

GREEN MARCH, BLACK SEPTEMBER

The Story of the Palestinian Arabs

John K. Cooley

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
ISRAEL AND PALESTINE



ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Volume 4

GREEN MARCH, BLACK SEPTEMBER

Page Intentionally Left Blank

GREEN MARCH, BLACK SEPTEMBER

The Story of the
Palestinian Arabs

JOHN K. COOLEY

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published in 1973

This edition first published in 2015

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 1973 John K. Cooley

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-138-89267-5 (Set)

eISBN: 978-1-315-69513-6 (Set)

ISBN: 978-1-138-90480-4 (Volume 4)

eISBN: 978-1-315-69596-9 (Volume 4)

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

Disclaimer

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

GREEN MARCH, BLACK SEPTEMBER

**The Story of the
Palestinian Arabs**

John K. Cooley



FRANK CASS : LONDON

First published 1973 in Great Britain by
FRANK CASS AND COMPANY LIMITED
67 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BT, England

Copyright © 1973 John K. Cooley

ISBN 0 7146 2987 1

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photo-copying
or otherwise, without the prior permission of Frank Cass and Company
Limited in writing.*

Made and printed in Great Britain by
The Garden City Press Limited
Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1JS

Contents

List of Illustrations and Maps	vii
Preface	ix
1. King Hussein's Gamble	i
2. The People Without a Country	13
3. The Westernization of Palestine	25
4. Palestinian Protest: Poetry and Prose	45
5. Frontiers in the Diaspora	69
6. The Guerrillas (1): Yasir Arafat, al-Fatah and the Emergence of Black September	87
7. The Guerrillas (2): George Habash and the Radicals	133
8. Communist and Other Friends	157
9. Israelis and Palestinians	195
10. Towards Peace in Palestine	227
Appendix 1: Palestine, Population and Land Ownership	239
Appendix 2: Where the Palestinians Live	241
Selected Bibliography	243
Index	251

Page Intentionally Left Blank

List of Illustrations

	<i>Facing page</i>
1. Jewish refugees on board the <i>Exodus</i> stare hopefully out at Palestine	36
2. British Palestine Police baton-charge an Arab demonstration in Jerusalem against mass Jewish immigration	36
3. The other exodus: Palestinian Arab refugees flee across the wrecked Allenby Bridge	37
4. The new generation growing up in the camps	37
5. Camp life: Winter	52
6. Camp life: Summer	52
7. Jaramana Emergency Camp, Syria	53
8. Girl commando training in Jordan	100
9. Israeli soldiers collect the bodies of thirteen guerillas killed in action	100
10. King Hussein inspects knocked-out Israeli tank after the battle of Karameh	101
11. Refugee camp shelled in the September 1970 civil war in Jordan	101
12. Yasir Arafat	116
13. Black September at the Munich Olympics	116
14. Ghassan Kanafani	117
15. Nayef Hawatmeh	117
16. Wasfi Tal	117
17. George Habash	117

Maps

	<i>Page</i>
1. Palestine, Israel and the Middle East	43
2. Northern Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria	44

“We could make peace with Egypt, but that would not solve things—for it is the Palestinians who are the core of our problem.”

—Arie L. Eliav, former Secretary-General
of the Mapai Party.

Preface

After nearly ten years of reporting the North African independence movements and the Algerian revolution, and a year's research in New York, I came to the Middle East as the *Christian Science Monitor's* correspondent in late 1965. As I lived through the events surrounding the Arab-Israel war of 1967, as well as what came before and what has followed, it became my firm conviction that much reporting about the Middle East, both journalistic and scholarly, was missing the point. Neither boundary disputes between Arab governments and Israel, nor 'interim' Soviet-American settlements to open the Suez Canal or solve other side issues were going to bring peace to the Middle East. Only by going to the heart of the matter, the fate and future of the Palestinian Arabs and their relations with Israel, can a solution be approached and eventually found. This book is an effort to show why the Palestine question remains the central one.

