

The background of the book cover is a photograph of a street scene in East Jerusalem. On the left, a man in a grey thobe and a black and white checkered keffiyeh stands with his hands on his hips, looking towards the right. In the center and right, a group of people is walking along a paved path. A woman in the foreground is wearing a white jacket and a black skirt, carrying a black bag. Behind her, another person is holding a large Israeli flag. The path is bordered by a high, ancient stone wall made of large, irregular blocks. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

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SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

**THE INSIDE STORY OF ISRAELI RULE
IN EAST JERUSALEM**

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The Inside Story of Israeli Rule
in East Jerusalem

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Prologue

Why another book about Jerusalem and why now? The question is indeed that simple and poignant, as is the answer. Reams have been written about Jerusalem since it was reunited in 1967. But we believe we are justified in saying that what has been written has not really arrived at the root of the central issue: the failure of Israeli rule in the city. Today, more than three decades after Israel first took control of all Jerusalem, and at a time when the conflict over the city's future appears to be reaching a climax, it has never been more important to understand Israeli policy toward the city.

This was not an easy book to write. Perhaps that is why others in our position—with a behind-the-scenes view of the making of Israeli policy toward east Jerusalem—have preferred to remain silent on the subject. We are Jerusalemites and Jews, and we are deeply connected with the city. We also had a say in forming Israeli policy toward east Jerusalem, which makes us anything but innocent observers. Amir Cheshin was former Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek's adviser on Arab affairs from 1984 until 1993 and then served one year under Kollek's successor, Ehud Olmert. The post put him at the center of Israeli policy-making on east Jerusalem during his tenure. Bill Hutman was a senior reporter with *The Jerusalem Post*. From 1992 through 1996 he covered the Jerusalem beat for the newspaper. Avi Melamed served as deputy adviser on Arab affairs from 1991 until 1994 and as adviser from 1994 until 1996. The three of us literally lived many of the events described, in some instances as observers, in others as participants.

This book has been rumbling in our hearts and minds for years, each of us in our place. We watched with concern as the fragile quiet in Jerusalem was broken again and again. The dreams and images of a united Jerusalem, where different peoples and religions could all make their homes, which guided us and many like us were slowly being destroyed. We talked about the situation with friends and colleagues. We used our professional positions to try to influence things to take a turn for the better, but they only got worse. Ironically, it was a glimmer of hope—the signing of a Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization in September 1993—which prompted us to begin to make this book a reality. We reasoned that at such a historic juncture, not only Israelis and Palestinians but all people interested in the fate of Jerusalem would want to know more about this conflict-torn city.

Much of the information contained in this book comes from our first-hand experience. In addition, we have drawn on an extensive archive relating to Israeli policy in Jerusalem since 1967, which we compiled through our work and from various Israeli sources. Included are the minutes of meetings among the most senior Israeli leaders and officials responsible for setting policy in the city; correspondence among these individuals, and in some cases between them and various non-Israelis; and numerous other documents detailing Israel's decision-making process with regard to Jerusalem. Where necessary, we spoke directly with the Israelis, Palestinians, and others involved. Specific references to these materials and interviews can be found in the Notes.

While *Separate and Unequal* begins in 1967 with the aftermath of the Six Day War, our focus is on the past fifteen years—from the rumblings of Palestinian unrest in Jerusalem in the early 1980s, to the intifada, or uprising, that hit the city soon after it broke out in Gaza in December 1987, and finally to the showdown over Jerusalem's future that began after the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993. That agreement specifically called for the Palestinians and Israelis to sit down and talk together about the future of the city so dear to them both.

The deadline for those talks to begin—tentatively May 1999—is

fast approaching. Thus, some may accuse us of hanging out Israel's dirty laundry at just the time when it could be the most embarrassing and detrimental to the Jewish state and to the man who came to symbolize its rule of the city, Teddy Kollek. To those people we can only say that damaging Israel's claim to Jerusalem is far from our intention. In making public, for the first time, this record of Israeli rule in east Jerusalem, we believe that lessons learned from past mistakes can help build a better future. This chronicle of political intrigue and personal suffering is often an upsetting story for all involved, including ourselves; but it is a story still in the making. Hope remains for a just and peaceful ending, and it is with this hope that we have written this book.

“And my people shall abide in peaceful habitation,
and in secure dwellings, and in a quiet resting place.”

