

Cross, Crescent and Star

A Picture of Palestine

LESTER COHEN

PALESTINE is a very small country, 336 Palestines could fit into the United States. Even from shipboard, while docked at Haifa wharves, it seems a disjointed land, English officers coming aboard with Jewish and Arab assistants, officers and assistants going check and double-check over the landing list, Arab and Jewish money changers vying with each other, the money stamped in three languages: English, Hebrew, Arabic, the piastre with its hole in the middle, looking like a plugged nickel . . . all about us signs in three languages, "No Smoking" in three languages, "This Way Out" in three languages . . . taxi drivers hollering in three languages, each making a bid for his own sort. I think back to White Russia, the signs in four languages, a convenience and an expression of new liberties, but this hollering in three languages a competition on a racial basis, an English taxi driver yapping at Eden, a Jewish driver yapping at me, an Arab being the only silent and reflective one, we take him, he seems very much surprised.

He starts off, shaking his head to himself, and almost going into a camel. I ask if he isn't feeling well, he says it is hot, which reminds me that we are thirsty. I ask him to pull up at a drink stand down the way. He does, but—"It is Arab place, sair," says he . . . well, I say, is that anything against it? He says no, we get soda pop, I ask if he will have one, his brow wrinkles in puzzlement. I take it the palefaces have rarely seemed considerate, he is very thirsty, between gulps "Thank you sair, please sair," says he . . .

All about us Arabs in long white robes, black hair hanging down the sides of their faces—lean, brown, handsome, unfriendly faces—coarse white cloths over the heads and falling down the shoulders, brilliant black eyes staring, staring . . . some of the Arabs swinging canes, standing still but swinging canes, ragged and unkempt, but swinging canes. . . .

Back into the car, out of Haifa. . . . We pull up at a crossroad, we must wait till a caravan goes by, knobby legged camels, jerkily ambling through the dust . . . and out to Nazareth, which you feel may be different from the other villages. But it isn't, a few small white structures, shepherds tending flocks, some palms, scrubby fields, then desert, clear blue sky above, jagged blue hills beyond. . . .

And now we are driving into Jerusalem, winding up narrow newish streets, past hundreds of Jews in long black gabardines and wide beaver hats, the costume they were forced to wear in the medieval ghettos, through centuries of wearing, the costume seems to have endeared itself, and with it

corkscrew curls down the sides of the face, the shoulders crooked up in the stoop of fear and sorrow, hands folded over the small of the back, feet shuffling along *schlipsh-schlopsh*, *schlipsh-schlopsh*—and so they have trained their children in this Jerusalem where they might have a new life if they could come into a new point of view, but no, hundreds of kids of five and six in long black gabardines, wide black hats pressed down over the ears, corkscrew curls, little hands behind, little shoulders crooked up, little feet in *schlipsh-schlopsh*.

I was raised on the tough streets of a tough city. I don't mind tough streets, wherever I have been I have gone looking for what was tough, toughness interests me, I take it as a symptom of a diseased civilization . . . but I never came across anything like this, dark, pitch dark, narrow cobbled streets, streets of stairs winding down, down, sometimes a streak of light glimmering over a trickle of blood between the cobbles, dead-end streets, too dark to find the way out. Suddenly a circle of eyes, eyes under white cowls, Arab eyes, staring, staring . . . vanishing on silent feet, harsh Arabic words crackling the dark, the only clue to the way out. . . . I don't know that I scare easier than most, but Jerusalem at night scares me. I think it must scare most of the European residents, the only ones abroad were the Arabs . . . only two spots of light in the Jerusalem night, two Arab cafes, each across from the other, no side walls, rails between the three or four floors, the effect like skeleton scenery, a group of Arabs in dirty white gowns, each wound about with the tubing of the *nargile*, small cups of Turkish coffee before them, the musicians making *eechyscreechy*, and the sultry night pressing down, pressing down, choking them, one by one, into slumber.

NEXT morning we set forth. I buy a map of Jerusalem. The map shows two cities, the old and the new. Our hotel, the Grand Mufti's house, and the Y.M.C.A. are in the new city, the more venerated and historic places are in the old.

