



## THE DE-ARABIZATION OF WEST JERUSALEM 1947-50

NATHAN KRSTALL

*This article describes the progressive depopulation of the Arab neighborhoods of West Jerusalem following the outbreak of the fighting in late 1947. By the time the State of Israel was proclaimed on 15 May 1948, West Jerusalem already had fallen to Zionist forces. Quoting from eyewitness accounts, the author recounts the widespread looting that followed the Arab evacuation and the settlement of Jewish immigrants and Israeli government officials in the Arab houses. By the end of 1949, all of West Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods had been settled by Israelis.*

THE CONVENTIONAL ZIONIST VERSION of the fall of Arab West Jerusalem depicts a Jewish community forced to defend itself against attacking Palestinians, Arab armies mounting a full-scale attack on Jerusalem as of 14 May 1948, and a fledgling state at the end of the fighting with no choice but to settle thousands of homeless Jewish refugees in the empty houses abandoned by Arabs who had fled at the first hint of gunfire. A more recent variant simplifies the tale by ignoring that there ever had been Palestinians in West Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, before 1948, the Palestinian Arab community of West Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> which numbered about 28,000,<sup>3</sup> was one of the most prosperous in the Middle East. West Jerusalem's Arabs lived mainly in the southern part (in beautiful residential quarters from Talbiyya down to the German Colony,<sup>4</sup> the Greek Colony,<sup>5</sup> Qatamon, and Baq'a) and in the eastern part (in Musrara on the northwestern side of the Old City and Dayr Abu Tur on its southern end). In 1947, they owned 33.69 percent of the land in what was to become West Jerusalem,<sup>6</sup> excluding the Arab villages later incorporated into the municipality. The Jewish population, which numbered about 95,000<sup>7</sup> and owned 30.04 percent of the land,<sup>8</sup> lived mainly in West Jerusalem's northern and western neighborhoods, which were ringed on the west, going from north to south, by the Arab villages of Lifta, Shaykh Badr, Dayr Yasin, 'Ayn Karim, Maliha, and Bayt Safafa.

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### INITIAL EVACUATION OF THE ARAB NEIGHBORHOODS

Fighting between Zionist and Palestinian forces in and around Jerusalem broke out immediately following the 29 November 1947 UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution to partition Palestine, which provided that Jerusalem remain under international control as a *corpus separatum*. During the three-day strike called by the Arab Higher Committee (AHC) to protest the resolution, Jerusalem Arabs staged a militant demonstration that led to the burning and looting of Jewish-owned shops in the Mamilla commercial district of the New City. By most accounts, the rioting in Mamilla was the spontaneous act of individuals, but the Zionist "dissident" groups, the Irgun Zva'i Le'umi (Irgun) and Lehi (Stern Gang), responded swiftly and with lethal force. The fighting quickly escalated.

The main Arab force in and around Jerusalem before May 1948 was the *Jihad Muqqadis* (Holy Struggle), a semiregular fighting force led by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, which commanded about 380 men in the city itself and another 250 in its rural environs. There were also some 100 to 150 fighters of the Arab League-sponsored Liberation Army and volunteers of the Manko company, a contingent of irregulars. Altogether, the Arab forces, hampered by a paucity of trained soldiers, antiquated and insufficient arms, and a fragmented leadership, commanded less than 1,000 full-time fighters in the Jerusalem area. There were also dozens of "part-time" troops, who would rally to help ward off a Zionist offensive or participate in a nearby Arab attack and return home after a few hours. On the Zionist side, the Haganah, many of whose soldiers had served in British units in World War II, gradually mobilized two brigades under a unified command in the Jerusalem area by May 1948: the Etzioni or Sixth Brigade, with some 2,750 troops, in the city itself; and the Harel or Tenth Brigade (Palmach), of about the same strength, in the environs.<sup>9</sup> The forces of the two "dissident" groups mentioned above were concentrated disproportionately in Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup>

With the outbreak of fighting, Jews began to leave the mixed neighborhoods, where for the most part they were renting homes from Arab landlords. The Haganah saw this as a serious problem, for it regarded each neighborhood as a military post, and its resident population as a reserve fighting force. Its strategy for dealing with the Jewish exodus was to forbid all Jews to leave their area of residence without permission. Furthermore, the Jewish neighborhood committees compelled residents to continue to pay tax, even after they evacuated, and refused to take responsibility for property left behind.<sup>11</sup> When Jews continued to leave, Israel Amir, the Haganah commander in Jerusalem, decided to drive the Arabs completely out of West Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup>

In implementing this plan, the Haganah first used psychological warfare. Haganah members issued threats via posters, notes, and phone calls to the Arab neighborhood leaders. Next, raiding parties entered the neighborhoods, severing phone lines and electric wires, throwing hand grenades, and

firing into the air to create a general air of insecurity.<sup>13</sup> They also blew up buildings on the pretext that they served as bases for Arab military actions.

Clearing Lifta, Romema, and Shaykh Badr of their Arab residents was given top priority, as these villages were strategically located at the city's entrance on the main road to Tel Aviv. Most residents of Lifta left the village soon after a series of Haganah and Irgun attacks in late December killed seven people, and the rest departed when the Zionist forces blew up several houses.<sup>14</sup> The Arabs of Romema and of adjacent Shaykh Badr, the closest village to the city, were forced out in early January 1948.

