

## GEOLOGY

# International Problem

**Nations that need oil most, except America, have only minor natural resources. Commission should allocate petroleum products to countries needing them.**

► THE IMPORTANCE of oil in world economy is indicated by proposals under discussion at the London Anglo-American conference, particularly the idea of an international commission to deal with present and future problems concerning the development of old and new reserves and the allocation of the petroleum products to the countries needing them. The nations that have the greater needs for petroleum, except the United States, have only minor domestic reserves, if any, and even American needs may soon require oil imports because of war drains and future expanded uses.

Atomic power may some day replace some of the present-day power-creating fuels, but not in the immediate future. Even if atomic power is used in the larg-

er power plants, petroleum will be needed for many decades for diesel engines, heating plants and to operate automobiles. The world supply is ample for many years, and oil and gasoline can be made from oil-shale and coal.

However, the process is not simple, and nations depending upon synthetic fuels for their war equipment might find themselves at the mercy of those with natural supplies, as Germany and Japan now know. In addition to fuels, lubrication greases for machinery are essential to operation, and most of the greases found satisfactory for this purpose are petroleum products. Petroleum chemicals are also important, but many of these can be made from coal.

The United States, in the past, has worried very little about its supply of oil. The situation has changed, however, as a result of the war, during which America provided about two-thirds of the needed oil to power not only American fighting equipment but that of the other Allies as well. Known reserves have been drawn on heavily. New reserves may be located, and better recovery methods developed to get a larger percentage of the crude from under the ground, but the United States must look forward to possible importation.

The importance of oil in world economy becomes apparent by a survey of the countries using it and the regions where it is mined. The industrially developed nations are the greater users, but, with the exception of the United States, they are only minor producers. Western Europe, for instance, mines very little petroleum, but needs much. Soviet Russia seems to have plenty for its own need, and Romania produces for export. Production in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France and England is very small. Australia and Brazil are other countries undergoing rapid industrial development which now rely almost wholly on imported mineral liquid fuels.

The principal oil-producing nations in the Western Hemisphere are the United States, far in the lead, together with Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia and Trinidad. Northern Alaska has oil reserves

now under development which soon may play an important part in the American supply.

Africa produces very little oil at present, the principal production being in Egypt. An American oil company has just secured oil concessions in Ethiopia, an indication that its geologists, from preliminary studies, believe that important reserves may be found.

The Netherlands Indies, particularly Sumatra, Java and Borneo, are rich sources of oil and in the future will play an increasingly important part in the oil industry. Relatively little exploration has been carried out in this vast Netherlands area so the full possibilities are as yet unknown.

Asia has vast quantities of known oil, particularly in the Arabian-Iran region. Burma is also important and both China and Japan produce some. Sakhalin island, off the coast of Siberia, was a Jap source of oil in prewar and early war years. The Middle East fields in Arabia are particularly rich, one American authority stating that these fields are incomparably richer than those in this country.

"The really rich areas in oil as proved by drilling," Robert E. Wilson, president of the Pan-American Petroleum and Transport Company, stated recently in an article in *Mining and Metallurgy*, "are in the large basins alternately lifted and depressed between major continents—the Caribbean area, including our Gulf Coast, Venezuela, and Colombia; the great area between Europe and Asia, which has the tremendous reserves of Arabia and Iran; the intercontinental area of the Netherlands Indies between the continents of Australia and Asia; and finally, the area around the Arctic ocean, in northern Russia and around Alaska, which may prove a rich area but which, because of physical difficulties, has not as yet been explored."

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