More or less in the center of the map is the wall of the old city. All roads lead to that wall, the Bethlehem Road, the Jaffa Road, the Jericho Road, the other roads. Each road comes to a gate, the gates are in the wall. There is the Jaffa Gate, the Zion Gate, the Dung Gate, the Golden Gate, St. Stephen's Gate, Herod's Gate, the Damascus Gate, the New Gate. Within those gates are the four quarters: Christian Quarter, Armenian Quarter, Jewish Quarter, Moslem Quarter. Within those four quarters are the

religious crossroads of the western world.

We put our map away, approach the Jaffa Gate, go down the streets of stairs, narrow streets, at times your outstretched hands can touch from wall to wall, the stairs rudely hewn into stone, down, down, this dank and sodden way, it is almost like going down into a colossal well—and it is, the well out of which, for thousands of years, Jews, Christians, Mohammedans have drawn their spiritual sustenance, the greatest well of blood, belief and tears the world has ever known. As you go down, down, the streets of stairs, dirty, filthy, stinking, damp and bloody stairs, you see breaks in the wall to the right, breaks in the wall to the left . . . butcher shops, grocery shops, eating shops, leather shops, wine shops, holy goods shops. Here, in dirt, misery, filth, squalor and disease are the hewers of wood, the drawers of water, the hammerers of the gold, the makers of crosses, crescents, phylacteries, whips—and the butchers, Arab butchers, Jewish butchers, Christian butchers, splitting open carcasses, hanging out the skins to dry, cutting away the pink ribbons of the lamb mouths, chopping off the lamb heads . . . the lamb heads, their glassy eyes staring, rolling into the streets of stairs, blood of the lamb heads streaking the stones, wine of the wine skins dripping on the stones, Arab water carriers, in sandals, sloshing by, wooden yokes across their shoulders, wooden pails swinging from the yokes, water dripping from the pails, making a mess of blood, water, wine and dung . . . and the sound of the beating of gold, the whipmaker cracking his whips, the *muezzin* calling to prayer, a black Copt priest jingling his silver beads, an Arab beggar hollering for *baksheesh*. . . .

EDEN said she wanted to get out of all this, perhaps we could go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I took out the map, we looked at it, as we were wondering whether to go this way or that, a young Jew stepped up to us, he wore European clothes, and in very good English—"May I help you?" said he.

We told him where we wanted to go—"Isn't it strange," said he, "I was just going there myself, if you like I shall show you the way." We thanked him, and as we went along he kept looking at me—"But aren't you a Jew?" said he. I said yes. Now he looked at Eden, "But your wife is Gentile," said he. I said yes. "Oh I understand," said he, "you came to see the things of the Jews, and your wife wishes to see the Christian things." We said we hadn't divided it up that way. He nodded, but his eyes

remained puzzled and gray—"And here we are," said he.

And indeed, here we were, before a not very imposing church, making way through Arab loiterers, our companion holding open the door for us, "If you please," said he, and by his manner it was plain that he too was coming in—"It is quite some time since I have been," said he. And now his gray eyes looked into mine—"Don't say anything about being a Jew." I paused and asked why—"They won't let Jews in," said he. I asked about the times he had been—"Oh that's different," said he, and with the unexplained hanging about us . . . we went in.

It was quite gloomy, a few dark forms stood swinging censers, others stood murmuring before the flames of small candles.

The young man beside us said "back soon," and disappeared. A priest nudged me, put out his hand, I put something in it, he went away.

I thought back to the little I knew of this place, the tomb of Christ was here, I remembered how Joseph had claimed the body, wrapped it in linen and spices, put it in a sepulchre that had been hewn out of a rock. . . .

We heard voices. By now our eyes were accustomed to the gloom, we could see several priests squabbling, one had a white face, one a brown face, one a black face, the squabble brought them nearer the candle flames, we could see them pushing each other, a fourth figure in Arab caftan came over to them, prevailed upon them to keep the peace . . . oh yes, this Church of the Holy Sepulchre was in the keeping of European, Asiatic and African sects, the sects were known to quarrel, that's why there was a Mohammedan keeper of the keys. . . .

