

The election is over and, as expected, Ronald Reagan has been reelected. The 1988 campaign is now underway, but rather than looking four years ahead, I would like to make a few observations about the likely course of President Reagan's Middle East policy.

American Jews were expected to vote for Reagan in large numbers as they did in 1980 when he received nearly 40 percent of the Jewish vote. Early polls indicate the President may not have done quite as well. Jews do not vote solely on the basis of U.S. Middle East policy, but it is a significant factor and the president's decline in support might be attributable to his opposition to moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, the sale of AWACS and Stinger missiles to Saudi Arabia, and the stillborn Reagan Peace Plan.

The president still won more Jewish votes than a Republican is expected to receive. This is at least partially due to the perception that he is a strong friend of Israel. This perception has been reinforced by the president's statements of support for Israel and more tangibly by increasing military and economic aid to Israel and signing a strategic cooperation agreement. On balance, the Israeli government feels quite comfortable with Ronald Reagan in the White House; nevertheless, there are reasons to be concerned about the future of U.S.-Israel relations.

It is important to understand that Reagan is now a lame-duck. Even if he was willing and able, he would be barred from reelection by the Twenty-Second Amendment. Ordinarily a president's behavior is shaped by three concerns: reelection, the desire to make some historical mark, and the pursuit of ideological goals.

A lame-duck is no longer concerned with reelection; consequently, he does not have to worry about being held ac-

countable. Given that Israeli lobby influence is largely related to voting strength, an official unconcerned with reelection is likely to be less constrained on Israel-related issues.

The most likely manifestation of this lack of accountability will be the proposal of arms sales to Arab states. Why arms sales? The answer is related to the third presidential concern — ideological goals. President Reagan has been criticized in some quarters as having no foreign policy; actually, he does have a policy, albeit a simplistic one. The president adheres to the Cold War notion of con-

Soviet Union, is the greatest threat to peace in the region.

As a result of this failure, the Administration has been forced to pursue its strategy on an ad hoc basis by strengthening individual Arab states. This year, the Administration wanted to make large arms sales to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait but was prevented from doing so by election-year pressure from Congress.

Now that the election is over, the opposition to arms sales might be expected to diminish. The AWACS sale was rammed through the Senate in 1981 and a similar strategy might be employed in 1985.

REAGAN: Will the teflon last?

By Mitchell Bard

tainment; that is, the belief that the United States must do whatever is necessary to prevent communist expansion.

The implementation of this policy is seen more clearly in Central America, but remains the goal in the Middle East as well. Under this policy, it is Israel's strength and reliability which make it an ally of the U.S.; consequently, Reagan does not consider it inconsistent to support Arab states that are hostile toward Israel. Recall the president's desire to develop a "strategic consensus" in the Middle East to confront the Soviet Union. The effort failed for two closely related reasons. The first is that the Arabs can reach a consensus on only one thing, that being the belief that Israel, not the

I do not think the president can succeed this time for several reasons. First, many Democrats (and Republicans) believed Ronald Reagan's overwhelming victory in 1980 was a mandate from the people which required them to go along with the president on AWACS. Although Reagan's victory was even more impressive this time, few congressmen see it as a mandate.

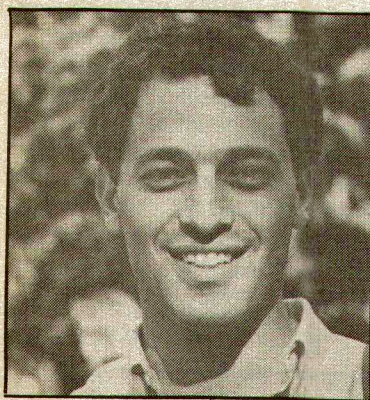
In 1980, the Republicans took control of the Senate and won enough seats in the House to form a working majority. This time, the Republicans lost two Senate seats and did not win enough House seats to recapture the working majority they lost in 1982. Related to this, two of the president's

