

6 APR 52

ISLAM AND ITS PEOPLE



THE MOSLEM WORLD—"Between three and four hundred million Moslems inhabit many of the world's most strategic areas."

'Peace May Be in Moslem Hands'

CPYRGHT **Proud, religious and nomadic, these people will judge us friends or foes by our works.**

CPYRGHT

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By ROM LANDAU

BETWEEN three and four hundred million of the world's inhabitants are Moslems, or adherents of Islam, the religion founded by the Prophet Mohammed in 622 in the heart of the Arabian desert. Whatever the racial and national differences between them, the Moslems form a more united religious body than do the followers of any other great religion. Their political importance in present-day world affairs can be gauged from the fact alone that it is they who inhabit Egypt, Tunisia, Iran, Pakistan, Libya or Morocco. The attitude of the Moslem countries toward the West might easily determine the future of every American, Britisher or Frenchman. As Marshal Lyautey, the famous French ruler of Morocco, once said, "The Moslem world is like a resonant box. The faintest sound in one corner of the box reverberates through the whole of it." The recent moves against Tunisian nationalist leaders by the French had repercussions in all the Moslem countries.

These Moslem communities are by no means confined to the Arab countries. Besides the whole of North Africa and the Middle East, they also inhabit the Dutch East Indies, count 25 million adherents in Soviet Russia, the same number in China, and form large minorities in countries as far apart as the Philippines and Liberia, Yugoslavia and Madagascar, Greece, Senegal and the Congo. And so today the Moslem is America's potential friend or foe in many of the strategically most vital areas. World peace may well be in Moslem hands.

I WAS the guest some years back of King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, undoubtedly the most forceful ruler in the Arab world, and dined with him and

a few court officials. All the other guests were the King's own soldiers, fierce-looking men of the desert with glossy black hair hanging in plaits, lithe, catlike bodies, and the hostile gaze which assumes that stranger is automatically foe-man. I doubt whether a single one among them could either read or write. Yet they were uncowed by the distinguished company, and there was no shadow of discrimination in the degree of hospitality they unself-consciously enjoyed.

MY more recent visits to Morocco have furnished countless examples of this democratic freedom of association of great and lowly. Servant or chauffeur, grocer or tailor, guest or host shared the meal as by natural right. There is a religious basis to this manifestation of democracy, for Islam insists that men are equal and "all believers are naught else but brothers." Richness and poverty are not meritorious or censurable states but have been decreed by Allah. It would not do, of course, to equate the Moslem notion of democracy with our own; but to the degree of democracy which Islam makes an article of faith the Moslems are unquestionably faithful. And herein lies our warning.

God's omnipotence and man's prime duty of submission are taken for granted. Mohammed never preached absolute pre-destination which would destroy human freedom. Nevertheless, the Moslem tends to be fatalistic and to accept the Turkish philosophy of Kismet (fate) and the Arab Maktub (it is written in the holy book). This deviation from the Koran—traceable to differences of opinion between Moslem theologians—is a source of both

Moslem to accept adversity without complaint; it takes the sting out of his envy or jealousy; it gives him added strength when he pursues a cause in which he believes, and which he can identify with the will of God. But it also serves as an excuse for laziness or inefficiency, and explains away failure or injustice.

If it were not for this fatalism, many of the blemishes that are so noticeable in more than one Moslem country—economic inequality, corruption, social backwardness—would have been swept away by the sufferers themselves, and social revolutions would have brought the misrule of rapacious landlords and officials to an end. For the very existence of these exploiters of native ignorance and submission is a paradox in communities where religion preaches equality and charity, and merely proves that even a creed as realistic as Islam has no infallible safeguard against human imperfection.

IT is no longer sufficient, as it would have been nineteen hundred years back, to describe a man as "a Christian," and, in so doing, define him. The statement "He is a Moslem" is far more complete, for it declares that the man in question shares not only certain spiritual and moral ideals but also many of the fundamental habits and customs in his daily life, with millions of co-religionists. Many a professed Christian is little more than an atheist; but the hold of Islam is secure, in urban and rural areas alike, among intellectuals and illiterate, rich and poor.

