is a policy that is being conducted by our government in all of our names but without the consent of many. This puts at risk not only chances for a sustainable Middle East peace, but it also jeopardizes the safety of Americans at home as well as our national interests and credibility abroad.

Now for some qualifications. As someone who has worked as an editor and a reporter in the mainstream media, and as one who now helps prepare students for journalism careers, I would like to offer three qualifiers to the foregoing critique. The first is that while media criticism is legitimate and important, we should nevertheless neither blame the messenger nor view the media as being responsible for solving the conflict.

The second qualifier is that it is impossible to expect each individual news report to deliver full historical context and exact symmetrical balance. The constraints of space and time won’t allow for a recreation of the wheel or full-blown reiteration of partisan
positions every time. But we should expect context and balance in the body of reporting over time.

The third point is it is important to recognize that there is good reporting being done on this conflict and related topics. Some recent noteworthy examples:


Finally, what are the prescriptive guidelines for full and fair media coverage of Israeli-Palestinian issues? I believe that they are the basics of reporting any story well: Consider both sides of the story as equally valid and give them balanced representation and voice not only in direct quotations but also in characterization and analysis. Don’t rely on official sources alone – and challenge them when appropriate. Don’t perpetuate false comparisons and equivalencies by reporting them unchallenged again and again. And always be aware of relevant context – be it historical or recent – and include it even briefly via a parenthetical phrase or a few paragraphs.

Marda Dunsky is assistant professor at the Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, USA.

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A reflection on balance

At the conference on ‘Megaphones and Muffled Voices’ we heard a speaker say that too much balance is not good. After all, it is not a balanced situation with huge imbalances in accountability as well as the differences in an established state and not yet a state. The speaker said that treating them as equals is not right. The question then becomes one of what is balanced in reporting.

The balance should based on human rights and not State might nor even organizational structure. The preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins: ‘Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and unalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,’ and the first article says that ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.’

There is no balance in reporting on people who are equal in dignity and rights when Palestinians are labelled terrorists and Israelis, citizens.

There is no balance in reporting on people who are equal in dignity and rights when Israelis who are killed are given the human identity of names, ages and families and Palestinians are reported as numbers.

There is no balance in reporting on people who are equal in dignity and rights when headlines feature a small number of Israelis killed or wounded and the story is about larger numbers of Palestinians.

The media, of course, did not sign or ratify the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. States did and they are accountable for upholding those rights. But clearly there is no full and fair media coverage when people are not treated with equality in dignity and rights. It is the foundation for the freedom that the media desire.

The pro-Israeli lobby in the USA seems to have the ear of executive power as well as that of the media, judging by the way most newspapers and television programmes cover Israeli/Palestinian issues. The following article highlights major concerns of bias, language, imagery and their impact on Americans’ awareness of what is taking place.

As Communications Director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), I work in the National Press Building in Washington D.C., home to some of America’s most prominent press outlets. I have appeared on several television and radio programmes to discuss issues ranging from Islam in America to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Later in this talk, I will give a few personal anecdotes relating to my experiences in this arena, but I would first like to highlight some of the pervasive journalistic tendencies in American media coverage of the Israel/Palestinian conflict that I would argue signal a clear pro-Israel bias in our coverage.

I object to this pro-Israel bias, which I hope to demonstrate shortly, for several reasons. The first is that the bias simply violates the most basic principle of journalistic integrity; American journalists have gone to extraordinary lengths to cover up, confuse, and obscure some of the most very basic facts underlying the reasons and context of the Palestinians’ justifiable resistance to Israeli occupation, a right that is granted under the Geneva convention. The second reason is that Americans’ ignorance of the full story in the Middle East has reached a point that such ignorance now represents a clear and present danger to American interests and American people.

I will state it frankly: Israel’s brutal military occupation of Palestinian territories, now in its 35th year – making it longer than any occupation in modern history, after the Japanese occupation of Korea – is the number one issue at the root of anti-American sentiment in the entire Arab and Muslim world. No serious analyst of the conflict there will argue otherwise. This is enough of a reason for American’s to start digging deeper into this issue and examining all sides of the story.

The third reason is that I fear that the climate of intimidation surrounding reporting on this conflict may have lasting effects on the overall climate of public discourse in the United States. While we value our freedom in this country to say what we want to say and express what ever view point we want to express, the level of intimidation leading to self-censorship that has surrounded this conflict threatens to erode American’s comfort generally to exercise their right to free speech. It certainly has intimidated Arab Americans and American Muslims.

I will read you a quote from media analyst Seth Ackerman, from the media watchdog group Fair And Accurate Reporting (FAIR): ‘American journalists probably feel more pressure about their coverage of Israel than any other subject. That is true even of my organization, FAIR. Despite having a readership that is overwhelmingly sympathetic to our progressive critique of the media, our Middle East coverage invariably elicits angry letters and complaints, sometimes resulting in cancelled subscriptions. According to Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of the liberal Jewish magazine Tikkun, his publication has felt ‘tremendous pressure’ to alter its editorial position that Israel’s occupation is the ‘fundamental source of the problem.’ Hundreds of subscribers have cancelled their subscriptions, and donors have announced publicly that they will stop giving money to the magazine. This being the case, it is probably inevitable that the editors of many respectable American news outlets may conclude that the familiar principles of editorial balance do not apply to the subject of Israel.’

In reporting on wars, like the one that broke out between the Israeli army and Palestinian fighters in September 2001, a journalist has a few basic duties. The first is to provide readers with the basic reasons both sides are entering into conflict. The journalist should also give the historical and political context behind the fighting and leave ensuing conclusions to the audience. In the case of American reporting of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, even these basic tenants have not been honoured in the American press.

The taboo of occupation
The historical context of Israeli occupation over Palestinian lands is mostly missing from television
and press reports. It is nothing short of extraordinary that while Israel’s justification for its every military incursion is hashed and rehashed in the press – ‘fighting terror’, ‘Israel’s existence threatened’, etc., the other side of the story – that Israel has been occupying Palestinian land for 35 years, that the occupation is illegal under international law, that the rest of the world condemns it, that Israel has been building settlements in the Occupied Territories and special, Jewish-only bypass roads to take illegal settlers, many from Brooklyn, to Jewish only petrol stations and super markets, all on Palestinian lands, is almost totally omitted.

Case in point: on 4 December 2000, Time magazine reported: ‘The Palestinians began the latest protest with old-style demonstrations. Then they started shooting at Israeli towns. Now they are attacking settlements. It’s not at all clear what the next step will be, but every step seems to get bloodier.’ Well, besides the fact that no Israeli towns have been shot at by Palestinians, it is noteworthy that the fact these settlements were built on Occupied Territories that are not part of Israel is simply not mentioned at all. In fact, the word ‘occupation’ has all but become taboo in the American press.

Another disturbing trend is the tendency to call the Occupied Territories ‘Israel’. Dan Rather reported, as pictures of the day’s violence on the West Bank and Gaza appeared on the television screen, that ‘As the fighting rages in Israel, there’s word of a possible cease-fire deal.’ Tom Brokaw, on NBC Nightly News on 2 October reported, ‘The ever-widening eruption of violence in Israel.’ Again, the Occupied Territories are not a part of Israel. To call them such reflects the most right-wing Zionist view that the West Bank is actually the Judea and Samaria supposedly promised to the Jews in the Old Testament – a view expressed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon himself. According to Ackerman, who published a report on media bias in the Journal for Palestine Studies in the early 1990s, the phrase ‘occupied territories’ showed up in hundreds of Associated Press (AP) articles each year – 699 in 1992 and 731 in 1993. Nearly a third of all articles mentioning Palestinians used the term. By the end of the decade, the number of appearances had dwindled to a few dozen. During the first eleven months of 2000, barely 1% of such articles made mention of the dreaded phrase.’

On the three major news networks, ABC, NBC and CBS, at the time Ackerman was writing, the words ‘West Bank’ and/or Gaza was used 99 times. On only 4 of those 99 occasions was the word ‘occupation’ even mentioned. Therefore, 90% of network TV reporting failed to report that the territories were occupied. Contrast this with the London Independent, in which the word ‘occupied’ is mentioned 2/3 of the time. The inverse is true of the New York Times: the phrase is omitted 2/3 of the time. These critical omissions have the effect of making all Palestinian attacks look apparently unprovoked.

‘Violence’ or ‘excessive force’
The phrase ‘Palestinian violence’ is repeated again and again by the American Middle East press corps, while Israeli violence, and, indeed, state terrorism, is characterized almost exclusively as ‘retaliation’. This phraseology contradicts Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, the UN Human Rights Commission, and the UN Security Council, who have all use the phrase ‘excessive force’ to characterize Israel’s actions. One of the most absurd examples of the lengths our media will go to distance Israel from violence included the following headline that appeared in the New York Times on the first of November, 2000, which read: ‘New Violence After Rocket Strikes on Palestinians.’

Hiding Israeli incursions: I’ll never forget waking up one morning and reading reports from the British and French press of Israelis firing upon a statue of the Virgin Mary with a tank, severely damaging the statue. When I opened the Los Angeles Times, the headline read something like, ‘Statue of Virgin Mary Site of Renewed Israeli/Palestinian Violence.’ Surely, had a Palestinian damaged a Jewish holy site, the matter would have been reported in no uncertain terms, and in the active voice.

Instead of characterizing Palestinian resistance as a struggle to end occupation, which is how the Palestinians perceive their resistance movement, for most American pundits, the Palestinians’ problem is one of pure hatred. As Dan Rather reported on October 14, ‘Hatred now has live ammunition’ In a Washington Post editorial in April 2002, journalist Robert Cohen characterized the problem as a cultural one. Israeli’s are the type of people who weep over the death of soldiers, while Palestinians, dried-eyed, hold processions cheering in the streets. What Mr. Cohen fails, of course, to mention, is that had the American press bothered to interview Palestinian mothers and families and personalize them in the American press to the same extent they personalize and humanize Israelis, I guarantee you, there would be no shortage of crying, screaming, sobbing and suffering. Such a line of argument – dehumanising the Palestinians – is gravely dangerous, setting the stage for untold massacres against a people who are not perceived by Americans to be human.

Visual imagery of the occupation
Americans are also not shown visual imagery of the
occupation on their nightly television screens. Americans are not shown scenes of terrified Palestinian children hiding under their kitchen tables as their refugee camps – literally bursting with civilians – are under fierce attack. Never are Americans shown the extraordinarily humiliating manner (as if a matter of Israeli policy) in which Palestinians are treated as checkpoints. Even more egregious is media coverage of illegal Jewish settlements. Not only are the settlements’ illegality scarcely ever highlighted verbally, but pictures of the settlements are never contrasted with Palestinian villages, as the hideous contrast between fortress-like, green-lawned and swimming pool Israeli settlements and impoverished Palestinian villages would be instructive for the American public. When settlements are shown on the nightly news channels, they convey the stories of colonizers claiming that they are ‘peaceful’ and feel ‘besieged’ by their neighbours, without mentioning that these colonies are built on confiscated Palestinian property and agricultural lands.

Pro-Israel lobby
Research on media bias on this issue tends to focus on the influence of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States, who regularly put massive pressure on American news outlets to report news in the occupied territories from a strictly pro-Israel perspective. The Israeli foreign ministry has formed a public relations department in New York, including ‘some of the most well known PR firms in America.’ Among the many tactics this steering committee uses in combating so-called ‘pro-Palestinian bias’ includes relentlessly targeting individual journalists. Rula Amin, CNN’s West Bank correspondent, is one of the primary targets of this campaign. Israeli spokesperson Nachman Shai told his listeners in October 2001, and I quote, ‘We are putting real pressure on the heads of CNN to have Amin and other reporters replaced with more objective pro-Israel reporters that are willing to tell our side of the story’, as if the words ‘objective’ and ‘pro-Israel’ are somehow interchangeable.

According to Ackerman, ‘The feeling against Amin is probably motivated more by her ethnic background than the content of her reporting, which, though somewhat more sympathetic to the Palestinians than most American fare, is not much different than what typically appears on, say, the BBC. It is worth noting that a very high number of American reporters and editorialists on this issue have Jewish backgrounds – yet to suggest that the ethnic or religious backgrounds of these reporters somehow taint their objectivity would be loudly, roundly and rightly condemned as anti-Semitic.

The other major instance of media bias is the pervasive myth that the Israelis made a very generous offer at Camp David from which the Palestinians, in their lust for war, simply walked away. Gone is any analysis of the Camp David accords, which to most serious observers offered the Palestinians a ‘Swiss cheese’ state composed of a series of Palestinian slums, similar to South African Batustans cut with Israeli bypass roads, military installations, and settlements. The repeated mantra, ‘Arafat walked away from an unprecedented, generous offer’ is repeated again and again as a means of justifying Israel’s current savagery against the civilian Palestinian population.

The Jenin massacre
While the rest of the world was busy trying to gather evidence of a massacre in Jenin – Amnesty International was bringing a formal law suit against the IDF calling for access to the camps – the American press was simply parroting the right-wing Israeli line (it is worth noting that Shimon Perez described Jenin as a ‘massacre’ in Ha’aretz) that a massacre did not occur. On April 17 the Washington Post and Washington Times reported stories to the effect of ‘while there is massive destruction and human suffering in Jenin, there is no evidence of a massacre.’ But that’s precisely the story! The IDF is being charged with covering-up evidence of a massacre in Jenin. The role of an investigative journalist would be to confirm or deny these charges by bravely trying to enter the camp and get the information, not simply repeat the official line of another government regarding its own military incursions. Indeed, headlines in the British newspaper The Independent, read, by contrast, ‘Aid the Ruins of Jenin, the Grisly Evidence of a War Crime’.

Another problem is our press’ reporting on the stance of our government. As Bush sat in his Texas ranch, mindlessly repeating his demand that Yassir Arafat, trapped by candlelight in two rooms, ‘do more’ to stop the violence, the American press seemed to take it as in incontrovertible fact that Yassir Arafat was in full control of every suicide bomber in the Occupied Territories, ignoring that this is a man who has a history of summary arrests and detentions of his own citizens whom he suspected of being militants. Meanwhile, the Israeli press itself was much more forthright, reporting widely that it was clear that president Bush was leaving a ‘window of opportunity’ for Israel to undergo more incursions and wreak more havoc on the Palestinians.

US media are also very scant in explaining to Americans the links our officials have with pro-Israel groups both now and in the past. In an article entitled ‘The “Do More” Chorus in Washington’, Charles
D. Smith, professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Arizona, recently exposed the affiliations many of our top-placed government officials have with right-wing Israeli groups. He singled out, for example, Douglas Feith, Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, the latter two appointed to major positions in the Pentagon under Rumsfeld. According to Smith, Feith was recently identified by Ha’aretz as closely linked to right-wing settlers on the West Bank, and as a constant opponent of the Oslo accords. Richard Perle established a Defence Policy Group independent of but linked to the Pentagon. Perle was identified by Seymour Hersh, in his 1979 biography of Henry Kissinger, as someone whom Kissinger discovered to have ‘spied for Israel while a National Security Council staffer’. Perle was not dismissed for these charges.

Also unexposed by the media is the unsavoury relationship between the extreme Christian right and its influence in Congress (and, presumably, the executive branch) and ardent supporters of Israel. It is largely hidden from Americans that much of our congressional leaders’ strong support of Israel has to do with notions of Armageddon and the return of the Messiah that hardly belong in US political discourse.

A final word courtesy of Robert Fisk
One of the longest serving Middle East journalists in the Middle Eastern press is Robert Fisk. In The Independent newspaper of April 17, 2001 he wrote:

‘And there were little tell-tale stories that showed just how biased and gutless the American press has become in the face of America's Israeli lobby groups. “I wrote a report for a major paper about the Palestinian exodus of 1948,” a Jewish woman told me as we drove through the smog of downtown L.A. “And of course, I mentioned the massacre at Dir Yassin by the Stern Gang and other Jewish groups – the massacre that prompted 750,000 Arabs to flee their homes. Then I look for my story in the paper, and what do I find? The word ‘alleged’ has been inserted before the word ‘massacre’. I called the paper’s ombudsman and told him that the massacre at Dir Yassin was a historical fact. Can you guess his reply? He said that the editor had written the word ‘alleged’ before ‘massacre’ because that way he thought he would avoid a lot of critical letters.”

‘By chance, this was the theme of my thoughts and lectures: the cowardly, idle, spineless way in which American journalists are lobotomising the stories from the Middle East, how the “Occupied Territories” have become “disputed territories” in their reports, how Jewish “settlements” have become Jewish “neighbourhoods”, how Arab militants are “terror-ists” but Israeli militants only “fanatics” or “extremists”, how Ariel Sharon – the man held “personally responsible” by Israel’s own commissioners’ inquiry for the 1982 Sabra and Shatilia massacre of 1,700 Palestinians – could be described in a report in the New York Times as having the instincts of a “warrior”. How the execution of surviving Palestinian fighters was so often called “mopping up”, how civilians killed by Israeli soldiers were always “caught in the crossfire”. I demanded to know of my audience – and I expected the usual American indignation when I did – how U.S. citizens could accept the infantile, “dead or alive”, “with us or against us”, “axis of evil” policies of their president?

‘And for the first time in more than a decade of lecturing in the United States, I was shocked. Not by the passivity of Americans – the all-accepting, patriotic notion that the president knows best – nor by the dangerous self-absorption of the United States since 11 September 2001, and the constant, all consuming fear of criticizing Israel. What shocked me was the extraordinary new American refusal to go along with the official line, the growing angry awareness among Americans that they were being lied to and deceived... So for the first time, it wasn’t my lectures they objected to, but the lectures they received from their president, and the lectures they read in their press about Israel’s “war on terror” and the need, uncritically, to support everything that America’s little Middle Eastern ally says and does.’

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The most distressing reality facing us in the Middle East is not the deadly struggle between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat. What is most distressing about our current situation is the chilling fact that no candidate for the U.S. presidency dares display any awareness of the Palestinian perspective in this conflict.

President Bush and before him, President Clinton, were equally unwilling to acknowledge, or were unaware that there was such a perspective. But once in office both were forced to acknowledge that the rest of the world understands: Israel’s military control over Palestinian life is at the heart of the problem.

Unfortunately, driven by domestic political concerns, these leaders continue their unwavering and total support for Israel, as Bush demonstrated in his embrace of Sharon during the Israeli leader’s most recent visit to Washington.

Bush’s ear for political nuance, never as finely tuned as it might be, was especially wooden when he declared that a future Palestinian state must have leaders who are neither corrupt nor terrorist. Conservative columnist George Will could not have said it better. Karen Hughes, who is in charge of shaping the Bush image, should have reminded her old friend that such a statement is not a sign of leadership, but a demonstration of partisanship.

Of course, governments of any country should avoid corruption and eschew acts of terror, which are despicable tactics of desperate people with no power of their own. Bush should be reminded that the modern state of Israel was born, in part, out of acts of terrorism, and that Israel elected two prime ministers from terrorist leadership – Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir.

Bush stretched the limits of rhetoric when he praised Sharon as a ‘man of peace’ – hardly an apt description for a leader whose career, according to Israeli historian Avi Shlaim, has been marked by ‘savage brutality’ toward Arab civilians. Shlaim also notes that Sharon’s real agenda is ‘to subvert what remains of the Oslo accords, to smash the Palestinians into the ground, and to extinguish hope for independence and statehood.’

This is not a man of peace, this is a man with a plan.

A recent appearance on Meet the Press by North Carolina Senator John Edwards was not encouraging to any future peaceful solution of the conflict. Edwards might be only one of 100 senators (98 of whom voted for a recent pro-Israeli resolution) but he is also a leading candidate for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination. He is a handsome, rich, articulate and southern trial lawyer – perhaps all that is required to give him a strong lead among the anyone-but-Gore crowd that is competing for the nomination.