In opening, I review the new perspectives raised by King Hussein of Jordan in his programme for a federated Palestine-Jordan kingdom. After briefly retracing Palestinian history from its beginnings to the present, I have tried to show how the tragic fate and the aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs emerged in their literature and art. Since the Western world has long had a one-sided view of them only as miserable refugees, I have mentioned the careers of a few of the Palestinian exiles who have made outstanding contributions to Arab and world society. Inevitably, I have included an account of the main leaders and organizations of those who followed the opposite and harder path of guerrilla warfare, and have tried to show some of the reasons for the brief rise and the subsequent decline of the fedayeen movement. How the Communist states, the Third World and the West reacted to these movements and to Palestinian aspirations in general is followed by a survey of the wide spectrum of Israeli

opinion towards the Palestine Arabs as people, enemies, neighbours and a political force. The final chapter offers an approach to a peace solution, drawing what I hope are logical and dispassionate conclusions from what has gone before.

The Israel-Palestine question is so emotionally supercharged that it has been my purpose to keep the viewpoint of the concerned outsider, rather than to take a partisan stand. Besides the work in my daily reporting and comment on the Middle East for the *Christian Science Monitor* and ABC Radio News, I have drawn on hundreds of published sources, personal interviews, and the experiences and writings of many journalistic and academic friends and colleagues far too numerous to list here.

My special thanks must go to Hanan Mikhail, who took time out from her own labours towards a doctorate to help with research and translations on the recent history and literature of the Palestinians. Acknowledgements are due The Christian Science Publishing Society, publishers of the *Christian Science Monitor*, for permission to draw on much of the material from my published dispatches, and to the *Journal of Palestine Studies* in Beirut for their authorization to include the material on China and the Palestinians, much of which appeared in an article in their Winter 1972 issue.

My debt to many people on both sides of the Arab-Israel demarcation lines is indicated in part in the text and the notes. In other cases credit or sources are withheld only because they would betray a confidence or endanger the source, in some cases physically. The encouragement of Patrick Seale and Jane Blackstock in London and the editorial work of Jim Muir were vital factors, as was the patience of Miss Varsi Afarian. She typed the manuscript and saw it through many mutations as the subject went through many dramatic changes even as the book was being written.

The transliteration of Arabic names is a perennial and possibly insoluble problem. I have tried to evade it by choosing, most usually, the journalistic versions familiar to general readers of newspapers and periodicals, except in the Bibliography of Arabic Sources. These may not please some Arabists or other scholars, but I ask for their indulgence.

There may be many Arabs, Israelis and others who disagree either with my premises or my arguments, or both. Their critiques will be welcome, because they should help to stimulate more

imaginative approaches to this lingering, chronic and explosive problem of our time. I believe that one can acknowledge the more passionate ingredients of the problem and simultaneously move beyond them to higher ground where one can perceive the distant outlines of a just solution. It is because of this possibility that the book was written.

Page Intentionally Left Blank

Chapter One

King Hussein's Gamble

In the main council chamber of his Basman Palace in Amman, King Hussein of Jordan faced the assembled leaders of his kingdom. The tension in the room was electric. Newsmen and television crews from the Western and Arab worlds mingled with the 600 invited notables, who came both from East Jordan and the Kingdom's Western wing, occupied by Israel since the Israeli victory in the June 1967 war. All had been told to expect an announcement of 'major importance,' affecting the future of Jordan and perhaps of the entire Middle East for many generations to come.

Outside, the spring rains had sprinkled Amman's brown hillsides with timid patches of green, to Arabs, as to others, a symbol of hope. The day was March 15, 1972. Some of those present remembered another meeting with the short, stocky King in this same palace in another March, just one week less than four years previously. Hussein had spoken then, as he would today, of war, peace and the fate of Palestine and Jordan. This was just after the biggest battle with Israel since the 1967 war. Nearly a division of the Israel army had crossed the Jordan river on March 22, 1968, in hopes of destroying forever the buildup of Palestinian commandos in and around the refugee town of Karamah. They had been met by tough resistance from both the guerrillas and from King Hussein's forces. They had taken unusually heavy losses before destroying the town and withdrawing. "The day may come," King Hussein had said then, "when we are all fedayeen."

