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Commentary...

Sharon at Passover By William Safire

One year ago, Jews at their Seder meal were stunned to learn that Arab terrorists had massacred 29 of their brethren assembling for remembrance of the Israelites' escape from slavery. Fast-forward to this year's Passover: Jews recounting the exodus from Pharaoh's Egypt are reminded that 22 million Iraqis have just been freed from a modern tyrant's bondage.

Hope is now more realistic. "No doubt the American victory is a shock to Arab countries and opens new possibilities in the region," said Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, reached by telephone at his farm just before last night's Seder. "Because Bush showed real leadership and determination, there is more of a chance to do something. Arabs have less reason to believe that one can overcome Israel by force. Israel will make every effort to take advantage of a new situation that could lead to peace."

Because President Bush wants to reward Tony Blair of Britain for his war support, we can expect much chin-pulling in coming weeks about the Middle East "road map." This proposes specific withdrawals and freezes by Israel in exchange for promises by the Palestinians to try harder. The lopsided plan, pressed by pro-Palestinian Europeans and anti-Israel U.N. bureaucrats, will be issued next week as a reward to the Palestinian Legislative Council for approving a new prime minister.

Sharon, reacting mildly because he trusts Bush, prefers to interpret its timeline as a series of targets: "We will move from one phase to another only after accomplishment. Progress will be based on performance."

Much of that progress will depend on new Palestinian leadership. Unfortunately, Yasir Arafat, the major obstacle to peace, is still given succor by German and French politicians. "I'm sorry to see Europeans keep contact with Arafat," Sharon said. "That makes him believe he can still be an influence, which makes it harder to move forward."

The man Arafat reluctantly allowed to become prime minister is his longtime P.L.O. colleague, a taciturn politician known as Abu Mazen. "The question is, Will he be free from pressure from Arafat on important matters like security and finance?" We'll know in a few days, if the Palestinians elect him and, many Israelis hope, back him up with tough-minded men like Muhammad Dahlan and Salam Fayed.

"I'm not going to waste time. I'll invite Abu Mazen for a meeting shortly afterward," Sharon said. "We've met several times in recent years, at the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem, here at the farm, other places."

Can they do business together? "Look, Abu Mazen is a Palestinian. He's not a member of the Zionist movement. But I believe he is reasonable." After a long pause, Sharon added the potential new leader's most significant negotiating and governing asset: "Abu Mazen understands that you cannot break Israel by terror."

That's the key to getting restarted. But what if some terrorist tries to subvert talks by blowing up a bus? "We will take into consideration a 100 percent effort to stop it." How is that measured? "One, if they arrest, interrogate, try and punish the killers; two, if they dismantle Hamas, the Jihad, the Popular Front and the others; three, if they seize illegal weapons and hand them over to the U.S. for destruction; four, if they stop incitement and instead educate for peace. That's 100 percent effort."

That would eliminate the terrorists' power to derail negotiations. Sharon, at 75, with unprecedented political support and no interest in re-election, will take heat from supporters for giving up key villages in the disputed territories. But

ISRAEL NEWS

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he believes that acceding to extreme Palestinians' demand for a "right of return" would mean "national suicide as a Jewish democratic state."

Syria? "Things will change in Damascus after Iraq," he said, but he sees no negotiations soon with Lebanon's occupier — "One at a time." Iran? "Even the moderates call for the destruction of Israel."

Sharon's focus is on "two peoples, two states." If Abu Mazen makes that

100 percent effort to end violence, Palestinians will see checkpoints removed, work permits issued and ultimately borders drawn that will be secure because they are not imposed.

At this post-Saddam Passover, two old adversaries earning each other's trust might just bring it off. Leave the door open for Elijah. (NY Times Apr 17)

Trading Truth for Access? By Jeff Jacoby

When Saddam Hussein's psychopathic son Uday told CNN's top news executive, Eason Jordan, that he planned to assassinate his two brothers-in-law who had defected from Iraq, he wasn't concerned that Jordan would rush the explosive scoop onto the air. Uday figured the influential journalist would sit on the story and say nothing -- and he was right. The news didn't leak and the brothers-in-law were murdered soon after.