And now our young man returned with a Greek priest, the priest beckoned to us, we followed, "You'll have to hurry," the young man said, "they're about to lock up." Before I could ask why the priest held candles out to us. . . "Buy candles," said the young man, we did, the priest lighted them, indicated that we were to stoop and enter a low crypt . . . we were in the Holy Sepulchre.

Imagine a cell, a small cell, hardly big enough to live in, just big enough to die in, a stone couch to the side, and there, after the agonies and doubts, lay Jesus Christ . . . if ever he lay here at all. The cell didn't seem 2,000 years old, there was a regularity to the masonry . . . the priest, as if primed for doubters, pointed to the stone couch, nodded, stroked his long black beard, stuck out his palm, I put something in it, he started to back out, I was about to stoop and head out, the young man grabbed me, swung me around, backed me out. . . .

Something in the young man's manner made us realize he was a guide—"Let me have your candles," said he. We gave him the candles, he blew them out, put them back on the pile. "Hurry, hurry," said he, looking at the luminous dial of his watch, "you just have time to see the place of the



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Crucifixion"—and with that he rushed us upstairs, "this way, watch your step," said he. The priest stuck out a candle—"Buy another candle," said our guide, "see the notches in the stone."

We bought a candle, the priest lit it, held it down, we looked . . . there were notches in the stone. Above on the wall—iconry, gold iconry, emblazoned with diamonds and heaped with gold watches, bracelets, earrings, stickpins, diamond hatpins. . . .

I thought of the simple ways of Jesus Christ, the love of the poor, the tenderness toward lepers, the willingness to have wine at the wedding, the great heart, the great goodness, the great poetry of the man . . . celebrated here by watch chains and signet rings.

I looked at Eden, her face was pale and prim, as she stared at the showcase full of watches she seemed like a Puritan maiden beholding the idolatries. . . "It isn't true," she said, "Christ wasn't crucified here, it was on the hill of Golgotha." The guide said this was the hill of Golgotha. Eden said how did anyone know, Jerusalem had been pillaged, burned, rent by quake . . . the Sepulchre couldn't have been so near the place of Crucifixion, it was in a garden. This, said the guide, was the garden. The notches, said Eden, couldn't have been the real notches, it would be difficult to get three crosses so close together . . . as she spoke the luminous brown eyes of the Greek priest hovered over her, he smiled to her and wisps of black beard streaked his gleaming teeth, at the moment he looked like a ham actor playing Rasputin—then from without we heard the *muezzin* calling to prayer, the priest pointed toward the sound as if saying: there it is—"Come on," said our guide, "hurry up, you'll be locked in"—and from below we heard the banging of doors and clanking of chains, the Mohammedan keeper

of the keys had to go to the Mosque of Omar, knock his head against the stones and say: "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His Prophet."

And so out we went, stood again in the light of day, surrounded by Arab beggars demanding *baksheesh*, a friar went plishing by in yellow sandals and coarse brown gown, there was a processional of pallid Dutch nuns in white windmill hats, a Syrian wanted to sell a cane for ten cents, our guide suggested the Wailing Wall, a lamb's head went *kerplunk* in the wine-mud-blood of the cobbles, spattering on a torn Arab caftan embroidered in gold. . . .

And we went down the streets of stairs, the old streets, named after the old agonies: Via Dolorosa, Street of the Chain . . . and here we were at the Wailing Wall. It is all that is left of Solomon's Temple. You can still see some of the original stones. These stones are sacred to orthodox Jews. The stones above them, which are built onto a mosque, are sacred to Mohammedans. Every now and again this makes for trouble, and a policeman is stationed nearby. Today's policeman happened to be a Jew, he was seated on a camp chair, white helmet tilted down, a thick volume in his hands. I looked over his shoulder, wondering what a Jewish policeman reads—it was an anthology of short stories.

OVER at the Wailing Wall were a number of Turks, old time Turks such as we had seen in Rhodes, red pantaloons, black socks, yellow slippers, silk skullcaps. I thought it nice of them to stand here waiting for the Jews, I wondered if the Jews had gone in for hired mourners, it made me a little sad, this Turk wheezy-sneezy didn't come from the heart, I missed that old time *myeh*.

