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"The Impossible Peace - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(13)

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Chapter 1 Wave of nationalism and socialism (1945-1956)

1-7(13) Young officers awakned by Nakba

The Arabs living in the Palestine could not keep silent against the declaration of independence of the Jewish state Israel. Adjacent Arab countries such as Egypt and Jordan were the same. In terms of number of population, the Jews at the time of declaration of independence was around six to seven hundred thousand. On the other hand, the population of Arabs surpassed 100 times. Speaking of the myths of the Old Testament, it looked like a fight between David and the Giant Goliath. The commanders on the Arab side, therefore, predicted that they will annihilate the Jewish army within 11 days.

Nonetheless, the First Arab Israeli War from 1948 to 1949 ended in Israel's overwhelming victory. Arabs fought a disastrous defeat. Jewish regarded the war as an independent war. The reason was the difference between military force and the fighting spirit.

Certainly the number of soldiers from Arab countries were more than a hundred times higher than the Jewish ones, but in fact the military force sent to the battlefield from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon were about 10,000, 4,500, 3,000, 2,000 and 1,000 respectively. Total number of combatants including 2,000 soldiers from other Arab countries and Palestine were only 23,000. On the other hand, the Jewish side had about 35,000 regular Haganah forces alone, as well as thousands of combatants such as Irgun and armed colonists. In terms of armament they armed with the modern weapons and had a wealth of funds sent from European and American Jewish communities. The difference in the strength of each side was obvious.

Furthermore, there was a big difference in the soldiers' fighting spirit. Jews had burning spirit for the independence. If they were defeated by war, they would face again for the fate of "diaspora (discrete)". For the Jews it was a war that could not be defeated at all. Both men and women took their weapons

with them and stood up. At present Israel still has women's military service obligation. Current military service in various countries around the world is a volunteer system, and there are not many countries of compulsory military service. Even in countries where military duty is required as in South Korea, only men are subjects, and rare in countries where military service is obliged to women like Israel.

On the other hand, although the Arab side attacked Israel from all directions at the same time when the war began, the unity of the Arab Allied Army was nominal, and there was no unified command order system. They were only a crowd of disorderly. Individual soldiers were forced to engage against the Jews with old-fashioned weapons according to the order of their superior officers, without knowing what they were fighting for and for whom. Arab soldiers were defeated everywhere in the front. They named this war "Nakba (great disaster)".



Major Nasser who became Egyptian president later also served in war and injured. Gamal Abdel Nasser was born in 1918. After graduating from the military academy in 1939, he moved to Sudan. Then he threw himself into the Egypt liberation movement during World War II. He was a young age of 30 at the time of the First Arab Israeli War. In this era, the only way that boys who could not go on to college due to poverty despite having excellent brain was to join the military academies. In military academy, they did not need to worry about food, clothing and housing. They got even salary. Furthermore, could master the latest technology, and if they had achieved excellent grades they had a chance to study abroad. For ambitious but poor young, there was no job exceeding military service.

After graduating from the military school, however, there was a tough war in the motherland betting his own life. When defeated by the first Arab Israeli War, disillusionment against motherland was overflowed in the heart of Nasser who had been fighting for the sake of Egypt.

Shuji Terayama, Japanese poet, revealed nihilistic feeling in his poem;
"Striking a match / momentarily / I see the foggy ocean -/ is there a motherland / I can dedicate myself to?"

But Major Nasser was different. Along with General Naguib, he formed a secret society of anti-British patriotism, "Association of Free Officers" and aimed for a revolution.

(To be continued ----)