In questioning Edwards, host Tim Russert went through the entire pro-Israel litany: Should Bush have told Sharon to get his troops out of the West Bank? (No, a sovereign state doesn’t like to be told what to do); Should Sharon see Arafat as a peace partner? (That is for Sharon to decide); Should the UN have investigated Jenin? (No). All of these answers ignore Israel’s massive military superiority which continues to causes great suffering in the West Bank and Gaza. Yes, suicide bombers are bad, but Edwards seems unaware that Sharon’s invasions guarantee more suicide bombers.

Another Democrat often mentioned as a 2004 nominee for president, Senate majority leader Tom Daschle, of South Dakota, has been in politics much longer than Edwards. But like Edwards, his views on the Middle East suggest he is not open to any perspective but the Israeli one. In an American Prospect essay on Jewish lobby power in Washington, Michael Massing traces Daschle’s rise to power: ‘When, as a four term congressman, Daschle first ran for the Senate . . . his record was not particularly distinguished on matters Israeli, but AIPAC [the American Israel Public Affairs Committee] and other Jewish groups, intent on nurturing him, helped organize a round of fund raisers in different locales. In the end, say former AIPAC officials, these events netted Daschle roughly one-quarter of the $2 million he spent on the campaign. Daschle has received similar amounts in subsequent races. And as he’s ascended the Democratic ladder in the Senate, his votes on the Middle East have reliably reflected AIPAC’s perspective.’

In his book, Mount Rushmore: An Icon Reconsidered, Jesse Larner examines the irony of the South Dakota memorial to four American presidents who were instrumental in dehumanising and humiliating native Americans. The four faces adorn a mountain on land that the United States agreed by treaty to allow the Lakota tribe to retain. The American government stole that land, of course, and
commissioned Gutzon Borglum, a sculptor with strong ties to the Ku Klux Klan, to create the memorial.

In his visit to Washington, which cut short by another suicide bombing, Ariel Sharon no doubt repeated his contention that he is only doing to the Palestinians what the U.S. did in Afghanistan – attacking an entire nation to eradicate a terrorist infrastructure. Sharon might also have said, but probably did not, that his ‘peace’ plan is the same military strategy the United States used against its Native Americans. He too is protecting settlements by stealing land, violating treaties, and forcing an entire native population to live on reservations.

James M. Wall is Contributing Editor to the Christian Century magazine, Chicago, USA. The above piece appeared May 22-29, 2002 and is used with permission.

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Participants at the conference ‘Mega-phones and Muffled Voices’ agreed the following set of guidelines for journalists covering conflict situations. It calls for honesty, self-criticism and equally balanced coverage.

The primary mission of journalists is to offer readers, viewers and listeners a rough first draft of history as it is being made. By definition, this draft is not always complete, often presenting facts without adequate context, filing reports in a hurry and sending pictures that emphasize immediate action and consequences. Still, there is more to informing the public than merely relaying raw data quickly. To prepare coherent accounts of events, reporters and editors routinely filter and condense the vast amount of available information into a coherent package. They attempt to separate the wheat from the chaff. Information gatherers and gatekeepers fulfil their responsibilities best when they observe the following guidelines:

1 The best of journalists do not only report what they see, hear or are told by official sources. They dig beneath the surface. They strive to get the other side or sides of the story and rely on diverse sources.

2 Balance of coverage is not achieved only in providing equal space or time to each side. There is no balance when an articulate, moderate and charismatic person is asked to represent one side and an uncompromising, militant, fiery and inarticulate ideologist is offered as a representative of the other side.

3 Headlines should reflect the content of the story. Photographs should give a fair and accurate image of an event and not exaggerate an incident simply because the photograph is exceptionally dramatic.

4 As much as possible, journalists should understand the language, the history and the culture of the people they cover. They should not totally rely on interpreters provided by particular causes or governments.

5 Covering such a sensitive, nuance-ridden subject as the Arab-Israeli conflict, journalists should be careful in using such loaded words and clichés as ‘terrorists’, ‘gunmen’, ‘Islamic bombers’ and ‘fatalistic’ Muslims.

6 In presenting stories, there should be a clear distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion. News should be free of bias. Columnists should stake their positions by verifiable facts rather than secondary sources or reports. Op-Ed articles by advocacy groups should be clearly labelled as such.

7 As a marketplace for ideas, the news media, particularly newspapers, magazines and periodicals, have a responsibility to publish all sides of controversial issues by inviting ‘Op-Ed’ contributions and letters to the editor.

8 Journalists should have the courage of well-founded convictions and a healthy sense of fair play. They should never write anything that goes against their conscience.

9 Although pledges of confidentiality should be honoured, they should be made sparingly – and only when the journalist deems it to serve the public’s need for information.

10 Journalists are more self-critical about their work than their readers or viewers frequently give them credit. Journalists should also encourage thoughtful public input about their work.

11 Journalists should expect access from governments at all levels, especially from those that profess to honour democracy. So-called closed military zones and blanket orders prohibiting coverage in combat zones ill serve democracy.

12 Editorial criticism of a government’s policy should not be equated as criticism or derision of an entire nation or class of people.

The Media Group of the Middle East Forum is an ecumenical, church-related organisation that works for balanced reporting on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It has recently published a style sheet for reporters, copy editors and radio and television presenters to provide them with background information and explanations of key words and terms. It uses an alphabetical listing followed by brief clarifications.

Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Paramilitary group loyal to Yasir Arafat’s Fatah organization; founded after the eruption of the second intifada on Sept. 28, 2000, the day Ariel Sharon, then Israel’s right-wing opposition leader, went to Jerusalem’s Al Aqsa Mosque to press his claim of Israeli sovereignty over Islam’s third holiest site. See: Fatah.

Al Haram al Sherif. English: the Noble Sanctuary. Arabic name for the plaza in Jerusalem where the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque are located. Muslims revere the site as the area where Prophet Muhammad broke his miraculous night journey from Mecca to heaven. Jews revere the area as the location of the First and Second Temples, and refer to the area above and to the east of the Western Wall as Har Ha Moriyya or Har Ha Bayt in Hebrew and as the Temple Mount in English. Some Jewish radicals advocate the construction of a third Temple there. Use Hebrew and Arabic equivalents or use two English equivalents. See: Western Wall; Temple Mount Faithful.


Al-Jazeera (or Al-Jazira) Satellite Channel. Founded in Qatar in 1996, JSC is the only 24-hour station in the Arab world dedicated to news, news analyses, talk shows, and documentaries; as such it has replaced CNN as the major source of news on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Its impact on the Arab world is significant. By beaming scenes of Israel’s occupation hourly into Arab homes and schools, it has made its viewers real-time participants in these events, much as CNN made Americans real-time participants in the events of September 11, 2001.

Allah. Arabic for God. Not exclusively the God of Muslims, since Arabic-speaking Christians use the same term. See: God.

Annexation, Annexed Territories. Following the 1967 war, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and a portion of the West Bank, extending the borders of Jerusalem by some 55 square miles. In 1981, Israel annexed Syria’s Golan Heights. Both these annexations are considered illegal under United Nations resolutions. The United States regards the annexed territories as areas to be dealt with in final peace negotiations. Settlements for Jewish residents have been and are being constructed in the annexed areas and in other parts of the West Bank and Gaza. [www.arij.org] See: East Jerusalem; Golan Heights; Green Line; Occupied Territories; U.N. Resolutions.

Anti-Semitism. Discrimination against, or persecution of, Semitic people. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term was first used with specific reference to Jews in the 1880s, although for hundreds of years and in many countries Jews and Arabs, who are also Semites, have been denied full rights as citizens and have suffered economic discrimination, social ostracism, and persecution. Historically, anti-Semitism toward Jews has been especially harsh in predominantly Christian nations in Europe, culminating in pogroms, the Inquisition, and the Holocaust. Generally used to describe negative attitudes toward Jews. See: Semitic Peoples.

Arab, Arabic, Arabians. An Arab is a person whose native tongue is Arabic, generally one who comes from the Middle East or North Africa. Arabs are not a religious group but a linguistic and cultural group of Semitic origin. Arabic is the language used throughout the region and also liturgically by Muslims worldwide. Arabians are people who live in, or have migrated from, the Arabian Peninsula. [www.albab.com/-arab/countries/palestine] See: Israeli Arabs.
**Arab League.** Confederation of Arab states founded in 1945. Membership comprises 22 Arab states and includes Palestine, which was admitted as a full member in 1976. The League, now headquartered in Cairo, Egypt, has observer status at the United Nations. Its summit meetings are seen as indicators of the level of Arab unity.

**Areas A, B, C.** The 1995 Oslo II Agreement divided the Palestinian territories, excluding East Jerusalem, into three zones: Area A, comprising disconnected districts, includes 17.2 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and is under the full security and civil control of the Palestinian Authority. Area B, 23.8 percent, is under Israeli security control, while the Palestinian Authority is responsible for some social and civil services. Area C, approximately 59 percent, is under full Israeli occupation. The three areas were theoretically a first step in Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank, as required under U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. Further significant withdrawals, to be completed by May 1999, never took place. See Occupied Territories; Autonomous Areas; U.N. Resolutions.

**Ashkenazi** (plural, Ashkenazim). Jews in Israel are officially divided into Ashkenazim (from Germany, and by extension, Europe) and Sephardim (from Spain, and by extension, the Middle East and North Africa). Since most Jews of European ancestry are Ashkenazim, the term denotes both sectarian affiliation and geographic origin. Israeli Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, however, are described as Sephardim in sectarian terms, and Mizraim (Orientals) geographically. In the early years, the Zionist movement was almost wholly Ashkenazi. Of the 717,000 Jews in Israel in 1948, Ashkenazim numbered 80 percent; and of the 37 Jewish leaders on stage when David Ben-Gurion declared the state of Israel in 1948, one was from Palestine, one from Yemen, and 35 from Europe and Russia. By the mid-1960s, Mizraim surpassed the Ashkenazim, due to immigration and a higher birth rate. Today, due to Russian immigration, their numbers are about equal. See: Jews; Judaism; Zionism.

**Autonomous Areas.** As a result of Oslo I in 1993, Oslo II in 1995, and the 1997 Hebron Agreement, seven Palestinian cities in the West Bank, 60 percent of Gaza, and 80 percent of Hebron are considered autonomous areas under full Palestinian jurisdiction. Other parts of the West Bank and Gaza (Areas B and C) are under joint or exclusively Israeli jurisdiction. See: Areas A, B, C.

**Borders.** Israel has never officially fixed its territorial borders. When David Ben-Gurion announced the creation of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948, he refused to define its borders, saying, ‘We are announcing the creation of a state in the Western part of our country.’ And in his diaries (‘Rebirth and Destiny of Israel’) he wrote ‘...we have to set up a dynamic state bent upon expansion in order to accommodate the ingathering of Jews from around the world. Within Israel today the question of borders is controversial since some Israeli Jews refer to the West Bank as Judea and Samaria and as part of Greater or Eretz Israel. Israeli peace groups, such as Gush Shalom, call for the pre-1967 borders, or green line, to be accepted as the ‘border of peace.’ Agreements at Taba, Egypt, in January 2001 (later repudiated by Israel) acknowledged the 1967 borders as the basis for lasting peace. [www.GushShalom.org/Jerusalem] See: Aliyah; Green Line; Peace Organizations; U.N. Resolutions; Zionism.

**Checkpoint.** A barrier built by the Israeli Defense Forces or Border Police to limit the movement of Palestinians who lack necessary permits. Normally, Israeli citizens and foreigners move through the checkpoints without being stopped. Palestinians with permits frequently experience extreme delays and humiliation at these barriers. On occasions, deaths have occurred at checkpoints when individuals, including pregnant women in labor, have been unable to reach hospitals. Often farm produce, especially from Gaza, has spoiled at checkpoints due to delays of up to several days. See: Closure; IDF.

**Christian Zionism.** For more than a century, some evangelical Christians have supported the development of a Jewish commonwealth in the belief that the Messiah will return when Jews are restored to the land of Israel. Various leaders in Israel have courted evangelical leaders in the U.S., including the Rev. Jerry Falwell and the Rev. Pat Robertson who, like Hal Lindsey, anticipate the last great battle,
Armageddon. These Israeli leaders generally ignore the Christian Zionists’ theological position that in the end days all Jews will be killed, save for 144,000 who accept Christ. An exception to this evangelical Christian support for the state of Israel has come from the U.S.-based Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding. [www.icej.org; www.emeu.org] See: Embassy, Christian Embassy.

Christianity. The religion practiced by Christians, the followers of Jesus who was born and lived as a Jew in what is now Israel and the West Bank. According to biblical tradition, Jesus also visited parts of what are now Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. [www.cicts.org] For the branches of Christianity, see: Christians.

Christians (Middle East Christians). The Christian community in Israel and Palestine, and throughout the Middle East, includes four families of churches: the Eastern Orthodox, within which the Greek Orthodox Church is the largest and most prominent; the Oriental Orthodox, which includes the Coptic Orthodox Church and Armenian Apostolic Church among others; the Catholic family in which the Latin Catholic, Greek Catholic (Melkite) and Maronite Churches are the most prominent; and the Evangelical (Protestant) family that includes Anglicans, Lutherans and numerous smaller groups. Churches of all four of these families participate as members of the Middle East Council of Churches and accept both the Old and New Testaments. Membership of all these churches has declined during the last half century due to emigration from the region. Members of Christian congregations in the Holy Land are sometimes called the ‘Living Stones’ as a reminder that the churches in the area are more than museums; they are the centers of dynamic and living communities of faith that trace their history to Pentecost. Since 1948, the Palestinian Christian community has dropped from approximately 18 percent to 1.9 percent. [www.Al-bushra.org; www.mec-churches.org; www.Sabeel.org; www.bethlehem-mediacenter.org]

Citizenship, Nationality. An important distinction should be made between citizenship and nationality in Israel. While Israeli Jews and non-Jews (most being Palestinian Arabs) are citizens with the right to vote, Israel distinguishes between citizens who are Jewish nationals and those who are not. In 1952, Israel enacted the Citizenship/Jewish Nationality Law, granting all Jews in the world, and only Jews, the status both of Israeli citizenship and Jewish nationality, meaning that, as soon as they arrive in Israel, they are automatically eligible for significant rights and benefits provided by the state or by its semi-governmental organizations – rights and benefits denied to non-Jewish nationals, whose families may have lived on the soil for generations. See: Aliyah.

Closed Military Zones. Areas in the occupied territories declared by the Israel Defense Forces off-limits to unauthorized persons. These zones need not be of military significance; at times, Israeli officials abort peaceful demonstrations by temporarily designating a site a closed military area. [www.arij.org] See: IDF; Occupied Territories.

Closure, Siege, Blockade. Terms used to describe official Israeli efforts to control the movement of Palestinians. Closure was instituted in March 1993 to deny Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, except those with permits, entry into Israel and Greater Jerusalem. More recently, roadblocks have restricted movement between cities and towns within the occupied territories; some Palestinian farmers are even unable to reach their fields because of these ‘internal checkpoints.’ Students, medical doctors, and patients often find it impossible to reach colleges, universities, and hospitals. In August 2001, The New York Times reported that Israel had established 97 ‘armed blockades’ in the West Bank and 32 in the Gaza Strip. Palestinians refer to the effect of this policy as a siege. Some news media use the term blockade. [www.btselem.org] See: Checkpoint; Collective Punishment.
Collective Punishment. Practice of punishing entire families, communities or groups for the act of an individual. Collective punishment, as practiced by Israel, takes the form of sealing or demolishing Palestinian homes, imposing curfews, erecting roadblocks, confiscating personal property, uprooting olive and other fruit trees (over 34,600 between Sept. 2000 and Feb. 2002), destroying water systems, and closing schools, colleges, markets, roads, and other gathering places. Collective punishment is prohibited by Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. See: Geneva Conventions.

Colonies. Term used by Palestinians and others for settlements established by the Israeli government in the occupied territories. See: Settlements.

Crusades. In 1095, Pope Urban II called on Christians of Europe to invade the Middle East for a holy war against the ‘infidel Mohammedans.’ In 1099, a European expedition known as the First Crusade ‘liberated’ Jerusalem, massacring 40,000 of its citizens. This crusade was followed by six others over the next 200 years. In 1187, the Muslim general Saladin (also Salahudin or Salah-al-Din) retook Jerusalem without bloodshed. The barbarity of the Western crusaders is a vivid memory for the peoples of the Middle East, many of whom see the influx of European Jews into Palestine in 1948 as yet another crusade.

Curfew. A decree confining people inside their homes. The Israel Defense Forces have kept Palestinian cities and towns under curfews, some for weeks at a time, resulting in serious food shortages and the denial of urgent medical services. As a form of collective punishment, curfews are contrary to the Geneva Conventions. [www.phrmg.org] See: Geneva Conventions.

De-development. Term first used by Sara M. Roy to describe the negative economic impact of Israel’s occupation on Palestinian cities and towns. From 1992 to 1996, for example, average unemployment in the occupied territories increased from 3 to 28 percent, and per capita GNP fell 37 percent. By the year 2002, poverty and unemployment in Gaza had reached 50 percent.

Detention: Administrative and Juvenile. Administrative detention is detention without charge or trial, authorized by administrative order rather than by judicial decree. It is allowed by international law within rigid limitations. B’Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, charges that Israel’s practice of administrative detention violates these limitations. Contrary to article 49 of the Geneva Convention, e.g., Israel often holds Palestinians for prolonged periods of time without trying them and without informing them of the suspicions against them. Israeli military order 132 also allows for the arrest and detention of Palestinian children from 14 to 17 years of age, who are confined with adult prisoners and criminal convicts. This practice contravenes the Fourth Geneva Convention and the U.N. Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty. From Sept. 2000 to Feb. 2002, 1,000 Palestinians from inside the green line have been detained, and 1,850 (including 600-plus children) from Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip. B’Tselem charges that 85 percent of detainees are tortured during interrogations. [www.btselem.org] See: Geneva Conventions.

Dimona. Site in the Negev Desert where Israel manufactures nuclear weapons. In his book ‘The Samson Option: Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy,’ investigative reporter Seymour Hersh writes: ‘By the mid-1980s, the technicians at Dimona had manufactured hundreds of low-yield neutron warheads capable of destroying large numbers of enemy troops with minimal property damage. The size and sophistication of Israel’s arsenal allows men such as Ariel Sharon to dream of redrawing the map of the Middle East aided by the implicit threat of nuclear force.’ Israel has refused to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Disputed Territories, Administered Territories. Terms used by Israel and sometimes the United States to soften or intentionally confuse the status of areas occupied by Israel in 1967. Use ‘occupied territories.’ See: Geneva Conventions; Occupied Territories; Judea and Samaria.

Divided City, Undivided City. Refers to urban areas, especially Hebron and Jerusalem, where Jews and Arabs live side-by-side. From 1948 to 1967 Jerusalem was divided. Jews could not reach places in East Jerusalem, including the Jewish Quarter of the Old City and such holy places as the Western Wall; Arabs could not reach areas in West Jerusalem, including properties to which they held deeds and keys. Since 1967, Israel has referred to Jerusalem as its ‘undivided and eternal capital,’ although it provides disparate public services in the two parts of the city and residents have little interaction. [www.acj.org] See: East Jerusalem; Jerusalem; Hebron.
Druze, Druse. Members of a secretive religious group which has roots in Christianity and Islam. There are Druze in northern Israel who are Israeli Arabs, as well as Druze in Syria and Lebanon. See: Israeli Arabs.