This is because their religion provides the ground upon which they stand and the roof that gives them shelter. Consequently the materialistic doctrines of communism have made little headway in their midst. It is not accidental that communism is finding far more ad-

The Lessons of April 6, 1917

THE beginning of 1917 was marked by three stupendous events: the German declaration of unlimited U-boat war, the intervention of the United States, and the Russian Revolution. Taken together these events constitute the second great climax of the war." So wrote Winston Churchill in 1927; we can see now, in the perspective of another quarter century, that these events marked not merely a climax of the war but—to use another Churchillian phrase—one of the great climacterics of history. It was the first decisive intervention of the United States in world affairs, the first time that the New World was to step forth, "with all its power and might, to the rescue and liberation of the Old." But it was more than this.

It was the end of American isolation. That isolation had been a very real thing, especially in the nineteenth century. To Americans, independence was more than a break with the mother country, a disruption of the Old Empire and establishment of a new nation. It was a symbolical act of release from all that the Old World represented—from political oppression, from kings and aristocracies, from the tyranny of class over class, from an established church and a standing army. It was the symbol of the creation of a new order, a new society and economy and politics, even a new moral order. The United States was to embark upon an experiment new to history—an experiment in making government for men, not men for government, an experiment in liberty and equality.

AFTER the peace of 1815 it was possible for Americans to cultivate their own affairs free from the vexations of European politics and wars. The Monroe Doctrine proclaimed the new relationship between America and Europe: let Europe tend to her own affairs and let us tend to ours. So it was understood by the man on the farm and in the street, and Americans turned energetically to the cultivation of their own affairs, turned westward, turned to the creation of an American nationalism. Actually it was quite impossible to separate the New World from the Old, what with millions of immigrants pouring into the country, what with the intimate economic ties and the intimate cultural ties, what with the same body of traditions and values. Actually the Atlantic community persisted all through the century; but this great truth was not understood or appreciated. It was the century of "splendid isolation."

"Our relations with foreign nations today fill but a slight place in American politics and excite generally only a languid interest." So wrote Henry Cabot Lodge in 1889. Even as he was writing, isolation began to evaporate. It was in the Eighteen Nineties that the United States began to emerge as a world power. The Spanish War dramatically ended one century-old empire and ushered in another. America turned to the Pacific, to Hawaii and the Philippines, and to China; the Open Door was added to the Monroe Doctrine as one of the cornerstones of American

Thirty-five years ago we ended isolationism and began to re-create the Atlantic community.

CPYRGHT By HENRY STEELE COMMAGER

foreign policy. America turned to Europe, and her voice was heard in the councils of the Old World.

ALL this came to a climax during the first World War. "It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war," said President Wilson; he had put it off as long as he could, so he thought. This fateful step, the declaration of war on April 6, 1917, was the beginning of those decades of conflict which were to shift the center of power from the Old World to the New, which were to engage the whole Western world—perhaps the whole

globe—in kaleidoscopic rearrangements of peoples, regroupings of power, reorganizations of national and international systems. The real beginnings had come, of course, in 1914, but who can doubt now that the distinctive and decisive fact of the great war was the entry of the United States?

The year 1917 marked too the beginning of that re-creation of the Atlantic community which had been a very real thing in the eighteenth century and which had been forgotten or ignored in the nineteenth. The rescue of Britain and France was not an explicit war aim in 1917, but no one who

studies the drift of public opinion during the early years of the war can doubt for a moment that it was a decisive consideration. For it was clear from the first that the United States could not tolerate a hostile power on the shores of the Atlantic and that it could not stand idly by while Britain and France went under. The community of thought, of values, of interests, which allied the United States with the Western European peoples twice in a generation, was a most fundamental thing. In one sense, then—perhaps a symbolical one—the creation of NATO may be regarded as the most significant thing to come out of those years of conflict. And the Atlantic community, now coming to fruition, is unthinkable without the United States.

