

Dishonest Reporting: Media Bias against Israel

by Israel H. Asper (October 30, 2002.)

Throughout my lifetime I have had an unshakeable commitment to two cornerstones of my personal value system: Perhaps three, if you include Canada. My first commitment is to this great nation, Canada. My second is to Israel as a symbol and teacher of excellence for all of humankind, and the media as the most honorable and steadfast advocate, defender and distributor of truth, honesty, fairness, freedom, democracy and human rights.

Tonight, with a combination of sadness, fear and anger, I must tell you that [Israel and the media] are under grievous assault. And, even more painful for me, even though at first glance those two pillars should be separate, I regret to say, they are both threatened by the same cancer and have thus become inextricably linked. This is because dishonest reporting is destroying the trust in and credibility of the media and the journalists, and the same dishonest reporting is biased against Israel, thus destroying the world's favorable disposition toward it.

[Tonight] I make the charge that much of the world media who are covering the Arab-Israeli conflict have abandoned the fundamental precepts of honest reporting. They have been taken captive by their own biases, or victimized by their own ignorance. They have adopted Palestinian propaganda as the context for their stories. Thus dishonest reporting has made truth a casualty of the war, causing grievous damage to both Israel and the integrity of the journalistic profession.

Dishonest reporting occurs in several forms. One is through the selection of terminology which promote a presumed set of facts. [Many] biased media describe the Palestinian perpetrators of clear acts of terror against Israel, merely as "militants," "resistance fighters," "gunmen," "extremists." The terms "cycle of violence," "moderate Arab states," "peace process," "occupied territories," and "illegal settlements" have also become tools and weapons used by the journalistic propagandists. The war proves there is no peace process, there are no moderate Arab states, the term "cycle of violence" is an insult to the truth, and under the Oslo agreements there is no prohibition against Israel establishing new settlements in the territory it captured from Jordan.

Some examples of profound media bias against Israel which result in this dishonest reporting, are found in the world's leading media. Some of the worst in Britain are the London Independent, the Guardian, BBC, Sky News, Reuters, Evening Standard, Britain's television network ITV and the Daily Mirror. In the U.S., the worst offenders are CNN, ABC, CBS and NBC, the Washington Post, the New York Times, the L.A. Times, and Associated Press. In Canada, although not alone, the CBC provides the most slanted and biased information, and routinely practices dishonest reporting.

The first and worst lie is what this war is all about. Dishonest reporting tells you that it's about territory, and Jerusalem, and Palestinian statehood, and alleged refugees. Honest reporting would tell you that it is a war to destroy Israel and kill or expel or subjugate all the Jews. But the media has bought and reported dishonestly and relentlessly the big lie that this war could be ended by Israeli land concessions.

The second fundamental big lie is what gave rise to the current version of the Arab war of extermination of Israel and the Jewish people -- the so-called al-Aqsa uprising or intifada. The truth is that when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat could not get the extravagant concessions he demanded from the Clinton's Camp David meetings, he planned the uprising of terrorism as a means of intimidating the U.S. and Israel into giving into his maniacal demands.

But he needed an excuse, an appealing argument in which to clothe his new latest war. And so, in early September 2000, when Parliamentary opposition leader Ariel Sharon told both Israelis and Palestinian officials he intended to visit the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, legally part of Israel which is co-sited with the Muslim al-Aqsa mosque, they agreed and both Palestinian and Israeli security detachments accompanied him on his brief tour. This was the opportunity Arafat sought. He immediately unleashed the rioting, stone-throwing and armed attacks allegedly as a “spontaneous” uprising against Israel allegedly in response to Sharon’s provocation! Then most of the world media bought the propaganda that launched the second big lie of the current warfare: “Sharon’s visit provokes Palestinian rebellion.” They didn’t even ask the fundamental question: Is this true?

The third big lie is that the current conflict arises from Palestinian frustration over the slowness of the alleged “peace process.” What utter nonsense. The central, and conveniently ignored, fact is that the current warfare is merely the latest chapter in a war against the Jewish people. That war began in earnest 85 years ago, when in 1917, Britain and the League of Nations declared, with world approval, that a Jewish state would be established in Palestine. The region’s Arabs have engaged in terrorist slaughter, riots and multi-Muslim states’ military invasion against the Jewish nation ever since. The only periodic lulls in this savage and often barbaric assault, specializing in seeking women, children and elderly victims, has occurred when the Arabs have been resoundingly defeated. Then, they sue for peace, issue poor-me hand-wringing pleas for international help, and use the lull in the battle to regroup, re-arm and plot their next assault.

Any reportage or commentary that is not clothed in this context is, at best, misleading, or ignorant and plain dishonest at worst. I offer a handful of examples extracted from the hundreds available:

Recently a nationally syndicated American columnist, Georgie Ann Geyer, wrote a column laced with pure fabrications, such as “Prime Minister Sharon told his cabinet recently ‘don’t worry about American objections to our actions, I control America.’” When challenged, she admitted that the statement originated from an October 3, 2001 press release from the pro-Hamas American group, Islamic Association for Palestine. They claimed that it had originated with an official Israeli government radio broadcast. On checking, it turned out that no such broadcast had ever occurred.

When confronted with this information, Geyer cowered ignobly behind the standard liar’s shield: her sources, she whined, “were two anonymous Israeli individuals.” Naturally, she refused to identify them.

As we all know, pictures can tell a story much better than words. So when 100,000 supporters of Israel marched down Manhattan’s 5th Avenue to celebrate Israel’s 54th birthday this May, the New York Times photograph was of a placard “end Israeli occupation.” The same bias was repeated in the coverage of the huge Toronto rally in support of Israel where thousands of pro-Israel supporters marched. A few hundred anti-Israel protestors dogged the parade. But they got more media attention. The separate fact was that an innocent bystander, a Toronto Jewish doctor, was standing on the street watching the parade and called out his support for Israel, Palestinian supporter thugs beat him, and broke his shoulder. This was not reported.

