

# The Politics of Muslim Anti-Semitism

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The representative of the Zionist entity is evidently incapable of concealing his deep-seated hatred toward the Arab world for having broken loose from the notorious exploitation of its natural resources, long held in bondage and plundered by his own people's cabal which controls and manipulates and exploits the rest of humanity by controlling the money and wealth of the world. . . . People like Lord Rothschild every day, in ironclad secrecy, decide to flash around the world how high the price of gold should be on each particular day. And there is Mr. Oppenheimer of South Africa, who holds 15 million blacks in bondage in order to exploit and monopolize the diamonds, the uranium, and other precious resources which rightfully belong to the struggling African people of South Africa and Namibia. It is a well-known fact that the Zionists are the richest people in the world and control much of its destiny.

DISREGARD the references to "the Zionist entity" and "the struggling African people of South Africa and Namibia" and these words might have been heard at a Nazi rally in the 30's. Yet they were spoken only last December, and not by a member of the radical Right but by Hazem Nuseibeh, Jordan's delegate to the United Nations. These remarks, moreover, though unusually flagrant and provocative, are far from unique: similar talk about a worldwide Jewish conspiracy is heard regularly from the leaders of many Muslim countries in the Middle East. They assault *Jews*, no longer even pretending to draw a distinction between them and Israelis.

This is puzzling, for until recently Muslims had nothing in their lexicon corresponding to Christian anti-Semitism. Jews had lived among Muslims since the days of Muhammad without ever becoming the target of such base, far-fetched attacks as the Jordanian ambassador's. Yet if notions of Jewish conspiracy are alien to Islam, they are now most often heard coming from Muslims. How has this come about? What significance does it have?

Before taking up these questions, a distinction

must be made between ordinary anti-Semitism—disliking Jews and imputing to them various objectionable traits—and morbid fear of Jews. Dislike of Jews fits into normal patterns of racial, ethnic, and religious bias, and though neither pleasant nor harmless, it does not differ substantially from prejudice against other minorities. The second category of anti-Semitism is quite different. It goes far beyond normal ethnic or religious animosities to claim that the Jews actually threaten the world. Before the 18th century, this threat was conceived in theological terms: Jews were seen as the enemies of Christianity. Since then, the emphasis has become secularized, so that modern anti-Semitism has as its central motif the notion that Jews are to be feared because they aspire, through economic and political conspiracy, to world domination.\* That Muslims were not conversant with this second level of anti-Semitism until recently is not surprising, for it is a characteristically Christian notion that derives from ancient relations with Jews, going back all the way to the very birth of Christianity.

Christians have convoluted feelings about Jews, deriving at least in part from the ambiguous tie between them: Jesus was one of them but rejected many of their practices; Christians accept the Hebrew scriptures but read them in a different light; Jews did not accept Jesus as the messiah, and have been blamed for his crucifixion; some Christians believe that Jesus' Second Coming will not occur until all Jews convert. For these and other reasons, Jews cannot but occupy a central place in Christian consciousness; they can never be forgotten. Even unbelieving Christians retain an awareness of the special role of Jews in their civilization. By the same token, Christian peoples cannot be indifferent to the state of Israel. Whether they favor it

\* In theory, anti-Semitism is directed against all peoples who speak Semitic languages, not just Jews, but also Arabs, Ethiopians, and others. In fact, it refers to Jews alone—as the collaboration between Nazis and Arab leaders during World War II proved. Arabs occasionally protest that as Semites themselves, they are incapable of anti-Semitism, but this is merely semantic mischief; whatever its etymological source, the term clearly refers to anti-Jewish sentiment and Arabs are as capable of this as anyone speaking an Indo-European language.

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or not, Israel can no more be just another state for Christians than it can be for Jews. The connections go too deep for mere indifference.

If Jews in the West suffered from too much Christian attention, in Muslim countries they had the good fortune to be both less significant and less prominent. In Europe Jews were after all the only "infidels" most Christians ever encountered and they stood out very conspicuously in what was otherwise a fairly homogeneous religious environment. In the Muslim world, by contrast, Jews were one minority among others; though important in Islam's early development, they did not play any great role in subsequent Muslim life. As a result, they never intruded all that much on Muslim consciousness.