That day had never come. The unity of Karamah was a passing thing. The commandos had steadily gained in defiance of Hussein until they challenged Hussein's government and his very throne. At the same time, they had quarrelled among themselves, followed new ideologies like strange gods, and many had behaved in ways that disturbed their host countries and were a source of

satisfaction to their main target, Israel. The hopes of unity and success raised by Karamah in March 1968 were dashed in the bloody civil war of September 1970 in Jordan, and in subsequent drives by the Jordanian army in the summer of 1971, when Hussein crushed the commandos and drove them from their last bases and footholds in Jordan. Thus began the decline of the Palestinian fedayeen as a military force, left with only Syria and Lebanon as staging areas, where their freedom to attack Israel was to be increasingly qualified and controlled.

In March 1972, Hussein went directly to the heart of the Middle East conflict. Neither the Israelis, their Arab adversaries nor the big powers playing big-power games in the Middle East had dared to confront it. This was the question of Palestine and the nearly three million Palestinian Arabs; a people without a state of their own, living since 1948 as refugees, exiles or subject to Israeli rule.

Speaking slowly and carefully, Hussein outlined a plan which he said had been prepared after "continuous meetings, discussions and conversations with the representatives of both banks of the Jordan." It was a plan to federate his kingdom after the Israelis had withdrawn from West Jordan. Any attempt to cast doubt on its real motives, he warned, would be "high treason against the unity of the Kingdom." It aimed at reorganizing the "Jordano-Palestinian homeland" so as "to reinforce and not to weaken it; to unite it and not disintegrate it. It will not involve modifying what our citizens have accomplished" in the time since the first Arab defeat by Israel in 1948 annexed to his British-protected Kingdom of Transjordan the remains of Palestine, which the Jordan army had saved from Israeli conquest.

Hussein's new United Arab Kingdom, he said, would federate the Jordan region and the Palestine region (the East and West banks). "Any other liberated Palestine territory"—such as the Gaza Strip, also held by Israel since 1967—could join the Palestine region if their people wished. Amman would be both the federal capital and the Jordanian regional capital. Jerusalem, partitioned before 1967 between Israel and Jordan, but conquered by Israel in the six-day war, would be the capital of the Palestine region (as well as the capital of Israel, Hussein was to add in subsequent newspaper interviews). The King and a central cabinet would retain supreme executive power in the new Kingdom; and there would be a parliament with equal

numbers of members from each region. There would be a central court system. The King would remain supreme commander of the armed forces. A governor-general and his cabinet would administer each region, whose citizens would be equal and from both of which the armed forces would recruit members. Parliamentary committees would rewrite Jordan's constitution of 1952 to include the new region of Palestine.

Hussein had only bitter words for the divided state into which the Arab world had fallen: "the disintegration of the Arab front; lack of coordination; the struggle to establish hostile blocs; the habit of speaking in the name of Palestine instead of acting in a concerted way.

"All this," Hussein continued, "has increased the suffering of the Palestinian people." Debate about West Bank municipal elections, held under the supervision, guidance and threats of the Israeli occupation authorities, was "a sad example of this tragedy which certain people try to exploit for personal ends."¹ His plan, Hussein indicated, was the start of a way out of the tunnel of despair.

Within minutes, Arab and Israeli broadcasts were reacting to Hussein's reopening of the Palestine question. A wave of controversy rolled across the Middle East, awakening the pathetic Palestinian refugees in their camps from political torpor; diverting men and women on farms and in cities from their battle with grinding poverty; or, for a relative few, from their scramble to increase their wealth. Palestinians in occupied West Jordan turned off their transistor radios and began heated discussions in their homes, shops, offices and farms. Israelis listened with renewed interest to their hourly news bulletins, which only months earlier had been carrying the news of new battles or sabotage incidents on their borders or in their cities. In the Gaza Strip, Israel radio reported, 'the population, expressing itself through the voice of its leaders, reacted negatively . . . the leaders made it clear that they refused to pass under the Jordanian yoke in any form whatsoever.' Gaza had lived under Egyptian military rule from the first Arab-Israel armistice in 1949 until the Israelis moved in in June 1967, except for another brief Israeli occupation following the Suez War of 1956. It was a small fragment of pre-1948 Palestine, crowded with over 400,000 refugees coming mainly from post-1948 Israel, where resistance to the Israeli

occupation still seethed, and where the Palestinian guerrillas kept their last remaining toehold in the occupied lands.

