

Reporting from Jerusalem

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"This place is like a Rubik's cube," said Lyse Doucet, BBC correspondent in Jerusalem. "You keep turning it, and yet it seems there is always a wrong color showing somewhere."

So history never ends, at least not to the people whose task it is to report on Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East, very frequently from a Jerusalem base. I was in Jerusalem in early 1997, meeting with resident news media foreign correspondents, as one part of an ongoing wider study of the occupational experiences and practices of the group.¹ The work of foreign correspondents, one might argue, parallels that of anthropologists, in that both report from one place to another, often across cultural as well as spatial distances—in that sense, this study involves the kind of transnational occupational ethnography in which the anthropologist is studying neither up nor down but sideways.² At least at times, foreign correspondents, like anthropologists, presumably have to deal in one way or other with questions of "cultural translation" or "representing otherness." Yet their relationships to time and space in the reporting situation, their collegial relationships, and their organizational embedding are different from those of anthropological fieldworkers—and their reporting usually reaches much wider audiences. Indeed, many of the images and understandings we all have of people and places elsewhere in the world result from the efforts of foreign correspondents. Consequently an inquiry into their work is also an attempt to cast some light on contemporary global interconnectedness and the possibility of well-informed cosmopolitan citizenship.³

The timing of my stay in Jerusalem was probably fortunate. Certainly nobody thought that the puzzle of the Rubik's cube had been solved, but for a period, there was a certain relative calm. I arrived in January 1997, just after the Hebron agreement between Israelis and Palestinians resulting in a partial Israeli withdrawal from that West Bank town. About a month after my departure, the Israeli government allowed work to begin on a new Jewish neighborhood in East Jerusalem, and a period quickly followed that included renewed violent protest on the West Bank, a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv, a border zone shooting of Israeli schoolchildren by a Jordanian soldier, and extensive international political activity. From then on, 1997 continued crisis ridden and often violent. The period when I was in Jerusalem was hardly without news either, with one domestic

political scandal (the "Bar-C... affair"), one meeting between Palestinian Authority Chairman Yassir Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Erez Crossing (on the Israel-Gaza border), and one collision of two Israeli military helicopters on their way into Lebanon, resulting in the death of 73 soldiers. Yet this was on the whole an interval when correspondents could find some spare time away from "breaking news" to think about feature stories they wanted to do and to engage in lengthy conversations with a visitor. What follows is itself a report from Jerusalem, then, on some aspects of the working lives of newspeople in an unusually eventful place.

Jerusalem as a News Center

Quite possibly, Jerusalem, as a relatively small city, has one of the highest densities of foreign correspondents in the world. A recent edition of the local *Who Is Who in the Foreign Press Association* (Foreign Press Association n.d.) lists 177 active members (including a number of photographers and cameramen); not all of these reside in Jerusalem, as some are in Tel Aviv, an hour away. On the other hand, not all correspondents for foreign media are members of the association. Listings available at the Government Press Office in mid-1996 showed 168 correspondents in Jerusalem, 73 in Tel Aviv.⁴ Apart from the Israel-based correspondents, there are a number of reporters, mostly "Middle East correspondents," who come to Jerusalem, Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza with a degree of regularity, although they are based elsewhere—often Cairo or Cyprus. These are largely not discussed here.

Why is Jerusalem such an important news center? The answer is fairly obvious, although multifaceted. First of all, there is of course the continuous Arab-Israeli conflict, resulting over the years in several wars, a number of somewhat lesser armed confrontations, the Intifada uprising, and a long series of bombing and shooting attacks in public places, often on civilians, with perpetrators and victims on both sides. In other words, there is a stream of events of a kind that is generally newsworthy. Second, news from Jerusalem has a special cultural resonance because the city is a center of three world religions. Third, after the Holocaust, the continuing history of the Jewish people has been a matter of special concern to a large number of people especially in Europe and North America, and Israel is the focal point of this concern.

One should note also the compactness of the Jerusalem beat. In the world of foreign news, there are people like "Asia correspondents" and "Africa correspondents"—undoubtedly especially provocative job descriptions to anthropologists, who are by tradition more nearsighted. In Jerusalem, it seems most correspondents are expected to cover Israel and the occupied territories, but even those who are "Middle East correspondents" do a very large proportion of their work in the immediate vicinity. As one of them said, "You can go to Hebron to cover an incident and be back in Jerusalem in time for lunch." Even a brief visit to Gaza or the Galilee hardly requires more than a day trip.

To a degree, news centers rise and decline: foreign editors and correspondents are sensitive to such shifts. At the time I was in Jerusalem, there was some

speculation on whether "the peace process" might ever reach the point where the city would no longer stand out as a major international news source. But few seemed to think so. The significance of Jerusalem to millennia of human history would remain. In more mundane and practical terms, there was the opinion that if lasting peace would really break out in the region, Jerusalem would become an even more practical home base for correspondents with a general assignment of covering the Middle East. It offers more attractive living conditions, not least for families, than most competing locations, and the political and logistic difficulties of visits from there to, say, Damascus or Baghdad would be gone. Yet most correspondents were perhaps not even ready to take such prospects seriously. The Rubik's cube of Middle East conflicts would keep generating new business.⁵

Varieties of Correspondents

Who is a foreign correspondent? For the purposes of my study, I have defined the "core group" of foreign correspondents as consisting of those individuals who are stationed in countries other than that of their origin for the purpose of reporting on events and characteristics of the area of their stationing through news media based elsewhere (in large part in their countries of origin). But if this is the core, the real world of international news reporting also includes a number of variations on the theme. This is not least apparent in Jerusalem, due to the particular history of Israel.

On the one hand, there are indeed those expatriate correspondents who arrive in Israel on assignment from media organizations with headquarters in other countries and who expect to spend some time based in Jerusalem and thereafter return home or proceed to another posting elsewhere. On the other hand, among the people reporting to the world from Jerusalem there are also many who have likewise come to Israel from somewhere else, but not primarily or necessarily in order to work as foreign correspondents, and who expect to remain there. They are Jews from somewhere in the diaspora who have decided to make *aliya*—to "ascend"—to the home country of their people. Through one arrangement or other, however, they work for media organizations in the countries they have left, and their intimate knowledge of those countries is useful in reporting to them.

Perhaps one can refer to the categories of correspondents just sketched by contrasting "expatriates" with "immigrants," but one should keep in mind that the boundary between them can get somewhat blurred. Some of the "immigrants" have become Israeli citizens, others not. There are also a fair number of Jewish journalists among the expatriates—in part (at least one of them thought) because there are relatively many Jews in North American and European journalism, and possibly because some of them may find Jerusalem a particularly intriguing assignment, even when they have no plans of settling in Israel permanently. And then a life might change direction: one prominent immigrant correspondent started out as an expatriate, posted to Jerusalem by a major British newspaper, but after one additional assignment in another part of the world

he decided to come back to Jerusalem. Here his family had come to feel at home and began anew as a freelancer (writing for a range of publications extending from *Time* to the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Calcutta Statesman*, although not including the paper that had first sent him to Israel).

The expatriate-immigrant divide in Jerusalem foreign reporting casts some particular light on one of the eternal questions of the craft: how long should a foreign correspondent stay in a place? In other words, what are the advantages and disadvantages of long and short stays? Depending on when they arrived in Israel, and on when they became active as correspondents, the immigrants could presumably report from the area for several decades. The expatriate correspondents in Jerusalem are likely to be stationed there for three to five years, although some remain longer.⁶

It is especially the larger U.S. media organizations that show a clear preference for the expatriate alternative and for rather quick rotation. The assumption here is that "going stale" is a significant occupational hazard among foreign correspondents. One stops seeing the potential stories in what one begins to take for granted; some stories begin to feel repetitious and boring; and one loses that sure grasp of what readers "at home" already know and what has to be explained. There is seen to be virtue, then, in innocence—at least to a degree. It is hardly denied, however, that local knowledge is also useful. "The first year you are learning, the second year you are on your feet and can give more texture to stories, the third year you are getting tired," said one veteran American correspondent with experiences from postings on three continents.