In general, Muslims take a somewhat patronizing view of other religions. In their eyes, Islam is the one true and eternal religion and while other faiths contain a part, if not the whole, of God's message, they inevitably distort it. Thus, Jews are wrong in believing that God's religion is for them only, and Christians are wrong in worshipping one of God's messengers as though he were God Himself. (The Qur'an accepts Jesus as prophet and messiah but rejects him as the son of God.)

A Muslim believes so confidently in the perfection of Islam that he cannot quite comprehend why Jews and Christians continue to follow their outmoded and imperfect versions of the truth. This confidence can be seen in the Muslim response to discrepancies between biblical and Qur'anic narratives. Though the Qur'an came long after the Bible, Muslims do not hesitate to claim that their version of some events central to Judaism and Christianity is the correct one. Thus, Abraham lived in Mecca according to the Qur'an, and Jesus was never crucified. The Qur'an also implies that the Christian Trinity consists of the Father, the Son, and Mary, rather than the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christians cannot convince Muslims that this is a faulty, or at best a schismatic, notion, for the Qur'an is seen by Muslims to be faultless.

Oddly enough, this very confidence has allowed Islam to tolerate minorities better than Christianity, as may be seen in the religious diversity of the Middle East compared with Europe. So long as they met certain criteria (notably the possession of sacred scriptures) and so long as they did not challenge the superior status of Islam, non-Muslims were allowed to live under Muslim rule with the legal status of *dhimmis* (protected persons). They paid higher taxes and enjoyed fewer privileges, in return for which they had the right to practice their own religions. Such sanctioned toleration has no Christian counterpart; under Islam, Jews were second-class citizens but they were part of the legal landscape, not the problematic anomaly they were in the Christian world.

Historically, Jews and Christians under Muslim

rule received about equal treatment. Muhammad himself had mixed relations with Jews, so they are condemned several times in the Qur'an; yet Jews hardly ever threatened Muslim political supremacy, while Christians launched major attacks on Muslims beginning with the Crusades and culminating in modern European imperialism. Partly for this reason, Jews generally survived Muslim rule better than Christians did. Indeed, in some areas, such as Yemen and North Africa, Christianity died out and only Judaism persisted.

Jews appeared strange in Christian Europe: their peculiar dietary habits, unusual clothing, and a preference for living apart made them different and odd. But Muslims had comparable food habits, distinctions of dress, and living arrangements, so Jewish practices appeared quite normal to them. Culturally, too, Jews participated in the mainstream of Muslim life, as they had never done in pre-modern Christian Europe. As one minority among several—unthreatening, and living in relatively familiar ways—Jews attracted little Muslim interest. On the whole, Jewish life flourished under Muslim rule when times were good for Muslims and declined when times were bad. While the *dhimmi* status implied institutionalized discrimination, it also meant that Jews rarely encountered systematic persecution. In pre-modern times, they lived markedly better under Islam than under Christianity.

MUSLIM attitudes toward Jews began to change in the 19th century. Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in 1798 brought Muslims of the Middle East into direct and intense contact with modern Europe. After many centuries of scorning the "Franks," Muslims watched in awe and despair as West European Christians far surpassed them in wealth and power. Christians had more advanced technology, more developed institutions, a more dynamic culture, and modern medicine. In the course of the 19th century, they overpowered most Muslim rulers, so that by World War I, few Islamic countries still enjoyed independence.

Like other non-Western peoples, Muslims responded by learning Western ways. They admired and sought to imitate not just Western military and economic techniques, but also many aspects of European political culture, including its social ideas and cultural fads. Along with much else, they also learned about anti-Semitism. Not surprisingly, it was the Arabic-speaking Christians of the Levant who were most receptive to theories of Jewish perfidy and played a key role in transmitting them, assisted by Europeans living in the Middle East. In 1840, for example, when an Italian priest and his native servant disappeared from Damascus, indigenous Catholics supported by the French consul invoked the ancient charge of "blood libel" against local Jewish inhabitants.