We know about that conversation, and about CNN's silence, because Jordan admitted it last week. In a New York Times column titled "The news we kept to ourselves," he confessed that CNN habitually suppressed stories of torture, mutilation, and other atrocities -- "things that could not be reported because doing so would have jeopardized the lives of Iraqis, particularly those on our Baghdad staff. . . . I felt awful having these stories bottled up inside me."

Jordan's disclosure triggered a storm of criticism, and no wonder. It is scandalous that a network calling itself "the most trusted name in news" would sanitize the truth about a dictatorship it claimed to be covering objectively. And the scandal is compounded by Jordan's lack of contrition. He makes no apology for downplaying the horrors of Saddam's regime. If CNN hadn't done so, he says, innocent people would have died.

But as Franklin Foer reported in The New Republic last October, CNN didn't bury stories only out of fear. It bent over backward to remain on good terms with Saddam's Ministry of Information, which controlled the all-important visas needed to stay in Iraq. "Nobody has schmoozed the ministry harder," Foer wrote, "than the head of CNN's News Group, Eason Jordan, who has traveled to Baghdad 12 times since the Gulf War."

What emerged from those meetings, it seems, was a policy of going along to get along. CNN's stories frequently echoed the Baath Party spin, deferentially covering its agitprop or toadying to Saddam. ("It's . . . a vote of defiance against the United States This really is a huge show of support!" -- CNN's Jane Arraf on Saddam's 100 percent "election" victory last fall.) Rarely was there an unvarnished look at the regime's cruelty and deceit. That, Jordan now admits, was "the news we kept to ourselves."

But CNN wasn't the only offender, and it doesn't just happen in Iraq.

News organizations boast that they cover even the toughest beats without fear or favor. Sometimes it's true. But sometimes journalists choose to censor themselves instead -- to toe a vicious regime's line, to soft-pedal its ruthlessness. They may do it to save their skin, or to ingratiate themselves with the dictator, or to protect the bragging rights that come with access to a big story. Whatever the excuse, the results are the same: The public is cheated, the news is corrupted, and a despot is strengthened.

Don't take my word for it. Listen to Thomas Friedman, who described in his 1989 best seller "From Beirut to Jerusalem" what it was like to be a reporter in Beirut during the years when southern Lebanon was dominated by Yasser Arafat's PLO and Syria's Palestinian loyalists.

"No discussion about the reality of Beirut reporting would be complete," he wrote, "without mentioning a major reporting constraint journalists there faced: physical intimidation." He explained, for example, how Syria's agents dealt with one journalist they didn't like: He was found with a bullet in his

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head and his writing hand mutilated with acid. Earlier, Friedman recalled his own terror on learning that Arafat's spokesman wanted to see him "immediately" about the stories he'd been filing to New York:

"I lay awake in my bed the whole night worrying that someone was going to burst in and blow my brains all over the wall."

No "major breaking" news story was ever suppressed because journalists were too intimidated to report it, Friedman insisted. But behind that fig leaf, he conceded a shameful truth:

"There were . . . stories which were deliberately ignored out of fear. Here I will be the first to say 'mea culpa.' How many serious stories were written from Beirut about the well-known corruption in the PLO leadership. . .? It would be hard to find any hint of them in Beirut reporting before the Israeli invasion."

And then, an even more damning admission:

"The truth is," Friedman wrote, "the Western press coddled the PLO. . . For any Beirut-based correspondent, the name of the game was keeping on good terms with the PLO, because without it would you not get the interview with Arafat you wanted when your foreign editor came to town."

There are moral costs to doing business with thugs and totalitarians. Reporters who forget that accuracy, not access, is the bedrock of their profession can too easily find themselves paying those costs -- trading off truth for a coveted interview or visa, turning a blind eye to dissent, treating barbaric criminals with deference. Or saying nothing when the dictator's son says he is planning a double assassination.

When "the name of the game" becomes "keeping on good terms" with the world's most evil men, journalism turns into something awfully hard to distinguish from collaboration. It didn't start with Eason Jordan, and it didn't end in Baghdad. (The Boston Globe April 17)

The writer is a columnist for The Boston Globe.

