

WORLDVIEW

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Worldview* is to place public policies, particularly in international affairs, under close ethical scrutiny. The Council on Religion and International Affairs, which sponsors the journal, was founded in 1914 by religious and civic leaders brought together by Andrew Carnegie. It was mandated to work toward ending the barbarity of war, to encourage international cooperation, and to promote justice. The Council is independent and nonsectarian. *Worldview* is an important part of the Council's wide-ranging program in pursuit of these goals.

Worldview is open to diverse viewpoints and encourages dialogue and debate on issues of public significance. It is edited in the belief that large political questions cannot be considered adequately apart from ethical and religious reflection. The opinions expressed in *Worldview* do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Council. Through *Worldview* the Council aims to advance the national and international exchange without which our understanding will be dangerously limited.

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Worldview and the Middle East

A special word about this issue of *Worldview*. It concentrates heavily upon the troubled area of the Middle East. It does so in the editorial belief that the title of an article that appeared in our September, 1976, issue was prescient: "The U.S. and Israel: The Coming Storm."

At the time of the article, no one would have predicted the election of Menachem Begin as prime minister of Israel or the dramatic visit of Anwar el-Sadat to Jerusalem. These events disturbed a number of expectations. Now, however, the euphoria inspired by Sadat's visit has almost completely faded, Begin has frequently expressed as prime minister the positions that he has held unwaveringly for many years, and Arab-Israeli issues that have proved intractable for thirty years have reasserted themselves. But if those issues have remained relatively constant over the years, the political climate in which they have been debated and in which serious decisions have been made—that climate has been notably fickle, now fair, now foul. At the moment the barometer indicates stormy weather.

Relations between the United States and Israel are now tense and strained, in spite of the warm public exchange between Carter and Begin. On May 1, standing beside the prime minister, the president said: "For thirty years we have stood at the side of the proud and independent nation of Israel. I can say without reservation as the President of the United States that we will continue to do so not just for another thirty years, but forever." (The easy assumption that the U.S. will itself be around forever would seem to be tempting the gods, but the intention of Carter's hyperbole is clear.)

The very next day, twenty-two of the thirty-seven members of the House International Relations Committee signed a "resolution of disapproval" of the strong Carter proposal for a "package" sale of military jet fighters to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel. Critics of the proposal wish to untie the package and consider separately the sale of arms to each country. The same issue has surfaced in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, members of which subjected high administration officials to sharp questioning.

These divisions within major branches of our government have their counterpart in other sectors of our society, including the Jewish community, and in Israel. The sudden growth of the "Peace Now" movement in Israel has surprised everyone, including the organizers, and its aims have won support from figures as significant as Abba Eban and Yigal Allon. In the United States a group of thirty-seven prominent Jewish political, literary, and religious leaders sent a letter of support to the organizers. In doing so they brought into public discussion issues that have been vigorously but privately debated for some time.

Worldview has, over the years, explored the major issues in the Middle East, offering a variety of informed and responsible views. Because the present situation holds out the possibility of either an ongoing peace process or another terrible armed conflict, we offer in this issue several diverse viewpoints on major actors and major issues. For example, Joseph Sisco reminds those who are depressed by the present low state of U.S.-Israeli relations that we have gone through worse times. But he also cautions that, following the Sadat visit, the alternatives for the area are profoundly serious. He takes a different view on some of the issues—Security Council Resolution 242, for example—from that of Begin, and on the issue of the West Bank his position is significantly different both from that of Begin and of Gerald Hyman, who addresses that problem directly.

Worldview will continue to bring together, not always in a single issue, different points of view on the Middle East. Barring a sudden and unexpected turn of events, the people of Israel and the United States will be intensely engaged during the coming months with the questions explored in the following pages.

—James Finn, Editor