

Troubled Oil On The Waters

The Standard Oil Co. of California, headquartered in San Francisco, has just sent a letter to all of its stockholders, urging more sympathy for the Arab cause. It signals an upcoming campaign for America to ditch Israel and is worth some analysis.

At the end of the long letter, there are a couple of after-thought sentences which carry a lofty and familiar rhetoric: "It is in the best interest of all of us who are citizens of the United States to urge our government to work towards conditions of peace and stability. We must acknowledge the legitimate interests of all the peoples of the Middle East and help them to achieve security and a dependable economic future." The letter then urges "a course which above all seeks a peaceful and just settlement of conflicting viewpoints."



Raab

Those are marvelous sentiments, which all must applaud. But they have absolutely nothing to do with the body of the letter. The body of the letter does not even hint that there are "legitimate interests" in the Middle East other than those of the Arab nations. As far as the letter is concerned, Israel does not exist. There is only mention of the Arab nations, and of the villainous United States which has been treating them badly for some reason or another.

The letter says: "There is now a growing feeling in much of the Arab world that the United States has turned its back on the Arab people. Many are said to feel that Americans do not hold in proper regard the national interests of the Arab states... It is highly important at this time that the United States should work more closely with the Arab governments... There must be understanding on our part of the aspirations of the Arab people, and more positive support of their efforts toward peace in the Middle East."

Their efforts toward peace in the Middle East? One is tempted to ask which efforts Standard Oil has in mind: the continual statements of Arab leaders that they're going to drive the Israelis into the sea? The harboring of terrorists who hijack planes and machinegun innocent people? The blockading of the Gulf of Aquaba? The unyielding refusal to recognize the existence of Israel or to sit down and negotiate differences with the Israelis? One would like to know which of these aspects of the Arab peace offensive the Standard Oil Co. feels deserves "more positive support" from the United States.

But never mind. The main point is this: why doesn't this letter even make a passing pretense at "even-handedness" and suggest that there are two sets of peace proposals in the field—those of Israel (that's the name of the country), and those of the Arab nations—and that it is the job of the United States to attempt to integrate these different proposals?

Having failed to do that, the letter clearly indicates that there are in the Middle East the "good guys" and victims (the Arab nations); and the "bad guys" (Israel, whose name most people can supply from memory, although unmentioned in the letter).

The point is that even the dullest student of the Middle East knows that neither peace nor stability lies in that direction. If the Arab Nations (like Standard Oil) refuse to recognize Israel's existence, refuse to recognize that there are also "legitimate interests" on Israel's part, there can only be continuing war. Then, the only "final solution" is the removal of Israel. And to put it at its mildest, that is not the road to peace and stability.

Then, how explain the Standard Oil letter which calls for peace and stability in the Middle East, but points in the other direction? Certainly, oil aside, peace and stability in the Middle East is in the American national interest and that of world peace. Russia and China would be quite pleased to have troubled waters there in which they can fish. And, in the long range, America's access to Middle East oil will be more threatened than it is now, if there is a real shift of geopolitical power in that area.

Some Standard Oil stockholders are apparently asking these questions. Can it be that Standard Oil is just interested in some short-range corporate opportunities, never mind the consequences to America? Can it be that this letter was written mainly to comply with the demands of Arab leaders? Surely, there must be some other explanation!