September 11, 2001 - April 9, 2003 By William Kristol

America was attacked a little over a year and a half ago. This assault was the product of two decades of American weakness in the face of terror and three decades of American fecklessness in the Middle East. From the barely-responded-to bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983 to the host of subsequent, little-noticed or quickly forgotten attacks in the later 1980s and in the 1990s, we came to be seen as a "weak horse." That characterization was Osama bin Laden's, and he made it with reason.

Similarly, from the oil embargo of 1973 through the destruction of a free and democratic Lebanon in the mid-1970s by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Syrians, to the Khomeini revolution in Iran, the accelerated Saudi export of violent Wahhabi Islam to America and the world, and Saddam Hussein's brutalities in the 1980s and 1990s, the United States rolled with the punches. Saddam, to cite an egregious example, was allowed to stay in power after being routed in the Gulf War, then held accountable only on rare occasions for continually violating the ceasefire he signed. Along the way, the United States decided its proper response to Middle East tyranny and brutality should be not to punish our enemies and stand up for our principles, but rather to focus on a "peace process" between democratic Israel and the master-terrorist Yasser Arafat.

But that era--in which the American stance was one of doubt, weakness, and retreat, in which we failed to affirm our most cherished principles or even stand up for ourselves--came to an end on September 11, 2001. The United States committed itself to defeating terror around the world. We committed ourselves to reshaping the Middle East, so the region would no longer be a hotbed of terrorism, extremism, anti-Americanism, and weapons of mass destruction. The first two battles of this new era are now over. The battles of Afghanistan and Iraq have been won decisively and honorably. But these are only two battles. We are only at the end of the beginning in the war on terror and terrorist states.

The Taliban regime that provided safe haven and support for al Qaeda has been removed, and up to two million Afghan refugees have gone home. One of the two dangerous rogue regimes that have dominated the Persian Gulf--the political heart of the volatile and crucial Middle East--has been overthrown. Some 50 million Muslims, liberated from brutal governments, now have a chance to live decent and normal lives. The war on terror, meanwhile, has gone extraordinarily well. Though the threat of another serious terrorist strike on America has not vanished, there has been none since the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11. Law enforcement authorities have uprooted al Qaeda sleeper cells at home, and friendly governments have cracked down on anti-American terrorists abroad.

We are a strong nation. But a successful response to the challenges that culminated in September 11 was by no means inevitable. Let's be honest, and let's even run the risk of being denounced for partisanship: If Bill Clinton had still been president on September 11, and were still president now, the Taliban might be gone, but Saddam would still be in power, and we would still be considering P.C.-acceptable ways to fight the war on terror at home and U.N.-acceptable ways to do so abroad.

Leadership matters. President Bush, above all, but also Vice President Dick Cheney, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and Attorney General John Ashcroft, among others, have risen to the challenge of September 11. The American military has risen to the challenge with two brilliant and innovative campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. The American people, too, have risen to the challenge. Many battles remain to be fought, both military and political, many tests of America's resolve. But the war on terror and terrorist states--the defining challenge of this moment--is well-begun. (Weekly Standard Apr 28)

The Kingdom of Incitement By Dore Gold

Even with the U.S. winning a lightning victory in Iraq, the question will remain about how to win the overall war on terrorism. The war in Iraq reminds us that the Saudi role in global terrorism still needs to be addressed. The organizational link between Iraq and al Qaeda, identified as Ansar al-Islam by Secretary of State Colin Powell during his address before the U.N. Security Council, was not just a product of Iraqi policy.

This small, militant Kurdish group that has experimented with chemical weapons was created in mid-2001 with assistance from al Qaeda and individuals in Saudi Arabia. Kurdish media reports have claimed that its members profess a strain of Sunni Islam derived from Wahhabism, the austere creed practiced in Saudi Arabia and adopted in its most militant form by the followers of Osama bin Laden.

Reports of Saudi connections to the new wave of global terrorism are ubiquitous. Recently, the New York Times Magazine carried an eye-opening excerpt, translated from French, of the memoirs of the brother of Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called "20th" Sept. 11 hijacker, who is now in U.S. custody. In explaining his recruitment to al Qaeda, Moussaoui's brother laid the blame on the religious indoctrination from Wahhabi groups active in Europe. German law enforcement documents tie the recruitment by al Qaeda of Christian Ganczarski, a Polish convert to Islam, to similar educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, where he has gone into hiding. He is suspected of involvement in the 2002 attack on a Tunisian synagogue that killed 21 people. Hasan Akbar, the U.S. Army sergeant who attacked his fellow soldiers in Kuwait, appears to have been tied to militant Wahhabi institutions in the U.S.

