Foreword

This is the first, and most prominent account of the work of journalist Dorothy Kahn Bar-Adon. Kahn was born in 1907 to an assimilated Jewish Reformed family in Philadelphia. The Kahns later moved to Atlantic City, already then a lively and thriving beach resort. In her early and continuing concern for social justice, Dorothy Kahn was much like other children of immigrant Jewish parents. That said, she was met with "mixed" responses from gentile classmates when they realized she was Jewish; she herself joined a Christian (one might even say anti-Jewish) high school sorority. Meanwhile, her own family, or at least her sister, did not particularly like Jews. In a 1937 letter describing a working trip to Poland, Kahn admitted her own discomfort with some Orthodox religious practices.

But in 1933, after a few years working for the Atlantic City Press, the increasingly Jewish-identified Kahn moved to Palestine. With letters of introduction to some powerful Israeli pioneers, including the founder of The Palestine Post, Kahn had managed to secure a visa to Palestine. She described being the only woman writing for the English-language Palestine Post (later called The Jerusalem Post). Except for her self-effacing modesty, Kahn was not like most mid-twentieth century women and was drawn to journalism. She became a pioneer not by facing down sexism in journalism, or in the newsroom specifically, but by negotiating the major challenges as well as the minor frustrations confronting the settlers of Palestine especially the "N.C.," the New Comers' community, as it was known. She immediately embraced the multitude of tasks: people had essentially created a new language for conversation (Kahn learned Hebrew once she got there) and were still creating new ways of finding self-esteem (especially in agriculture and other physical labor) and new ways of organizing social and religious life. Kahn proceeded to dig into her new life, literally. She described that grand experiment with grace and a sense of humor in

her staff-written and freelance articles, publicity materials, letters, and her autobiography. She adamantly denied that she and the others were idealists, however. Instead, they were realists, building a real home for a people who really needed it.

Two years after her arrival, Kahn renounced her United States citizenship and became a citizen of Palestine. As Kahn put it, Palestine was less a country than a weak, unstable ward of the League of Nations. Nonetheless, her theory was that the only answer to anti-Semitism is Semitism—albeit a Semitism recognizing that Arabs and Jews were Semitic cousins. Indeed, Kahn was less offended by Arabs who openly hated Jews than by Americans or Europeans who disliked Jews for the size of their noses or who alleged that Jews are dirty or wily or were the power behind the financial crisis in America. Arabs had a more straightforward, and even more plausible, reason for disliking Jews: they regarded Jews as invading their country.

With forty years or so of feminist scholarship and women's history now available, including the history of women journalists, researchers have begun to turn away from biographies of individuals. The suggestion is that "bringing up women from the footnotes" is no longer important or necessary. Yet, this book on, about, and of Kahn shows why the processes of recovering women's histories—and the plural forms are intentional and significant—from around the world remain relevant. Now we understand: social history is more than men's history; men's history often ignores women's history; and also, just as men's histories are multiple and complex, so women's histories cannot be made homogenous. Scholars often become irritated by journalists' preference for the individual and anecdotal and their resistance to seeking out patterns. In this case, however, Kahn's refusal to buy into a sentimental, universalizing notion of women as a sex turned out to be a good instinct. Kahn was interested in Muslim women, interested enough to don a Muslim woman's voluminous black dress and veil and to try to walk with a water jug balanced on her head. Her main point, however, was that Muslim and Jewish women made claims to the same land, not that they shared a set of distinctly womanly values.

Most likely, no single story can be called typical. No single trajectory for women pursuing journalism careers can be identified as representative. That said, few women—or men, for that matter—seemed to have made the move Kahn did. Many of her early stories for the *Atlantic City Press* concerned Jewish-oriented local events as well as visiting celebrities—including major political figures. I must add that it was also a thrill to page

through the *Atlantic City Press* and come across Kahn's front-page crime stories. Apparently, Atlantic City was rife with juicy crimes, including more than a few committed by women.

Meanwhile, after 1933 Kahn also witnessed the rise of the Nazis to power, the Arab revolts against the increasing dominance and status of Jews and Zionists and later against the State, the World War II and the Holocaust, the detainment by British Mandatory authorities of Jewish refugees, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and the War of Independence and its aftermath in 1948–49. Meanwhile, there were all the quotidian challenges for diasporic Jews coming to Palestine, bringing along their different cultures, perceptions, skills, expectations, advantages, and handicaps.