The correspondents who remain for longer periods—in this case typically (but not exclusively) the immigrants—could thus possibly have lost some of their freshness of perspective. They, for their part, instead tend to emphasize the intensity and breadth of their knowledge, particularly their personal involvement in Israeli society. They are more likely to live in ordinary Israeli neighborhoods, and their children go to Israeli schools. More than a few have done Israeli military service, which is a way of meeting people of many backgrounds in a very diverse society. Having been around for a long time, they can place new events in the context of old ones, and they know where to turn for informed comments. In addition, there is the language factor. In most instances (though not quite all), the immigrants speak Hebrew fluently; many of the expatriates do not. And so they are immersed in the daily flow of Israeli comment and debate.

Take as one example of an immigrant correspondent's personal path to a reporting life that of Rami Wurgaft, who writes for *El Mundo* in Madrid. Wurgaft is not originally from Spain but from a Chilean Jewish family. His father, a lawyer, decided to make *aliya* with his family in the 1960s, but it did not work out particularly well—his father, says Wurgaft, concluded that he was Chilean after all, and so they all returned to Santiago. The 1973 military coup in Chile was a traumatic experience, however, and Rami Wurgaft decided to go back to the Israeli kibbutz where he had spent some years of his youth. He later went to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for a while, studying international relations and sociology, married an Israeli woman, was called up to do his military service

reporting on the fall of the Berlin Wall and who has also reported from the Soviet Union and South Africa), whereas Joel Greenberg, appearing about as frequently in the newspaper columns, is an immigrant. Less visibly for their audiences, the expatriates in larger media organizations tend to have researchers, translators, and "fixers"—field assistants and go-betweens—to assist them in various ways, on a full-time basis or occasionally. Three translation services, two Palestinian and one Israeli, are also part of the infrastructure of foreign reporting from Jerusalem, offering the main stories of local media by fax to subscribers. And there is a continuous output of news bulletins in English from the Government Press Office as well as other Israeli official sources. On a typical morning, Serge Schmemmann said, he might sit down with his translator to scan the stories in the three major Israeli papers and decide which ones he wanted translated more completely. Later he might call the authors of the stories he had read, or people who figured in them, and perhaps make a lunch appointment. And occasionally, one or another among those authors might be invited to write something for the *New York Times's* op-ed page, to increase the diversity of voices heard there.

The choice between longer-term assignments and quicker rotation, which in Jerusalem tends to become one between immigrants and expatriates, is not only one of media organization reporting philosophies. There is clearly also an economic element involved. Expatriates are usually more expensive for their employers. They are often on a higher salary scale than "local hires"; the needs of their families, for example with regard to children's education, also have to be taken more directly into account; and vacation arrangements and relocations tend to become costly. At a time when the power of accountants is widely recognized to be growing in media organizations, and when the foreign editors at home often have to struggle to defend their turf, it is clear that at least the smaller and middle-sized European media organizations frequently prefer a less expensive arrangement, often with an immigrant operating through a more or less elaborate stringer relationship.

Elements of Community

The public image of foreign correspondents, which they often cultivate themselves (for example in their autobiographies), is one of a tightly knit group, largely male, coming together wherever there is trouble in the world, congregating in bars after the day's work is over, drinking, and swapping stories. Is the foreign correspondent community like this? In what sense, for that matter, is there a "community"? What kinds of relationships actually emerge among the correspondents, as colleagues and competitors, sometimes neighbors, sometimes compatriots, in a working life that is after all marked by a great deal of transiency?

The image just referred to is probably skewed toward one kind of foreign correspondent practice, that of the "firemen" who come to a place more or less briefly, probably at a time of crisis, and find their colleagues mostly staying in the same hotel—in the classical case, because that is where the communication

in the Israeli Defense Forces, and had no job lined up when he was demobilized. So he became a restaurant waiter to support his young family, and while in that business, by chance, he became acquainted with a Scandinavian foreign correspondent, who after some time suggested that Wurgaft try his hand at writing and gave him some support in his early attempts.

Then, once, when Wurgaft was on his way to Chile to see his relatives and had a stopover in Madrid, he checked the papers in the newsstands and called the offices of a few of them. It turned out that at *El Mundo*, a rather new paper making a reputation through political muckraking, there was some interest in improving foreign coverage. The first piece he was asked to do was a nervous experience, for it dealt with arms smuggling from Israel by way of the Caribbean to a Colombian narcotics cartel; not precisely a topic where he felt he had much expertise to draw on. But soon, luck came his way, in a peculiar sense. The Gulf War broke out, Iraqi Scud missiles fell on Israel, and there was Wurgaft, when he had his gas mask off, reporting to Madrid on reactions to the emergency in his modest Jerusalem neighborhood. The response at *El Mundo* was very favorable, and soon enough Wurgaft was assigned tasks such as going to Cairo to interview Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the United Nations secretary-general. But he still felt his closeness to the local Jerusalem scene was his greatest asset.

Ramy Wurgaft's example is hardly typical; I am not sure there is a typical immigrant correspondent. Some were experienced journalists before they migrated, others not. There are those among them who identify fully with their journalistic work, and others who enjoy it but also find time to pursue other interests. Yet Wurgaft's story shows what importance a local grounding can have.

The expatriates have certain ways of compensating, at least partially, for their disadvantages. Those of Jewish background may have had some knowledge of Hebrew prior to their arrival, mostly through religious instruction. Often they had not been given much time to prepare for a Jerusalem assignment—sometimes no more than six or eight weeks—and under such conditions, as Barton Gellman of the *Washington Post* noted, there could conceivably be "a problem of institutional memory." Yet he had received some advice from his predecessor on the Jerusalem beat, who had shown him around; written two long memos, one on logistics and one on people; and turned over his Rolodex to him. And Gellman and others were still in occasional touch with predecessors, by e-mail perhaps, especially when they still worked for the same organization (at home or on another foreign assignment). So the message may go out that someone in a West Bank town had invited the newcomer: "... and he says he knows you. Can I trust him?"

Moreover, the expatriate correspondents may be able to draw on the knowledge of a local staff. In the larger news organizations, there is sometimes even a complementary group of expatriates and immigrants among the correspondents themselves. At CNN television, the bureau chief, Walter Rodgers, is an expatriate, whereas the other correspondent regularly seen reporting from Jerusalem and its vicinity, Jerold Kessel, is an immigrant. At the *New York Times*, the bureau chief, Serge Schmemmann, is an expatriate (who won a Pulitzer Prize for his

facilities are. In recent years, the work of foreign correspondents has gone through a technological revolution, and with improved telephone lines, laptop computers, and modems, even traveling correspondents tend no longer to be very dependent on such centralized facilities. One Jerusalem hotel, indeed, has a reputation as a correspondent gathering spot: the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem.⁷ Yet although some of them might go there for a drink occasionally, for the correspondents who are permanently (or at least durably) based in Jerusalem, the hotel is not particularly important. Those with young children may pay a seasonal fee to use the swimming pool, but eating and drinking there would not be part of any everyday routine, nor is there now any other particularly significant public or semipublic hangout.⁸ One veteran immigrant correspondent suggested, a bit provocatively, that the bar at the American Colony Hotel was where one might go to hear visiting journalists swap speculations about Israeli affairs on the basis of shared ignorance.⁹

Some media organization offices are clustered in a couple of buildings, so that the correspondents working from them are more likely to run into one another and become more or less closely acquainted. In the big new Jerusalem Capital Studios (JCS) Building opposite the main Jerusalem bus station on Jaffa Road, especially the television and radio organizations have been coming together, due to the advanced technical facilities available there. Closer to downtown western Jerusalem is Beit Agron—named after Gershon Agron, founding editor of what began as the *Palestine Post* and in 1948 became the *Jerusalem Post*, Israel's only English-language, internationally well known daily—another large complex, which houses the Government Press Office, the spokesman of the Israeli Defense Forces, and the office of the military censor. In its corridors one also finds the small Jerusalem offices (mostly a couple of rooms each) of a number of foreign newspapers: the *London Times*, the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Baltimore Sun*, *Newsday*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Toronto Star*, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

Again, here are opportunities for face-to-face encounters and interactions between colleagues. Yet Beit Agron was a more important meeting point earlier, when all correspondents accredited with the Government Press Office would have its various messages and bulletins delivered to their pigeonholes there. In those days, they would come by more or less on a daily basis and also run into one another. Since some time back, that information is sent out by e-mail instead, and there is little reason for frequent visits to Beit Agron for those who do not have their offices there. (To an anthropologist, it sounds like the familiar story of how a village changes when piped water is introduced and nobody has to go to the pump in the square any more.) And many certainly do not. Some have separate offices elsewhere, whereas many work out of their homes—which are dispersed over West Jerusalem, although it seemed to me that I found a number of them in the German Colony, an attractive neighborhood established in the 19th century by a German Christian order, and in Musrara, an old gentrifying area north of the Old City.

