

XXM

ISRAEL - PALESTINE, " A FINAL SETTLEMENT "

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XXII

For two years Mark had a respite from government missions; then, one day early in 1949, he got a call from Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, wanting to know if he was going to be in Washington the next day. It happened that he was <sup>to</sup> ~~he was~~ attending a meeting of the Advisory Commission on Information.

4] Then Secretary Acheson said, "Well, please come to the State Department as soon as you get off the train."

Mark arrived in Washington at 8:20 <sup>(A.M.)</sup> and went straight to the State Department. The Secretary was already there. "I suppose you know why I wanted to see you," he said.

"I haven't the slightest idea," Mark answered.

"We want you to go to Palestine."

"My God, I haven't lost anything there," Mark protested. "You all have given me enough dirty assignments already."

Then Acheson told Mark the United States was in <sup>terrible bind</sup> ~~an unholy mess~~.

A few weeks before <sup>1</sup>/<sub>1</sub> in December 1948 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>1</sub> the General Assembly of the United Nations, at the instigation of the United States, had created a new commission, the Palestine Conciliation Commission, to go to Palestine and Israel to make a permanent peace. After all the fighting, the General Assembly had decided that the U.N. had no business trying to fix ~~the~~ boundaries <sup>1</sup>/<sub>1</sub> the lines should be drawn by the Arab countries and the Jews themselves. The General Assembly needed a neutral body to get them together and act as referee. So it had selected the United States, France, and Turkey to compose

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ref to history  
etc.

this neutral body. ~~At this juncture,~~ the delegates from France and Turkey had ~~already~~ <sup>chosen</sup> been ~~selected~~ <sup>≡</sup> and were <sup>already</sup> in Geneva <sup>#</sup> for a preliminary meeting, ~~but there was no~~ <sup>as</sup> United States delegate. The man whom the State Department had appointed had gone on a three-week binge and never shown up. ¶ "And if I had had as much sense as he had," Mark said, "I would have joined him." ~~Meanwhile~~ <sup>≡</sup> ~~The~~ United States minister to Switzerland, John Carter Vincent, was sitting in for the United States, *because*

*no* ¶ ~~Still Mark said no.~~ He ~~definitely~~ didn't want to go and saw no reason why he should. ¶ Finally Secretary Acheson picked up his white phone and called President Truman. "Ethridge is bucking," he told the President. "I'd like to bring him over."

"Bring him right now," said Mr. Truman.

At the White House the President began to put the heat on Mark as only he could. Nevertheless, Mark continued to make excuses.

At last Truman lost his temper and barked angrily, "I can get a million sons-of-bitches tomorrow to help me make war. Can't I get one son-of-a-bitch to help me make peace?"

"Mr. President, when do I go?"

"Tonight."

So Mark flew home, packed his bags, kissed the children and me good-by, and took a night plane back to Washington to have less than an hour's briefing for each of ~~the thousand year~~ of Palestine history.

He learned what he had already suspected: that the Israel-Palestine confrontation was ~~1/2~~ <sup>(more than</sup> and, after thirty years, <sup>'t</sup> still is ~~1/2~~ <sup>#</sup> the most painful, complicated, intransigent, "hot" situation one can conceive of.

Mark <sup>war</sup> ~~is~~ full of admiration for President Carter and the "framework for peace" he so laboriously worked out at Camp David, but there ~~are~~ <sup>were</sup>

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still too many questions left unsettled for peace to be close.

By way of background it is necessary to go back at least to the Balfour Declaration, the most important document in the history of the State of Israel. It was signed <sup>in London</sup> by the British government, with the informal approval of President Woodrow Wilson and the French, ~~in~~ London on November 2, 1917. It read:

Wilson + French there in 1917

It read:?  
Is this all of it?

"His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

Bloody riots <sup>followed</sup> between the Arabs and Jews, who were already settled in Palestine, ~~followed~~. They were particularly violent during the early twenties; then <sup>things</sup> ~~the situation~~ quieted down until the rise of Hitler in 1933 and the heavy immigration of Jews from Germany to Palestine. <sup>Once</sup> Again terrible riots raged ~~and~~

The situation grew so alarming that, in 1939, Britain, which had been given a mandate over Palestine at the close of World War I, sent the Peel Commission to study the ~~whole~~ Arab-Jewish problem. Its report resulted in the famous White Paper of 1939, which <sup>limiting</sup> ~~limited~~ Jewish immigration into Palestine to ~~a total of~~ 75,000 in the next five years, after which there was to be no Jewish immigration without the consent of the Arabs.