East Jerusalem. Sometimes referred to as Arab East Jerusalem, this area was captured by the Israelis in 1967. Under international law it is considered part of the occupied territories. Although it is part of the single Jerusalem municipality, it suffers from lack of public services except for the Jewish Quarter of the Old City and the parts of East Jerusalem where settlements have been constructed. East Jerusalem is the area where most Muslim and Christian residents live and work. It includes the walled Old City and the historic Mount of Olives. Most international N.G.O.s are located in East Jerusalem. Palestinians expect that when their state is formally established, its capital will be in East Jerusalem. [www.passia.org/index_jerusalem] See: Jerusalem.

Embassy, Consulates, Christian Embassy. Although Israel considers Jerusalem its capital, most nations do not and maintain their embassies in Tel Aviv. The United States maintains consulates in both West and East Jerusalem. Although the U.S. Congress has pressed the State Department to move the embassy to Jerusalem, every President since Ronald Reagan has resisted specific requests. In 1989, the United States purchased a 7.7 acre site on the Hebron Road south of the Old City for the construction of an embassy. Subsequently the site was discovered to lack a clear title, the land having been confiscated from Palestinian owners including an Islamic foundation (waqf). The so-called International Christian Embassy in West Jerusalem, which is unrelated to any government, represents the presence in Jerusalem of certain ideological Christians from abroad who support the policies of the state of Israel. The Christian Embassy is not recognized by the historic churches in the Holy Land, nor does Israel accept the conservative theology of the Christian Embassy. [www.icej.org] See: Christian Zionism.

Fatah. The leading constituent group of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Founded in 1959, it marks January 1965 as the beginning of its armed struggle to free Palestine. In 1969, Fatah’s leader, Yasir Arafat, was appointed chairman of the P.L.O.’s executive committee. See: P.L.O.

Foreign Aid to Egypt. U.S. aid to Egypt averages $2.2 billion per year over the past 21 years. The money is given as part of an agreement that encouraged Egypt to sign and maintain a 1979 peace treaty with Israel.

Foreign Aid to Israel. U.S. aid to Israel takes the form of federal loans and grants, plus tax-deductible donations from organizations and individuals. Federal aid to Israel is unique in that: a) the total annual grant is given at the start of each fiscal year, instead of quarterly, allowing Israel to earn the interest; b) it is given with no strings attached, unlike aid to other countries, which is given for designated purposes; c) as of 1984, the U.S. gives Israel additional funds to pay whatever debt it owes on its loans; d) annual U.S. aid to Israel is far greater than that given to any other country. According to conservative U.S. government figures, total U.S. aid to Israel since 1948 is around 90 billion dollars, or approximately $15,000 per citizen. In addition, Germany over the years has given Israel some $31 billion in grants and preferred loans. [www.palestinenmonitor.org/-fact-sheet] See: Jewish National Fund.

Fundamentalist. Term used by religious scholars to designate a segment of any religious community that has adopted a narrow focus on their tradition. In recent decades, the term has become pejorative when used to caricature the policies or practices of those who narrowly employ the fundamentals of their faith to promote a radical political agenda. Properly used, a fundamentalist is an orthodox traditionalist of a particular faith group. When the term is misused, fundamentalist conveys a political style often associated with violence; in this usage, a fundamentalist is blamed for using sacred texts to justify his or her agenda. The term is legitimate in academic discourse, but has become imprecise in wider discourse. Extremist, radical, or fanatic are more accurate terms. See: Terrorism.

Gaza, Gaza Strip. One of the most densely populated areas in the world, the Gaza Strip is 25 miles long and five miles wide, lying along the southeastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. Intended as part of the Arab sector in the 1947 U.N. partition plan, it was occupied and administered by Egypt following the 1947-48 war. Gaza City, the principal urban community, makes up one third of the Strip’s 1.02 million residents (1997 census), most of whom are refugees. Israel occupied the Strip in 1967 and constructed numerous settlements there for the exclusive use of Jews. With the exception of those settlements and some closed military zones, the remaining 60 percent of Gaza was incorporated in the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords. Gaza is not contiguous with the West Bank and ‘safe passage’
between Gaza, the West Bank and Jericho provided for in Article XI of an agreement signed on May 4, 1994, is currently shut down. See: Oslo; Settlements; West Bank.

'Generous Offer'. Following the failure of the Camp David meetings in July 2000, the Palestinian Authority's President Yasser Arafat has been criticized for refusing the 'generous offer' of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. The offer, never publicly displayed, would have maintained 69 settlements in 10 percent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel would have retained full military control over another 10 percent of the West Bank, specifically in the agriculturally productive area along the Jordan River. Although described as 'temporary control,' this 10 percent would remain under Israeli military and civil authority for an indefinite period. All the borders of the West Bank would remain under Israeli control, thus prohibiting freedom of movement internationally. The settlement blocs would be connected by Israeli-controlled roads, effectively dividing the West Bank into four isolated cantons, similar to the Bantustans of South Africa. Because the settlements are established on groundwater aquifers and near the sources of surface water, Palestinians would not control the water supply necessary for a viable state. In addition, Israel resisted the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes within the green line. Israeli peace organizations, including Gush Shalom, describe the offer as impossible and as a 'fig leaf.' [www.Gush-Shalom.org/] See: Borders; Green Line; Law of Return; Settlements; West Bank.

Geneva Conventions, Fourth Geneva Convention. Four internationally accepted conventions were approved in Geneva following World War II. The Fourth Geneva Convention was adopted on August 12, 1949 with Israel as one of the signatories. It protects individuals who live in a territory occupied by another nation and makes the occupying power responsible for the welfare of the population of any territory it occupies. It protects such residents from coercion, corporal punishment, torture, the confiscation of personal property, and collective punishment. The occupying power is prohibited from transferring any part of its own population into the occupied territory. This provision has been cited by U.N. resolutions objecting to the creation of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel takes the position that the Fourth Geneva Convention does not apply to its role as an occupying power. [www.Law-Society.org/Reports/1999/geneva4] See: U.N. Resolutions.

God. Supreme Being worshipped by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and known in Arabic as Allah and in Hebrew as Gd or YHWH. Arabic-speaking Christians and Muslims both use the term Allah. Devout Jews do not pronounce the ineffably sacred name of God, Yahweh, or Jehovah, thus the Hebrew spellings above.


Green Line. Line drawn up by the 1949 Rhodes armistice agreement separating Israel from the West Bank. Since 1967, the green line provides the boundary between Israel and the occupied West Bank, which together with the occupied Gaza Strip, comprises 22 percent of pre-1948 Palestine. When Palestinians signed the Oslo Accords and modified their charter in 1996, they agreed to recognize Israel within the green line, thus conceding 78 percent of historic Palestine to the Jewish state. In some areas, such as north of Bethlehem, Israel has further extended its control, leading to the use of the phrase 'creeping green line.' See: Borders; 'Generous Offer'.

Hamas (Acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement). Established in 1987 as an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. Engages in social-communal activities as well as armed struggle against Israel's occupation. Led by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and concentrated in the Gaza Strip and a few West Bank areas. Membership includes tens of thousands of supporters and sympathizers.

Hebron. The largest city in the West Bank with approximately 125,000 Palestinian residents. Although 80 percent of Hebron is currently under Palestinian administration (designated H1 in the Hebron Protocol to the Oslo Accords), Israel controls the main access routes. The Old City of Hebron (H2), also under Israeli military occupation, is home to an estimated 35,000 Palestinians, as well as 400 settlers who are protected by 1,200 Israeli soldiers. The traditional burial site for Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah, located in the Old City, is known among Palestinians as the Ibrahimi Mosque and to Jews as the Cave of Machpela. Parts of the mosque were built by Herod the Great sometime prior to 4 B.C. Much of the pre-
sent structure was built by Crusaders about 1115. The worship area at the burial site was divided by Israel in 1994-95 following the massacre of 29 Muslims at prayer by Baruch Goldstein, a settler with dual American and Israeli citizenship. Two outside observer groups are present in H2: the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) and the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) organized by three U.S. peace churches, the Mennonites, Brethren, and Friends. Hebron is some 45 miles south of Jerusalem. [www.cpt.org] See: Crusades, Holy Land, Holy Places; Oslo; Settlers; West Bank.

Hezbollah. An Islamic political movement and party, active mainly in Beirut, the Beqa' Valley, and South Lebanon. Starting in 1983, Hezbollah carried out attacks against Israeli forces occupying South Lebanon, which led ultimately to Israel's withdrawal in May 2000.

Holy Land, Holy Places, Holy City. Popular designation for Israel, the West Bank, and portions of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where the biblical events and Prophet Muhammad's visit to Al Aqsa Mosque took place. Jerusalem itself, especially the Old City, is regarded by Jews, Christians, and Muslims as uniquely significant and is referred to as the Holy City. Certain sites are known as Holy Places, generally those identified with the lives and activities of King David, the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, Mary, and the disciples, and Prophet Muhammad. The Western Wall is regarded by Jews worldwide as the focus of liturgical life, and thus of enormous significance. Christians consider the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City, the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem as of major importance. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, also known as the Church of the Resurrection, is believed to have been constructed over the places where Jesus was crucified and where he rose from the dead. The Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque on Al Haram al Sherif comprise the third holiest place in the Muslim world. Some sites are revered by members of all three faiths, e.g., the burial place of Abraham in Hebron, the tomb of Joseph in Nablus, and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem. [www.Al-Bushra.org] See: Al Haram al Sherif; Western Wall.

Home Demolitions. Practice of forcibly removing families from their homes and destroying their dwellings. The government of Israel and some Israeli municipalities have carried out home demolitions as punishment for an alleged criminal act by a member of an extended family or because the house was constructed or enlarged without a building permit. Demolitions are carried out with the help or supervision of the Israeli army or police. Home demolitions are a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. From 1967 to 1999, Israel demolished over 8,500 Palestinian homes. [www.palestinemonitor.org; www.cpt.org; www.batshalom.org] See: Geneva Conventions.

Humanitarian Crisis. Sometimes used by the Western media to describe shortages of medical supplies, food, and water in the West Bank and particularly Gaza. While the phrase implies a natural disaster or unavoidable consequence of war, shortages of medical supplies and food in the occupied territories generally are a direct result of Israeli policies. Interfering with food and medical supplies for a civilian population is forbidden by the Fourth Geneva Convention, and technically is a ‘war crime.’

IDF (Israel Defence Forces). The conscripted army of the state of Israel, in which both men and women serve. Certain Jewish religious groups are exempted from service. Military service, which is otherwise universal except for Israeli Arabs, is the basis for educational, health and other social services. Druze citizens may be conscripted and some Israeli Arab citizens have volunteered for service. [www.idf.il/English] See: Yesh Gvul.

Intifada (or Intifadah). Arabic word meaning ‘a shaking off,’ used as the designation of an uprising among Palestinians from 1987 until 1993. The uprising that was touched off by Ariel Sharon’s visit with 1,000 troops to Al Haram al Sherif on September
have resided in the area since before the state’s formation in 1948. See: Citizenship, Nationality.

Jerusalem (including East Jerusalem). The English word designating the city holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims. Most of the sacred sites of the three religions are in the walled Old City, which comprises Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Armenian Quarters. Although claimed by Israel as its capital, Jerusalem is not recognized as such by the United States or most other nations. The Knesset and principal government offices are located in West Jerusalem. Although a part of a single municipality since 1967, East Jerusalem, under international law, is considered part of the occupied territories. In 1967, Israel annexed parts of the West Bank and unilaterally extended the boundaries of the city from 70 sq. miles to over 900 sq. miles. The Hebrew name is Yerushalayim and the Arabic is Al-Quds. [www.Gush-Shalom.org/Jerusalem; www.jerusalem.muni.il; www.acj.org] See: East Jerusalem; Divided, Undivided City.

Jewish National Fund. A subordinate body of the World Zionist Organization, the J.N.F. entered into a ‘covenant’ in 1961 with the government of Israel. Today, the J.N.F. in the U.S. is a tax-exempt corporation that raises millions of dollars annually for the ‘afforestation, reclamation, and development’ of the land of Israel, including the lands occupied by Israel. To date, the J.N.F. owns 93% of the land inside Israel, most of which was confiscated from Palestinians. By law, non-Jews cannot own, reside, or work on land acquired by the Jewish National Fund.

Jewish Neighbourhoods or Jerusalem Neighbourhoods. A term sometimes used as a euphemism for settlements, especially those located within the extended borders of Jerusalem. See: Jerusalem, Settlements.

Jewish State. Occasionally used as a synonym for Israel, especially when emphasizing the official nature of Israel’s monolithic religious character. ‘The Jewish State’ is also the English translation of the 1886 book ‘Der Judenstaat’ by Theodor Herzl, an Austrian-Jewish writer and founder of the World Zionist Organization. The more accurate translation of the German is ‘The Jews’ State.’ The distinction is important: ‘Jewish’ refers to the culture of the state, as reflected by its majority; in this sense, Israel is a Jewish country, as the United States may be said to be a Christian one. If Herzl had this sense in mind, he would have used the German ‘Der Judische Staat.’ But he used the possessive ‘Der Judenstaat,’
meaning it was to be a state owned by all Jews, no matter where in the world they lived. According to Herzl, the Arabs would be expelled and an exclusive state belonging to Jews would result. See: Aliyah; Israel; Zionism.

Jews. Followers of the religion known as Judaism, although designation includes 'secular' as well as 'cultur-al' Jews. [www.ou.org/about/judaism2; www.ajc.org] See: Judaism.

Jihad. Incorrectly translated 'holy war,' jihad is more precisely a 'striving,' or 'struggle' of a Muslim to keep the faith, to achieve self-control or personal development, or to improve the quality of life in society. This jihad, called the 'greater jihad,' has spiritual implications for devout Muslims, and is a fairly common name given to children born in a time of struggle. The Qur'an also speaks of a jihad of arms, the 'smaller jihad,' which permits fighting as a means of self-protection, not unlike what Christians call a 'just war,' which is fought against tyranny or oppression. There is no such thing as 'holy war' in Islam; the Arabic term harb muqaddasa, which translates holy war, cannot be found in the Qur'an or in the sayings of the Prophet known as the Hadith. The word was adopted by a political movement, the Islamic Jihad. See: Islamic Jihad.

Judaism. The religion practiced by Jews. In the U.S., Judaism is made up of Conservative, Reform, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist congregations. In Israel, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist congregations have no legal standing. Israeli Jews include large numbers of Ultra-Orthodox, as well as many who are 'secular,' i.e., do not belong to congregations and whose religious practices may be limited to certain religious holidays. [Conservative: www.uscj.org; Reform: www.uahc.org; Orthodox: www.ou.org; Reconstructionist: www.jrf.org]

Judea and Samaria. Biblical names for the southern and central areas of Palestine, now in the West Bank; used by some settlers and other Israelis who hope or expect Israel to annex the occupied territories as a permanent part of the state of Israel. [www.yesha.org.il] See: Occupied Territories; West Bank.

Kibbutz, Moshav. A kibbutz (plural, kibbutzim) is an Israeli community, originally agricultural but increasingly industrial, in which most property is collectively owned. Early in the development of Israel, the kibbutzim gave the country a socialist flavor and orientation. A moshav (plural, moshavim) is a cooperative community of small farmers in Israel, who own their own property and possessions, organize their work cooperatively, and market their produce jointly.

Knesset. Israeli parliament and the building in which it meets. The Knesset, a unicameral legislature, functions in a modified parliamentary system, with a separate national election for the Prime Minister who is both head of government and a member of the Knesset. The President, also elected separately, serves as the mostly ceremonial head of state. The two major parties are the relatively liberal Labor Party and the more conservative Likud Party. When, as at present, no party has a majority in the 120-member Knesset, some of the numerous small, special interest parties — excluding the Arab ones — are invited to form a coalition government, thus giving these parties a disproportionate influence. [www.Knessetgov.il/main/eng].

Koran. See: Qur'an.

Law of Return, Right of Return. In 1950, the Israeli Knesset adopted the Law of Return giving any Jew in the world the right to move to and settle in Israel. The Right of Return is the right of all Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 13, 15, and 17) adopted on December 10, 1948, and Resolution 194 adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on December 11, 1948. The state of Israel opposes the return of Palestinian refugees, fearing that their presence would change its character and demographics as a Jewish State. [www.untreaty.un.org/] See: Aliyah; Refugees; Jewish State.

MK. Member of the Knesset. An elected representative in the Israeli parliament, which is known as the Knesset. [www.info.gov.il] See: Knesset.

Madrasa. Arabic word for a school that is often, but not necessarily, involved in the teaching of religion.

Martyr (in Arabic, Shahid). In religious terms, a witness to one's faith, including one who witnesses with his or her death (martyrdom). In political terms, one who dies in the struggle for freedom and is honored as a hero. See: Suicide Bomber.

Middle East. Land area of Southwest Asia and Northeast Africa, often from Turkey to Yemen and Iran to Egypt; sometimes includes North Africa to Morocco. Formerly known as the Near East, a term
Southwest Asia. Far East (East Asia). Some geographers prefer
used by the British whose empire once reached to the
Far East (East Asia). Some geographers prefer
Southwest Asia.

Mosque. Muslim place of worship, commonly
including a minaret from which the call to prayer is
announced or broadcast. Generally dominated by a
room facing Mecca, so marked by a qibla or niche
toward which Muslims face during prayers. In the
United States there are about 2,000 mosques,
Islamic schools and Islamic centers. In Jerusalem the
mosque most sacred to Muslims is Al Aqsa Mosque
located on the compound known as Al Haram al
Sherif or Noble Sanctuary, and known to Muslims as
the ‘Farthest Mosque.’ Properly speaking, the Dome
of the Rock, also located on the Haram, is not a
mosque although sometimes it is incorrectly referred
to as the Mosque of Omar. The Caliph Omar, who
conquered Jerusalem in 638 C.E., was offered an
opportunity to pray in the Church of the Holy
Sepulchre but rejected the invitation knowing that his
followers would designate the Church as a mosque.
Instead, Omar prayed just outside the Church of the
Holy Sepulchre where the Mosque of Omar was later

Muslim. Follower of the religion of Islam. Muslim
(plural, Muslims in English, Muslumun in Arabic) is
the preferred spelling (do not use Moslem) as a more
accurate transliteration of the Arab word. Do not use
Mohammedan; Muslims do not consider themselves
disciples of Muhammad in the sense that Christians
consider themselves disciples of Jesus, and
Muhammad is not part of the deity. There are 1.2 bil-
lion Muslims worldwide, of whom an estimated 6 mil-
lion live in the United States. About 20 percent of all
Muslims live in Arabic-speaking countries; Indonesia
is the nation with the largest Muslim population.
Demographers estimate that in 2025 one-fourth of all
people in the world will be Muslims. (Note: Do not
use Arab as a synonym for Muslim; some Arabs are
Christian and the majority of Muslims are non-

Nakba (also Naqba or Nakbah) ‘The
Catastrophe.’ Al Nakba is the term used by
Palestinians for the impact on them and their nation-
al aspirations of what Israelis call their War of
Independence, 1947-48. 700,000 Palestinians
became refugees and 419 villages were destroyed.
The Nakba is marked by ceremonies each year on
May 15. The Israeli analyst Meron Benvenisti has
used words like ‘ethnic cleansing’ to describe the
actions of Israeli troops in more than 30 documented
massacres.

Near East. Term no longer in general use in the
U.S. Once used, especially by the British, to design-
ate area now known as the Middle East. Sometimes
used by academics, especially archaeologists. See:
Middle East.

Neutral Broker, Honest Broker. Avoid using
these terms to describe the role claimed by the U.S.
in relation to the peace process. Neutrality in this
area is questioned in light of the United States’ dis-
proportionate financial and military aid to Israel and
to the frequent assertion of a ‘special relationship’
between the U.S. and Israel. See: Foreign Aid to
Israel; Special Relationship.