Then there is the Foreign Press Association (FPA). This may have had its ups and downs. What it does, noted its chairman, Nicolas Tatro (who is also the Jerusalem bureau chief of the Associated Press and was Beirut bureau chief during the Lebanese upheavals of the early 1980s), depends in large part on the tastes and the degree of commitment of its elected board members. There are meetings with visiting speakers, as recently when the U.S. ambassador had come to discuss the current state of the peace process. And the FPA also functions as a kind of ombudsman for the foreign correspondents, making sure that they are not ignored in press conferences and on tours of high Israeli officials. Occasionally, too, it has to complain when Israeli police or military personnel have tangled with its members.

The Government Press Office also arranges meetings and outings, some of which are more popular than others with correspondents. Apart from such organized events, however, foreign correspondents inevitably run into each other when they are covering the same news stories; when they have to be in Hebron or at the Erez Crossing, at the same time or when they attend press conferences and hear each other ask questions. Acquaintances may be struck up here, or at least one may begin to recognize faces and get some sense of who represents what, from where. And although one may never get to see the products of some colleagues' efforts—for their work may appear in some language one does not know, in a paper one never sees, or on a channel one never watches—one may still form some idea of what kind of journalists they are. One correspondent for a Scandinavian paper noted that the freelance photographer he sometimes worked with had introduced him to other journalists with whom he, the photographer, teamed up on other occasions.

Usually, however, one has more knowledge of the colleagues who represent media organizations from one's own country. One may follow their reporting more or less closely, run into them at gatherings at the country's embassy, and exchange tips about the practicalities of Jerusalem life. It is often with them that one would have more personal interactions. But this is not always so, and when the compatriots are also one's most immediate competitors, writing for example for newspapers in the same market at home, this fact may well affect the closeness of relationships.

One kind of tie with colleagues is perhaps especially important. When correspondents go on a reporting trip, especially out of town, they often prefer to go together with another correspondent, someone who is not an immediate competitor. This is practical, for they can split the cost of a driver and of a fixer/interpreter if one is needed. Sometimes, going to difficult reporting sites, one may feel safer traveling with a partner. Talking to different people and noticing different things, two reporters can pool information. And, as one British correspondent pointed out, "when one gets bored, the other can keep mental energy flowing."

Such partnerships are usually not exclusive. Preparing for a trip, a correspondent asks around among a few colleagues he or she enjoys going with. It may be, but certainly is not always, someone from the same country—provided no direct competition is involved. Personal chemistry certainly matters, but also

important are a sense of equality of knowledge and resources and similarity of working style. One immigrant correspondent, with decades of professional experience and extensive knowledge of Israel, said she was not enthusiastic about traveling with newcomers, as she would be exploited, turned into instructor and "source" rather than colleague.¹⁰

This sort of temporary partnership also mostly involves print journalists. TV crews tend to be so large anyway that there is little room for any teaming up among them; and print journalists are happiest when there are no TV people around, for they have a way of drawing too much attention and disturbing the work setting for everybody else.

So—all these things considered—is there a foreign correspondent community in Jerusalem? Perhaps just barely, in any strict sense of the term. The "community" is a heterogeneous collection of people, divided along varied dimensions, but not least by nationality. The members are brought together by some news events and some organizational contexts, but in everyday life the community is rather fragmented and individualized. It is more like a rather loosely connected network of variously multiplex or single-stranded ties. Some of its members are entirely unknown to one another, others may be recognized by face and known by reputation. There may be little awareness of arrivals and departures. Yet in small groups and in particular relationships, there are also close friendships and frequent sociable contacts. One European old-timer had been meeting with colleagues over many years for poker games involving symbolic sums. The participants had shifted with time, depending on comings and goings as well as the demands of domestic life. As a matter of principle, there would be no shop talk, although undoubtedly relationships of personal trust could accumulate.

When foreign correspondents (not least of the more expatriate type) reminisce about their lives, they also comment on such issues and on differences between places where they have been posted. There are variations in local community formation: perhaps less overall closeness where the number of correspondents is large and more of it where the environment (and not least the government of the country) is regarded as dangerous and hostile. Jerusalem may be one thing, Paris another, and Nairobi something quite different again. Especially with the expatriates, however, one factor is more constant: some of their most significant others are not in the same locality at all. They are in the home office, to be dealt with long distance, with regard to daily coverage as well as future career moves. And so there, perhaps many time zones away, is another community.

Managing the News Flow

Nothing important would happen in Israel or the occupied territories, said Serge Schmemmann of the *New York Times*, that he would not hear of within ten minutes—by telephone, on the beeper connecting him with the Government Press Office, or on the radio. When the two helicopters crashed into one another close to the Lebanese battle zone, his photographer was in her car nearby and actually saw the crash in the air. And of course she was on the telephone with him almost immediately. When two rather primitively constructed bombs went off

in a Tel Aviv bus station, he had received seven calls about it in five minutes. Apart from himself and a colleague and staff in the Jerusalem office, he had stringers in Tel Aviv, the West Bank, and Gaza, but there were also a number of other people who kept in touch.

Schmemmann and I were talking in the afternoon, and that evening Arafat and Netanyahu would again meet at the Erez Crossing, a couple of hours away by road. How would Schmemmann handle that? Would he go there himself? No, he would send his Tel Aviv stringer. The latter would call him when the meeting—which probably would not start on time anyway—was over, and then Schmemmann would be able to call Netanyahu's press spokesman, who had a mobile telephone in his car, to check details and ask for comments. That would actually work better than calling from one car to the other. In principle, anybody could be reached on the phone more or less at any time—during the talks leading to the Hebron agreement, Schmemmann had talked to Dennis Ross, the chief U.S. negotiator, as Ross was flying over in a helicopter. Going to Erez was unattractive, moreover, because, since the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, security arrangements had turned into a time-consuming nuisance.

Israel is an unusually news-conscious society. It is not only the correspondents who find out quickly if anything big has happened. Israeli radio has news bulletins every half hour, and as one of the correspondents remarked, "if you are in a city bus in Jerusalem and the driver has his radio on, you will notice that when the news comes on, everybody in the bus becomes quiet." And if there is a major unexpected occurrence—a shooting, a bombing—the reporting will not wait for the nearest half hour.

Those foreign correspondents who have a staff will indeed often want to have someone listening to the radio continuously. Yet there are also many other ways in which information reaches them. Probably they keep an eye on what comes out from the main news agencies—Associated Press, or Reuters, or both. One can rent a beeper and get the coded bulletins of government offices that way. One can get materials from the Palestinian Authority, from human rights organizations, from groups representing Jewish settlers in the occupied territories, and from a variety of other organizations. Friends and tipsters let reporters know what they know—and here it matters that Israel has a high density of public telephones and a quite remarkably high density of personal cellular phones. By the time correspondents know that something has happened, if they do not immediately dash off to the site, they perhaps check if Israeli television, or CNN, Sky TV, or BBC, is there with live coverage.