IT would be an exaggeration to suggest that Americans generally understood what was involved in the great decision of 1917. The formal cause of the war was unrestricted U-boat warfare; the objectives of the war, as Wilson saw them, were democracy, freedom, self-determination, and a world organization for peace. "The right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for those things which we have always carried nearest our hearts, for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right * * *." Even Wilson, for all his insight and historical perspective, probably did not fully understand what was involved in the American entry into the war.

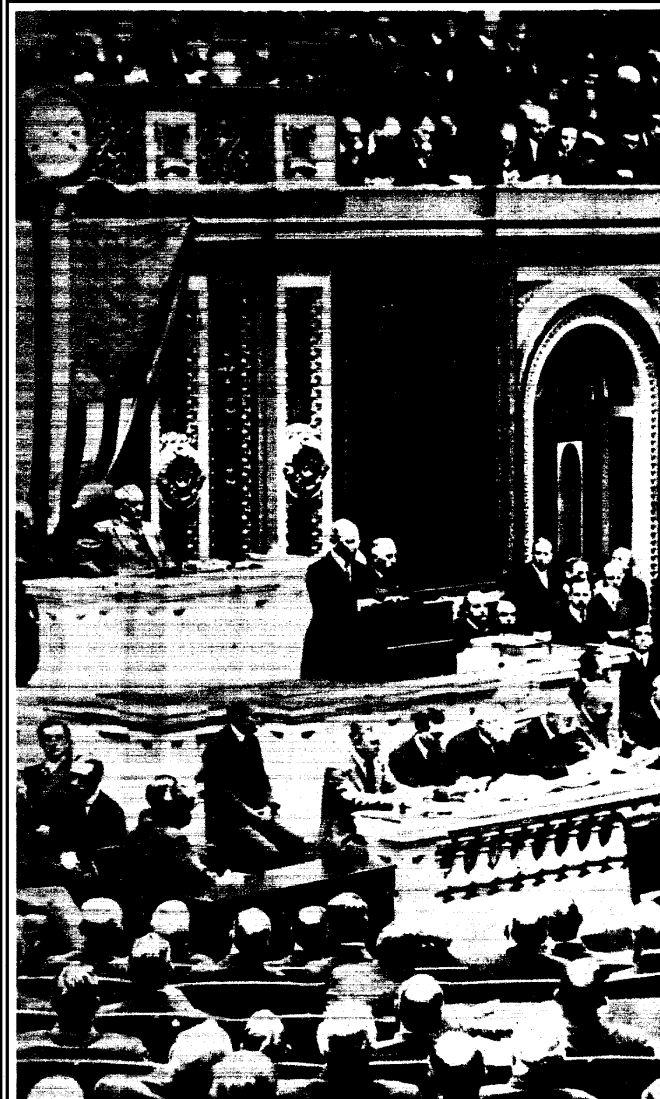
The election of 1920 and the repudiation of the League and the World Court dramatized the unwillingness of Americans of that generation to accept their new role as a world power.

After the first bold step to the rescue and liberation of the Atlantic community there was a withdrawal into isolation. This withdrawal never went so far in fact as it did in psychology and sentiment. Yet it was a very real thing, and portentous for history. It persisted well into the Nineteen Thirties and to the eve of World War II; it has not yet wholly vanished.

It is important, therefore, that we consider the reasons for the withdrawal into isolation in the Nineteen Twenties and Nineteen Thirties, the character and consequences of that withdrawal. It is important that we do this in order that we may avoid in the future the errors of the past.

WE can distinguish four major causes or influences which persuaded Americans to withdraw from the responsibilities of world power. There was the deeply ingrained isolationist sentiment; there was disillusionment with the results of the war; there was the myth of American war guilt, and there was the impractical and over-ambitious nature of the new international order. Let us look briefly at each of these.

The first needs little elaboration. Isolationism was not to be overcome by a single venture into the world arena; it was too deeply ingrained for that. (Continued on Page 38)



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Wilson asks Congress to declare war on Germany.

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'Peace May Be in Moslem Hands'

(Continued from Page 14)
herents in Hindu India than in Moslem Pakistan, among the Indo-Chinese than among the Moroccans and Tunisians who share the same basic grievances.

