

## *Introduction*

The big failures are the most interesting part of history. This book brings together some of the crucial documents necessary to understand the recent failure of the West to read aright the signs of change in the Middle East, and to cope with changes when they occurred. Because the drama of American involvement in that turbulent area is only beginning, every American can usefully acquaint himself with the facts.

The twenty-one months, from the Suez crisis to the Lebanon landings, are truly a watershed in the history of the modern world. These stirring events—the rise of Nasser in Egypt, the Arab unity movement, the development and will-to-survive of Israel, the decline of European influence in the Levant, the competitive intervention of the Soviet Union and the United States—have their origins deep in a past but dimly remembered.

The state of Israel can be seen as a political fulfillment of the ancient Hebrew prayer to God to lead his chosen people back to Jerusalem. The Arabs grope toward unity spurred by the memory of an antique time, already a millenium past, when a Moslem empire spanned the world from central Asia to Spain. The British-French landings at Suez can be seen in perspective as a pathetic reversion to methods that used to work—in the nineteenth century. In that same century, we learned in school, Tsarist Russia was forever pushing at the edges of the Middle East in search of a warm-water port. And as for the Marines in Lebanon, are they not the heirs and assigns of a tradition which includes a landing on the shores of Tripoli in search of pirates?

What's past is prologue, to be sure; but the roots of the contemporary crisis do not all lie deep in the kind of history that is measured in centuries. A closer look at the Middle East in 1956-58 shows us a past that is full of "proximate causes."

The ingathering of the Jews in Palestine would hardly have achieved a momentum so disturbing to the Arabs had Hitler not consigned six million of their brethren to confinement and death. When the Industrial

Revolution made petroleum a form of wealth, and petroleum was eventually found in unequal measure beneath the nations of the Arab World, a move toward Arab unity was fore-ordained—the “have-not” nations taking the initiative to federate with the “haves.” Once Lenin took power in nearby Russia, and established the policy of undermining capitalist strength by cutting the West off from its colonial ties, it was only a matter of time before the Soviets would get around to penetrating the Middle East in earnest. The wonder is that it didn’t happen sooner—before, rather than after, the much larger and more difficult operations in China and Southeast Asia.

Add to all of this the sudden emergence of the United States as the most powerful nation in the world—if also the one most astonished by its role—and American involvement in the Middle East can be seen as almost inevitable. The wonder is that we were able to stay on the sidelines as long as we did.

This little book might well be subtitled, “The Sudden Education of the United States.” For two brief, crowded years, in the microcosm of the Levant, Americans have been exposed to three homely truths. We have learned that the mighty cannot avoid involvement in a crisis anywhere in so shrunken a world. A policy of studied disinterest—in Soviet arms traffic with Egypt, in Israel’s desperate appeals for arms, in the precarious position of the Hashemite kings in Iraq and Jordan, in the growing power of the Arab unity movement—simply did not work. The same old problems remained and were rapidly joined by others. When President Eisenhower decided to “sit out” the Suez crisis, some kind of dramatic overinvolvement at a later date was predestined. Destiny was in a hurry: less than two years later, the Marines were sloshing ashore at Beirut.

We learned, too, how unhelpful to our real interests are those clichés by which we have lived for more than a generation in our relations with the several regions of the world. Attractive ideas like “nationalism” and “self-determination” and “federal union” somehow look different when others take them up and use them to justify the assassination of Iraqi political leaders and Egypt’s “federation-by-swallowing” with Syria.

If, a few years ago, you had asked most Americans what they really wanted in the Middle East, the unhesitating answer would have been: “stability.” We have learned now that the attempt to assure stability by bottling up political forces both ineluctable and readily exploited from Moscow is a dubious way to seek peace and order in a revolutionary world. If we have learned this lesson well, all the diplomatic heartburn recorded in these pages will have been eminently worth while.

Taken together, the documents in this volume constitute a judgment of irrelevance against some of the methods powerful nations have long used to affect the actions of others. When the British and French attacked Egypt in that abortive and miserably executed little war of 1956, the outrage of the rest of the world soon gave way to amazement that any prime minister of Britain or France could have started so quaintly old-fashioned an enterprise. Similarly, while the real drama was being played out in the "internal" affairs of several Middle Eastern countries, men with international reputations for diplomatic sagacity were engaged in setting up military alliances, announcing "doctrines" against the least likely forms of aggression, and gravely pretending that the established order of tiny, unviable "nations" was not already beyond repair. How far some United States officials were from knowing the score was revealed when, a few days before the murder of Iraq's king and prime minister, an American intelligence agent reported in Baghdad that the stability of Iraq was assured. "These Iraqi Arabs are different," he averred. "They are congenitally incapable of assassinating their leaders."

In diplomacy as in genetics, only the fittest survive for long. The skills required to deal effectively across national boundaries are therefore undergoing rapid mutation these days. It is no longer adequate for American diplomats to negotiate with the thin upper crust of each foreign society, to deal only with other diplomats and high governmental officials. Americans abroad are engaged nowadays in *operations* on a very large scale—technical aid, industrial investment, military training, and overt or clandestine liaison with all significant elements of each nation's political, economic, and cultural life. The more deeply we become involved in other people's "internal affairs," the more conscious we are of the need to get along, not only with the existing authorities, but with their possible successors. In the Middle East, we temporarily laid aside this first principle of twentieth-century diplomacy. We opted for stability in a region where there will be no stability until there has been plenty of change.

Because the Middle East's *inter*-national affairs cannot be understood without seeing the dynamic change in their *intra*-national affairs, Miss Carol Fisher and Professor Fred Krinsky have not only put together a collection of timely historical documents but have produced a guide-book as well—an introductory essay which provides the background for understanding the place of each document in the tangled story of contemporary Middle Eastern history.

The resulting work is not just a "survey" of Middle Eastern affairs; it is, rather, a basis for discussion of United States interests and United

States policy in the area. More than that, it is a discussion guide tested and proved in terms of past success. The documents it contains were first assembled as a basis for a study-and-discussion project in a sophomore course in Citizenship, conducted by the Maxwell School as part of Syracuse University's liberal arts program.

Both authors teach in the Citizenship Program, a general-education curriculum designed to introduce freshmen and sophomores to the complexities of public affairs and to methods of making and executing public policy. Miss Fisher, a graduate of Colorado College, has combined anthropological field work with her duties as Instructor at Syracuse University and is completing her requirements for the interdisciplinary Doctor of Social Science degree in the Maxwell Graduate School. Dr. Krinsky, Associate Professor in the Citizenship Program, earned his Ph D. in Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania in 1951 and taught at the University of California before joining the Syracuse faculty in 1948. He is co-author of several textbooks used in the Citizenship Program and chairman of the editorial board which produced the sixth revised edition of *Problems in Democratic Citizenship*, published by the Maxwell School.

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