

IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE

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GREEN WORLDS
MOSCOW SKIES
THE GREAT OFFENSIVE
RED BREAD
HUMANITY UPROOTED
BROKEN EARTH
THE RUSSIAN PEASANT AND THE REVOLUTION

IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE
PERSIA, EGYPT, IRAQ AND PALESTINE

by

MAURICE HINDUS

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Awake, awake, put on strength

—ISAIAH 51: 9

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The Quotations from Hafiz are from *Hafiz, Fifty Poems*, by Arthur J. Arberry, professor of Arabic in the University of London, Cambridge University Press, 1947.

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In the footnotes the American publisher is given for publications that have appeared in the United States. Of such publications the following are the British publishers:

Oriental Assembly by T. E. Lawrence (Williams & Norgate), *Palestine, Land of Promise* by Walter Lowdermilk (Gollancz), *The Making of Modern Iraq* by H. A. Foster (Williams and Norgate), *The Outline of History* by H. G. Wells (Cassell), *The Economic Development of the Middle East* by A. Bonnet (Routledge and Kegan Paul), *The Road to Survival* by William Vogt (Gollancz).

Foreword

THIS IS A BOOK ABOUT PERSIA (IRAN),¹ EGYPT, Iraq, and Palestine—countries in search of a future. Essentially it is a book about people and land, only incidentally about cities and culture.

It is the author's judgment that Jewish Palestine, now known as Israel, provides a workable blueprint for the development of the other nations with which this book is concerned. Indeed, unless, in one way or another, to suit the character of their peoples and the physical conditions of their lands, the Mohammedan nations in the Middle East avail themselves of the example Israel has set in pioneering for a new way of life in desert and neglected country, their future is weighted with dire consequences. Anything may happen there, including violent revolution. Let it be emphasized that in 1946, Persian Azerbaijan, Persia's largest and most populous province, actually witnessed the dress rehearsal of such a revolution.

Until a generation ago, the part of Palestine that now consti-

¹Throughout the book I have used the words Persia and Iran interchangeably, even as did the people whom I met wherever I journeyed and as do foreign, particularly the British and American, residents of the country.

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tutes Israel was almost as much aslumber with stagnation as was Arab Palestine. Since then a spectacular process of rejuvenation has taken place. Israel has already achieved a well-defined blueprint for the course of its internal development. Its overwhelming concern is with outside pressures, particularly from Great Britain. The Mohammedan countries in the Middle East, while as yet secure from foreign encroachment that may threaten their statehood, are still darkly groping for a way of national regeneration.

I am writing neither a political polemic nor a historical treatise. I am concerned with the philosophies neither of Zionism nor of Arabism, but rather with Persians, Egyptians, Arabs, and Jews as human beings and as peoples I came to know during several journeys in the Middle East. Other men have written ably and brilliantly on the political controversies, the historical issues, the international embroilments that the very word Palestine suggests. The Report of the Palestine Royal Commission (known also as the Peel Commission) of 1937 is one of the most searching and most illuminating documents on these subjects. Sumner Welles's *We Cannot Fail* is such a terse and highly documented account of Zionism, of British commitments and British reversals, of American promises and American defaults, of the legal claims and historical contentions between Jews and Arabs over Palestine, that a discussion of these subjects would be repetition of a performance which I cannot hope to rival.

Besides, whatever the future of Israel, even if the Foreign Office in London and the Imperial General Staff were to bring forth a fresh arsenal of diplomatic or military weapons with which to snuff out the Jewish Community or smother it into impotence, the record of pioneering it has already attained, the facts and conclusions about desert farming and desert life it has already demonstrated would shine forth like the summer waters of the Mediterranean on the shores of Tel Aviv. They would still constitute a hopeful and viable example for the internal regeneration of Persia and the Arab world.

It was my good fortune to know the late Wendell Willkie. In the course of a conversation about the backward peoples of Africa and Asia, many of whom he had visited in 1942, I heard him make this significant pronouncement: "If the millions and millions of peasants had land enough to enable them to buy one suit of clothes a year, one pair of shoes, a couple of suits of underwear, shirts, and socks, think how much business we could do with them."

Himself the owner of five well-managed farms in his native state of Indiana, Willkie was transcendently land-minded, as few Western statesmen are. In laggard and backward Africa, as well as in meagerly developed and thickly populated Asia, he glimpsed intuitively the relationship between the landlessness of the multimillioned peasantry and their unspeakable poverty.

In this landlessness of the farming population, and in the absurdly primitive mode of tillage that accompanies it, lurk the chief causes of the turbulence that, like the smoke of a brewing volcano, hover over so large a part of the world. Persia, Egypt, Iraq, and the other Arab countries are only a segment of the Asia and Africa that are shrouded with uncertainty and threatened with upheaval. In Israel internal peace may be menaced by violent minorities, but even in moments of crisis its land policies and its highly developed agriculture, the health and the hopefulness of its rural population are certain to prove a Gibraltar against forces of disunity and disintegration. Yet there is nothing Jewish Palestine has achieved that the Mohammedan nations of the Middle East cannot attain. Difference in historical heritage does not necessarily preclude similarity of effort and identity of accomplishment.

Let a casual incident speak for itself. During my visit to the Jewish village of Givat Brenner, as I was sauntering around the many-laned and hilly fields, I was suddenly attracted by what from a distance appeared to be a scuffle between Jews and Arabs. Pointing to a small crowd of black-robed Arab women and ragged Arab children who seemed to have besieged a Jewish

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wagon, I asked the village secretary who accompanied me, "A race riot?" "Oh no," he said, "this is a daily occurrence. Arab women and children wait on the highway for our garbage wagon, and when it starts out for the garbage pit, they rummage around for the scraps and rags that may be of use to them." He glanced at the loud scene before us and added sorrowfully, "It is a pity, a great pity, that this should be so."