Occupied Territories. Territories occupied by
Israel in 1967, specifically Gaza (which had been
governed by Egypt), the West Bank and East
Jerusalem (which had been under Jordanian jurisdic-
tion), the Golan Heights (which had been part of
Syria), and the Sinai (which was later returned to
Egypt). Under terms of the Fourth Geneva
Convention, no occupying power may legally seize
territory by war nor transplant its own population into
the occupied territories. As part of the Oslo Accords,
Israel accepted U.N. Security Council Resolution 242
that called for its withdrawal from these territories.
East Jerusalem; Gaza; Geneva Conventions;
Golan Heights; West Bank.

Oriental House. Office building used by the
Palestinian Authority in East Jerusalem. Seized by
Israel on August 10, 2001, along with eight other
P.L.O. offices in East Jerusalem. [www.pna.net] See:
East Jerusalem.

Orthodox, Orthodox Christians, Orthodox
Jews. The word orthodox, when applied to reli-
gious groups such as Christians and Jews, signifies
an historic theological position. For some, the word
signifies theological or liturgical purity. When used
with a capital letter, Orthodox designates particular
groups, such as the Greek Orthodox Church or
Orthodox Judaism. See: Fundamentalist.

Oslo, Oslo Accords. Following secret negotiations
in Oslo, Norway, Israel and the P.L.O. signed the
‘Declaration of Principles on Interim Self
Government’ (DOP) on September 13, 1993.
Implementation of the first stage occurred in May
1994. This was followed by the Taba Agreement
(Oslo II) in 1995, the Hebron Agreement in 1997,
and several other protocols. Together these docu-
ments represent the ‘Oslo Accords.’
P.A., P.N.A. The Palestinian Authority or Palestinian National Authority designate the elected governmental officials and agencies authorized under the Oslo Accords. Yasir Arafat was elected president of the P.N.A. on January 20, 1996. [www.pna.net] See: P.L.C.; Palestine.

P.L.C. The Palestinian Legislative Council of 88 members was elected on January 20, 1996 from 16 electoral districts. The P.L.C. was created pursuant to the Oslo Accords. The P.L.C. has no responsibility for foreign affairs or agreements with foreign governments. [www.pal-plc.org] See: Oslo.

P.L.O. The Palestine Liberation Organization was established in May 1964 when the Arab League authorized a body to represent stateless Palestinians. Yasir Arafat became the chairman in 1969. It was recognized by the United Nations in 1974 as the representative of the Palestinian people and gained a role as a U.N. observer in that year. The same year, an Arab summit recognized the P.L.O. as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In 1993, Israel recognized the P.L.O. The P.L.O. is the official Palestinian signatory to the Oslo Accords. [www.nad-plo.org] See: Oslo, P.N.C.

P.N.C. The Palestine National Council is the legislative body of the P.L.O.; its 669 members represent Palestinians worldwide and elect an Executive Committee of 18 members. Among the major actions of the P.N.C. were the signing of the Palestine National Charter in 1964, the Palestinian Declaration of Independence on November 15, 1988, and, in agreement with the Oslo Declaration of Principles, the modification of the Charter on April 21, 1996, which recognized the state of Israel.

Palestine Located from biblical times on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean, the area was first designated as Palestine by the Romans in the 2nd century. Although the 1947 U.N. Resolution 181 provided for a Palestinian state on 43.5 percent of Mandate Palestine, Palestinians still remain stateless. [www.passia.org; www.ARIJ.org] See: P.L.O., Palestinian Authority, West Bank.


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‘The US public lacks a complete picture. The key is to examine ‘what’s not there’ – descriptions of the daily details of life for Palestinians.’

Permits. Documents issued by Israeli authorities authorizing everyday acts such as travel by residents of the West Bank and Gaza into Israel for work or transit, building, and the importing and exporting of goods. Residents of the West Bank or Gaza who wish to travel abroad must apply for and receive special permission to reach the Tel Aviv airport and other border crossings. Israel also issues identification papers to Palestinians living within the extended borders of Jerusalem and has sometimes withdrawn those IDs, as when students go abroad to study or when a Jerusalem-born Palestinian marries a resident of the West Bank or Gaza. [www.LawSociety.org] See: Borders, Closure, Checkpoint.

Philistines, Falistin, Falistini. The Philistines are an ancient people who, in biblical times, were rivals
of the Israelites. Filistin is pronounced the same way, but is the Arabic word for Palestine. Filistini (plural, Filistiniun) is the Arabic word for a Palestinian. Philistine is not a synonym for Filistini and should not be used in that way.

**Refugees.** Individuals who flee from or are driven from their homes, especially in time of war, and are unable to return. The United Nations defines a Palestinian refugee as a person 'whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the conflict in 1948, and who, as a result of this conflict, lost both his home and his means of livelihood and took refuge in 1948 in one of the countries where the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (U.N.R.W.A.) provides relief. Refugees within this definition and the direct descendants of such refugees are eligible for Agency assistance' under certain circumstances. A total of 757,000 refugees were estimated in 1948 and several hundred thousand additional persons became refugees in 1967. By 1999, the U.N. had registered 3.5 million refugees living in camps or assimilated into the populations in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza. In 1948, the United Nations recognized the right of all refugees to return to their homes (Resolution 194). Today, 33 percent of all Palestinian refugees live within 59 camps maintained by U.N.R.W.A. [www.badil.org/Refugees] See: Law of Return, Right of Return.

‘Relative Calm’, ‘Comparative Quiet’. Terms used at times by the media to describe periods when few, if any Israelis are killed, even though, during the same periods, more than a few Palestinians were killed. Reporters should reflect the reality of the situation on both sides.

**Rubber-Coated Steel Bullets.** This is more accurate than ‘rubber bullets.’ It is important to distinguish live fire from rubber-coated steel bullets. Often the Israeli army will use the latter when confronting Palestinian stone throwers. The mainstream media customarily refers to these bullets as ‘rubber-coated,’ giving the impression they are more humane. In fact, they are steel bullets with a thin rubber coating and they can cause more extensive damage than uncoated bullets when lodged in a person’s head or abdomen, particularly a young person’s. The U.S. government has criticized the Israeli government for their use and misuse. Reporters and editors should also be careful to use equivalent terms for both sides in the conflict. Use ‘killed’ rather than ‘murdered.’ Use names for both Israelis and Palestinians when reporting persons killed and injured. [www.btselem.org/files/ERubber.rtf] See: IDF.

**Salahadin Brigade.** Named for Muslim general who defeated the Crusaders. Military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, composed of members of Hamas and Ya-sir Arafat’s Fatah organization. See: Fatah, Hamas, Crusades.

**Samaria.** Area in the West Bank near Nablus where a religious group known as Samaritans have lived since biblical times. The group, now estimated to number fewer than 550, worship in Hebrew and still practice animal sacrifice. They consider themselves Palestinians and are integrated into Palestinian society. See: Judea and Samaria.

**Security Measures.** Term often used by Israel to justify such acts as shelling Palestinian cities and villages, bulldozing homes, uprooting olive and fruit trees, preventing foodstuffs and medical supplies from entering besieged areas, and destroying sources of water. Such acts do not promote security, and often are provocative. A better term would be punitive measures.
Semitic Peoples. Members of ethnic and religious groups who by tradition are believed to be descendants from Noah’s son Shem (or Sem). Both Jews and Arabs are of Semitic origin. Numerous Semitic languages are used in the region.

Sephardim, Mizrahim. See: Ashkenazi, Jews.

Settlements. Originally any new Jewish development in Israel, but now more frequently used to describe the ring of residential communities constructed around Jerusalem and scattered in strategic areas throughout the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. Israelis refer to those within the green line as ‘Jerusalem neighborhoods,’ but this is contested by Palestinians and others who note that the status of East Jerusalem is not yet resolved. Most settlements were constructed on confiscated Arab land and at least partially at the expense of the Israeli government. Sometimes called ‘colonies’ these settlements, built for Jews only, often are massive apartment blocks or suburban homes, and are a source of international controversy and Arab anger. Since the Oslo Accords were signed in September 1993, 19,000 new housing units were added, including 3,000 under Prime Minister Ehud Barak. In all, there are now 194 settlements in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and 18 in the Gaza Strip. [www.ARIJ.org; www.fmep.org/home.html; www.gush-shalom.org] See: Geneva Conventions.

Settlers. Jews who have chosen to live in subsidized homes and communities known as settlements, many within commuting distance from Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. By August 2000, there were 400,000 settlers living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. The estimated annual increase of settlers (natural growth and new additions) is 8 percent. Although the first settlers, in the Jordan Valley and the Golan Heights, were Laborites and generally secular, later settlers near Jerusalem, and in Hebron, were more likely to be Ultra-Orthodox and highly ideological. The Hebrew words for settler, mityashev or mitnachal, can mean either a dweller or the possessor of an inheritance. [www.yesha.org.il] See: Settlements.

Shabbat. Jewish day of worship, beginning at sundown on Friday and continuing until sundown Saturday.

Special Relationship. The frequently cited ‘special relationship’ between the United States and Israel originated with President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy inherited tense relations with Egypt’s Nasser, who appeared to favor the Soviet Union. With strife in Vietnam creating anxieties about Communist expansion, Washington was eager for a dependable ally in the Middle East. Since then, the United States, abetted by a strong pro-Israel lobby, has given enormous military and economic aid to Israel, along with diplomatic assistance by vetoing over 40 U.N. resolutions critical of Israel. See: Foreign Aid to Israel.

Suicide Bomber. Often used by the Western media to describe a Palestinian who detonates explosives strapped to his or her body. Such a Palestinian does not see this as an act of suicide, which is prohibited by Islam. Rather, it is seen as a legitimate means of defense on the part of an occupied people and, as such, worthy of Islam’s most exalted honor, that of martyr. Palestinians speak of a ‘martyrdom operation’ as opposed to ‘suicide bombing.’ See: Martyr.

Tanzim (‘Organization’ in Arabic). A quasi-military militia associated with the P.L.O.’s Fatah organization. Members number in the tens of thousands, most
of them residents of the occupied territories. The tanzim see themselves as graduates of the intifada, who are in the vanguard of organizing protests against Israel’s occupation. They are under the control of local commanders, with branches throughout the occupied territories, and are especially strong within the universities of Bethlehem, Bir Zeit, and An-Najah. They also conduct first aid and civil defense courses on a regular basis.

**Targeted Killings, Interceptions.** Terms used by Israel to describe its policy of executing Palestinians without bringing them to trial. These Palestinians are killed by Israeli death squads or missile-firing helicopters. The Israeli military also uses the phrase ‘target bank’ to refer to the list from which the security cabinet selects its next target. Palestinians and human rights groups condemn the practice, and use the term ‘assassinations,’ or ‘extra-judicial executions.’

**Temple Mount.** English term used by Israelis for the site of the First and Second Temples and the current location of the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque (the Noble Sanctuary.) The Hebrew terms are Har Ha Moriyya or Har Ha Bayt with the Arabic equivalent Al Haram al Sherif.

**Temple Mount Faithful.** A militant Jewish organization determined to ‘liberate’ the Temple Mount (Noble Sanctuary) from what they believe is an Arab occupation by destroying the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque or moving them to Mecca, after which they plan to rebuild the Third Temple. [www.templemountfaithful.org] See: Al Haram al Sherif; East Jerusalem.

**Terrorism.** An act causing extreme fear, dread, fright. Can refer to a mode of governing (military action, sometimes called state-sponsored terrorism) or a mode of opposing government (armed resistance, sometimes called a poor man’s way of waging war). Military action is often justified on the grounds of national security, while armed resistance is often justified on human rights grounds. The United Nations recognizes the legitimacy of ‘armed struggle’ as a means towards self-determination, or restoring a lost independence (e.g., General Assembly Resolution 2246). Israel, however, asserts that all acts of resistance by Palestinians are illegitimate acts of terrorism. Journalists should be aware that to use the term ‘terrorism’ for every act of violence from the Palestinian side is to reveal a pro-Israeli bias in their reporting, since this is not the way Palestinians describe actions taken to force Israel to change its 35-year occupation. A better word to use may be ‘resistance,’ as in: ‘A group of Palestinians believed to be members of Hamas ambushed a bus carrying Jewish settlers in a destructive and deadly continuation of Palestinian resistance designed to force Israel to abandon its occupation policies.’ The same is true of Israeli actions; it is better to describe them as military actions, as in: ‘The Israeli military bulldozed 12 Palestinian homes today in an effort to break Palestinian resistance.’ Judging whether such acts of a state or a resistance group are contrary to international conventions is the task, not of journalists, but of tribunals such as the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and countries that signed the Geneva Conventions. In December 2001, for example, more than 100 signatories of the Geneva Convention gathered in Switzerland to reprimand Israel for ‘indiscriminate and disproportional violence’ against Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories, and urged it to abide by international law. See Martyr; Suicide Bomber.

**Transfer; Transfer Agreement.** Transfer is a euphemism for ethnic cleansing. Reference is often made to the Zionist master plan, Plan Dalet (Plan D), the name given by the Zionist High Command to military operations in April-May 1948 that eventually resulted in the expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians and the destruction of over 400 of their villages. The idea is still prevalent. In a February 2002 poll by the Israeli newspaper Maariv, more than a third of Israelis surveyed said they supported the idea of ‘transfer’ of Palestinians out of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to Arab countries. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon himself has said that ‘The Palestinians already have a state—it’s called Jordan.’ The Transfer Agreement refers to the negotiated arrangement in 1933 between Zionist organizations and the Nazis to transfer some 50,000 able-bodied Jews, and $100 million of their assets, to Palestine in exchange for stopping the worldwide, Jewish-led boycott that threatened to topple Hitler’s regime in its first year. [www.feature-group.com/transfer] See: Nakba; Refugees; Zionism.

**U.N. Resolutions.** Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have adopted numerous resolutions dealing with Israel and the Palestinians. In 1947, the General Assembly offered a partition plan for Palestine as Resolution 181. In 1948, UNGA Resolution 194 declared the Palestinian refugees’ right of return. In November 1967, the Security Council’s Resolution 242 called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and for Arab countries
to recognize Israel and end the state of war. When war broke out again in October 1973, UNSC 338 called for peace negotiations and reaffirmed 242. Those two Security Council resolutions were cited in the Oslo Accords signed by Israel and the P.L.O. and are the agreed-upon basis for final status negotiations. In September 2000, UNSC 1322 called on Israel to abide by its responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention. See: Geneva Conventions; Occupied Territories; Refugees.

Unrecognized Villages. A significant number of Palestinian villages in Israel, which pre-date Israel’s founding, exist without formal recognition from the Israeli government. They are provided with no public services and are subject to the confiscation of any land not under cultivation. They have been befriended and to some extent protected by several sympathetic groups of Israeli Jews.

West Bank. Area captured by Israel in 1967. Following the end of the British Mandate in 1947 and until 1967 the area was administered by Jordan and became known as the West Bank (of the Jordan River). See: East Jerusalem; Green Line.

Western Wall (once called Wailing Wall). Hebrew: HaKotel Hanna’aravi. Site revered by Jews who come to pray and lament the destruction of the First and Second Temples. The wall, with some stones in distinctive Herodian style, was part of a retaining wall built by Herod the Great in 20 B.C. to support the platform of the Second Temple. The modern plaza facing the wall was created after Israel conquered the Old City in 1967 and demolished hundreds of Palestinian homes. Do not use Wailing Wall. See: Jerusalem.

Yesh Gvul (Hebrew meaning ‘There is a Limit’). Israeli peace group, founded in 1982, to support soldiers who refuse assignments of a repressive or aggressive nature. During current intifada two other support groups have been founded, one by disabled army veterans and one by wives of reserve soldiers. By February 2002, over 250 reservists refused to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip because Israel’s policies there involved ‘dominating, expelling, starving, and humiliating an entire people.’ See Peace Organizations.

Yesha Council. Organization of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem; seeks politically to prevent any government from compromising on the continued development of settlements; at times settlement members take the law into their own hands in an attempt to drive Palestinian farmers from their land. See: Settlements; Settlers.

Zion, Zionism, Zionists. Zion is a biblical name variously referring to Jerusalem as a whole, the temple area, and to the location of David’s palace. In the New Testament and for many Christians, Zion refers to the future locus of God’s kingdom—sometimes with apocalyptic implications. The term Zionism was first used in 1890 in its modern context as a movement to resettle Jews in historic Palestine and to create the state of Israel. Theodor Herzl provided a strong impetus to the movement as early as 1881 and in 1895 wrote a pamphlet in German ‘Der Judenstaat.’ Political Zionism is a form of Jewish nationalism that regards all Jews worldwide as part of a national entity called ‘the Jewish people.’ Central to this concept is the belief that anti-Semitism, as Chaim Weizmann, the first president of Israel, called it, a ‘bacillus’ that infects every Gentile, whether he knows it or not. The Jewish philosopher Ahad Ha’am, also known as Asher Ginzberg, represented the more conciliatory form of Zionism. In 1891, he acknowledged that Palestine was not a land without a people and that it could accommodate only a small number of Jews from around the world. Those who did settle in Palestine, said Ha’am, must respect the rights of the Palestinian majority. In 1975, the U.N. General Assembly passed Resolution 3379 declaring Zionism ‘a form of racism and racial discrimination.’ In 1991, due to diplomatic lobbying by the United States, the 1975 resolution was repealed. Contemporary Zionists are those who have associated themselves with the goals of the modern state of Israel, some through cultural, economic and political means, some through military and other violent strategies. See: Christian Zionism; Jewish State.

The style sheet represents work in progress and the compiler, J. Martin Bailey, welcomes comments and recommendations. Contact: MartBailey@aol.com
The Berlin Film Festival took place 6-17 February 2002 attracting 29 films in competition, 39 in the Panorama section (plus 19 specials), and 71 films in the Forum section. To these have to be added a section on 'The New German Movie', a children's film festival and a number of retrospectives. Altogether, some 400 films in 700 screenings!

The international jury, headed by Indian director Mira Nair, awarded the Golden Bear jointly to Spirited Away, an animated film by Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki, and to Bloody Sunday, directed by Paul Greengrass. The international critics' prize went to veteran Georgian film-maker Otar Iosseliani for Monday Morning, a gentle comedy about a factory worker fed up with his work, his wife, his children, and the inhabitants of the village where he lives. In place of this mundane life, he sets off for Venice to paint.

The ten-member ecumenical jury made an award in the Panorama section to L'ange de goudron (The tar angel) directed by Denis Chouinard (Canada). The father of an Algerian immigrant family is about to receive Canadian citizenship when his son disappears. With his son's Canadian girlfriend, the father sets out to find him and begins to understand his son's socio-political protests as well as to see the limits of his own culture. A touching and explosively political film.'

The jury also gave a prize in the Forum section to E minha cara (That's my face) directed by Thomas Allen Harris. 'In a most extraordinary manner, this Afro-American director takes us on a musical and humorous journey to the roots of his family. Through his eyes, we discover the continents of his ancestors, the civil rights movement and the rich spirituality of the Afro-American Diaspora.'

But the ecumenical jury, chaired by Werner Schneider Quindeau (Germany), reserved its main prize for Bloody Sunday, as on previous occasions coinciding in its choice with the international jury. The prize was awarded for 'compellingly showing the devastating effects of a policy which accepts the escalation of violence in solving social and religious problems.' WACC President Albert van den Heuvel, a member of this year's jury, commended the film for 'its honesty and its moving portrait of a peace movement in disarray.' He called it 'a docudrama of great power'.

