



WASHINGTON

# Flowing strong, the current change towards PLO in U.S.

THIS week the most important Black Civil Rights organization, and one which has long-standing ties with the Jewish community here, endorsed the concept of a Palestinian homeland and urged the U.S. government to open discussions with the PLO.

In a statement released by the Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), the organization proclaimed support for self-determination for a homeland for the Palestinian people that recognises their fundamental moral, legal and intimate rights to a just existence.

Last week the American Representative to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva — Ambassador Jeffrey Carter who is Black — voted in favour of two pro-PLO resolutions. The first called for Israel to begin immediate negotiations with the PLO on pre-conditions and the second urged Israel to "desist forthwith from the bombing of the civilian population in South Lebanon and other areas."

The "violation of fundamental rights of the Arab population of the area" was also mentioned. Two examples of the support of pro-Palestinian and PLO support that has become significant in the wake of the Andy Warhol affair — an incident which has been widely reported in the Jewish establishment here, and which has caused a great deal of concern — is the possibility of firm Carter

Waiting for the polls fog to lift

White House initiatives spurred by this positive swing in public attitudes toward the PLO has to be much discounted by the realisation that Carter is in the middle rounds of an exhausting fight for political survival.

At least one national columnist, George Will, has suggested that August 1979 may be recorded in the history books as the month Jimmy Carter became regarded as a lame-duck and American politics became fixated on the presidential transition but 15 months yonder.

Another prominent commentator, Joseph Kraft, while lamenting Carter's possible retention of office should he overcome his opposition, has lambasted the administration's record and urged the president to abdicate, and insisted the U.S. would continue to "pay and pay and pay" in crucial national interests if Carter remained at the helm.

Senator Edward Kennedy's slow process of undermining the Carter Democratic Party has had considerable effect in recent weeks. Kennedy has apparently decided to attempt to push the president out of the presidential sweepstakes before he himself enters.

As the *Christian Science Monitor* here lists

WHATEVER the time-frame, the PLO's American position has never been better, Camp David notwithstanding.

As pressures build in the press and from grass-roots organisations such as the NAACP, the American government (especially the Department of State) finally has the beginnings of a long-sought mandate to deal with Palestinian nationalism in the face of the massive roadblocks strewn everywhere by Jewish and conservative lobby groups.

Just as in late 1976 the PLO recognized the crucial significance of the presidential transition period and sent two first-class emissaries to make contact with the incoming administration, a similar appreciation of the current period in American politics may eventually yield the rewards Fate has been seeking.

And so, the changes in American public attitudes unleashed, but not initiated, by the Andrew Young affair, continue to generate a receptive climate for eventual U.S. gambits on the inescapable "Palestinian problem."

Further examples of the shifting tides abound. On September 7th, for instance, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* carried columns calling for U.S. involvement with the PLO.

Respected Harvard Professor Stanley Hoffman noted the

The need to polish the TV image



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"inevitability of U.S. dealings with the PLO." And the *Post's* Stephen Rosenfeld, who also contributes monthly to a magazine published by the American Jewish Committee, proclaimed "Palestinian nationalism is authentic and surging," "Israel's crucial requirement," "Rosenfeld emphasised, "is to recognize the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism. Once the principal were granted, the "details," large and painful as they are, could be worked out. Everything else is temporising and gimmicky."

Still, however, actual Palestinian policies and ideology remain attitudes.

little understood here even among the elite, partly due to Israel's continual harping on the outdated 1968 charter and partly resulting from a third-class PLO effort to explain, in terms Americans can appreciate, the realities of Palestinian politics.

Yasser Arafat's appearance on ABC-TV's *Issues and Answers* last Sunday once more proved his ineffectuality with both language and concepts.

The handling of the media generally, and of TV in particular, is a specialised skill to which Western politicians devote much time and training.

Yasser Arafat, undoubtedly, has more important things to do but if the PLO wishes to get its case properly represented to the American people the PLO must play the game the Americans understand. And that, however wrapped up in matters of the life and death of his people, means an ability to handle TV.

Undoubtedly the PLO has men with such skills or who could be trained in them but among that number cannot be included their representative in Washington, Hatem Huseini, who often does more harm than good by intoning simplified concepts rather than initiating a discussion of the evolution of Palestinian thinking and

Three meetings — and one conclusion

IN THE coming seven weeks three important conferences will be taking place in Washington and all are sure to focus further attention on the imperative of bringing the PLO into any Middle East negotiations.

Later this month, the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign will hold a two-day national conference featuring a number of prominent West Bank mayors (though at least one, Bassar Shakra of Nablus, has so far been refused Israeli permission to attend).

Two weeks later, the prestigious Middle East Institute will convene its 33rd annual conference with the year's theme, "The Mid-east after peace: What lies ahead." Former Under Secretary of State George Ball who recently wrote that "no durable Arab-Israeli peace is possible without PLO participation in the negotiations," will be the featured banquet speaker.

And three weeks after that the pro-Palestinian Israeli magazine, *Netiv*, will stage a large symposium. To sum up, it's a time of cautious hope here. It's not inevitable that the Americans will finally acknowledge that only the PLO can save the much-touted "Camp David process," but it's becoming more and more likely.