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Old City of Jaffa

Poem
Bride of the Sea

I was very much in love
I couldn't sleep
I left her in total exhaustion
On a black boat sailing without a flag
Waves in turmoil all around it
The passengers incredulous, regretful

I left the lights of Jaffa dying behind me
The dreams of youth scattered in the air
I promised I would come back to her
With open arms and yearning
I am very much in love
With Jaffa the Bride of the Sea

—TD

Bride of the Sea (Arabic)

عروس البحر

أنا في هواها لم أتم
وغادرتها ليلاً بحالٍ عدمٍ
على شراعٍ أسودٍ مبحرٍ بلا علمٍ
ووجه البحر مضطربٌ والركاب في ندمٍ

رأيت أضواءً يافا ساكنةً ورائي
وأحلام الصبا تناثرت في الهواءِ
قلت لها هاتفاً عروس البحر إني
راجعٌ لك رجعةً الوهانِ

—TD

BRIDE OF THE SEA

Violin

Taher Dajani

Allegro non troppo

p

mf

piano

f

cresc.

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Prologue

For forty-six years I dreamed of going back to Palestine, the land my family had been forced to flee in 1948 to escape the onslaught of the Zionist militias that had encircled Jaffa. In 1994 my wish came true when I was sent on an International Monetary Fund assignment to Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. At the end of my official business I traveled by road from Jerusalem to Jaffa, the place of my birth, to search for my roots and to see again the house where I grew up.

With sadness I saw that our house and the surrounding homes, many belonging to relatives, had been demolished. I went to a nearby restaurant in the hopes of finding out what had happened. Bulldozers had roared into the neighborhood, the houses were turned into rubble, and pushed down the hill into the Mediterranean. The State of Israel now holds the resulting wide space of prime land. I sat in the restaurant trying to contain my anger and disappointment before going to look for our orange grove on the outskirts of the city. The grove had been inherited by my father and had been in our family for many years. I was stunned to find it had completely gone, together with all the surrounding orange groves. The area was filled with apartment buildings, all occupied by Jewish families.

My mind went back to the days when I was growing up and to the events that led to our exodus from Jaffa and the hardships and successes we experienced during our exile from Palestine. I knew that one day I would write down my thoughts and describe my journey from Palestine to America.

1

Jaffa

Jaffa is considered one of the oldest seaports in the world. It was called Yafi by the ancient Canaanites, which means the beautiful. The city is referred to as Yafa in Arabic, Yafo in Hebrew, Yoppa in Greek and Yapu in Egyptian inscriptions. It is the City of Oranges and the Bride of the Sea. Throughout its history of over 4,000 years Jaffa saw many invaders including Egyptians, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Phoenicians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks and French. Sadly Jaffa is now part of Israel.

My family roots in Jaffa (Yafa), Palestine go back to Sheikh Saleem al-Dajani (1759–1839). He descended from Sheikh Ahmad (1498–1561) who lived in Dajania, later known as Djanja (El Jania) or D'ganja, a village near Jerusalem. Sheikh Ahmad's ancestors are traced back to Sayeda Fatima the daughter of the Prophet Mohammad. Sheikh Ahmad was buried in Jerusalem. Other sources have it that the name Dajani could have been derived from Beit Dajan, a village about 6 miles east of Jaffa referred to in the bible as Dagon. According to this version of our history the family roots date back to the Canaanites, who inhabited the land of milk and honey before the invasion of the Israelites from Egypt.

Sheikh Saleem was a graduate of al Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. Al Azhar is considered the chief center of Islamic and Arabic learning in the world. Its basic program of studies was, and still is, Islamic Law, theology and the Arabic language. He had a wide knowledge of Shari'a (Islamic Law) and Sufism (the articulation of the idea of a path by which the true believer could draw nearer to God). Sheikh Saleem was appointed the Mufti of Jaffa—the highest religious authority that interprets and expounds on matters related to the Islamic law—and he had homes in

Jaffa and Beit Dajan. One of Saleem's contributions to Palestinian history was that during the Napoleonic invasion of Jaffa, Saleem, together with the scion of the Damiani family who acted as consul for Italy and whose Christian ancestors go back to the crusades, went to meet Napoleon to ask him to spare the lives of the Jaffa garrison that surrendered, undertaking to provide for them. At that time Napoleon's army killed more than 2,500 captive Muslim fighters allegedly because food supplies were barely sufficient for the invading troops. Family records tell us that Napoleon heeded the request. The Napoleonic invasion was aborted when his troops could not breach the walls of the northern city of Acre and as his army was hit by the plague.