Of course, in Israel, most journalists are Jewish. It is worth highlighting in particular how, over the larger course of history, few Jewish women have gone into journalism. Among the few exceptions that essentially prove the historical rule was Frances Davis Cohen. Writing under the name Frances Davis, she lived 1908-1983. Her parents were Russian immigrants who worked in the garment industry and were involved in the garment workers' union. While she was in high school, Davis was already a proofreader and writer of "fillers" for a weekly paper in one of the Boston suburbs. After graduation and a short, unsatisfying stab at journalism education, she wrote feature stories for papers in Boston and New York. In 1936, having convinced a few small New England and mid-Atlantic papers to buy the columns she promised to send from Europe, she went to Paris and then Spain to cover the fighting. Finally, the London Daily Mail hired her to report on the Spanish Civil War. While reporting from the battlefront, Davis was slightly injured by a piece of shrapnel; by 1939, she became dangerously ill with septicemia and was forced to return home. The much more famous Flora Lewis, who lived 1922-2002, was a foreign affairs correspondent and columnist, as well as an author of books about international affairs and diplomacy. Lewis began her 60-year-long career in 1942 with the Associated Press and later wrote for The Washington Post and Newsday. Her greatest acclaim came at The New York Times. Her husband was a correspondent for The New York Times, which barred spouses from working for the paper. Once she was separated (and later divorced), the Times hired her as its Paris bureau chief and later its European diplomatic correspondent. Lewis covered the Communist takeover of Eastern Europe in 1946, the Polish and Hungarian uprisings against Communism in 1956, as well as the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, the Vietnam War, and the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. Her peripatetic life is seen in the fact that her children were born in three different countries: Ireland, Israel, and Mexico.

Edith Lederer, born in 1943, has worked for the Associated Press since 1966, covering wars, famines, nuclear issues, and political upheavals. Although the AP foreign editor was unhappy about women covering wars and disasters, in 1971 Lederer became the AP's first woman to work full time covering the war in Vietnam. After nine months in Vietnam, she went to Israel to cover the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Lederer also covered wars in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Somalia, as well as the troubles in Northern Ireland, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the Romanian revolution. The AP's first woman to head an overseas bureau (in Peru), in 1998 she became the AP's chief correspondent at the United Nations, reporting on the diplomatic side of conflicts and major global issues. Lederer credited the feminist movement with inspiring women her age to believe they could do anything they wanted, including to compete in the "big leagues."

Given their shared commitment to helping the Jewish people and their more explicit identification with Judaism, Kahn is more like photojournalist Ruth Gruber. Indeed, Gruber lived long enough to report on some of the unfortunate consequences of some of the same anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist policies that Kahn and her fellow Zionists saw emerging. Born in 1911 (and still alive as of this writing), Gruber received her bachelor's degree at age sixteen and her PhD at twenty. She then began writing for The New York Times and the New York Herald Tribune, which assigned her to report on the status of women under Fascism and Communism. Known both for her writing and her photojournalism, Gruber went to the Soviet Arctic in the mid-1930s. In 1946, the New York Post assigned her to cover the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine, which was convened to decide the fate of about 100,000 European Jewish refugees then living in displaced persons' (DP) camps. She is most famous for covering the arrival of Exodus 1947; the ship, with its 4,500 Jewish refugees, was attacked by the Royal Navy as it approached Haifa. (Kahn also wrote about those unresisting refugees on the Exodus.) Gruber went along when the British sent the DPs to France; when refugees refused to disembark there, she accompanied them back to Germany. In the mid-1980s, Gruber reported on the rescue of Jews from Ethiopia.

Gruber also helped Jews outside her journalistic work. In 1944, the United States government secretly assigned her to help escort 1,000 Jewish refugees (as well as some wounded American soldiers) from Europe to the United States, where they were taken to Oswego, New York and locked behind a chain link fence. This was the government's only official attempt to shelter Jewish DPs during the war. Eventually, the refugees were allowed to apply for American residency. Gruber's Haven: The Dramatic Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees and How They Came to America was based on her interviews of the refugees. In 1978, Gruber spent a year in Israel writing a book about an Israeli nurse who worked in a British detention camp as well as in an Israeli hospital. Again, relatively few Jewish American women reporting for the general interest news media have explicitly identified as Jewish, much less practiced Judaism. Flora Lewis's family had observed Jewish holidays, but as an adult Lewis did not identify with Jewish life. Frances Cohen's family lived for eight years in a utopian community and, after they returned to the Boston area, they continued regular visits to "The Farm." Davis recuperated from her injuries at The Farm after returning from Spain but was apparently unable to convince friends there of the seriousness of the war's political consequences; she met her future husband there. So, it is from Kahn that we learn about secular Jews' life in American suburbs as well as, more importantly, about Jewish immigration to the new homeland and about Jewish (and Arab) life in villages and cities, both pre- and post-Statehood.

In this text are feature stories written with a generous heart and a light touch. Kahn does not describe her working life *per se*. She mentions that she undertook a trip to Poland to investigate the minority experience of Polish Jews because she needed the money. Yet, which stories she wanted to cover but were denied, or which stories she was assigned but that she regarded as gender stereotyped or beneath her we do not know. That said, Kahn avoids purple prose, hysteria, and false innocence while reporting and writing her stories. She remained consistent with her promise to be a journalist. As Esther Carmel Hakim and Nancy Rosenfeld note (and to whom we must be grateful for putting together this volume), Kahn gave the right answer when she was challenged by an editor who worried that Jews could not be simultaneously journalists and Zionists. Kahn was cleareyed, correcting misconceptions and misrepresentations, large and small, and reporting the details of everyday life. That's no minor feat.