A great deal of the dishonesty arises from the failure to report and the failure to opine on many factors which must be considered in judging the Middle East war. Such as: Failure to report on the depths of Arafat’s corruption.

Failure to report the truth of an incident in March 2001 when a Palestinian sniper looked through the crosshairs of his scope and murdered Shalhevet Pass, a 10-month-old Jewish baby in Hebron. Associated Press’ headline writers declared: “Jewish toddler dies in West Bank”. AP made no mention of who perpetrated the murder, and gave no indication of the ghastly nature of the crime.

CNN has reported that 30 Palestinian women have died in labor while being held up at Israeli checkpoints. The story is a complete fabrication, generated from Palestinian spokesperson Nabil Teacher Aid 4.1G Dishonest Reporting: Media Bias Against Israel 3 Sha'att. To this day, CNN has neither published a categorical withdrawal nor the main proven fact that not a single woman had died.

In stark relief, two incidents from last March stand out. Two separate acts of terrorism occurred on the same day -- an IRA car bombing in London, and the Palestinian suicide bombing in Netanya. On the BBC, the word "terror" was used to describe the IRA bomber, but they described the Palestinian's suicide by a far milder term "militant." BBC has admitted that it practices a double standard.

But if nothing else in this entire sad and sordid story irrefutably demonstrates the inherent media bias against Israel, it is the Jenin massacre myth on which the herd of ravenous reporters descended with vulture-like hysteria. Hysterical, hyperbolical Palestinian propagandists shrieked "Massacre --5000 innocents slaughtered". Finally, when the UN commission declared that only 54 Palestinians had died, and over half of them were armed combatants, the myth exploded. However, few media apologized or retracted the charges of "genocide," "war crimes" and "heinous Israeli atrocities."

Contrast that with a true war crime that occurred shortly after. It is an offense, under the Geneva war conventions, for armed persons to occupy any church. Yet, the whole world sat silently and did not condemn the crime that occurred when Palestinians terrorists in Bethlehem occupied the Christian Church of the Nativity, took its occupants hostage, and refused to surrender to surrounding Israeli soldiers. Rather, the so-called world community, aided by a silent media, brought huge international pressure against Israel to give up its barricade and let the alleged terrorists go. When Israel bowed to the pressure, there was no United Nations intervention, no Christian church intervention, and no condemnation of the war crimes committed by the terrorists.

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It is timely, then, that we ask why is this happening? The answer is plain to see. Firstly, too many of the journalists are lazy, or sloppy, or stupid. They are ignorant of the history of the subject on which they are writing. Others are, plain and simple, biased, or anti-Semitic. The result is that the biggest casualties of the Palestinian-Israeli war are truth, and the integrity of the media.

Every one of us must do what we can to correct this travesty. It is time to say "Enough!" The solution starts on the campus, in the journalism schools, then goes to the boardrooms of the media owners, and finally, and most importantly, with you, the public. We must demand that the journalism schools do a better job of teaching integrity more forcibly. Then, we must demand that our media owners invest more money in educating their journalists and media operators. On the university campuses, we must demand that the administrators of higher education re-take control of the teaching process, to ensure that hate is not taught, propaganda is not preached and that the revered term "academic freedom" is never used as a license to libel, a podium for propaganda, and an advocacy of hate. And we should withhold our financial support for those institutions that fail this obligation of educational integrity.

And you, the public, must take action against the media wrongdoers. The issue here is not the media bias against Israel. The issue is the media bias, period. If we cannot trust the media in its reporting on Israel, how can we trust it on anything else? And if we cannot trust our media, democracy and our freedom are profoundly threatened. You, the public, must be more vigilant and aggressive by your e-mails, your letters to the editor, your phone calls, your cancellation of subscriptions, your refusal to patronize advertisers. You should establish, in each of your communities, honest reporting response groups to call to account

offending dishonest media. And you must become politically active to demand government policy consistent with fairness to, and Teacher Aid 4.1G Dishonest Reporting: Media Bias Against Israel 4 support of the only beacon of democracy in a swamp of hate, and violence and terrorism, the state of Israel.

Don't think that you are powerless. Always remember, as it has been truly said, that all it takes for evil to triumph is for a few good men -- and women -- to remain silent. We are witnessing the most virulent, vitriolic and vicious explosion of anti-Semitism, rivaled only by the rise of Nazism and its anti-Semitism in Europe in the middle 1930's. Left unchecked, it will consume all freedoms, for every attack of anti-Semitism in the history of mankind has always been a forerunner to the destruction of liberty in other sectors of human endeavor, not just for Jews. Therefore, I appeal to you, do not repeat the errors of your parents and grandparents who passively and complacently witnessed Canadian government indifference to the rise of genocide in Europe during the 1930's. It is time to vigorously and vigilantly become activists.

As for me, I do not intend to be silent. I have carried on a love affair with media all my adult life, and I have also been a staunch supporter of Israel. At the same time, I am an unashamed and unrelenting Canadian patriot. I am not going to stand idly back to watch any of the democratic ideals that made Canada the envy of nations be injured, sullied or disgraced. At this time, the appropriate position for all Canadians should be to stand tall in support of honesty in reporting, as well as for the right of Israel to exist and to take whatever actions it needs to battle its savage attackers, and to demand that our media and our politicians act with honor in this quest. But, the question for you, my friends, is, what are you personally going to do about it?

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