

Catastrophe Overtakes the Palestinians:

Memoirs, Part II

Sami Hadawi

A Note from the Editors

Sami Hadawi's life (1904–2004) mirrors that of many Palestinians of his generation. He grew up in Palestine during the British Mandate years and was forced out in 1948, never to be allowed to return. He lived in exile the rest of his life and devoted his energy to the cause of Palestine. He became a well-known scholar of the Nakba, devoting his life to researching and documenting its effects on the Palestinians, in particular the refugees. Hadawi's memoirs were circulated privately in English in 1996 in two volumes. In Jerusalem Quarterly 53, we published a selection from these memoirs about his early childhood in Jerusalem, titled "Sodomy, Locusts, and Cholera." Below we publish a section dealing with the destruction of Palestine in 1948.¹ The text reprinted here deals primarily with the memories of the author during May 1948, the same month in which Israel was declared a state over most of Palestine, while Jordan annexed the eastern part of the country as the kingdom's West Bank and Egypt took over the administration of the Gaza Strip. The text below is faithful to the original with two exceptions: spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have been regularized; and we have added a few explanatory notes. For more on Sami Hadawi, see the introduction to the excerpt republished in Jerusalem Quarterly 53.

The Union Jack over Government House came down after thirty years of British administration, and the British High Commissioner with his staff left Jerusalem on the morning of 14 May 1948. With this, Palestine as a country ceased to exist

officially in the eyes of the political world. The effect was more catastrophic for the country than any of the other foreign occupations to which it was subjected throughout its history, not only for the indigenous Moslem and Christian inhabitants of the land, but also for the peoples of the entire region.

This infamous era began in 1920 with unfulfilled promises and broken pledges given to the Arabs in 1915 of freedom, liberty, and independence from the 400-year-old yoke of the Ottoman Regime,² and ended with the British Government forsaking the responsibilities it freely assumed under the Mandate of the League of Nations to safeguard and uphold the rights and further the welfare and interests of all its wards without fear or favor. Now it was leaving the country in utter chaos, distress, and bloodshed.

Until that day, we still did not believe that the British Government would forsake its Moslem and Christian wards to the mercy of the Zionists the way it did. Here I was one of about a million other human beings deprived overnight of country, of home and property, and a means of earning a living, with a family as refugees in Lebanon waiting for me to send them their cost of living and I had nothing in my pocket. But tragedy was all around me and I felt that perhaps I was still better off than many who did not have a roof over their heads and begged for their next meal.

That first [night] of 14/15 May 1948, I lay awake on my narrow bed in a room hardly larger than a prison cell with only a small wooden table and one rickety wooden chair for furniture and I surveyed the 44 years of my life. I then compared Palestine under the 400 years of so-called “yoke” of Ottoman rule with the claimed “democratic” administration of the British Mandate just terminated, and I came to the conclusion that Palestinians were far better off under the Ottoman Turks than under the British Mandate. Under the first, they were partners and participated in all responsibilities; under the second, they were a colonized people with the minimum of rights and no responsibilities for the benefit of the country. In the end, their homeland was taken away from them and given to strangers under misinterpreted biblical promises and political vested interests.

Under the Turks, the Palestinians held seats in the Turkish Parliament; Palestinians occupied high positions in various parts of the Empire. To mention a few whom I personally got to know when working with Sir Ronald Storrs, Governor of Jerusalem, they were: Musa Kazem Pasha El-Husseini who was later to become until his death Head of the Arab Higher Committee in defense of Palestinian Rights;³ Aref Pasha El-Dajani who held a high position in Istanbul;⁴ Ragheb Bey Nashashibi who served as Mayor of Jerusalem for many years;⁵ Ruhi Bey Abdul Hadi, who on his return to Palestine was offered the post of District Officer in the office of the Governor.⁶ Often he would complain to me that he had less responsibility in his present post than he had when he was serving in the Ottoman Empire. I recall him once remarking: “As one grows older and gains greater experience he is supposed to advance and assume greater responsibilities, but in my case, after years of experience abroad and responsible service in the Ottoman Administration, I find myself reduced to an office messenger, never able to take a decision on my own.”

It may be argued that if the Arabs had it that good under the Ottoman Regime why did they revolt against the Turks and join the Allies in World War I? The Arabs are a proud people who had a glorious past that is still being felt in countries like Spain, and their

contribution to western civilization cannot be denied. Furthermore, it is only natural for any people to want to be free, and the Arabs are no exception.

Palestine under British Mandate – The Palestinians joined the forces of Sharif Hussein of Mecca in the war against Turkey in order to achieve full independence not to be placed under Mandate and ruled under a direct colonial system. On the other hand, the Jews who remained a minority during the whole period of the Mandate, were given absolute control over the political and economic potentialities of the country. The first High Commissioner was Sir Herbert Samuel, a Jew who took part in obtaining the Balfour Declaration from the British Government, and therefore his inclinations were towards an eventual “Jewish state” in Palestine. Other Jews who filled top positions were: Norman Bentwich was appointed Attorney General responsible for the introduction of the laws of the country; Albert Hyamson filled the post of Director of Immigration who saw to it that as many Jews as possible were brought into the country under the rule of “absorptive capacity”; and Max Newrock was First Assistant to the Chief Secretary who checked on all matters before they reached the desk of the Chief Secretary or the High Commissioner. No Palestinian occupied any position of equal seniority.

