

fair and a brittle and 'unchosen' world confronts us again. I'll be so glad when the winter desists from its barbarianisms and one can breathe again."

As I say, the letters in *Correspondence* will not lift Fitzgerald any nearer to Shakespeare. In fact, their literary value is slight. On the other hand, they tell us a great deal about a writer whose life was inextricably mingled with his art. Like most modern romantics, Fitzgerald was never able to distance himself from his subject matter. Like his friend Hemingway, whose ego was such that he could never forgive Fitzgerald for having helped him get started, Fitzgerald was narcissistic and naive. Indeed, part of his charm depended upon his naiveté, a fact of which his friends were well aware. (They also knew that his selfishness was unconscious and unthinking. Sara Murphy, for example, wrote him a scalding letter in 1934, chiding him for his inability to consider other people's feelings and opinions and for not even knowing what Zelda or his daughter, Scottie, were like.) He forever played the part of the little boy who insisted on being the life of the party, no matter whose party it was or whether he had even been invited. But no one, apparently, could dislike him for long; once he appeared, cap in hand, all was forgiven. But then neither could anyone take him very seriously, certainly

not as seriously as he took himself.

As the letters of this collection clearly show, Fitzgerald always believed that by writing for money today he could buy time for the competent work he would do tomorrow, never realizing, as someone once said, that beyond a certain point writing for profit becomes unprofitable. I can think of no other writer of his ability who wrote so many third-rate stories, or spent so much time doing hack-work that he knew was hack-work. Near the end, in fact, he seemed unable to distinguish clearly between competent work and the embarrassing stuff he was churning out in Hollywood. Before going there for the last time, he had written (in one of the "Crack-Up" articles in 1936) that films were "capable of reflecting only the tritist thought, the most obvious emotion," but while working on the script of *Three Comrades* he somehow convinced himself that what he was writing had merit. The fact is that Fitzgerald's screenplay has no more merit than an afternoon soap on the tube. Fitzgerald was greatly upset when only part of his script was used by the producer, Joseph Mankiewicz. Instead, he should have been thankful.

Considering Fitzgerald's great talent, or genius, if you will, I pay him tribute in calling him a failure. Two excellent novels and a handful of first-rate stories might seem God's plenty to all but a select company of writers. But then Fitzgerald was a member of that company. □

## ARABIA, THE GULF AND THE WEST

J.B.Kelly / Basic Books / \$25

Daniel Pipes

As oil, revolution, and war attract increasing attention to the Persian Gulf, articles and books about the area spew forth in the West. For the most part, they are written by overnight experts or sycophants, authors hobbled by deep ignorance of alien customs and blinded by the prospect of sharing in the vast wealth of the region if they say the right things. In Kelly's words, "a shuffling, endless procession of sages, oracles, sophists

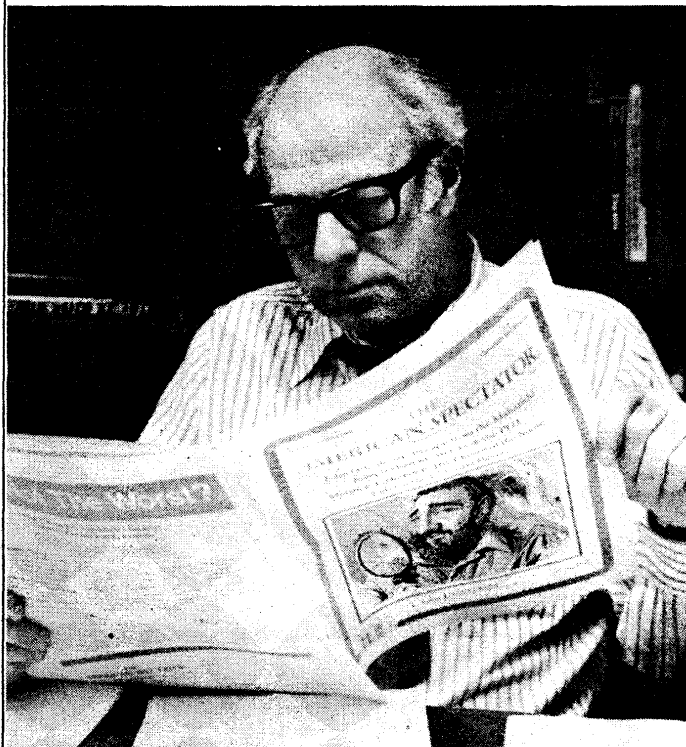
*Daniel Pipes is a historian at The University of Chicago. His Slave Soldiers and Islam will be published in January by Yale University Press.*

and sciolists" hold forth about the Gulf "with all the perspicacity of an Arabian Bedouin discussing the finer points of the United States Constitution."

Even were the competition not so dismal, J.B. Kelly's book would stand out as a tour de force. Mr. Kelly has wide knowledge, a sharp writing style, and a clear political vision, and he has written a large, wise, and angry study. Occasional excesses can be found in the work, but they do not detract from its main themes that succeed in debunking

(Continued on page 47.)

# Who reads The American Spectator?



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### DANIEL PIPES (Continued from page 39)

Gulf myths and alerting the West of the tragic course on which it is currently embarked.