But Europe not only made anti-Semitism available to Muslims, it also made them feel weak and hence vulnerable to anti-Semitic ideas. Muslims had long been accustomed to seeing themselves as successful in worldly matters. The stirring history of Muhammad's rise from orphan to ruler of Arabia; the phenomenal Arabian conquests which reached to France and China in less than a century; the great medieval empires, with their booming trade and distinguished culture—all of these created a Muslim expectation of wealth and power. What then had gone wrong? How had the despised Franks surpassed the Muslims? Even after many decades of debate, this question has not been satisfactorily answered.

Conspiracy theories have served to soften the blow, at least psychologically. The notion of a "hidden hand" manipulating events has unique importance in modern Middle Eastern politics, for many Muslims apparently need to believe that evil agents have stolen their rightful success. Often, it is the United States which is called upon to fill this role. When the Arabs could not accept the catastrophic defeat Israel inflicted on them in June 1967, they blamed covert American assistance. More recently, the Iranians have raised conspiratorial paranoia to new heights, and both parties in the Iraq-Iran war have been accusing the U.S. of helping the other. Zionist conspiracy theories are, as we shall see, even more widespread.

If Muslim grievances against Jews had been negligible in the pre-modern period, they increased substantially in the colonial era. Jews received favored treatment from European colonizers, especially the French, who needed local assistance in running their empires but feared and mistrusted Islam. Accordingly, they turned to non-Muslims and offered them all sorts of economic and social advantages. Jews were quick to seize these opportunities and rapidly gained privileges over their Muslim neighbors; no longer tied to *dhimmi* status, they became ambitious in precisely those ways which most offended Muslim sensibilities and provoked their resentment. When European rule ended, local Jews faced the accumulated wrath of decades, and often had no recourse but to flee. The French retreat from Algeria in 1962, for example, also signaled a Jewish exodus from that country.

**D**ESPITE these local aggravations, the Muslim world had little political concern with Jews until the period immediately preceding Jewish statehood. The establishment of Israel in 1948 was a shocking, even a traumatic event, for it meant that at one stroke Jews had cast off their *dhimmi* status, conquered part of the Muslim patrimony, and become rulers over Muslims. Christian power was bad enough, but to have Jews—the subject people *par excellence*—pushing Muslims around was too much. Muslims

had to account both for their own devastating failure and for the Jews' unexpected power.

Familiar with Christian European culture, receptive to conspiratorial theories, antagonized by Jewish economic success, outraged by the creation of Israel, Arab Muslims turned to anti-Semitism. In the 1950's, under the auspices of the Nasser regime in Egypt, a number of anti-Semitic works were translated into Arabic, and subsequently published and broadcast throughout the Arab world. Within a few years, most of the dominant anti-Semitic themes standard in the European repertoire were widely available in Arabic, with variations to suit local contingencies and all sorts of embellishments added in the translation.\*

To a large degree anti-Semitism followed political hostilities with Israel—it did not cause them. This is an important distinction: while it was anti-Zionism (that is to say, a horror of Jewish sovereignty over lands once belonging to Muslims) which impelled the Arab states to fight Israel originally, anti-Zionism alone cannot account for the extraordinary role played by Israel in Arab political life since then. Credit for that must go to anti-Semitism. The Arab obsession with Israel during the past thirty years depends for its sustenance on the fund of anti-Semitic ideas imported from Christian Europe. Without this ideology, the Arabs could not have sustained their opposition at such fever pitch. (By contrast, it is interesting to note that even at the height of the Algerian war, Arabs did not vilify the French people as they do the Jews, though that was a far more protracted and brutal conflict against a much more powerful enemy.) While hostility to Israel has indigenous roots, its transformation into the single overriding Arab cause has depended on the availability of an anti-Semitic ideology. Having no such ideology of their own, the Muslims borrowed the one invented by Christians.

