

AMERICANS ON ISRAEL III

There may or may not have been a good reason to make the films *Rocky II* and *Rocky III*, if indeed there was a good reason to make *Rocky I*. But there is an important reason to keep asking the American people, over and over again, what they think about Israel.

How else are we going to find out what changes are taking place? A survey of Americans on the subject was just finished by the Garth-Furst outfit, as commissioned by the ADL; and a couple of months ago by Yankelovich and also by Gallup, one commissioned by the American Jewish Committee.

There is even a bit of justification for occasional duplication within the same time period. Some people are still as resistant to opinion survey results as their ancestors were to the outlandish idea that the world is round. They prefer to believe what they hear in the select circles of their parlors, workplaces or bars; or in the inner whisperings of their minds. But if the same results emerge from several different and independent surveys, it becomes harder to insist that the earth is flat.

The Garth survey found exactly what the earlier surveys had found: there has been *no* erosion of American public support of Israel. Asked whether the U.S. should "give stronger support to Israel or to the Arabs," Americans preferred Israel over the Arabs by a 5 to 1 ratio. In answer to the same question, the ratio of preference for Israel was the same in 1981 -- and has been about the same for the past 15 years, on all surveys. If not asked about "support," but more simply about sympathy for Israel over the Arabs, the ratio has been consistently even higher.

In other words, throughout the past 15 years of scarring events, Arab propaganda and media treatment, the American people have not altered their highly favorable support of Israel. Putting a lot of questions and answers together, you would find that the American people don't care about the history of the West Bank, or whether Jordan is a Palestinian

state, or whether Israeli attacks on the PLO installations in Lebanon are justified (they are split down the middle on that question). Through thick or thin, naughty or nice, they have supported Israel overwhelmingly because they see Israel as important for American national interest. That tells us where to put our energies.

That favorable opinion on Israel as compared to the Arabs is not unalterable. But oil and the Saudi money notwithstanding, asked last month if they would choose Israel or Saudi Arabia as an American ally, Americans chose Israel by about a 3 to 1 ratio. The ratio is, of course, much higher in favor of Israel over Syria, or over the PLO, which almost all Americans dislike.

These figures have not changed over the years. Only one in ten Americans believe that the U.S. got anything in return for the AWACS sale, or that the Saudis would help the U.S. in a crisis. Of course, the majority of Americans opposed the AWACS sale in the first place because they did not believe that America would get anything in return.

It is undoubtedly for the same reason that Americans oppose the proposed arms sale to Jordan by more than a 3 to 1 margin, according to the Garth survey. Over two thirds of them also believe that the U.S. government should actively pursue the Camp David peace process -- most of the remainder unhappily believing that it is at a dead end.

You should remind your Congressmen and Congressional candidates that the American people, in their instinct for American national interest, do oppose the Jordan arms sale, support Camp David and want the U.S. government to demand something from Saudi Arabia in return for any sales or favors.