**Background to the film**

In 1972 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, working together with local groups called for march for Sunday 30 January to protest against internment without trial, introduced by the British government the previous summer under pressure from the Unionist Government. The march was to start at Bishop's Field in the Creggan, the Catholic suburb on a bleak hill high above the City and pass through Free Derry to the Guildhall, the seat of local (Protestant) political power in the heart of the City for a meeting.

Derry had been the birthplace of the Civil Rights movement in 1968. The most westerly city in the United Kingdom it sits just six miles from the border with Donegal, separated from Belfast by the Sperrin Mountains. Derry is a town steeped in conflict. In the 17th century Protestants loyal to William of Orange held out against a long siege by the Catholic armies of James II, and in 1969 the Catholic people of the Bogside held out against attack by militant Protestants, including police officers, who were attempting to burn them out of their homes.

In January 1972, the Unionist Government in Belfast, the British Army and the British Government were all determined that the civil rights march should be stopped and be seen to be stopped. The Commander Land Forces Northern Ireland, General Robert Ford, had met with Protestant Traders from the city centre, who complained about the constant attacks by youths from the nationalist areas. General Ford ordered Brigadier MacLellan, the Commander of 8th Brigade, which covered the Londonderry area to come up with a plan which Ford insisted should involve members of the first
Battalion of the Parachute Regiment as the arrest force. The Paras were based in Belfast, where they had developed a fearsome reputation. They had never been on the streets of Derry before. A target of 500 arrests was set.

On 30 January 1972, British soldiers shot dead 13 unarmed civilians taking part in an anti-internment civil rights march in Derry, Northern Ireland. This event, Bloody Sunday, was a major turning point in the history of the modern Irish troubles, catalyzing the conflict into a civil war, driving many young men into the ranks of the IRA and fuelling a 25-year cycle of violence.

The film Bloody Sunday, directed by Paul Greengrass, tells the story of this single day from dawn till dusk, from the arrival of thousands of troops on the streets of the besieged city to the violent collision between soldiers of the crack Paratroop Regiment and the crowds of civilian demonstrators. The film follows the British soldiers and the police, as well as civilians from both sides of the religious sectarian divide. It focuses in particular on the stories of four men: Ivan Cooper, an idealistic Civil Rights leader, a Protestant in the Catholic camp who shares Martin Luther King’s dream of peaceful change; Gerry Donaghy, a 17 year old Catholic rebel, who yearns to settle down and marry his Protestant girlfriend, but who is drawn into violent confrontation with the soldiers; Brigadier Patrick MacLellan, the commander of the British Army in Londonderry who is under pressure to take firm action to stop the march; and a young private, a radio operator in the Paras, who is ordered, with his unit of hardened veterans, into the Bogside.

**Why this film?**

No single event propelled director Paul Greengrass and producer Mark Redhead towards making a film about Bloody Sunday. Since their teenage years, the Troubles in Northern Ireland had cast a dark shadow over the lives of everyone in Ireland and Britain and Bloody Sunday had come to symbolise the worst in the long, often unhappy and violent relationship between the two countries. Bloody Sunday was a terrible turning point, the moment when the civil rights movement was destroyed, when the mass of civilians were driven from the political stage and the struggle in Northern Ireland became one between men with guns.

Recently, with the advent of the peace process and of a ceasefire and the possibility of a better future, it seemed to both producer and director that rather than slamming the door shut on the memories of years of suffering, one of the most constructive things one could do was to explore the dynamics of the relationship and try and make some sense of this painful shared history.

Interviewed in London (14 March 2002), Paul Greengrass had this to say: ‘Bloody Sunday does not explain or justify anything that was done later, because no abhorrent act can be justified in relation to another abhorrent act. On the other hand you can’t deny the link, looking at it from an unbiased point of view, and if you’re British you can’t understand what led that generation to do what they did, unless you understand the links to Bloody Sunday. It’s part of the emotional, symbolic impetus that led to the conflict that followed.

‘What was important to me about this film was that we celebrated a particular group of people – the early civil rights movement. In it rested great idealism, great hope, great optimism, still the only possible basis for peace, not just in Northern Ireland but wherever you get difficult, intractable conflicts where two peoples lay claim to one land. Nationalisms, traditionalisms cannot provide a basis for peace. I don’t even believe that two nationalisms agreeing to break bread together and divvy up the spoils is really going to be an effective basis for peace. The basis for
peace is the growth of rights-based democracies where what is important is your shared citizenship around certain core civil rights.

'It was always important to me that this film was seen in Britain and Ireland, but also beyond these two countries. That's what was terribly interesting to me about Berlin. Here you have a small town in the extreme west of Europe, and you take a film about events that happened 30 years ago in that small town and show them in another city that is the furthest east in Europe. And what connects these two is a very European story of division, conflict and the legacy of the past. That gives me tremendous resonance.'

WACC’s Congress 2001 took the theme ‘Communication: From confrontation to reconciliation’. Considerable emphasis was placed on the need to recover and confront social memory in the process of discovering and acknowledging truth. Only then might it be possible to take the first step towards some kind of reconciliation. Bloody Sunday is a contribution towards coming to terms with the bitter legacy of Ireland’s past and the possibility of a peaceful future.

Report by Philip Lee.

IV Festival internacional de cine independiente, Buenos Aires

‘Las crisis suelen traer una pequeña bendición mezclada con las desgracias, ya que obligan a preguntarse seriamente por lo que uno hace.’ Así afirmaba Eduardo Antín, director del IV Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente en Buenos Aires, al comienzo de un acontecimiento que reunió cerca de 200 filmes de más de 20 países. Argentina está experimentando la crisis más grave de toda su historia y la realización de un festival de cine aparecía como un lujo. Pero los organizadores, que realizaron un impecable trabajo, entendieron que la resignación no es la respuesta. Como el mismo Antín remarcó, ‘cuando un filme manifiesta aquello que el mundo oculta, es un buen filme.’

El Festival (abril 18-29, 2002) constó de una competencia oficial en la que intervinieron 16 películas provenientes de 14 países y una competencia de corto metrajes en la que intervinieron 15 películas de 12 países. Además, hubo lugar para la proyección fuera de concurso de más de 100 filmes entre los que se incluyeron documentales, retrospectivas de algunos directores como los argentinos Hugo Santiago y Raúl Perrone y el chino, Hou Hsiao-hsien y una mirada sobre el trabajo de algunos otros, entre los que se encontraban Kim Ki-duk, Manoel de Oliverira y Leslie Thorton.

El Festival incluyó, además, una muestra del poco conocido cine napolitano y una sección sobre ‘lo nuevo de lo nuevo’ del cine argentino que incluyó trabajos que reflejan un cierto grado de originalidad y se alejan de lo convencional. Al mismo tiempo, se realizaron, entre otros eventos, un simposio sobre la situación de la producción cinematográfica, un diálogo entre cineastas canadienses y argentinos y un encuentro de cortometrajistas.

Este festival buscó atraer a directores que, en propuestas radicales e innovadoras, proveyeran una mirada crítica sobre las desigualdades y las injusticias que se suceden en el mundo, dejando de lado estrellas y grandes superproducciones Una buena parte de los filmes muestra algunas características comunes. Estas ponen de manifiesto el común denominador de la crisis, no obstante provenir de muy diversas culturas. Así se pueden señalar algunas características comunes en una buena parte de los filmes presentados.

Al menos tres características son las más evidentes. Por un lado, la falta de comunicación entre las personas, muy claramente ilustrado en el bello filme del coreano Park Ki-yong, ‘Nakta (deul)’, quien con una serie mínima de acciones, que puede producir exasperación en algún espectador, logra trasmitir la incapacidad de la comunicación de una pareja de unos cuarenta años que ha pretendido huir del encierro de sus vidas y su pasado.

La necesidad de irse, huir sin tener un destino fijo, es otra de las características. Varios de los filmes asumieron el estilo ‘road movie’, bien ilustrado en el filme estadounidense ‘Kwik Stop’ de Michael Gilio, en una versión que sale de los cánones tradicionales en este tipo de películas. Los protagonistas pretenden salir en búsqueda del éxito y la gloria a la que nunca podrán acceder, porque hay como una invisible muralla que les impide avanzar, como si sus sueños solo fueran inútiles propuestas para eludir una realidad que cada vez más les sume en la frustración pero a la que tendrán que enfrentar. Es como un eco de la agobiante mirada que Luis Buñuel ofrece en ‘El ángel exterminador’.

La incertidumbre que producen las crisis en la vida y la dificultad o incapacidad para asumir cambios, describe la tercer característica. El joven que, en ‘Bungalow’ (Alemania) de Ulrich Koehler, desierta del ejército y se resiste a asumir su adultez, o en ‘Amour d’en face (Francia) de Yves Caumon, donde el protagonista que, en el reencuentro con el pasado, la vuelta a la vida campestre y la experiencia de la muerte de su padre, es obligado a
La presencia de jurados, en los que han participado OCIC, INTERFILM-WACC en conjunto o por separado, es ya una constante en casi todos los festivales más importantes que se celebran en distintas partes del mundo. Su participación y apoyo a obras que descubren y exaltan los valores humanos, denuncian atropellos a la dignidad humana y están en la búsqueda de una comunidad más justa y solidaria, ha ido ganando respeto y aprecio.

Para el Festival de Buenos Aires la asociación católica mundial para la comunicación, que reune a las anteriores organizaciones OCIC y UNDA, estuvo presente con un jurado integrado por el crítico Guido Convents (Bélgica), Ana María Jarmoluk, María Gabriela Valinoti, Agustín Neifert y, como invitado protestante, Carlos A. Valle. Este jurado otorgó en forma unánime su premio al director chino Wang Chao por su película ‘Anyang Orphan’ ‘por la belleza con que el filme propone la preservación de la vida como bien más preciado, en medio de cambios económicos que la amenazan, creando miseria y marginalidad.’ Además, concedió una Mención al filme ‘Tan de repente’, opera prima del director argentino Diego Lermam ‘porque con un lenguaje innovador rescata el sentido de humanidad, apelando a personajes que descubren la posibilidad de un cambio cualitativo.

La competencia en el Festival es una invitación al descubrimiento, por eso se circunscribe a primeras y segundas películas. El Festival se dispone a la búsqueda de una real comunicación, como lo afirman sus organizadores, a ‘viajar a un universo de filmes en el que, democráticamente, bodrios y obras maestras todavía no llevan puestas las etiquetas correspondientes. La competencia exige el

Still from The Man Without A Past, directed by Aki Kaurismäki.

At the Cannes Film Festival (15-26 May 2002) the award of the Ecumenical Jury went to The Man Without a Past, by Aki Kaurismäki. ‘This film, full of tenderness and humour, is a parable about the rebirth of a person and the birth of a community. Thrown into a situation of extreme poverty, a man without a past finds solidarity and builds a life of dignity. Through the art of Aki Kaurismäki, we experience a moment of grace.’

The Ecumenical Jury also awarded a commendation to The Son, by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. ‘Rich in humanity, this film is about overcoming the need for revenge. While learning a skill and learning about human relationships, a future is made possible. The intensity of the film fully captures and maintains the viewer’s attention.’

A second commendation went to My Mother’s Smile, by Marco Bellochio. ‘This film reflects a modern doubt about the existence of God. The main character, who opposes all compromise, provides an example of a search for identity and truth.’

The members of the Ecumenical Jury were: Anca Berlogea, president (Romania); Michèle Debidour (France); Julia Helmke (Germany); Bruce Girard (Canada); Ezio Alberione (Italy) and Revaz Nicoladzé (France).

Interfilm and Signis are jointly holding a seminar during the Mannheim-Heidelberg film festival. It takes place 8-9 November 2002.

The seminar will discuss iconoclastic trends in current cinema. Lectures on different cultural approaches to the image will be given, as well as screenings of Rosetta (1999), Habla con ella (2001), Heaven (2001) and Der Felsen (2001).

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Africa hosts close to 15 million refugees. If one were to add other uprooted peoples – the internally displaced, street children, landless squatters, political exiles and economic migrants – this figure will probably be in the region of 50 million, perhaps even more. Given continuing political instability in the Great Lakes region, civil conflicts in West Africa, the economic and political situation in Zimbabwe and a generalised recession in the Southern African region, large-scale migrations into this region are bound to remain for the foreseeable future. The two countries that seem to have weathered this economic recession are Mozambique, which has posted enviable growth rates over the last two years, and Botswana, which has enjoyed sustained economic growth on the back of a lucrative diamond trade and cattle-based industries.

The workshop on ‘Refugees and their Rights to Information/Communication’, held in Lusaka, Zambia, 18-20 March 2002, brought together about 30 communicators representing the government, inter-governmental agencies, the media and the church. Participants hailed from 13 countries in Africa. Organised by the Africa Literature Centre on behalf of WACC-Africa, the workshop was preceded by a similar event held in June 2001 that covered refugee issues in the Horn of Africa.

The keynote address was given by Shirley C. DeWolf, a Zimbabwean, who until very recently had worked for the church’s refugee commission. With vast knowledge and experience of working among refugee communities, she was able to give both a broad overview of the refugee situation in the region and to clarify some of the communication challenges facing refugees. She listed a few priorities including the following – the need for sustained campaigns against xenophobia in the media and in society and sensationalist reporting, communication skills training for refugee youth and support for local host communities – the people who live in the immediate vicinity of refugee camps. Their receptivity to refugees is absolutely crucial to their well-being.

Fr. Michael Gallagher of the Jesuit Refugee Service, Lusaka, presented a paper on the information rights of refugees in this region. Drawing upon his extensive knowledge of international, regional and national legislations on refugees, he outlined the complexities, and the possibilities and limitations of such a right. He pointed out that the key refugee conventions had no provisions for the information rights of refugees. He also noted that Article 19 of the UDHR was not a binding right but that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) contained six articles on information rights. Article 2 states ‘that all the rights enumerated in the ICCPR must be extended to all individuals, and not just citizens, present in a state’, providing the clearest indication that the rights of stateless people are to be respected. These provisions are however negated by regional instruments such as the OAU Convention on Refugees (1969) and the Banjul Charter (1981), that severely restrict the rights of refugees, including their information rights in the interest of maintaining ‘solidarity and friendly relations’ among member states.

Charles Mushitu’s presentation dealt with the very specific instance of ‘tracing’ and Red Cross Messaging as information rights. As the Information and PRO for the Zambian Red Cross, he has had experience working in refugee camps in Zambia, especially among ex-combatants. These people have extremely restricted information rights and the Red Cross Messaging service is their only means of communication to the outside world. The legal mandate of the Red Cross is covered by the 1949 Geneva Convention, which does grant the information rights of refugees. However, it became clear during this presentation that the Red Cross’s commitment to ‘neutrality’ and ‘impartiality’ remained a deterrent to the substantive interpretations of, and enjoyment of this right.

There were two interesting
Radio in Africa

An international conference on the subject of Radio in Africa took place in Hattingen near Dusseldorf 15-17 March 2002. The conference was organised by the Educational Department of the German Trade Union (DBG Bildungswerk) and KomTech-Institut, Solingen. The conference was officially opened by Günter Dickhausen, Director of the DGB Bildungswerk, Prof. Dr. Jörg Becker, KomTech-Institut, and Mr. Claude Ondobo, Deputy Assistant Director General of Unesco in Paris. The following 15 countries took part in the conference: Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Germany, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo. At the close of the conference Hans-Dieter Klee, invited guest speaker and former head of the Africa Division of the German foreign radio station Deutsche Welle, was presented with the Hans Böckler Medal of the German Trade Union for his life-long dedication to African affairs.

The conference participants all agreed that radio in Africa must still be regarded as the most socially relevant medium.

Given how dramatically under-developed the modern mass media are in Africa, radio is the easiest means of communication to acquire and handle. The political, cultural and economic objectives of the African countries and societies simply demand that communications be developed using radio: the need for a free dissemination of information at an intra- and inter-societal level. Radio is the only means of communication that is available to poor and marginalized Africans. As radio can be acquired and used collectively and no radio licence fees are charged, radio is the cheapest and most efficient means of communication in Africa.

1. Political objectives and radio

These objectives take on a concrete form in the process of democratisation. Democratic participation is impossible without a means of communication that is available to the majority of the population. Furthermore, given the importance of political opposition as a means of enabling citizens to critically judge the political situation, democratisation in Africa is not possible without radio. The importance of a free press (freedom of opinion and to exchange views) has already been laid down, for example, in human rights conventions and in the 1991 Unesco-Windhoeck Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralist African Press. Community radio has contributed much to social change, for example, the anti-apartheid activities. Community radio in South Africa has played a pivotal role as a provider of information on HIV/AIDS, child abuse, child labour, the use of condoms, environmental responsibility and under-aged pregnancy.

2. Cultural objectives and radio

In the process of nation building, minorities often become uprooted and marginalized. In order to preserve a cultural awareness, informative and educational programmes can be broadcast on community radio and the African tradition of palaver, talking and listening, thus preserved. Furthermore, the oral aspect of radio broadcasting has a cultural parallel in the oral aspect of African culture. Thanks to radio, the significance of the word, the role of the voice and of rhetoric, the function of conversation and of public debate (palaver) and audio
perception experience a comeback. The different informal communication systems are extremely suitable both for preserving traditional values and absorbing and disseminating new views and insights. Moreover, if the respective language receives attention on community radio, then group-specific identity can be preserved and traditional beliefs maintained. Neither political participation nor economic development are possible without this identity.

3. Economic objectives and radio
In many African countries community radio and mobile phones have become an efficient means of communication. Through them, small farmers and entrepreneurs can communicate on the state of the harvest and the market, find suitable solutions for economic problems, and get information on the new agricultural technologies. A good example of this are the different women’s associations, women’s mutual help groups, and neighbourhood associations which are formed in the cities so as to provide a social net for new arrivals, etc. As an important means of organization, radio can serve national or regional development campaigns.

In view of the above mentioned advantages of radio for political, cultural and economic development, the conference participants were in agreement on the following demands:

• Much more money than in the past must be spent on supporting communication in developing countries, particularly, communication with the help of group media (radio, video, traditional media, etc.)

• Political, structural and cultural measures must be taken to preserve the languages and cultures of minorities in Africa so that the younger generation can get to know about the spoken elements of their culture from the older generation by means of radio programmes.

• Many of the cultures and languages of Africa’s multi-ethnic societies have not yet been researched. The specific identities and mind-sets of these people will be lost as a result of the gradual disappearance of these languages and cultures. For this reason, it is imperative to spend more on research into the languages and cultures of Africa’s minorities.

• Objective journalism is indispensable for democratisation and human rights and minorities policies. Therefore national and international actors must do more financially and structurally to promote independent journalism.

• Political opposition is an important constituent of modern democracy. Opposition is ineffective without radio. Consequently, the various international institutions must provide financial and structural support for the dissemination of radio.

Report by Jörg Becker.

WACC Central Committee
The Central Committee of WACC met in Nadi, Fiji, from 30 June to 5 July, 2002. Members agreed the following statement.

‘Truth is central to WACC’s communication ministry and in all the regions the struggle for truth engages us. In Fiji we heard from many representatives of churches, NGOs and social and cultural movements that in the Pacific, as in other parts of the world, truth is often compromised, as it was during the coup in 2000. Some churches missed the opportunity to assume their leadership role and speak out.

‘We also learned that today, many people in the Pacific hesitate publicly to express their points of view or name the tensions and divisions that are present in their society. The public media too often fail to express the needs and aspirations of the people. We are all challenged to establish credible channels and open opportunities for dialogue and communication that can lead to reconciliation.

‘As a global organization we are aware of situations in different parts of the world where silence, misinformation, even disinformation hinder truth telling.

‘There are several important examples: the events leading up to and since September 11, 2001; the effects of industrialization and consumer life-styles on the fragile ecosystems of the Pacific; the reporting of conflicts in all parts of the world, in particular, the situation in the Middle East; and the recent scandals concerning Enron and Worldcom.