ISAIAH 32:18

The Vision and the Reality

The Six Day War was still raging. Hours earlier, Jerusalem was taken by the Israeli army. A people whose long history was already filled with miraculous moments was in the midst of an event of biblical proportions. Prime Minister Levy Eshkol prepared to go to the Western Wall—the site of millennia of Jewish longing that had been cut off from the Jewish people since 1948. Before setting out, however, he called together the nation’s chief rabbis and other Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious leaders, “to share . . . the news of the events taking place these last few days in Jerusalem, the Holy and Eternal City.”¹

“Peace has now returned with our forces in control of all the city and it environs,” Eshkol told the clergymen.² “You may rest assured that no harm whatsoever shall come to the places sacred to all religions . . . With the aid of the Rock and Salvation of Israel, from Jerusalem, a symbol of peace for countless generations, from this Holy City now returned to peace, I would like to have you join me in this call for peace among all the people of this area and of the whole world.”

At that moment, it was as if Israel collectively put on rose-colored glasses and turned to view the ancient City of David. Perhaps this was only to be expected. Jerusalem for most Jews was a place seen only from afar, a holy city idealized in prayer and legend. Tradition says King David founded Jerusalem some 3,000 years ago on the slopes of the Kidron Valley. Historically, however, the city’s roots go back even further, with the site first inhabited well be-

fore 2,500 BCE. For Jews, the city's history began 1,500 years later, when David conquered a Jebusite fortress and declared it the capital. David built a new walled city that remained in Jewish hands until 578 BCE, when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and sent the Jews into exile. The city's history since Babylonian times has been one of repeated conquests, spattered with intervals of peace and even disregard. Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Ptolemy Soter, Antiochus Epiphanes, Pompey, the Parthians, Herod, Titus, Hadrian, the Persians, Heraclius, Omar, Saladin, the Mongols, Suleiman the Magnificent, General Henry Allenby—they are among the names of the great leaders who led armies into Jerusalem.

The irony of this Who's Who list of conquerors is that for all the city's attraction, Jerusalem remained desolate and isolated for most of its history. It was not a major center of trade. It may have had great religious symbolism, but there were many other far greater centers of learning and religious study than Jerusalem. Even as a pilgrim site, the city just did not seem to get it right. Over the years, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish pilgrims from Europe, Africa, and Asia may have come annually in greater and lesser numbers to the city. But that did not keep Jerusalem from remaining an out-of-the-way place. Few people wanted to live there. Those that did were largely poor and often depended on welfare from various patrons abroad.

Jews became a majority in Jerusalem by the early 1800s. But Jerusalem remained small, more of a village or town than a city, with a population of just 15,000 in 1845.³ Nearly all of the residents lived in the confines of the Old City. It was about this time that the Zionist movement began to bring Jews to Palestine. The Zionists, however, did not place Jerusalem at the center of their vision; for the most part they chose to live elsewhere. Tel Aviv was founded and quickly became the *de facto* capital of the Jewish community in Palestine. Still, by 1912 the population of Jerusalem included 45,000 Jews and 35,000 Muslims and Christians, and it continued to grow, largely due to the influx of Jewish immigrants.

Israel's War of Independence in 1948 left much of Jerusalem off-limits to Jews. Historians have spoken of the city as being "divided"

in 1948, but this word does not begin to capture the reality in Jerusalem. Historic Jerusalem for the Jews—the Western Wall, Temple Mount, City of David, and Mount of Olives—was part of Jordanian-controlled east Jerusalem. For nineteen years, Jews who wanted to glimpse the Jerusalem of their prayers had to climb atop the YMCA on King David Street, or take their chances with Jordanian snipers at various vantage points near the wall dividing the city.

So it is not surprising that in 1967, still giddy from their lightning-like military victory over their Arab neighbors, Israelis flocked by the thousands to the Old City. They wandered through the narrow streets of the Arab markets, or *shuks*, on their way to the Western Wall. The city was theirs. And in their euphoria over retaking historic Jerusalem, perhaps it is understandable that they paid little attention to the 68,000 Palestinians they had conquered as well, and who also called the ancient city home.⁴

The leaders of Israel, however, cannot be excused for this oversight. They had a clear goal: the reunification of Jerusalem. Ignoring the needs of the city's Palestinian population undermined this goal. The mistakes began immediately after the war and continued, until ultimately they severely threatened Israel's hold on Jerusalem.

In 1967 the image Israel projected to the world of a “united Jerusalem” was that of a body which, though once split in two, had been returned to its natural wholeness. “Jerusalem is rightfully ours again” was Israel's message after the Six Day War. “We will protect the rights of all peoples living in the city, Christian and Muslim. They will be able to worship freely. We will even give them limited autonomy over their holy places. But we will be in charge. This is how it should be.”

Israel's great spokesman of the period, Abba Eban, writing to the United Nations just after the war, put the Jewish state's claim to Jerusalem and its plans for the city in much more eloquent terms. In a letter to the secretary-general of the U.N., Eban, Israel's foreign minister at the time, outlined an altruistic and enlightened policy.⁵ In ret-

respect, it is sad to see how far from this vision Israeli policy-makers wandered.