Several correspondents commented that it was not so much a question of getting the news; the flow was so intense, varied, and insistent that it was rather a matter of filtering it and deciding how to handle it. What local news should be turned into international news? Should one rush off to be personally on the scene, or should one handle the information flow from one's desk? And if the reporters write for a newspaper and know that the foreign desk at the newspaper's home office will see the same news agency materials that they see, how do they decide what stories they should go after and what could be left to the agency?

The Bar-On affair is an example of a story that may or may not have turned out to be of international significance. An Israeli television channel accused the government of having attempted a shady deal: in exchange for supporting the Hebron agreement, the Shas Party, a minor partner in the governing coalition, would get the questionably qualified jurist-politician Roni Bar-On appointed attorney general. And Bar-On would then arrange a lenient treatment of a leading Shas politician accused of corruption.

Was this something that would interest the world? Despite the large headlines in the Israeli press, many of the correspondents were not entirely sure. Yet there was the possibility that the governing coalition would fall apart as a result, and by such a time it would surely be international news. So apparently most of them decided to play it safe and report on it at least briefly at the early stage. (And the affair did indeed become major news some three months later, even if in the end the cabinet did not fall.)

The question of whether one should hit the road and try to be on the scene where something is happening, or has happened, or deal with the event from the office may perhaps sometimes be a matter of personal energy level, but often enough it is an organizational and practical issue. Serge Schmemmann, as seen above, could plan for an Arafat-Netanyahu meeting in advance and decide that he might be better off not going to Erez. An assassination is a different, unexpected kind of event. The Saturday night on which Yitzhak Rabin was murdered in Tel Aviv, Anton LaGuardia, working alone for the *Daily Telegraph*, at first saw the question of going out or staying in as a dilemma. How much would be gained by being on the spot, and how much would be lost in travel time and by not being fully engaged with the information flow that, through many channels, might reach his Jerusalem office? He decided quickly, however, that he would hardly gain much by heading for the other city. In a day or so, somebody could fly out from London to assist him in the continued coverage, but the nearest deadline, for the Monday paper, he would have to handle alone. So on Sunday he was in his office continuously from 7 A.M. to midnight. Writing a lot from the top of his head, drawing on stored-up knowledge, while at the same time following local newscasts, he did seven stories, which would take up almost three pages in the following day's paper.

The evening before my discussion with LaGuardia about the Rabin assassination, LaGuardia had had another type of event to report on. For days, the Israeli government had been expected to release a number of Palestinian women prisoners—terrorists in the eyes of some people, although others would describe them as resistance fighters. There had been excited scenes as the women came out. Before that, LaGuardia had gone to interview the kinspeople of one of the women, a student who had led an armed Palestinian cell, and then to see the widow of a West Bank Jewish settler whom the members of that cell had killed. And immediately after we had talked about this, LaGuardia would join an American colleague for another excursion to see if they could talk with the young woman after she had had a night's rest at home.

Generally, it would not be easy for a correspondent of any other media organization to compete for breaking news with the major news agencies. The staff resources of the latter are much greater. Nicolas Tatro of the Associated Press told me he had had 47 people on his pay list in a recent month, through varied arrangements, but his more stable organization of writers, photographers, and TV crews would include about twenty-five people. He had eight journalists in Jerusalem and one in Tel Aviv, a photographer in Gaza, stringers in three West Bank towns, and a stringer TV crew in the Galilee. In addition, there would often be a few interns from U.S. universities who would come for anything between six weeks and three months, to work for coffee and donuts, gain experience, and get something to put on their resumés. At the time he had four expatriate staff members, including himself, but some of his local hires were immigrants from the United States, and there were also two Palestinians in the office.

Whether as a foreign correspondent in Jerusalem reporting directly to a paper in Los Angeles or Stockholm or to a radio station in Amsterdam or Milan, one can be sure that the foreign desk at the home office is also keeping an eye on what Tatro and his staff at the Associated Press (or their counterparts at Reuters) are reporting from this beat. To an extent the main agencies become the arbiters of what is newsworthy.¹¹ If another correspondent has a story and AP has nothing on the subject, the question may arise of whether it is really much of a story. If AP reports something and other reporters are silent, they may be asked to explain why. Inevitably this sometimes becomes an irritant. One immigrant Scandinavian correspondent, long in Jerusalem, remembered an occasion when some AP newscaster, rather gung-ho about the importance of his own work, had reported somewhat breathlessly and at length about a Palestinian Authority event in a West Bank town—and then the Scandinavian had to explain to his editor at home that it had really been a quite routine affair.

More often, the question may be whether the foreign desk at home should use the agency materials as they stand or get something from its own correspondent. Clearly "being there" is valued by media organizations as well as correspondents in a way that is likely to remind anthropologists of the importance of ethnographic authority in their own craft. Nevertheless, practices vary somewhat. Some organizations would be reluctant to use straight agency materials from a place where they have a correspondent and would expect a rewrite that might also add a little context and color. Showing off one's own news-gathering organization could be a matter of principle and prestige. For the correspondent, too, especially if he or she is somewhat loosely attached to the organization (as a stringer, for example), it may be important to signal one's usefulness to the employer by doing one's own version. How much personal effort goes into such stories is something correspondents take note of, as a matter of professional quality. One minimal construction of a story sent home, somebody quipped, would be "I was there . . . blah, blah . . . fear and loathing . . . blah, blah (please add agency materials)."

Yet some media organizations feel that there is no reason why their own correspondents should have to deal with what is available anyway from the agencies.

They should be doing things with greater depth, commenting on the background of news, or doing feature stories. A rather clear-cut example is the *Boston Globe*, not one of the three or four U.S. newspapers with an emphasis on international news. The *Globe* has a half-dozen or so foreign correspondents of its own (while for example the *Los Angeles Times* has about twenty-five), so for large parts of the world it is dependent on agency coverage anyway. From Ethan Bronner, the paper's Middle East correspondent when I was in Jerusalem, it expected two or three stories a week. Bronner, an expatriate nearing the end of a six-year stay, highly respected among his Jerusalem colleagues despite the fact that they hardly ever read the *Globe*, saw his job as "writing for the first page," and he succeeded in this notably often: 76 times in 1996. But then that was a remarkable year on his beat; and his version of the Bar-On affair, when it first came up, ended up somewhere inside the paper. Apart from news stories, Bronner did book reviews, analytical pieces for the *Globe*'s Sunday "Focus" section, and occasionally something for the weekly color supplement. (But the latter had to be handled with care, for it had a four-week printing time, and when one reports from a turbulent region, much can happen while a story is stuck with the printer.)

Bronner had all *Globe* foreign reporting sent to him, and all front pages—usually there would be one foreign story on the front page per day—to maintain a sense of where he would fit in. He was in touch with the *Globe* by e-mail every day and spoke to his foreign editor on the phone once or twice a week. As a Middle East correspondent, he figured he was away from Israel and the occupied territories about 25 percent of his time, traveling widely in the region. But his experience was that it was the Israeli and Israel-related stories that most often got to the front page; Turkey, by contrast, hardly ever did.¹²

When the helicopter collision occurred, Bronner had just gone to Amman in anticipation of a Netanyahu visit there. But Netanyahu had to cancel his journey, and Bronner called Boston to see if he ought to return to Israel and write about the crash and the national mourning. His editor said the *Globe* would use the agency story, so Bronner and his travel partner, Barton Gellman of the *Washington Post*, stayed in Amman and tried to find out from its Iraqi exile rumor mill what had really happened in Baghdad recently, when Saddam Hussein's son Uday had been shot.

It is in the nature of things that correspondents' working hours are unpredictable. LaGuardia of the *Daily Telegraph* had a long day after Rabin was assassinated, and when the Hebron agreement was finally about to be signed, Lyse Doucet reported live from the Erez Crossing on BBC every hour between midnight and 9 A.M.—"exhilarating." But there are more routine days as well, when one can think about feature stories and perhaps read a bit. Apart from keeping an eye on agency materials, most correspondents do not follow each other's reporting very consistently. They may be more likely to turn to regional newsmagazines, or biographies, or academic monographs. On the shelf of Ethan Bronner's small office in Beit Agron, I spotted S. N. Eisenstadt's *The Transformation of Israeli Society* and Smadar Lavie's *The Poetics of Military Occupation*.