WACC’s involvement in the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) campaign reflects our commitment to the inviolability of communication as a fundamental human right.

We call on the members of WACC courageously to confront and expose instances of misleading communication and to break down the walls of silence in each of our regions.

We urge media-training institutions to empower students and equip them, not only with technological skills, but also with critical and analytical skills.

Finally, we call on our churches to take the risk to stand up and be counted.'
The European Region of WACC held a seminar on ‘Virtual ethics in Europe – Challenges for Christian communicators’, which took place 1 March 2002, in Geneva, Switzerland. Participants heard speakers discuss some of the ethical questions raised by the impact of new communication technologies on society, especially the Internet and digital technologies. The following article is based on one such presentation.

In the movie The Wings of Desire (originally Der Himmel über Berlin) by Wim Wenders, there is a scene that pretty well represents what I understand by ‘virtual communication’. At one moment, the two male characters of the movie, who happen to be two angels, are walking inside the big rooms of the public Library of Berlin. Here they are, where the knowledge of the world is located, the location of memory buried in books, and as they walk, because probably they are angels, they begin to hear the choir of internal voices of people sitting at the tables and silently reading their books. At the beginning all these voices seem a bit discordant, but after a while they mix into a beautiful melody. The fragmented knowledge is gathered into the total knowledge of the two angels . . . they create a kind of virtual communication: as they walk between the alleys of the library, somebody attentive enough to their presence could listen to this melody and join the choir and therefore this global communication…

This scene conveys a very positive image of what is called ‘virtual communication’. There are other images, less poetic and transcendental. The image of the exclusion from virtual communication. The image of Switzerland where one third of families has access to the Internet, against one inhabitant in 400 in Africa. The image again of Switzerland, where 7 people in 10 have a mobile phone against 80% of the world’s population that have no access to phone lines at all.

My first image is an idyllic one. My second is a realistic one. Both are dealing with elements, which are not my specific field of knowledge: I am not a specialist in so-called virtual communication, although I use it. Neither am I a specialist in political and social factors, which cause the reality of the world of today, dealing with injustice and exclusion. But as a theologian, I would like to work on the theological implications of these factors, as on the theological dimensions of the development of all new technologies of communication. My aim is, therefore, to unveil the theological issues of the new way of communicating today.

As our entire language is quite challenged by this new communication, I will proceed as if I were opening a dictionary, or a lexicon: opening words as turning keys in the doors of interpretation and dealing with their meaning.

Labyrinth

Since the beginning of human history, there have been labyrinths, related to legends of origins. Since the beginning of human history, people have tried to explain their common reality, their fears and the challenges they faced in their everyday life by telling stories about good and evil, about punishment and protection, mostly understood as coming from a divine origin, stories about travel as an initiation, darkness as a threat, a promised land as an answer to anguish. But surprisingly, all these stories are linked by a unique theme, the one of the labyrinth, understood as a road of wisdom, the road of the common message of all these stories, the secret of life!

Before the Internet, there were many former labyrinths in human history: Were they simple games or significant rituals? Some aesthetic work of art or mystical signal? A prison or a door to heaven? An eternal way of wandering or a true way to paradise? An initiation’s starting point or a glimpse of human ignorance? Was it something that led to sin or salvation? Was it a primitive form of scripture or a sophisticated way of symbolic expression? The labyrinth is probably a little of each. But more than that, it is a mirror where every civilisation looks upon its own fantasies. And virtual communication doesn’t escape this definition: a mirror of all the dreams and imaginative fantasies of our civilisation.

So far, the universal presence of virtual communi-
And further away from a centre you wanted so much, did you have the impression that you were further. You wanted to pursue your future, how many times did you have the impression of going back into your past even if you looked at your own life, how many times did you have the impression of reaching a dead end - in your personal life as in your public or professional one, how many times did you have the impression of going back into your past even if you wanted to pursue your future, how many times did you have the impression that you were further and further away from a centre you wanted so much to reach?

Today people who surf the net look like modern pilgrims on the way to Santiago de Compostella, virtual nomads, travellers of the world of images, working at home, surfing without any guide through networks of information and power. This is the positive side of the coin. But its negative side reveals the creation of an elite, masters of all the networks, telling others which ones are the necessary ones, which values are the ultimate ones, which images of our modernity are the acceptable ones.

As a theologian, I ask that we analyse the labyrinth understood as a tool of possible power and possible wisdom: Who is going to give us the rules needed for travelling through it? Who is going to draw the maps for the journey? Again, a look to the past can help us understand our future: Why were the ancients drawing and organising labyrinths if not to ask us urgently not to forget some essential issues of human life? Continuously to discover who we are, to understand time as a space in which to organise our life, to take some strength from all the mistakes we make, to organise our life as a game, with improvisations, with joy too. As nomads in the desert need a god to turn their faces to, a god for healing and consolation, a supreme guide, the modern nomads in the deserts of today and tomorrow will need gods or a god to help them, to guide them, a god to turn their eyes to. This is probably why our future will be more and more surrounded by the immense spiritual and even mystical needs of people.

With the development of the new technologies of communication, every human being will be like the thread of a huge fabric, the word of a text, the cell of a living body, a point in the labyrinth that incorporates and transcends all other points. Another way of describing this human being, following a more theological pattern, would be to say that every human being will discover him or herself as a fragment of God, a god travelling with him/her. The fears generated by such a world can also produce extreme totalitarianism, narrow-minded sectarianism, and awful violence. The past century has shown the way . . . The problem is that even with the more positive option, the labyrinth understood as a way of wisdom, the story never ends because behind one labyrinth there is another one. What is important is the journey, and of course the encounters we make on this road. The end of the story belongs to each of us.

Temptation

When Jesus was caught by the Spirit in the desert to be tempted, the original text of the Scripture actually says that he underwent an experience: to be tempted actually means to undergo an experience, to go through an ordeal in an existential sense. Virtual communication also has its temptations, and as virtual users we are, so to speak, forced to go through the ordeals of temptation.

One of these temptations is to imagine that we are obliged to communicate or that we cannot escape the progress of virtual communication. On the one hand it is indeed true: whether we want it or not, virtual communication belongs to our environment. On the other hand, the very fact that people gather to speak about it, is a sign that as soon as the process of interpretation begins, we escape from total domination: the domination of the spirit as well as the domination of the economy, on a local or a global scale (because one of the many temptations of the virtual network is the commercial one, the merchandising one, the quest for more and more benefits). The other would be the domination of the spirit, as is well shown in the movie Matrix, which depicts a world close to the one of George Orwell, where people are surrounded by an electronic matrix which evacuates from their brain even the human task of thinking and interpreting reality. It is not surprising that the movie, having set the scene of a post-modern nightmare of an anonymous and sordid world, introduces the figure of the Messiah, a modern representation of the antique hero of all the salvation’s stories of the world.

After some qualifying steps, and non-recognition of the official priests as well as recognition of some faithful disciples, the hero will face the forces of evil and after a passage through death and darkness, he will rise again, discovering in himself the energy to transcend gravity, reality, which has been manipulated by the matrix. If one were to try a psychoanalytical reading of the movie, one could argue that, at the end, the hero needed to escape from the feminine
womb of the matrix, as well as needing to kill the
masculine opponent to do so. At the end of the film,
resurrected and having abandoned the pre-modern
pattern of unique love, family and friendship, he
takes flight – a kind of ascension – and leaves the
earth, liberated and free from any spiritual and
economical domination.

In one sense, regarding virtual communication, we
are all heroes of our own salvation story. We are all
able to take the qualifying steps, avoiding recogni-
tion and non-recognition because the important task
here is not to be recognised by the other, but to con-
front the possible forces of the evil of domination. We
have the energy and power to encounter them, to
confront them and to gain the only possible price,
which is our freedom.

The temptation of absolutisation
Another temptation consists in absolutising virtual
communication simply because it offers the illusion of
universal and total communication. Here again we
encounter the figure of the angel. In western culture
angels made their come-back approximately at the
same time as virtual communication was developed,
around the last decade of the 20th century. Supernatural bodies, artificial and still quite real,
with a kind of luminescent beauty, pure energy, like
the superb bodies proposed by the video-games of
cyberculture, the angel represents a body capable of
bringing technological development under control
and delivering it from its physical hindrances in order
to plunge into virtual worlds.

The angel also represents pure communication, the
one all the businessmen of the planet dream of, as
they are running after time, travelling in the fastest
airplanes, simultaneously using their mobile
phones: they overcome what was always a real
human difficulty, almost an impossibility: the gift of
ubiquity. The remaining question is the one of the
message. Because it is not sufficient to transcend the
barriers of space and time: what is happening to the
message? Is not the danger here the temptation to
forget the message and to retain only the communi-
cation, perfectly functioning, as angels, inventing
simultaneity but forgetting to transmit their message?
Everything is transparent, rapid and objective. But
even the God of the Bible, the God of the origins was
not as powerful, as you probably remember the
scene of Genesis 3 when God is searching for the
human couple and asking ‘Where are you?’ At least
original communication was not as paradisiacal as
we imagine, not transparent, rapid or even objective!
Even the Bible presents a limited divinity, why should we accept an unlimited conception of
communication?

On the other hand, in the history of mentalities and
cultures, the angels have sometimes represented the
figures that helped people to understand the changes
affecting their lives. For example, during the two
centuries before Christ, Israel was going through a
rough time, influenced by Greek culture and others
like the Iranian religion and Babylonian culture. This
is the time when Israel will ‘adopt’ the figure of the
angel in the process of reconstructing its history. In
times of cultural passage, of religious intermixing,
people and civilisations need translators to pass from
one to another. In our time of passage, we probably
also need translators, modern angelic figures. What
we can expect are figures less connoted by the tem-
portation of simultaneous communication than by the
possibility of passing from one culture to another.

The temptation of possession
The last temptation of virtual communication would
be the one of possession: possession of history and
memory. Again the figure of the angel can help us to
overcome this temptation. As a model for the black
boxes of our culture, the angels tape all communica-
tions (like the black boxes in a plane, the first object
to be searched for after a crash). A Jewish Midrash
says that when a child is not yet born, still in the
womb of his mother, he possesses all knowledge, the
entire reality of the universe, including even divine
knowledge. But when the time comes to be born, at
the very moment when he comes ‘outside’, an angel,
his guardian angel, will pass a finger over his lips
and forehead and at the moment the angel erases all
the knowledge the child possessed and he immedi-
ately forgets everything. It will be the task of his
total life to recapture the total knowledge that was
his in a life before life. To see what we today call
virtual communication as that total knowledge
would be succumb to temptation. To see it as a tool
to recapture that knowledge is much more attractive
and challenging.

The problem with these temptations remains the
status of human subjectivity. If virtual communication
eras the human sub ectivity, if we are no longer recog-
nised as human beings with some density, bodies of
suffering, desire, thoughts, then we are effectively in
danger of losing ourselves, which means our stories,
our culture, our memories. Hopefully, research on
the so-called theory of ‘strong Artificial Intelligence’
(the brain considered as limited to a complex game
of neuronal connections and not containing any
principle called soul or spirit or conscience) is quite
challenging nowadays. Not to mention that these
theories faced a solid wall of religious hate . . .

What strikes me when I consider the theological
issues of virtual communication are the constant
choices that are ours in terms of using the tools for our own awakening to life. Solitary pleasure most of the time, as a time of retreat, in front of a virtual community, where I can choose to join or to look from outside, especially in the chat-rooms. Solitary initiation, without any spiritual master, although we can constantly learn from the practice.

First choice, the choice of entering into this kind of communication. I already mentioned this, saying that it has to be used, the remaining question being the one of the status of such communication.

Second choice, the choice of travelling in a new world, through illusions which have to be unveiled, fears that have to be overcome, mistakes that have to be corrected, with others to help travelling as well. This time is also the moment of rediscovery of ancient qualities which have nothing to do with speed, reason or logic, but qualities such as perseverance, slowness, mischief, curiosity, trickery, improvisation and self-control.

Third choice, the choice of accepting to lose oneself: it is by losing himself that Ulysses realises the strength of the love of his wife, that Columbus discovers a new continent, that Newton understands gravity. It is by losing itself that Israel receives the Law. In our society, to lose oneself is to lose time and money. The opportunity of virtual communication is to force people to lose themselves . . . in order to find themselves later.

The fourth choice is the one between the erosion of our old culture and the opening of new horizons. It is not easy to go through every passage: simply because the word ‘passage’ unquestionably conjures up a journey, taking to the road, moving on. It is also that fleeting moment of which one only realises afterwards that it has happened, when it has passed and already belongs to the past.

And it is finally that great passage par excellence, that discreet euphemism for death, which is popular in both French and English: passer in the sense of mourir, to die, to pass away. Culturally, we are probably going through one of these major passages. A passage that could be described as passing from an identity culture to a universal culture. Something close to globalisation but somehow different.

Until recently it seems that our world was constituted by a profusion of different cultures. Cultures which have invented thousand of worlds, some of them already disappeared, others appearing as the virtual ones of today. These cultures could be characterised as linked to an identity, linked to an identification of people, to the roles that were expected of them since the origins of their world. These identity cultures have been important in the past, but by maintaining people in a tradition which no longer has meaning, one can question simple imitation for the pursuit of culture. Cultures based only on identity create divisions, if not wars, fears and hatreds.

The Bible, as probably in other religious works, presents another type of culture, a dynamic based on a promise, a future which is already present, where human beings are understood as better than what they are in fact. The Jesus of the four gospels, in his encounters with people, says ‘Stand on your feet’, ‘Be who your are’, etc…. all phrases which sound like new age clichés, but still contain existential strength.

Ethic of transmission
First of all, I do not think there can exist a so-called ‘ethic of virtual communication’. The world of today stands globally under the sign of disorientation. We have to take it for granted. We have also to seek some ethical principles, knowing in advance that they will not be permanent. They will only be provisional principles. Principles as bridges between responsibility and hope: responsibility to assume the choices we have made, hope that gives the courage of being and acting.

In terms of responsibility, as Christian communicators, we have the responsibility to transmit something of the Gospel for today. Or, at least, to translate it in a less proselytising way, to transmit something of the Christian story in order to help people of today build their own stories. Speaking about transmission, we touch here on the limits of virtual communication.

Some years ago, when the Internet was developing very rapidly, even in the Church, one of my colleague argued that the Internet would be the next and best medium for dealing with laity training and theological adult education. I was never convinced. When I see the little dialogue and few questions I receive by virtual communication, I feel that I was right. For me the reason is very simple: when something of the Gospel has to be given, it is not a question of communication, not even a question of transmission. It is a question of initiation. I know that the term is not very much loved, especially in Protestant circles. Too old, too catholic, too esoteric . . . but I do think that it is probably the way of religious communication to come.

For practical activities, there is apprenticeship (learning how to use tools in order to create objects). For intellectual sciences, there is teaching (learning how to use parts of knowledge). For spiritual communication, there is initiation – which means a dual relation between master and disciple. Not even a relationship based on inequality: most of the time, the master doesn’t know much more than the disciple. He/she just knows the way the disciple has
to go. Spiritual initiation does not mean a huge amount of knowledge, but rather going through ordeals, knowing how and when to lose oneself, being curious about one’s own mistakes. This journey of fear and pleasure, of impatience and patience, of losing and gaining, this initiation can only be based on human and not virtual communication.

I would even describe the initiation process as lost communication that we have to get back, with which we have to reconnect. Current communication seems to me based on the concept of teasing, forcing our individual freedom in order to get our attention. Initiation does not seek attention, apart from the expectations expressed by the disciple. The initiatory master doesn’t have all the knowledge, neither does he impose a particular pedagogical method. In the initiation process, there are no good or bad answers. Maybe there is even no knowledge to transmit.

Knowing belongs to another level, more existential than intellectual. Based on the existential side of human being, on the being rather than on the doing or the saying, privileged link between initiator and initiated, initiation looks like a birth giving, a way of transcending one’s own existence.

In the strong passage Christianity is going through, initiation communication is probably a way to overcome a theology of announcement, which looks rather empty after 20 centuries of use. Is not the ultimate question one of interpretation? How Christians are able to interpret the world of today, starting from the Scriptures and tradition?

How creatively, with what kind of new visions and new understandings will it be possible? I do not have the answers of course. I just recall the word of Jesus to the Pharisees asking for a sign coming from the sky (Mt 16, 1-4): ‘When the sun is setting you say, we are going to have fine weather, because the sky is red. And early in the morning you say, it is going to rain, because the sky is red and dark. You can predict the weather by looking at the sky; but you cannot interpret the signs concerning these times! How evil and godless are the people of this day! You ask me for a sign? The only sign you will be given is the sign of Jonah.’

To interpret our times, our ‘kairos’, our important moments, including new ways of communicating and new ways of thinking about theology, do we need miracles coming from the sky or do we have enough signs in our tradition and memory? The Pharisees ask for something to see, and Jesus offers them something to hear (a name, Jonah). There are signs to see and signs to hear. The question that remains is how to interpret these signs of our times.

Apparently, virtual communication gives us tools for our interpretative and initiation tasks. Let us not forget that the important point remains the task: to interpret. ■

Bibliography

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The aesthetics of the Russian film-maker, Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-86), are discussed in the following article. He made seven major films: Ivan’s Childhood (1962), Andrei Rublyov (1966), Solaris (1972), Mirror (1974), Stalker (1979), Nostalgia (1983), and The Sacrifice (1986). Undoubtedly, all are gems of world cinema. He also wrote a book about his philosophy of art titled ‘Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema’. In this book he discusses his ideas about art and the artist in general, the factors that distinguish cinema from other arts, the elements of cinema as an art, his aims in filmmaking, the role of the filmmaker and the film viewer, the nature of film imagery, and his own experiences and aesthetic ideas compared to those of his colleagues. He also discusses the particular intention and ‘meaning’ that lie behind his films.

Tarkovsky’s view of the major goal of all art is not surprising, but few people would really find it tenable today, when the work of art is degraded to a saleable commodity thanks to our consumerist culture. According to Tarkovsky, the aim of art is ‘to explain to the artist himself and to those around him what man lives for, what is the meaning of his existence. To explain to people the reason for their appearance on this planet; or if not to explain, at least to pose the question.’ Tarkovsky understood art as a human activity that unifies ethics and spirituality. Art is in a close relationship to religion anyway, but in Tarkovsky’s hands it is definitely a religious art. This does not mean, however, that Tarkovsky’s art can be exclusively associated with a single religion, although Christianity plays a crucial role in his films. Tarkovsky is an independent religious thinker and artist influenced in many ways by different cultural and religious traditions.

What is important here is that in Tarkovsky’s view art has religious functions and purposes. What are they? As Tarkovsky stresses, ‘The allotted function of art is not, as is often assumed, to put across ideas, to propagate thoughts, to serve as example. The aim of art is to prepare a person for death, to plough and harrow his soul, rendering it capable of turning to good.’ ‘The greatness and ambiguity of art lies in not proving, not explaining and not answering questions [. . .]. Its influence has to do with moral and ethical upheaval.’ Art shapes the spiritual structure of the soul: ‘Art must give man hope and faith.’

This view of art is certainly far from contemporary practice. Tarkovsky condemns modern art for not fulfilling the genuine role of art: ‘Modern art has taken a wrong turn in abandoning the search for the meaning of existence in order to affirm the value of the individual for its own sake. What purports to be art begins to look like an eccentric occupation for suspect characters who maintain that any personalized action is of intrinsic value simply as a display of self-will. But in artistic creation the personality does not assert itself, it serves another, higher and communal idea.’ Tarkovsky painfully realizes that modern man is spiritually impotent, and that ‘one of the saddest aspects of our time is the total destruction in people’s awareness of all that goes with a conscious sense of the beautiful.

