

THE ILLINOIS VOTE AND ISRAEL

Analysis of the Illinois Jewish precinct vote reveals that in the Democratic primary, Carter outpolled Kennedy among Jews by a 3-2 ratio. In the Republican primary, Anderson handily outpolled Reagan among Jews. However, a large proportion of normally Democratic Jews crossed party lines and voted for Anderson. In fact, Anderson received more primary votes from Jews than did either Carter or Kennedy.

Such trends, on their face, raise more questions than they answer: how many of those Anderson votes would become Reagan votes, if there were to be a Carter/Reagan contest? How many would return to Carter? Would a disproportionate number of Jews just stay away from the polls, as so many did in the Nixon-McGovern race? To what degree was the large Jewish crossover a result of Carter's treatment of Israel? If Jews were rejecting Carter simply on that account, wouldn't they have made their point by voting for Kennedy, who has specifically attacked Carter's treatment of Israel?

The answer to the last question could be very significant. Perhaps everyone has overestimated the extent to which Jews are a "single-issue" public. On the other hand, the evidence is that while Jews will not normally vote for a candidate solely because of his position on Israel, at least 9 out of 10 would vote against any candidate they felt was bent on destroying Israel.

On that premise, the Illinois vote suggests that many Jews are not convinced that Carter is bent on destroying Israel. In fact, the figures suggest that Carter would today get a majority of Illinois Jewish votes in a two-man race -- a drop-off from the usual Jewish Democratic vote in presidential elections, but not the drop-off some had anticipated.

According to some, it is not that so many American Jews are pleased with Carter's Middle East policy -- but rather that many Jews are displeased with some of the current policies of the Israeli government. Therefore some in Illinois registered their dis-

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pleasure by symbolically voting for Carter, who has criticized those policies.

In that case, certain distinctions had better be made clear, at least for the sake of American politicians.

What *is* the prevailing consensus among American Jews? Most American Jews, by actual count, believe that much of the "West Bank" must eventually be turned over to some jurisdiction other than Israeli; but they believe that this should happen only in return for the "best possible" conditions for peace and Israeli security. While American Jews are not agreed on what the "best possible" conditions might be, they are consensually agreed that a PLO-dominated state would comprise the "worst possible" condition.

Those are examples of matters on which consensus exists; there are other matters on which there is no strong consensus. Many Jews believe that the Israeli government has been taking some actions which signal its interest in holding onto the West Bank indefinitely, not for security but for ideological reasons. These particular Jews (and not others) believe that such signals, mainly transmitted by way of recent settlement actions, are ill-advised and ill-timed obstructions to peace.

Of course, some American politicians are using these "new-settlement signals" as an instrument with which to attack Israel far beyond the question of new settlements. In May there will be a major attempt to scrap UN Resolution 242, and with it the possibility of peaceful negotiations. The vultures are gathering at the scent of oil, in Austria, France and America. In preparation, the new-settlement signals by Israel are being used to paint Israel as the main obstacle to peace.

Indeed, some Jews are furious at the Israeli government just because it is giving unnecessary ammunition to the foes of Israel. These Jews have frequently expressed their displeasure to the Israeli government, and will continue to do so.

But, even in the heat of debate, these Jews will not commit the fallacy of Transposing Villains. The basic obstruction to peace in the Middle East is not the smattering of settlers, but the hard-line Arab refusal to accept the existence of Israel. If the Israeli government made Hebron and all the West Bank *judenrein* tomorrow, neither the PLO nor its supporters would be a whit less interested in invading Israel. If some settlement actions by the Israeli government were indeed "ill-advised and ill-timed," they would make the achievement of peace critically more difficult; but they would not be the substance or cause of the problem of peace in the Middle East. We still have to look to the PLO line for that.

In brief, American politicians should recognize that while Jews have some vigorous differences among themselves, the American Jewish community *is unified* against any attempts to impose an unregenerate PLO state, or to turn history on its head by setting Israel up as the villain of the piece.

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