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By Helen Dewar



In Plains, Ga., Jimmy Carter prepares for interview on NBC's "Today" show.

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# Carter Attacks Ford's Ability to Lead

By Helen Dewar

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ATLANTA, Aug. 30—Jimmy Carter characterized President Ford today as "timid, fearful and afraid to lead" as Carter began two days of missionary efforts among Catholic, Jewish, black, ethnic and labor leaders here, in Washington and New York.

Addressing several hundred campaign volunteers outside the new Carter-Mondale headquarters here, the Democratic presidential nominee sharpened his attack on Mr. Ford's leadership and warned it would be a mistake to underestimate "the aura of the White House" in the campaign.

"It's not going to be easy," said Carter, whose lead over Mr. Ford has slipped sharply in the polls since the President was chosen as the Republican nominee 11 days ago. "We're running a tough campaign."

Seeking to reduce the potential value of Mr. Ford's incumbency at the polls, Carter said, "Don't forget this: Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter are both running for President for the first time."

Taking issue with President Ford's recent listing of his issues for the fall campaign—which Carter said was issued "between golf games" during the President's post-convention vacation at Vail, Colo.—the Democratic nominee accused Mr. Ford of neglecting to mention his leadership record as President.

Similarly, Carter charged that Mr. Ford neglected to mention "trust . . . embarrassment and shame . . . lowered expectations," along with such Carter-proposed issues as governmental reorganization, tax and welfare reform, urban problems and "basic human rights."

Carter specifically cited a Senate report of Medicaid losses of a least \$4 billion a year through fraud, deficient patient care, maladministration and issuance of benefits to ineligible persons and asked caustically:

"When the Senate was investigating the management of Medicaid, where was the President, where were the officials in the executive branch who are supposed to administer the program? I don't know. Sitting in the White House perhaps, timid, fearful, afraid to lead, afraid to manage. That's something they're going to have to answer for."

In his last trip before the official opening of his campaign next Monday in Warm Springs, Ga., Carter met earlier in the day with Jewish supporters and spoke here tonight to the Voter Education Project, a group devoted to the registration of black voters, before flying to Washington.

In Washington, he will meet with state Democratic chairmen, the AFL-

CIO general board, the head of the United Transportation Union, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and the national Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Although Carter has received strong backing among blacks, his strategists concede that he needs more exposure among traditionally Democratic ethnic groups in the Northeast, principally Catholics who have demonstrated some apprehension over his fundamentalist Southern Baptist faith and his opposition to a constitutional amendment banning abortion.

In addressing about 70 Jewish advisors and potential supporters here at the start of his trip, Carter reaffirmed his "undeviating, unequivocal" support for Israel, a strong American

guarantee of defense for the Jewish state and a peaceful settlement of Mideast hostilities that does not put Israel at a disadvantage.

He called for "humane settlement" of the Palestinian refugee problem, as he has before, but then went out of his way today to stipulate that any settlement should absolve Israel of blame for the problem.

In his continually escalating criticism of abuses by the nation's intelligence agencies, Carter said they have "tended to snuff out individual human rights." He added: "It has been a devastating blow to the American consciousness to realize that our government, of which we are so proud, in its two major law enforcement agencies has deliberately and habitually violated the law."