The guide admitted that the *myeh* was somewhat run down, but after a while, he said, it might pick up.

"Well," I said, "it is an adequate performance, considering that they are Turks—but where are the Jews?"

"These," said the guide, pointing to the Turks, "are the Jews."

"Oh no," said I, "you can't fool me, I know a Jew when I see one."

"These are Algerian Jews," said he.

Well, I didn't know, maybe they were. They looked like stooges from *The Garden of Allah*. They were now joined by an old Turk in similar costume, but there was one thing about him that inclined me to believe he was a Jew. On a hot, cloudless day he carried a tightly wound umbrella. He had a fierce light in his eye, he began hollering at the others, I came nearer, couldn't make out a word he said, some Hebraio-Algerio-Ladino dialect perhaps, but whatever the language, this was exhortation and whatever it was the old guy was after, he wanted it bigger and better—and here it came, tears, real tears, tears running down the faces, hands beating against the wall, cryings, shak-

ings, hollerings, the old guy leading them on, a sort of cheer leader of the wailers, no doubt hollering: "Myeh! Give me myeh! You call this myeh, hah? You should've heard how in the olden days we are giving myeh. Now give, giveout, all together—myeh!" And every now and again his umbrella would wave, a grisly black baton, bringing them to one great myeh.

While the Algerians were in the midst of things several gabardine Jews stooped nearby, looked on as if it were all very strange, and a Jew in ordinary clothes came along, paused mournfully by the wall, sniffled a little, was so prosaic as to touch a handkerchief to his eyes, the Algerians never as much as looked at him, such a sissy was beneath contempt.

I asked the guide if the Algerians usually went on at this rate, he said no, just once in a while. And now he suggested the dancing dervishes. But no, we paid off and started up the streets of stairs.

It was toward evening now, the muezzin was again calling to prayer, a murmuring started up in the Hourva synagogue, vesper bells chimed, caftans, gabardines, cassocks came swarming through the streets, the believers in the caverns of the walls were hollering their wares, hammering the brass, crossing themselves, kissing the mezzuzeh, demanding baksheesh, never such a swarming and hollering as at this hour of the evening prayer, never such a business in the cavernshops, never such a kerplunk, kerplunk of the lambs' heads, never such a murmuring, haggling, buying, selling, butchering, yammering, as the city, with one vast fetid breath, roared its terrible antiquity.

UP FROM antiquity come conflicting claims. To the devout Jews, Christians and Mohammedans this is the Holy Land. On the basis of history and sentiment they all have good claims. But the Arabs have lived here for hundreds of years, the Zionists have colonized for a few generations, the English have been here since the War. As the English have come last their case is easiest to handle.

The English want to collect taxes, maintain a favorable balance in trade, keep open the road to Persia, India and Anglo-Persian oil—"And," said an Englishman, "we would like the Jews and the Arabs to live in quietude."

"Why don't they?" said I.

"Heaven only knows," said he, "why don't you ask them?"

And so I put it to a Jew. He said that for centuries the Jews had been coming here to die. But Zionism gave them the idea of coming here to live. They bought small parcels of land, tilled the soil, and there was very little trouble. "But as the years went on," he said, "the colonies began to be successful, business men and speculators came in, real estate boomed—the Arabs are jealous," said he.

Well maybe, but it sounded inconclusive. I asked an Arab about it—"It isn't that we



A JEMENITE JEW

Saul Raskin

are jealous of the Jews," he said. "To understand our troubles you have to know our history." And he told me about the centuries of Turkish oppression, how the Turks had sold the privilege of tax collecting to the highest bidder, the highest bidder had sold to other bidders, finally minor publicans set out with bands of troops and took everything they could lay hands on. "The land was wrung dry," he said. "That was our condition when the Jews came. And the fellahin were glad to get a little cash for their fields. Only—"

"Only what?" said I.

"Only," said he, "when the fellahin had sold their lands—what were they to do?"

"I don't know," I said, "what?"

"Better not to talk about it," said he.