Meanwhile, on 4 January 1948 the Haganah blew up the Semiramis Hotel in the prosperous Arab neighborhood of Qatamon, claiming to have suspected that the hotel served as the headquarters of local irregulars.<sup>15</sup> In fact, twenty-six civilians, most from two Christian Arab families of Jerusalem, were killed, causing major panic and triggering the exodus of Arab residents from Qatamon and Talbiyya. Hala Sakakini, a young woman living in Qatamon, described the situation in her neighborhood as follows:

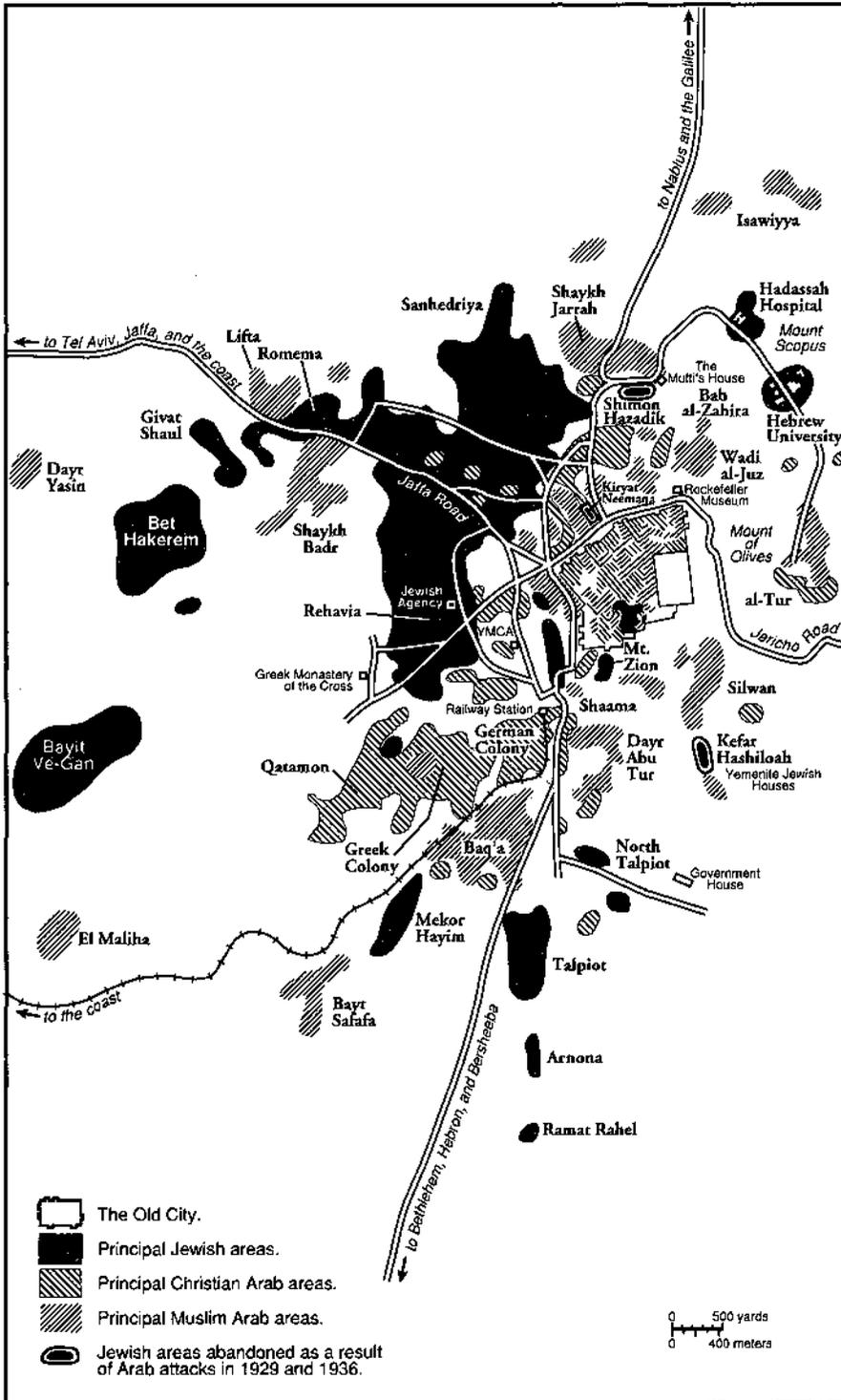
All day long you could see people carrying their belongings and moving from their houses to safer ones in Qatamon or to another quarter altogether. They reminded us of pictures we used to see of European refugees during the war. People were simply panic-stricken. The rumor spread that leaflets had been dropped by the Jews saying that they would make out of Qatamon one heap of rubble. Whenever we saw people moving away we tried to encourage them to stay. We would tell them: "You ought to be ashamed to leave. This is just what the Jews want you to do; you leave and they occupy your houses and then one day you will find that Qatamon has become another Jewish quarter!"<sup>16</sup>

Following the Semiramis Hotel bombing, the Haganah blew up many private Arab residences in Qatamon.<sup>17</sup> A communication dated 13 January 1948 from Hussein al-Khalidi, AHC secretary and Jerusalem National Committee leader, to Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem then in exile in Cairo, describes the situation in the city as follows: "The position here is very difficult. There are no people, no discipline, no arms, and no ammunition. Over and above this, there is no tinned food and no foodstuffs. The black market is flourishing. The economy is destroyed. . . . This is the real situation, there is no flour, no food . . . . Jerusalem is emptying out."<sup>18</sup> In January, practically all the West Jerusalem Palestinians with the means to relocate left the neighborhoods of Qatamon, Dayr Abu Tur, and Baq'a<sup>19</sup> for safer areas of Palestine or abroad, intending to return when the fighting subsided.

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*The Jews and Arabs of Jerusalem by 1945*

Concurrent with the Haganah's campaign to clear West Jerusalem of Arabs was the settling of their homes by Jews. The first area to be settled was Shaykh Badr (today the site of the Knesset), which already had been looted by Jewish residents of nearby Nahlaot. By 28 January, twenty-five Jewish families, most of whom had been displaced from Shimon HaTzadik in East Jerusalem, had been moved into Shaykh Badr.<sup>20</sup> Arnon Golan describes how various committees established by the Haganah and the Jewish Agency pressured these families into settling the neighborhood:

It was not easy for the Housing Committee to convince [the refugees] to leave the *Kol Yisrael Chaverim* institutions [where they were sheltered] and to be housed in Shaykh Badr. . . . According to the testimony of Chaya Buton, a Housing Committee worker, sanctions were imposed on them like cutting off support given them by the Social Department of the Community Committee, and when that did not work they were forcibly loaded onto trucks and transferred to Shaykh Badr.<sup>21</sup>

David Ben-Gurion closely followed the dual process of evacuation and settlement. On 5 February 1948, he ordered the new Haganah commander of Jerusalem, David Shaltiel, to conquer and settle Jews in Arab districts.<sup>22</sup> Appearing before the Mapai Council two days later, Ben-Gurion reported:

