

Ford & Carter Presidencies

I. Gerald Ford's Presidency

- A. Pardon of Nixon brought immediate controversy in Sept., 1974
 - Nixon accepted offer yet admitted no wrongdoing; had not yet been charged with a crime.
- B. Economy plagued with "**stagflation**"
 - 1. Ford called for voluntary restraints on inflation and asked citizens to wear **WIN (Whip Inflation Now)** buttons.
 - Inflation did drop from 12% to 5% in 1976 but drop was temporary.
 - 2. Ford asked for tax cuts to stimulate business and argued against spending for social programs.
- C. South Vietnam (Saigon) fell to North Vietnam in April 1975
 - 1. Ford had failed to get from Congress approval to provide more arms for South Vietnam.
 - 2. To many Americans it appeared U.S. involvement in Vietnam had been tragically in vain.
- D. **The Mayaguez**
 - 1. May 12, 1975, Cambodia, seized by communists 2 weeks earlier, seized the American merchant ship *Mayaguez* in the Gulf of Thailand.
 - 2. After demanding the ship and crew be freed, Ford ordered a Marine assault on Tang Island, where the ship had been taken.
 - 3. Ship and crew of 39 released but 38 Marines were killed.

II. Election of 1976

- A. Nominees
 - 1. Ford narrowly defeated Ronald Reagan for the Republican nomination.
 - 2. Democrats nominated Jimmy Carter, former governor of Georgia, and peanut farmer.
 - a. Ran as an outsider from Washington (like Reagan did in 1980)
 - Emphasized integrity & lack of Washington connections; born-again Baptist; "I'll never lie to you"
 - b. Carter a conservative Democrat who questioned affirmative government and welcomed increased role of religion in public life.
- B. Result
 - 1. Carter d. Ford narrowly 297 to 240; 51% of the popular vote.
 - a. Swept every state except Virginia.
 - b. 97% of blacks voted for Carter.
 - 2. Large Democratic majorities in both houses

III. Jimmy Carter's presidency: Domestic policy

- A. Domestic achievements
 - 1. **Amnesty** -- Pardoned 10,000 draft evaders during Vietnam era (campaign pledge)
 - 2. Created the **Department of Education** (and the Department of Energy -- see below)
 - 3. Placed the civil service on a merit basis and reduced Civil Service System
 - 4. Environment: created Superfund
- B. Energy
 - 1. 1977, created **Dept. of Energy** at the cabinet level (in light of recent energy crisis)
 - 2. Proposed raising the tax on gasoline and taxing autos that used fuel inefficiently in order to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil.
 - Got only a small portion of this bill through Congress.
 - 3. 2nd fuel shortage in 1979 exacerbated the nation's energy woes.
 - Spurred by the Iranian Revolution and demise of the Shah.
- C. Economy (stagflation continued)
 - 1. Convinced Congress to pass an \$18 billion tax cut in 1978.
 - 2. 1978, proposed voluntary wage and price guidelines to combat inflation
 - a. Somewhat successful but didn't apply to oil, housing, and food.
 - b. By 1980 inflation was 12%
 - 3. Federal Reserve Board tightened money supply in order to reduce inflation but interest rates soared to 20%!
 - Sales of automobiles and houses suffered which increased unemployment.
 - 4. By 1980, unemployment reached 7.5%
- D. Environment
 - 1. **Created "superfund"** for the cleanup of chemical waste dumps.
 - 2. Established controls over strip mining
 - 3. Protected 100 million acres of Alaskan wilderness from development
 - 4. Three-mile Island nuclear accident occurred in 1979
- E. **Deregulation**
 - 1. Air Transportation Deregulation Act (1978): Ended government regulation of airline fares and routes
 - 2. Action symbolizes Carter as a conservative Democrat. (Perhaps the most conservative since Grover Cleveland)
- F. Peacetime Draft Registration: 18 year-olds required to register with the Selective Service System to prepare the nation militarily; no one actually drafted.