Abdel Aziz Zouabi, the only one of the 300,000 Israeli Arabs to hold important office in pre-1967 Israel (as Vice-Minister of Health), was just leaving for a lecture tour in the United States. He thought "the Arabs of West Jordan might see in the King's initiative the will to honour their wishes and to take their opinions into account . . ." Many Israelis proclaimed their indignation. "Hussein," said Gideon Hausner, a member of Israel's Knesset (parliament) and the man who had prosecuted the kidnapped Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann, "is putting the cart before the horse. First of all he must discuss with Israel, and only afterward can new frontiers be drawn, and the new form for his state be found. In any case, his suggestion for Jerusalem is unacceptable . . . although his statements, if far from what we expected, are a small step forward."

Menahem Begin, chief of the rightist Herut Party, and once a leader of Zionist guerrilla and terrorist action against the Arabs and British in pre-1948 Palestine, said it was a pity that Israel had not placed all of West Jordan under its own laws instead of giving it the status of occupied territory. This mistake, he added, had permitted Hussein to "create a federation of territories not belonging to him and where he has not the slightest right." The final, and official, dash of Israeli cold water came from Prime Minister Golda Meir: "The plan put forward by the King of Jordan in his speech today has not been agreed upon by Israel and there is no base whatsoever to reports that this plan is allegedly the result of any prior understanding with Israel."²

But there were persistent, well-documented accounts of previous secret Israel-Jordan talks. Israel's non-conformist and non-Zionist Knesset deputy and editor, Uri Avnery, assured readers of his muckraking *Haolam Haze* (The World), that a secret plan had indeed been worked out. It was based on the 1967 plan of Israeli Vice-Premier Yigal Allon, who had subsequently met Hussein and discussed it with him and Foreign Minister Abba Eban: Israel would annex the so-called Latroun area (where the Arab village of Latroun, near the famous monastery of the same name, had been razed along with several other villages by Israeli troops in 1967). It would also take the 'little triangle' of Palestinian Arab villages near Nataniya, where the territory of pre-1967 Israel was only nine miles wide, and where on a clear day

you could see the Mediterranean from Arab soil. Jerusalem, continued Avnery's version of this plan, would remain under Israeli administration and sovereignty. It would be divided into districts, like London, each with an autonomous administration and all under one central municipal administration and mayor.

The Middle East correspondent of a leading US news magazine obtained from sources he knew to be absolutely sure the confirmation of secret Israeli-Jordan contacts to set the stage for Hussein's sally. They had gone through the United States government, and various US embassies had furthered them. They had not reached final agreement because of Hussein's insistence on a return of Jordanian sovereignty to Jerusalem. It had been decided that any open approval by Prime Minister Meir or other Israeli government members, and any open US endorsement of the plan—which King Hussein did not secure when he subsequently visited the United States in March and April, though he did get assurance of continued American economic and military support—would automatically put paid to any chances it had of acceptance in the Arab world. The magazine, apparently after consulting White House or State Department quarters, killed the story and its correspondent resigned.

When Allon's meetings with Hussein were used by an opposition deputy in the Knesset to challenge the government, the speaker of the house ruled that the question be stricken from the record and that the entire subject be placed under military censorship. Reporters present would be disciplined if they broke it.

My own investigations bear out those of others such as Marsh Clark of *Time* and Eric Rouleau of *Le Monde*, that Hussein held up to ten or twelve meetings with Israeli leaders, mostly Allon, from 1968 to 1972. Specifically, Allon and Hussein probably met three times in September 1968, a few weeks before King Hussein's first attempt to confront and crush the Palestine guerrillas, which we shall look at in a later chapter. Foreign Minister Abba Eban was present at one of these meetings, and also met Hussein in October 1968 and probably January 1969. All reports of these meetings were denied by both Israel and Jordan; most of the leaks disclosing them came from the Israeli side.³