Iraq may be the source of the most dangerous weaponry that could fall into the hands of terrorists, but Saudi Arabia has emerged as one of the key centers of motivation. Brave Saudis have begun to acknowledge the problem: last September, a columnist in the London-based al-Sharq al-Awsat noted that the large number of Saudis involved on Sept. 11 and among the al Qaeda prisoners in Guantanamo Bay is a product of "the culture of violence that has infiltrated religious education" in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis are the ones who post online many of the sermons that provide incitement to would-be terrorists. The intention might be to spread their message of intolerance globally, but they allow outsiders a rare glimpse of the messages conveyed to Saudi youth over the last few years. The sermons advocate ongoing religious conflict with Christianity and Judaism, described as the camp of blasphemy and polytheism.

The problem goes beyond the mosques. A recent study, by the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, of 93 Saudi textbooks published in the last four years found that these values of total intolerance are entrenched in the Saudi educational system. Two months after Sept. 11, another brave Saudi columnist admitted: "We all focus on bin Laden and his ilk . . . but we have yet to focus on the more dangerous people, and I mean those who fill our heads with this rhetoric in the schools, the mosques, and the media."

Some of Saudi Arabia's largest religious charities, those under state control, have been suspected of serving as conduits for terrorist financing--including to al Qaeda. Philippines authorities believed that the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), whose Philippines branch was run by bin Laden's brother-in-law, was funneling funds to the Abu Sayyaf organization. The brother of bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was employed by IIRO in Albania, where he assisted al Qaeda's efforts in the Balkans. Reportedly, detailed minutes of a meeting between bin Laden associates on the stationery of these Saudi welfare agencies, captured in Bosnia, clarifies how organizations like IIRO were to be used by al Qaeda.

Israel found an IIRO payment schedule detailing how \$280,000 was to be distributed to 14 different Hamas charities, thereby documenting, for the first time, the pattern of Saudi backing of terrorism. The head of the Canadian branch of IIRO admitted in court that "The Muslim World League, which is the mother of IIRO, is a fully government funded organization. In other words, I work for the government of Saudi Arabia."

By engaging in terrorist financing, Saudi Arabia is violating U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373 that was adopted after Sept. 11 under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter -- the most severe U.N. resolutions reserved for threats to international peace and security. Indeed, all U.N. resolutions on Iraq were

adopted under Chapter 7, as well.

So what is to be done about Saudi Arabia? The kingdom may have been the ideological source for the attacks on America, but it is not the Imperial Japan of 1941. Regime change is not necessary in Saudi Arabia -- but post-war diplomacy must achieve two changes in Saudi behavior if the war on terrorism is to be won. First, pressure must be placed on Riyadh. Saudi Arabia cannot author a new Middle East peace plan while subsidizing suicide attacks. Despite its protests that it no longer is in contact with "suspected groups," the Saudis openly hosted one of the heads of Hamas as late as October 2002 and reassured him of continuing aid.

Second, the incitement of an entire generation of Saudis that delegitimizes other religious groups must come to an end. Writing about the origins of the Bosnian conflict, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Richard Holbrooke noted that the hatred that helped launch the Balkan conflict began as a result of a deliberate policy by Belgrade television that incited the Serbian population against their Muslim neighbors. Diplomats generally deal in international law or arms control agreements, and rarely cope with issues of incitement. After Sept. 11, religious tolerance is not only a fitting subject for interfaith dialogues -- it now must be a part of the new agenda for global security. (Wall Street Journal April 16)

The writer, the author of "Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia supports the New Global Terrorism" (Regnery, 2003), is a former Israeli ambassador to the U.N. He was the guest speaker at BAYT's 18th anniversary dinner in 1999.

Partners in Terror, Still By Lee A. Casey and David B. Rivkin, Jr.