During the years of World War II, England and the United States were too caught up in the struggle for survival to give much thought to what was happening in Palestine; but, in the fall of 1945, the

reality of the horrible, inhumane murders of 6,000,000 Jews in the Nazi gas chambers shocked the world, and President Truman, <sup>in an effort</sup> jumped ~~in to alleviate the situation of those Jews still living in Germany,~~ He asked the British to lift its quota ban and admit 100,000 Jews into Palestine immediately.

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of 1946  
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The British refused. Instead, they advocated a new study of conditions in Palestine by a joint British and American committee. In April 1946, this committee unanimously adopted a recommendation that 100,000 Jews, the number President Truman had suggested, be admitted in to Palestine and that a United Nations trusteeship be set up to supervise the country until peace was restored. Furthermore, the committee rejected a suggestion that Palestine be partitioned.

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At this point, Great Britain announced it was giving up its mandate over Palestine and turning over the whole dilemma to the United Nations. The <sup>UN</sup> United Nations <sup>then</sup> moved quickly. It sent out another committee, the UN Special Committee on Palestine, usually referred to as UNSCOP. After interviewing practically everyone in Palestine, UNSCOP recommended to the General Assembly that Palestine be partitioned into two areas, Jewish and Arab. The General Assembly favored the recommendation and set about drawing the lines of separation. It was an exceedingly trying undertaking, for at that time <sup>with</sup> there were 1,100,000 Arabs and 600,000 Jews in Palestine, and the Arabs owned 94 percent of the land and the Jews 6 percent. Nevertheless, the lines were finally drawn, making the Jewish area somewhat in the shape of an hour glass, quite narrow

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sup~~

at one point near the coast and quite wide to the south in the Negev. On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly adopted the suggested partition, with <sup>the</sup> lines as drawn.

When <sup>that</sup> the decision of the General Assembly was announced, pandemonium ~~raged~~ England. England let it be known immediately that she would have nothing to do with the partition; she was washing her hands of Palestine and withdrawing all her civil servants and soldiers by August 1948. The Arabs, though, were the most enraged. They said they would never consent to the partition of their homeland. Fighting flared up ~~everywhere~~ <sup>and</sup> War appeared imminent. It was evident it would take an army to make the partition a reality.

England gave up her mandate  
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At the prospect of war, the United States changed its position. Instead of being for partition, we were against it. We favored a temporary trusteeship of Palestine under the United Nations. <sup>UN</sup> The United Nations called a special meeting to consider this proposition, but, before it could meet, the Jews of Palestine, on May 14, announced the formation of the State of Israel. Within the hour President Truman recognized it.

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And almost within the hour the Arabs and Jews plunged into a full-scale war. Working feverishly, the United Nations succeeded in getting a four-week truce. The four weeks up, the war resumed and raged on until July 18, 1948, when the U.N. was able to get a second truce. By then the Israelis had ~~altered considerably~~ <sup>considerably altered</sup> the November 29, 1947 lines of partition.

~~Two weeks earlier~~, the United Nations mediator in Palestine, Count Folke Bernadotte, had released a new set of proposals for the partition of Palestine. These infuriated some members of an

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see p. 304

On September 17, 1948

Israeli terrorist gang; two months later Bernadotte was assassinated in Jerusalem. <sup>and</sup> ~~It was then that~~ Dr. Ralph Bunche, who had been his assistant, became U.N. mediator.

That was the way matters stood when the Conciliation Commission was formed on December 11, 1948.

~~Mark's briefing by the State Department was over by January 28 and he was as ready as he would ever be for the lift-off to Palestine-Israel.~~ That afternoon <sup>Mark</sup> he had one last engagement with President Truman, <sup>who</sup> ~~The President~~ wanted to extend his best wishes. As Mark frequently comments, "God knows I needed them!"

The instructions Mark was given by the State Department, labeled TOP SECRET <sup>(later)</sup> and buried in the national archives in Washington, were <sup>just</sup> recently declassified. <sup>As he reads</sup> Reading them over in the light of the unjumpable hurdles and unclimbable pitfalls <sup>since</sup> that have ~~strewn~~ the paths of all the Secretaries of State and missions ~~that have followed~~ Mark to the Middle East, they impress him as "incredibly naive."