In the Arab world's other kingdoms of Saudi Arabia and Morocco, where King Hussein's fellow monarchs reigned, there was support for the Hussein plan. Nearly everywhere else among

the Arabs, a campaign of attack, innuendo and ridicule was launched against Hussein. Algiers radio said the plan 'reflected the designs of Zionism.' A cartoon in Beirut's pro-Cairo newspaper, *al-Anwar*, depicted it as a Trojan horse with Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Dayan inside, about to be brought through a gate labelled 'The Arab Homeland.' Another Beirut newspaper favourable to the Palestine guerrillas, *al-Moharrer*, showed the ghost of former Jordan Prime Minister Wasfi Tal, assassinated by Palestinians in Cairo in November 1971, and the ghost of the late Israeli Prime Minister Levy Eshkol drinking a toast up in the clouds. The pro-Iraqi newspaper, *Beirut*, showed King Hussein using blood from a bucket labelled 'the September massacre' (meaning the Jordan civil war of September 1970) to write the words, 'United Arab Kingdom.'

The Baghdad radio issued an official Iraqi statement addressed to the 'Arab masses' completely rejecting Hussein's plan. Within hours, this was followed by an Iraqi call for a new Arab federation of Iraq, Egypt and Syria as a riposte to Hussein. Iraqi diplomats flew to Cairo and other Arab capitals to sell this idea, but within two weeks it had been quietly buried in that same limbo of forgetfulness where the majority of pan-Arab schemes have ended over the past thirty years.

President Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria and Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, who had already formed their own federation in September 1971, consulted for a few days before condemning Hussein and his plan. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), al-Fatah and the other Palestinian guerrilla groups called it 'treason' and a 'sellout.' They announced the resumption of military operations to overthrow Hussein, and began to issue communiqués about the supposed operations. Thousands of Arab students shouted against 'Hussein, the agent King' in the streets of Damascus, Baghdad, Algiers, Beirut and Aden.

In the Western world, despite the non-committal stand of Washington, Britain was cautiously favourable towards the project of Hussein, its friend and one-time protégé. President Georges Pompidou of France, still clinging to the distance which the late President Charles de Gaulle had taken from France's former friend Israel since the war of 1967, said "the prolonging of the conflict provokes initiatives here and there, like that of King Hussein. This comprises a recognition of the Palestinian reality.

It marks something which, to us, is important and is part of the final settlement. That final settlement is not yet in view.”⁴

Moscow and the Soviet bloc had little to say. One Polish newspaper, *Zycie Warszawy*, which had jumped on the plan with the usual epithets like ‘treason’ on March 16, came back two days later with second thoughts, reprinting the official Polish news agency’s commentary that it was the ‘first important step’ capable of breaking the Middle East deadlock.⁵ The Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee castigated Hussein and said the ‘Soviet people’ shared the opposition of the ‘Palestine resistance.’⁶ This was of course a far cry from official Soviet government condemnation, which was not forthcoming. Palestinian guerrilla emissaries called at Soviet embassies to try and elicit some reaction, but without success. Hussein was, in fact, at that moment fishing for an invitation to Moscow to explain his plan to the Soviet government, and there was a good chance that he would receive it before the end of 1973, after President Nixon’s talks with Soviet leaders. The Soviets, after all, were officially calling for a peace settlement on the basis of the UN Security Council resolution of November 22, 1967, whereas the guerrilla stand was totally different: substitution of a new Palestinian secular state for pre-1967 Israel. Amman’s position was that Hussein’s offer was intended to fulfil the UN resolution, so the Soviets could not officially reject it, whatever Moscow’s dislike for the conservative Arab rulers like Hussein and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, who had firm commitments towards the United States.

Hussein had indeed stirred new inflammation in the old scars of Arab division. But he had brought the Palestine question back on to the centre of the world stage. His hope of consolidating control over both Jordan banks would have to wait until after a peace agreement with Israel. At the very moment Hussein was talking about the end of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, General Dayan and other Israeli leaders were announcing new settlements for new Jewish immigrants, especially the Jews coming from the Soviet Union in greater numbers since 1971, in all the occupied territories, including some near totally Arab towns and cities of the West Bank. But clearly, Hussein had resolved never to try to fight another war against Israel, and he hoped, if not for a genuine and certified peace, then at least for a more or less permanent *modus vivendi* with Israel.

