Bad Deal for Israel
Feith, Douglas J.
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edge Israel’s right to exist. He said in an interview with the left-wing Jewish publication Tikkan that Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya, and Iran “already accept Israel as a fact,” when most of those countries are pledged to destroy Israel if they can. Jackson calls for a Middle East settlement involving creation of a Palestinian state and a “right of Israel to exist within secure, internationally recognized boundaries,” but he has recommended no machinery for ensuring that the Palestinian state would not sponsor terrorist raids into Israel. Boundaries presumably would be “recognized” by the United Nations, whose majority is unremittently hostile to Israel.

Jackson does his best to fan that hostility. He often refers to South Africa as “the fourth Reich,” and often in the same paragraph points out that Israel has maintained an arms-and-trade relationship with Pretoria. Jackson unambiguously courts Arab Americans and welcomes them as an integral part of his Rainbow Coalition, but his attitude toward Jews remains muddy. He has made overtures, has sought the release of Soviet Jews, and has stopped uttering blatant anti-Semitic remarks, but when a young black lawyer in Los Angeles asked him about his relations with Jews, he reportedly became enraged and told the man, “You should have let the Jews speak for themselves.” Can anyone believe that Israel would be safe with this man in power?

FACE IT, America’s interests would not be safe with this man in power. Fundamentally, he does not believe in the moral superiority of Western values. “The 130 countries of the Third World have different histories, cultures, and economic conditions,” he says. “They necessarily will have different social and political experiments. They have the right to choose their own destiny—to find their own ways to cope with poverty, illiteracy, and political representation. We must respect that right, confident that democracy and freedom are spreading in the world. . . .” The United States must leave the field to whatever forces are in play. “When we seek to determine the outcome of upheaval or revolution,” he says, “we expend our resources and our reputation on an impossible task.”

Clearly some tasks are impossible, but Jackson and his friends seem to counsel the abandonment of democracy worldwide, leaving the field to scoundrels. In 1984 Jackson made his preference explicit. In 1985 he attended the tenth anniversary celebration of the “liberation” of South Vietnam, along with North Vietnam’s ambassador to the U.N., who thanked American peace groups for their assistance. This year Jackson is more circumspect, but his policy views are just the same. So you’ve got to figure that if, say, the Arabs ever succeeded in routing Israel or the Communists came to power in El Salvador or the Philippines, Jackson would say what he said in 1984 about the repressive aftermath of the Communist victory in Vietnam and the genocide in Cambodia: “Unfortunately, unfortunately. Sometimes people struggling for freedom lose their way.”

MORTON M. KONDRACKE

What’s wrong with ‘land-for-peace.’

BAD DEAL FOR ISRAEL

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT began not when Israel took control of the territories in 1967, or when Israel became a state in 1948. The hundred-year war the Arab world has waged against Zionism has been a fight against the very idea of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Arabs riot now in Gaza, Jerusalem, and the West Bank. In 1920–21 Arabs rioted in Palestine in opposition to the Balfour Declaration. In 1929 the local Arabs rioted again against the growing Jewish presence in Palestine (and succeeded in killing almost the entire Jewish population of Hebron). And in 1936–39 Palestinian Arab riots against Jewish immigration and against the vestiges of Britain’s Jewish National Home policy were so intense that they were called a revolt.

In years past the Arabs openly fought the plans for a Jewish state, and when it was established they attacked it. They said they intended to destroy it and drive the Jews into the sea. Calling for Palestine to be incorporated into a greater Arab state, they repudiated the notion of Palestine as a separate country and condemned the imperial powers for having arbitrarily drawn lines that separated the Arabs of Palestine from their fellow Arabs. In 1921 the deputation of the Arab Palestine Congress delivered to the British colonial secretary, Winston Churchill, a memorandum proclaiming that “the Arabs are convinced that this unnatural partitioning of their lands must one day disappear,” and “Palestine should not be separated from her sister States.” (It bears noting that the Palestine to which the Arab Congress referred was the entire area covered by the League of Nations’ Mandate for Palestine—the area comprising what is now Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and Jordan.)