Kelly argues that the policies of Middle Eastern states towards the West are motivated by a deep hatred for Europe and by the hope that their new wealth and power will allow them to vanquish it. "The actions of the Arabs and the Persians before, during and since 1973, if placed in their historical, religious, racial and cultural setting, amount to nothing less than a bold attempt to lay the Christian West under tribute to the Muslim East." The use of oil as a weapon thus expresses "powerful sentiments of grievance and resentment against the Christian West [which have been] long cherished by the Arabs, who deem themselves a chosen people, the repository of the true faith, the race of the Prophet, ordained by Providence to receive the submission of others."

In contrast to this surge of Muslim confidence and aggression, the West has lost its nerve and sense of purpose. This decline began already decades ago: "the collapse of the European empires in Asia and Africa was due less to the might of the anti-colonialist forces than it was to the sapping of the European powers' will to rule." This "will to rule" collapsed completely by the time Britain withdrew from Aden in 1967 and the Trucial States in 1971—two little-known but significant events.

Aden and the Trucial States were both primitive regions which had long benefited from a light British protection that left local life virtually undisturbed. In each case it was outside forces that wanted the British to leave: in Aden, migrant laborers; in the Gulf, the Saudi, Iraqi, and Iranian governments. In dramatic contrast, the populace and leaders of these two

regions *wanted the British to stay on*. Some indication of this can be gathered from the fact that the sultans of Aden who did not flee their homelands quickly enough after the 1967 withdrawal were murdered; and by the fact that when the British complained about the expense of keeping forces in the Gulf, several of the Trucial sheiks offered to reimburse Britain for its efforts—an utterly trivial sum in contrast to the value of the oil in the region.

Still, the British persisted in abandoning their commitments in the Gulf. As Kelly puts it, "It was . . . a betrayal of the trust placed in British steadfastness, a renunciation of an imperial power's recognized responsibilities to its subjects." In other words, "a betrayal of all (Britain) had done and stood for in the region for 150 years." This, despite Aden's incalculable value in controlling the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, and the Gulf's possession of the world's most precious raw materials.

Only loss of nerve can explain such blithe withdrawal. And like Britain a decade ago, the West today responds with indecision and appeasement to foes that are determined to impoverish, immobilize, and finally dominate us. Kelly decries the policies of the West for their amorality and harmfulness and blames all the "melancholy consequences" of the OPEC boom on

the failure of the Western powers to back the oil companies to the hilt from the early months of 1970 onwards, to stop Qaddafi in his tracks in the summer of that year, to prick the bubble of the shah's insensate illusions about his own power and consequence, and to help the companies gain the upper hand of OPEC at Tehran at the outset of 1971. The companies lost the contest, not because their adversaries were stronger but because their own governments were indecisive and they themselves were enfeebled by their own disunity.

Although the West has already let much go—its control of Aden and the Gulf to local potentates, its wealth to the oil producers—enough still remains in its hands to save the situation. Our strategic position can be maintained by holding tightly onto Oman; the oil problem can be ended by smashing the cartel: "There is . . . only one way to cope with OPEC surpluses [of wealth], and this is to reduce them to marginal limits—if not to erase them completely—by breaking up the cartel and forcing down the price of oil. All other expedients designed to soak up the surpluses are bound to prove, as they are proving, unavailing."

The imperial age came to an end in the aftermath of World War II,

followed by a generation of retraction and withdrawal. Kelly presents a startlingly new argument for the post-post-imperial age: Europeans and Americans can yet turn back the tide that threatens to overwhelm them. They need only to throw off their guilt and purposelessness and once again reassert themselves on the world scene. Should they decide to do so, no one can stop them. And such moves would benefit not only them but also the many peoples of the world ravaged by their own rulers.

Two other excellent features of this book deserve mention. First, the work contains in chapters three to six the finest account in print of the internal history of Arabia and the Gulf, bringing places like Oman and Kuwait to life. I myself, a historian of the Middle East, found the information on each page almost all new; finally I shall be able to keep straight the difference between Abu Dhabi and Dubai—for better or worse, ever-more-important knowledge.

Second, Kelly writes with a savage but incisive pen. Two examples, taken almost at random, may convey some sense of his splendid prose. Concerning the much-vaunted foreign aid given by OPEC states:

To fend off the envious or the censorious among their fellow Arab governments (and those of the Afro-Asian world at large), they have made a great brouhaha about the sums they have donated as charity to needy lands or worthy causes; only to hurriedly amend their exaggerated estimates as they found the ragtag and bobtail of Asia and Africa beating a path to their doors, begging bowls outstretched.

Concerning radical Arab regimes:

their *beau ideal* of government is not the gentle and noble vision attributed to them by credulous Westerners, of popularly elected legislatures graced by the grave and dignified figures of so many Oriental Ciceros, Scipios and Gracchi. On the contrary, their paragons of political virtue are the self-perpetuating oligarchies and politburos of the kind that rule in Baghdad, Tripoli and Aden, composed of men of flinty and vulpine visage, backed by the apparatus of the thumbscrew and the rack, and animated by a virulent mixture of Marxist bigotry and Muslim fanaticism.

Above all, however, at a time when the position of America and Europe in the Middle East has never looked bleaker, Kelly's book stands out for the unique and accurate information it provides about a most critical area of the world, and for the author's clarion plea to the West that it fundamentally reassess its relations with the oil-producing countries of the Middle East—before the opportunity to do so is irretrievably lost. □