

OIL INTERESTS AND ISRAEL

Some of us missed the main point of the John Connally speech which shocked the Jewish community a couple of weeks ago.

He was charged in some quarters with "selling out" to the oil interests, but even if that were true, it misses the mark. The long-range interests of the American oil industry and of American Jewry should coincide on the subject of Israel and the Middle East. Why don't they? That's the point.

There is no doubt that oil was on the top of Connally's mind when he made that speech. He said so. But American access to oil *should* be on the top of *everyone's* mind. In the immediate future, the United States will be in a deep hole, and Israel in a deeper hole, without American access to oil.

But what does American access to Middle East oil mean? It means that the current regime, or a regime friendly to the U.S., will remain in power in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It even means that a regime no less friendly to the U.S. will remain in power in Iran. Those necessities apply to price as well as to access. Our economy could be even more seriously wrecked by insane and unfriendly oil pricing.

In the logic of things, who would like to see the oil-producing countries like Saudi, Kuwait and Iran turn their backs completely on the U.S.? The Soviet Union, that's who; and the "revolutionary movement" which is sweeping parts of the world such as Central America and Africa, with the help of the PLO and of the Cubans, under the guidance of the Soviet Union.

There probably *should* be political revolutions in many of those countries, where so many people have been oppressed for so long. But the fact is that they are usually happening in the PLO-Cuban-Soviet pattern, which is another story. As things stand, Saudi and Iran themselves, among other oil producers, are destined to fall into that same pattern.

Who will suffer drastically when these countries turn their backs on the U.S.? Generally, the American society and Western civilization; specifically, the American oil companies, Israel and American Jewry. But if the oil companies and Jewry have a common stake in this matter, how is it that the oil companies and Jewry -- and various American politicians -- do not have a common program?

On one level, there may be some honest, if sometimes simple-minded, differences about strategy. Oil producers and others may actually believe that if the Saudi regime is given everything it wants, it will be powerful and persevere. That's what they thought about the Shah of Iran. They may actually believe that the PLO can be subverted into moderation by giving it a state.

Anything is possible, we are told. But some of us believe the odds to be infinitely greater that if a PLO state is set up, without a drastic change in the PLO character, there will be war, there will be a toppling of the Saudi regime, there will be a closure of oil to the United States.

Of course, it might be that the American oil industry is so greedy that it doesn't care about its own long-range interests. A few more banner years like this, and these multi-national conglomerates can go into the frozen chicken business. Or at least some of the stockholders and executives can go into splendid retirement. If that's the case, it's still up to the American government to insist on those policies which will protect oil access, and generally prevent Soviet hegemony in the Middle East.

In any case, that is our arena for debate: *not* Israel vs. oil, but what is good for both the Jews *and* oil access.