

The impending entry of the Palestine issue in the fora of the UN General Assembly this September comes in the aftermath of the revelations of the leaked “Palestine Papers” and the controversy they generated. The leaks—which are reviewed in this issue of *Jerusalem Quarterly* in the context of progressive sacralization of the city – showed, among other things, the extent to which the PA (in exchanges between President Abbas and former Israeli PM Ehud Olmert) was willing to make concessions over territory and refugees, but it also showed the centrality of the case of Jerusalem in these negotiations. The papers demonstrated that the PA has moved considerably from positions held at and since the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. Previous Palestinian and Arab positions on Jerusalem were based on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 242, passed after the June 1967 War. The resolution considers East Jerusalem occupied territory and its status no different from that of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, or the Syrian Golan Heights. Moreover, the “land for peace” arrangement that is at the heart of UNSCR 242 also applies to East Jerusalem.

From the official Palestinian perspective, the PLO’s approval of the two-state formula in 1988 “resolved” the status of Jerusalem as the capital of two states – Israel and the prospective Palestinian state. Jerusalem at this stage became the subject of a seemingly symmetrical formula of reciprocal political arrangements. West Jerusalem would be the capital of Israel, and East Jerusalem would be the capital of the Palestinian state.

However, with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, Jerusalem was deferred to final status negotiations, along with borders, settlements, and refugees. During the second stage of negotiations, in the late 1990s,

the focus shifted to Jerusalem's "special status." This status emanated from its sacred character, the presence of the holy basin, and the interests of other parties, including Jordan, the broader Islamic world, the USA, Europe, and the Vatican. This removed negotiations over Jerusalem from a framework that could be addressed simply under the rubric of UNSCR 242, that is, restoring the territories to their status before the war. One salutary effect of these revelations seems to be that the current resurgence of fighting for sovereignty in the UN context came, partly at least, in response to the weakened image that the leaks revealed of the Palestinian Authority and the leadership of the PLO. But there is no doubt also that the diplomatic activity has also come about as a result of the stalemate in the political process, with settlement activities going on unabated both in Jerusalem, around it and beyond.

As this issue of *JQ* goes to press, Palestine President Mahmoud Abbas sounded a very welcome note in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly, bringing back the human everyday reality of Palestinian life in occupied Jerusalem, decrying Israel's "decades-long campaign of demolition and confiscation of Palestinian homes" and terming it a "multi-pronged project of ethnic cleansing." Subsequent issues of *JQ* will examine how political actors, whether the international community or Palestinian government and parties, might bring a living Jerusalem out of the political shadows.

Using intimate family correspondence from Bethlehem, Ramallah and the Americas, Nadim Bawalsa, in "Trouble with the In-Laws," examines a network of migration from Palestine in the first half of last century which linked commercial interests, real estate and marriage strategies across four continents, in Russia, Palestine and the two Americas.

Salim Tamari examines military manuals from WWI to shed light on the manner in which the Ottomans (and the British?) saw the native population of the Arab East, what was known as the Levant, in their ethnography and cartography.

Tulkarm has always been seen as a backwater region in the Syrian provinces where 'things did not happen.' Farid Al-Salim uses court records to study the changing status of Ottoman Tulkarm in the nineteenth century in terms of religious endowments, land tenure, and inter-elite rivalry. Al-Salim shows that significant changes were taking place as a result of the changing Ottoman economy, which throws light on socio-economic changes in Palestine as a whole.

In "Overdue Books" Hannah Mermelstein follows the fate of thousands of books appropriated by the Haganah during the war of 1948. Building on the work of Gish Amit, who appeared in a contribution to *JQ* last year, she traces the books to individual authors and their families, contextualizing the lost books within the erased patrimony of an intellectual elite, and surveys attempts at restoring Jewish property looted during the Second World War to its prior owners, with a view to laying the groundwork for a similar restoration of property plundered from Palestinians.

Neither Palestine nor the Arab world are known for having produced noticeable works of detective fiction. Israel too seems to have the lone figure of the late Batya Gur in this arena. Alex Pollock introduces us to the Bethlehem sleuth Omar Yussef, who has achieved world renown in the detective series by Matt Rees. Pollock writes

critically of Rees: “By focusing primarily on power and corruption, juxtaposed with murder and mayhem, there is insufficient contextualization of Palestinian ... This absence undermines narrative realism, especially when dealing with power and corruption, and the novels often have the feel of melodrama represented by a binary opposition and simple ethical antithesis between good and evil ... with the struggles between and within such institutions being depicted in terms of the perversity of power rather in terms of the ideological, strategic and subjective dimensions that normally underpin political and institutional rivalries. Moreover ... the Omar Yussef series tends to give the impression that murder and mayhem are perennial aspects of this society, rather than rare local episodes. While Palestinians do face perpetual violence, it is not self-inflicted but rather the more ordinary, everyday and banal brutality of prolonged military occupation and settler-colonialism.” Nevertheless he adds, “It is now three years since the publication of the last Omar Yussef mystery ... we are left wondering whether the Omar Yussef mysteries have reached their end ... It would certainly be a loss if the Omar Yussef character was to end so suddenly. But if so, Rees should be praised for giving Palestine its first exemplary detective, one who has delved into areas of Palestinian life and politics that are rarely dealt with imaginatively.”

The “barrier is mile and mile of self-delusion”—Penny Johnson quotes Mark Thomas, the author of *Extreme Rambling: Walking Israel’s Separation Barrier. For Fun*. In her review she examines the transformed landscape of Palestine and its physical dismemberment through a new book on rambling.

The lens of photographer Christopher Lee, who teaches history at the University of North Carolina, has captured the high tension generated by the parades of Jerusalem Day which marks the conquest of East Jerusalem during June of every year. The texture of defiance, arrogance, and raw triumphalism are skillfully portrayed in the stills, with an essay explaining the author/photographer’s personal view of these events.