Most Jerusalem print correspondents appear to be in touch with their home offices on a daily basis, mostly rather early during the home office's working day (whenever that may be, Jerusalem time), to discuss ongoing stories and longer-term plans. Thus decisions are made on what will be written and published; how much space should be allotted to it; and what, considering its own more modest importance and the simultaneous pressure of news from elsewhere, will not be worth writing about. During the fall of 1996, one correspondent said, stories on Hebron, its local troubles as well as the negotiations over the status of the town, could be used to gauge the overall news flow in the world. When much was happening, no room for Hebron; when things were slow in the newsrooms, Hebron reporting was welcomed back again.

Audiences Talking Back

In early April 1997, there was a brief exchange in *Svenska Dagbladet*, one of Stockholm's two major dailies.¹³ A volume of Edward Said's writings on Palestine had just appeared in Swedish translation, and the writer who had done a new introduction to the book, Mikael Löfgren, had argued there that Swedes, like much of the Western world, tend to see the Israeli-Arab conflict through Israeli eyes. One reason for this, he suggested, was that the people reporting to Western media were frequently immigrants to Israel; this could lead to a conflict between their roles as professionals and as citizens. As an example of such a "naturalized Israeli," he mentioned Cordelia Edvardson, *Svenska Dagbladet*'s correspondent in Jerusalem.

Edvardson, well known among her foreign correspondent colleagues in Jerusalem, where she has been for more than twenty years (after an extended career in Swedish journalism), commented in her paper that she was not an Israeli citizen and that she had indeed not taken on Israeli citizenship in order to avoid such a conflict. In his response to this some days later, Löfgren suggested that the real problem was the absence of autonomous Palestinian voices in Swedish reporting from the Middle East. And then, in her final reply, Cordelia Edvardson noted ironically that in a way she was grateful to Löfgren for claiming that her reporting was pro-Israeli, for, over the years, "friends of Israel" in Sweden had kept complaining to her paper about her pro-Palestinian reporting—even to the extent of suggesting that she was in the pay of PLO or had a Palestinian lover.

Cordelia Edvardson's concluding comment, and the exchange as a whole, points to one important fact about Jerusalem as a news center: audiences in various parts of the world not only pay attention to the reporting but have opinions about it and often make their opinions known. Some of them are ordinary readers, listeners, or viewers; others are more or less professional media critics or Middle East watchers who may hold highly partisan views.

Hans-Henrik Landsvig, correspondent for the Danish paper *Bertingske Tidende*, noticed in one small but concrete way that people's interaction with the media is not all a one-way flow. In the period when the correspondents were regularly watching Hebron, before the agreement about a partial Israeli withdrawal had been signed, he and a couple of other foreign journalists had been

sitting at what they had come to think of as "Riot Square." It was afternoon, the schools were letting out their pupils, and one young Arab boy had come up to them and asked who they were. And then, for their edification as it seemed, he picked up a stone and threw it at the Israeli soldiers on watch. It made Landsvig think once more about what influence media coverage itself had on the shaping of the conflict.

U.S. correspondents, and in particular those working for the organizations understood to be the most politically influential, felt that they were especially closely watched—in Israel but probably no less by Jewish circles in the United States.¹⁴ (Although there is a Palestinian diaspora as well, it is, with occasional exceptions such as Edward Said, less audible.) "There are people who read the *New York Times* as if it were a second Talmud," said one correspondent. When Marjorie Miller of the *Los Angeles Times* had decided with the foreign desk at home that it might as well use an agency report on the curious bus station bombings in Tel Aviv in mid-January 1997, her paper's managing editor was confronted, on a public appearance before a Jewish group in Los Angeles, with angry readers who felt that the paper had played down what they saw as another instance of Palestinian terrorism. Like many other observers, Miller had actually not been so sure about this. The bombs had been of a very primitive type, not anything like what by now one expected from the Palestinian groups involved in bombings; and in that neighborhood in Tel Aviv, one might alternately guess that the bombings were part of local underworld violence.

Audiences may feel that there is too little attention to something, then, or too much attention, or attention to the wrong thing. The previous year, when the Israeli election campaign was in full swing, Barton Gellman of the *Washington Post* had had an appointment with prime ministerial candidate Benjamin Netanyahu abruptly canceled and was told by someone on the latter's staff that "Netanyahu would never talk to the *Washington Post* again." Gellman had just reported in the *Post* (on the basis of an interview with a childhood friend of Netanyahu's) that at one time when the candidate had been living in the United States, he had seriously contemplated staying there instead of returning to Israel. Considering such thoughts were hardly what one would expect of a candidate for the prime ministership, the Netanyahu camp was quite upset; of course, very soon after the election, this did not prevent the new prime minister from calling up Gellman again. Gellman also noted that some of his Israeli journalist acquaintances often tried to get him to make statements for publication on Israeli affairs—preferably unfavorable comments on politicians. It was difficult to flatly refuse, on collegial grounds. So on such occasions, he just tried to be as dull and unquotable as possible.

Again, because the Jewish diaspora community in the United States is so large, and American-Israeli relationships are generally so close, the feedback to U.S. correspondents both from home audiences and in Jerusalem tends to be particularly intense. When he came in as the new Jerusalem bureau chief at the *New York Times*, Serge Schmemmann found himself invited to lunches just about daily by people who wanted to make contact. One European old-timer saw this

structure of attention, and perhaps also the greater resources of at least some of the colleagues from across the Atlantic, as leading to a stratification among the correspondents: "First the Americans, then comes nothing, then nothing." But as the exchange between Cordelia Edvardson and a Swedish media critic shows, other correspondents get their share of scrutiny as well.

The BBC correspondents had found that somewhere on an Internet website, it was suggested that their supposedly pro-Israeli reporting was due to the fact that they were all Jewish—although in fact, not one of the three was. Another critic, from the opposite camp, had claimed that their supposedly anti-Israeli stance was shown by how little attention BBC had given to the tragic helicopter crash; but then, as one of the BBC correspondents noted, one should keep in mind that it happened on the same evening as President Clinton's State of the Union address (the first after his re-election) and the verdict in the O. J. Simpson civil trial. And the crash was after all an accident, with no suggestion of foul play and no immediate international repercussions. So at the London headquarters, this correspondent concluded, there had probably been a question of priorities.

For some time, a particular local expression of the interest in foreign media was a column in the *Jerusalem Post*, in which its executive editor, David Bar-Illan (more recently a special advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu), systematically polemicized against what he perceived as unfair, anti-Israeli reporting.¹⁵ One correspondent suggested that Bar-Illan became a sort of pet enemy, someone whose attacks were seen as a badge of honor by the victims. Again, Americans stood a better chance of earning his animosity. Yet Cordelia Edvardson (Swedish) and Jörg Bremer (German), writing for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, were pleased that they had also succeeded at least once.

Thus it is not that what is published away from the world metropolises goes entirely unnoticed in Israel. For one thing, from Israeli embassies everywhere, reports reach the Government Press Office about what local media have to say about Israel and the Middle East. The staff responsible for handling foreign correspondents at the Government Press Office say they take a very liberal view of foreign reporting, even at times when they do not precisely approve of it. Yet if someone writes a story that they feel is notably slanted toward Palestinian sources, he or she will possibly get a call suggesting other sources that would have been suitable.

At one extreme, of course, the official Israeli reaction to items of foreign reporting may involve censorship—as I noted above, Beit Agron, the press building, also houses the office of the military censor. Accredited foreign correspondents sign a statement that they are aware of censorship restrictions. On the whole, however, these now play a limited role in correspondents' work—partly because in the changing political equation, military aspects of Israel's relationships to the Arab world may no longer be quite as prominent as they once were and partly because changing communication technology has for some time made effective censorship more or less impossible.¹⁶ Recently when a new director of the Israeli secret service was appointed, his name was made public; that had never happened before. When Barton Gellman reported on this in the

Washington Post, he also mentioned the name of the previous director, which had never been made official. For this infraction, he was called to a hearing, at which Gellman pointed out that the name had been mentioned on the Internet as well as in graffiti on local house walls and must surely be known to Palestinians. He was told that a second meeting would be held to determine his punishment, but he never heard anything more about it.