Saleem's son Hussein (1787–1858) and his brothers (Muhammad and Hassan) studied Arabic grammar, literature and religion under their father and were sent to Cairo, Egypt to study in al-Azhar. Hussein became well known for his teachings and publications, and in 1820 was appointed the Mufti of Jaffa. At the age of seventy-two he traveled with his brother Hassan and his cousin Abu Rabah al Dajani to Mecca for the Hajj. He died and was buried there.¹

His brother Hassan (1816–1890) my great, great, grandfather was also well known as a scholar and like his brother was appointed Mufti of Jaffa. In his book, *Hiliat al Bashar in the Thirteenth Hijri Century (Wholesome Personalities in the 19th Century)* published in Arabic in 1961 by The Council of Arabic Linguists in Damascus, Sheikh Abd al Razik al Bitar mentioned both Hussein and Hassan as learned and highly respected with a wide knowledge of Arabic literature and Islamic law. He added that their ancestry goes back to the Prophet Muhammad and that their presence, kindness and humility were exemplary. He also highlighted the contributions of Abu Rabah al Dajani and Ali Abu al Mawahib, the son of Hussein. Both were well known Sufis renowned for their generosity and charitable giving to the poor.

From here on the letters al (meaning the) preceding the family name will be omitted.

The Dajanis lived in the old city of Jaffa, which sits on a rocky hill overlooking the Mediterranean from three sides: West, North and South. The

port was nestled down below the steep western side, on which lay two- and three-story houses, clustered around narrow roads and alleys and connected by winding stone stairs.

A high wall and a moat encircled the old city to protect it from invading armies. By 1888, in order to expand the city, the wall was completely dismantled and the moat covered with earth. New roads opened north and south and new suburbs sprang up. It was at this time that my great-grandfather, Sheikh Ali Fouz, his brother and cousins built homes in the Ajami quarter a mile south of the old city on a high plateau overlooking the sea. The first local hospital, built in Jaffa at the beginning of the 19th Century by the Ottomans, was on land in the Ajami quarter donated by Ali Fouz. At that time there were only a few hospitals in the city, which were owned and operated by Christian missionaries.

My grandfather Sheikh Mahmoud (1864–1936), like several of his cousins, was educated at home and in traditional schools before going for higher education in Arabic literature and Islamic studies at al Azhar in Cairo. After graduation he served as a judge in Palestine, Syria and Libya under the Ottoman Administration. He was married to Fatima Bakri, my grandmother, whose family came from Hebron, Palestine. She was knowledgeable in religious matters and the Dajani women sought after her advice. She bore three children: Abdelkareem, Ishaq and Tayeb (my father). Abdelkareem, like his father studied at al Azhar in Cairo, but died a few years after graduation from typhoid fever in Horan, Syria where my grandfather was posted. Ishaq did not go to university and did administrative work in law offices and dabbled in real estate. He married Fakhriya Bakri, his first cousin but had no children.

Six Generations of the Dajani Family

Saleem (1759–1839)

Hussein, Mohammad, Hassan (1816–1890)

Arif, Ragheb, Mustafa, Adib Pasha, Ali fouz (1841–1910)

Ragheb, Abdel Ghani, Muhammad, Mahmoud (1864–1936)

Abdelkarim, Ishaq, Tayeb (1907–1985)

Mahmoud, Taher, Sidqi, Salwa, Khawla

My father, Tayeb, studied at Rashidiya College in Jerusalem, established in 1914 by the Ottoman Turkish Administration and at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, together with several of his cousins. Other cousins went to study in Britain, France and Germany. This was a major departure from the religious education acquired by most of their forebears that had put them in a special place of influence as Ulama or learned men during the Ottoman administration.

when only my grandmother was at home, and going on the roof where no one could see me and shooting a clip of bullets. During this period weapons were readily available in the black market at a high price. One day I experimented with bullets by removing the head of one, stuffing match heads over the gun powder, placing the head back on, tying a long string on both sides in the form of a sling and hurling the bullet against the wall of our house. The result was an explosion. The next time I did that the bullet exploded in my hand as I was placing the head of the bullet back on top of the gunpowder. My left thumb was split open and my father took me downtown to the pharmacy of our relative and neighbor Rachid Dajani where I was treated for the wound.