But I wanted to talk about it, couldn't find another Arab with whom I could get started, looked up a Jewish business man, "Listen," he said, "every inch of that land was bought and paid for. And if it's worth more now, it's because of what we put into it."

I said what. "We irrigated," he said, "put in plumbing and electric lights, built schools, hospitals, universities, why ever since we've been here the Arabs've had more schooling, more hospital care"—the Arab question irritated him, he waved it away, "they got nothing to complain about," he said, and he told me what a filthy, unsanitary people the Arabs had been, how they had cultivated the soil in the most primitive way, "why we brought progress here," he said, "and prosperity" . . . but as I walked away I stumbled over Arabs sleeping on the streets.

One of them sat up, folded his arms across his dirty white robe, stared . . . I said I was sorry, my eyes weren't used to the dark—"It's all right, sair," said he. I asked if he would come and have coffee . . . after he was wound about with the tubing of the nargile, he began to speak.

Yes, he said, it was true. He had lived in filth and ignorance, eaten dates and wiped sticky hands on his hair, once, on a long trek, he had drunk Camel water. . . "But my land, sair," he said, "all has been worse since I sold my land."

I asked why he had sold it—"I owed money to the Emir, sair. He was going to take, so I sold to the Jew."

"And then?"

"Then I came to the town. Everything costs in the town, the money soon gone . . . have to get job."

I asked what he did—"Carry things, hammer brass, anything can do." But in recent months he had been without work, jobs were hard to find, the Arab industries were overcrowded, the Jews wouldn't employ him.

I asked why—"Because I am Arab, sair."

I went to a Jewish manufacturer and asked why he wouldn't employ Arabs—"Because they won't employ Jews," said he. I asked what this sort of thing would lead to, he said he didn't know, the Arabs were less and less inclined to sell their lands—"Serious problem," said he, and he spoke of the persecutions in Germany, the need of the Jews for more and more land, if they could get it Palestine could accommodate more refugees, the bars on immigration could be taken down—

"Nevair!" said an Arab, "the English have promised, sair."

"Yes," said a Jew, "but they have also promised this would be the Jewish homeland."

To which an Arab replied—"English make too many promises. Curse of Allah on the English, sair. Only one thing to do—take the land away from the Jew."

"Let 'em try it," said a Jew and he told me the Jewish landowners were armed, there was a Jewish fascist movement here, the Jew fascists wanted to do unto the Arabs as the German fascists had done unto them—

And in disgust, I turned away. It was plain, every time I looked around, that this was an Arab land. And so it was likely to remain, unless through mutual aid and goodwill it became an Arab-Jewish state. A man named Lazaroff had spoken for such an idea . . . and they killed him.

"Who killed him?" said I.

The Jew who was telling me about it looked around to see if he might be overheard—"The Jews," said he. "And no one was ever tried for the murder."

But this is a land in which an idea, nurtured in martyr blood, takes root. It is beginning to occur to Arab and Jewish workers that their lot is much the same, they have tired of hunger, disease and dirt under the auspices of Allah and Jehovah, they are beginning to work together for a new way of life, sometimes they go to harangue the Arabs and Jews passing by the Wailing Wall and the Mosque of Omar . . . I didn't see it, but the report is that such a gathering was dispersed today, Arab and Jewish policemen running after the Arab-Jewish Communists

and cracking their skulls along the way to Golgotha, *which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull.*

BUT there are some people who are above the battle. Such a man was our innkeeper, Mr. Fast. "We have our own life here," he said. "We have nothing to do with all that"—and he pointed down at the Well of the Stairs. "We live like Europeans, we have European houses, European gardens, European clubs"—but business is business, and he asked if we wouldn't like a trip to the Dead Sea.

As we drove out four big sporty cars shot by us, Arabs in flowing robes leaning back on the upholstery—"The Emir," said our chauffeur. "Emir of what?" said I—"Emir of Trans-Jordan," said he. I asked if the Emir often went to Jerusalem—"For the Moslem conferences," said he. I asked what the conferences were about—"The Italians. We do not like what they do in Africa," said he. "Perhaps make Holy War."

And now we were at the Jordan, which inspired one of the most beautiful lines in the Bible, the one about we sat by the waters of the Jordan and wept when we thought of our native land.