IV. Foreign policy under Carter

- A. **Humanitarian diplomacy** -- sought to base foreign policy on human rights but was criticized for inconsistency and lack of attention to US interests.
1. Verbally lashed out at Cuba and Uganda for human rights violations.
 2. Cut foreign aid to Uruguay, Argentina, and Ethiopia.
 3. Championed black majority in South Africa and denounced Apartheid.
 4. Did not punish South Korea or Philippines -- too vital to U.S. security.
-- Some saw this as hypocritical.
 5. Humanitarian diplomacy ultimately ineffective.
- B. **Panama Canal treaty:** Provided for transfer of ownership of the Canal to Panama in 1999 and guaranteed its neutrality.
- C. **Camp David Accords** (September 17, 1978) -- perhaps Carter's greatest accomplishment
1. Another conflict imminent between Egypt and Israel.
 2. Carter invited President **Anwar Sadat** of Egypt and Prime Minister **Menachem Begin** of Israel to a summit conference at Camp David.
 3. After 13 days, Carter persuaded them to sign an accord that seemed to place the two countries on a solid road toward peace.
 4. **Palestinian Liberation Front (PLO)** led by **Yasser Arafat** would use terrorism to protest the existence of Israel.
 5. Sadat eventually assassinated by Muslim extremists.
- D. **Recognition of China**
1. US ended official recognition of Taiwan and in 1979 recognized the People's Republic of China.
 2. Conservatives called the decision a "sell out"
 3. UN had recognized Communist China in 1972 as a member of UN Security Council
- E. Cold War politics
1. **SALT II**
 - a. SALT I treaty due to expire in late 1977.
-- Carter called for a renewing of the SALT accords and extending them to include real reductions in nuclear armaments.
 - b. 1979, Carter signed SALT II with the USSR.
 - c. Not ratified by the Senate in light of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
 2. Soviet invasion of **Afghanistan** (end of détente), December 1979
 - a. Carter's proclaimed U.S. would "use any means necessary, including force," to protect the Persian Gulf against Soviet aggression.
 - b. Stopped shipments of grain and certain advanced technology to the USSR
 - c. Withdrew from SALT II from the senate
 - d. Boycotted the 1980 summer Olympics held in Moscow.
-- In retaliation, Moscow boycotted 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.
 - e. Soviets met stiff resistance in Afghanistan and the war became "Russia's Vietnam"; Soviet forces pulled out a decade later
- F. **Iran Hostage Crisis:** biggest crisis of Carter's presidency and cost him election of 1980.
1. The Iranian Revolution
 - a. In 1978, a revolution forced the Shah of Iran to flee the country.
 - b. **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini**, a religious leader, became Iran's leader.
-- Reversed many of Shah's western reforms and established conservative Islamic social order.
 - c. Revolutionaries called the U.S. "the Great Satan" for its support of money and arms to the Shah of Iran.
-- CIA had put the Shah in power in 1953 after it overthrew Mossadegh supported the Shah's regime until his ouster.
 2. American hostages
 - a. Carter allowed the Shah to come to the U.S. for medical treatment in Oct. 1979 after Shah was in exile.
 - b. In response, about 400 Iranians (many of them students) broke into the U.S. embassy in Tehran on November 4, taking the occupants captive.
-- Demanded Shah be returned to Iran for trial and that his wealth be confiscated and given to Iran.
 - c. Carter froze Iranian assets in the U.S. and initiated a trade embargo against Iran.
 - d. Iranians eventually freed the black and women hostages but kept 52 others.
 - e. April 1980, Carter ordered a Marine rescue attempt but it failed after several helicopters broke down and another crashed, killing 8 men ("Operation Eagle Claw")
 - f. Carter perceived as weak, indecisive, and ineffective and suffered for it in the 1980 elections.
 3. Release of the hostages after 444 days.
 - a. After extensive negotiations with Iran Carter released Iranian assets and the hostages were freed on January 20, 1980.
 - b. As a final insult to Carter, hostages were released after Reagan took his inaugural oath so that Carter could not solve the crisis during his presidency.