By now, most of the main features of Christian anti-Semitism have been thoroughly absorbed into the Arab Muslim world. Jews are no longer just another minority in the Middle East—they are suddenly as conspicuous as they were for centuries in Europe. Rumors of blood libel and cabals have gained wide exposure, unpleasant caricatures of Jews fill the Arab press and school textbooks, loose talk about Jewish economic exploitation goes unchallenged, and Jews still living in countries such as Syria and Iraq suffer government-sponsored persecution. Hardly a mishap occurs in the Arab world which does not get blamed on the Jews.

\* The Nazis also did much to familiarize Muslims with anti-Semitism. Exploiting Middle Eastern resentment against the Allied government in the 1930's and 1940's, they established close bonds with leading political elements in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere. Nazi sponsorship of anti-Semitism made it a live ideology in the Arab world; ex-Nazis then held important positions in Nasser's government during the 1950's.

Most important, the Arabs have taken over the notion of a Jewish world conspiracy, first popularized in the notorious forgery, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and have given it a new lease on life.

The world-conspiracy idea has several obvious advantages in the Arab struggle. It makes Israel's very existence sinister; it cushions the reality of repeated defeats at Israel's hands; it makes Israel appear more dangerous, thus stimulating destructive passions in the Arab populace that might otherwise subside. Finally, by linking the Zionist conspiracy with European imperialism, the Arabs have won wide sympathy for their cause in the former colonies of the Third World.\*

During the 1950's and 1960's, the outside world heard little about Arab anti-Semitism. Zionist conspiracy was common coin in Arab political rhetoric but it served mainly internal purposes and little attempt was made to convince others of its validity. There were exceptions, of course, as when Arab diplomats, at the time of Vatican II, did their best to pressure the Church not to exculpate the Jews for Jesus' death. But for the most part, non-Arabs were hardly aware of the growing importance of anti-Semitic ideas in the Middle East.

ALL this changed in the 1970's. Arabs no longer confined their anti-Semitism to internal discussions but made vigorous efforts to spread it internationally, giving it back, so to speak, to its Christian homeland. Two developments lie behind this change: the emergence of new leaders in the Middle East, and the great oil boom.

A number of virulently anti-Semitic leaders came to power in Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Iran in this period. Saudi rulers had long connected Zionism with Communism, but the 1967 war intensified their anti-Semitism, and the ruling group that took over after King Faisal's death in 1974 stressed it even more than he had. The Saudis were openly promoting anti-Semitism before any other state; visiting foreign dignitaries were often presented with copies of the *Protocols*, and still are. (While living in Tunis in 1970, I picked up a French translation published in Lebanon, and distributed gratis by the Saudi consulate.)

In Libya, the situation changed even more dramatically. Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, who took power in 1969, grew up idolizing Gamal Abdul Nasser and formed his political beliefs on the basis of broadcasts from Radio Cairo's "Voice of the Arabs" which in those years was riddled with anti-Semitism. Throughout the dozen years of his rule, Qaddafi has made the destruction of Israel his highest priority. In Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, too, made vitriolic anti-Semitism a key issue in his attack on the Shah. Khomeini seems to have picked up anti-Semitic notions rather late in life, perhaps during his residence in Ba'th Iraq between 1964 and 1978.

The views of these Muslim leaders would count for little if not for the extraordinary oil boom that began about 1970. Producer revenues doubled by 1973, quadrupled in 1973-74, then doubled again in 1978-79. OPEC nations suddenly acquired astonishing wealth and power. The Saudi leaders and Qaddafi especially recognized the potential, and in their different ways both have won substantial international influence. Their efforts have added a whole new dimension to Middle Eastern anti-Semitism. Thanks to their oil wealth, the Arab states now have the means to spread calumnies about the Jews around the world, and also to insure that these views carry weight.

Arab power derives from three sources—selling oil, purchasing goods and services, and giving money away. In the scramble for energy supplies during recent years, many Western governments have seen good relations with Arab states as an urgent priority and have made numerous concessions to them. Of the major powers, France and Japan have done the most to avoid offending the Arabs, but as the Common Market's recent "European initiative" indicates, this approach is spreading to much of the Western world.

