

Anti-Zionism isn't new

written by David M. Weinberg | 03.05.2024

The type of unbalanced criticism Israel is experiencing today in its war against the genocidal Hamas movement in Gaza isn't new. Long before Binyamin Netanyahu, Itamar Ben-Gvir, and Betzalel Smotrich were anywhere near Israeli government, the world was fiercely critical of Israel. Rarely have Western pundits brooked understanding for IDF operations against Palestinian terrorists.

I was reminded of this last month when I discovered, while cleaning my office for Pesach, a collection of editorial cartoons published in Canadian newspapers in January 1988 at the beginning of the so-called "first intifada." (At the time I worked for the Canada-Israel Committee in Toronto.)

The editorial cartoons of three-plus decades ago gave full vent to intimations that Israeli troops were barbaric, and that Israeli policy was Nazi-like or equivalent to South African apartheid. Again, these ugly assertions did not pop up just recently.

In the second week of January 1988, cartoonist Bob Krieger of *The Vancouver Province* drew a cartoon with Israeli-flagged IDF troops shooting at a Divine hand descending from the heavens with two numbered tablets of stone. The insinuation was that the Israel Defense Forces and the Jewish People were committing abominations against G-d's most basic Ten Commandments.

Vance Rodewalt of *The Calgary Herald* sketched an ugly, fat, and smoking Israeli soldier with an enormous rifle lording over an innocent pro-Palestinian protestor whose hands were submissively in the air. The snarky Israeli tells the protestor that "World opinion being what it is, and me being the good guy I am, I've decided to give you a fair chance. When I give you the word.... Run for it!" The sweet protestor's placard lays on the ground emblazoned with the words: Down with Jewish oppressors. Long live Palestine.

The Windsor Star carried a cartoon by Edd Uluschak entitled "Modern David and Goliath" which had an outsized Israeli soldier with a smoking machine gun towering over a tiny dead figure with a slingshot.

Similarly, Malcolm Mayes of *The Edmonton Journal* drew a ghoulish Israeli soldier (with the face of the Grim Reaper) and a smirking Israeli politician (with the face

of then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir) standing over a Gazan Palestinian who lies in a pool of blood. The Israeli says to the dead Palestinian: "You have the right to remain silent..."

Carrying further with this Palestinian-as-underdog theme and Israeli-as-butcher theme was Andy Donato of *The Toronto Sun*. He penciled a Palestinian midget figure throwing rocks and trying to climb up the barrel of an Israeli assault rifle. In another cartoon he had a Palestinian throwing a rock which bounced off the helmet of an Israeli soldier, who responded with deadly fire. The caption reads: "An eye for an eye, ears, nose and throat."

Brian Gable of *The Globe and Mail* made it clear that Israel was to blame for the violence, not Palestinians. Repeatedly he depicted Israelis as aggressors and pyromaniacs, pouring or pumping gasoline on homes in the West Bank and Gaza.

Dale Cummings of *The Winnipeg Free Press* made the same allegation by imprisoning an Arab with a keffiyeh inside an oversized Star of David, with locks on his hands and manacles on his feet.

Dan Murphy of *The Vancouver Province* offered an "Israel Army Target Practice" session with ponytailed little Arab girls as clay pigeons tossed-up into the sky as somebody yells "PULL."

To make it explicitly clear what Murphy thinks of Israel (it being an "apartheid" state), he drew a tea-party conversation between Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and South Africa's President P.W. Botha. Shamir says "Arabs, and only Arabs are to be blamed for this unrest!" Botha responds "Indeed! Now let me tell you about the Black interlopers in Africa..."

What is truly amazing is that these vile cartoons are from 1988 - when Shimon Peres (the "Prince of Peace") was Alternate Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Yitzhak Rabin was Minister of Defense, and Yitzhak Navon was Minister of Education and Culture (all of the Labor Alignment), alongside Prime Minister Shamir and Deputy Prime Minister and Housing Minister David Levy of the Likud.

This was long before the rise and fall of the Oslo peace process, long before Binyamin Netanyahu became prime minister, long before Itamar Ben-Gvir graduated grade six, and long before baby Betzalel Smotrich could say the word "settlement."

This was long before Israel dared to (was forced to) bomb terrorist bunkers or blow-up the homes of Palestinian terrorists. At the time, all IDF troops dared to do (under orders from Yitzhak Rabin) was club Palestinian attackers with wooden batons and fire plastic bullets at the limbs of Palestinian terrorists armed with Molotov cocktails. It was long before the much ballyhooed and mostly bogus “settler violence” narrative.

It was a time when the Palestinian Liberation Organization was openly and proudly terrorist and formally designated as such by all Western countries.

It was a time of great in-house Palestinian bloodletting, with as many Palestinians slaughtered by other Palestinians for being “collaborators” with Israel as there were Palestinians shot by Israel while putting down the intifada (- Palestinian terrorism which also killed and wounded thousands of Israelis).

Despite all the above, the cartoonists and editorialists of 1988 had zero sympathy for attacked Israelis and oodles of sympathy for the attacking Palestinians. Even back then - again long before the “obstructionist” Israeli right-wing under Netanyahu came to power - the world was more than ready to paint the IDF in the darkest hues and label Israel as criminal.

So much for blaming Israel’s hasbara (reputational) problems on the Israeli right wing. I’m just saying.

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