

# THE INSIDE STORY

JOHN JUDIS



Ibrahim Abu-Lughod

## Syria holds key to Camp David

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod is a professor of political science at Northwestern University. He is an internationally respected expert on the Mideast and Africa.

He is also a Palestinian, born in Jaffa, Palestine, in 1929, who emigrated to the U.S. in 1950 and worked his way through college. In 1967, in the wake of the Six-Day War, Abu-Lughod also became a full-fledged participant in the Palestinian cause.

He became a member of the Palestinian National Council, the highest decision-making body for the Palestinian movement. In 1977, when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was still searching for a Palestinian representative who would be acceptable to the PLO, but whose legitimacy could not be denied by the U.S. and Israel, it was reportedly Abu-Lughod and Columbia professor Edward Said that Sadat hit upon.

When I went to talk to him last week, we transported our conversation from the Ivy-covered confines of Northwestern's Scott Hall to the Mediterranean House, a small, inexpensive restaurant in predominantly Jewish Skokie. "There's a special reason I wanted to take you here," Abu-Lughod said. When the residents had learned the restaurant's owner was Palestinian, they had instituted a boycott. The owner's attempt to deny PLO membership had been to no avail, and when we arrived, we were the only customers.

I expected from Abu-Lughod a semi-official denunciation of the Camp David Accords, and I did get that. He charged that they "condemn the West Bank to the permanent status of subordination and condemn Palestinians who are outside to the permanent status of exile."

But the scholar in Abu-Lughod kept asserting itself over his partisanship, forcing him to admire Jimmy Carter's diplomacy or to sympathize with Sadat's dilemmas even as he condemned their actions.

### Jordan wants West Bank.

Abu-Lughod is naturally most concerned with the proposed agreement on the West Bank and Gaza. If the U.S. and Israel can win Jordan's cooperation, he thinks they may set off a "dynamic of negotiation" that will "get rid of radical forces for the next ten or 15 years and eliminate the Soviet Union as an influence."

But the dynamic may stall on the West Bank if Jor-

dan is not brought in. Jordan's King Hussein wants nothing less than an explicit promise of the West Bank's return. Given such a promise, he is willing to take his chances with the Palestinian majority and the PLO. "He is counting on the fact that the Palestinians on the West Bank, given the choice between permanent subordination to Israel and joining Jordan, will choose Jordan," Abu-Lughod explained.

But Israel is unwilling to give up the economic potential of the West Bank.

Abu-Lughod sees one other option for sustaining the West Bank agreement: get Syria into the negotiations. Israel is more willing to give up the Golan Heights than the West Bank. A Sadat-style agreement could be signed granting Syria the Golan Heights in exchange for diplomatic recognition of Israel and a promise to contain the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Lebanon and Syria.

With Syria brought in, and the PLO out of the picture, Hussein could be forced to enter the negotiations, and a compromise could be worked out on the West Bank, along the lines of an autonomous state federated with Jordan, and open to Israeli development.

But will Syria's President Hafez Assad follow Sadat to the negotiating table? How strong is the Syrian's commitment to the Palestinian cause?

Abu-Lughod paused at the question of Syria's commitment. "Syria is difficult," he said. "The Syrian people view Palestine as part of Syria historically. If you go into the smallest Syrian town, and they have a museum there, you will find pictures of Syrians who have gone from that town and died in Palestine in battle. It is a different kind of commitment from the Egyptians. Outside of the attachment to the soil, it is as strong as the Palestinians' commitment."

But there was, Abu-Lughod explained, another level to the problem. To meet its commitment, the Syrian government would have to beat Israel, and it cannot do that. "With the Arab front broken by Sadat, and the possibilities of more inter-Arab quarrels, Syria has to calculate shrewdly how it can keep its commitment, retrieve its national territory, and maintain itself."

### Assad the dealer.

In this calculation, Abu-Lughod thinks that Assad will play a special role. "Kissinger discovered that Assad was a dealer," Abu-Lughod said. "He's not an inflexible son-of-a-bitch like Ho Chi Minh or Nasser or Arafat. Assad is more like Sadat. He can see the advantage of a bargain."

Previously, Israel was unwilling to give up the Golan, but now Abu-Lughod thinks it will in order to keep the negotiations going. If that happens, Assad will have to weigh the immediate rewards of getting the Golan back against his commitment to the Palestinians.

Abu-Lughod doesn't rule out Assad's going along with Israel and the U.S., but he doubts it will happen. Syria is much more independent economically than Egypt, and much less open to pressure from the U.S. or Saudi Arabia.