Until 1972, Hussein had waited for Egypt to make the first

steps towards a durable peace with Israel. But following the death in September 1970 of President Nasser, the leadership Nasser had exercised on behalf of Egypt in the Arab world had begun to slip away from his successor, Anwar al-Sadat. The various US plans for a settlement, following the Middle East ceasefire of August 1970 in the 'war of attrition' across the Suez Canal in which Soviet forces had intervened to defend Egypt's airspace, had fallen by the wayside. Israel's price for a partial peace settlement to reopen the Suez Canal and permit a withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Canal's east bank had apparently been too high for Sadat. US pressure on Israel to lower the price had not, despite the hopes of Sadat and Hussein, been forthcoming. So Hussein took a deep breath and plunged into the icy seas of Arab disunion, which he had already survived on previous occasions. Hussein had, in fact, decided to gamble on a separate peace of his own, centred not on the Suez Canal or other territorial issues, but on the heart of the problem: the future of the Palestinian Arabs.

In making this gamble Hussein collided with two counter-thrusts of Arab activity. One was the guerrilla movement, whose rise and decline we will examine in later chapters. The second competing current was the idea of a separate Palestinian entity or state on the West Bank, completely divorced from the control of King Hussein and his Hashemite family, but favoured by Israel as a possible partner for peace talks. Israel's sponsorship of the municipal elections on the West Bank in March and May 1972, and their successful holding under the watchful eye of the Israeli occupation authorities, was one part of this current.

What the Palestinians themselves thought of Hussein's plan, and indeed of their future destiny in larger terms, could scarcely be ascertained. As a whole they were not being consulted. Their geographical dispersion and the various political regimes they lived under made this doubly difficult, even if anyone had the genuine will to do so.

During their generation of exile the Palestinians had followed many different paths. Some kept refugee status and never acquired citizenship from their places of residence. Many others acquired Jordanian citizenship when the West Bank was merged with Jordan in 1949; or acquired other Arab or non-Arab citizenships in various ways. Those in the Israel of the pre-1967

boundaries legally had Israeli citizenship, though without all the rights and privileges of Israeli Jews.

A research estimate published in Beirut in 1972 found the total number of Palestinians to be 2,923,000. Of these, over 1,000,000 lived in the parts of pre-1948 Palestine occupied by Israel in 1967 (the West Bank and Gaza). Another 340,000 had been living under Israeli rule in pre-1967 Israel since 1948. Some 900,000 were in East Jordan and the rest dispersed throughout the Arab world and various Western countries (see Appendix 2, p. 241).⁷

Of all these nearly 3,000,000 Palestinians in the world, more than half were needy refugees, some living at a bare subsistence level in the pathetic and miserable refugee camps of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. UNRWA defined a refugee as 'a person whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948 and who, as a result of this conflict, lost both his home and means of livelihood.' There are also 'displaced refugees,' refugees registered with UNWRA who were displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities. 'Displaced persons' were still another category: people who were displaced as a result of the June 1967 fighting but who were not refugees registered with UNWRA, such as 100,000 Syrians who fled or were forced out by the Israelis from their homes in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights district of south-western Syria.

The 'displacing' of persons had not stopped with the end of the June war in 1967. Of over 600,000 people of refugee status in the Israeli-held zones of the West Bank, some 38,000 either fled or were deported by the Israelis from Gaza up to the summer of 1971. At that time, the Israelis demolished many of the huts, tents and shelters of Gaza refugees and deported another 15,000 Palestinians from three Gaza camps to al-Arish in Sinai, to the West Bank, and to other places in the Gaza Strip. The Israelis forcibly expelled another 2,000 Bedouin from their living quarters around the fringes of the Gaza Strip in February and March 1972, resulting in their own protests and in protests to Israel's ruling Labour Party leadership by some Israeli settlers in surrounding *kibbutzim*. (There was some disciplinary action against several Israeli officers involved. The Bedouin were offered new land, but were not allowed to return to their homes.) Another 340,000 refugees, less than one-fourth of the total, were living in Lebanon and Syria, also under UNWRA care.⁸

The dry language of the UN bureaucracy was a supreme understatement of the tragedy of people, many barely keeping body and soul together on inadequate rations, and school and work-training programmes being pared to the bone because UNWRA operated on voluntary contributions and could never get enough, despite the bad conscience of Western governments about the Palestinians. 'Despite more frequent public recognition,' said the UNWRA commissioner-general's report in late 1971, 'of the need to take account of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian refugees in any political settlement', and over 20 years of UN resolutions recognizing their 'equal rights and self-determination' as an 'indispensable element' in peace, 'there was . . . little to lessen the frustrations of the refugees.'