The Jews declared the establishment of their state the following day and gave it the name of “Israel.” There was a significant reason behind it. It connected the new state with the Old Testament of the Holy Bible in order to give it religious significance which was fully exploited through certain misguided Christian leaders and fundamentalists; it purported to be the homeland of all the Jews of the world; it signified that Jews of whatever race or color were one nation; one peoplehood, and not part of those nations among whom they lived; it assumed the role of the legitimate spokesman for world Jewry which willingly or unwillingly became entitled to its protection; and finally, it became the responsibility of all Jews to owe allegiance to Israel, support it morally, politically, financially, and militarily in the countries in which they lived. Any Jew who did not abide by this latter provision was regarded to be a traitor to his religion and people.

This unique position created problems for those Jews who believe that their religion was their own concern and that they regard themselves to be an integral part of the peoples and the countries in which they live while Israel is just another foreign country for those who live within its borders.

The Arab Higher Committee, on the other hand, having rejected in the name of the Palestinian people the United Nations resolution of partition, made no move to bring into existence the recommended “Arab state” and took no precautions to protect the defenseless Arab inhabitants against Israeli attacks of expulsion and dispossession. Instead they relied on the neighboring Arab states to do that for them.

Except for Dr. Izzat Tannous⁷ who was responsible for the Palestine National Fund and remained on the spot, all other members of the Arab Higher Committee left the country with their families for safer places when the going became rough, leaving the rest of the inhabitants to their fate. It does not speak well of those who undertook to represent Palestine while it gave them fame and prestige and then turned around and fled forsaking those who put their faith and trust in them.

What little of public security was in the country collapsed with the departure of the

High Commissioner after which people began to flee their homes in towns and villages forsaking all and seeking safer areas while the Israelis followed in hot pursuit terrorizing the inhabitants and in some instances committing indiscriminate calculated atrocities to speed them on their way. About 700,000 persons were affected, some fled to other parts of Palestine, such as Gaza where they felt they would be safe, while the majority fled to Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan with a small number to Egypt.⁸

In Jerusalem the deserted Greek and German colonies and the Upper Baq'a Quarter on the road to Bethlehem were occupied without a shot because of the fear of the inhabitants of massacre like that of Deir Yasin.⁹ This enabled the Israelis to apply added pressure on the Old City particularly from the Jaffa Gate side in order to link up with members of the Hagana¹⁰ who infiltrated into the Jewish quarter of the Old City before the British left.

During the day the Israelis would send over the city wall as many as twenty-five homemade mortar shells and grenades fired by rifles; and at night would attempt to storm the Old City. The inside group of Hagana attempted to open the way for those on the outside to enter but the Armenian community through whose section they would have to pass stood firm and frustrated all such efforts.

For the first three days the Old City was left in a vacuum. The only defense we had was a handful of traffic policemen with no knowledge of handling a rifle assisted by a small group of courageous volunteers with light guns in their hands. A few of us who could not handle a firearm assisted those in the Citadel by encouraging them and providing them with water and where possible with food.

The Jaffa Gate, the closest to the Citadel and Christ Church Hostel where I was staying, was a danger spot and was hurriedly sealed off with old trucks and other barricades. Later the New Gate was also blocked, but Damascus Gate and Herod Gate remained open and heavily guarded against Jewish penetration to enable those inhabitants who were fleeing from the nearby Musrara Quarter to seek refuge in the Old City. St. Stephen's Gate to Gethsemane was the only outlet to Amman and the outside world. Traffic between Jerusalem and Amman was at a complete standstill except for those who were willing to risk their lives from sniping from the Hebrew University buildings on Mount Scopus.

There was no shortage of food or water in the Old City but the electricity supply, telephone communications, and the main water supply network were all cut off by the newly declared Israelis. The people, now numbering three times the normal residents, were obliged to rely on kerosene lamps for light and on water from old rainwater cisterns which are plentiful in the Old City. Communications with the new sector of the city were severed completely and remained so until the 1967 war.

The security situation became desperate and Israeli penetration seemed imminent until 18 May 1948 when the Transjordan Arab Legion arrived and drove the Israelis away from the Sheikh Jarrah Quarter and cleared the road to the Damascus Gate and Herod Gate. 250 Jordanian soldiers then relieved the fatigued policemen and others in the Citadel and in other parts of the city walls and the inhabitants began to feel some relief.

The inmates of the Christ Church Hostel included, beside myself, my two brothers Edward and James and their families, Gordon Boutagy, George Khadder and his brother Emile, and Wadie Qumri and his mother. There were also those who were permanent

residents of the Hostel. Altogether we were about thirty souls.

The Christ Church Hostel received all the mortars and grenades which missed the Citadel. One mortar fell in the compound and smashed the glass of my car; another fell between two ladies as they were chatting but fortunately did not explode; and a grenade dropped on the roof behind my window while I was shaving one morning and also did not explode.