Military assumptions have also changed. With its superior numbers, Egypt used to be seen as the main military threat to Israel. Now, some Arab (and Syrian) strategists believe that "Egypt was never a serious threat to Israel. The actual threat comes from Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan because all the population centers are within reach of these fronts."

According to Abu-Lughod, Syria has already asked Jordan to form a united political and military front that would include Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians. Syrian efforts in Lebanon have also been aimed at controlling that part of the front. Abu-Lughod thinks that Assad will not contemplate negotiations until he possesses the kind of credible military threat that such a unified front would give him.

If Syria and Jordan don't go along with the Accords,

Abu-Lughod expects "greater explosions in the Arab world, particularly in Lebanon." In the West Bank, Israel's only recourse will be "to create totally subversive Palestinian institutions." He predicts that pro-PLO mayors will be arrested and otherwise harassed during the next year.

### Disaster for Sadat.

Abu-Lughod thinks that the Camp David Accords will only bring temporary popularity to Sadat. "Sadat has succeeded in selling the Egyptian people his decisions and in the short run he will be sustained, but after that, it will be disaster for him."

I thought Abu-Lughod was saying that Sadat's betrayal of the Palestinian cause would catch up with him, but he wasn't saying that at all. Abu-Lughod thinks neither peace nor war, Arab unity nor betrayal would solve Egypt's problems, which are rooted in its economy.

These problems are "literally insoluble," according to Abu-Lughod. "No amount of money that is poured into Egypt will solve them."

"Egypt has gotten close to \$6 billion in aid since 1973. Egypt today is worse off than it was in 1973. Of course, there is a special class that benefits from this money and that is the class Sadat belongs to, but in this way the money only aggravates the social contradictions. In terms of these contradictions, Egypt is worse off today than it was at the time of King Farouk."

The only solution, Abu-Lughod says, is to reorganize the basis of production, as China did after its revolution. "But Sadat is incapable of doing this. Nasser couldn't do it either. And there is no viable political movement that holds that kind of vision."

Abu-Lughod grants that at Camp David the Israelis "scored a victory which they didn't dream of. Israel's aspiration has always been a bilateral agreement."

He thinks Carter and Kissinger deserve credit for this. "Kissinger is the one who first perceived it was possible, and Carter succeeded in getting the Israelis to forego something they had never foregone before: the principle of not dismantling settlements."

In exchange for giving up this principle, the Israelis not only got a peace treaty with Egypt, they "got an Arab agreement to reject the principle of a Palestinian state."

### PLO not worried.

Abu-Lughod sees the current PLO strategy as one of "keeping its options open." In contrast to when Sadat visited Jerusalem, the PLO has not called for street demonstrations against the Camp David Accords. "They are trying to avoid being held responsible for their failure. And they are trying to hold themselves free from inter-Arab skirmishes."

Abu-Lughod said that the PLO "is not as worried as I would have expected. They feel the Syrian national commitment is sufficiently strong and also the Arab national commitment."

As we were leaving the Mediterranean House, I asked Abu-Lughod if there was any way that the Accords were a victory for the Palestinians.

He rejected the Egyptian or Saudi view that they open the way to future negotiations. "In 1922," he said, "the British offered the Palestinians an administrative council, which would have included two-thirds Palestinians and one-fourth Jews. The Palestinians rejected it. It was the principle of giving the Jews more than their number allows them and accepting the idea of a mandate. Sixty years later you come up with even less than the administrative council. It's unbelievable."

But Abu-Lughod did see one paradoxical way in which the accords were a victory. "When you have to go through all that complication and trouble to contain several million people, that means these same people are going to come back and haunt you."

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# IN THE NATION

## ELECTIONS

# Dukakis dumped in Massachusetts gubernatorial vote

By Sidney Blumenthal

BOSTON

**I**NCUMBENT MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNOR Michael Dukakis was upset in the mid-September primary by Edward J. King, a law-and-order, business-oriented Democrat. While Dukakis was beaten by a candidate to his right, Democratic voters cast 70 percent of their ballots for two extremely liberal candidates for the U.S. Senate. Meanwhile, in the Republican primary U.S. Senator Edward Brooke, a moderate Republican turned back a challenge from the New Right's Avi Neison.