There was also a "memorandum" from Mr. Rusk <sup>then director of the office of United Nations Affairs in U.S. Dept. of State</sup> to Secretary Acheson, explaining the Commission's task. Some pertinent sentences from it are worth repeating;

"...The principal work of the Commission," Mr. Rusk said, "is set forth in Article 6 of the Assembly's resolution:

"...the Commission [is] to take steps to assist governments and authorities concerned to achieve final settlement of all questions outstanding between them." <sup>Those words, "final settlement" and "all question" bring a wry grin now to Mark's face.</sup>

"In addition, the Commission is required to present detailed <sup>I, director of the office of United Nations Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State</sup>

*That's was Mr. Rusk's exact title*

*See p 303  
conflict later clear enough?*

*See p 300 re briefing*

*did Mark, where were they in 1948?*

*in the archives as above?*

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*see p 299*

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*see below*

proposals to the next regular session of the General Assembly for a permanent international regime for the Jerusalem area under effective United Nations control. It is required to seek arrangements among Governments and Authorities concerned to facilitate the economic development of the Palestine area. Furthermore, it is charged with arranging for the return of refugees to their homes and for their long-range rehabilitation."

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Then Mr. Rusk added what Mark describes as the "understatement of all time" though he didn't appreciate it then "It is thus apparent the Commission faces no easy task."

Dated January 28, 1949, the State Department's paper for Mark's guidance instructed him to "keep in mind" <sup>that</sup> American policy <sup>was</sup> based on the following premises:

"1) No modification should be made in the boundaries of the State of Israel as established by the General Assembly resolution of November 29, 1947, without the full consent of the State of Israel.

"2) If Israel desires additions to its territory as defined under the November 29 resolution, i.e., areas allotted by the General Assembly to the Arabs such as ~~Western Galilee~~ and Jaffa, now under Israeli occupation, Israel should make territorial concessions elsewhere, i.e., the Southern Negev. Israel is not entitled to keep both the Negev and western Galilee and Jaffa. If there is no agreement between the parties, the Israelis should relinquish western Galilee and Jaffa, and the Arabs should relinquish the Israeli portion of the Negev.

"3) If Israel desires to retain western Galilee and Jaffa, the southern border of Israel should not be drawn further south than the thirty-first parallel within the territory allotted Israel

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under the resolution of November 29.

4) Status of Jerusalem - The resolution of December 11 states that the Jerusalem area should be accorded special and separate treatment from the rest of Palestine and should be placed under effective United Nations control. This could be accomplished by appointing a United Nations Commissioner for Jerusalem and by establishing machinery to enable him to supervise the administration of the area to guarantee free access to the city and the Holy Places, and to insure adequate protection of the latter. The effective administration of the area of Jerusalem should be left to Arabs and Jews, the delineation of the parts of the area to be administered by each party to be determined by agreement..

When Mark landed in Jerusalem, he was met by the members of his delegation, whom, of course, he was seeing for the first time, and some members of the French and Turkish delegations. His delegation was composed of Frazier Wilkins, who had been with the State Department for fifteen years in <sup>such places as</sup> Bagdad, Tangier, and other exotic, ~~sounding~~ places; John Haldeman, an attorney with the State Department; William (Bill) Sands, a career diplomat, who was the first secretary of the American legation in Beirut, but ~~who had been~~ assigned temporarily to Mark's delegation because he was familiar with the Arabs and spoke the language; Allan Fletcher, whose job was to code and decode secret messages; Joe Reeves and Bob Yount, who took turns driving the automobile assigned to the delegation, and Mark's personal secretary, Kenneth Bussy.

The head of the French delegation was a professional diplomat, Mr. Claude de Boissanger; and of the Turkish delegation, Mr. Huseyn Cahit Yalchin, who for many years was Kemal Ataturk's spokesman as

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See p. 314, Yalchin's speech as?

see 3  
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the editor of the prominent newspaper Ulus.

The Commission stayed at the King David Hotel in the Jewish-occupied section of Jerusalem. The big main doors, fronting on the main avenue, were bolted, as they had been since the fighting <sup>began</sup> between the Jews and Arabs ~~began~~, and the Commissioners had to go in and out through a small side door that was guarded by Israeli soldiers. Israeli soldiers were also in the lobby, though no one was staying in the hotel except members of the Commission and, now and then, some U.N. personnel on duty in and around Jerusalem. Sandbags were piled high on the outside of the lobby and ~~dining room windows~~ and all the ~~other~~ windows on the first floor, to protect them in case <sup>terrorist</sup> ~~the Arabs~~ from any camp decided to take pot shots.

