

external forces, and left it to professional diplomats like Gideon Rafael to try and explain their behavior to the world.

If anything, in his attitude toward the occupied territories Menahem Begin has been more consistent than his predecessors, though hardly to the point of seeming to know where he is heading. Most discouragingly, nowhere on the current Israeli political scene can one discern a single figure of stature who seems capable of making the hard decisions that must eventually be made and winning a mandate from the public to make them. Of all Israeli politicians in recent years, Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizman alone seemed to possess the character needed to fill such a role, and both are now gone from the stage.

The Peace Process: II The Arabs

THE ARAB STATES AND THE PALESTINE CONFLICT. By BARRY RUBIN. Syracuse University Press. 298 pp. \$22.00.

Reviewed by DANIEL PIPES

RARELY does anyone stop to ask just how the Palestine problem became so important. At base, it concerns two small people fighting for control over a sliver of territory. There is nothing in this struggle to capture the world's attention; how, then, did it grow from a minor clash into the most persistent international problem of our time?

One reason is that both sides, the Jews and the Arabs of Palestine, draw support (if unequally) from a hinterland. While the Jews receive financial and political help from their co-religionists around the world, the Arabs get financial, political, and military aid from the Arab states. More than anything else, indeed, it was the early involvement of independent Arab states that transformed the Palestine conflict into a dispute with seemingly unending repercussions.

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We now take for granted Iraqi, Egyptian, and even Libyan participation in the conflict, but the independent Arab states (of which there were five in the 1930's, and now over twenty) could have remained aloof, just as Turkey has done. The fact that Syrians, for example, speak the same language as Palestinian Arabs does not mean that the fate of Palestine must become—as it did—a matter of obsessive concern in Damascus.

Barry Rubin, in this fine study, has set out to show "how the Arab states entered the battle in the first place" by tracing their policies from 1929, when Arab riots in Palestine first brought the region's problems to the attention of Arab leaders, until 1948, when Arab-state participation culminated in the military invasions of Palestine. In 1929, Palestine was of only minor interest to the Arab kings in Cairo, Riyadh, Amman, and Baghdad—although it had long been a matter of intense political and ideological

concern to non-governmental movements and individuals, as is documented in Neville J. Mandel's study, *The Arabs and Zionism Before World War I* (University of California Press, 1976). By 1948, it had become central to these kings and to Arab leaders in Damascus and Beirut as well. By 1967, the issue involved all the Arabic-speaking countries and in 1973 it spread even to non-Arabic-speaking Muslims.

Rubin emphasizes that the Arab states involved themselves in Palestinian affairs for disparate and sometimes contradictory reasons. "The interests of each Arab state differed with its size, domestic politics, ambitions, geopolitical needs, and proximity to Palestine." Yet their interests "remained surprisingly consistent" over a period of decades; even today, the reasons which impelled involvement in the 1930's are still operative, "transcending coups, revolutions, ideologies, and vastly different personalities."

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KAFKA A BIOGRAPHY Ronald Hayman

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One early and ardent participant was Iraq, which for fifty years has "never allowed itself to be outflanked by anyone in taking a hard-line stand" against Zionism. From the Islamic conference on Jerusalem in December 1931 to the anti-Camp David group of today, Baghdad has consistently pursued extreme policies against the Jews in Palestine. Two structural facts about Iraq go far to explain this behavior. First, the country has three major ethnic groups (Shi'i Arabs, Sunni Arabs, Sunni Kurds), each of whom shows primary loyalty not to the Iraqi nation but to its co-ethnics both inside Iraq and outside that country's arbitrary borders. Second, one group, the Sunni Arabs, has controlled the central government for centuries, although it makes up only one-quarter of the population. Sunni Arabs employ the ideology of pan-Arabism (calling for the union of all Arabic-speakers) to bind Iraq to other Sunni Arab states, to exclude the Shi'is and Kurds, and to legitimize their own rule. The Palestine conflict is an emotion-laden vehicle for demonstrating pan-Arabist loyalties; intransigence on this issue helps to solidify a position in Iraqi politics.