No less important than selling oil, Arab states massively acquire goods and services, usually paying premium prices. For many firms, winning an Arab contract can easily spell the difference between a mediocre year and a great one. The Arab oil states bring business to everyone: financiers, lawyers, manufacturers, shippers, builders, architects, scientists, academics, advertisers, and even governments.

WESTERNERS invariably note the extreme importance of personal relations when doing business in the Middle East, where sales often hinge on maintaining good relations with buyers more than on considerations of quality and price. Spelled out, this means the importance of agreement on the issue which the Arabs bring up most often and with the greatest passion: Israel. Politicians concerned about oil supplies and salesmen seeking contracts know they must show sensitivity and sympathy for the Arab view on Israel; not surprisingly, this pressure begins to change their views. Since the Arabs hold all the cards in these transactions and also the more steadfast opinions, invariably they are accommodated, and their views soon come to pervade the institutions that deal with them—foreign ministries and oil corporations most dramatically, but many others too. Even if they had not harbored such sentiments before, and even if they are

\* Still, it is worth bearing in mind that among Muslims, anti-Semitism, although gaining in strength, remains for the most part a political weapon and not a profound social illness. Anwar Sadat's case is evidence of this: in 1954 he wrote a eulogy of Hitler and in 1977 he took the courageous step of making peace with Israel.

not so crude as Billy Carter who famously observed that "there's a helluva lot more Arabians than there is Jews," employees quickly realize that a dash of anti-Semitism helps make friends and land contracts in the Middle East.

Not only do Arab states provide outstanding new markets, their governments and private citizens have also become the world's foremost philanthropists. At a time when many other sources of funds have dried up as a result of oil price increases, OPEC wealth attracts all those hoping for money—from African states in need of infrastructure to American universities seeking endowments. Arab states have an aura of wealth which bestows influence on them even when they give no money away. When they do, the competition is keen, and one way potential recipients of Arab aid vie with each other is through declarations of undying hostility to Israel.

In brief, the Arabs have managed to make Israel a pariah in international politics, the subject of more controversies—and more lopsided votes—at the United Nations than any other country. Just as Christian Europe once blamed the Jews for diverse evils in their midst, so now a motley of countries regularly reviles Israel and blames it for its problems. With over twenty votes at the United Nations, control over much of the world's disposable oil, and vast financial resources, the Arabs have the power to impose their views on others and have used it to raise anti-Semitism to the level of international politics.

The Soviet Union has of course been an invaluable partner in this enterprise, since it finds Israel useful for galvanizing an anti-Western consensus internationally and for justifying its own anti-Semitic policies internally. Nor should we ignore the willing cooperation of many Westerners—Protestant groups, human-rights activists, reporters, academic committees, and an increasing number of liberals—who for a variety of reasons are seeking a respectable forum in which to vent their own views about Jews. But much of this activity takes its cue, and its justification, from the Arabs.

THERE are many organizations in America whose sole order of business seems to be the supervision and judgment of Israel's every step, and which seem to know astonishing amounts about the minutiae of housing on the West Bank, electricity company ownership in Jerusalem, use of Jordan River water, and court cases adjudicating eminent domain. Such groups noisily oppose nearly every Israeli attempt at self-defense, whether it involves going after the PLO in Lebanon, purchasing American weapons, arresting terrorists, or bombing the Iraqi nuclear reactor. They show such pleasure at turning up allegations of torture or other abuses by the Israelis that one is tempted to think that their real goal is to attack Jews, not to help Arabs.

Nothing reveals this so clearly as the humanitarian concern lavished on the Palestinians. By any relative standard, human-rights issues involving Israel are minor: the Palestinians are few in number compared to the other peoples displaced in the aftermath of World War II (Germans, Koreans, Indians, Pakistanis); they do not face starvation; their lives are not in danger. Why then does their plight generate nearly as much concern as all other refugees combined? What of the Crimean Tatars, wrenched overnight from their homeland on May 18, 1944 and prohibited ever since from stepping foot in it? What of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries? The sadness of a Palestinian refugee camp hardly compares with the anguish of Vietnamese and Cambodians, and among Muslim peoples, Somalis and Afghans are currently experiencing far worse tribulations. Given the other refugee problems existing in the world which attract little or no attention, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Palestinian welfare is of interest to many only insofar as it can be used to harm the Jews.