The Massachusetts election confirmed no clear trend to the right or left but rather revealed a schizophrenia on the part of the electorate, who seemed to be moving in several directions simultaneously. On the one hand the highly touted threat from the New Right, in Brooke's case, was quelled. On the other hand, an incumbent governor with a liberal image was upset by an unimaginative, conservative Democrat. Tip O'Neill, the U.S. Speaker of the House and Democratic sage from Massachusetts, analyzed the gubernatorial primary results as an "anti-guy" vote, not as an "anti liberal" vote.

At the center of this enigmatic vote is Gov. Michael Dukakis, at once a social liberal and fiscal conservative. One of Jimmy Carter's earliest supporters, Dukakis was personally and politically close to the President. But however close he was to Carter, Dukakis was more frequently cast as the New England version of California Governor Jerry Brown— young, bright, pragmatic, able to ride several political currents simultaneously—that is, until now.

### Dukakis alienates everyone.

The difference between Brown and Dukakis was finally evident in the primary. Dukakis' ambiguities worked against him, unlike Jerry Brown's. Dukakis, while appearing to be similar to Brown, is really a distinct figure.

The obvious factor causing Dukakis' downfall is taxes. Before assuming office he vowed not to raise taxes; once in power now taxes were enacted. This would seem to be enough reason for him to arouse voter resentment. But the case for the tax revolt forcing Dukakis from office is not so simple.

The governor managed the state's fiscal crisis, moving Massachusetts from insolvency to the point where the state distributed millions of dollars to towns and cities to be applied for property tax relief.

The manner in which Dukakis handled virtually every issue, however, served to alienate some voter groups. He offended both liberals and conservatives, receiving acclaim from neither group for achievements that might have been to their liking. Dukakis was a good-government liberal—a manager with a distaste for the politics of patronage and favors. Although he practiced a modest lifestyle, taking the subway to the State House every morning with other commuters, he generated no ascetic mystique like his California

counterpart. The Massachusetts governor's statements weren't perplexing like Brown's, suggesting deeper insight. Dukakis was straight-forward and even banal. He wanted things to be clear-cut. Yet his policies were a mixture of liberalism and conservatism.

### "Wielding a meat-cleaver."

When Dukakis cut the state human services budget he spoke blandly about wielding a "meat-cleaver." Liberals were offended by this stark image, especially considering the hapless victims—the retarded, crippled and unemployed. Brown, however, speaks of the age of lowered expectations and explains how less is more; he presents state budgetary problems as a philosophy lesson. Dukakis evoked the image of an emotionless Puritan, a throwback to the past.

