

Carter Revisited

Once Jimmy Carter was seen as the godfather of the Camp David accords; the crucial bond that permitted Israel and Egypt to achieve peace. Since then Carter, who was crushed by Reagan in the 1980 election, has become the symbol of the deterioration the U.S. experienced in the late 1970s. Yet Carter feels he still has the answers, available in his new book *The Blood of Abraham*.

Readers of the *Blood of Abraham* (Houghton Mifflin Co.), the new book on the Middle East by former President Jimmy Carter, will find the same Mr. Carter that both satisfied and infuriated American supporters of Israel.

There is much in Mr. Carter's broad goals spelled out in his book which is fair and sensible. He says that the Arabs "must acknowledge openly and specifically that Israel is a reality and has a right to live in peace, behind secure and recognized borders." He says that no pre-conditions should be set; that U.N. 242 should be the basis of talks; that compromise is necessary and the final agreement has to be both "voluntary and acceptable." He approves of the Soviet Union being left out of face-to-face negotiations because "it seems to be the role of the U.S.S.R. to stay, to avoid, and to spoil." He offers "American ideals and principles" as guidelines for American negotiators; these include preserving the security of Israel; negotiating with fair representation and free discussion; respecting the sovereignty of nations and sanctity of borders; preventing terrorism; and protecting human rights.

His vision of a reprise of Camp David — face-to-face negotiations with the United States as active mediator, with recognition of Israel in clearly defined borders, and with the bottom line that Israel must purchase peace with territory — is much in line with longstanding American policy (though the peace for territory formula on the West Bank is looking increasingly questionable).

Where Mr. Carter goes wrong is in his detailed description and analysis of Middle East positions. He describes his visit to the region in 1983 and his discussions in Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and with Palestinians. What a stark contrast in the presentations. The section on Israel, while balanced and even sympathetic in discussing earlier periods, is full of criticism for the post-1980 period. "I see over and over a reluc-

ance to face the troubling question of what to do about Palestinians." Settlements on the West Bank are "both contrary to international law and a serious obstacle to peace." He recommends that Israel grant the "right of self-determination" to the Palestinians, even though Mr. Carter's own Camp David accords specifically limit the Palestinians to "participate in the determination of their own future," recognizing that competing needs and security demands enter the picture. And he points out that Israeli opposition to withdrawal from territories and Palestinian rights would "directly and adversely affect U.S. interests in the Middle East." He talks of the "tremendous costs to Israel in continuing the occupation of Arab territory, ministering to the needs of many homeless refugees, expanding an already formidable military capability, and in building the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza." For Mr. Carter the key to dealing with these problems lies not with would-be Arab peacemakers, but within Israel itself.

These sharp comments on Israel would be more understandable had Mr. Carter also directed the same approach to the Arab side. With the exception of the chapter on Syria, which is a mixed bag of letting Assad's views on the region get a full hearing and of some critique, the rest is generally highly sympathetic and even puff pieces of Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinians. Absent are strong critiques of continued rejectionism by the moderate Jordanians and Saudis. Always their absence from the peace table is explained by other circumstances than continued warfare against Israel. Hussein is portrayed as peace-loving but in difficult circumstances. Mr. Carter too readily accepts Hussein's critiques of the Reagan Administration that its failure to address the "crucial issues of Israeli settlements, the withdrawal of occupation forces, and Palestinian rights" has strengthened radicals and extremists in the region, and the U.S.-Israeli

"strategic alliance" meant that U.S. effectiveness in bringing parties to negotiate had diminished.

The Saudis are not reactionary authoritarians who have sought to rape the Western and Third World Nations, but caring leaders who have made "advances in employment, education, housing, women's rights," and who developed human services and skills. King Khalid was not an anti-democratic, theocratic, reactionary ruler, but a man committed to personal consultations and service to his people. Where is the Saudi Arabia whose delegate to the U.N. recently accused Israel of blood libel, that has distributed the *Protocols of Zion*, that had a newspaper recently reprint Henry Ford's *International Jew*?

This is the Jimmy Carter who delighted and disturbed as President. The substance of his record on the Middle East was good. Camp David and the peace treaty were highly significant accomplishments.

Economic and military aid to Israel grew. And yet...the feeling existed that Mr. Carter was less than a friend, and often harmful to Israeli and American interests. His constant criticism of Israel on settlements, on the Palestinians, on negotiations, at the U.N. seemed one-sided, short-sighted and oftentimes spiteful. The image of Israel suffered because of the constant criticism from the White House and American Jews wondered, despite Camp David, whether Jimmy Carter was "evenhanded."

The *Blood of Abraham* revives old doubts. Though there is a lot of good, it is offset by tone, emphasis, priorities, and double standards which leave one wondering.

By Abraham Foxman

Review written by Abraham H. Foxman, Associate National Director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.



The Fractured PLO

by Mitchell Bard

There has been talk in some quarters of a new moderation in the Palestinian camp since the rout of Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction by PLO "rebels" in Tripoli, but this is largely illusory. What has happened is a further polarization of the already fractured PLO. The so-called moderate wing of Arafat has tried desperately to regain its predominance in the face of Syrian opposition. Arafat has since returned to his jet-setting ways in an effort to stay on the world stage. Meanwhile various Palestinian leaders have begun to make noises about accepting

the new post-Lebanon reality, that being that the military struggle against Israel is hopeless. On the other hand, the rebels have returned to the undisguised objective of driving the Jews into the sea.

The split in the Palestinian ranks is particularly evident in this country where the PLO's supporters now find themselves having to choose sides between the competing factions. The Palestinian Human Rights Campaign has tried to maintain the fiction of Palestinian unity. In its newsletter, the PHRC reported how Fatah firmly established itself as the dominant force in the PLO during the February meeting of the

Palestinian National Council in Algiers. Despite some disagreement on tactics, the May newsletter said, the PLO emerged from the conference unified and is "now in a position to take the necessary risks to bring about a lasting peace." What actually emerged, however, from the conference was additional evidence that the Palestinian movement is seriously divided.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the schism among Palestinians in the United States are the comments by and about the Palestinian Congress of North America. The

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