Few doubt that Saddam Hussein was an enthusiastic supporter of terrorism, both within Iraq and abroad, and his regime's destruction has already paid significant dividends in the war against terror.

Most recently, Abu Abbas, mastermind of the 1985 hijacking of the Italian cruise liner Achille Lauro, has been captured. Abbas was taken into custody by American forces on April 15, after he unsuccessfully attempted to find refuge in Syria, the Middle East's last Ba'athist dictatorship.

Abbas is wanted both by Italy and the United States. Italy convicted him in 1986 for hijacking the Achille Lauro, and imposed a life sentence. Abu Abbas is of particular interest to the United States because his agents on the Achille Lauro murdered American passenger Leon Klinghoffer, whom they shot and pushed overboard in his wheelchair.

Indeed, of all the pre-September 11 terrorist attacks against Americans, Klinghoffer's murder, because of the perpetrators' naked brutality and base cowardice, may be the best remembered in the United States.

The incident also involved an early success against terror, when the Achille Lauro hijackers were intercepted, en route from Egypt to sanctuary in Tunisia (then the PLO's home), by US Navy warplanes dispatched by president Ronald Reagan. Their Egyptian plane was forced down in Sicily, and the hijackers were prosecuted by Italy. Abbas himself also was tried, in absentia, but remained free until now. Finally, he can be brought to justice.

Unfortunately, when Abbas's capture was announced, Palestinian Authority officials immediately leapt to his defense. They did not claim that he was innocent, but demanded that he be released based on a ludicrous legal theory that the United States must free Abbas under the 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo). According to this agreement, which Saeb Erekat asserts was "signed" by president Bill Clinton and secretary of state Warren Christopher, Palestinians cannot be prosecuted for crimes committed before September 13, 1993.

In fact, however, the United States signed the 1995 agreement as a witness, not as a principal, and the instrument imposes no obligations whatsoever on America. In this respect, Erekat's argument is rather like claiming marital rights vis-à-vis your wife's maid of honor, based on the fact that that lady also signed the marriage certificate.

As they say in Texas, that dog won't hunt. Not surprisingly, the PA's claim has already been dismissed by the US, and the question now under consideration is whether Abbas will spend the rest of his days in an Italian prison, or be sent to America for trial under anti-terrorism statutes that might permit a death sentence.

More troubling than the PA's lack of legal aplomb, however, is what its knee jerk reaction to Abbas's capture says about the current Palestinian leadership. Championing the cause of an already convicted terrorist suggests that PA denunciations of terror are less than sincere and again raises the question whether the current leadership can serve as partners in any US-backed peace initiative.

Over the past 18 months, President George W. Bush has defined the most fundamental principle of American foreign policy as a "war on terrorism."

The US has taken an unequivocal position that the actions of men like Abu Abbas are not, and cannot be permitted to become, legitimate forms of armed resistance regardless of the underlying cause.

Any attentive observer of the events since September 11, 2001, must conclude that those who resort to terror, or who harbor terrorists, make

themselves enemies of the US, and that they will be pursued with an implacable hostility until they are no longer a threat.

The PA's willingness to associate itself with Abbas does not recommend its leaders as appropriate partners for the United States in seeking an ultimate settlement in the region, and this surely must be obvious even to them.

The fact that, as some claim, Abbas has eschewed acts of terror for many years, and that he has publicly admitted that seizing Achille Lauro was a mistake, does not make the PA's performance any more acceptable. Even assuming that these claims are accurate and the Pentagon has already publicly stated its belief that Abbas has not changed his stripes promoting, or even permitting, a quiet retirement for aging terrorists sends exactly the wrong message to their more youthful acolytes. If Abu Abbas has finally recognized that the seizure of Achille Lauro, and Klinghoffer's murder, were mistakes, he must now be given the opportunity to pay for them.

The writers are partners in the Washington, DC law office of Baker & Hostetler LLP. They served in the United States Department of Justice under presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. (Jerusalem Post Apr 20)

Those Not Yet Free Jerusalem Post Editorial

America is celebrating, as it should, the safe return of seven prisoners of war from Iraq, as well as Private Jessica Lynch, whisked away from an Iraqi hospital by US forces. The latter seems to be emerging as the most prominent figure of the war, lauded for her heroism even by hardened veterans of World War II and Vietnam War POW camps, and with several films in the works about her experience.