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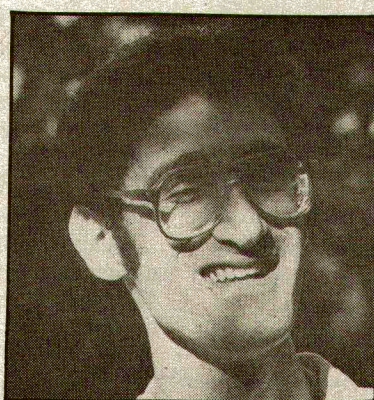
Campus reaction: Reagan Reelection

By Leslie Schwartz
Photos by Marlon West



◀ **Brian Linde**
•biochemistry•senior

"Reagan was elected because of a swing towards self-interest. . . I was bothered by a bumper sticker that said 'Reagan' in Hebrew. Judaism and Reaganism are antithetical. The goal of Judaism is to clothe the naked and feed the hungry. I don't think these are Reagan's goals."



Paul Ross ▶
•UCLA Alumnus•political science—class of 1981

"It's sad for two reasons. First of all, it's a victory for the politics of cruelty. It's the 'I've got mine and I'm going to keep it' attitude. People are into it now. Second of all, Reagan has insulted the intelligence of the American people more than any president in recent memory. He has a 'secret plan' for the economy. That sounds like Nixon and his 'secret war strategy.' As for Jewish interests, there'll be no difference. Any candidate elected will be pro-Israel."

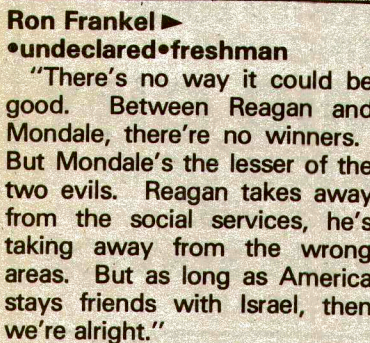
David Nidorf ▶
•psychobiology•junior

"It's sad that the majority of the population wants to take a step backwards. Reagan's just going to get us deeper in the arms race. In terms of Jews as a minority, Mondale definitely would've been better."



◀ **Alex Goodman**
•psychobiology•junior

"Reagan's better for Israel. He's recently signed for financial support for Israel. Mondale would've been better for America, but he's made concessions. . . under the table. . . to Jesse Jackson, who's pro-Arab. Domestically, Reagan's not good. Prayer in the school, that's not cool."



Ron Frankel ▶
•undeclared•freshman

"There's no way it could be good. Between Reagan and Mondale, there're no winners. But Mondale's the lesser of the two evils. Reagan takes away from the social services, he's taking away from the wrong areas. But as long as America stays friends with Israel, then we're alright."



◀ **Lesley Blum**
•psychology•junior

"Reagan won by an image he portrayed. Minority groups, such as Jews, have been appeased, but they won't get the benefits."

Michelle Porjes ▶
•undeclared•freshman

"Despite prayer in the schools, he's good for Israel."



Leslie Schwartz is a freshman majoring in psychology.

Reagan

Continued from page 3

Senate allies who were instrumental in getting the AWACS sale passed were defeated — Charles Percy of Illinois and Roger Jepsen of Iowa.

One reason for their defeat was the opposition of the Israeli lobby which poured large sums of money into the campaigns of their opponents. This highlights the third point which is that congressmen are held accountable for their votes on Middle East issues. All 435 House members will be running for reelection again in just two years and so too will a number of senators who see in the Percy and Jepsen defeats the message that opponents of Israel will have to face the consequences at election time.

Overall, support for Israel remains strong in both Houses of Congress; in fact, a pre-election survey of the candidates by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee suggests the new Congress may surpass the last one as the most pro-Israel in history.

There is one wild card in the congressional deck — Jesse Helms. The North Carolina Senator was also a target of the Israeli lobby, but narrowly escaped defeat and now represents Israel's staunchest opponent in the Senate. What's worse, in a peculiar twist of fate, Percy's loss places Helms in line to take over as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Helms is currently the chairman of the Agriculture Committee and pledged during his campaign to keep that job to protect tobacco price supports for his North Carolina constituents. There is a good chance he will renege on that pledge, however, if he finds someone to represent his interests on the committee or is serious about running for president in 1988. The Foreign Relations Committee provides a far more visible platform for him to attract national attention than the Agriculture Committee.