Hard News and Feature Stories

Jerusalem was Gellman's first foreign assignment. Before going there he had reported on local court cases in the District of Columbia and on the Pentagon. But he had made known his interest in going abroad, and Jerusalem was more or less his first choice. Serge Schmemmann, who feels this might be his last stop before returning to New York, had thought other possibilities such as Paris and London might be a bit "sleepy," which Jerusalem most likely would not. When he knew he would be going there, he read the last four years of Jerusalem coverage in the *New York Times* and, among other things—"don't laugh now," he says—the Bible, which he found continuously useful. Simonetta Della-Seta, working for a chain of Italian television stations as well as the newsweekly *Panorama*, had done a master's thesis on Jewish land purchases in Palestine between the world wars, a doctorate on Italian archival materials relating to contacts between Fascists and Zionists, and thereafter turned to journalism. The correspondent for the Dutch daily *Algemeen Dagblad*, Joop Meijers, has his doctorate in psychology and holds a part-time position at Hebrew University while also doing some work for Dutch radio and television. He did his military service in Israel as an army psychologist. Jörg Bremer of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* did his doctorate on the history of the German Social Democrats, was in the United States for his paper to cover the first Reagan presidential campaign, spent much of the 1980s as Warsaw correspondent, and likes being in Jerusalem because he is interested in religion (coming from a Lutheran family) and archaeology. And the correspondent for the Stockholm newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, Nathan Shachar, also finds time to pursue his interests in Latin American history and to maintain contacts with Jerusalem academics.

Some Jerusalem correspondents obviously come to their assignment with considerable preparation, others with less. They have different personal backgrounds and interests, too, and different tastes in stories. What, then, do they report on? What do their audiences learn from them?

To begin to answer this, one may turn to veteran Jerusalem reporter Jim Lederman's book *Battlelines* (1993), a critical analysis of the North American news media coverage of the late 1980s Intifada. Lederman, who arrived in Jerusalem from Canada some 30 years ago, draws attention to the importance of the "story line," a device that gives reporting its sense of continuity:

The story line is a frame into which a journalist can place seemingly random events and give them coherence. It simplifies the narrative thread, reducing it to manageable dimensions by using a single overarching theme so that each dramatic

incident can be highlighted as it occurs and each "chapter" of the ongoing story can be slotted in easily and given a context. (1993:12)

For a long time, according to Lederman, the story line with respect to the occupied territories, and Israeli-Arab conflict generally, had been "violent conflict over possession of land" (1993:13). It had been possible to link all kinds of stories to it: if one writes about Israeli universities, one soon enough gets to the fact that students would be off on reserve army duty now and then; or if one describes Christmas in Bethlehem, one turns from religious experience to local security concerns. But by the time of the Intifada, Lederman argues, this story line no longer quite sufficed. Its followers had not really noticed the generational conflict that had been building up within the occupied territories, which quite quickly transformed Palestinian society.

The notion of story lines may remind anthropologists of what Appadurai has labeled "gatekeeping concepts"—concepts that "limit anthropological theorizing about the place in question, and that define the quintessential and dominant questions of interest in the region" (1986:357). For the anthropology of India, caste has long been such a concept; among the Mediterraneanists, much effort has gone into delineating and debating "honor and shame." And again, much of whatever else is there has tended to be in large part ignored.

In a general sense, the conflict between Arabs and Jews, in its changing phases, and including whatever there has been of a "peace process," continues to be the dominant story line for Jerusalem correspondents, the one fact that nobody can fail to be aware of or attend to, whether immigrant, expatriate, or temporary visitor. It is the focus of a great many stories and the background of others. Because this story line keeps going through so many complicated stages, upsets, and reversals—because there is always a wrong color showing somewhere on the Rubik's cube—the Jerusalem correspondents tend to feel that their assignment is in very large part "event driven": it seems to them that they often do not have much choice as to what to report on. Many of them evidently find this predominance of "hard news" a bit irritating, even boring, insofar as they would personally enjoy a bit more room for their own initiatives and interests, their own journalistic imagination—exciting as it may be to be present when history is made.

Many of what correspondents might describe as their "enterprise" stories, their feature stories, also develop at the edges of the hard news. As Lederman suggests, the stories are framed by the story line. The correspondent does a profile of someone emerging as a key participant in the peace process, for instance, or describes a family in Hebron (or, better, two families—one Arab, one Jewish) and how the Israeli-Palestinian agreement over the town affects them. Barton Gellman did an extended story about a rabbi, a leader of a Jewish settlement on the West Bank, who was inclined to tell the world about his excellent relationships with the Arabs in the neighboring village. When Gellman went to the settlement, he noticed for one thing that it had been built across the only road

leading to that Arab village. And the villagers, it emerged, could not afford to alienate those who now controlled that road.

Gellman's tale of the two West Bank villages points to a major concern of the Jerusalem correspondents. They report from a region with two peoples, two languages—and as is increasingly clear, two nations (disregarding, for the moment, the rest of the Middle East, although it is also included in some correspondents' assignments). Yet it is very difficult to avoid attending more closely to Israeli than to Palestinian conditions and perspectives. Is there, then, a persistent built-in flaw in the way the correspondents handle the regional story line?

The question of whether there is any difference in this respect between immigrant and expatriate correspondents was already alluded to above. The correspondents hold different, and subtle, opinions on this issue and argue about it among themselves. One expatriate suggested that it really must be difficult to be impartial if your son is, say, an Israeli paratrooper. Yet it is possible to find immigrant correspondents who seem to have as good contacts on the Palestinian side as just about any expatriate, and they may also be as sharply critical of their own government as anyone else.¹⁷

In some part the asymmetry of reporting on Israelis and Palestinians is a question of language. Not many correspondents in Jerusalem speak both Hebrew and Arabic. Some of the expatriates speak neither, but if they speak one, it is almost invariably Hebrew. The immigrant correspondents are almost all fluent in Hebrew, whereas only a few speak Arabic as well. This is hardly balanced by the fact that among those Middle East correspondents reporting on Israel and Palestine but based elsewhere (e.g., Cairo), some may speak Arabic but no Hebrew. Of course, a great many Israelis speak English, as do an increasing number of Palestinians. But apart from this, most correspondents have to work through intermediaries and depend on translation services as they form their understandings of Palestinian life and opinion.

The language imbalance apart, the correspondents who reflect on the question also point out that Israel has a much wider, more varied, and generally more developed media scene of its own. Beyond what is directly available in print or on radio or television, this means that there are also local colleagues to interact with, to check interpretations or facts with, to seek out for opinions. On the Palestinian side, there is still the clear tendency for media to become organs of the national struggle, and the freedom of the press has hardly been total either under Israeli occupation or under the new Palestinian Authority. Palestinian colleagues, then, are often rather guarded in expressing personal views. Things may be changing, though—younger Palestinians, in and out of politics, it is said, seem to be more media savvy than their elders and their counterparts elsewhere in Arab countries.

Again, the asymmetry in coverage does not necessarily translate simply into a pro-Israeli, in the sense of pro-Israeli government, stance on the part of the correspondents. It is, rather, a matter of reporting more fully on Israeli internal debate and on the diversity of Israeli viewpoints. Recently, the correspondents' point of view toward the Israeli government itself has often been quite unfavorable. Yet

the story line tends to continue to be more densely contextualized on the Israeli than on the Palestinian side.