With the fighting going on there was little the thirty residents of the Hostel could do except to take cover in the sitting room which was adequately protected on all sides. There were times when we all had to leave our beds and spend the night downstairs. For exercise I would walk around the playground and when the shells started to fall I would take cover. On one occasion I noticed I was being watched by a man with a rifle sitting in a window overlooking the garden. At first I did not pay him much attention, but when I enquired I was told that the window belonged to the Jewish Quarter and that the man looking out at me was a member of the Hagana, I did not go out to the garden again.

Those of us who had cars trapped in the Old City did not know what to do with them. We would start the engines for a few moments each day, but our gasoline supply in the tanks was not inexhaustible. However we kept doing this in the hope that now that the Arab Legion had arrived the whole of Jerusalem would soon be rescued and we would be released from our enforced imprisonment and able to return to our homes. That high was our optimism.

Since there was no local authority in the Old City, a group of the inhabitants took it upon themselves to keep the streets clean and some doctors established a clinic to deal with the wounded but they had hardly any equipment and limited medical supplies. The main center was established in the Austrian Hospice and people were appealed to by word of mouth to help in whatever way they could. I myself managed to purchase a bottle of kerosene and some sugar which I took along. The sight that met my eyes as I entered was most distressing: the rooms and corridors were filled with bodies lying side by side on the floor, some lifeless, others unconscious and bleeding, others groaning and calling for help, while doctors and nurses were running among those unfortunate people administering what help they could and removing the bodies of those who were beyond any help.

During a lull in the fighting, I would take a walk through the streets of the Old City and see what was going on. The sight was terrible. I saw old men sitting in street corners wailing and pounding their chests and calling out either for bread and water or more to anyone who knew where their loved ones were; children running up to strangers enquiring about their parents; others begging for food; and the blind and infirm winding their way aimlessly in silence.

On one occasion I came across an American correspondent who was apparently searching for news to send to his paper. He came up to me and handed me a telegram he had received that morning to read. It said: "Do not send us material about refugees; send us particulars of Jewish heroism." Ironically, the correspondent happened to be on the Arab side of the fighting. I handed the cable back to the correspondent with a question mark on my face and a shrug of the shoulders. The correspondent walked away and I

never saw him again.

On another occasion I did not notice that another American correspondent was sharing the miserable sights with me. He too looked distressed and unbelieving. He came up to me and asked: "Who do you think is responsible for all this human misery?" I replied without hesitation that it was the United Nations which partitioned our country and the British Government that undertook under the Mandate to protect and defend the inhabitants and now has forsaken us. At that time I was still unaware of the part played by the United States whom we believed to be the champion of human liberties and freedoms.

The correspondent looked at me with a saddened smile and said: "Some day you will come to realize that while the United Nations and the British Government, and even the United States might be responsible to some extent in the tragedy, the main fault lies in the creation of the state of Israel in the lap of Arab states who lacked foresight, integrity, and unity. Let me put it to you in this way:

I – stands for Iraq
S – stands for Syria
R – stands for Riyadh (Saudi Arabia)
A – stands for Amman (Transjordan)
E – stands for Egypt
L – stands for Lebanon

At that time I had so much confidence in the Arab states numbering a population of nearly 200 million people and possessing unlimited oil riches, that I felt sorry for the 700,000 Jews in the country who might all be slaughtered. The man's ingenious conclusions came back to me years later as I was trying to figure out what went wrong, and I can now almost hear him say: "Didn't I tell you so, over forty years ago?"

By this time my meager funds began to run out, and not having contact with my family in Beirut, I wondered how my wife was making out. To start with, I had only ten pounds in my pocket when we lost our home, and the money I subsequently received from the departing government as an advance on my "loss of office" compensation payment I had given to my wife when I took her back to Beirut leaving a small sum for my own use. It was therefore important for me to visit Amman and enquire at the British Embassy about the payment of my monthly pension.

A ceasefire was ordered by the United Nations two weeks after the fighting had started but the cross firing did not cease. The first thing that happened was for members of the United Nations to appear and gather the Jews of the Old City in front of the Citadel entrance in order to take them away to the Israeli side. People gathered to see them. The men, women, and children, numbering nearly 1,000 persons, looked well, but there were no Hagana men among them, which means that they must have slipped away in the interval. One could see on the faces of both sides a look of sadness that people who had lived side by side for generations should suddenly become enemies. We later understood that these people were taken to Katamon to occupy our homes.¹¹

An effort was made by me and my friends to talk to the United Nations officials to

arrange for the release of my two friends Yusif Sayigh¹² and Ahmad Abdul Khaleq, who were being held as prisoners. We argued that there was no difference between the Jews of the Old City and my two friends all of whom were caught up in the fighting but did not participate. We received no response and both our friends continued to be held.

With the ceasefire still holding I decided to go to Amman, but the question was how to get my car out of the Old City. The roads outside the city walls were in the hands of the enemy and the streets of the Old City were not fit for vehicular traffic, and used only by pedestrians and animals. With the help of my two brothers I arranged to construct wooden slabs to be placed close to the cobbled stairs in order to roll the car down on them. Once a stair had been maneuvered, the slabs would be moved to the next stair and so on until we reached open ground. It was an unusual sight and the first time that a car was seen driving down the cobbled streets of the Old City. It took us about three hours to reach St. Stephen's Gate.