As a result of the aggression launched by the Arab States against Israel in 1948, the section of Jerusalem in which the Holy Places are concentrated had been governed for nineteen years by a regime which refused to give due acknowledgment to universal religious concerns. The City was divided by a military demarcation line. Houses of worship were destroyed and desecrated in acts of vandalism. Instead of peace and security there was hostility and frequent bloodshed. The principle of freedom of access to the Holy Places of all three monotheistic religions was violated with regard to Jews, but not to them alone. On 5 June 1967, the Jordanian forces launched a destructive and unprovoked armed assault on the part of Jerusalem outside the walls. This attack was made despite Israel's appeal to Jordan to abstain from hostilities. Dozens of Jerusalem citizens were killed and hundreds wounded . . . Since 7 June, the entire City of Jerusalem experiences peace and unity. The Holy Places of all faiths have been open to access by those who hold them sacred.⁶

Eban aimed to quell the criticism of Israel's claim to authority. He, along with other Israeli government spokesmen, rejected the term "annexation," arguing that there was no need for Israel to annex east Jerusalem, as that part of the city had been rightly theirs even under Jordanian rule. In subsequent sections of the letter to the U.N. secretary-general, Eban promised an enlightened policy toward the city's religious and ethnic minorities. He stressed that Israel would follow a policy of religious tolerance and that civic understanding between Arabs and Jews would be encouraged, where before the two peoples had been separated by walls and fences. "One of the most significant results of the measures taken . . . is the new mingling of Arabs and Jews in free and constant association," Eban wrote. "There is a profound human and spiritual significance in the replacement of embattled hostility by normal and good neighborly relations. It is especially appropriate that ecumenical habits of thought and action should take root in the City from which the en-

during message of human brotherhood was proclaimed with undying power in generations past.”

Eban went on to describe the major steps already taken by Israel to improve the poor conditions in east Jerusalem. The Old City was now hooked up to the main water supply of west Jerusalem, ending the acute water shortage Arab residents had lived under during Jordanian rule. New health clinics had been opened in east Jerusalem, and Arab residents could now claim welfare rights equal to those of the Israeli population and far better than they had under Jordanian rule. Compulsory education was extended to east Jerusalem as well. Then, in a triumphant finale, Eban concluded:

Where there was hostility, there is now harmonious civic union. Where there was a constant threat of violence, there is now peace. Where there was once an assertion of exclusive and unilateral control over the Holy Places, exercised in sacrilegious discrimination, there is now a willingness to work out arrangements with the world’s religious bodies—Christian, Muslim, and Jewish—which will ensure the universal religious character of the Holy Places . . . The government of Israel is confident that world opinion will welcome the new prospect of seeing this ancient and historic metropolis thrive in unity, peace, and spiritual elevation.

How far this picture was from reality we can now clearly see. This is not to accuse Eban or other Israeli leaders who presented the rosy outlook in the days after the Six Day War of intentionally painting a false picture. As difficult as it always is to judge intentions, in this case they appear to have been honorable. Victory can bring with it a feeling of magnanimity, and so it was with Israel after the Six Day War. Israel saw itself as a benevolent conqueror and even liberator, and this feeling was strongest with regard to Jerusalem. There, more than in any other territory won in the war, Israelis believed they simply had taken back what was rightfully theirs.

At the same time, the Israeli government was less confident than Eban and other leaders publicly let on that the world would support the Jewish state’s claim to Jerusalem. Thus, not surprisingly, while

continuing to work to gather international support, Israel at the same time followed a policy aimed at physically strengthening Israel's hold on east Jerusalem. This is the policy that was not announced at the United Nations. Israel's leaders, knowing that their position in Jerusalem was shaky and that they had to act fast to strengthen it, adopted two basic principles in their rule of east Jerusalem. The first was rapidly to increase the Jewish population in east Jerusalem. The second was to hinder growth of the Arab population and to force Arab residents to make their homes elsewhere.

The logic behind this unspoken policy was quite simple: whoever physically dominated Jerusalem would determine the city's fate. If east Jerusalem remained inhabited only, or even predominately, by Arabs, then its chances of re-division would be much greater than if Jews moved in and became the majority of residents. This logic has driven Israeli policy makers from 1967 right up to today. And as we will show in detail in the chapters that follow, it has translated into a miserable life for the majority of east Jerusalem Arabs, many of whom have chosen to leave the city, as Israel hoped they would. At the same time, Jews have moved into east Jerusalem by the thousands. As of 1996, 157,000 Jews lived in east Jerusalem—a number nearly equaling the 171,000 Palestinians who resided there.⁷