From your entry into Jerusalem, through Lifta, Romema, . . . there are no Arabs. One hundred percent Jews. Since Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, it has not been so Jewish as it is now. In many Arab neighborhoods in the west one sees not a single Arab. I do not assume that this will change . . . . What has happened in Jerusalem . . . is likely to happen in many parts of the country . . . in the six, eight, or ten months of the campaign there will certainly be great changes in the composition of the population of the country.<sup>23</sup>

By March, all the neighborhoods of Jerusalem—except for the Jewish Quarter in the otherwise Arab Old City—were exclusively Arab or Jewish, with virtually no communication between them.<sup>24</sup>

### THE ZIONIST CONQUEST OF WEST JERUSALEM

During the first months of 1948, the Palestinian irregulars and militiamen of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni concentrated their efforts on attacking the Jewish convoys en route to Jewish Jerusalem through the Arab territory separating it from the coastal areas. In March, they also began to sabotage the water

supplies to the Jewish neighborhoods. By the end of the month, Jewish Jerusalem was effectively under siege.

The Haganah's Operation Nahshon, designed to carve out a corridor to Jerusalem through this territory, which had been allotted to the Arab state under the partition plan, began on 6 April 1948. It was the first operation within the framework of Plan Dalet, which aimed to enlarge the boundaries of the state allotted to the Zionists under the UN partition plan and simultaneously conquer dozens of villages from which the Palestinian Arab inhabitants would be expelled.<sup>25</sup> Benny Morris describes Operation Nahshon as "a watershed, characterized by an intention and effort to clear a whole area, permanently, of Arab villages and hostile or potentially hostile villagers."<sup>26</sup> Yitzhak Rabin, then an officer in the Palmach's Harel Brigade, had the mission of razing the Palestinian villages upon which 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni relied for support, from Dayr Mahsir in the west to Kolonia and Kastel in the east. Rabin later explained the ultimate goal of the operation as follows: "By not leaving stone on stone and driving all the people away, and without those villages, the Arab bands were not going to be able to operate effectively anymore."<sup>27</sup>

As their contribution to Operation Nahshon, Irgun and Lehi perpetrated the Dayr Yasin massacre on 9 April 1948.<sup>28</sup> The Haganah had prior knowledge of, and even assisted in, the attack on the village, strategically located one mile from Jerusalem's western suburbs near the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road.<sup>29</sup> The killings of the unarmed civilians after their surrender were gratuitously savage, and there were numerous instances of rape and, to quote a British police detective who investigated the massacre, other "sexual atrocities."<sup>30</sup> Jacques de Reynier, Jerusalem's chief delegate of the International Red Cross, reported that the Jewish forces carried out the attack "without any military reason or provocation of any kind."<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Dayr Yasin was one of several Arab villages in the area that had concluded nonbelligerency agreements with Jewish Jerusalem.<sup>32</sup> News of the attack spread quickly throughout Palestine. De Reynier observed that the "general terror" was "astutely fostered by the Jews,"<sup>33</sup> with Haganah radio incessantly repeating "Remember Dayr Yasin" and loudspeaker vans broadcasting messages in Arabic such as: "Unless you leave your homes, the fate of Dayr Yasin will be your fate."<sup>34</sup>

The massacre had an immediate impact on the situation in West Jerusalem. As Hala Sakakini of Qatamon wrote in her diary:

Lately, ever since the massacre at Dayr Yasin, we have been thinking seriously of leaving Jerusalem. The most terrible stories have been reached from eyewitnesses who have escaped from this unbelievable massacre. . . . One day, perhaps very soon, we may be forced to leave our house.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the National Committee of Jerusalem's order to the Arab population to stay put on pain of punishment, the massacre immediately provoked

a mass flight of Palestinian Arabs from Jerusalem and the surrounding villages.<sup>36</sup> The impact of Dayr Yasin on the Arab neighborhood of Talbiyya is clearly rendered in the following testimony of an Israeli who witnessed its evacuation as a child:

I lived not far from here [Talbiyya]. Dayr Yasin had a huge influence on the evacuation of Talbiyya. The Arabs were scared to death. They left their meals on their tables and the Haganah requested people in our neighborhood to clean the houses so that Jews could move into them. There were really meals still on the tables. The Arabs thought it was a matter of two or three days before they would return to their homes, as had happened in 1936 and 1939.<sup>37</sup>

With Operation Nahshon having cleared the corridor leading to Jerusalem, the Haganah General Command was poised to take control of West Jerusalem excluding the areas under British control. This was among the goals of Operation Yevussi, carried out by the Haganah's Etzioni Brigade and Palmach units as of 27 April.

As a precursor to its attack on Qatamon, the Zionist forces subjected the neighborhood to weeks of heavy artillery shelling.<sup>38</sup> On 22 April, the Arab National Committee of Jerusalem ordered its local branches to relocate all women, children, and elderly people from the neighborhoods.<sup>39</sup> The Haganah's conquest of Qatamon on 1 May was followed by widespread looting. Hagit Shlonsky provides an eyewitness account:

I remember the looting in Qatamon very well. I was a first aid nurse stationed in the Beit Havra'a Etzion [military convalescence center] in Qatamon. . . . One night a soldier took me out and showed me around the neighborhood. I was stunned by the beauty of the houses. I went into one house—it was beautiful, with a piano, and carpets, and wonderful chandeliers.

At the time my family lived in Rehavia on a street that was on the way to other Jewish neighborhoods from Qatamon. For days you could see people walking by carrying looted goods. . . . I saw them walking by for days. Not only soldiers, civilians as well. They were looting like mad. They were even carrying dining tables. And it was in broad daylight, so everyone could see. . . .

