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Zionism: The Birth And Transformation Of An Ideal



Synopsis

From serving as the Middle East correspondent for The New Yorker to penning articles for the New York Times, Milton Viorst has dedicated his career to studying the Middle East. Now, in this new book, Viorst examines the evolution of Zionism, from its roots by serving as a cultural refuge for Europe's Jews, to the cover it provides today for Israel's exercise of control over millions of Arabs in occupied territories. Beginning with the shattering of the traditional Jewish society during the Enlightenment, Viorst covers the recent history of the Jews, from the spread of Jewish Emancipation during the French Revolution Era to the rise of the exclusionary anti-Semitism that overwhelmed Europe in the late nineteenth century. Viorst examines how Zionism was born and follows its development through the lives and ideas of its dominant leaders, who all held only one tenet in common: that Jews, for the first time in two millennia, must determine their own destiny to save themselves. But, in regards to creating a Jewish state with a military that dominates the region, Viorst argues that Israel has squandered the goodwill it enjoyed at its founding, and thus the country has put its own future on very uncertain footing. With the expertise and knowledge garnered from decades of studying this contentious region, Milton Viorst deftly exposes the risks that Israel faces today.

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Customer Reviews

âœZionism: The Birth and Transformation of an Idealâ• by Milton Viorst (2016). Initially I was expecting an extensive analysis of the overall Zionism movement since the 1880s through 2010ish.

And this book does cover this era, but it is stronger in the 1880s-1920s than thereafter. I learned a lot about these four decades from this book. However, during this limited time period the author primarily discussed just the influences of the usual suspects: Herzl, Weizmann and Jabotinsky. While reading about these leaders, what I found lacking was the author not listing the specific policies that they were trying to implement. The author provided generalities about some of their personality conflicts, but I was left yearning to learn more about how they communicated and interacted with the lesser Zionists within Poland and Eastern Europe. The author noted how these luminaries might entice thousands of Jews to attend some speech, but I don't recall the author noting through what publications or groups informed the Jewish masses to learn of some upcoming speech/confab. The author noted that some Jews were openly split between the secular-Zionists versus the Orthodox-rabbis who didn't want to have anything to do with secularism. However, I don't recall the author listing any numbers as to how many Jews participated in or championed these different camps. I just didn't get any feeling as to what percentage or number of Jews supported the various camps. When discussing the Jews immigrating to British-held Palestine, I don't recall the author really mentioning how many Jews were immigrating after 1920 (although the author did state that there were about a million Arab-Palestinians and 400K Jewish-Palestinians).

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