There is no place in a Moslem's life for a new set of dogmas or regulations. His standards of personal cleanliness and hygiene, his daily diet and his fasting, his dress and manner of speech, his literary style and his codes of hospitality, his education, his inheritance-and-divorce laws, his income-tax procedures, the way he sits and eats, his attitude toward his parents and children—for any of these the holy book of the Koran gives definite instructions.

AFTER 1,300 years it would be understandable if the religious origins of these instructions were forgotten; yet in actual fact it is not so. And it is precisely because he is always conscious of those sanctions that the Moslem abides by these decrees with a living awareness which many people of other religions have lost. No amount of dialectical-materialistic propaganda will convince the Moslem that to offer protection to a stranger, to distribute part of his income to the poor, to eat with but three fingers of the right hand are outmoded procedures.

Whereas Islam is the dominant influence in a Moslem's life, it is by no means the only one. Islam was born in the desert and under a scorching sun, and the original Moslem was a son of that very desert that is so vividly reflected in the Koran. His blood was quick with the heat of Arabian sands, and it throbbed with the restlessness of one born to a nomadic life.

Both as a son of the desert and as a nomad, the Moslem



Moroccan girl.

is by nature suspicious, hardy and frugal; and because of the poverty that has marked most of his history, he is easily bewildered when riches fall into his lap. Like a child, he then throws caution to the winds

and seeks all the luxuries that have enlivened his dreams. Yet, as a nomad, he is essentially a "man of the tent" who calls no piece of land his own and pitches his home anywhere where there is some verdure for his sheep or camels. Thus he does not share the westerner's attachment to property, to permanence, or even to economic security and lives for the day rather than the morrow.

He easily becomes excited, and the border line between an innate reticence and a tendency to violence is indistinct. His background and the climatic extremes to which he is inured help to make of him a man of extremes: supremely courteous but also given to cupidity or cruelty unmatched in the West.

THE saintliness and asceticism of the Moslem Sufi mystic belong as much to the world of Islam as do the gross material pleasures and the promiscuity of Moslem voluptuaries. It must not be forgotten that a characteristic of the Prophet's paradise is marked by a vividly sensual imaginativeness. Because he is used to extremes rather than to the Golden Mean of the ancient Greeks, the Moslem finds nothing particularly reprehensible in the co-exist-

ence of extremes of wealth and poverty. Indeed, they are of Allah's ordinance; and this degree of complacency makes him an easy prey of the rapacity of greedy pashas and effendis.

IN many ways the Moslem resembles the man of the Italian Renaissance, in whose life violence, cruelty and debauchery went hand in hand with artistic refinement, intellectual pursuits and even spiritual exaltation. The sublime poems of the Sufis, the exquisite miniatures of the Persians, the subtle intricacies of Moorish arabesques have all grown from the same soil that produced a Moulay Ismail, that seventeenth century Sultan of Morocco who with his own hand chopped off more heads than all the executioners of the French Revolution.

The question of the Moslem's acceptance of polygamy is a stumbling-block to many Westerners. Unfortunately, the Prophet Mohammed's teachings on this matter have usually been misrepresented. In actual fact he limited the highly polygamous man of his day to four wives, being realistically aware of their clamorously sensual nature. He made divorce easy for the Moslem male; and there is no gainsaying that even his



Algerian worker.

injunctions safeguarding divorced women are somewhat half-hearted.

Many of the Koran's injunctions are inspired by the Prophet's longing for social justice. "Unto your parents show kindness" it says, "and unto kindred and orphans and the needy, and unto thy neighbor who is a kin and the neighbor who is a stranger." Almsgiving, which forms the third of the five acts of religious worship imposed by the Koran, is a duty accepted by even those Moslems who are prone to disregard some of the other four acts of worship, such as the obligation to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, to say the five daily prayers, or to fast during the month of Ramadhan.

Practically all Moslems are addicted to word-spinning and the telling of tales. Much of Islam's literature, both secu-

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lar and religious—in fact the Koran itself—has been transmitted by word of mouth. As we all know, the spoken word does not call for the same conciseness and discipline of thought as the written.