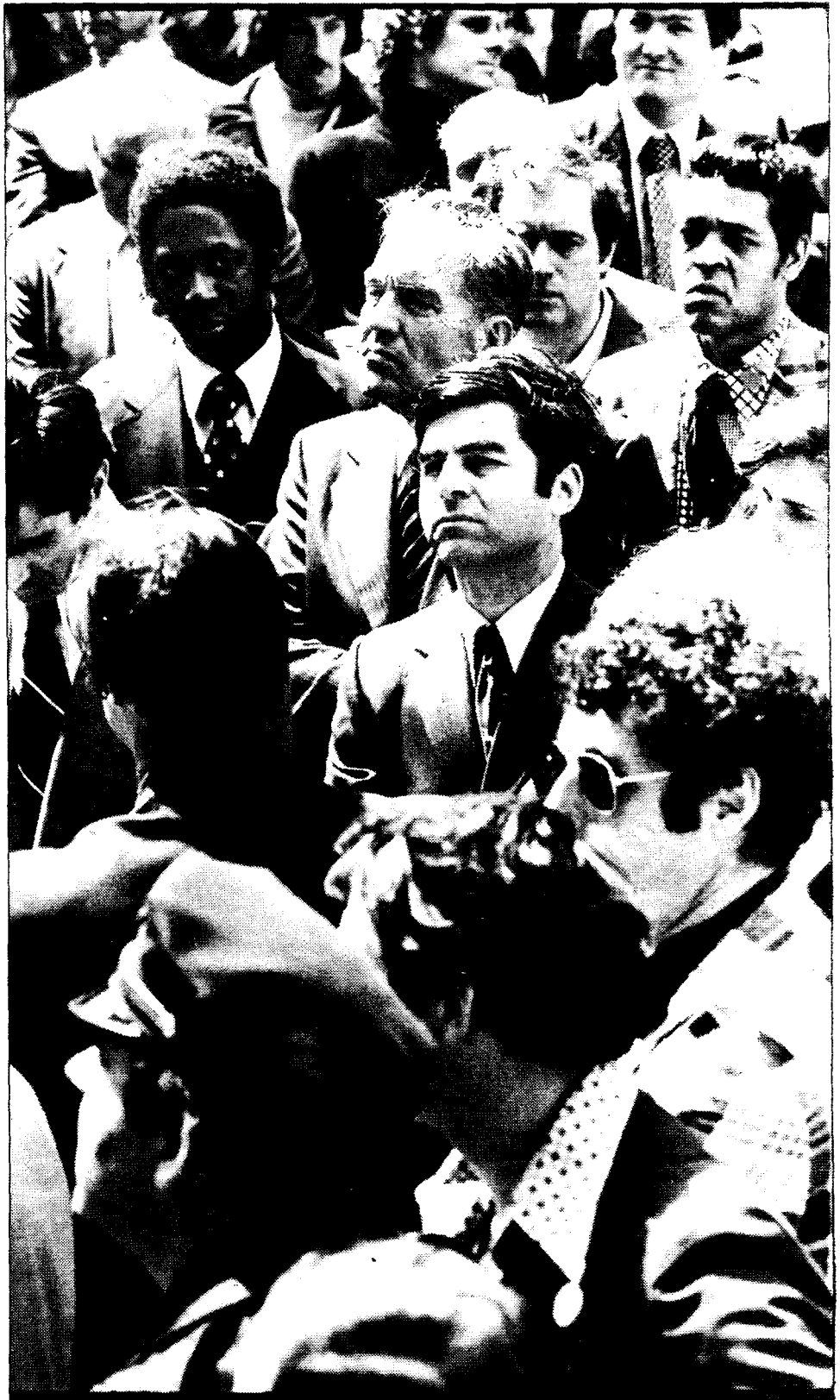
Even though Dukakis satisfied Massachusetts bankers with his handling of the state fiscal crisis he didn't earn their political support. Other conservatives attacked him for his good-government style reforms, particularly in the court system, where Dukakis attempted to end an inefficient set-up plagued by cronyism. His judicial appointments were almost uniformly notable, including the appointment of Margaret Burnham, a young black woman who was Angela Davis' attorney, to the Boston Municipal Court. Conservatives reviled the governor for his progressive tendencies, including his veto of a capital punishment bill passed by the state legislature. Meanwhile, liberals didn't give Dukakis credit for his positive accomplishments because he was so tainted in their minds for doing big business' bidding in the state financial crunch. And state workers despised him for vetoing their pay raise. Consequently, Dukakis failed to develop any real constituency. He repelled both the right and left. Dukakis really didn't see his goals as political. He viewed himself more as an administrator than as a politician. That is why he completely neglected to develop a strong organization for the primaries.

Among Democratic governors, Dukakis was regarded as a rising figure, part of a new wave. But he showed in his political conduct the dangers of mixing ideologies and programs. Without the strong personal appeal of a Jerry Brown, Dukakis discovered that he was without the vital support of traditional Democratic constituencies.

### Conservative Democrat, liberal Republican.

Edward J. King, the man who defeated Dukakis, successfully rode the wave of anti-incumbent sentiment to victory. As head of the Massachusetts Port Authority, King was responsible for overseeing the expansion of Boston's Logan Airport into the surrounding community. His autocratic style made him contemptuous of the people from nearby working-class neighborhoods who protested the expansion.

King's program is almost a parody of conservatism. He takes a hardline stand



Incumbent Governor Michael Dukakis (center) marches against racism. He was defeated by a conservative Democrat.

on issues ranging from reinstating capital punishment to raising the drinking age. His manner is stiff, unexciting, crude.

The principal source of King's campaign funds came from those who were shut out of lucrative state contracts and the spoils of patronage by Dukakis. Among King's big financial supporters are real estate speculators, builders, construction unions, and assorted right-wing businessmen. It is ironic that while King preaches an anti-government, tax cut message, his support comes from those who thrive on state expenditures.

Refusing to bow to pressure from more prudent Democrats who want him to adopt a more moderate tack in the upcoming general elections, King has stuck adamantly to his conservative platform. He claims that the primary vindicated his position and he views himself as a tribune of the silent majority. Other Democrats, wary of supporting him on the ticket in November, have given him only tepid support. This should benefit his opponent, Republican Richard Hatch, a liberal state representative.

Massachusetts voters, perhaps the most liberal in the nation, are presented with an electoral twist in which the Democrat is the conservative and the Republican is the liberal.

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The electorate in Massachusetts moved to the left and right simultaneously. It turned back the New Right and threw out a liberal governor.