The Dajani family was very prominent in the town. Opposite the pharmacy on Iskandar Awad Street, a commercial hub, Dr. Said Dajani had a medical clinic, Dr. Jawad Abu-Rabah Dajani, had a dental clinic, Rachid Dajani had a pharmacy, Aziz Dawoodi Dajani and Shafiq Dajani had law offices, and Hassan Kholki Dajani owned a textile and clothing store. The name of Hassan was mentioned to me in 1998 by a former ambassador of Israel in the United States who was a participant at a seminar on Palestine in Washington. During his presentation, I asked the ambassador to elaborate on one of the points that came up in the discussion. When he heard my name he told me that his father used to buy textiles from Hassan Kholki on credit and sell the merchandise retail in Tel Aviv. He added that his father was very happy with the arrangement and grateful for Hassan's help. A short distance from Iskandar Awad Street lay Nuzha Street where the Dajani Hospital, founded in 1933 by Dr. Fouad Dajani, was located. Dr. Fouad, who had studied in Britain, died young and a relative, Dr. Zuhdi Dajani, took over the management of the hospital. Both Fouad and Zuhdi, together with Aziz were born in Jerusalem but made Jaffa their home.

In late April 1948 when I was 14 years old, the National Committee of the city of Jaffa advised the citizens that it was no longer safe to stay. A member of the committee was Zafer Dajani, a fourth cousin of my father and a successful businessman. The skirmishes on the outskirts of the city, which lasted several months, had then become full-blown battles, with the Jewish

side having a decisive advantage because of better training, arms, and equipment. On April 9, Jewish armed militias attacked the village of Deir Yassin near Jerusalem and conducted a whole scale massacre of the villagers, including women, children and the elderly. Women were raped and bodies were looted. In all more than two hundred fifty were slaughtered. The news caused panic and a collapse of morale. In the same week Abdel-Kader al-Husseini, a popular Palestinian commander, was killed during the battle of Castal near Jerusalem, which made Palestinians feel unprotected against the Jews.⁵

Zionist leaders believed that conquering Jaffa, the cultural and commercial center of Palestine, would deal a major blow to the morale of Palestinian resistance forces, especially as Jaffa under the United Nations Partition Plan was to be part of a future Palestinian state. On April 24, 1948, my father came home late in the afternoon to tell us that Jewish fighters had encircled the city and mortars were falling on the northern part. With few arms and ammunition at our disposal, we stood no chance of protecting ourselves and we had to leave in a few hours by sea to Lebanon. This meant that only essential clothing had to be packed and taken to our fishing trawler at the harbor where the co-owner's family would be leaving at the same time. I cried and shouted, "no I am not leaving" and ran out of the house. My father ran after me and said if we were to stay the men would end up in concentration camps or be killed and the women would be raped. He then asked: Do you want your mother and sisters to be in harm's way? The question and its connotations put an end to my resistance. We left in our fishing trawler, which my father co-owned with Abu Abed Ishkuntana, in confusion, anger, and fear. We became Palestinian refugees with no valid passports, little money, and no jobs. Jaffa fell soon after following major battles where Haganah and Irgun fighters gained the upper hand. Although Jaffa surrendered without conditions and was declared an open city, the Jews did not abide by the provisions of the agreement. They plundered the city, burglarized homes and killed many civilians. Those who remained were pushed into Ajami quarter, which was encircled with wire fences.⁶ My father was right when he said at the time of our exodus that if we were to stay we would be killed or end-up

in concentration camps. At that time our beautiful cosmopolitan city (the Bride of the Sea and the City of Oranges), had a population of about 100,000, a thriving export sector, budding light industries, trading houses, sports clubs, and newspapers with wide circulation in Palestine. The Near East Arabic Broadcasting Station, which was established by the British Government, was located in Jaffa, and I remember a group of our neighborhood children rehearsing songs taught to them by Mr. Ansari, a school-teacher, for a regular program of children songs. Halim al Roumi, a famous singer who also lived in our neighborhood, recorded hit songs at the station, and well-known Egyptian religious chanters contributed to the station's programs. After the end of the British Mandate in Palestine the station moved to Cyprus.

At the time of our departure Fatima came to say goodbye. She asked my mother to take Bashira, who was about five years old, with us. My mother said by all means. Fatima left for Gaza with her husband who later fell ill and died. Fatima went to Port Said, Egypt as a refugee. There she found a job as nanny with an English family. After that she married Mahmoud Dabbik, who at the time was working for an Egyptian contractor. He happened to be a classmate in my elementary school in Jaffa. After the British withdrew from the Suez Canal area, Mahmoud and Fatima settled in Cairo, Egypt.