Another Moslem attitude that often exasperates the foreigner is addiction to complicated argument, to the ambivalent reply that seems to say either far more or far less than it is meant to do. In most Moslem countries people have all the time in the world and leisure for long-winded talk and complicated processes of thought. A clear and direct approach to any given problem is almost impossible to them. This, however, need not imply that they wish to deceive or be untruthful. And from their enjoyment of argument and the matching of wits stems their passion for bargaining, both in political and in business dealings.

It is impossible to understand the Moslem without acknowledging his unworldly attitude to time. Whether he be a Persian, an Egyptian or a Tunisian, time in the Western sense means nothing to him. Since both measurable time and the outcome of all human strivings in time are God's, it would be foolish to become a slave to chronometers. On innumerable occasions my Moslem friends have kept me waiting for anything from one hour to several days. We may have

had an appointment for Monday and they would arrive on Thursday, seemingly hardly conscious of their unpunctuality. At the same time they would have found it perfectly natural if, instead of waiting, I myself had departed; they would certainly not have resented the necessity of calling on me again and again.

As so many of the fundamental conceptions of the Westerner and the Moslem are at such variance, it is surprising that mutual relations are not even more unsatisfactory. But real improvement must

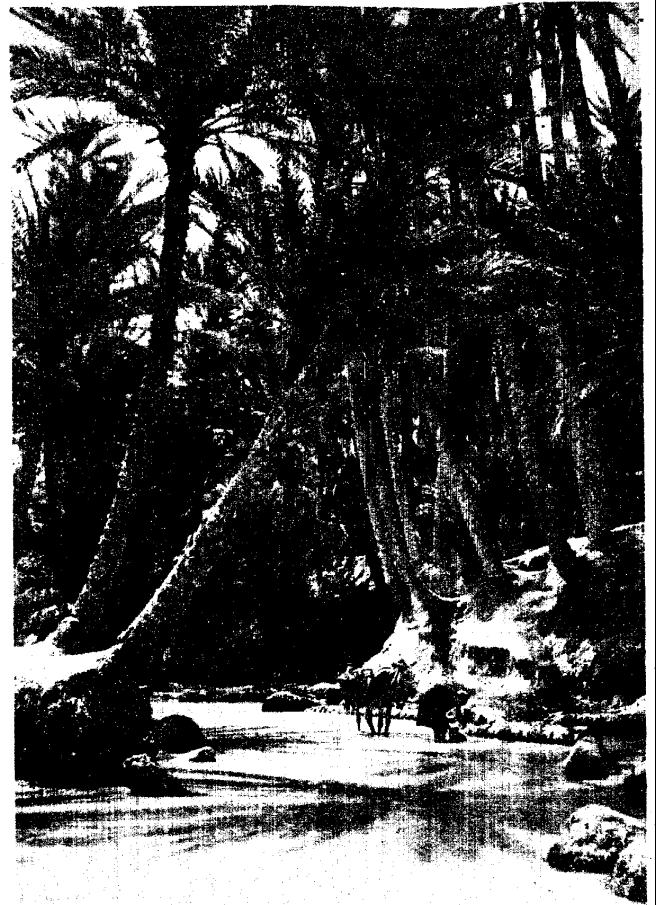


Algerian beggar.

depend on our efforts rather than on his; for we are better educated, more widely traveled, and have a greater scientific training—which should enable us to study others dispassionately.

It is unreasonable to expect a political leader of the Moslems to possess the American equipment for his job; for velvet-gloved or iron-handed foreign domination has conditioned his whole life. And his newly won independence has been an intoxicant to him. We must remember that in his own country he deals with communities that are morbidly suspicious of any move of the Western powers, and terrified that they may again be deprived of their independence. We forget that most Moslems are pronounced individualists, and that in Moslem countries personalities count for infinitely more than principles or doctrines. Hence the extreme importance of personal jealousies and vendettas that affect so strongly the political conduct of Moslem powers.

