

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

July 15, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: DAVE GERGEN  
FROM: BOB MEAD *BM*  
SUBJECT: JIMMY CARTER

Allow me to share with you some thoughts and perceptions I had last evening watching the Democratic nominating speeches for Governor Carter. (No charge for this.) This contribution, along with David Broder's excellent article, "Carter Enigma is Real," may in some small way help President Ford in his approach for a November victory. (I'm sure there are experts in this already, but my interpretation might add a little.)

I realized during the nominating speeches that an air of the Gospel was flowing from my television set. Speeches were more like testimonials or confessionals. Phrases used i.e. "when you come to know him the way I do" (used by Jesus' disciples) and "...he can lay that burden down..." (in obvious reference to the plight of racism) are typical of how the campaign has been going. They were falling short of equating him with God.

It is very effective on television, and several scenes reminded me of Madison Square Garden when Hitler appeared in the late 30's. There was mass control and mass psychology (exactly what the Germans did); people were caught up in the mystique of it all. (Present day maharajas do this also.)

The bottom line, I suppose, is that you must be very careful in the way you will deal with Carter, in speeches and attitudes. You cannot defy him, or say anything bad about him. (Thus you challenge the world of Christianity.)

On television the nominee caresses, soothes, croons, if you will, to put the people at ease. That soft, even-toned voice relaxes people, and they are receptive. He uses an old trick of lowering his voice to make you want to lean forward to hear him. (If you ever have lunch with Eric Sevareid, sit next to him as he uses this technique.) Carter also pauses long enough for his listeners to shout for more of that "wisdom."

Carter uses this religious atmosphere to his advantage. Karl Marx called religion the opiate of the masses. When you're down and out (Carter on how the country's going), when you need a fix, to get a shot to get your mind off your troubles, you look for something soothing. (Has he not been telling us he understands

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our problems?)

The Governor comes across, also, as if he is in charge, no one else. There is an air of confidence about him on television which goes along with that soothing voice. "I am nothing but a peanut farmer..." (Jesus was a carpenter.)

When you start saying that Carter is not specific, particularly on issues, remember that Jesus was not specific. He said, "...only follow me, I will show thee the way..." He never said how he would do it or what he would do. Jesus only said, "...you must believe." Never did he explain how or why.

Like Jesus, Carter to a lot of people is a symbol of what you believe you are...Your faith lifts you up...you have faith in yourself. You do the work, Carter doesn't. He is trying to give an incentive to lead a good life to prevent that judgment day. (No one ever commits suicide who sees hope, and Carter is offering out that hope.)

There are lessons to be learned from his style and manner. Perhaps now politicians will refrain from shouting campaign oratory and let others whip up a frenzied audience instead. But attacks on him will be dangerous. You must now think of a way to "out-Herod Herod."