On reaching Amman, I was surrounded by people enquiring how the fighting was going on and when will the whole of Jerusalem be occupied by the Arab Legion. Their confidence in victory was so strong that they were disappointed when I talked only of the difficulties and miseries the population was experiencing. I found a message from my wife asking me to send her money, and since the monies due to me from the Palestine Government were still being processed, I was obliged to sell my car for five hundred pounds and send her the money.

Amman was also crowded with refugees; the streets were full of people begging for money and food while women sat by the roadside wailing for the loss of one or more of members of their families. The sight was pathetic, and no matter what the people of Amman and the government did to alleviate the suffering, it was like a drop in a bucket. After all it must be realized that the original population of Amman was 35,000 persons, and when another 250,000 penniless refugees are dumped overnight on the city the situation becomes unmanageable especially for a country like Transjordan which at the time had limited possibilities. Yet the manner in which the refugees were received and treated by the people and government of the country has never been sufficiently recognized and appreciated.

The ceasefire period ordered by the United Nations was about to expire and there was talk of renewal of hostilities. I hurried back to Jerusalem to witness what we believed would be a victorious sweep by the Arab Legion into the Israeli occupied areas. I wanted to be on hand to protect my home from further destruction even though I was aware that the furniture had been plundered before the British left.

When I got to Jerusalem my friends assured me that it was now a matter of a few days before we returned to our homes. They informed me that Abdullah Tal,¹³ the military governor, had told them that the army was now fully equipped and ready to occupy the whole city. Little did these wishful dreamers realize that during the ceasefire period the Israelis had brought into the city reinforcements of men and military equipment that enabled them when the fighting was resumed to fire into the Old City about two hundred foreign-made mortars instead of the twenty-five unexplodable home-made bombs.

The four-week ceasefire was followed by a short period of renewed hostilities during

which the Israeli forces gained further ground as more of the Moslem and Christian inhabitants were either expelled or fled. Among those who were forcibly expelled were the inhabitants of the towns of Ramle and Lydda estimated at about 60,000 persons. I happened to be paying a visit to Ramallah soon after the expulsion and the arrival of these unfortunate people in the city and saw with my own eyes the pathetic state in which they were. They had no shelter, no clothes, no food, no money, and no water as they went from door to door begging something for their children. I saw little children carrying small tins and begging for water, others were stretched on the ground as if awaiting their fate. Ramallah did not have a main water supply system and relied on rainwater. That year the rains were less than normal and the water in the cisterns was not enough to meet the needs of the inhabitants, yet they shared what they had with their unfortunate guests. The worst was the stink which dominated the town as every open space was turned into a public latrine. There was great fear of an epidemic but somehow this was averted as first the International Red Cross and later the United Nations relief agency stepped in.

The stories of expulsion, murder, rape, and theft I heard in Ramallah were in later years confirmed by one of the victims who tried to pose as relating the experience of a friend of hers. She said in part:

Israeli soldiers swept through Ramle, and in small groups moved from one house to another. They would knock on the door, and if it was not promptly opened, they would break it down. We were huddled all in one center room as five soldiers walked in. My father tried to plead with them that we had never harmed anybody and that we wished to live in peace. But the soldier in charge smiled back sarcastically and said: For thirty years we Jews suffered indignity and insults at the hands of you Arabs, while Arab men raped Jewish girls. Now it is our turn and our revenge is going to be good! He ground his teeth as he spoke with bitterness and hatred. After searching the house and relieving us of money and jewelry, the soldier in charge pointed to me and told his four companions – she is yours, take her. My father was shocked, begged, and pleaded for them to leave me alone, and even stooped down to kiss the soldier's feet to spare me but he kicked him in the mouth which began to bleed. Three of his companions came forward and began to drag me away to the bedroom, but the fourth declined to take part and suggested that I should be left alone. My father tried to intervene and was shot. We all screamed and my mother fainted, but this did not prevent the three soldiers from dragging me away. I cried and implored, but it was of no use. They threw me on the bed, helped each other to undress me, and before I was attacked I fainted. I came to bleeding and in pain and realized that the three soldiers had raped me in turn.

I was taken back to join my family and found my father dead on the floor with my mother bending over him weeping. This sad sight had no effect on the Israeli soldiers who watched with apparent pleasure. They then shoved us towards the entrance and warned that if we wished to remain alive, we

should join the crowds in the streets and take the road out of Ramle towards the hills in the direction of Ramallah.

The purpose of my visit to Ramallah was to attend a celebration by the Arab Legion of a victory over the Israelis as they attempted to penetrate the Arab lines and open the road between Jaffa and Jerusalem at Latrun. The story as it was then told was that an Israeli force of some 5,000 men with armored trucks and guns tried to break through. The Arab Legion some 800 strong were garrisoned in the “Tegart” police building¹⁴ overlooking the road. As the Israelis advanced across the open fields the Arab Legion opened fire and killed some 1,400 Israelis before the rest withdrew. The Jordan casualties were only three wounded. I did not believe this at the time but Glubb Pasha, Commanding Officer of the Arab Legion, had the incident recorded in his book *A Soldier with the Arabs*.¹⁵ The evening consisted of the renowned Arab national dish of “mansaf”¹⁶ followed by stories of the attack and the recitation of poetry.