Helms may not be as serious a threat to Israel's interests as one might think; after all, the Israeli lobby was able to overcome the opposition of former chairman Fulbright, whose anti-Israel views landed him a job with the Arab lobby after his

Senate career.

On the more positive side, the president has been supportive of eliminating trade barriers between Israel and the U.S. and increasing military and economic aid at unprecedentedly favorable terms. Just before the election, Reagan offered to reschedule the Israeli debt payment and there is a good possibility that some of the debt will be forgiven. The attitude toward aid may be affected by the president's final and most important concern; that is, the desire to leave his mark on history.

In the hours immediately after Reagan's victory, a number of people, including Henry Kissinger, suggested that Reagan's place in history might be secured by the negotiation of an arms control agreement with the Russians. Another way the president could leave his mark would be to bring about a Middle East peace settlement.

Reagan has shown no signs of rethinking his earlier proposal, so we can expect to see a resurrection of the 1982 peace plan which was rejected by the Israeli government and given a lukewarm reception in the Arab world. U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Samuel Lewis, recently said the timing of the original Reagan Plan was "abysmal," the presentation "even worse and the results nil." The same could be expected from any new initiative. This pessimistic outlook is unavoidable given the turmoil both within Israel and the Arab world.

First, Israel's government is extremely fragile. The unification of Labor and Likud is possible only as long as the focus remains on the economy and Lebanon, the only two issues on which they agree. Until the economy is resuscitated, which is unlikely to be any time soon, the government will be unable to devote much attention to foreign affairs with the exception of Lebanon. Israeli forces will inevitably be withdrawn, but the process will take anywhere from six months to a year after an agreement is negotiated with the Lebanese to secure Israel's northern border.

The Lebanon War will also have a discouraging impact on

the peace process because of the great sacrifice, in resources and lives, that was entailed. After losing 600 men, the Israeli public is in no mood to discuss new sacrifices for peace. Prime Minister Peres has expressed an interest in peace negotiations, but it is very unlikely the current government could present a unified negotiating position given the deep ideological divisions between Labor and Likud and their contrasting visions of the future of the West Bank and Gaza. Individuals, notably Ariel Sharon and his allies, would also be likely to do what they could to obstruct any negotiations that would involve giving up territory.

As has been the case for the last thirty-six years, the greatest obstacle to peace remains Israel's Arab neighbors. Jordan's King Hussein remains unwilling to enter negotiations, and there is no reason to expect his position to change. Hussein still has no incentive to acquire the West Bank with its population of one million Palestinians, the majority of whom are hostile to his rule.

The famous Arafat-Hussein

discussions resulted in nothing in the past and would be equally futile in the future, especially since Arafat has lost control of the PLO and the organization has become, as a result of Lebanon, militarily and politically irrelevant.

The greatest obstacle to negotiations for both Hussein and Arafat is presented not by Israel but Syria. Syria's support for PLO rebels in Lebanon has virtually finished the job of erippling the organization that Israel started, and President Assad's intractable hostility toward Israel (and Hussein) insures that he will do whatever he can to prevent negotiations. Of course, everything could change overnight if an Arab leader followed the path of Sadat to Jerusalem, but that possibility seems more remote than ever.

What, then, will the president do? Well, he could try to pressure the Arabs to negotiate, but no president has shown the willingness to do that. Congress has been more forthcoming, however, and has passed a resolution which ties future arms sales to Jordan to Hus-

sein's willingness to negotiate.

Given his immunity from election pressures, the president might be tempted to pressure Israel, but the likely opposition of Congress and the probability that the Israelis would respond by becoming more defensive rather than forthcoming, makes this possibility less likely.

In sum, President Reagan will have strong motivation for leaving his mark by negotiating a peace settlement, but the conditions in the region make success highly unlikely. Beyond that, the nature of domestic American politics should insure that United States policy in the Middle East remains business as usual, that is, pro-Israel. Whatever the president decides to do, he had better do it fast, because in about 18 months the whole election process will begin again.

Mitchell Bard is a graduate student majoring in political science.

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