

## The Palestinian Issue

When the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle ran a picture of Henry Kissinger in Arab head-dress, people asked suspiciously: "Now, what does that mean?"

That's an indication of Kissinger's peculiar power. He has no political power base, and could be toppled in a minute. But, for various reasons, he seems to have become the key to several specific situations, such as the Middle East. Si Kenen, head of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee said in San Francisco this week that Kissinger is the best single hope for trying to bring some peaceful resolution in the Middle East. Kenen added that when all the conflicting rumors are sifted, the best reporters conclude that Kissinger has never betrayed his commitment



Raab

to Israel's survival.

As Secretary of State, Kissinger's prime commitment to Israel's survival is based on the fact that Israel's survival is important for American national interest. That is the one and only reason that most Americans remain favorable to the cause of Israel's survival.

In the near future, for example, we are going to hear more and more about the "Palestinian Issue." Most Americans don't give a hang about the Palestinian issue, one way or another. The attitudes of the public and or public officials towards support of Israel is not going to be shifted one degree by the Palestinian issue — even if full-page ads run every day in every metropolitan daily. That much has been learned by studying the public opinion polls and the behavior of public officials.

But if, for other reasons, the perception of American national interest changes, then the Palestinian issue will serve as one excuse for changing the American stance on the Middle East. For example, the neo-isolationist wing of the American "peace" movement is now pushing hard on the Palestinian issue, as an excuse for its fundamental belief that America is so evil, it should withdraw from the world scene everywhere.

The crucial, mind-changing question is still *not* the Palestinian issue, but American national interest — including the need for America to maintain a selective, productive presence on the world scene. That larger question is the one that requires the prime educational attention.

Nevertheless, it is still necessary to "keep them honest" on the Palestinian issue, and make the disingenuous excuses as difficult as possible. For that reason, it is especially dismaying to find so many Jews who don't know, for example, that:

- "Palestine" never really existed before 1922, and then came into existence as a geographical term, not a political or ethnic term, describing the area now roughly occupied by both Israel and Jordan.
- "Palestinians" means all those who live in or come from that geographical area: Jews, Moslems, Christians, Arabs, whatever.
- More Jews fled from Arab countries to Israel, than there were Arabs who fled from Israel to the Arab world.
- Of the 2.8 million Palestinians who are Arab, over a million live in that part of Palestine known as Jordan; another half million live as Israeli citizens in that part of Palestine known as Israel. About two-thirds of the Jordanian population is Palestinian Arab.

**There is a Palestinian issue, there are Arab national aspirations which cannot be ignored — but until the myths are combed away from the facts, this issue can be used mischievously for diversionary purposes, if American winds should shift.**

The Northern California group of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee has just prepared a one-sheeter on the Palestinian issue, separating the myths from the facts. Longer material is available through the American Professors for the Middle East, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the ZOA, etc. Such materials are available to you through the JCRC, or from your favorite neighborhood organization.