On 13 July, the Security Council ordered the cessation of all hostilities and the commencement of talks for a settlement. At the same time it appointed Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden as UN Mediator, but on 17 September he was assassinated with his French aide in the streets of the Israeli occupied section of Jerusalem by members of the Stern Gang under the command of Yitzhaq Shamir, later prime minister of Israel.

In his report submitted to the United Nations one day before his death, Count Bernadotte outlined his recommendations for a settlement, and stated among other things: “The Jewish state was not born in peace as was hoped for in the Resolution of November 29, but rather ... in violence and bloodshed.” He then advised the General Assembly that the refugees’ “unconditional right to make a free choice between return and compensation should be fully respected,” and he went on to say, “It is, however, undeniable that no settlement can be just and complete if recognition is not accorded to the right of the Arab refugee to return to the home from which he has been dislodged.” “It will be an offense,” he said, “against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right of return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine, and indeed, at least offer the threat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees who have been rooted in the land for centuries.”

On the question of property, Bernadotte remarked that “There have been numerous reports from reliable sources of large-scale looting, pillaging, and plundering, and of instances of destruction of villages without apparent military necessity. The liability of the Provisional Government of Israel to restore private property to its Arab owners and to indemnify those owners for property wantonly destroyed is clear.”

On 16 November, the Security Council ordered the conclusion of an armistice between the warring parties in order “to eliminate the threat to the peace in Palestine and to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace.”

On 11 December, the General Assembly resolved that the refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so and that compensation should be paid to those who do not wish to return and for damage to or loss of property.

The general belief among the Palestinians as a result of the UN Mediator’s report was

at first one of optimism, but as things dragged on, they began to lose faith in the ability of the Arab states and the sincerity of the United Nations to do them justice. Little by little the hope of return by peaceful means disappeared and a feeling of despondency prevailed.

I could not remain bottled up in the Old City without work and no income. I shut myself up in my small cubicle of a room and started to think and plan. I went over the past, the present and let go with my thoughts for the future. I was now forty-four years of age, retired after thirty years of government service, with a family of [a] wife and two children living as refugees in the home of my brother-in-law in Beirut, with no funds in the bank, and with no immediate prospects of earning a living, and I asked myself what I should do.

I recalled that I began my early life burdened with family responsibilities and possessing nothing except the memories of an ambitious father, the wisdom of a mother, and the determination of an immature boy to succeed. I was once advised that one makes his own luck; I proved it the first time; and I intended to prove it once more.

With my mind made up I informed my brothers that I was giving up my room at the Hostel and moving to Amman. I asked them to look after the taxation documents I smuggled into the Old City before the British left, bid them good-bye, and left.

In Amman I stayed with the Katibahs who made me feel that their home was my own. Ibrahim went with me the next morning to see Suleiman Pasha Sukkar, the Minister of Finance, who would eventually be responsible for land taxation matters in the West Bank. Suleiman Pasha was a very close friend of the Katibahs and had accompanied them to our home in Jerusalem on several occasions. He received us kindly, and when he heard the reasons for my visit, told me that a new administration was in the process of being formed but that no final decision has as yet been taken. However he promised that he would keep me in mind.

I then flew to Beirut to see my family and explore the possibilities of work in Lebanon. I met my friend Taufiq Nasr who had found employment with the Iraq Petroleum Company, which had moved its headquarters from Haifa to Tripoli, but I needed a work permit from the Lebanese government before I could be employed by the Company. Taufiq Nasr was able to get one because of his Lebanese ancestry.

The majority of the Palestinians who had fled to Lebanon were either of the well-to-do class, or had children of school age, or had family connections, and were able to live on their own resources without necessarily seeking employment. But they were confronted with two problems not faced in Jordan: The first was that should they ever need to work, they must procure a working permit and this was not easy to obtain without the payment of a substantial bribe; the second was that a Palestinian who fled with his car was allowed to run it in Lebanon for the statutory period allowed for foreign cars and then must either store it, sell it, or pay a heavy fee levied only on Palestinian cars equal to about ten times the legal amount payable by a Lebanese driver. This discrimination created ill feeling among the Palestinians who were in the country not out of choice.

I knew I could not live under such conditions and therefore made my way to Syria where I hoped to find treatment of the Palestinian refugees to be more humane. I stayed with Dr. Daniel Katibah, the brother of Ibrahim and cousin of my wife. He promised

to help because there were no restrictions on the employment of Palestinians, but my chances proved fruitless and so I returned to Amman as my only hope.

In the meantime the monies I received from the sale of my car were exhausted and these were followed by the money I received from a twenty-year matured life insurance policy. In this case I was unlucky because one month before the money was due the pound sterling had been devalued and as a result I lost one-third of the value. Then came the payment of compensation for “loss of office” and this was paid to the Palestinian pensioners living in Beirut in Lebanese currency at the old rate of exchange before the pound sterling was devalued. In my case the British Embassy in Beirut decided to pass my voucher to Amman because they claimed I was living there. I argued that my home and family were in Beirut and that I was in Amman searching for a job, but to no avail. The result was that I was paid in Palestine currency, which was still legal tender in Transjordan, and exchanged it in Beirut at the rate of L.L. 8 instead of L.L. 11.50 paid to Palestinians in Beirut. Here my loss was again about one-third, a loss I could ill afford.

