

SEMITES AND ANTI-SEMITES: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice
by Bernard Lewis
Norton, 1986
283 pp. \$18.95

Christian anti-Semitism dates back almost 2,000 years, but Islamic anti-Semitism is something new under the sun. Indeed, says Lewis, a professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton, it emerged in this century, and the Arab-Israeli conflict over Palestine has caused it to spread.

Christian anti-Semitism, rooted in Gospel accounts of the Jewish role in the death of Christ, stems from an age-old fear, notes Lewis, that Jews are "a dark and deadly power, capable of deeds of cosmic evil." In the Muslim Qu'ran, by contrast, a Jew "might be hostile, cunning and vindictive, but he was weak and ineffectual." And, in fact, medieval Islamic societies, as well as the later Ottoman Empire, tended to be more tolerant of Jewish communities than were their European counterparts.

Lewis traces the rise of Islamic anti-Semitism to the early 1930s, when such groups as the Young Egypt Society began publishing Nazi-style anti-Jewish propaganda and openly harassing Jews in Cairo. The hate campaign has tended to be a "top-down phenomenon," issuing more from the rhetoric of leaders and intellectuals than from popular sentiment. During the 1950s, Egyptian premier Gamal Nasser expressed "deep regret at the Nazi defeat"; in 1974 Lebanese socialist leader Kamal Jumblatt urged that Nazism be "revived somewhat." Full-fledged "demonization" of Jews began after Israel's seizure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, as Arab intellectuals started depicting Jews as ancestral enemies—"descendants of the Jews who harmed the prophet Muhammed"—in textbooks and histories. Lewis's prognosis is bleak: Nothing less than open dialogue between Arab and Israeli leaders will halt an "unending downward spiral of mutual hate."

BROTHER ENEMY: The War after the War
by Nayan Chanda
Harcourt, 1986
303 pp. \$24.95

One justification that U.S. presidents from John F. Kennedy to Richard Nixon gave for intervention in Vietnam was to thwart the expansion of Communist China. Yet when China went to war against Vietnam in 1979, it had Washington's blessings.

The war after the Vietnam War contained other ironies. Not least is that the three regimes involved—in Cambodia, Vietnam, and China—were Communist, formerly united by anti-American fervor. Chanda, a journalist for *Far Eastern Eco-*

nomic Review, explains how ancient national rivalries, submerged during more than a century of colonialism and foreign intervention, resurfaced in fierce power politics, diplomatic maneuverings, and bloody clashes.

Even as the last U.S. personnel withdrew from Saigon in 1975, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia began purging suspected Vietnam sympathizers; purges soon led to direct attacks on Vietnamese villages. To the Khmer Rouge, says Chanda, this was a "preventive war of survival" against a hereditary enemy. Vietnam viewed the attacks as a predatory ploy, backed by its millenary foe, China; it responded by invading Cambodia in 1977. China, for its part, saw its hegemony in Southeast Asia threatened by an old rival who, moreover, had close ties with the "barbarian" to the north, the Soviet Union.

Chanda believes that the United States could have fostered a balance of power in the region. But President Carter's concern about Soviet expansion made him avoid normal diplomatic ties with Hanoi and deal exclusively with Peking. Even today, Chanda contends, seven years after consolidating its hold in Cambodia, Hanoi would break off its marriage of convenience with Moscow if America would provide guarantees against Chinese aggression along Vietnam's northern border.

Arts & Letters

**THE AMERICAN
NEWNESS: Culture
and Politics in the
Age of Emerson**

by Irving Howe
Harvard, 1986
99 pp. \$12.50

Twentieth-century cynics tend to look down on Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) as the pundit of unrealized possibility, a curious reminder of strangely optimistic times. But Howe's little volume, drawn from lectures delivered at Harvard, places Emerson on a broader plane.

During the period of "newness"—America in the 1830s and '40s—Emerson reigned as the main spokesman of transcendentalism. Having abandoned traditional Christianity (he had begun his career as a Unitarian minister), Emerson saw in the breakdown of New England Puritanism the first days of a "Central Man" who would base his life on "self-reliance." "What Washington and Jefferson had enabled institutionally," Howe writes, "Emerson would now bring into fruition in the