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## When journalists are reluctant to write about the travails of a troubled trade

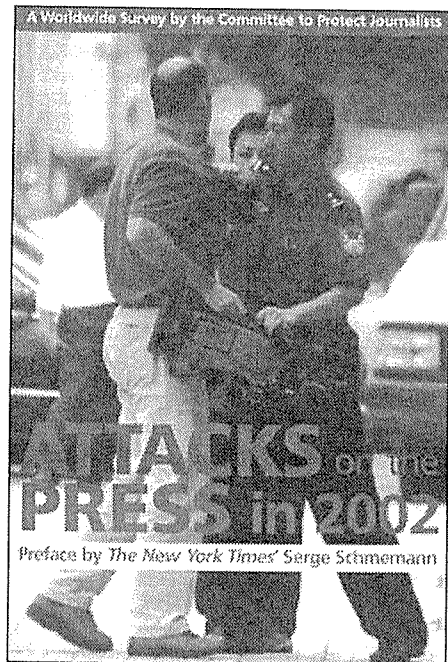
*Attacks on the Press in 2002*, Committee to Protect Journalists, New York, 2003. 428 pp. ISBN 0 944823 22 X

*Freedom of the Press throughout the World 2003*, Reporters Sans Frontières, Paris, 2003. 586 pp. ISBN 2 908830 76 0

*Live News: A Survival Guide for Journalists*, International Federation of Journalists, Brussels, 2003. 131 pp. ISBN unlisted.

*Dangerous Assignments: Covering the Iraq War*, Committee to Protect Journalists, New York, 2003. 30 pp. ISBN unlisted.

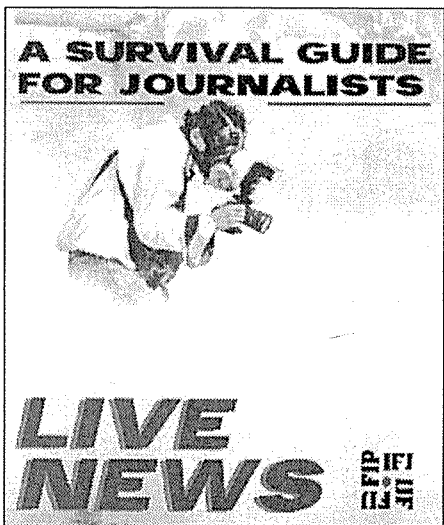
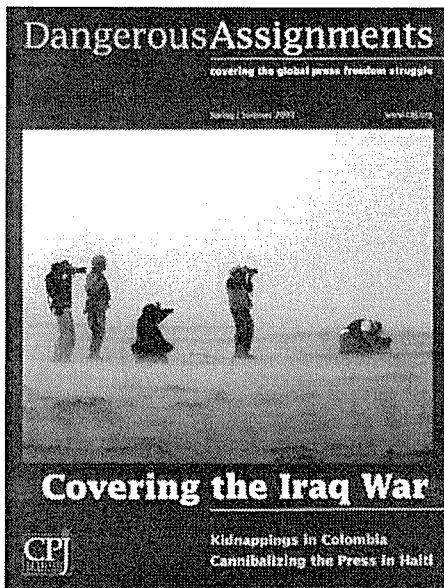
WHEN THE press comes under attack, many reporters find themselves in a dilemma, notes foreign correspondent Serge Schmemmann, a member of *The New York Times'* editorial board. Writing the preface to the annual New York-based Commit-



tee to Protect Journalists' *Attacks on the Press* volume for 2002, he reminds journalists of who knows better than the failings of the press than they do.

'These conflicting instincts often make us reluctant to write about the travails of our trade,' he says. 'I think we would all agree that if we deliberately impose ourselves on a story, we have failed (p iv).' But, as a correspondent who has covered Germany, Israel, post-Soviet Russia and South Africa, Schmemmann has found reporters who are harassed, jailed or killed are rarely those who chase after danger, glory or ratings.

Media freedom reports are always grim reading, and this one is no excep-



tion. The report states 19 journalists were killed because of their work in 2002, the lowest number since CPJ began recording the annual death toll in 1985 (p x). According to executive

director Ann Cooper, one fact was the easing of conflict in some key countries, such as Afghanistan where eight journalists were killed the previous year.

Of course, the report doesn't include the invasion of Iraq and the high death toll of journalists there. But another CPJ publication does. *Dangerous Assignments* described Iraq as a 'bleak period for journalists' with 14 (plus) losing their lives (p 2) while bringing us news from the frontline.

Media freedom agencies use different criteria in drawing up their lists and Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontieres has a far higher tally in its report, *Freedom of the Press throughout the World 2003* (it actually applies mostly to 2002). Describing the year as a period of the 'New World Order of Repression', it notes that of the 25 journalists killed,

more than half were murdered by regime henchmen, armed groups, organised crime figures or agents of powerful interests the victims angered. Some 40 per cent more journalists were arrested during the year and physical attacks and threats doubled. Nearly 400 media outlets were censored and at the end of the year 121 journalists were in prison around the world, compared with 110 a year earlier (p 6).

Determined to cut through the fog of

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