Still in search of employment I paid a visit to the British Embassy in Amman and asked to see Mr. Perrie-Gordon, now holding the post of First Secretary to the Embassy. I told him that I have not been successful in finding employment and wondered if he could help me. He suggested that I should first of all apply for a British passport to enable me to move around since my Palestine passport was no longer valid. I was told that I was still entitled to one provided I applied before the expiry of six months after leaving the government service. I wrote out an application and he promised to send it on with a strong recommendation. Holding the M.B.E.,¹⁷ he said, will no doubt help.

He then suggested that I should write to Mr. McGillevry who was now Chief Secretary of the Government of Jamaica, where Sir Hugh Foot (later Lord Caradon) was Governor-General and Mr. Newton was Financial Secretary. He said that the three gentlemen knew me well when they were Assistant District Commissioners in Palestine and are aware of my capabilities and no doubt will help.

I wrote to Mr. McGillevry who replied promptly informing me that the government was in the process of establishing a valuation department and he thought that I would fit very nicely in it. He said that the commissioner of the department would have to be an Englishman and he thought I could fill in the post of deputy. He stated the salary and said that the appointment would be in the first instance for one year. I flew to Beirut to consult my wife who agreed reluctantly and we arranged that I would proceed alone at first and that the family would follow after I had established myself.

I wrote back to Mr. McGillevry accepting the offer and I informed him that I had applied for a British passport which should make it less difficult for me to work in a British Colony. Three months later I received a reply informing me that the Legislative Council had opposed my appointment on the grounds that they could not agree for two foreigners to fill the posts of commissioner and deputy. One or the other must be a Jamaican, and the Governor-General had decided that he would be the deputy. (In 1953 I lunched at the United Nations in New York with a member of the Jamaican Legislative Council, and when he heard of my story, he said that he was the person who had opposed my appointment which he said was on principle. Jokingly he said if you are still interested

this time I will not oppose the appointment now that I know you!)

In November 1948, negotiations for an armistice between Israel and the Arab States were started at Rhodes Island under the directions of the United Nations, and Agreements were concluded:

With Egypt on 24 February 1949;
With Lebanon on 25 March 1949;
With Jordan on 3 April 1949;
With Syria on 20 July 1949.

The more important provisions of the Agreements were:

1. The armistice was intended to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine;
2. The basis on which permanent peace was to be established, including primarily the question of the future government of Palestine, was still the subject of consideration by the UN General Assembly “in response to the request of the Security Council of April 1, 1948,” and were not, therefore, to be defined by the Armistice agreements;
3. The Armistice Agreements were designed merely to:
 - (a) delineate armistice demarcation lines;
 - (b) agree on “withdrawal and reduction of armed forces” to “ensure the maintenance of an armistice.”

Each Agreement also included the proviso: “It is also recognized that no provision of this Agreement shall in any way prejudice the rights, claims, and positions of either party hereto in the ultimate settlement of the Palestine question; the provisions of this agreement being dictated exclusively by military, and not by political considerations.”

As a result of the Agreements, Israel came into control of about 8,000 square miles of Palestine territory out of a total of 10,435 square miles, or 77.4%, instead of the 56.47% allotted to the Jewish state under the Partition Plan. Jewish landholdings in the whole territory under Israeli control were only 7.23% of the total area.

Before the ink of the signature on the agreements was dry, the Israelis had violated every condition to which they had willingly agreed. Israeli action can best be illustrated by drawing upon the experiences of General Carl von Horn during the period he was Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization [UNTSO]. He recorded in his book *Soldiering for Peace* (London: Cassel & Co., Ltd., 1966) pp. 282–283, his experiences. He said: “Time and time again in the course of frank discussions with Israeli officers and officials, I had heard them openly repudiate the idea of objectivity.”

Their flat statement was you are either for or against us. Even nastier,” he added, “was an Israeli tendency to immediately brand objectivity as anti-Semitic; a convenient label which could be smeared on to any UN soldier whose impartial report did not weigh down in favor of the Israelis.”

In reviewing his relations with Arabs and Israelis, General Von Horn remarked that personnel had “from time to time incurred a certain degree of animosity” in their dealings

with the Arabs, but never, he said, “in the same implacable and frenetic way. The Arabs could be difficult, intolerant, and indeed often impossible, but their code of behavior was on an infinitely higher and more civilized level.” He then pointed out that “all came to this conclusion in UNTSO,” which he described as “strange, because there was hardly a man among us who had not originally arrived in the Holy Land with the most positive and sympathetic attitude towards the Israelis and their ambitions for their country.”

General Von Horn went on to explain that “after two or three years in their contact with officials, soldiers, and private individuals on both sides, there had been a remarkable change in their attitude.” He found [it], he said, “sad but very significant” that when he asked what their most negative experiences had been during their service with UNTSO, the reply was almost invariably: “The consistent cheating and deception of the Israelis.”