Mark's room, on the third floor rear of the hotel, had a magnificent view. Below his windows the land dropped off into a wide, shallow valley where there was nothing much to see; but on the high rim on the far side were ~~the~~ broad, curving, crenelated walls with minarets and steeples and domes towering about ~~them~~. There was Old Jerusalem, occupied by the Arabs; but it took Mark a little while to pick out landmarks. <sup>↑</sup> Almost directly in front of him, across the valley, was Jaffa Gate that led into the heart of the old city, but ~~it~~ was now closed. The largest and most beautiful dome, which could be seen from practically everywhere in or near Jerusalem, crowned the Dome of the Rock, sometimes called the Mosque of Omar. Under the Dome rested the rock from which Mohammed is supposed to have ascended to heaven on the back of his winged steed, er-Baruk. To the right, just outside the city walls, was Mount Zion, where the Last Supper is supposed to have taken place; beyond it lay The Mount of Olives, and beyond ~~it~~ <sup>that</sup>, a considerable distance off, the Dead Sea.

The scene looked peaceful ~~from Mark's windows~~, but there was no

peace. At night Old Jerusalem was blacked out like New York City during a power failure. ~~As~~ the old city was still held by the Arabs and the electric-light plant was in the new ~~part~~<sup>part</sup> occupied by the Jews, ~~the Jews~~<sup>who</sup> cut off all the current to the old city. The Arabs had had no lights other than candles and lamps since May 18, 1948.

Mark was supposed to have a bodyguard every time he left the hotel. When he went to the American consulate, ~~which was~~<sup>a</sup> just a block and a half from the King David, he had a bodyguard of two; when he went ~~in~~ into the business section of the new part of Jerusalem, he had a bodyguard of four; when he went to Tel Aviv, he had a bodyguard of eight. Only once did he get out of ~~the hotel~~ without a bodyguard ~~he~~ slipped out of the King David one night with two members of his delegation to go to an Israeli party. When he got back to the hotel, he found that the major in charge of the guards had been looking wildly for ~~him~~<sup>him</sup> everywhere. Mark told him he didn't feel he needed a bodyguard when he had two members of his delegation with him.

"Look, Mr. Ethridge," the major said sternly, "it's not your life I'm worried about. It's my job."

One day, when the delegation and Mark went to Tel Aviv with the four guards in front and four in the rear, there were ~~two~~<sup>also</sup> guards ~~also~~ in the car with him, though registered as drivers. The man in command was a sergeant named Morris. ~~Though~~ He had come to Israel from Germany, ~~he~~<sup>but</sup> spoke good English. As they came into Tel Aviv, Mark told him to pull up at the Kaethe Dan Hotel; that he had to go to the men's room. Mark's limousine and two jeeps pulled up and parked. The sergeant jumped out ahead of Mark and hurried to the men's room, ~~where~~<sup>where</sup> he found a man ~~there~~ relieving himself. He grabbed him by the collar and threw him out. Arriving on the scene while this was happening, Mark protested.

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"Mr. Ethridge," Sergeant Morris said, "you will find people who will kill you anywhere."

And Mark was sure he was right <sup>because</sup> ~~The~~ Americans were hated by both the Arabs and Israelis. The Arabs blamed the United States for the United Nations' first truce in ~~1948~~ 1948. They claimed they had been winning the war when the truce halted the fighting. They argued <sup>that</sup> their arms were superior at that period; but after the four-week truce ~~was~~ ended, the arms of the Israelis were superior. Though the truce called upon all governments "to refrain from sending arms or fighting personnel into Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan, and Yemen," the Arabs <sup>said</sup> ~~claimed~~ that the Israelis got planes <sup>#</sup> and shiploads of fighting materiel from Czechoslovakia and Russia. When the fighting resumed, <sup>the</sup> Israelis had the upper hand, <sup>they</sup> ~~the~~ Israelis hated the United States because of the second truce. They <sup>claimed they</sup> ~~were~~ <sup>then</sup> winning and could have occupied more of Palestine, ~~so they claimed~~, if the war had not been stopped.