LONG centuries of colorful history the Moslem may well boast; but in terms of modern politics they are inevitably still minors, and may have to learn a good deal from the West. But we, on the other hand, can learn from them: their patience and sobriety, their courage in adversity, their complete lack of self-righteousness and their obedience to religious principles. The "clean-sweep" approach will get us nowhere. Only by our works will they know and judge us, and, finally, decide whether to be our friends or our foes.



The Nefta Oasis in Tunisia.

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Missions to Man

The U. N.'s technical assistance program is taking on world scope.

By KATHLEEN McLAUGHLIN

ON the twenty-fifth floor of the East River headquarters of the United Nations is located a prosaic suite of offices. Few visitors come there. The atmosphere is quiet. Nothing about the place suggests that it is the hub of a network spanning the globe and seeking daily to improve the lives of millions—shepherders in Afghanistan, weavers in the Philippines, farmers in Pakistan—or that it symbolizes more optimism for mankind than any of the well-publicized sessions to date of the General Assembly, including the one lately adjourned at Paris. But it does.

These offices are the home of the Technical Assistance Administration, set up by the U. N. to provide aid for underprivileged areas. Its director general is Hugh L. Keenleyside, a Canadian. Its annual budget of \$6,000,000 is supplemented by voluntary contributions from member governments, totaling about \$20,000,000 a year. This sum pays the foreign-travel expenses and the salaries of scientists and technicians

from thirty-four nations. Local Governments pay the costs of any approved project, and domestic travel costs.

Every U. N. delegate understands the functions of this organization, if not its potentialities. To the rest of the world, it is only a bravely idealistic plan. Yet its effectiveness even now could shake those critics who assert that the U. N. has not justified its existence through any constructive advances for humanity.

THE files in these rooms are refutation enough. They are the reception center for a constantly accelerating flow of reports from remote regions. Each of them documents the advances or frustrations of man's fight against disease, illiteracy, drought, abnormal climate or the unproductivity of the soil. The reports come from missions to specific Governments on problems involving health, living standards or happiness of entire populations or segments thereof. They are terse and factual, written in technical phrase-



Using local labor, the T.A.A. sets up flood control in Greece.

ology. Only occasionally a flash of exuberance gleams through. Only scrutiny reveals the essential drama in these undramatic pages.

At intervals some scientist or engineer turns up at headquarters after months in the field. Then the picture comes clearer as their first-hand stories are told—not to a circle of correspondents, but to a group of staff employees. The press generally seems to inhibit these knowledgeable,

frequently solitary, workers in the far places.

Lack of exploitation has left untold, for instance, the chapter on the resuscitation of the weaving industry in the Philippines, through the ingenuity and experience of two American women cooperating with the Government there. One of them suggested the addition of eight inches to the looms in use there, providing wider yardages in the production of upholstery weaves

which are now finding a ready outlet through Filipino furniture factories. The cost was two pesos (about \$1 American) per loom. Such wider yardages are preferred everywhere by professional designers.

The Technical Assistance Administration is based on the principle of reciprocity. Today's borrower of skills from "the common cupboard" may be tomorrow's lender. Sensitive smaller nations especially appreciate this. Sometimes exchanges are exclusively between or among themselves.

THERE was the case of St. Lucia, in the British Windward Isles, and its boiling volcanic springs. Officials there sought information about the possibility of harnessing this vast accumulation of steam to make electric power. A cross-check revealed only two countries with experience in this field—Italy and Iceland. Details were sent to St. Lucia. Back came a request for the services of someone who knew how Iceland had directed its steaming geysers into commercial channels. An Icelandic technician is now there on a preliminary survey.

International teams comprising T. A. A. technicians and local workers who learn as they operate, have accom-

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NOMADISM—"The original Moslem was a son of the desert, born in the sands and under a scorching sun. His blood throbbed with the restlessness of nomadic life."



NATIONALISM—"Newly won independence has been an intoxicant. Moslems are terrified they may again be deprived and morbidly suspicious of any move by the West."



POVERTY—"Extremes of poverty co-existing with extreme riches are Allah's ordinance. Man's prime duty of submission to adversity without complaint is taken for granted."



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