'The General Assembly,' the commissioner-general, Sir John Rennie recalled, had repeatedly 'called on the government of Israel to take immediate steps for the return of those displaced from their homes and camps, but although many were able to visit the occupied West Bank from East Jordan, there was, apart from the issue of a limited number of permits in cases of family reunion or special hardship, no change in the situation as regards return for residence . . .'

This simply meant that apart from special cases, the Israelis permitted the return of no Palestinians, either to their former permanent homes, or to the larger built-up settlement areas on the West Bank, like Aqabat Jaber near Jericho, where many had lived as comparatively well-off refugees between the wars of 1948 and 1967.

This, then, was the 'silent majority' of Palestinians; not only a people without a country, but a people without a voice. Those living in the main 'host countries,' outside the iron military law of King Hussein—Lebanon, Syria and a few in Egypt and Iraq—were much more strongly influenced by the guerrilla movement than those living in the Israeli-occupied lands. The guerrillas were unlikely ever to accept anything coming from King Hussein, or offer him anything except assassination. But despite the decline of their influence, they were not alone among the Palestinians in seeing Hussein's programme as a surrender of the claim to return to all of pre-1948 Palestine, now Israel, and to transform it into a mixed state of Jews, Muslims and Christians, where one man would have one vote and the society would be secular; this is the maximum programme of most of the guerrilla groups, past

or present, and of the Palestinian intellectuals who backed or inspired them.

The world's Palestinians also remembered Hussein's frequent public promises that those under Israeli rule would be free to decide their own future once the Israeli occupation ended. Their overriding fear was that Hussein's projects would further increase the pressure on the West Bank people, both refugees and otherwise, to resign themselves eventually to Israeli peace terms, however stiff they might be. Thus they would be signing away the rights of all Palestinians, including those still outside Israeli control, while they were still under Israeli rule.

From the Israeli viewpoint, the war of 1967 and the conquest of the new occupied territories had given Israel new spaces for strategic manoeuvring; new sources of water and minerals, including the oil of Egypt's Sinai. Israelis also said they now had 'defensible frontiers' and, above all, space for the settlement of the millions of new Jewish immigrants who were part of the Zionist dream. What all this had also brought about, however, was the aggravation of the question of the Palestinians and their fate. As many of Israel's more perceptive thinkers and statesmen well recognized, whatever peace arrangements might be reached with Egypt, Jordan, Syria or even Iraq, the Palestinian people would sooner or later have to be recognized and dealt with.

In the green March of Amman, King Hussein's plan for the future of the Arab land east and west of the Jordan river had aroused hope. To many thoughtful people, it looked like the beginning of realism. In the same way, the hopes of the Palestinians had, in March 1968, begun cautiously to sprout with the success at Karameh. Each March had ultimately led to a black September of despair, and of new blows to hopes of Middle Eastern peace—September 1970, when Hussein crushed the guerrillas, and September 1972, when the Palestinian terrorists at the Munich Olympics and the Israeli reaction crushed, at least temporarily, all hope of a real solution. At the centre of such hopes, at the heart of the Middle East's agony, lay the question of Palestine and the Arab people who lived there.

To tell the story, we must first go back to the origins of Palestine, and to the dreams as well as the deeds of the various people who have lived on its soil, or marched their armies back and forth across its green hills, its vineyards, olive groves and its stony deserts since history began.

NOTES

1. Dispatches of news agencies and newspapers of March 15, 1972 and eyewitness accounts of the meeting.
2. All above statements carried by Agence-France Presse, March 15, 1972.
3. *Le Monde*, July 6-7, 1968; *TIME*, November 2, 1969; *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Paris, November 23, 1970; Whartman, Eliezer, 'Correspondents in Israel Vexed by Ever-Tightening Censorship,' *The Overseas Press Club Bulletin*, Overseas Press Club of America, New York, January 2, 1971, p. 1.
4. Paris Radio, March 16, 1972.
5. Agence-France Presse, March 18, 1972.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Shaath, Nabil, 'Palestinian High Level Manpower,' in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Beirut, No. 2, Winter 1972, pp. 80-81.
8. UNWRA Commissioner-General's Report, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
9. John de St. Jorre, Observer Foreign News Service, *The Daily Star*, Beirut, August 5, 1971; report of the Commissioner-General, UNRWA, to the Special Political Committee, United Nations, for the period ending June 30, 1971, and numerous reports in the Israeli newspapers *Haaretz* and *Maariv*, and Western newspapers, March 1972.