In our family, because my father was so outraged by the looting, we all talked about it a lot. But otherwise I didn't hear about it from anybody. It took many years till people started all talking and writing about it.<sup>40</sup>

On 16 May, the Zionist forces took over Baq'a, an event described in the memoirs of John Rose, an Armenian Jerusalemite:

There was no resistance of any sort; they just walked in, gradually taking over buildings in strategic places. Nearly every house was empty: set tables with plates of unfinished food indicated that the occupants had fled in disarray, haste, and fear. In some kitchens cooking stoves had been left alight, reducing the ingredients of a waiting meal to blackened remains.<sup>41</sup>

After the fall of the Arab neighborhoods of West Jerusalem, only about 750 non-Jews remained in the area.<sup>42</sup> Of these, many were Greeks who were allowed to continue living in their houses in the German Colony and the Greek Colony. Almost all the Arabs—most of whom were Christian—were concentrated by the Zionist forces into Upper Baq'a.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, Operation Kilshon ("Pitchfork") had begun on 14 May, the day before the British Mandate was to end, and was designed to occupy the areas that had been controlled by the British, particularly Talbiyya and central Jerusalem. Complicity of British troops helped ensure this operation's success. Through coordinating their withdrawal, the British handed over to the Haganah "Bevingrad," the huge central compound consisting of the city's vital installations.<sup>44</sup> They also secured the Haganah's occupation of the strategically positioned Villa Harun al-Rashid in Talbiyya, which served as the command base for the Royal Air Force and which towered over the neighborhood.<sup>45</sup> With control of this central area extending beyond Bevingrad to Musrara, Jewish forces now occupied all of West Jerusalem.

### THE ARAB LEGION

With Ben-Gurion's declaration on 14 May of the establishment of Israel, the Jewish state in Palestine, with no specified borders, Transjordan—along with Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria—decided to attack.<sup>46</sup> Two days later, Jordan's well-trained Arab Legion, officered by the British and under the command of Glubb Pasha, arrived on the outskirts of Jerusalem. At first, Glubb resisted the calls for help from the local Palestinians, under attack from Zionist forces, which had breached the walls of the Old City in an effort to link up with the Hagannah garrison in the Jewish Quarter under siege by the Palestinians. Only after strong Arab pressure and desperate cries for help from the local population did King 'Abdallah order Glubb to advance into Jerusalem on 19 May.<sup>47</sup>

It was the entry, however reluctant, of King 'Abdallah's troops that prevented the Zionist forces from completing their progressive takeover of the city. 'Abdallah's secret arrangement with the Zionists concerning the division of Palestine has been amply documented, but since the UN plan had designated Jerusalem a *corpus separatum*, it was not covered by the deal. Avi

Shlaim believes that fighting between the Transjordanian and Israeli forces broke out in and around Jerusalem precisely because the two sides had not reached an understanding regarding the city.<sup>48</sup>

This is not the place to rehearse the fierce fighting over the Old City, which by the end of May was completely under Arab control, or the intense disappointment of the Arab soldiers of the Legion who were prevented by their British superiors from attacking West Jerusalem.<sup>49</sup> At the end of May, Britain ended all Arab hopes of pressing forward by withdrawing all its Arab Legion officers—two-thirds of the total—from the fighting in Jerusalem and imposing a regional arms embargo that favored the Israelis.<sup>50</sup> For their part, the Israelis in West Jerusalem were under renewed siege and constant bombardment by the Arab Legion. On 11 June, both sides agreed to a thirty-day truce.

Some Jewish residents of West Jerusalem used the cease-fire as an opportunity to loot more empty Arab houses. John Rose, one of the few non-Jews who had remained in West Jerusalem, reported:

Our movements were restricted, but Jewish residents from the western suburbs and elsewhere were allowed to circulate freely. During this time looting of Arab houses started on a fantastic scale, accompanied by wholesale vindictive destruction of property. First it was the army who broke into the houses, searching for people and for equipment that they could use. Next came those in search of food, after which valuables and personal effects were taken. From our veranda we saw horse-drawn carts as well as pick-up trucks laden with pianos, refrigerators, radios, paintings, ornaments and furniture, some wrapped in valuable Persian carpets. . . . Safes with money and jewelry were pried open and emptied. The loot was transported for private use or for sale in West Jerusalem. To us this was most upsetting. Our friends' houses were being ransacked, and we were powerless to intervene.

. . . This state of affairs continued for months. Latecomers made do with what remained to be pillaged. They pried off ceramic tiles from bathroom walls and removed all electric switches and wiring, kitchen gadgets, water-pipes and fittings. Nothing escaped: lofts and cellars were broken into, doors and windows hacked down, floor tiles removed in search of hidden treasures.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile, Palestinian Arabs in the Old City, including many who had been displaced from West Jerusalem, used the lull in the fighting to escape to safer areas. Their flight and the consequent desolation visited upon the

Old City is described in the diaries of Greek vice consul in Jerusalem, C. X. Mavrides:

What characterized more the Old City during the four weeks of the truce was the exodus of the noncombatant population from the city who took refuge in the countryside, the surrounding villages and towns such as Ramallah, Jericho and Bethlehem, or Transjordan. From morning till evening the streets were full of porters and pack-animals, belonging to the Ta'amreh and A'bed tribes, who were carrying furniture, household utensils, mattresses, clothing, etc., from different parts of the city and heading to Damascus Gate. The exodus was like an ongoing chain of animals, porters, women, aged people, children—all of them carrying something under the burning July sun. As the time limit for the "truce" was approaching, this chain of people and animals was getting denser and denser every day.