Under Article VIII of the Agreement with Jordan, provision was made for the establishment of a Special Committee to formulate agreed plans and arrangements for the City of Jerusalem. The committee was soon established under the chairmanship of U.S. General Riley, Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine. The Jordan delegation consisted of Hamad Farhan, Secretary of the Prime Minister, and Abdullah Tal, Military Governor of East Jerusalem. Captain (later General) Ali Abu Nuwaar¹⁸ was attached to the delegation as military adviser and I was asked to join the delegation as civilian adviser. The Israeli delegation consisted of Moshe Dayan and Avraham Biran (previously known as Bergman) one time district officer of Affula with whom I was on the best of terms for many years. I considered Biran or Bergman as an honest, level-headed, and trustworthy man, but I never knew he had any connections with the Hagana. When he saw me he rushed up, embraced me, and hugged me fondly. I must admit I could not reciprocate after what had happened to Jerusalem and to me and my family. When he asked how I was, I replied how could I be anything but sad and angry when the people I had served so well and so long could expel me and rob me of my home and belongings. He expressed his regret at my plight but pointed out that this was war. With this our relationship became official. Moshe Dayan I had not met before but I found him to be arrogant, conceited, and inflexible. When he did not like anything our delegation said he would retort, “I will order my army to do it without asking questions,” and he did just that a few days later by occupying by force of arms the Arab College grounds then falling within the “No Man’s Land” perimeter which also included Government House. The Jordan Government protested expecting the United Nations to take action but it appears that the occupation was with the connivance and the blessing of the U.S. Government.

A number of meetings were held and it was apparent to me from the start that General Riley was siding with the Israelis. When I attempted at one point to revise a tentative agreement relating to the railway line, the General went red in the face, banged the table, and said that he would not allow that and if necessary would report the matter to the Security Council. The Jordan delegation said nothing but I decided not to allow him to get away with it.

Before the next meeting was held I suggested to the Jordan delegation that we should get together to discuss strategy and for me to explain my interpretation of the provisions

of Article VIII of the Armistice Agreement and the dangers inherent in following the procedure outlined by General Riley. I pointed out that by first dealing with the Israeli items as they appear in Article VIII and approving them and then taking up any demands put forward by the Jordan delegation, there is nothing to prevent the Israeli delegation from throwing out the Jordan demands once they already had the signature of the Jordan delegation on the Israeli items. I drew attention as an example to the item relating to the railway line which I had suggested should be reconsidered as part of a package deal and the anger it created.

In the end I suggested that our approach should be for a package deal, that is, that each party should present its claim and both would be dealt with simultaneously. The Jordan delegation considered my approach a wise strategy and agreed to present the case accordingly.

When the plan was presented at the next meeting, the Israeli delegation naturally rejected it and claimed that Article VIII of the Armistice Agreement called for Israel's right of access to Mount Scopus, the Jewish cemetery, the Wailing Wall, free movement of traffic on the Latrun–Jerusalem highway,¹⁹ resumption of the operation of the Latrun water pumping station, and the resumption of the railway to Jerusalem. In return Jordan, the Israeli delegation claimed, would have access to Bethlehem through the occupied part of Jerusalem instead of having to take the longer arduous route, and the Old City would receive electricity from the Jewish sector.

The Jordan delegation pointed out that its own interpretation of Article VIII was far wider in scope and spirit than the Israelis allege. The delegation maintained that the intent and purpose of the said Article were to provide for civilian life in both sectors to return to normal for all sections of the population without exception. It is conceivable, the Jordan delegation declared, that the Article could have been designed to serve the interests of the Israelis in full and utterly disregard the interests and rights of the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem. The delegation went on to explain that the first paragraph of Article VIII stipulated that a Special Committee shall be established “for the purpose of formulating agreed plans and arrangements designed to enlarge the scope of the Agreement.” The words “to enlarge the scope” can only mean that the door was left open for both parties to proffer claims and counter-claims before the Special Committee which needed ironing out. The second paragraph of the Article lays down that the Special Committee “shall direct its attention to the formulation of agreed plans and arrangements for such matters as either party may submit to it.” This provision, the Jordan delegation contended, reinforced the first argument that the parties were not restricted to the six specific items enumerated in the Article but were at liberty to “enlarge” on them particularly since the words which followed made it clear that such matters, “in any case include” the items specified “on which agreement in principle already existed.” The words “in any case” were very significant because they indicated that whatever was decided upon the enlarged program was to include the items enumerated in the Article. The meaning of the item on “free movement of traffic on vital roads, including the Bethlehem and Latrun–Jerusalem roads,” was interpreted by the Jordan delegation as empowering the Special Committee to establish what in its judgment were roads “vital to both parties,” but that such vital

roads must include the Bethlehem and Latrun–Jerusalem roads. As for “free access to the Holy Places,” the Jordan delegation contended that this does not mean free access to Jewish holy places only nor does it specify that “Holy Places” meant the Wailing Wall.

The Jordan delegation then presented the following “plans and arrangements” to the Israeli side and suggested that they form a package deal and a basis for discussion:

The Jordan Government agrees to permit access to the Jewish buildings on Mount Scopus, the Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, the Wailing Wall in the Old City, free movement of traffic on the Latrun–Jerusalem highway, resumption of operation of the Latrun water pumping station, and the resumption of operation of the railway to Jerusalem.