Iraq once hoped to win control of Palestine, but this ambition faded long ago. Far more serious are the Syrian and Jordanian designs on the region. Even before Syria attained independence in 1945, the country's leaders were enthralled by a pan-Syrian ideology (calling for the incorporation of Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine). Although pan-Syrianism has since given way in Damascus to a form of pan-Arabism, Syrians still deeply oppose the Jewish state and hope to eliminate it. Their leaders have long viewed the conflict with the Jews as a means both of expanding their territories and of winning undisputed leadership of the Arab world.

Jordan (known until 1950 as Transjordan) has treated Palestinian matters more directly and less ideologically than any other Arab state. King Abdallah and his grandson, the present King Hussein, both displayed a willingness to deal flexibly with the Jews and the

Arabs of the region in order to further Jordanian interests. Abdallah signed a treaty accepting the Balfour Declaration; he offered to sell land in his country to the Jews so they would help in its development; and he put Hebrew on Jordan's currency to win their good will. But Abdallah's innumerable proposals to the Zionists all fell through; he aspired to rule them as subjects, while they insisted on independence. In Chaim Weizmann's words, the Zionists had not gone to Palestine "to exchange their German or Polish ghetto for an Arab one." Jordan controlled the West Bank for nineteen years (1948-67) and has since played a coy non-ideological game in the pursuit of winning it back.

Egypt's involvement with Palestine "always demonstrated more emotional and political distance than the other Arab states," Rubin writes. The country's size, homogeneity, and relative stability account for this moderation, as do Egyptian reservations concerning Arab identity (the Egyptian nationality signifies far more than does citizenship in any other Arab country). At the same time, successive governments have been concerned that Egypt's rivals might take control of Palestine, destabilizing its eastern frontiers. Egyptians, who have endured three-quarters of all Arab casualties fighting Israel, show the most reluctance to continue paying the price of involvement in the conflict.

For the Saudis, an ideology based on Islam justifies a special hatred for Zionism, a hatred which has for decades perplexed outsiders accustomed to the regime's otherwise cautious and moderate foreign policy. Ibn Saud (reigned 1902-53), founder of the modern Saudi state, displayed a virulent anti-Semitism which "approached the pathological" and which has been inherited by many of his successors. The Saudi leaders' feeling that, as keepers of Mecca and Medina, they must "uphold the Islamic cause against the Zionists" has added to their intense rhetorical aggressiveness. Furthermore, Rubin points out, unlike other Arab states, "the Saudis fought Israel to maintain Arab stability, not to set off regional

revolution." Riyadh has consistently viewed the Palestine conflict more as a threat than as an opportunity.

As for Lebanon, the dominant Christian Maronite community has often been tempted to make common cause with the Jews against the Muslims. Though the possibility was broached on several occasions in the past, the Christians eventually opted for a "National Pact" with the Muslim Arabs. This required that the Christians identify with the Arab cause; despite their lack of interest in fighting the Jews, denouncing Zionism took on crucial importance in insuring the stability of the precarious Lebanese state. The Lebanese solution—"coupling strong rhetoric with inaction"—worked until the National Pact broke down in the mid-1970's. Since that time, some Christian groups have allied with Israel.

EACH state thus has distinct reasons for concern with Palestine: pan-Arabism (Iraq), pan-Syrianism (Syria), territorial expansion (Jordan), secure boundaries (Egypt), Islam (Saudi Arabia), national harmony (Lebanon). In each of these states, a "traditional quartet" of factors has established the context in which they have made choices: Islam, Arabism, domestic politics, and inter-Arab rivalries. Each state has its own mix of factors, each has joined in the fray with its own agenda.

The bulk of *The Palestine Conflict and the Arab States* details the Arab governments' growing involvement in Palestinian affairs through the 1930's and 1940's, drawing on newly available materials in American, British, and Israeli archives. The author occasionally loses his readers in the attempt to keep tabs on six Arab states, the Jews and Arabs of Palestine, and the great powers. The final chapter (on early U.S. relations with Nasser's regime) has almost no connection to the rest of the book. But these reservations aside, the book is well-organized, clear, and persuasive.