To the world, Israel presented itself as an enlightened ruler of a troubled city. In reality, while pursuing what for the Jewish state was the logical goal of fortifying its claim to Jerusalem, the city's non-Jewish residents suffered greatly. Although Israel has gone to great pains to show otherwise, the startling evidence of this policy is obvious to anyone who drives through east Jerusalem, and it is borne out by the statistics on the comparative well-being of Jewish and Arab residents.⁸

Teddy Kollek, Jerusalem's mayor from 1965 to 1993, liked to tell foreign audiences how, "From a provincial backwater in 1967, Jerusalem has become a thriving metropolis" in which all its residents reap the benefits of enlightened Israeli rule.⁹ "Projects aimed at improving the quality of life for Jews, Christians, and Muslims in every part of the city have led to the establishment, expansion and improvement of community institutions, centers of art and culture, ed-

ucation and sport, rest and recreation and the preservation and restoration of the city's historic heritage, while fostering the theme of mutual respect and tolerance among the city's peoples," he would tell them.¹⁰ It was a mouthful of a message, and the audiences ate it up. This was particularly true with Jewish audiences in the United States. Kollek's portrait of life in Jerusalem gave world Jewry the best of both worlds—pride in seeing Jerusalem again the center of Jewish life, and a clear conscience in being told the Palestinian minority in the city was being treated fairly. This vision, however, was far from the reality.

Mr. Jerusalem

Teddy Kollek was in his element. The main municipal auditorium, which doubled as the City Council meeting hall, was filled with *mukhtars* and other Palestinian notables. Kollek worked the crowd, shaking hands and exchanging greetings with the leading Palestinians of the city. The atmosphere was cordial and relaxed. It was early summer, 1984. On the surface, at least, relations were still relatively good between city hall and the local Palestinian population. But there were also signs of the trouble ahead. This was an important gathering for the mayor, one of a round of periodic, informal, and largely social get-togethers with the city's Palestinian leaders. Sometimes they would even meet in east Jerusalem in the home of one of the Palestinians, before Palestinian nationalistic sentiment made such displays of seeming support—or at least acceptance—of Israeli rule impossible.

Four years later, in December 1987, Palestinians would take to the streets en masse in protest against Israeli rule. This violent uprising—which would become known worldwide by its Arabic name, *intifada*—would spark a complete rethinking of Palestinian-Israeli relations. But Kollek, as early as 1984, was aware that all was not right with the sensitive relations between Israeli authorities and the Palestinian population. “I am sure you have been aware of recent incidents in our city, including the attempt of a fringe [Jewish] group to attack the mosques of the Temple Mount,” the mayor wrote in a confidential memo to a Jewish-American associate earlier in the year. “With the increasing tensions throughout the Middle East, the local scene cannot be unaffected, and the Muslim and Christian pop-

ulations need more attention.”¹ But to the Palestinians gathered at city hall that evening, Kollek made no mention of these concerns. His remarks were brief—a few words of praise for his outgoing adviser on Arab affairs and an introduction to the new man taking the post—and were sprinkled with humorous comments in Kollek’s characteristic friendly and easy-going manner.² The mayor did his best to present a facade of normalcy. As for tensions between Palestinians and Israelis in his city, it was as if, by not talking about them, Kollek believed, they would go away.

Kollek loved to take visitors to east Jerusalem. They would sit in cafes and *kibitz* over Turkish coffee with the locals. One of the mayor’s favorite restaurants was the Philadelphia, on Ez-Zahra Street near the National Palace Hotel. This fancy basement restaurant was frequented by the cream of Israeli society. Between the 1967 war and the intifada, Israelis from all walks of life roamed the streets, markets, and cafes of east Jerusalem. To Israelis, the Arab part of the city was exotic and intriguing—and open on the Sabbath. When on Saturdays everything shut down in west Jerusalem, crowds of secular Israelis flocked to east Jerusalem, where they would barter with Palestinian shopkeepers at the *shuk* just inside Jaffa Gate and then pack into Abu Shukri’s, in the Old City on the Via Delorosa, or into some other favorite eating spot. People would travel for miles for a plate of Abu Shukri’s famous homous and *ful*.

At night, music blared from youth hostels and pubs, where Israelis and tourists from around the world would come to forget their worries with a little help from Lebanese hashish and Israeli beer. On warm summer nights the watermelon market between Mousrara and Damascus Gate would be packed. For just a few lira you could buy an ice-cool slice of fresh watermelon and be entertained by belly-dancers who worked for tips between the stalls. In the winter, hot sahlab, the local sweet tea, was a favorite in the Mousrara market. And year around the aroma of fresh baked bread and pita filled the air. The Mousrara market covered an area that had been no-man’s land between 1948 and 1967. It had been desolate, divided by barbed wire and a high wall from which Israeli and Jordanian soldiers looked down on their respective sides of the city.

Immediately after the Six Day War, when Israel pulled down