And now, on our way . . . and not far from Jordan, an Arab processional, clowns and merrymakers in the vanguard, one of the Arabs pulling a camel along, a girl up on the camel, white veil over her face, yellow bodice and pink gauzy pants, quite like a vaudeville Fatima. I asked why she was the only one up on a camel—"She is bride," said our driver, "this is wedding procession, *sair*. Air leading bride to groom's house"—relatives, friends and well-wishers trooping along behind, holding lanterns on long sticks, pale lanterns that glowed faintly in the azure dusk, hired jokesters and merrymakers telling

stories and chanting as they plashed through the sand, the girl on the camel bobbing back and forth, back and forth, as if already on the troubled way of matrimony. . . .

And over the hills into the oncoming night . . . and the Dead Sea. Not very large, you can see across it, and not much to see. A bathing pavilion and restaurant on one side, salt mills on the other. I gave the driver some money and told him to get his dinner—"Does not matter, *sair*, about me." He was the same man who had taken us from Haifa to Jerusalem and still puzzled by a friendly word. His deep brown eyes looked into mine—"You are strange, *sair*," said he, "but I am glad to eat."

We went down to the water, Eden changed and plashed about, every now and again she would tell me how wonderful it was and wouldn't I come in. But not that night, I was what she called "in a mood," I didn't care how dead the sea was, across those heavy dark waters were the lights of the salt mills, owned by Jews who wouldn't employ Arabs. . . .

And from a little away, toward the curve of the sea, I heard voices, an Arab voice and a Jew voice. I turned, there was a strange sight—a Jew and an Arab talking things over. The Jew was well dressed and the Arab was well dressed—"Listen Ibrim," said the Jew, "you make shoes and I make shoes . . . we got to get together." And he told about the Jew-Arab workers getting together—"No more the old foolishness, Ibrim," said the Jew. "With us it's got to be employer for employer, what we need is an Employers' Association"—

And Ibrim said yes.

And Eden came out of the water, we had dinner and drove away . . . a fine narrow road, mile after mile without seeing another car, a habitation, a human . . . the moon

somewhere beyond the dark sharp ridges of the hills, a strange whiteness over the desert, by far the most entrancing desert I had ever seen, an electric desert, the feeling that at any moment hordes might rise from the sand, ghostly whiteness upon the yellow sand, deep shadowy pockets down the sharp hills and the sense of wings, unseen wings over all—

Bang—and the rear tire was out. We stopped, I got out to see if I could be of any use, our driver's eyes were hopelessly puzzled—"Please *sair*," he said, "you are bettair in the cair" . . . but I thanked him and set the jack . . . now Eden climbed out, gazed at the pale empty sands with their strangely peopled shadows and with the quiet ecstatic joy of the insane, went prancing out into the desert.

Of course Eden and I are supposed to be equals and anything either of us wants to do is supposed to be okay. But English officers are told to keep off the Palestine desert at night—and suddenly I was after her, struggling up a wave of sand—and there, a little below, in her white silk dress, stood she—and a Bedouin coming toward us, his long striped gown flapping, his low striped tent beyond, a small glow of embers before it—

We were all set for a scene from *Desert Love*. I was now at Eden's side, the Bedouin coming toward us, his feet plashing up the sand, down the sand, up the sand, down the sand—