Israel's enemies justify their obsessive concern with it by pointing to the Jewish state's vital importance in imperiling the Arabs' oil supplies and weakening their resistance to the Soviet Union. If only Israel acceded to Arab wishes, the logic goes, the Middle East would become more stable; this, in turn, would reduce both our energy worries and the Soviet danger. In effect, Israel's enemies argue, the fate of the entire Middle East, with its massive resources, rides on tiny Israel. This improbable analysis has an uncanny resemblance to the notion that the Second Coming awaits the conversion of the Jews. In both cases, the Jews are crucial to the fate of the world—and in both, the unsolicited role that has been thrust on them both reflects and invites anti-Semitism.

In fact, Israel is not that important to the Middle East. Aside from temporary, unsustainable boycotts, it has not until now significantly influenced the international trade of petroleum; the Arab-Israeli conflict has had far less impact on oil supplies than developments within the oil states themselves, like the revolution in Iran or the Iraq-Iran war. Nor is there any reason why this should change. As for the Soviet threat, Israel, far from endangering the region, is the West's most reliable partner there, the only politically stable nation in the Middle East and the only one with the will and the means to resist Soviet encroachments.

In orchestrating their campaign against Israel, Arab spokesmen have made a great point of distinguishing between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, but in real life this distinction turns out to be specious. Although in theory, hostility to Israel need not affect Jews elsewhere in the world (and Arab spokesmen repeat this *ad nauseam*), the fact that the great majority of Jews actively support Israel's

cause makes anti-Zionism in the end look and feel no different from anti-Semitism. If anti-Zionism were really their only concern, Palestinian terrorists would not murder Jewish travelers, businessmen, and children in Western Europe; nor would they supply arms and training to German neo-Nazi paramilitary groups, as has been recently reported. The pretense of distinguishing anti-Zionism from anti-Semitism can no longer be maintained.

**B**UT sponsoring violence against Jews is not the worst problem created by Muslim anti-Semitism; the influence of Arab states over many of the key institutions of the Western world poses much greater long-term dangers. Insofar as it is practicable, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and other governments boycott Jews in a blanket fashion, without regard to their political orientation. This has major implications for the position of Jews in many leading businesses, professional firms, universities, and even government agencies.\* (Saudi leaders not long ago refused to accept a senior British diplomat as ambassador when they learned he was Jewish.) Some Arab countries refuse to issue visas to Jews and instruct their agents to avoid dealing with them. Such attitudes make Jews an impediment to business, of course. As one American businessman noted after concluding a deal, the Libyans "simply don't want to deal with Jews or anyone else who does." At best, Jews are tacitly urged to stay away from matters Middle Eastern; at worst, they are seen as potential troublemakers who might sue or raise a furor in the press; better not to employ them at all and avoid complications. For the first time in decades, there are real incentives to make institutions *judenrein*. There are laws in the United States prohibiting this, but with care and ingenuity, they can be finessed.

It is not just in the world of international trade and diplomacy that Jews are affected by Arab anti-Semitism. Many of the best-documented cases of anti-Jewish discrimination come from the universities, perhaps because tenured professors need not fear the consequences of speaking out. Arab countries have frequently offered American universities grants and contracts which are prejudicial to Jews. Almost inevitably such grants, which are often for Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, come with strings attached. The donors expect to promote their views on politics and religion and seldom make an effort to hide their aims. They discourage Hebrew instruction, do their best to expel Jewish studies except as an aspect of European culture, and lobby to banish Israel altogether from the curriculum. Needless to say, academic institutions receiving funds from either the Arabs or their business partners (oil and construction companies in particular) come under considerable pressure to accommodate these wishes, creating an

atmosphere that is unfriendly to Jews (and even more so to Israelis). The case of a young Israeli professor at the University of Texas recently created a front-page sensation when the Middle East Center there attempted to block his appointment by the department of history, fearing his presence would antagonize its Arab benefactors. Even some of the most prestigious schools in effect exclude Jews from Arabic and Islamic teaching positions; no one admits to this, of course, but the pattern of hiring is too consistent to be coincidental, especially in light of the many Jewish students and degree-holders in these fields.

