

Near Eastern Problems

THE MIDDLE EAST, by *Eliahu Ben-Horin*. Norton.
\$2.50.

MEET THE ARABS, by *John Van Ess*. John Day.
\$2.50.

THE recent upsurge of nationalist sentiment in Syria and Lebanon has once again focused attention on the profound fermentation at work among the peoples of the Near and Middle East. It has emphasized, moreover, how little we Americans know of the tangled history and problems of that region. These two volumes are timely and offer a certain amount of useful factual knowledge.

The points of view expressed are widely divergent. Ben-Horin, a journalist of many years' experience, is pro-Zionist. Because he tends to identify the aspirations of the Arabic peoples with those of a small upper crust of landlords and ruling groups, he writes in a pronounced anti-Arab vein. He is perhaps most successful in his treatment of Turkey, where Kemal Pasha led a nationalist revolution after World War I and set up a secular republic, which has since strongly influenced the Arab world. His book is somewhat sprawling because of the attempt to cover too much ground and is weakened by a number of inaccuracies and superficial generalizations.

Dr. Van Ess pleads the cause of the Arabs. But he looks to the ruling groups in Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the other Islamic nations of that region rather than to the peoples themselves for a solution of nationalist aspirations. His close friendship with King Feisal of Iraq and the austere Ibn Saud, king of Saudi Arabia and leader of the puritanical Wahhabite Moslem sect, may account for this emphasis. He tends, moreover, to underplay the role of *secular* Turkey in recent Moslem affairs. He displays a thorough knowledge of Arabic culture, language, and institutions, gained as a result of many years' stay in the Arabian peninsula. A useful bibliography on the Arab question is appended to the volume.

Both authors have a blue-print for the solution of the complicated Palestine question. Ben-Horin proposes large scale population transfers, re-settlement and colonization of Arab *fellahin* (peasants) from Palestine and Transjordan to fertile land in Iraq. Van Ess offers a detailed plan for the "United States of the Near East."

These plans seem somewhat divorced from reality since they fail to take into account some of the complex social and political forces at work in the present period.

Both books are worth reading for their interesting details, but lack thoroughness. An authoritative volume on the region loosely known as the Near and Middle East has yet to be written for American readers.

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