The Israeli authorities, on their part, agree to permit the return of the Moslem and Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem to their homes as already resolved by the United Nations, to grant free access to the Moslem and Christian holy places in Israeli-occupied territory such as Nazareth and Nabi Rubin in Jaffa, free movement of traffic on “vital roads” such as to Nazareth and Jaffa on festive occasions, to Gaza to provide a link between separated Arab families, and free movement of traffic to Bethlehem.

Jerusalem to continue to be administered as a divided city with the Israelis having jurisdiction over the Jewish populated areas and Jordan over the Arab quarters.

The Israeli delegation ridiculed the proposals and Dayan described them as “Fantastic!” He distinctly declared that he would not be willing to exchange one building in Katamon for the Wailing Wall. That much respect he had for the holiest place in Judaism!

With the Israeli delegation unwilling to consider the Jordan claims, the meetings of the Special Committee came to an end and the problem remained unresolved until the war of 1967.

Endnotes

- 1 Sami Hadawi, *The Story of my Life: Memories and Reflections*, vol. 2 (n.p.: n.p., 1996), 251–268.
- 2 Hadawi is referring to the Hashemite-British understanding known as the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, in which the British committed their support for Arab independence in the Arab regions of the Ottoman Empire (1915–1916).
- 3 Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husayni was the most important Palestinian leader during the 1920s and early 1930s. He studied at the *Maktab Mulkiye* (Civil Service School) in Istanbul. He served as a *mutasarrif* (“governor”) of several Ottoman provinces in the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, and Anatolia. Shortly after the British occupied Palestine, he was appointed mayor of Jerusalem, but was removed from office in April 1920 for his opposition to British pro-Zionist policies. After his death in 1934, his son ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni emerged as a leader in the 1936–1939 Palestinian Revolt and in the catastrophic war of 1948.
- 4 ‘Arif Pasha al-Dajani (1856–1930) was mayor of Jerusalem during World War I. Immediately after the war he headed the Muslim-Christian Society in Jerusalem.
- 5 Raghīb al-Nashashibi served as mayor of Jerusalem from 1920 to 1934.
- 6 Ruhi ‘Abd al-Hadi was a Mandate-era politician

- and son of a large landowning family that originated in the Jenin region. During the Ottoman period he served in the consular service in Salonica.
- 7 'Izzat Tannus, a Protestant Palestinian medical doctor who became a representative of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee at the United Nations General Assembly.
 - 8 Hadawi provides the lowest estimate of the number of uprooted Palestinians. Other estimates place the number closer to 800,000.
 - 9 The Dayr Yasin massacre took place on 9 April 1948 when armed members of the right-wing Zionist paramilitary groups Irgun (*Irgun Zevai Leumi*, also known by its acronym Etzel) and Lehi (*Lohamei Herut Yisrael*, also known as the Stern Gang) attacked the village located on the western outskirts of Jerusalem, killing at least one hundred civilians and parading the prisoners they took through the streets of Jerusalem. For a detailed account, see Walid Khalidi, *Dayr Yasin: al-jum'a 9-4-1948* [Dayr Yasin: Friday, 9 April 1948] (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1999).
 - 10 The largest Jewish paramilitary force in Palestine during the British Mandate, which later became the Israeli army.
 - 11 Qatamon was an Arab neighborhood to the southwest of Jerusalem. In January 1948, the Hagana bombed the Semiramis Hotel in Qatamon, killing between 24 and 28 people. During the war, Qatamon fell to Zionist control and its residents were pushed out to the eastern part of the city, which remained under Arab control at the time.
 - 12 Yusif Sayigh (1916–2004) was a Palestinian economist and prominent nationalist whose family lived in Tiberias on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee. He and his family were expelled from the city after its fall to Zionist forces in May 1948.
 - 13 'Abdullah al-Tal (1918–1973) led the Jordanian army during the 1948 Palestine war and was military governor of Jerusalem until June 1949. He was accused of being involved in the assassination of King Abdullah in Jerusalem in 1951. He fled to Egypt where he stayed until 1967 before being allowed to return to Jordan.
 - 14 These police fortresses were built by the British during the 1936–1939 Palestinian Revolt in an attempt to reestablish control over the Palestinian countryside. They are named after Sir Charles Tegart, a British colonial police officer who served for many years in India before he was brought to Palestine to advise the Mandate authorities on how best to quash the ongoing rebellion.
 - 15 Sir John Bagot Glubb, also known as Glubb Pasha, was a British lieutenant-general who led Transjordan's Arab Legion from 1939 to 1956. Hadawi references his memoirs here: John Bagot Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1957).
 - 16 *Mansaf* is a famous Bedouin dish of rice and meat cooked with dried yogurt popular in Jordan and Palestine.
 - 17 Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, an honor awarded by the British Empire.
 - 18 'Ali Abu Nuwwar became the head of the Jordanian army in 1956 following King Husayn's removal of John Bagot Glubb, a Briton, from that position.
 - 19 The Latrun junction is located on the road that connected Jaffa (and Tel Aviv) to Jerusalem. A Trappist monastery is located in the area.