

3/11/92

Roy Heachum, who has more pairs of feet for his own shooting than cats have lives, shoots them both repeatedly in his March 11 column pretendedly on the death of Menachem Begin ~~but~~ actually still again his vehicle for pro-Muslim, anti-Israel propaganda.

Boasting still again about his journalistic career and accomplishments, ~~as he is not to do~~, he says of the Camp David accords that "they removed the only potential adversary that really matters" i.e., Egypt. "Without Cairo, Tel Aviv's other enemies cannot hope to make good on that tired old propaganda wheeze, to push Israel into the sea."

In Arab propaganda Tel Aviv is Israel's capital. In fact, Jerusalem is. That heavily-armed Iraq, ^{Syria,} Iran and Saudi Arabia in particular can't do this is ludicrous. With his unerring instinct this Heachum column appeared the very day other papers reported that a North Viet~~nam~~ese ship escaped U.S. Navy efforts to intercept it and landed in Iran with a cargo of advanced Scud missiles for Syria and Iran.

Has Heachum forgotten that when he was fighting the Gulf war for his own survival and Israel was not in that war, Saddam Hasein rained his Scuds on Israel?

From what enemy does Syria's dictator, one of the bloodiest in the Muslim world in which they are not uncommon, need Scuds to defend himself, more advanced missiles that can have nuclear and chemical/ bacteriological warheads?

Who, when the U.S. has so thoroughly defeated Saddam Hussein, is going to attack Iran?

Why has Saudi Arabia obtained warplanes with a range that includes far-away Greece and parts of what was the USSR and why has it asked for ownership of the advanced weapons ~~of~~ war the U.S. took there to defend it in the Gulf war?

The only Muslim-world need for advanced weaponry is for use against Israel and all that prevents the effort is fear of the havoc Israel can inflict in retaliation.

Is it because wiping Israel out is only "that tired old propaganda wheeze" that save for Egypt the entire Muslim world remains in a state of war with Israel from the day it was established, through all the wars it lost to Israel? Is that why destroying Israel remains in the PLO's charter? Or why the Muslim world boycotts all who do business with Israel?

Meachum says ~~he~~ it is "natural" for him to object to Israel's costly invasion of Lebanon to protect its northern border from endless Arab terrorism and to drive the PLO away from it "because + object to all killing."

Any reflection of this is missing from his innumerable columns condemning Israel without condemning, even reporting, the simply enormous slaughter of Arabs by Arabs. On single days more Arabs killed other Arabs in Lebanon than were killed in the entire intifada. On a single day Saddam killed more than ten times as many as died in the entire intifada with poison gas attacks on his own people!

Syria's Assad equalled or exceeded this slaughter of his own people also on a single day because he believed those who lived in the city he decimated opposed him.

The greatest tragedy of the Muslim world is fratricide, not the existence of Israel.

There is ~~no~~^{no} peace in the Middle East only because the Muslim world is determined that there be ~~no~~ peace there. This and ~~the~~ its fierce determination to end Israel, the only true democracy in the area, is the only reason not a single Muslim state agreed to any peace treaty after losing all those wars against Israel.

Meachum "objects to all killing[?]" Is this why he has yet to "object" to any Arab attack on Israel, to any of the perpetual Arab terrorism? Is this why he hailed Arab terrorists as the moral equivalent of George Washington?

However one may feel about the great tragedy of the Middle East, understanding of it by Americans can come only from their being truthfully and accurately informed,

We cannot be from any of Meachum's columns on the Middle East. They are all Arab propaganda and I can't recall a single one that wasn't or reported ^{on the Middle East} accurately and truthfully.

Harold Weisberg

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blues?

Roy Meachum



3/11/92 Menachem

My time in Egypt coincided with Menachem Begin's rise to glory. I departed as the Nobel laurels were being passed about, to him and Egypt's Anwar Sadat.

Thank God, I missed entirely the invasion of Lebanon, the disaster that broke Mr. Begin's heart, which finally gave out completely over the weekend. Mr. Sadat went down before assassins' bullets while Israeli troops still occupied Beirut.

Now only Jimmy Carter remains of the remarkable triumvirate that forged the beginnings of peace for that part of the world where the Bible warned there would always be wars and rumors of wars.