On Friday, 10 July, as the truce had expired (8:00 A.M.), the Old City became empty of population. Out of a population of 60,000 plus the nearly 10,000 refugees who came from the new city suburbs, it is estimated that today about 5,000 to 7,000 only remain. Most of them are very poor, and they have absolutely no money at all to move away.<sup>52</sup>

At the end of the cease-fire, IDF and Arab Legion cannons exchanged furious gunfire inside Jerusalem, and the Israeli troops launched a final abortive attack on the Old City. With the artillery brought in during the cease-fire, the IDF shelled the Old City intensely, inflicting extensive damage but this time causing a low casualty rate because so many had fled.<sup>53</sup> By then, the Palestinians viewed the Arab Legion with a large measure of skepticism, as related by John Rose:

The stalemate was intriguing and the intensity of fruitless daily bombing aroused suspicion. Rumors soon spread that perhaps after all there was a secret agreement between the sides and that the noise we heard was only a sideshow for the benefit of the population. The Arab Legion was accused of using ammunition filled with bran and sawdust intended to cause minimum damage to the enemy.<sup>54</sup>

### THE SETTLING OF ARAB WEST JERUSALEM

On 17 July 1948, after a week of fighting, a second UN-arranged cease-fire went into effect in Jerusalem. By then, the city was effectively divided into the Israeli-controlled West and the Transjordanian-controlled East. A belt of

no-man's land ran south from Shaykh Jarrah, along the west side of the Old City's walls, and down Hebron Road to Ramat Rahel. The next month, Israel's provisional government declared West Jerusalem "territory occupied by the State of Israel" subject to Israeli law.<sup>55</sup> The state used the Absentee Property Regulations of 1948 to confiscate all Arab homes, including any contents that had not already been looted, as well as lands and businesses.<sup>56</sup> These regulations, later codified as the Absentee Property Law of 1950, allowed all property belonging to an "absentee" to be transferred to the Custodian of Absentee Property. An "absentee" was defined as a person who, at any time between 29 November 1947 and the day on which the state of emergency declared in 1948 ceases to exist, became a national or citizen of an Arab country, visited an Arab country, or left his ordinary place of residence in Palestine "for a place outside Palestine before 1 September 1948."<sup>57</sup> The status of the custodian, according to the law, is the same "as was that of the owner of the property," enabling him to choose to maintain the property, sell it, or lease it.<sup>58</sup>

Even before the first cease-fire in June, the Housing Committee began settling Israeli Jews in elegant Palestinian neighborhoods such as Qatamon and the German Colony. It was not until September, however, that this policy was carried out systematically. New immigrants, the first category of Israelis to be settled, were housed in the German Colony, Qatamon, Baq'a, Musrara, Dayr Abu Tur, and Talbiyya. Arnon Golan writes that the policy was not so much a result of the lack of alternative housing as a political strategy:

The population by Jews of former Arab neighborhoods was supposed to create facts on the ground, after which it would be difficult to alter them in the framework of a political agreement. New immigrants, so very dependent, were the government's and the Jewish Agency's primary reserve for housing these neighborhoods.<sup>59</sup>

Internal Israeli politics also played a role in the resettlement. Again according to Golan, the ruling Mapai party, whose standing was weak among the veteran Jewish population of Jerusalem, was eager to move immigrants into the city to strengthen its position there. To encourage them to settle in Jerusalem where conditions were relatively difficult, the Israeli government provided incentives, such as exemption from army service.<sup>60</sup>

So zealously did the Jewish Agency settle new immigrants in Palestinians' houses that its officials clashed with those of the Custodian. Not only did the Jewish Agency misreport to the Custodian concerning the Arab houses in which it was settling new immigrants, but it also took property without authorization from these homes and handed it over to the

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Jewish Agency's New Immigrant Authority.<sup>61</sup> The new immigrants, for their part, were more than willing to move into the spacious Palestinian homes. So much so that when immigrants were told that they would be housed in the Jewish neighborhood of Neve Sha'anán, some refused to move there, saying they preferred to live in the villas of Qatamon.<sup>62</sup>

As the new immigrants flooded into West Jerusalem, an acute housing crisis developed. On 15 September 1948, Military Governor Dov Joseph reported that 5,000 Jews in West Jerusalem needed housing.<sup>63</sup> As Qatamon and the German Colony already were overcrowded, Jews began to be housed in Baq'a and the Greek Colony. Many of those lacking housing grew impatient and broke into and squatted in empty houses in Qatamon. Other squatters had housing elsewhere but simply wanted to improve their living conditions by moving into the more spacious Arab homes.<sup>64</sup> According to Golan, among the squatters were Israeli officers who broke into Arab buildings and arbitrarily took apartments for themselves.<sup>65</sup> Some soldiers had two apartments: one in the city center and one in Arab neighborhoods, which they rented out for considerable sums. By early 1950, the Israeli housing authorities authorized almost all the squatters, soldier and civilian, to remain in the Palestinian homes they had broken into.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout the process of Israeli settlement, looting remained a problem, as reported by the military governor of Jerusalem, Dov Joseph, in a letter to Ben-Gurion:

The looting is spreading once again. . . . I cannot verify all the reports which reach me, but I get the distinct impression that the commanders are not over-eager to catch and punish the thieves. . . . I receive complaints every day. By way of example, I enclose a copy of a letter I received from the manager of the Notre Dame de France. Behavior like this in a monastery can cause quite serious harm to us. I've done my best to put a stop to the thefts there, which are all done by soldiers, since civilians are not permitted to enter the place. But as you can see from this letter, these acts are continuing. I am powerless.<sup>67</sup>

In mid-September 1948, the Israeli military erected a barbed-wire fence around a half-square-mile area in Baq'a, where they further concentrated the Palestinian Arabs who had remained in West Jerusalem. During daylight hours, they were permitted to roam around the compound, but at night they were under curfew. Israeli marauders broke through the fence to steal what they could from the "non-Jews." In addition, gangs of Israeli soldiers burst into the houses on the pretext that they were looking for "hidden arms and Arabs" and proceeded to extort money, jewelry, and other valuables.<sup>68</sup> Because of the housing shortage, some Jews defied the military authorities'

separation policy and rented rooms from non-Jews in the concentration zone.

