50 Years Ago: The Conflict in the Middle East

Another Middle East storm has developed. This time it is the Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq that occupy the centre of the stage, with Kuwait also stirring. Again oil is the mainspring of the eruptions and clashing interests. The struggles concern the rich oil lands and the routes to those areas, with other economic advantages for the privileged seeping in.

The revenues from oil are in the region of the fabulous. They are cherished by the privileged possessors, and sought after by privileged non-possessors who want a larger share of the plunder. The toilers who make these revenues possible have no share in them. They only receive the customary payment for the work they do; some of the Arab workers receive hardly enough to buy the necessities of life.

In spite of the numberless pronouncements on peace, with which we have been deluged for decades from all quarters, armed force, or the threat of it, is always the final resource when capitalist sections feel that their sources of revenue are threatened.

The present flare-up, just as the recent Suez dispute, concerns oil and the interests of the mammoth oil companies. There is no secret about this. Reports, articles, and pronouncements concentrate on this aspect. ( . . .)

It is an old oft-repeated story; littered with indecision, broken pacts, duplicity, intrigues and wars. In the final chapter the privileged always occupy the seat of power and the mass of people remain in subjection. It will be the same in the Middle East after the present turmoil has come to an end. At best the most the mass of the people there can obtain is a standard of wage slavery that is equivalent to what obtains in the so-called advanced countries.

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