Modern mass culture, aimed at the ‘consumer’, the civilization of prosthetics, is crippling people’s souls, setting up barriers between man and the crucial questions of his existence, his consciousness of himself as a spiritual being.’ Now we can understand, why his films are not for entertainment, not simply to ‘kill time’. Tarkovsky refuses the idea of accommodation between art and commerce. Tarkovsky is not affected by the pure ‘technocratic’ view of cinema. ‘Technical questions are important commercially, in terms of the show, but are not central to the problem of cinema, and throw no light on the secret of cinema’s unique power to affect us.’

Furthermore, Tarkovsky also rejects the ‘intellectual’ view of art. He agrees with Goethe, ‘The less accessible a work is to the intellect, the greater it is.’ Otherwise the artist imposes his thoughts on his audience. Tendency in art has to be hidden. The ideal of a work of art is thus when it is not calculated, not cerebral, or not formulated intellectually.

The role of artist
The artist has a spiritual or religious role to play. He or she is the moral and spiritual mediator between the divine and the human, acting as a prophet who calls us for the very nature of reality, and for moral action, even transformation. ‘Masterpieces [. . .] are
scattered about the world like warning notices in a mine field.' The most important virtues an artist should possess are humility, responsibility, honesty, and sincerity. The artist should be serious, intense, committed, and uncompromising. An artist has a calling, a vocation. It is a necessity for which they have not been given a choice. 'The artist [. . .] becomes the ideologue, the apologist for his time, the catalyst of predetermined change.' But the talent that has been given is often a source of much pain and suffering. 'True artistic inspiration is always a torment for the artist, almost to the point of endangering his life.' 'The artist cannot express the moral ideal of his time unless he touches all its running sores, unless he suffers and lives these sores himself.'

Talent imposes duties and obligations on the artist and offers very few tangible rewards in return. 'The artist is always a servant and is perpetually trying to pay for the gift that has been given to him as if by a miracle.' The role of the artist is to sacrifice himself for a higher ideal. 'Artistic creation demands of the artist that he “perish utterly”, in the full, tragic sense of those words.' The artist, because of his special awareness of his time and of the world in which he lives, is the voice of those who cannot formulate or express their view of reality. The artist expresses the inner needs of society, but he is not accepted or recognized until after his death. Real masterpieces ‘range themselves at the sites of possible or impending historical cataclysms, like warning signs at the edge of precipices or quagmires. They define, hyperbolise and transform the dialectical embryo of danger threatening society, and almost always become the herald of a clash between old and new.’

Artsists, however, are not superior to other people, only more sensitive and better able to articulate what they perceive. 'The genius [of the artist] is revealed not in the absolute perfection of a work but in absolute fidelity to himself, in commitment to his own passion.' Modern man, however, does not want to make any sacrifice, even though true affirmation of self can only be expressed in sacrifice.'

**Importance of the image**

Artists uncover reality in a way we have never seen before, thus making us recognize the spiritual, sacred aspect of it. The means by which they fulfil this task are 'images.' As Tarkovsky states, ‘What I’m interested in is not symbols, but images. An image has an unlimited number of possible interpretations.’ A real image is inexhaustible and unlimited in its meaning. ‘Through the image is sustained an awareness of the infinite: the eternal within the finite, the spiritual within matter, the limitless given form.’ The essence of an image cannot be described in words, because it always incorporates infinity. ‘It can be apprehended through art, which makes infinity tangible. The absolute is only attainable through faith and in the creative art.’

According to Tarkovsky, the image is a glimpse of the truth; it is absolute. ‘An artistic discovery occurs each time as a new and unique image of the world, a hieroglyphic of absolute truth. It appears as a revelation, as a momentary, passionate wish to grasp intuitively and at a stroke all the laws of this world - its beauty and ugliness, its compassion and cruelty, its infinity and its limitations.’ Again: ‘And so, if art carries within it a hieroglyphic of absolute truth, this will always be an image of the world, made manifest in the work once and for all time. [. . .] These poetic revelations, each one valid and eternal, are evidence of man’s capacity to recognize in whose image and likeness he is made, and to voice this recognition.’

Tarkovsky’s purpose is thus to penetrate into the depth of reality, somehow to glimpse the unseen. He realizes this purpose in images, creating a unique and fresh poetic language. ‘The birth and development of thought are subject to laws of their own, and sometimes demand forms of expression which are quite different from the patterns of logical speculations. In my view, poetic reasoning is closer to the laws by which thought develops, and thus to life itself, than is the logic of traditional drama.’ If we look at reality as something that is beyond the actual events, as something that always carries a further meaning, the task of a filmmaker is to re-enchant reality by ‘unnaturally’ emphasizing this further meaning through images, his characters, and through the way the story is formed. ‘Art must transcend as well as observe; its role is to bring spiritual vision to bear on reality.’

Poetical reasoning means that Tarkovsky applied an associative method rather than a narrative one in creating his films. This means that he substituted the direct connections between scenes, events and images with a loose structure of associations and images that overlap from time to time, and create a mood that strikes the viewer on an unconscious, emotional level. Tarkovsky concentrates on the internal spiritual development of his characters, although the events and the story of his films are also formed brilliantly. The associative method lends a dreamlike surface to his films, in which the deep meaning of events always remains to a certain extent unattainable.

There are always new possibilities for new associations in interpreting his films, and this is because of the inexhaustible depth of our own experiences. The artistic image cannot be one-sided: in order justly to
be called truthful, it has to unite within itself dialectically contradictory phenomena.' 'The image is invisible and elusive, dependent upon our consciousness and on the real world which it seeks to embody.' This effect is enhanced by the fact that his deepest images recur from film to film, always with a slightly different emphasis, and a shift in meaning, thank to the various environments in which they occur. Tarkovsky's images are living organisms, formed by organic processes. As a critic of his films stated, 'While the rhythm of Tarkovsky's films is invariably stately and solemn, the film itself is always brought into being through a changing pulse of rhythms, new motifs flaring up and bursting in unannounced, clashing with other motifs and fading from the screen to boil up again in another part of the stream.'

**Time and memory**

As the title of Tarkovsky's book, *Sculpting in Time*, suggests, time has a crucial importance in his art. As Tarkovsky states, 'Time is a condition for the existence of our “I”.' Time is the dimension in which a human being realizes him- or herself as a personality. 'The time in which a person lives gives him the opportunity of knowing himself as a moral being, engaged in the search for the truth.' 'The human conscience is dependent upon time for its existence.' Tarkovsky is not interested in the concept of time that only includes the possibility of getting something done. He is interested in the inner process that makes us perform a certain action and makes us incarnate in a moral sense. History and evolution are only consequences of time, not Time itself. 'Time is a state: the flame in which lives the salamander of the human soul.'

Memory is another notion closely related to time that is as important to Tarkovsky as time. Without time, memory cannot exist. According to Tarkovsky, memory is a spiritual concept. Memory constitutes our very existence, even our personality. 'Bereft of memory, a person becomes the prisoner of an illusory existence.' Time and memory are two sides of a coin. What Tarkovsky is interested in is not the methods of recording time, nor the forms used in art to fix time, but the inner, moral qualities essentially inherent in time. Of course, as an artist, he somehow needs to record time, and the way he records it, its inner, moral qualities, is the feature that makes his art so special and peculiar to him.

The method he uses to record time is very simple: to give a chance for time to be realized in a soul, that is, to let the characters and scenes develop in a way that uncovers the inner, moral qualities of time through their emotions, feelings, thoughts and actions, through the visual treatment and the sound. 'I want time to flow in a dignified and independent way on the screen.' As a critic of Tarkovsky's films said, 'In all Tarkovsky's work, this “individual stream of time” is something which pulsates, moves not smoothly but in jerks, in explosions of meaning . . .' In Tarkovsky's words, 'The dominant, all-powerful factor of the film image is rhythm, expressing the course of time within the frame.' Time is not a formal feature of Tarkovsky's films, but an inherent density. You do not see it, only feel it. As we only 'feel' time in our real life as well.

The main purpose of Tarkovsky's films is thus to reveal time, its inner, moral qualities in a more concrete and significant way than we feel it in everyday life. That's why memory is so important to him. In our life, it is memory in which the importance of time, and hence, the importance of our life, is actually and directly felt. In our memories we 'meet' time and our life face to face. As Tarkovsky states, 'In a certain sense the past is far more real, or at any rate more stable, more reliant than the present.' Our very identity is our past, or, as Alfred Whitehead stated, we live in our past. As we return to our past, says
Tarkovsky, ‘cause and effect may, in a moral sense, be linked retroactively.’

Cinema as a distinguished art
With cinema a new muse was born, that is, time. ‘For the first time in history of the arts, in the history of culture, man found the means to take an impression of time.’ ‘He acquired a matrix for actual time.’ Tarkovsky accepts the view that cinema is a composite art, based on the involvement of a number of neighbouring art forms: drama, prose, acting, painting, and music. But Tarkovsky rejects the idea that cinema would be a mishmash. ‘It has to be made clear once and for all that if cinema is an art it cannot simply be an amalgam of the principles of other, contiguous art forms.’ The uniqueness of cinema as an art is that it is capable of ‘sculpting in time.’ As Tarkovsky says, ‘Time, printed in its factual forms and manifestations: such is the supreme idea of cinema as an art.’

And this is the very reason we go to cinema. We go for ‘time lost or spent or not yet had.’ ‘We go there for living experience; for cinema, like no other art, widens, enhances and concentrates a person’s experience – and not only enhances it but makes it longer, significantly longer.’ According to Tarkovsky, cinema is also to be distinguished from theatre. The laws of movement and the organization of time in a film are completely different from the time laws of theatre. Cinema also differs from prose and poetry. ‘Prose and poetry use words by definition, while a film is born of direct observation of life.’ ‘The cinema image [. . .] is basically observation of life’s facts within time, organised according to the pattern of life itself, and observing its time laws.’ This means that an image becomes authentically cinematic when not only does it live within time, but time also lives within it.

According to Tarkovsky, ‘No other art can compare with cinema in the force, precision and starkness with which it conveys awareness of facts and aesthetic structures existing and changing within time.’ Tarkovsky’s purpose in making his films is to reconstruct, recreate life.

Communicating with the audience
Tarkovsky’s films offer a very complex structure, which is often difficult to follow, especially to viewers used to the conventional narrative structures of Western movies. Tarkovsky’s films challenge their viewers. It requires hard work from the audience, while an average Western movie usually does not. In order to understand the deeper meaning of Tarkovsky’s films, the viewer has to approach them from a point of view different from the one he or she is used to.

The viewer already needs to go through a kind of transformation. Unusual associations and images, complex dialogue, dreams, slow and silent scenes follow each other without sharp boundaries. Tarkovsky’s films do not tell you what to think, how to relate to the questions raised. A film is thus a shared work of the artist and its audience. In an average movie the questions set up are clearly and didactically answered so that the viewer does not need to think too much. His or her position is not questioned. The viewer leaves satisfied. Tarkovsky’s films are not about satisfaction. His films are about challenge, catharsis, even transformation. The viewer is left in doubt, in ambiguity, and forced to fight for his or her own understanding.

A typical commercial movie gives us what we want by telling us what we already know. It confirms our existence, and makes us happy. Otherwise we would not pay for it. We want to be entertained, which excludes any challenge. If you see a Tarkovsky film, you feel that you want to see it again. It is meant to require multiple viewings, that is, a learning process. Tarkovsky does not do our thinking for us. ‘Art is by nature aristocratic, and naturally selective in its effect on the audience.’ This does not mean that his films are exclusive. They are accessible to anyone who is prepared to make the effort to enter into communication with them. In this sense, Tarkovsky lets the audience work on the meaning of his films; the viewers are co-creators of his works of art.

Artist and audience find themselves in communion, in a ‘spiritual bond.’ ‘The artist does not impose this relationship upon the audience by forcing them to take part in it, or by manipulating them into a prescribed point of view. The viewer’s freedom is guaranteed, and certainly by the difficulty of the film. If one is not capable of grasping anything from it, at least he or she can leave without being influenced. ‘The beautiful is hidden from the eyes of those who are not searching for the truth, for whom it is contraindicated. But the profound lack of spirituality of those people who see art and condemn it, the fact that they are neither willing nor ready to consider the meaning and aim of their existence in any higher sense is often masked by the vulgarly simplistic cry, “I don’t like it!” “It’s boring!” It is not a point that one can argue; but it is like the utterance of a man born blind who is being told about a rainbow. He simply remains deaf to the pain undergone by the artist in order to share with others the truth he has reached.’

Tarkovsky wants the audience to join in the dialogue he is in with reality. The viewer needs to suspend his or her judgment in the beginning, that is, to empty him – or herself in the same way the artist...
did while creating. ‘For an unclouded perception you have to have an outstanding capacity for original, independent, “innocent” judgement.’ A film director ‘starts to be an artist at the moment when, in his mind or even on film, his own distinctive system of images starts to take shape [. . .] and the audience are invited to judge it, to share with the director in his most precious and secret dreams.’

Creative transformation
One could raise the question what all this does to process. Let me explain here why Tarkovsky is one of my heroes, and a great contributor to my process understanding of life. As I noted above, Tarkovsky calls for transformation by seeing his films. We cannot leave remaining the same as we were before. We have undergone transformation. The change he would like to bring about in us is not only emotional but also moral. This change must be ‘creative’ in two senses, and this interpretation provides my understanding of ‘creative transformation.’

First, it creates a new emotional and moral state in which we are heavily challenged to look at reality from a new perspective thus enhancing our understanding of life. It is also creative so far as it requires our personal involvement and participation in achieving this new understanding. We must be creative in the sense of being active in our joint effort to make sense of reality together with the artist. Of course, all genuine works of art aim at this kind of transformation, and this fact alone would not make Tarkovsky a unique ‘process’ artist. There are several other features of his art that can jointly make him capable of being interpreted from this perspective. One is the integrative character of his films, and they are integrative in two ways.

First, they integrate the diverse forms of art into one that is more than its components, and second, they integrate various fields of human interest, such as philosophy, religion, social sensitivity and art itself. This integration is of course an artistic synthesis, but full of religious hints, and social calls for changing our behaviour towards different aspects of life. The main purpose of his films in this integration is to find an answer to what salvation is. From our process perspective, Tarkovsky’s understanding of salvation is very close to John Cobb’s interpretation of Christ as the embodiment of the principle of creative transformation. The creative transformation Tarkovsky calls for is thus not mere aesthetic catharsis or change in our mental dispositions, but real conversion to our genuine mission to be saviours of the world.

Tarkovsky’s inner struggle with the notion of salvation goes through several stages each marked by one of his films. His seven films constitute a single, long and developing vision with a progressively changing understanding of life. Strangely enough, each of the earlier stages constitutes a completed, absolute view of life. This fact can only be understood from the perspective of process philosophy. It stresses that each entity is a completed, absolute standpoint of the universe, has value in itself, but only in relation to other entities from which it is constituted. Then, each entity is transcended by future entities that cannot reject the importance of the past entities of which they are constituted. Tarkovsky’s films at the same time exemplify Whitehead’s principle of process and promote his philosophical ideas in an artistic rendering.■

Notes
1 I am aware of the sexist use of language in Tarkovsky’s works (films, books, diaries, screenplays) and regret it. I hope, however, that this fact does not detract from the value of his ideas. In this regard I would encourage readers to watch any of his films. Tarkovsky is certainly one of the greatest respecters of women.

2 The English mathematician and idealist philosopher Alfred Whitehead (1861-1947). In his Gifford Lectures of 1929, titled ‘Process and Reality’, he attempted a metaphysics comprising psychological and physical experience, with events as the ultimate components of reality.

Karsai Gábor studied philosophy, classical philology and indology and is currently doing a PhD in philosophy at Lorán Eotvos University, Budapest, Hungary.
This statement expresses the concerns of international journalists and supporters of journalism attending a seminar in Salzburg, Austria, 20-27 March 2002. The topic was the decline of the news media’s role as a public trust and the effects of that phenomenon on its obligations to civil society. Discussions revealed that journalists and their supporters from many countries share a strong conviction that market pressures are undermining the quality of journalism; specifically, as news organizations preserve high profit levels by reducing newsgathering resources and neglecting journalism in the public interest, the fundamental role of the press to inform and empower citizens is endangered. These concerns are the motivation for this statement, which is intended to prompt further consideration, discussion and action around the world.

A free and independent press is essential to human liberty. No people can remain sovereign without a vigorous press that reports the news, examines critical issues and encourages a robust exchange of ideas. In recognition of the vital role of the press in society, many countries extend it special legal protections under constitutions or legislatively enacted statutes. These protections are unique, for they safeguard print, broadcast and online media organizations against government interference and censorship.

Where this special status has been accorded the press, news organizations have been held to a high standard of public service and public trust. Over time, this ideal has become the bedrock of journalism, an enduring tradition by which a free press has been a powerful force for progress and informed citizen participation in society.

Historically, threats to press freedoms have been political in nature. At the start of the 21st Century, however, a new kind of threat emerges that, if continued, will endanger the freedoms guaranteed to the press and put at risk the sovereignty of the citizens.

The nature of the press as a commercial enterprise has changed significantly. The emergence of media conglomerates and intense market competition are creating new organizational priorities in which profit growth is replacing public service as the principal mission. Sustaining profit growth often requires reducing the resources for news gathering, thereby diminishing the role of the news media as a public trust.

Business priorities are encouraging the blending of news and entertainment as a strategy to build audiences and ratings. This trend, most noticeable worldwide in television, has led to a reduction in serious news coverage and may be responsible for a decline of public confidence in this medium as an essential source of information.

Finally, a shrinking commitment to both domestic and international news means that news organizations are missing opportunities to connect people and ideas globally at the very time technology has made such connections increasingly possible.

This international group of journalists and supporters of press freedom calls on the leaders of news organizations worldwide to recognize the need for a wiser balance between business goals and public-service responsibilities, and to reaffirm their commitment to journalism and the role of a free press in sustaining human liberty.

Concerns about journalism
We recognize that news organizations function in a competitive, multimedia environment, and that financial strength is essential for journalistic excellence and independence. However, an unbalanced emphasis on profits and financial growth weakens the foundation of journalism as a public trust. We are convinced that the growing imbalance in the priority given to the quality of journalism and profit growth ultimately impairs citizens’ ability to participate fully in their communities. We recognize that neglecting the public interest erodes public support for legal guarantees of the freedom of the press to report the news. We conclude that market forces and other pressures are causing the following problems:

1) For citizens and society
Inadequate access to diverse sources of information.
Decline in public understanding of current affairs. 
Decline in citizen participation in community life. 
Diminishment of citizens’ political authority. 
Improper confluence of media ownership and political interests.

2) For journalism content and influence
Decline of diverse and comprehensive news produced in the public interest. 
Neglect of audiences that are not valued by advertisers. 
Compromising of editorial integrity for commercial purposes. 
Encroachment of entertainment into news coverage. 
Shrinking impact of news organizations as audiences dwindle.

3) For news media organizations
Concentration of ownership and creation of monopolies. 
Vulnerability to the imperatives of stock markets and other financial interests. 
Increasing tendency of multimedia conglomerates to use news resources to promote commercial interests.