Zionist Jews at the time agonized over Arab hostility. Some theorized that it would disappear as the Zionist enterprise created prosperity in the region and thereby raised the standard of living of the Arabs as well as the Jews. Others thought that once the Arabs freed themselves of reactionary leadership, they would welcome cooperation with the Jews. But the Arabs’ unhappiness with Zionism—and the denunciations, riots, and attacks by which they expressed this unhappiness—did not cause the Zionists to doubt the legitimacy of Zionism. They did not stop believing in their rights to the land—rights emerging (in the words of the League of Nations’ Mandate) from “the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine.” They did not conclude that it would be immoral to establish a Jewish state in areas with substantial Arab populations. If they had, there would be no State of Israel.

The early Zionists generally reasoned that the Arabs had a great deal of land and a growing number of states continued on page 16

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of their own, including a large state—Transjordan (now called Jordan)—in 80 percent of mandated Palestine. The Jews, on the other hand, had no state. It was universally understood that the creation of a Jewish state in western Palestine would displease the local Arabs, but the Jews’ claims to one economically viable and militarily defensible state far outweighed, in the Zionists’ view, the local Arabs’ claims to make western Palestine another Arab state or a part of an existing Arab state. As one Zionist leader put it, it was a matter of the claims of starvation versus the claims of appetite.

In recent years, however, the war against Zionism has been conducted not with open extremism, but with wit, calculated obscurity of purpose, and disarming use of the terminology of the Western liberal democratic tradition. Where once there were exhortations to drive the Jews into the sea, now there are pleads to fulfill “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.” Where Arab leaders once highlighted the unity of the Arab people and the unnatural divisions wrought by “imperialist” line-drawers, they now assert not only that the Palestinian Arabs but more particularly the Arabs of western Palestine are a separate people entitled to nationhood.

Arab spokesmen know that most of the international community thinks “occupied territories” refers only to the lands Israel won in the Six-Day War, which makes their case sound moderate. They are usually careful with Westerners not to admit that the term applies also to pre-1967 Israel. (Arafat’s deputy Abu Jihad recently reaffirmed to an Arab audience that “we always insist that the Palestinian struggle aim at Jerusalem, Haifa, and Acre as well as Gaza.”) The Arab world, after numerous military defeats and political disappointments, is no happier than it ever was with the Jewish state or Zionism, but it now appreciates the utility of demanding slices rather than grabbing for the whole salami outright.

Israel’s opponents have garnered rewards for modifying the way they describe their war against Zionism, not least from the Jews themselves. Many Jews, oppressed spiritually by the continuous hostility toward Israel and linked ever more tenuously to the pre-State days, when the Jewish problem of powerlessness imbued the Zionists with special moral confidence, grow weary of the battle and are susceptible to redefinitions of the conflict. In particular, they are eager to accept a redefinition that holds out the promise that relatively small concessions by Israel will produce peace.

Many Jews nowadays talk as if the Arab world no longer contested the legitimacy of Israel’s existence. They argue that Israel should be willing to yield land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for peace, in return for “appropriate” guarantees of Israel’s security. This argument, however, is more rhetorical than real. No state or responsible group has offered Israel peace (much less security) for a portion of the territories. Moreover, the argument makes sense only if one believes that the Arab-Israeli conflict is merely about the size of Israel or about the easily satisfied craving of the West Bank and Gaza Arabs for a non-viable, semi-sovereign piece of turf for themselves in a small part of what they consider their homeland.

But the Arab world’s rejection of Zionism is not shallow. Its roots touch important passions and intense beliefs, including religious convictions about the imperative of Muslim rule over what Muslims deem their territory and the Arab world’s profound and long-standing resentment against Western “imperialism” and encroachments on the domain of Islam. As Walid Khalidi, an erudite “moderate” among Palestinian Arabs, wrote in a 1978 Foreign Affairs article, “The individual Arab states are deviant and transient entities, their frontiers delusory and permeable.” Khalidi states: “Champions of pan-Arabism speak in the name of vox populi. Their mandate is from the entire Arab Nation. Before such superlegitimacy, the legitimacy of the individual states shrinks into irrelevance.” He highlights “the inviolability of [the Arab Nation’s] territory ‘from the [Atlantic] ocean to the Arab [Persian] Gulf,’” and concludes: “By definition the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab Nation. The loss of Palestine is the de-Arabization of Arab territory. It is thus a violation of the principles of the unity and integrity of Arab soil, an affront to the dignity of the Nation.”

One can hardly overstate the popular political appeal throughout the Arab and Muslim world (even in Egypt) of steadfast opposition to a Jewish state in Palestine. The unhappy fact is that the war against Israel is not for sale; Israel’s opponents cannot simply be bought off, and surely not for a portion of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel does not have the option to purchase peace for a piece of land.

