

# Middle East Books

## Retreat from Freedom

by Joseph Churba

Centre for International Security, Washington 1980,  
\$10.00

With Ronald Reagan coming to Washington, a new book by Joseph Churba merits careful scrutiny – all the more since the introduction is by none other than Richard V. Allen, Reagan's top foreign policy adviser and the candidate to succeed Brzezinski as National Security Adviser.

With praise on the back cover from Professor Robert Tucker (of "invade the oil fields" fame), Admiral Elmo Zumwalt and Eugene Rostow (both among Israel's most fervent advocates), Churba's book is a broadside polemic against nearly everything the Carter administration attempted in the Middle East.

In fact a decade of American Middle East thinking, beginning with the 1969 Rogers Plan, is shot down by Churba. *Retreat From Freedom* represents, in capsule form, the hardest-line, super-Zionist, most anti-detente way of thinking imaginable. Yet it is an approach currently in competition for Ronald Reagan's imprimatur. And Richard Allen's endorsement of Churba as "one of our most incisive and skilled military intelligence analysts" is ominous.

For Churba the world is not too complex a place. The Russians are the devil with a "masterplan" whose lynch-pin is "encirclement of the Persian Gulf".

"The corollary to this is equally obvious", according to Churba: "the expulsion of American power from Africa and the Middle East, to be followed, very quickly, by the use of oil power against Western Europe and Japan. The Communist parties in Western Europe will then come to power, no doubt by democratic means, and a minimal degree of national independence will camouflage Soviet domination."

Churba sees the oil-rich countries of the Middle East being "integrated into the Soviet imperial system", and he insists that the Russians are manipulating the PLO as their Cuban GURKHA force for the Middle East. Israel, on the other hand, is "a vehicle for fostering stability" in the region, Camp David was a Carter sell-out to Arab oil machinations, and "while Egypt is going through the motions of peace, it does not rule out a concerted Arab attack on Israel – after Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai and the West Bank . . ."

Churba's prescription for saving the world for America also has rather simplistic formulations. Beyond a massive military build-up and reliance on Israel to deter the aggressive

Russians from military action in the region, Churba urges a concerted no-holds-barred campaign "to undermine [Soviet] control over its population by a broad-gauge, ramified, concentrated campaign of information designed to smash totalitarian censorship".

Israel should become "the focal point for America's national initiatives' planning in the Middle East," Churba asserts. Arms and "the whole range of required war material" should be pre-positioned in American depots within Israel. And two full divisions of US military forces should be placed in the two Sinai bases which Israel is to vacate by 1982 when the entire area is returned to Egyptian sovereignty.

The US defence budget should be increased by a huge 250 per cent, says Churba. And the "key to the success" of his strategy "would be the ability of the United States to be the initiator of action, striking out at times and places of its own choosing". In short, Churba foresees using American military resolve not only "to forestall overt Soviet military action" but also to prevent "the collapse of friendly governments from within". Images of Diem and Vietnam are rightly conjured up at this point – and, sure enough, Churba was a fanatical supporter of that US folly as well.

But the most currently important aspect of Churba's diatribe against detente, American spinelessness and Arab chicanery is his attempt to shift American military thinking away from making "Egypt the strategic nexus of US policy in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea". Israel is America's primary asset in the region, he insists, and so Israel should be awarded that role.

Indeed, Egyptian diplomats in Washington have urgently been reporting to Cairo about the major campaign under way to force Egypt to turn over the important military installations due to be evacuated by the Israelis – Eitam and Etzion – to American forces. The argument is that the US is committed to organise an international military force for Sinai (since the UN will obviously not cooperate with this Camp David requirement), and thus the US should recognise that "the need to implement the provisions of the peace treaty... provides the opportunity to introduce a permanent military presence in the Sinai" – in the words of Robert Tucker in the November issue of *Commentary*.

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