Reading about the development of these years gives one a sense of déjà vu; besides the lines of grand national policy, many of today's policies and dilemmas originated

then. As early as 1939, the Palestinian leadership justified its refusal to accept compromise on the grounds that it was protecting "the revolution." In 1921, long before Germany or Russia had a Middle Eastern presence, an Arab envoy warned that his people might turn to them if dissatisfied with British support for the Arab cause—and indeed the Arabs did exactly that decades later. On the Jewish side, just as Israel's supporters today emphasize its value as a "strategic ally" of the West, so the Zionists during World War II used the same argument with Britain. But as Rubin notes, "it was precisely the *unreliable* nature of Arab support that forced British concessions" (emphasis added). Today, a similar uncertainty about Arab relations with the superpowers serves as a powerful bargaining chip for the Arabs.

In Washington, Congress and the State Department have differed consistently over the Palestine issue ever since it first arose. When, in 1944, Congress advocated the partition of Palestine, against Arab wishes, a State Department official noted that the Arabs were "bewildered and disillusioned by U.S. policy" and might turn elsewhere. Arab leaders, naturally, encouraged this concern with strong vocal blasts. Shortly before the climactic United Nations vote on the partition of Palestine in 1947, Ibn Saud told Washington that its decision to support the Zionists "will lead to a death-blow to American interests in Arab countries." Such threats have been heard many times since.

Rubin puts to rest one old notion—that Arab leaders have exploited the Palestine conflict to manipulate domestic politics. "The simplistic idea that Arab governments used Palestine to distract their constituents from problems closer to home reverses cause and effect." Rather, he believes, "it was precisely because of the sincerity of feeling over Palestine that it proved to be such a potent domestic issue in the Arab states." Indeed, had the Arab regimes been more democratic, their engagement in Palestine might have been even greater than it has been.

Despite the fact that the Palestine issue has "unique and remarkable characteristics" for the Arab

states, it has also "functioned as part of the framework of politics, within and among . . . states. The struggles over power, leadership, identity, and economic policy which characterized these relationships have determined the framework for coping with the conflict." In other words, turmoil within and among Arab countries gave the Palestine conflict its special importance, not the other way around.

AND what of the future?

The Palestine issue has often overpowered empirical national interests. To reverse this process, the rationale for giving up such strongly based traditional stands must be compelling indeed. Establishment of an independent Palestinian Arab state in the West Bank and Gaza might provide a way out for the Arab governments who have tired of the long struggle.

Unfortunately there is little evidence that most Arab governments are tiring of the struggle.

Science & Society

THE PHYSICISTS. By C.P. SNOW. *Little, Brown*. 192 pp. \$15.95.

Reviewed by JEFFREY MARSH

THIS book, lavishly illustrated, is actually a first draft, dictated in haste from memory, of a longer work the late C.P. Snow planned to write, and this is reflected in the brevity of the text. Subtitled "A Generation that Changed the World," it attempts to put into context the men and ideas that shaped the revolution in modern physics. It is unfortunate that Snow did not live to complete it, for he was chronologically a member of that generation, a true child of the scientific revolution.

Charles Percy Snow was born in 1905. That year was notable for the publication by Albert Einstein,

JEFFREY MARSH has written on science for COMMENTARY and other periodicals.

Tradition—The Eastern European Jewish Experience

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In recent years, many of us have begun to explore the connections between origins and identity. This summer, a Cornell University on-site workshop in Jewish studies will consider the culture, literature, history, and socio-anthropology of Eastern European Jewish communities, emphasizing the period from the renaissance of Yiddish in the mid-nineteenth century to the Holocaust. During the first week, an intensive on-campus survey, the influence of Eastern European Jewry on American culture will also be considered. This session will be followed by a two week field trip to several of the sites studied: Amsterdam, Prague, Theresienstadt, Kiev, Moscow, and Berlin. The trip also offers the group a chance to review the present status of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. On-site lectures by specialists in Jewish history and culture will be arranged. The Cornell faculty includes Sander L. Gilman, professor of modern European literature, professor of psychiatry, and co-director of the Jewish Studies Program; Chana Kronfeld, assistant professor of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature; and Janet Belcove, department of anthropology.

Academic credit is available. Precise costs have not yet been set, but further information, including itinerary and application materials, may be obtained from: Tradition—The Eastern European Jewish Experience, Cornell University Summer Session, B12N Ives Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853.