The fact that there was no real peace in that part of the world was further ~~demonstrated~~ every time the Commissioners tried to pass from the Jewish sector of Jerusalem into the Arab sector or vice <sup>#</sup> versa. In order to cross, they had to pass through a no-man's-land, guarded at one end by Israeli soldiers and <sup>at</sup> the other by Arab soldiers, <sup>and they</sup> had to give twenty-four hours <sup>with a list of those planning to cross</sup> notice to the authorities of both sides and pass through at certain hours.

This no-man's-land was at the Mandelbaum Gate, which was

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not a gate at all but two <sup>horizontal</sup> barricades the size of telephone poles, one Israeli and one Arab. They were only a hundred or so feet apart, <sup>and</sup> in between was rubble <sup>H</sup> masses of tangled wire, broken cement blocks, and loose stones.

At the Israeli barricade were a half-dozen soldiers in spic-and-span, neatly pressed khaki, white belts, and spats. One morning, when Mark and members of his delegation drew up to the barricade, one of the soldiers stepped to the side of the car, took their passes, studied them, and then, eyeing each individually, called out their names. As they answered, he checked off their names on <sup>the</sup> list he had. Only when he was satisfied that each one of them matched <sup>a</sup> the name on the list did he signal to another guard to lift the barricade.

Carefully the United States driver followed the ruts across the strip of land to the Arab side. <sup>He knew that,</sup> If he got out of the rut, ~~he knew~~ he might hit a bomb ~~that had been~~ hidden in the rubble <sup>H</sup> not particularly for members of the United States delegation, but for anyone who might try to sneak from Israel-held Jerusalem into the Arab section.

At the Arabs' check point stood a handful of Arab Legion guards <sup>wearing</sup> ~~in their~~ red-and-white checkered kaffiyehs and, among them, a woman <sup>in khaki uniform,</sup> also <sup>wearing</sup> in the red and white kaffiyeh, the Arab Legion insignia on ~~the~~ black camel-hair cords just above her forehead, ~~and in khaki uniform.~~ Her name was Halliby.

Smilingly, she spoke to each <sup>members</sup> of <sup>delegation</sup> them by name and shook his hand. She was a remarkable woman, especially when one considers the status of most Arab women. Her mother was a Russian, her father a native Palestinian. During the British mandate she had been involved in military affairs. <sup>and</sup> She had

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held the title of Postwar Administrative Assistant in the Financial Secretary's Office of the Palestine government. At the end of the mandate she became the external liaison officer for the Arab Legion with the rank of captain and was allowed to <sup>wear</sup> ~~wear~~ the full uniform of the Legion. Members of the Commission saw a great deal of her in their comings and goings across no man's land, <sup>and</sup> ~~though~~ she was always cordial, <sup>though</sup> ~~she was~~ also strictly business.

<sup>9/1</sup> ~~Though~~ <sup>but</sup> crossing through the Mandelbaum Gate was a serious matter, <sup>but</sup> Mark had two happy experiences there. He drew up to the barricade one snowy day <sup>H</sup> snow in Jerusalem was a shock <sup>H</sup> and some Israeli children began throwing snowballs at the car. Mark got out and threw snowballs back. A United Press reporter happened to be at the crossing and sent a story about it to the States. The Washington Post put it on the front page under the heading, "Ethridge Wins Battle of Jerusalem."

Shortly afterwards <sup>Mark received</sup> ~~he got~~ a nice telegram from Secretary Acheson: "President and I extremely proud, as are all Americans, at your staunch defense against Jerusalem <sup>(A)</sup> snowball kids as reported in morning press. Thank the Lord you didn't ask for a mediation ~~Commission~~ <sup>H</sup> we just sent over the best man we had."

Another day <sup>Mark's</sup> ~~Mark's~~ car stalled as he started to cross no-man's-land. Several Israeli guards ~~came over and~~ fooled with things under the hood, but nothing happened. <sup>Then</sup> ~~Then~~ the Arab guards, seeing the Israelis getting nowhere, joined them

in the tinkering. Mark ~~hasn't~~ <sup>didn't have</sup> the slightest idea what they did, but after a few minutes the car started. Quickly, without speaking, the guards returned to their respective posts. Ruefully <sup>After</sup> Mark ~~says~~ <sup>said</sup> ~~commented~~, "That was the closest the Israelis and Arabs ever came together during my four and a half months in the Middle East."

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