The issue posed for Israel in the debate over “territorial compromise” is, more accurately stated, whether Israel would be better off in the continuing war against it if it retained the territories or gave areas away. The real choice is between land and no peace on the one hand and less land and no peace on the other. The recent riots have sharpened the debate over whether Israel should quit the territories, especially the higher population areas. There are practical arguments on both sides. But it is important to recognize that peace between the Jews and the Arabs has nothing to do with it.

It is well known that every new U.S. administration begins by “solving” the Arab-Israeli conflict. Some do it more than once. Secretary of State George Shultz is now going about it for the second time. In evaluating current and future peace proposals, one can profitably ponder some of the key insights of the early Zionists.

First, not all problems have solutions. The problem of anti-Zionism—in particular, Arab hostility to Israel—appears to be such a problem. In The Jewish State (1896), Theodor Herzl (the founder of the modern Zionist movement) wrote: “I imagine that the Jews will always have sufficient enemies, just as every other nation.” Zionism was not based on the promise that once a Jewish state was established the Jews would no longer have to con-
front hostility and attacks. It arose from the belief that it would be better for the Jews to have the ability to protect themselves in the form of a sovereign state with defensible borders and a potent army than to face their enemies as scattered and unorganized victims. History bears this out.

Indeed, history teaches that the greater Israel’s military assets are, the less Israel needs to defend itself. When the Jews did not control the highlands of Samaria and Judea (the West Bank), for example, Israel had to fight the Jordanian army twice—in 1948-49 and in 1967. After Israel took control of those lands, the Jordanians decided to sit out the next war, in 1973.

The basic truths about national security are the same for Israel as for every other state: strength is better than weakness. More strategic depth is better than less. Vigilance is better than trust in the moderation of one’s antagonists. A higher price for one’s concessions is better than a lower price. And one should be chary about giving away national assets merely to attempt to sweeten the diplomatic atmosphere.

This is not to say that Israel should be indifferent to the grievances of the Arabs in the territories (or Israel’s Arab citizens, for that matter). They have rights that should be respected and grievances that justice requires be acknowledged and, whenever possible, remedied. Any humane person must sympathize with people who are living under the rule of another people. These individuals face a truly distressing choice—either move to a state ruled by their own people or remain under a government they detest. If it is within Israel’s power to win their favor and bring about true conciliation between the Arabs and the Jewish state, Israel should do it. But it would be foolish for Israel to make the thorough mollification of its Arab population a condition for doing what it needs to do (and controlling the territory it needs to control) to secure the State.

For the foreseeable future, the only kind of Arab-Israeli peace that we can reasonably hope for is one based on military security, not true conciliation. If it is to come about at all, such peace will grow out of resignation on the Arabs’ side—a conviction about the futility of the armed struggle—not out of accommodating diplomacy from Israel. That is not the most satisfying variety of peace known to nations, but it is unwise to be overly choosy under the circumstances.

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Blackmail . . . greenmail . . . direct mail.

JUNK-MAIL POLITICS

BY GREGG EASTERBROOK

WHEN presidential candidate Richard Gephardt was riding high by presenting himself as an anti-establishment figure, other candidates and the press took delight in noting his heavy reliance on contributions from political action committees—more than any other candidate. “Gephardt’s $241,000 [in PAC assistance] is about eight percent of his total contributions,” the Washington Post reported, “compared with Dole’s 4.5 percent and Bush’s three percent.”

Eight percent? Not only do PACs play a negligible role in presidential campaigns, they aren’t as important as many suppose in congressional races either. In the 1986 election cycle candidates for the House raised 34 percent of their funds through PACs; Senate candidates a mere 21 percent. The rest came from individual contributions. And most of those are not of the $1,000 maximum variety. They are small donations. And these small donations are brought in through a process that is in many ways more corrupting of the political system than PACs.

There’s blackmail, there’s greenmail, and there’s direct mail, in which political candidates and causes suspend any concern they might have for truth, integrity, and your own intelligence in order to shake you down for money. If PACs and large contributors can bend politicians to their will on certain issues, the need to raise money through direct mail frames the political debate more insidiously. It puts a premium on simplification of presentation of issues, scare-mongering, and on creating boogeymen. It’s also remarkably phony.

“The most important thing to understand about current political direct mail is that it’s targeted at seniors,” said a former consultant for a leading direct-mail firm. “Median age of donors is about 55. This is the age when people start

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