It was not until November 1949 that the restrictions on movement of the Palestinians confined to the Baq'a zone were lifted, and they were permitted to circulate in West Jerusalem.<sup>69</sup> They were issued Israeli identity cards and, together with the villagers of divided Bayt Safafa on the Israeli side of the armistice lines, constituted the small Palestinian Arab minority of West Jerusalem. The Custodian of Absentee Property confiscated the homes of many Arabs in the Baq'a zone and forced them to pay rent to the Israeli state. Rose recorded the confiscation of his aunt's property in Baq'a as follows:

This [Absentee Property] law finally caught up with Aunt Arousiag and she was informed by the Custodian of Enemy Property that she had no rights in the house. She was to be treated as a tenant, and a demand for rent was sent to her for the two rooms which she occupied; furthermore, rents collected by her were to be handed over to the Custodian. The owner had been her late brother, Hagop. . . . She had lived there since it was built by her brother at the turn of the century, and had ploughed most of her earnings into the building. Unfortunately her pleas fell on deaf ears.<sup>70</sup>

#### AFTER THE WAR

The formal cessation of hostilities between Israel and the Arab states at the end of November 1948 allowed the expansion of Jewish settlement into Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods that hitherto had been military zones. Israel stepped up settlement further in defiant reaction to UNGA Resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948, Paragraph 11 of which called for the return of refugees to their homes; the resolution also reaffirmed the *corpus separatum* for Jerusalem. Four days later, Jerusalem Military Governor Dov Joseph reported to the Governor's Council that, in order to counter the UN refusal to include Jerusalem in the State of Israel's borders, he had ordered the immediate expansion of Jewish housing areas into territories abandoned by Arabs that thus far had not been populated by Jews. The first such area to be settled was the vicinity of the commercial center in Mamilla.<sup>71</sup>

On 2 February 1949, the Israeli government declared that it no longer considered West Jerusalem as occupied territory and abolished military rule. That same month, Israel and Transjordan began negotiations over Jerusalem and the rest of the territory along their front lines. Throughout the negotiations, the Israelization of West Jerusalem proceeded. To lessen the scope of potential Israeli compromises in the event of a peace agreement, Moshe Dayan ordered that the frontier neighborhood of Dayr Abu Tur be settled, together with Talpiot and Ramat Rachel. Dayan's directive was designed to preempt pressure on Israel from the UN-chaired armistice commission to

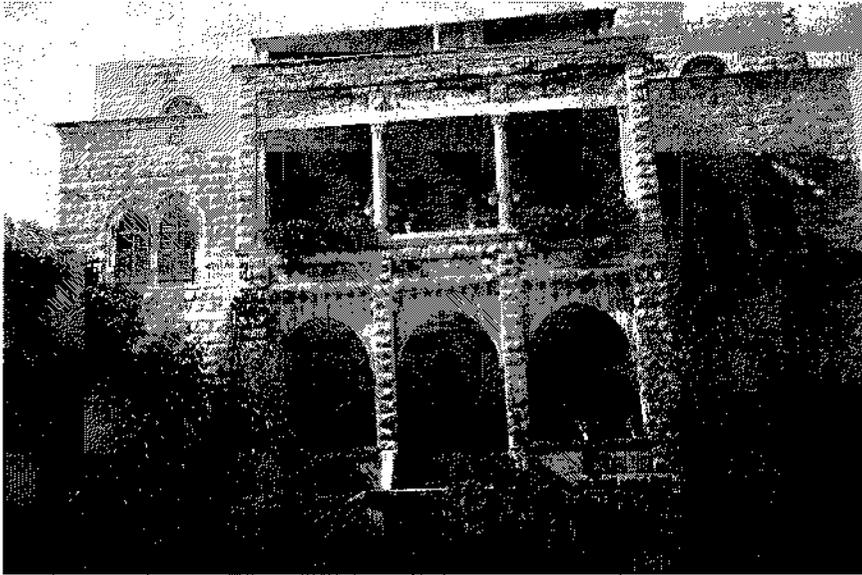
relinquish control over the southern Jerusalem-Bethlehem road.<sup>72</sup> As happened in other Arab neighborhoods that were opened up to settlement, buildings and homes in the Dayr Abu Tur area were looted.<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile, Israel as of early 1949 had begun transferring government offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. A major aspect of the transfer was the relocation of thousands of government clerks, who received preferential treatment in the allocation of housing. On 12 April 1949, a high-level government meeting was held in the Israeli Defense Ministry to discuss the housing of government clerks in Jerusalem. It was decided that 400 apartment units be allocated to the clerks and that they be given priority in choosing apartments in the neighborhoods of Baq'a, the German Colony, and the Greek Colony. Shaul Avigur, one of Ben-Gurion's closest advisers, was to be the absolute arbitrator in any dispute. As part of settling and resettling new immigrants in alternative sites, the Absorption Department was granted authority over Musrara and Lower Lifta.<sup>74</sup> Following this decision, new immigrants were allocated housing only in neighborhoods reserved for government clerks in those apartments that were in such bad shape that the cost of renovation was too high.<sup>75</sup> Houses in the elegant neighborhood of Talbiyya were reserved exclusively for senior officials and those with important connections, such as judges and professors at Hebrew University.<sup>76</sup>

Out of political considerations, though, government clerks were sometimes placed in less desirable neighborhoods. Clerks of the Ministry of Provisioning and Rationing were housed in Dayr Abu Tur, adjacent to the demarcation line. These houses were in terrible condition due to the intense fighting that had been waged in the neighborhood, and there still existed a danger of sniper fire. Still, a decision was taken to house the clerks in Dayr Abu Tur because of Israel's goal to settle Jews throughout the full area of Jerusalem under its control. Many of these clerks requested to be rehoused in Qatamon where the expansive houses were in better condition. In the end, senior-ranking officials succeeded in being housed in Qatamon, while regular clerks remained in Dayr Abu Tur.<sup>77</sup>

To provide for the ever-increasing number of Jewish residents in Jerusalem, the Israeli government opened many new schools and health service facilities, mostly in buildings owned by Palestinians. The Histadrut opened dozens of schools in Musrara, Baq'a, the German Colony, and 'Ayn Karim.<sup>78</sup> To stimulate Jewish Jerusalem's economy, new small industries and businesses were given special loans to lure them to the city.<sup>79</sup> The Custodian of Absentee Property handed over many buildings to be renovated for workshops, mostly in Mamilla, while additional ones were set up in the German Colony and the Greek Colony.<sup>80</sup>

While these activities had been proceeding, Israel made its second application for UN membership in late February 1949. After the Security Council rejected its first application for admission on 17 December 1948, Abba Eban, Israel's UN representative, repeatedly assured the UNGA that his government intended to comply with the resolutions pertaining to Jerusalem. Testi-