Within the frame of the story line, many correspondents make an effort to deal with emergent themes. One of their recent interests has been in the variety of everyday cooperative contacts between Palestinian and Israeli officials that have accompanied the off-and-on peace process. And as the Palestinian nation has looked increasingly state-like, and the Palestinian Authority has established its power in a number of West Bank towns and in Gaza, scrutinizing its exercise of that power has become another recurrent theme. Human rights stories, which used to focus on Israeli abuses, now often deal with internal Palestinian adversary relationships.

At the same time, on the Israeli side, a supplementary story line has become more and more conspicuous. The dividing line between secular and religious, especially ultraorthodox, Israelis is now evident in much of the reporting from Jerusalem (which is in itself depicted as a center of strong religious sentiment, a desert mountain capital, in contrast with secular, cosmopolitan, hedonistic, Mediterranean Tel Aviv). Clearly this theme is not entirely unrelated to the story line of the shifting Arab-Jewish relationship, as the hard-liners opposing the peace process—the Jewish settlers on the West Bank (often but not always), Yitzhak Rabin's assassin—are often on the religious side of the divide. Such aspects apart, however, this supplementary story line may entail less hard news and more feature stories.

Consequently, a correspondent may report on a prominent local columnist's suggestion in an Israeli paper that after the Palestinians have established their state, Israel itself may have to be divided into two Jewish entities, secular and religious. When the *haredim*, the ultraorthodox, try to shut down traffic on a Jerusalem thoroughfare during the Sabbath, this also becomes international news. When a stand-up comedian appears on television on Friday evenings with satirical readings and interpretations of the holy scriptures, the *haredim* protest; and the correspondents wonder, with the comedian's secular fans, how the *haredim* could know what is on television on the evening of the Sabbath anyway, as they would not be expected to engage with such worldly matters then. And in the *Los Angeles Times*, Marjorie Miller portrayed three individuals who left ultraorthodoxy, thereby breaking close personal and family relationships.

The newsworthiness of many feature stories, clearly, is often different from that of "hard news." They need not report on something that just happened. In these stories, instead, foreign correspondents can dwell deliberately on what is somehow surprising to their audiences, different from ordinary experience at home, in other words, a matter of "otherness." And here it is beginning to seem as if the correspondents, endeavoring to cover Palestinian news with fairness, and perhaps seeing not so much difference any longer between secular Palestinians and secular Israelis, now find their exotic "others" instead among the *haredim*.

"Otherness" can be elsewhere as well, certainly. Ramy Wurgaft enjoyed reporting from a West Bank camel-riding contest; but here the story line crept in once more, as the same article went on to describe the expulsion of a Bedouin

from its Jerusalem site. The element of surprise in a feature story may lie in juxtaposition, in a certain play with time and space. The stories Marjorie Miller wrote for her California readers sometimes portrayed an ancient city and land engaging with high modernity, globalization, Americanization—a proposal of no-phone zones, as mobile phones are turning into a public nuisance; an ultrarothodox provider of doctrinally pure materials over what she described as a “Kosher Internet”; the closing of a landmark café, where Jewish freedom fighters used to meet before 1948, to be replaced by a Burger King.

Correspondents also have to take their particular national audiences into account, and some feature stories are chosen to appeal to these. Joop Meijers expects some interest in Israeli agribusiness news among readers in the Netherlands, which has a large industry of the same kind. While Jörg Bremer’s personal interests may be elsewhere, he has to prepare to write something about Israeli soccer before the arrival of a German team. Simonetta Della-Seta and Rany Wurgaft, writing for Italians and Spaniards, probably pay more attention to news of Christian sites, of graves and relics, than do the northern Europeans and the Americans. Here, however, one is again reminded of the rich cultural, religious, and historical resonance of Jerusalem, with its possibilities for stories. Jörg Bremer has tried to do something on each major Jewish holiday to acquaint his *Frankfurter Allgemeine* readers with them (and he has also written about the teaching about the Holocaust in Israeli schools). Simonetta Della-Seta has described Palestinian attempts to reconstruct their national heritage and discussed the changing historiography of the Crusaders. She has also written on nightlife in Tel Aviv and made a special effort to report on Israeli high-tech and scientific news, including one story on research on multiple sclerosis and one on no-pain childbirth. (The latter was broadcast on her Italian television station at 10:45 p.m., and before the morning 170 viewers had called the station about it.) There is room, after all, to pursue some personal interests as well, and in this lies much of the freedom that foreign correspondents relish.

Is there any story that does not get told, even a potential story line that may not be getting the attention it deserves? I posed the question to Jim Lederman, the commentator on Jerusalem foreign news coverage referred to above, still in town after working there in different media for three decades. Lederman felt that longer-term trends, especially with regard to economic matters, risked being underreported. The development of an export-oriented Israeli high-technology industry, originally catalyzed by military requirements, now contributes to an economic polarization that also tends to coincide with divisions within Israeli society between Jews of different origins—for example, between more recent Russian immigrants and the Sefardim of North African or Middle Eastern background. There is a source of growing social tension here, he suggested.

But Jim Lederman, too, had done different kinds of reporting during his years in Jerusalem. One of the benefits of a period of writing for the popular British tabloid the *Sun*, he noted, had been the off-the-wall stories he could do—good for cleaning the brain—such as the story about the pelicans. A kibbutz in the Galilee had sought an insurance payment for a “natural disaster.” As

Israel is on a major feast of birds migrating between Europe and Africa, a number of pelicans would come by. Some pelicans discovered that the kibbutz was raising fish in ponds and apparently were in no hurry to move on. As pelicans eat a great deal, relative to their own weight, the kibbutzniks found themselves losing a lot of fish and tried to chase the pelicans away. Pelicans, however, according to Lederman’s *Sun* story, are intelligent birds and found a way of taking revenge. They would dive from the air toward kibbutz roofs and drop those heavy carps, which caused considerable damage. So here, after all, was a kind of bombing that did not fit with the story line.

Conclusion: Tribes of Scribes

Since I left Jerusalem, I have been reading some of the correspondents’ stories in the papers, heard their voices on the radio, seen their faces on television—this is not a group of informants that vanishes from one’s horizon the moment one leaves the field. Most of them are still in Jerusalem. Barton Gellman, however, has returned to Washington; Ethan Bronner has also moved back to the United States to become the higher education correspondent of the *New York Times*; and in early 1998, when my study had taken me to South Africa and I was talking to the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Johannesburg, it turned out that Anton LaGuardia was soon coming to replace him there. In Stockholm, Frankfurt am Main, New York, and Los Angeles, I have also talked to the foreign editors of some of the newspapers that some of the Jerusalem correspondents represented. Each one of them, of course, has not only their men or women in Jerusalem but also somewhere between 15 and 55 correspondents in other postings. The network of foreign correspondents is global, although uneven in the geographical distribution of both reporting sites and audiences; it is blurred at the edges, insofar as the correspondents are continuously in touch with news handlers at home, with some claim to foreign expertise of their own; and there is considerable turnover. This year one is a foreign correspondent, next year maybe not.

At the beginning of my project, when I made one of my first contacts with a potential informant (not in Jerusalem), he giggled a little at the idea of being interviewed by an anthropologist—“so we will be your tribe,” he said. Yes, but perhaps one not so different from my own. So what does a field visit with this far-flung tribe, in one of its gathering spots, tell me about parallels and contrasts between these two kinds of long-distance knowledge brokers, anthropologists and foreign correspondents?

For one thing, one senses the affinity between preoccupations with balancing “inside” and “outside” perspectives, even as the balances may be worked out differently. Anthropologists have struggled to grasp the inside point of view; a foreign correspondent is more likely to try to imagine what something would look like to a member of the audience at home. (And, said the foreign editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, “This is basically a one-paper town. You should try to write for the academic and the bus driver, because both read our paper.”) But when foreign correspondents speak of the danger of “going stale,” anthropologists

have their tales about the affliction of "going native," losing capacity of interest in, ethnographic reporting by naturalizing the inside view. In recent times, in the academic discipline, some of this preoccupation has increasingly taken the form of a debate over the advantages and disadvantages of foreign fieldwork as compared with "anthropology at home." In Jerusalem, one may recognize some of the same debate going on between expatriate and immigrant correspondents.

