

# The racist hatred that just won't quit

**Anti-Semitism just never seems to go away, even here, says Anna Morgan**

Hardly a month passes without a community holiday commemorating a historical event or spiritual moment. And as I write this column, Jewish neighbourhoods are putting away their Purim decorations and getting ready for Passover.

Coming up next month, the week of Passover will be a time to remember the oppression of a people under slavery in Egypt. Purim, which was celebrated earlier this month, recalls a period when pure and unadulterated racist hatred against Jews was used for political gain in ancient Iran.

The Jewish community will remember these holidays by rejoicing over their liberation from two different forms of anti-Semitism. But as they read today's press, a new sense of urgency can be felt as people view these ancient events through a contemporary lens.

Recent reports from Saskatoon suggest that David Ahenakew is being considered for reappointment to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations senate. This follows a Superior Court decision to order a new trial to see whether the former aboriginal leader really did wilfully promote hate when he applauded Hitler for having "fried" 6 million Jews.

The court may have to consider whether Ahenakew's comments were made publicly or privately in the interest of free speech. But the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations doesn't have to consider questions of law. .

There is some good news this season. German courts have finally done what the Canadian legal system didn't: Turn off the valve on Ernst Zundel's stream of hot air. The Supreme Court of Canada may have seen Zundel as a stalwart of free speech for publishing his tract, *Did Six Million Really Die?*

But Germans have learned that there is an answer to that question and that it is not open for debate.

On the other side of the world, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has taken up the mantle with a vengeance, speculating that the Holocaust itself is a hoax and that the world's only Jewish state should be "wiped off the map." He would be just one more windbag, like those who attended his pseudo-academic conference on the topic, if he wasn't developing nuclear capabilities to back up his point.

Even the UN Human Rights Council, headed by Canada's own Louise Arbour, has gotten into the act. The council spent its first year focused solely on the evils of the Israelis; it passed eight resolutions against Israel and none against a single other country.

Last week in *The New York Times*, Human Rights Watch's executive director, Kenneth Roth, expressed his enormous disappointment that the council's attention has been diverted away from all other issues, including the genocide taking place in Darfur. Roth and other observers noted that member countries from Africa and the Organization of the Islamic Conference have been voting as a bloc to ensure this result.

A new expert report on Sudanese atrocities has been prepared for submission to the UN Human Rights Council, but even its presentation to that body is controversial.

The gang of despots who dominated the old UN Human Rights Commission, and who now haunt the new Human Rights Council, is doing everything possible to ensure that Israel is demonized and that the world's most serious abusers never face justice at the UN.

Canada's political parties have had their own share of explaining to do.

The dust barely settled on the Liberal party leadership convention – where Bob Rae's candidacy was scurrilously attacked in pamphlets that identified his wife's Jewish faith as a reason to vote against him – when an NDP-identified blogger began speculating aloud that he won't regret the next time they "come for the Jews."

To their credit, NDP and Liberal leaders have distanced themselves from these outbursts, but having to do so this frequently should give all Canadians pause.

One of the lessons taught over most holidays is the importance of shaping the present and future. But when it comes to anti-Semitism, it is frustrating to think how relevant the past really is.

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