

## Oil And U.S. Public Opinion

In a recent Harris poll, the American people said, by a ratio of better than 2 to 1, that "we do not have to go along with the Arabs" just because of oil shortages.

Of course, the real crunch hasn't come yet: neither Sundays at home, nor a cold winter, nor brown-outs—much less any economic dislocations which might result from energy shortage. By and large, the American people are overwhelmingly favorable towards the Israeli cause—but they do not have an absolute love or commitment to Israel. In the opinion polls since 1948, only a small percentage of Americans have said that they favor Israel because "it's a homeland for oppressed Jews," or for any such reason. For the most part, they like Israel because it is good for America. There's nothing decisive that ties them to Israel, if that country should not turn out to be good for America.



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However, the Harris poll may suggest that the American people don't think of American national interest just in terms of oil. Right now, the sovereignty of this nation is at stake. Our national policy states that it is in American interest to protect Israel from Soviet-backed invasion by the Arab nations. When the Soviets threatened intervention, the United States called a military alert—and the American people approved, just as they had approved Kennedy's action in the Cuban missile crisis. Are we now to abandon our sovereign self-interest because a few oil sheiks are, by chance, sitting on a rich oil supply?

**That, of course, is exactly what Japan and most of Western Europe are doing: trading their sovereignty for oil. It is true that they are more dependent on Arab oil than America is. But the trade-off is still there: oil for sovereignty. The oil sheiks are making their foreign policy.**

Americans are not likely to bend so easily to this blackmail. They are being pretty well educated to the fact that only a fraction of American oil comes from the Arab nations—and to the fact that the energy crisis is larger than the matter of oil fields.

By the same token, Americans are not going to precipitately jump into the posture that the discomforts occasioned by the oil shortage are caused by Israel, and that we should therefore immediately abandon her. They know they would be abandoning more than Israel.

And by the same token, Americans are not going to plunge into an anti-Semitic frenzy as soon as they encounter the discomforts of oil shortage. Of course, the committed anti-Semites will attempt to use Israel as one more prong on which to hang their anti-Semitism. But the last time Americans were asked whether they thought American Jews "have anything to do with the trouble in the Middle East," only about 12 percent answered "yes," and about half of those thought there was nothing wrong in it. Just as the general American public has not adopted "Jewish" reasons for their support of Israel—so it has not, by and large, made sinister connections between Israel and American Jewry. They know, of course, that American Jews have a special interest in Israel, but such an interest is in itself not a strange phenomenon in ethnic America.

If Israel is done in—and the upcoming rounds of diplomacy will determine that—it will probably not be a simple matter of American public reactions to the oil shortage.