But terms reached in Frederick's Camp David placed Egypt's teeming millions and exceptional technical capabilities firmly on the sidelines. (International aid programs keep them there.)

Mr. Begin's great legacy to his much beloved nation was the agreement that removed the only potential adversary that really matters. Without Cairo, Tel Aviv's other enemies cannot hope to make good on that tired old propaganda wheeze, to push Israelis into the sea.

Not bad for a one-time Polish kid who was regarded as a major trouble maker by the Jewish state's founding fathers. Not without cause.

In his youth Mr. Begin joined the radical extremists, known as the Irgun. They were equally notorious within Israel for fighting their own people and for inflicting casualties on the then-occupation power, Great Britain.

When London finally ordered its army out in 1948, Menachem Begin was a fugitive, worth a big reward. The most publicized crime was his public hanging of captured British sergeants.

However, the Irgun leader incurred founding father David ben-Gurion's terrible wrath for the sin of causing Jew to fight Jew, over arms and weapons Mr. Begin attempted to smuggle and control for his group alone.

Nowhere in those early years of the young republic's life could any but

his greatest admirers have foreseen that the one-time Irgun chief would one day sit in the great ben-Gurion's chair. It took almost 30 years.

When Mr. Begin's coalition of right-wing parties, called the Likud, captured a majority of the parliament in 1977's elections, he became prime minister, ending the domination of the Labor Party, which had "always" run Israel, since Mr. ben-Gurion established it.

Fifteen years later the consternation created by the Likud victory can scarcely be imagined. In the state department, the distaste for the one-time fugitive from British law was intense: In terms of current politics, it was as if George Bush were to lose the White House not to Pat Buchanan but to David Duke.

Egypt went on military alert. My Cairo friends fully expected Mr. Begin to launch a surprise attack, if not immediately then in the near future. The surge of paranoid fear

was overwhelming.

Yet a few months later, in November, Anwar Sadat flew into Jerusalem. The only aspect of the progress toward peace I covered was Mr. Begin's return visit to Egypt. He came at Christmas, 1977, the month after Mr. Sadat's call on Israel.

The negotiating process could have died right there, at the Ismailia Suez Canal research station. At several points in the press conference, Mr. Sadat appeared ready to break his ever-present pipe and storm off stage.

Mr. Begin was a consummate bargainer. He seized the occasion to badger his host about the Egyptian president's hope to achieve a homeland for Palestinians.

Yet the Israeli prime minister somehow seemed to know the exact second to pull back, leaving the other party a toe-hold, so the talks could continue. I was told matters became much hairier when talks moved to Camp David the following autumn. I relied on reports from the BBC Overseas Service.

Nevertheless, on March 26, 1979,

the world was treated to the gratifying sight of Israeli and Egyptian leaders sharing warm handshakes, as the U.S. president beamed. The signing of the agreement was just cause for celebration.

Back in Washington by that time, I thought of the bleak ride back from Ismailia that Christmas, in a bus shared with the Jerusalem press corps. How my Israeli friends had to be exulting that day, almost exactly 13 years ago.

The Nobel Peace Prize commemorated the high point of Menachem Begin's life, without doubt. The absolute abyss came with the ultimate failure, characterized by the deep loss of young Israelis, in the ill-fated invasion of Lebanon in 1980.

Because I object to all killing, the invasion's massive cost in men, women and children made it naturally abhorrent to me, from the outset. Moreover, as I have written in the space frequently, when it comes to the Middle East, killing begets killing...

Nevertheless, I could sympathize with the anguish of a man who came to realize, however belatedly, that no ultimate orgy of violence would bring peace and security to his people. In addition, there was reason at the time to believe Mr. Begin had been sold a bill of goods by extremist Ariel Sharon, then the defense minister.

Mr. Begin's abrupt retirement just 10 years ago was never officially explained. Some blamed it on his wife's sudden death. Others said his grief with the futility of Lebanon caused him to step aside. We'll never really know.

Despite the wide chasm that separated my view of general humanity from his special concern for one particular people, there is no way I could help but harbor admiration for the feisty ex-guerrilla fighter, who signed the Camp David accords.

Menachem Begin deserves to rest in peace.