**This home in Talbiyya, originally owned by Palestinian Hanna Bisharat, was taken over by the Israeli Foreign Ministry. It served as Golda Meir's residence in 1968, when she made the infamous statement "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people."**

ying before the UN's Ad Hoc Political Committee after concern was expressed about the transfer of government offices to Jerusalem, Eban assured them that "No juridical facts whatever were created by such steps, which were dictated not by a desire to create new political facts, but to assist Jerusalem and to add economic recovery to the other aspects of its splendid recuperation." He also reassured the committee that "the legal status of Jerusalem is different from that of the territory in which Israel is sovereign."<sup>81</sup> He even claimed that the holding of the first Israeli Knesset in Jerusalem ten days earlier was based solely on "an historical motive which had nothing whatever to do with the future status of Jerusalem."<sup>82</sup>

Whether or not the United Nations was convinced by Eban's arguments, Israel was admitted as a new member on 11 May 1949, with the UNGA placing on the record Israel's "declarations and explanations" regarding the implementation of Resolutions 181 and 194.<sup>83</sup> On 13 December, almost seven months to a day after having been admitted to the UN, and several days after yet another UNGA resolution, 303(IV), was passed calling for the internationalization of the city, the Knesset voted officially to declare Jerusalem Israel's capital and accelerated the transfer of government offices to the city.

By the end of May 1949, all of West Jerusalem's Arab districts had been settled, at least to some extent, by Jews, most of them new immigrants.<sup>84</sup> Henry Cattán estimates that, in all, Israel occupied some 10,000 Arab homes, mostly fully furnished, in West Jerusalem.<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, in East Jerusalem, some 7,500 Palestinian refugees from West Jerusalem (out of the total of al-

most 30,000), including Qatamon, Upper and Lower Baq'a, and Musrara, were living either in the open or temporarily housed in mosques, convents, schools, and Old City houses in ruinous conditions.<sup>86</sup>

It is now fifty years since Israel conquered West Jerusalem, and thirty years since it conquered East Jerusalem. Consistent with its stated goal of retaining the "reunified" city of Jerusalem as its "eternal capital," Israel has settled over 170,000 Israeli Jews on expropriated Palestinian land in East Jerusalem but has not permitted a single Palestinian to return to his or her home in West Jerusalem.

## NOTES

1. Lynne Reid Banks, *Torn Country: An Oral History of the Israeli War of Independence* (New York: Frank Watts, 1982), p. 24. Banks's description of pre-1948 Jerusalem is as follows: "Then as now, Jerusalem was divided into the Old City to the east and the new, western sector, which also extended to the south, known as Jewish Jerusalem."

2. Although the term *West Jerusalem* did not come into use until after the armistice, it is used for the sake of simplicity throughout this article for those sections of the city that came under Israeli control in 1948.

3. Michael Dumper, *The Politics of Jerusalem Since 1967* (New York: Columbia University Press and the Institute for Palestine Studies, 1997), p. 67.

4. The German Colony, originally settled by the German Templars sect in the nineteenth century, retained the name even after it became a predominantly Arab neighborhood.

5. The Greek Colony is so called because the nucleus of the quarter was built by Greeks. The name remained even after it became a largely Arab neighborhood.

6. Sami Hadawi, *Palestine: Loss of a Heritage* (San Antonio, TX: Naylor Company, 1963), p. 141.

7. Dumper, *The Politics of Jerusalem since 1967*, p. 63. The figure given for Jews in Jerusalem is 96,000-97,000, but 2,000 to 3,000 of these lived in what became East Jerusalem.

8. Hadawi, *Palestine*, p. 141. Land ownership of the remainder was as follows: "Others" (primarily the international Christian churches): 15.21 percent; state domain: 2.4 percent; roads and railways: 18.59 percent.

9. For figures on Arab and Zionist troop strength, see Appendices VIII, IX-A,

and IX-B of Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest* (1971; reprint, Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987), pp. 858-87.

10. In analyzing the relationship between the actions of the three forces, Simha Flapan discerned that, following Irgun and Lehi raids and bombings, "a pattern became clear, for in each case the Arabs retaliated, then the Haganah—while always condemning the actions of the *Irgun* and *Lehi*—joined in with an inflaming 'counterretaliation.'" Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 95.

11. Arnon Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuivit b'azorim sh'nitush alyaday hauchlusia ha'aravit, b'shetach bo kama medinat yisrael, 1948-1950* (Change in the settlement map in the regions abandoned by the Arab population in the area in which the State of Israel was established, 1948-1950) (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1993), p. 11.

12. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 112.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), pp. 301-2.

15. See "Summary of Information about Hotel Semiramis . . . in Qatamon," Arab Division of the Jewish Agency Political Department, 8 January 1948, Central Zionist Archives (CZA), S25-4013; cited in Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 50.