We hardly wish to begrudge Americans any of their joy and pride, which is certainly warranted to a nation that so willingly and decisively put its own soldiers in danger for the sake of free nations all over the world. It is entirely appropriate that President George W. Bush, in a moving message for Passover and Easter, spoke of the "special meaning" of the festival of freedom this year, of the sorrow of those who lost loved ones, and of gratitude for the returning prisoners.

Yet the Americans who have come home are not the only Americans whose loved ones are waiting for them, nor the only soldiers who deserve the attention of the United States. Almost 21 years ago, an American citizen, Zachary Baumel, was taken hostage in southern Lebanon along with two other Israeli soldiers, Yehuda Katz and Zvi Feldman.

On October 16, 1986, IAF navigator Ron Arad bailed out of his falling jet over Lebanon and was taken into captivity. On August 17, 1997, Guy Hever disappeared from his base on the Golan Heights, along the Syrian border. On October 7, 2000 Sgt. Adi Avitan, St.-Sgt. Binyamin Avraham, and St.-Sgt. Omar Suwayed were abducted by Hizbullah. The IDF later declared that it was "highly likely" that the three were no longer alive, but there is still no definitive information regarding their fate, nor have their bodies been returned. Also in 2000, Israeli businessman Elhanan Tannenbaum was kidnapped by Hizbullah in Europe.

The International Coalition for Missing Israeli Soldiers (www.mia.org.il) has been pursuing the cases of six Israelis who may still be alive: Baumel, Katz, Feldman, Arad, Hever, and Tannenbaum. Hizbullah openly admits that it kidnapped and now holds Tannenbaum, who has been in captivity for more than 500 days.

Though some of the MIAs have been missing for more than 20 years, information that some or all of them may still be alive continues to emerge from Syrian and Palestinian sources.

Last month, Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom met with the MIA families and pledged to raise the issue with the US. Now, indeed, is the time to press for a complete resolution of the remaining Israeli MIA cases, given the changing regional situation. As Ori Tannenbaum put it just before the war in Iraq, "When this war is over, the US will undoubtedly be dealing with the issue of terrorist organizations and those countries which have harbored or assisted such organizations. We are seeking to ensure that when this occurs, the issue of my father and the other missing Israelis will be raised and efforts made to ensure their release and return."

Tannenbaum's family at least has good reason to believe that he is alive. The mother of Zvi Feldman describes what the families of the other MIAs go through year after year: "My husband is no longer well, and I have to take care of him. He only asks if he will live long enough to see Zvi again. The pain is so great. I don't wish this on any other family. Every year, on Remembrance Day, I ask myself what I should do. Should I light a candle? I don't know. We don't even have this day. I am in the middle of a meal, and I think: 'What does Zvi have to eat? How is he being treated?' It is so hard. We don't know whom to turn to anymore."

The place to turn should be the US, which should openly demand that Hizbullah, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran resolve these cases, starting with the provision of full information and access to third parties, such as the

International Red Cross, as required by international humanitarian law. Those countries and organizations responsible should be on notice that the failure to cooperate will be seen in the same light as support for terrorism or harboring Iraqi leaders and weaponry.

In his holiday message, Bush said, "This holy season reminds us of the value of freedom, and the power of a love stronger than death." The freedom of those in captivity should not be forgotten, nor the suffering of those who do not even have the bitter privilege of a grave upon which to mourn. (Jerusalem Post Apr 20)

The Israeli Press, and Ours: *The worldview options.* By Barbara Lerner

Press bias of the standard, Left-wing, blame-your-own-country-first type doesn't exist in France, but it isn't just an Anglo-American thing either. It's big in Israel too. Americans complain, rightly, about the blame-America-first bias of blatant offenders like ABC, PBS, Reuters, and the New York and Los Angeles Times, but we also have good alternatives — Fox News, talk radio, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Times, the New York Post, etc. Brits have a harder time escaping from the anti-British British. The BBC, ubiquitous by law, is so far left it makes Arab News seem pro-Israeli; and CNN Europe is much more biased than the sanitized version we get in the U.S. Sky News isn't as bad, but when I last watched it in London in January and February, it was no Fox News. On the newspaper front, the London Times is sometimes fair and the Telegraph reliably so, but the Independent and the Guardian are more extreme than anything here at home. British tabloids are wilder too, but those on the left have no monopoly; the Mirror slugs it out with the Sun. At every level, Brits and Americans have alternatives.