Proposals for consideration
To address these concerns, we encourage the press and the public to consider the following suggestions in communities and situations where they may apply:

1) Encourage diverse news media ownership and urge media companies to commit to providing quality journalism to all communities they serve. 
2) Ensure that television networks and radio stations provide quality news programmes as part of their societal obligation to the public airwaves. 
3) Help citizens evaluate the quality of the news they receive and express their views so that their voices may be heard. 
4) Use journalism to enhance citizens’ ability to participate in community life. 
5) Call on companies that own news organizations to:
   a) Adopt mission statements reflecting their journalistic values and the priority they attach to their role as a public trust. 
   b) Adopt a long-term business strategy based on producing quality journalism. 
   c) Include journalists on the boards of companies that own news organizations. 
   d) Adopt professional standards that promote high-quality journalism. 
   e) Compensate news executives based on the quality of their company’s journalism rather than its financial performance.
6) Ensure that entertainment content does not compromise news coverage. 
7) Keep a clear separation between advertising and news content. All advertising should be clearly labelled. 
8) Reaffirm journalism values of accuracy, fairness and balance; and maintain the roles of the press as watchdog and voice for citizens. 
9) Promote professional standards of excellence in journalism education. 
10) Foster media education of young people in schools and through media.

Endorsed by 396 participants from 24 countries.
Internet course for blind students in Mexico

ITESM (the Technological and Higher Studies Institute of Monterrey) is developing an Internet course for sight-impaired students that will enable them to study university programmes on-line.

To take part in the course, students need first to acquire a ‘screen reader’. This equipment costs up to $1,200 and makes the computer speak out loud whatever is on the screen. The eight-hour course offered by ITESM costs $140 and teaches students how to navigate the Internet in preparation for further study.

ITESM is encouraging local companies to donate computer equipment to help reduce costs. Even so, this is an expensive if welcome initiative in a country that has some 200,000 visually impaired people.


Telephone calls by the hearing impaired in Colombia

Deaf people in Bogotá are listening and talking on the phone thanks to calls being communicated via a Transfer Centre system. The first of its kind in Latin America, the technology gives public access to telephone systems for people with hearing impairments or speech problems.

More than 4,000 calls were made in the first three months that the Transfer Centre was in operation. At the moment Bogotá has 23 public access locations for this previously neglected sector of the community.


‘Losing It’ – a film on disability and identity

New York film maker Sharon Greytek has produced and directed a film that attempts to answer personal questions about her identity as a person with a disability. She wondered ‘if it is human nature to stare and to discount someone as weaker’ and if other people regard their own disability as a means ‘to dream about and observe’ humanity and their own lives.

In the film, Greytek visits four continents to conduct candid interviews. She meets two disabled Russians who speak about their lives in an economically insecure country after the fall of communism. From there she goes to Hong Kong to meet a survivor of a stroke who is struggling with her changed life in a highly ambitious and work conscious society focused on outward perfection.

In Europe Greytek meets an Italian man with a rare blood disorder who is facing isolation and loneliness. And in Brazil she encounters two disabled people in very different economic and professional situations. Both tell about the social pressures and religious expectations that impact on them.

Finally the film returns to New York where Greytek interviews a woman in the Police Department who deals with issues of marriage, race, parenting, education and employment as they relate to her position as a disabled woman.

A perceptive review of this film by Jennifer Perry praises it but also critiques it for allowing the film maker’s own perceptions to impinge too obviously on framing both the discussion and the choice of emphasis. Nevertheless, the film ‘is an excellent attempt to see disability and questions of perception and identity both within cultural and societal confines and across such boundaries.’

Full story: Disability World, Issue no. 13 April-May 2002. www.disabilityworld.org Further information from JenPerry1ID@aol.com

Blind radio broadcaster defies government threats in Sierra Leone

Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, is the home of Voice of the Handicapped (VoH), run by blind poet James Cullen. Supported by the BBC and some embassies, this independent radio station became the most popular broadcaster in the country.
It is reported that 75% of Free Town’s inhabitants tuned into VoH every day. Such popularity, together with criticism of government policies also made enemies. James Cullen and his disabled colleagues were regularly threatened.

In 1996 the then Minister of Information approached Cullen with a request to report government matters in a more friendly way. He was willing to pay him 100,000 Leones if he would change his tune. Cullen got the Minister to sign a paper authorising the payment and then used it in the opening to his next broadcast. Hours later security men were knocking on his door...

Later, after the end of the ten year civil war, the country was facing presidential and parliamentary elections. Cullen reports on the new start but points out that ‘the wounds made by the different factions have not yet healed.’

Full story: Disability World, Issue no. 13 April-May 2002. www.disabilityworld.org Further information from Andrew_Freeway@yahoo.com

Indigenous sign language book for deaf children in Colombia

Colombian deaf children are learning sign language through educational materials supplied by the Libros de Lengua de Señas para Niños Sordos. The Colombian National Federation for the Deaf is working with the Japanese Embassy to provide children from several regions in the country with some 1,100 packets of educational materials.

Contact Hernando Ayala Melgarejo at disnetco@yahoo.com

Disability in children’s literature

The Centre on Disability Studies of the University of Hawaii has called for papers on the theme of Disability Culture in Children’s Literature. Accepted contributions will be published in the online journal Disability Studies Quarterly < http://www.cds.hawaii.edu/dsq >

The rapidly growing area of studies in modern children’s literature has recognised the significance of bias concerning issues such as race and gender to contributing to children’s understanding of themselves and of society at large. In contrast, there is less debate about portrayals of disability in relation to current definitions and experiences of disability or illness with regard to the development of constructive personal and social attitudes in children.

The Quarterly is seeking papers that explore how modern children’s fiction portrays disability and illness, what perceptions may be drawn from it by children or their adult associates, and possible strategies for literary criticism which might be used to extend understanding. Collaborations between scholars of disability and children’s literature studies, or other interested parties, who can offer new perspectives are particularly encouraged.

Contact Kathy Saunders on k.saunders1@ukonline.co.uk

International conference on disability, virtual reality and associated technologies, 18-20 September 2002

This conference will review how advances in the field of virtual reality can be used to assist people with disabilities. It takes place in Veszprem, Hungary. Topics are likely to include communication and language, virtual and enhanced environments, visual impairment, training tools of rehabilitation and human factor issues. Research presented at the conference will be published in Proceedings.

Visit www.cyber.rdg.ac.uk/icdvrat or contact p.m.sharkey@reading.ac.uk

Disabled Peoples’ International 6th World Assembly, 15-18 October 2002

DPI will hold its meeting in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan to discuss and share information about critical issues affecting disabled individuals and communities. The Assembly provides a forum for DPI to promote the need for a UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons; for government officials, UN representatives and civil society to dialogue with national and international disability leaders; for DPI members and others to strengthen the human rights of disabled persons and moves towards social change and equality.

Visit www.dpi.org or contact Lucy Wong-Hernandez lucywdiny@aol.com or dpi@dpi.org

Editors’ note: The material for these pages originates in Disability World, whose cooperation is gratefully acknowledged. Visit www.disabilityworld.org

If the contribution of a book to a field of research and scholarship were measured by size, then this volume would rate highly. In some respects it has quite encyclopaedic qualities in terms of length, 765 pages, the number of entries, 39 chapters in all, and the number of contributing authors, no fewer than 64. The range of topics addressed also suggests an extensive coverage of issues relating to children and the media. There are substantial sections on children’s uses and gratifications; cognitive functions and school readiness skills; the hazards of television viewing; fears, aggression and sexual attitudes; personality, social attitudes and health; the media industry and its technology; policy issues and advocacy.

On the surface, then, the book appears to live up to its title by providing a major, comprehensive contribution to our understanding of children and the media. However, on closer examination some quite significant limitations become clear, limitations for which length alone cannot compensate. These are threefold.

Firstly, the issues which the contributing authors have been invited to address are approached from a very specific framework in that the editors have organised contributions around what they describe as the basic principles of child development and socialisation. Even the more policy orientated and production focused papers are geared towards the cognitive, emotional and motivational orientations of children to media. More specifically, the editors have been at pains to place children and young people’s relationships to media within an agenda heavily influenced by developmental psychology, because, they argue, this discipline has failed to recognise the importance of electronic media, particularly television, in the everyday lives of children and young people.

In other words, the aim of providing a handbook is heavily circumscribed by the editors’ real objective which seems to be to address what they perceive as a gap in the discipline of developmental psychology. This inevitably limits the perspectives within which the contributing chapters are couched, as progressively the book’s main object of study is revealed to be an examination of the impact of media use on children’s cognitive functions, particularly attention, comprehension, imagination and language development.

Few would quarrel with this focus as a worthwhile discipline based endeavour for developmental psychology, but in presenting a title that suggests a more comprehensive goal for the book the editors might have acknowledged, even through a small number of contributions, that other disciplines, particularly sociology, media studies and cultural studies have long recognised the salience of children’s relationships to media and have consistently presented this as an important area for research and debate.

The second limitation is related to the first. If the editors’ main task is to redress omissions in developmental psychology, then, of course, this has to take place within the terms and concerns found elsewhere in the discipline. This may help to explain the dominance of a negativity that underpins many of the contributions to this volume, expressing concerns about the influence of popular media on children’s development into responsible, caring adults. Inevitably therefore, many of the contributions are influenced by concerns about the dangers of children being exposed to a diet of violent and anti-social behaviour, which, will not only inhibit their development into ‘normal’ adults, but may actually turn them into the aggressive, violent juvenile and adult criminals which they would otherwise not become.

However, some, but not many, papers acknowledge more positive portents, for example, that popular media can provide something of the real world experiences that teachers and children bring to the learning process in the classroom. A more positive outlook can also be discerned in the small number of contributions focusing on how content and formats can influence children’s developing imagi-
nation, although clearly this is a contested area and is frequently conveyed as being not always 'good news'. Overall, the debates in the book remain heavily influenced by an agenda of concern about the media’s influence on sex, violence, drugs, stereotypes, family life, morality and ethics.

The final limitation relates to the range of media addressed. Although there are some references to music, film, magazines, comics and new media technologies, even collectively, these pale into insignificance compared with the attention given to television. Whilst evidence from studies throughout the developed world suggests that television still plays a prominent part in children and young people’s lives, two important trends are developing. Firstly the amount of viewing time is declining. Secondly, and related to this, the medium is increasingly becoming part of a multi-media experience. The book’s title rather hides the emphasis on television, and whilst the increasingly important issue of media convergence is briefly referred to by the editors in their concluding remarks, it is largely ignored in the contributing chapters.

This collection will certainly have its place in highlighting many of the concerns, working methods and modes of address of developmental psychology in the field of children and the media, but readers interested in a broader, less discipline bound appraisal of our understanding of this important area, will find it conceptually and empirically disappointing.

Review by Mike Richards, Professor of Media Studies, Media Arts Research Centre, Southampton Institute, UK.


It is almost unthinkable that a US publisher, even ten years ago, would have approved of a title like The Mission for a book on journalism. Has the pendulum swung back from rabid junk and trivia to high-minded civic-public journalism?

John Merrill, whose introductory chapter is meant to set the tone for the succeeding ones, seems to think so. He sees a paradigm shift from chaos to order. 'The chaos paradigm is a liberal communications structure that permits great diversity in public messages and in the mass media. At least this is the theory. In addition, its pluralism (stemming from freedom) does not permit the accumulation of centralised power' (p.23). In contrast, the order paradigm prizes stability and social responsibility higher than individualism and freedom. He refers specifically to Third World societies, which may find media 'traumatic and psychologically and socially disruptive'.

Merrill's intention may well be to show understanding for the media situation in the South, but the presumed paradigm shift is a phenomenon of the West rather than the South – perhaps a reaction to the media’s growing monopolisation and commercialisation. The media have never been as centralised and uniform as they are now – in the hands of Murdoch, Berlusconi, Bertelsmann and other giant conglomerates.

In western press theories there is indeed a re-awakening of civic or public journalism, but there is little evidence of this in practice. Merrill’s occasionally patronizing tone is unfortunate. 'If the West can come up with such ideas as public/civic journalism, it is surely possible for many Third World nations to develop their own mode of public communication' (p.28). This tone also contradicts the main tenor of the book.

Apart from Merrill’s theoretical chapter and the editor’s excellent introduction, the remaining 18 chapters are case studies from the Southern USA, Eastern Europe and from countries of the South. They show what individual media or individual journalists can do to advance freedom, civic responsibility and democracy. Some of these case studies are real jewels and are likely to be quoted in years to come.

Ibelema’s contribution on ‘Nigerian Press Ethics and the Politics of Pluralism’ is outstanding. It is well researched, thoughtful and original, and poses some fundamental questions on media ethics. Another excellent chapter is ‘Press Freedom and the Crisis of Ethical Journalism in Southern Africa’ by Regina Jere-Malanda. Her analysis of the partisan press of Zambia could serve as a model for similar studies in other developing countries. Veteran researcher Nabil Dajani dissects the ethical problems of Lebanese television since the end of the civil war there. ‘Journalism and journalism ethics in Hungary’ is another fine case study. The chapter on the press in Japan (by Nomura Takehiko) is equally outstanding.

There are also chapters on Colombia’s El Espectador, Mexico’s Excelsior, Slovakia’s news service SITA, German reporting on ‘guest workers’, and the press in Slovenia, Nepal and India. But the chapters that are most likely to have a lasting impact on future journalists are the last three in this book. They tell the stories of individual journalists, idealistic Neil White in Mississippi, Polish reporter of the Third World, Ryszard Kapuscinski,
and most impressive of all, the four-page contribution of Chuck Trapkus, who was killed in a road accident before he could complete his chapter. The book’s Postscript is Atkin’s account of the White Rose, ‘On the Martyrdom of Student Pamphleteers in Nazi Germany and their Legacy’.

This book analyses journalism ethics on the basis of the performance of individual newspapers or heroic individual journalists. But they are not likely to change media practices that are entrenched in a capitalist system that has little regard for the public good and thus for civic/public journalism. Nevertheless, Joseph Atkins, the editor, should be congratulated for a unique contribution to journalism ethics.

Review by Michael Traber, United Theological College, Bangalore, India.


Most people who communicate via computer networks would agree that this new facility has in one way or another altered their communication patterns and enhanced their capacity to build connections. The extent to which this new avenue for communication has affected the way we build communities and structured our social identities has been one of the questions that computer-mediated communication (CMC) scholars have explored. Early scholarship in this area is marked by euphoric statements on the potential of the technology radically to alter personal identities, communal relationships, social institutions and even national loyalties. The popularity of multidirectional interaction via a decentralized computer network (as opposed to the top-down, unidirectional communication via mass media technologies) has lead to speculations of unhindered free flow of information, democratisation, and increased citizen participation. Evidently, the bubbles of euphoria are bursting fast as they encounter the reality of incorrigible human nature.

The three books reviewed below are good examples of the process of maturation that is underway in CMC scholarship. Clearly evident is a more critical and realistic approach to the study of the uses and consequences of technology mediated communication. Increasingly, we are aware that technologies have to be ‘tamed’ to fit the quirks of human nature before their potential can be actualised. Historically, the impacts of the socially adapted version of even the most revolutionary technologies have, at best, been evolutionary.

The first book Network Society by Jan van Dijk, originally published in 1991, marks a departure from the prevalent techno-centrism of the 80s. The author takes a balanced approach in his analysis of the social aspects and implications of the new media. Many studies of that period started off either from the objective attributes or the subjective uses of the network technologies. Dijk takes a step back and looks at the larger picture. He studies computer-mediated communication technologies in the context of the communication capacities of all available communication channels. He correctly argues that the impact of these technologies will depend upon how these capacities are organised, institutionalised and used in social contexts.

For instance, Dijk does not suggest that the network technologies can cause decentralisation, free flow of information, or more choice. On the other hand, he suggests that the final outcome might be exactly the opposite, depending upon how we choose to use them. Dijk, however, has no doubts that the social effects of the new technologies are going to be very powerful, be they negative or positive. The term ‘network society’ represents a new society whose political, economic, legal and social dimensions have been transformed by the wide spread usage of computer mediated telecommunication networks.

According to Dijk, we have already transitioned from the mass society era to the ‘network society’ phase of human history. This seems like an overstatement from an era of high expectations when we consider that less than 5% of the world currently uses these technologies, even if it is the 5% who formulates global policies, controls the political, economic and social institutions, and sets agenda for public communication. Steve Jones provides an astute point in his book – we cannot predict global transformation based on the evidence from narrow experiences of North American technological life, or perhaps that of the Americanised upper middle class elsewhere in the world.

The two books edited by Steve Jones are collections of articles that describe how network technologies have been used by groups of people to congregate and build affiliations. The title ‘cybersociety’ represents an outcome of the consistent use of the network technologies – a parallel universe of social relationships that is sustained via computer-mediated communication. The global networks and connectivity draws
people with similar interests to shared social spaces. The result is usually termed ‘virtual communities’. These congregations develop their own social norms, rituals, and shared interpretations – or a virtual culture unique to themselves.

The authors explore issues of community, norms of behaviour, and power inequalities, anarchy, and dissent in these unique virtual environments, with no illusions that cybersociety is an idyllic world. The declared objective of the volumes is to provide a snapshot of the changing scene while keeping a watchful eye on the landscape; thus they provide few definitive answers but pose more questions yet to be answered: does a convenient communication medium provide a sufficient condition to the formation of community? How significant are factors such as emotional bonds, commitment, and a personal stake in each other in the maintenance of strong communities? If we interact only with people like us and exclude all ‘chance encounters’, how would it affect our social consciousness in a heterogeneous world? In a medium that permits one to masquerade behind imagined identities, how can one build honest relationships?

The study of cyber-communities and virtual identities can probably benefit from the holistic approach that Dijk has taken in his study of CMC. Most of us maintain multiple group affiliations – with family, colleagues at work, church, sports clubs, and so on. Similarly, we concurrently manage multiple identities – being mother, daughter, wife, teacher, student, friend, colleague, coach, etc. What additional community building capacities do the new technologies bring that enhance, strengthen, displace or hinder our participation in our other group affiliations – to connect and be disconnected, to inform and to misinform, to build communities and to erect (fire-)walls? Answers to these and other questions may emerge over time as the CMC experience becomes more central to the social experience. But for now the insights in these books help us understand various ways in which these technologies are being used by people like us to build alliances and explore their collective identities.


Sir Issac Newton is credited with the statement ‘If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.’ It acknowledges the centrality and primacy of pre-existing ideas to consequent innovation and creation, and one’s debt to that great storehouse of knowledge that has been built up over centuries that is so fundamental to the generation of new ideas.

As a professor of law at Stanford Law School, Lessig adopts a liberal view of intellectual property rights and acknowledges the rights and trade-offs of all players involved in this enterprise. He is not as concerned with the radical overhaul of the present IPR system as with a need to respect the niches and spaces for public innovation and creativity in line with what one may loosely term the liberal, Jeffersonian tradition. Using the internet as a case in point, Lessig documents the steady demise of a platform that in its global avatar was created through a communitarian exercise, with contributions from Net architects and designers, software engineers and policy makers. The Internet was an ‘innovations commons’. It no longer is.

Beginning with a general description of ‘rivalrous’ and ‘non-rivalrous’ resources in the commons, Lessig explores the nature of the Internet as ‘commons’ and the many ‘layers’ of the Internet along with its many dimensions of ‘control’. While some of these layers inclusive of its networks and content are protected by ‘property law’, the ‘code layer’ of the Internet originally evolved as an innovations commons. The meat of the book is about the ways by which an alliance of corporate and government interests have created enclosures around codes and the consequences of this for connected audiences in a wired world.

This is a well thought out reading of IPR. It clarifies a number of issues linked to IPR and avoids the arcane legalese that is a characteristic feature of writing in this area of enquiry. While I have some reservations with the liberal model of IPR espoused by the author, the book’s strength lies in its exploration of the ‘politics of possibility’ within the parameters of the given system in the USA. It attempts to redeem the American public’s right to know, to act, to celebrate autonomy at a historical juncture characterised by serious compromises of many of their fundamental, Constitutional freedoms. This is an accessible book, a must read for all those concerned with the future of ideas in a connected world.

Review by Pradip N. Thomas, WACC.