Chapter Two

The People Without a Country

Since the dawn of history, the people living in the geographical space called Palestine have had to resist or accommodate wave after wave of foreign invaders. Sometimes, as during the Crusades, they were ruled by the foreigners or their puppets. At other times, as during the four centuries of Ottoman government from 1518 to Turkey's defeat in World War I, foreigners have ruled with a coalition of local people. The modern Israeli state is governed by a majority of immigrant Jews and a minority of Jews born in Palestine.

At no time have the people of Palestine exercised undisputed and independent political control over all the area known in modern times as Palestine.

This stark fact of history, once grasped, begins to give us a hint of the dimensions of the Palestinian tragedy. It also shows why the two contending forces of today, Zionism and Palestinian Arab nationalism, have collided with such terrific force: each held out to its people the hope of establishing a state that would no longer be the colony, protectorate or sphere of influence of outsiders.

For world Jewry, Zionism was a truly revolutionary concept. It held out the promise of an end to Jewish wanderings and oppression. It offered a national state where religion would be a part of their statehood.

For the Palestinian Arabs, dispossessed by the Jewish state founded in 1948, the concept of their own nationalism is equally revolutionary. It is built around the idea of a new, secular state. It rejects the rule of outsiders. It would absorb Christians, Jews and Moslems—'all the inhabitants of Palestine,' to use a phrase of the *al-Fatah* movement—in a nation with equal rights for all.

The land called Palestine, or sometimes in its older usage Syria-Palestine, lies along the eastern Mediterranean coast. It

includes parts of modern Israel, Jordan and Egypt. In Biblical and pre-Biblical times, its northern boundary was Mount Amanus and its southern one the 'River of Egypt,' now called Wadi Arish. At times, its eastern frontier reached as far east as the Euphrates river, and its southern one deep into the Syrian desert. The name Palestine came from 'Philistia.' This was the land of the Biblical Philistines, or 'Peoples of the Sea', who occupied the southern coastal area in the 12th century BC.

From this, the Roman colonizers took the name 'Syria Palestina.' In the second century AD they assigned this name to the southern part of the Roman province of Syria. The British revived the title officially when their mandate there began after the end of Turkish rule in World War I.

The people of Palestine come from highly varied ethnic roots. Anthropologists examining human remains find that even 50,000 years ago, the Palestinians were of mixed racial stock. Beginning in the fourth millennium BC, until 900 BC, the predominant native stock are called Canaanites, but they were only one among many nations.

Egyptians, Hebrews, Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Persians and many others flowed into Palestine before the coming of the Greeks. They conquered, intermarried, imposed and superposed their languages, customs and religions. Some of them came from Arabia, injecting an ancient strain of Arab blood into the Palestinian organism along with all the rest.

Before all these immigrants, in Palaeolithic times, Palestine had many cultural links with Europe. Towns like Jericho, Megiddo and Beth-Shan were the centres of civilization in the early Bronze Age. They had some of the characteristics of Bronze Age towns in Europe. Then, in the Middle Bronze Age, around 2000 BC, the old pottery, weapons and burial practices disappear. New ones linked with the civilization of Phoenicia, the coast of the land of Canaan, begin to come inland. By this time the 'lip' or language of Canaan mentioned in the Book of Isaiah, had many dialects, including Hebrew, Phoenician and Moabite. Palestine was inhabited by 'a confused medley of clans—that crowd of Canaanites; Amorites, Perizzites, Kenizzites, Hivites, Gorgashites, Hitites; sons of Anak and Zamzummim.'¹

One of the Asian cultures intruding from the East was that of the Hyksos, whose Syro-Palestinian princes ruled in Egypt for a time, between 1720 and 1520 BC. These 'shepherd kings' set