Until recently, it was different in Israel. The average Israeli, like the average Brit or American, is basically monolingual. Because his one language is Hebrew, he can't access any of the news sources above. Even when he is bi- or trilingual, his other languages are most often Arabic or Russian, and media bias in those languages is worse. Thus, most Israelis have no choice: They must rely on the Israeli press. For decades, it provided three daily national newspapers, two (now three) TV channels, and three radio stations — but no real choices. For decades, Ha'aretz, Israel's prestige paper, pounded home the same blame-Israel-first message our own leftist papers pump out, routinely savaging Israeli conservatives as corrupt, know-nothing brutes, routinely embracing Oslo illusions with as much fervor as the worst of the Anglo-American bad boys. Ha'aretz's two larger rivals, Yediot Aharonot and Maariv, did the same thing, tabloid-style. Israel's government-controlled TV and radio stations echoed them. Israel's left-wing elite thus had a monopoly on Israel's national media, as well as near-monopolies on its universities, much of its permanent government, and its judiciary. It was that same leftist Israeli elite that bought the Oslo illusions, and sold them to the world. The world — but not the average Israeli. Jews who remember life in Arab or Communist lands, especially, are mostly realists. Their press was univocal; their experience was not.

"Wait," you say. "That's not fair. What about the Jerusalem Post?" And indeed, since about 1989 the JP has been one of the world's best centrist papers. Part of the Hollinger chain that owns the Telegraph and the Chicago Sun-Times, it's an excellent source for accurate news about the Middle East. Its legendary ex-editor, the pianist David Bar Illan, set the standard: passionate advocacy on the editorial pages, scrupulous objectivity on the news pages. New editor Bret Stephens, late of the Wall Street Journal Europe, is maintaining it, and calls Rich Lowry "the old guy," because he was a few months younger when he got the top job last year. JP boasts the most honest, well-informed Arab reporter in the Middle East, Abu Khaled Toameh, plus a consistently interesting lineup of columnists. Stephens is an eloquent voice, as is occasional NRO contributor Saul Singer. JP's other striking voices include Caroline B. Glick, who writes JP's "Column One" (when she's not embedded with the Third Army's 2-7 mechanized infantry battalion in Iraq, as she is now); Evelyn Gordon, the only settler on the staff, from Eli — Princeton East; and Michael Freund, ex-prime-minister Netanyahu's deputy director of communications. But there are many more to choose from, including a range of leftist voices. The JP is nothing if not balanced, but it has one huge flaw. It has a big English edition and a small French one, but no Hebrew edition, either in paper or online.

English-speaking news hounds get three other nice bonuses from Israel. No time to read multiple articles or thoughtful opinion pieces? Looking for a quick, accurate, 1- to 2-pp. summary of the most important new developments in the Middle East? Try the news service of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. Don't be misled by the 2-line biblical quotation at the start of each issue: ICEJ's editor, David Parsons, is as professional about the news as he is sincere in his Christian faith. He and his associates display a concern for factual and contextual accuracy that puts most Western journalists to shame. They daily check and cross-check the main English language wire services, JP, Ha'aretz, the English-language Arab press, major newspapers in the U.K. and the U.S., and relevant government sources, sorting out truth from rumor, fantasy, and propaganda. Parsons, a 43-year-old North Carolina lawyer who spent his first years in Israel living and working with Arab families, pens occasional editorials

too — printed separately, and bylined. But, once again, there is no Hebrew version of this news source — nor of IMRA, Israel's Media Review Analysis, a remarkable one-man news, document, and poll-results roundup founded by Joseph Lerner (no relation) and run by his son, Aaron. IMRA covers Hebrew and Arabic as well as English sources but, unlike MEMRI (the invaluable translation service available at www.memri.org), it's available only in English.

