

British government which set out to implement the Balfour Declaration, to the financial aid especially of American Jews, and to the enthusiastic self-sacrificing efforts of Zionist leaders. Under the inspiration of Zionism and with such powerful political and economic backing, Jewish experts, trained in the most advanced centres of Western Europe and America, wrought wonders in little Palestine. Their accomplishments raised enormous hopes so that when in the 1930's Hitler's fiendish persecution of the Jews made some refuge for survivors urgently necessary, both Jews and humanitarian sympathizers looked to Palestine to serve this end. Driven by intense enthusiasm and by a comprehensible sense of desperation, it is understandable that both Zionist leaders and their non-Jewish sympathizers should have overlooked or minimized Palestine's limitations in size and resources, the artificial nature of Zionist economy and the increasingly hostile attitude of its neighbours.

Struggle with the Arabs

During the Second World War the Zionists and their Arab neighbours stood divided. The Arabs, cool or hostile toward the Western Powers after their struggle for independence in the inter-war period, mostly remained aloof from the conflict; the Zionists, hopeful of seeing an independent Israel, participated on the Western side. After the war events moved rapidly. The British administration, which had been working for years to effect some reasonable compromise between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, without success, which was haunted more and more by fear of the world consequences of Arab hostility, and which was faced with a post-war need of reducing expensive overseas military commitments, decided to withdraw from Palestine in 1948. War between Zionists and Arabs followed at once, a war wherein the Arabs revealed all their divisions and weaknesses and were defeated. The culmination was the recognition of the independence of Israel. The Zionists had now reached their political goal.

The aftermath of this victory is, however, full of problems and queries. The Arabs have been defeated but, as a result, they are more bitterly determined than ever that this shall not be the end of the story. They lay the blame for their defeat quite as much on Great Britain, which fostered the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine, and upon the United States, which strongly supported the final creation of Israel, as on their own weaknesses. Such bitterness adds immensely to the difficulties of Britain and the United States in dealing with the Arab states. As for Israel, it is still largely dependent upon outside aid, both economic and military, and it finds itself faced by a wall of ill-will at its borders. The grave refugee problem, raised by the retirement of thousands of Arab refugees from Palestine into surrounding Arab countries during the Jewish-Arab war, is a constant reminder and stimulant of this ill-will. Israel, which is itself not unmarked by internal division, has accomplished much, but uncertainty marks her future path.

Oil

Amongst the fires of seething nationalism in the Middle East flows today a stream of oil, a fuel to feed flames. In the autumn of 1951 these flames shot high at Abadan, destroying a long-time connection between Great Britain and Iran.

Developments in Iran

Oil was discovered in Iran (then Persia) in the late nineteenth century, and early in the present century the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was formed. The Iranians were then a weak, badly-governed people who had already a long history of contacts with world Powers. In 1907, indeed, Iran was divided into spheres of influence by Great Britain and Russia. Reaction against this domination led Iran to be pro-German