In this particular localized debate, it may be that an anthropologist's gut reaction is to identify with the position of the immigrant correspondents. Perhaps they seem more "like us," at least as we ideally would like to be—they indeed come in from the outside, but then they immerse themselves in local life and do real "participant-observation" in all the everyday settings. The time-limited assignments of the expatriate correspondents would seem to be more remote from our fieldworker ideals.

Whatever may be the merit to that view, perhaps we should think again about how our own actual field involvements compare with regard to time to those of different correspondent types. While some of us take on a life-long identification with a particular field site, in many cases this identification is based on a single, one-year fieldwork period somewhere at the beginning of a professional career, which we then think about, talk about, and write about over the years, even as teaching and administrative tasks take up most of daily life at work. As compared with that reality, three to five years continuously on one beat need not be measured as a superficial experience. If the assignment is one of "covering Asia" or "covering Africa," firsthand personal knowledge of the entire area must presumably have its limits. In the case of reporting from Jerusalem, however, much of what is to be seen and heard (or smelled, tasted, or touched) is not so far away.

Then again, there is the question of the relative place of firsthand knowledge. Journalists and anthropologists both value it and construct heroes and heroines on this basis. Nevertheless, we see that the foreign correspondents are not always "on the spot" themselves. Whatever may be the tendency to understate this fact, their work seems frequently to entail a modification of material that is already in the media inventory, textualized by news agencies or in other ways.

As anthropologists, our inclination here may be to look down on this or see it as a necessary evil. Clearly we should not pretend to have been where we have not or, as academics, neglect to acknowledge sources. But are we too prone to take for granted a classic anthropological field situation, in which the ethnographer is "alone" as a scribe in an otherwise oral, face-to-face corner of the world and has to create all texts (narrowly defined) for him- or herself? The foreign correspondents may not be part of a cohesive local community of colleagues, but around them there is frequently an elaborate information habitat, partly stable, partly quickly changing. In our anthropological celebration of "being there," possibly we sometimes still risk neglecting the reality that most of our fields are now to some degree already textualized and mediated when we drop

in. Our skills, too, may be rearing in diverse sources.

Last but not least, for anthropologists and foreign correspondents, there is the time factor. At one level, this is a matter of operational time: deadlines for scholars and for journalists are quite different things, as correspondents are quick to say when they suspect that the more academic tribe is likely to engage in second-guessing. But there is also the question of the presence or absence of time as an element in the story to be told. Journalists, as "newscopple," are disciplined to deal with what just happened or even what is happening. Anthropologists rarely have the opportunity to be present at moments of breaking news or perhaps any real desire to be there either. Should they happen to be on the scene, they might still need to think about what to do with it all.

But this contrast is too simple. Both anthropologists and foreign correspondents deal with time in some variety of ways. If it is in large part the prevalence of "hard news" that brings so many foreign correspondents to the city, they must also deal with the eternal Jerusalem of their own and their audiences' imaginations. It is brought in by way of contrast and paradox, and sometimes the news consists of fresh light cast on something very old. As a ritual center, Jerusalem also generates some news that is quite predictable in its occurrence because it is calendrical. Moreover, there is the time of many feature stories, in which correspondents tend to become most like ethnographers. Often they dwell on the details of an everyday, but exotic, way of life. They seek out voices of people who are not in themselves particularly well known or important. And they are rather vague about whether this is today, last month, or forever.

What the occasional critic notes, however, is that foreign correspondents are less apt to build their reporting around another kind of time conception: one of not-so-quick, but cumulative, directional change. Anthropologists do not do very much of that either. But that is, perhaps, another story.

Notes

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1. I was in Jerusalem in January and February 1997 and conducted about twenty lengthy interviews; with some correspondents I met repeatedly. The correspondents were selected to represent diversity along several dimensions. They worked for Scandinavian,

other European, and North American media organizations. While most were involved with print media, a few worked for radio and television, and one represented a major news agency (the bureau chief of the Associated Press). I also talked to staff members of the Government Press Office of Israel, responsible for liaison with foreign press, and accompanied one of the correspondents on a reporting trip on the West Bank.

2. The question of "studying up" or "down" was raised in Nader's well-known article (1972). Studying foreign correspondents is also an instance of what Marcus has recently described as a comparative, reflexive study of "power/knowledge regimes" (1997:400 ff.), characteristically a "sideways" endeavor.

3. Writings by anthropologists on foreign correspondents and media foreign news have so far been rare. Recently there have been Pedely's (1995) ethnography of the foreign press corps in El Salvador and Malkki's (1997) comments on the relationships among "news," "culture," and modes of knowledge production, on the basis of her fieldwork among central African refugees.

4. There has been a tendency for major television networks to locate in Tel Aviv, although this appears now to be weakening.

5. Several Jerusalem correspondents have recounted their experiences there in books; see, for example, Frankel 1994, Friedman 1989, and Shipler 1986. Lederman (1993), to whose work I make further reference below, specifically analyzes the American media coverage of the Intifada.

6. I leave out here the extreme case of "firemen," or "parachutists," the journalists who show up only for a few days or weeks to cover a particular crisis or story and are then gone again.

7. The main building of the American Colony Hotel was once part of, and the hotel is named after, that early settlement of American Christians which also took in a group of pious 19th-century Swedish newcomers on whose story Selma Lagerlöf, Nobel Prize winner in 1909, based her novel *Jerusalem* (1902).

8. It should be noted here that the traditionally male bias in foreign correspondent public imagery no longer matches realities particularly well. Many correspondents are women, in Jerusalem and at other postings, and whether they are women or men, the resident expatriate correspondents often bring spouses and children. Of course, the immigrant correspondents are also often family men and women.

9. In her memoir of growing up with a foreign correspondent father, David Blundy (killed in action in El Salvador), Anna Blundy remembers, from a Jerusalem visit when she was 12, that "most days at the American Colony were spent by the pool with the tabloid hacks while Dad went out investigating. My companions would listen to the BBC World Service and rush upstairs to file copy when anything salient was announced" (1998:49).

10. A veteran freelancer suggested another constraint on what would be feasible partnering. Sometimes one of his good longtime friends, a woman with a stable tie to a European newspaper, would ask if he would come along for a story, and he had no reason to doubt that she would be able to get it into her paper. But for him as a freelancer, the market was more uncertain, and so he would regretfully have to decline going for a story that he could not be sure to sell.

11. Recently, the CNN and BBC World television channels have taken on similar importance, and the foreign desks in many newsrooms in the world have both of them on continuously.

12. In this context I would note, however, that in a conversation I had a few months later in New York with Bill Keller, then foreign editor of the *New York Times* (but named

its managing editor later . . . the year), he noted that his newspaper had recently opened a new bureau in Istanbul, in large part because Turkey seemed to be of increasing importance and interest.

13. The articles in *Svenska Dagbladet* are by Edvardson (1997a, 1997b) and Löfgren (1997). Edvardson, German-born and a survivor of Nazi concentration camps, decided to live in Israel after, somewhat accidentally, she had been sent by a Swedish newspaper to report on the 1973 Yom Kippur war, which started very badly for the Israelis. Her autobiographical account of her childhood and youth has been translated into several languages, although not into English (Edvardson 1984).

14. See, for example, a volume published at the time of the Intifada, stating in the introduction that "in 1988, a new level of moral, intellectual, and physical flaccidity was reached by Western journalists" (Kareizky and Frankel 1989:xi).

15. A collection of such media comment by Bar-Illan has been published (1993).

16. On the decline of censorship, see Lederman 1993:51 ff.

17. A striking historical example of a Jerusalem foreign correspondent who indeed did engage closely with Arab life is that of Leopold Weiss, correspondent to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (a precursor of today's *Frankfurter Allgemeine*) in the 1920s. Weiss, coming from a family line of rabbis in Poland, traveled widely in the Middle East, converted to Islam, and took the name Muhammad Asad, under which he became a well-known writer (see Gerholm 1988:267-268).

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