"*Sholom*," said he, this being the Hebrew-Arabic for peace—

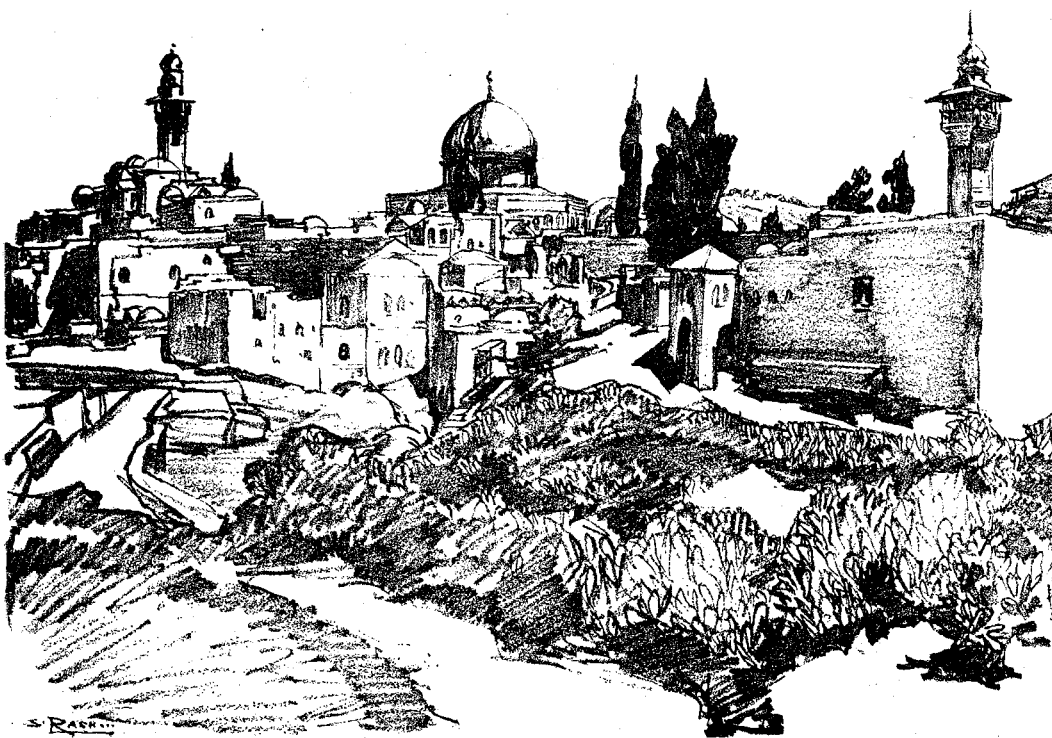
"*Sholom aleikim*," said I, with a heavy Arab accent, this being the response for peace be with you—

"*Allah huakbar*," said he, meaning God is most great—

"*Allah glug-glug Allah Allah*," said I, meaning you said it, kid—and he put his hands up to the sides of his face, salaaming to me—and I put my hands up to the sides of my face, salaaming to him . . . and so we backed up over the sand, the Bedouin halting now . . . and we made the road.

Eden got into the car, and I, with an unsteady hand, helped the driver fix the new wheel, he didn't know much about it, I did most of it and when we were ready to take off—"Thank you, *sair*," he said, "it is good we are going, some places very bad nights."

Back in Jerusalem again and to the King David, a very large hotel with the quality of important emptiness, very black Sudanese in very white robes standing about between listless palms. The palms are potted and there is something potted about the Sudanese . . . who look on with dull unjoyous eyes as the colonials dance. The colonials are the people Mr. Fast was telling us about, European houses, European gardens, European associates . . . English, Danish, French, German, Spanish, Swedes . . . dancing hoppishly to American jazz, holding themselves very stiffly in dress suits of long ago . . . and the Sudanese staring in vacant stupefaction, wondering no doubt, how long O Lord, how long before they can go to bed.



JERUSALEM—THE MOSLEM QUARTER

Saul Raschin

MORNING and the stink, smell, blood, dank and shouting of the Well of the Stairs and with shuddering and cursing, we decide to go. And off with the driver of the previous night to Lydda Junction. A very small place, hardly more than a junction, our driver unstrapping our trunk and bidding us goodby. I go to the wicket, it seems we are to buy tickets for El Kantara, from there we can get tickets to Cairo or Port Said. And now for a porter. There was one standing about at our belongings, a barefoot Arab with a torn robe, legs exposed to the thighs, he told me how much it would be to get us aboard, I said all right and with that he proceeded to get the trunk up on his back—I told him to get a helper, but no, he said he would do it himself. And so he did, not only shouldering the trunk, but dragging the four bags, surely he was carrying something like 450 or 500 pounds—but he made it, bedraggled, bent over, his fore-arms but a few inches from the ground. . . I gave him more than he had asked—"But was very heavy sair," said he, and I gave him the rest of my Palestine coins—"And now *baksheesh*, sair," said he—there was something so humiliating about it, here he was, a magnificent physical specimen of this human race from which I came and no fool either, his deep, burning, appraising eyes told you that, he too was humiliated, but—"must ask you, sair," he said, "nevair know when I get other chance. A *baksheesh*, sair, if you can." . . .