The sordid incident need never have happened, or might have been exceptional instead of commonplace, had the Arabs, in the centuries they have lived in Palestine, achieved an equitable distribution of the land and acquired a knowledge of scientific farming.

No Moses guided by divine inspiration has struck with a rod, for the Jews of today, a rock out of which flows water for parched throats and parched lands. The Jews have hunted for water, have dug for it, have drawn it to the surface. They have cleared the pestilential swamps, all but one, and have vanquished the malaria-carrying mosquito which for centuries has been the scourge of the Arab population of the country.

They have toiled and sweated over desert sands, rocky hills, have spent large sums of money—chiefly contributions from the outside—and have achieved a supreme agricultural triumph. They have few if any equals as desert farmers in Asia or Africa. They have demonstrated as have no other people on these continents that neglected and damaged land can be redeemed and freshened and be made to bear bread and fruit. Their triumph in the regeneration of deteriorated livestock, sheep and goats, poultry, and above all cattle, has been as spectacular as their redemption of unproductive lands, a triumph without which the Mohammedan countries in the Middle East cannot hope to stabilize, strengthen, and enrich their newly acquired and ardent nationhood. Though the Jewish farmers know no opulence, the annual suit of clothes and pair of shoes and shirts and underwear and socks of which Willkie spoke are not—as in Persia, Egypt, and Iraq—a dream or a legend, but an everyday reality.

Since this is a book primarily for American readers, I have deliberately devoted more space to Persia than to any other country. One of the most fascinating countries I have ever visited, Persia may not be "America's baby," as a foreign resident in Teheran expressed himself; yet, if only because it is the key to the Russo-American conflict in the Middle East, it is "America's baby" more than anyone else's. "Power in Persia," writes A. C. Edwards, a British author, "means only too often the support of the British or Russian Embassy."² I should dispute the writer's use of the present tense; America has superseded Russia and Great Britain as the chief foreign influence in the Land of the Lion and the Sun. The fact that an American Military Mission has been entrusted by the Iranian Government with the responsibility of helping to reorganize the army, and that American army officers have been engaged to rebuild the Iranian gendarmery, or internal police, tells its own story of the position America now holds.

Justifiably or not, friends and foes of America credit America more than their own government with the victory of Teheran over the autonomous regime in Azerbaijan in December 1946, and with the resoluteness with which the Majlis (Parliament), in October 1947, braced itself out of its fear of Russia and voted down Russia's clamorous demand for an oil concession in the northeastern provinces, which Ahmad Ghavam, the Prime Minister, had previously promised Moscow.

Despite America's prestige, Iran remains one of the most vexing problems on Washington's doorstep. Meanwhile, whatever America's future policy and influence in Teheran, Washington has, I believe, been more expertly supplied with full-bodied and authentic information about Iran than about any other Mohammedan land in the Middle East. Under the ambassadorship of George Allen, himself a former newspaperman, who has an eye for color and an ear for fact, hardly a phase of Iranian life escaped the searching attention of his staff of assistants and re-

²"Persia Revisited," *International Affairs* (London: January 1947).

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searchers. The 800-odd-page report of the Morrison-Knudsen Engineering firm of Boise, Idaho, is a treasure house of information. Invited by the Teheran Government, a staff of experts representing the firm made a comprehensive survey of Persia's economic ills and economic potentialities and proposed remedies for the removal of the one and the realization of the other. To the best of this writer's knowledge, no other such scientific and lucidly digested analysis of Persia, or of any other Mohammedan country in the Middle East, has ever been made.

Neither the State Department in Washington nor the American Embassy in Teheran has, at this writing, released to the press this highly significant report. But the governor of the Teheran National Bank lent me his copy, and it made exciting reading. For detail and massiveness of information it has not its equal in any of the volumes that have been published on that little-known land. Whatever America's future position in Iran, whatever the conflicts that may arise between Washington and Moscow over Iran's destiny, in the light of the studies made by the Embassy during George Allen's term in Teheran, and particularly the Morrison-Knudsen engineers, no American President or diplomat, and neither congressman nor senator, can ever ascribe errors or failures, should they occur, to scant or false information on the Persian land and the Persian people.

Yet it is impossible to escape the conclusion that Israel, despite all its harassments and imperfections, is the only country in the world that offers Iran a scientifically drafted blueprint for the solution of the ever-present and ever-pressing ailments with which it is afflicted. And what is true of Iran is true of Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and the other Arab lands in the Middle East. I shall not presume to assert that this blueprint can be literally and bodily applied to these other nations. Of course it cannot be. But there is nothing else in the world, and particularly in their part of the world, from which these nations can learn so much of ways and methods of rejuvenating their lands and of uplifting their peoples.

Almost thirty years ago Lawrence of Arabia, in writing of Jewish achievement in Palestine, then still in its infancy, said: "The success of their scheme will involve inevitably the raising of the present Arab population to their own material level, only a little after themselves, in point of time, and the consequences might be of the highest importance for the future of the Arab world."³

However deep their enmity for Israel at the moment, the Arab leaders can no more disregard its successful solution of problems identical to their own than a sick man can disregard the penicillin a physician prescribes for him because it cured a neighbor with whom he has quarreled.

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³T. E. Lawrence, *Oriental Assembly*, p. 93 (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1940).

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