16. Hala Sakakini, *Jerusalem and I: A Personal Record* (Jordan: Economic Press Co., 1990), p. 111.
17. Ghada Karmi, "The 1948 Exodus: A Family Story," in *JPS* 23, no. 2 (Winter 1994), p. 35.
18. David Ben-Gurion, *War Diaries*, 15 January 1948, p. 156, as cited in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, p. 92.
19. Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuvit*, p. 23.
20. *Ibid.*, 15.
21. *Ibid.*, 17.
22. Morris, *Birth*, p. 52.
23. Ben-Gurion, *The War Diary 1948-49, Vol. 1*, ed. Elhanan Orren and Gershon Rivlin (Tel Aviv: Israel Defence Ministry Press, 1982), entry dated 7 February 1948, cited in Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), p. 180.
24. Pablo De Azcarate, *Mission in Palestine, 1948-1952* (Washington: Middle East Institute, 1966), p. 22.
25. In the early 1960s, Walid Khalidi first drew the link between Plan Dalet and the premeditated expulsion of thousands of Palestinians from the Jerusalem corridor and elsewhere in Palestine. See Walid Khalidi, "Plan Dalet Revisited," *JPS* 18, no 1. (Autumn 1988), pp. 3-70.
26. Morris, *Birth*, p. 112.
27. Collins and Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!* p. 239.
28. It is interesting to note that the IDF Archives withheld from the author twelve out of thirty-eight documents from File #35, 500/1948, "The Western Front," which contains key documents concerning the Dayr Yasin massacre.
29. See Banks, *Torn Country*, pp. 56-57; Dan Kurzman, *Genesis 1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* (New York: Signet, 1970), pp. 141, 146.
30. See report filed on 15 April 1948 to the British Palestine Government by Assistant Inspector General Richard C. Catling of the Criminal Investigation Division (Dossier 179/110/17/GS), cited in Collins and Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!* p. 275.
31. Jacques de Reynier, *A Jerusalem un drapeau flottait sur la ligne de feu*, Editions de la Baconniere, Neuchatel, Switzerland, 1950, quoted in Henry Cattán, *The Palestine Question* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), p. 44.
32. Morris, *Birth*, p. 38.
33. De Reynier, *A Jerusalem*, section on Dayr Yasin translated by Institute for Palestine Studies and reprinted in Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest* (1971; reprint, Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987), p. 765.
34. Michael Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from their Homeland* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p. 97.
35. Sakakini, *Jerusalem and I*, p. 118.
36. Morris, *Birth*, p. 68.
37. David Kroyanker, walking tour of Talbiyya with author, 24 May 1997.
38. Morris, *Birth*, p. 51.
39. *Ibid.*, 66.
40. Hagit Shlonsky, interview with author, Jerusalem, 1 May 1997.
41. John H. Melkon Rose, *Armenians of Jerusalem: Memories of Life in Palestine* (New York: Radcliffe Press, 1993), pp. 194-95.
42. Sharif Kanaana, in his book *Still on Vacation! The Eviction of the Palestinians in 1948* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem International Center for Palestinian Studies, 1992), places the fall of Arab West Jerusalem in the framework of what he terms the Zionists' "Maxi-Massacre Pattern" in their conquest of large Palestinian cities. According to this pattern, Zionist attacks produced flight and demoralization. A nearby massacre resulted in panic and further flight, which greatly facilitated the occupation of the city and its surrounding towns and villages.
43. Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuvit*, p. 27; Rose, *Armenians*, p. 199.
44. Collins and Lapierre, *O Jerusalem!* p. 372.
45. Aviva Bar-Am, "Every House a History," *Jerusalem Post*, 14 December 1990. The Villa Harun al-Rashid was built in 1926 as two apartments for rent in ornate "Thousand and One Nights" style by Hana Bishara, one of two brothers who owned much property in Talbiyya. Golda Meir, as the Israeli foreign minister, lived there in the 1960s. When she learned that UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld was coming to visit, she directed her security men to remove a sign with the villa's name written in Arabic and English from above the side entrance door, supposedly to hide the fact that the house had belonged to an Arab.
46. David Ben-Gurion, *Israel: Years of Challenge* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and

- Winston, 1963), p. 40. By a vote of 5 to 4, the Jewish Agency leadership decided not to delineate Israel's borders in the declaration. Still, there was no doubt in Ben-Gurion's mind that Jerusalem was part and parcel of Israel, as he told the provisional government on 24 May. See David Ben-Gurion, *When Israel Fought* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1975), p. 183 [in Hebrew], cited in Matti Golani, "Zionism without Zion: The Jerusalem Question, 1947-49," *Journal of Israeli History* 16, no. 1 (1995), p. 47.
47. Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 242.
48. *Ibid.*, 239.
49. See the memoirs of Major Abdallah al-Tal, the officer in command of the Arab Legion troops in Jerusalem. Al-Tal, *Karithat Filistin: Mudhakkarat* (Catastrophe of Palestine: Memoirs) (Acre: Dar al-Jalil, n.d.), Part 1, p. 106.
50. Britain was the primary supplier of the Arab Legion, while Israel was able to use the cease-fire to transport arms, including heavy artillery, and ammunition to Jerusalem via the "Burma Road."
51. Rose, *Armenians*, p. 200.
52. C. X. Mavrides, *Jerusalem Diaries*, trans. Yanni Tleel (Jerusalem: Nes Zion Newsletter, 1948), Memorandum 2.
53. Abdullah Budeiri, interview with author, Jerusalem, 7 June 1997.
54. Rose, *Armenians*, p. 205.
55. Matti Golani, "Zionism without Zion: The Jerusalem Question, 1947-1949," *Journal of Israeli History* 16, no. 1 (1995), p. 48.
56. Cattan, *The Palestine Question*, p. 253.
57. To this day, Israel has not canceled the state of emergency, which provides legal justification for detention without trial and military censorship of the press.
58. Proceeds from these transactions, minus legal and administrative expenses, are to be held in a special fund, presumably for the absentees, until the state of emergency is declared over.
59. Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuvit*, p. 35.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*, 37.
62. *Ibid.*, 38.
63. *Ibid.*, 40.
64. *Ibid.*, 41.
65. *Ibid.*, 44.
66. *Ibid.*, 44-45, 64.
67. Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1986), p. 70.
68. Rose, *Armenians*, pp. 207-14.
69. *Ibid.*, 217.
70. *Ibid.*, 222.
71. Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuvit*, p. 49.
72. Morris, *Birth*, p. 193.
73. Rose, *Armenians*, p. 219.
74. Yoseftal to Greenberg, 13 April 1949, CZA, cited in Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuvit*, p. 54; Segev, *1949*, p. 78.
75. Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuvit*, p. 55.
76. Segev, *1949*, p. 78.
77. Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuvit*, p. 62.
78. *Ibid.*, 58.
79. Kenneth Bilby, *New Star in the Middle East* (New York: Doubleday, 1950), p. 203.
80. Golan, *Shinui hamapa hayishuvit*, p. 58.
81. Official Records of the 3rd session of the General Assembly, Ad Hoc Political Committee, 1949, Part II, pp. 223, 286-87, cited in Henry Cattan, *Jerusalem* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 59-60.
82. Donald Neff, *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy Towards Palestine and Israel since 1945* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), p. 133.
83. Cattan, *Jerusalem*, p. 61.
84. Morris, *Birth*, p. 193.
85. Cattan, *Jerusalem*, p. 61.
86. Director of Refugee Affairs for West Jerusalem: Washington National Record Center, Suitland, Maryland, RG84, cited in Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe*, p. 101.