And into a wooden car, more or less like the old time L car, except the effect of compartments, the aisle to the side, the very large windows open. Eden and I took one side of the compartment, across from us was a man in a dark blue suit, worried face, small black mustache and deep brown sorrowing eyes in bluish whites. He was very mannerly, rather painfully smiling . . . after a bit we got to talking and he told me he was an Egyptian. I asked him what an Egyptian was—an Arab, he said, who came from the Nile cultivators and had been influenced by European civilization. As for himself, he said his people had been Nile cultivators for over 400 years, he had been educated in London, he was an engineer.

We introduced ourselves. His name was Hamed Yeri, he was coming down from Damascus. I asked about Damascus, he said he had been there on a pilgrimage. I asked if he was a devout Mohammedan—"When I don't think about," said he. And if he thought about it—well, he said, belief wasn't compatible with thought. Then how did he come to believe—"Habit," said he, "there is little else to do, just work and believe." But the more you worked, he said and the more you believed, the worse things were. For instance, said I.

"Egypt," said he. The people were very poor—yet King Fuad received £1,000,000 a year. "A million pounds," I said, "why that's 5,000,000 dollars."

"Exactly," said he.



JERUSALEM—THE WAILING WALL IN MIDDLE DISTANCE

Saul Raskin

"For what?" said I.

"For being the dummy of the English," said he. And he complained about Egypt being under English dominion—"But you have your own government," said I. "In name only," said he. And he told me that English advisors, administrators and police agents kept Egypt as it was. I asked if there were Egyptians who wanted things otherwise—"Any number of them," said he. Even in the government service, he said, he was in the government service, but bitterly against Fuad, "So is every one in Egypt," said he.

Then how could the king keep his power—"Through the English," said he. And now he told me of the Wafd Party. I asked what Wafd meant—"The People's Party," said he. And what did they want—"Egypt for the Egyptians, no more Fuad and a republic," said he.

And now he asked where we had been. He was particularly interested in Russia, asked how it was going, I told him. He said it was strange, but he never heard anything about Russia. I asked where he lived, he said his office was in Cairo. And were there English papers—"Several," he said, "and I read them every day, but there is practically nothing about Russia." But, he said, there was little of any interest in the papers, they were published under a censorship, you only read what a fine fellow Fuad was, what fine fellows the English were, what fine horses were winning the races, what fine courtesans had come back to town.

But on Russia—the feature that particularly troubled him was its vast public education. "Even in Egypt," he said, "with the little education we have, there are too many educated people." I asked what he meant by "too many" educated people—he

said there weren't enough jobs for them. That, I said, merely meant that there weren't enough jobs at which educated people could be employed at a profit to the employer, old Russia had encountered the same difficulty. Well, he said, how was it possible that a revolution could make such an enormous difference? I said an ordinary revolution of one set of office holders against another wouldn't make any such difference, but a revolution against private profit would.

"How?" said he.

Well, suppose we took writing as an instance. Russian writers before the Revolution had experienced a particularly bad time. Now, with the huge increase in literacy, people read many more books, there were editions in the millions where once there had been editions in the thousands, there were far more writers, the writers did much better than ever before—the only people who had lost by it were the few middlemen who had published for private profit and in the long run they hadn't lost, they were publishers now and their audiences were so wide that they could publish what they liked without fear of competition and bankruptcy, they were publishers at salaries rather than at chance profits.

Well, said Hamed Yeri, he could see how it would work.

And so we talked of this and that, the train now curving over the sand toward the sea. And then a station called Rafa. Here Hamed Yeri reached into his bag, took out a red *tarboosh* which is a sort of stiff fez, set it above his face which was the color of dried lemon, his brown worried eyes welled sorrowfully out of their bluish whites, he smiled painfully, as if self-conscious about the rite of *tarboosh*—"For we have crossed into Egypt," said he.