What's a poor, Hebrew-only Israeli to do? Weizmann Institute physicist Eli Pollak and his colleagues at Israel's Media Watch (IMW) are working hard to reform the Israeli media by changing the laws that created a univocal left-wing Hebrew press monopoly. But it's a slow, uphill battle, even with a more conservative, free-market-friendly government in power. In the meantime, conservative Israelis created their own alternative, starting in Hebrew in 1988, and now available in English, Russian, and French too. This is INN — Israel National News, www.inn.org.il, the Internet print division of Israel's "pirate" radio station, Arutz Sheva (Hebrew for Station 7). If you're a regular NRO reader, you already know INN's opinion editor, Nissan Ratzlav-Katz, a frequent NRO contributor. Nissan and his coworkers are "pirates" in the news business much as George W. Bush is a "cowboy" in the international diplomacy business: Both refused to wait, endlessly, for hopelessly biased organizations to do what needed to be done. Arutz-7 chose a perfectly legal alternative: broadcasting to every part of the country from a foreign registry ship in international waters off Israel's coast. The fact that they were breaking no Israeli laws didn't stop leftist communications minister Shulamit Aloni from ordering police to storm the ship and confiscate their broadcasting equipment in 1995. That was a bit much, even for Israel's Left-wing establishment, and there were no repeat attacks — but the equipment was never returned either. Arutz-7 raised the money to replace it and continued to broadcast, on air and online, to a growing audience. When I interviewed Nissan in Jerusalem in January, Arutz-7 had over a million listeners a day, and INN was getting over six million hits a month. Not bad, for a country of six million.

Makor Rishon is another independent Israeli voice. It's a weekly news magazine, available only in Hebrew, and one of its features is "Against the Wind," a column by Amnon Lord, an Israeli journalist who stood up against an Israeli gale. Amnon was born into Israel's left-wing establishment elite. He's a sabra — a native Israeli — who grew up on a well-connected socialist kibbutz and was happily ensconced as the film critic at Israel's largest daily, Yediot Aharonot — and, of course, he was a peace-now man, like all his peers. But as soon as the Palestinians responded to Oslo by unleashing a violent intifada, Amnon saw that he had been mistaken, and said so, fast and straight: "I was wrong. My peers were wrong. Our mistakes have endangered the nation." That won him an award from IMW; it also got him fired from his dream job at Yediot.

All the Israeli journalists I interviewed agreed that Israel's Hebrew press was lock-step left in the past, but some argue that it's more balanced now. I saw some positive changes at Ha'aretz, the only Hebrew daily with an English edition, and was half-inclined to go along. Uneasy because my Hebrew isn't good enough to let me judge Yediot and Maariv for myself, I asked Amnon what he thought. Here's his answer: "After Yediot's unrepentant old opinion editor died and a new man took over, I began to do occasional pieces for them again. A few weeks ago, the paper launched a witch hunt against Israel's new military chief of staff, General Moshe Ya'alon, accusing him of politicizing his office because he testified, truthfully, that in his military opinion, the intifada was the biggest existential threat to Israel since 1948. I called the new editor and told him I wanted to do a piece defending Ya'alon. He said my piece would be redundant, because he'd already written one himself. When it wasn't in the paper next day, I called him. In a broken voice, he told me that his superiors at Yediot refused to run it."

Some things do change for the better, though — Israel's new government press chief, Daniel Seaman, being a prime example. The son of a U.S. airman, Danny moved frequently enough as a boy to learn to stand up to peer pressure early. Past holders of his job had mostly acquiesced to the foreign press, no matter how many dishonest, "Jenin massacre"-type stories they reported, or how flagrantly they abused Israeli hospitality — for instance, by handing out Israeli press passes to their Arab friends like party favors, passes terrorists find useful. ABC's Gillian Findlay, the Guardian's Suzanne Goldenberg, and the Washington Post's Lee Hockstader were among the worst offenders. Danny refused to work with them, and they went home. If only he could toss out a few Israeli journalists — Ha'aretz's Amira Hess and Gideon Levy, for starters — the long-suffering Israeli public might finally begin to get the press it deserves, first at home and, who knows, maybe someday in the Anglo-American media too. It wouldn't be the first time the foreign press was heavily influenced by the Israeli press.

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