**S**OMETIMES Arab pressures become so blatant that outside forces are compelled to intervene. In 1976, the Saudi government donated \$1 million to the University of Southern California to establish the King Faisal Chair of Islamic and Arab Studies. Attached to the grant was the "understanding" that "the first incumbent of the chair shall be Professor Willard A. Beling [and that] future incumbents shall be chosen by the University in consultation with the Saudi Minister of Higher Education." Needless to say, foreign governments do not ever exercise such rights over university appointments in the United States. Beling, an ARAMCO apparatchik with slender academic credentials (and none in Islamic and Arabic studies), organized a conference in May 1978 in tribute to King Faisal. Here businessmen from forty corporations with interests in Saudi Arabia learned that the Saudis would be pleased if their firms contributed to establishing a Middle East Center at the University of Southern California, to be under the directorship of Willard A. Beling. The Center would be funded through the Middle East Center Foundation, headed by none other than the same Mr. Beling.

In the end, the proposed Middle East Center could not survive public exposure. When Jewish groups challenged the many irregularities in funding and control, and Los Angeles newspapers made those irregularities known, the USC board of trustees eventually voted down the original arrangements. This led a vice president of the Fluor Corporation, a leading proponent of the Middle East Center, to accuse "the Jewish press" of distorting the whole affair.

But violating procedures in this way is rare for the Saudis, who usually press their views with considerably more tact and subtlety. For the most part, their anti-Semitism tends to take vaguer and

\* Arab pressure has much less influence on small business, minor newspapers, community colleges, and local politicians (who have little to offer them) than on the largest corporations, the press empires, the national networks, the greatest universities, and the federal government. These come into the most frequent contact with Arabs and profit the most by assuaging them. And they set the pace for the smaller institutions.

less provable forms—it is a matter of mood rather than overt action. (After all, there is no legal recourse for someone simply made to feel unwelcome.) With time, Arab tactics in the West are becoming increasingly refined and less susceptible to the kind of public exposure resulting from the University of Southern California case.

Indeed, much of the problem lies in the growing respectability of Muslim anti-Semitism as it affects the most central and important institutions of America. Put another way, the problem lies far more with Saudi Arabia than with Libya. Libya has a reputation, well-deserved, for encouraging fanatical and violent movements. Because Qaddafi is beyond the pale, and very few Americans risk association with him, his scope for mischief has steadily narrowed. But the same is not true of other Arab states. This was dramatically illustrated in February 1981 when the trustees of Georgetown University voted to return to Libya, with interest, \$600,000 for endowing a chair in its Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, but at the same time retained about \$3.5 million from other Arab governments. A spokesman for a Jewish organization did not protest this distinction, noting that "only the Libyan grant struck us as offensive

inasmuch as Colonel Qaddafi was the underwriter of the grant as well as of international terrorism."

Rarely are the Saudis or the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms accused of supporting terrorism (despite their aid to the PLO and numerous other groups) for these countries are America's allies and widely deemed conservative and moderate. Yet in the matter of anti-Semitism, they are not outdone by Libyans, Iraqis, Iranians, or other radicals. The Saudi danger exceeds the Libyan one precisely because of Saudi Arabia's good reputation and generally reasonable language; some of the most reputable politicians and lawyers in Washington are numbered among its lobbyists. Never in America has anti-Semitism enjoyed such reputable sponsorship, never has it crept into so many central institutions.

Thus it is that anti-Semitic tendencies already present in America and Europe are further encouraged by Arab money, with potentially disastrous effects. Ironically, the new Muslim anti-Semitism is in some ways less of a threat to Jews in the Middle East, where it remains a foreign import without local roots, than it is to Jews in the Western countries, where it touches a very deep nerve.