2

Latakia

My family sailed out in the night with little food or money, a few suitcases, two hand grenades and a pistol. We had wrapped our rifle, submachine gun and twenty bullets in rubber tubes and buried them in the backyard of the house with the hope that we would retrieve them later. So many precious things were left behind, precious in terms of sentimental rather than material value. In particular most of the family photos that my brother Mahmoud had put aside in his desk drawer, ready to take with him, were forgotten at the last minute. Luckily my mother and aunt had a few pictures in their handbags. My grandfather's collection of Arabic literature, Islamic legal books and court cases were left behind.

The fishing trawler was rather crowded with our family sharing the space with the Ishkuntana family, the co-owners of the boat. Fortunately, the sea was calm and the weather good so we managed. I could see the lights of Jaffa dying behind me, and the dreams of my youth shattered and scattered in the air. Our home and the land we loved were lost to us. We were afraid of being intercepted on the sea by the Zionist Jews but luckily we had no incidents and arrived in Tyre, Lebanon in the morning. Immigration officers were standing in the port. We presented them with the documents that had been issued by the National Committee of Jaffa, identifying us as Palestinians and requesting the authorities in the host countries to give us all possible assistance. Luckily we were admitted as temporary visitors without much delay. We took a taxi and drove to al Ghaziyah, a nearby village, where my Aunt Adiba's family had earlier rented a house from a Lebanese friend. We stayed with them until we found a place to rent. A few relatives and their families followed us to al-

3

Tripoli

On the way to Libya the family stopped in Beirut for a few days, which gave us a chance to see my Aunt Adiba and her family who had moved from Ghaziya to Beirut because of the children's education. We also visited several Dajanis who had made Beirut their temporary home. We flew out of Beirut to Benghazi in July 1953. The chartered flight that was provided for us by LATAS was a small turbo prop. The trip took about four hours and was very bumpy. My mother and sisters felt sick and could not eat any lunch on the plane.

We spent one night in Benghazi in one of the rest houses rented by LATAS and then drove to Al Marj in Jabal al-Akhdar (Green Mountain), which during the Italian colonization of Libya (1911–1945) witnessed major battles between the Libyan resistance movement, led by Omar al Mukhtar, and the Italian military forces. We drove up a winding road through scenic hills to our destination. My father whom we had not seen for a few months was waiting for us and we were happy to be together again. We stayed in his bachelor's apartment for a few days and then moved to a house that my dad rented from the municipality.

Al Marj was a small agricultural town with a few paved roads, one elementary school and one doctor from the World Health Organization. LATAS had a technical assistance station in the town to help farmers improve their production techniques. My father worked as an assistant to the American head of the station and he seemed to enjoy his job. Social life was limited. There were a few Palestinians working for the provincial government and the United Nations. My mother still had a large family to take care of with my Father, Salwa, Khawla, Bashira, and myself at home.

4

Chicago

In October 1955, I flew from Tripoli to New York with an overnight stop in Paris and a stop in Greenland. My parents, sisters, Pupa and several relatives and friends came to the airport to bid me goodbye. Fred Barber, who was my father's boss at LATAS in al-Marj, and his wife were at the airport heading for a vacation in Rome. Mrs. Barber turned to me and said that life in the United States could be hard, that she at one time had to clean floors to earn pocket money and that I should be prepared to slog it out.

From New York I took a Greyhound bus to Chicago. I was thrilled to see the skyscrapers as we left Manhattan and as we approached Chicago. I felt happy to have reached my destination but worried about making a living and getting an education with a lot of unknowns in a new environment.

My brother Mahmoud arranged for me to stay with his Palestinian friends (Fathi Said, Walid Bibi and Omar Abu Gheida) who lived in a rented apartment in the north side of the city until I found my own accommodation. Mahmoud lived in a rented room on Fremont Street near DePaul University and I found a small apartment on Webster Avenue in the same neighborhood.

I arrived in Chicago with only \$300 in my pocket, which I had saved. This sum translates into \$2,300 at current 2007 prices. My father borrowed money from a friend to pay for my air ticket. My money was barely enough to cover one semester's expense in college. Mahmoud and I went to see Father Quigley, the Dean of the College of Commerce at DePaul, to ask for a deferral of my admission by one semester in order to improve my English. He agreed. Immediately thereafter I began to look for a job. Mah-



In Chicago, 1960

During my student years in Chicago I closely followed the news of the Middle East. In 1956 Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal following the decision by the United States and the United Kingdom not to finance the construction of the Aswan Dam, as they had promised. This was a reaction to the growing ties between Egypt and the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. The United Kingdom and France, who owned the largest shares of the Suez Canal Company, allying with Israel, secretly prepared for military action to regain control of the Canal, and to depose President Nasser. On October 29, 1956, Israeli brigades invaded Egypt and British and French forces supported the invasion. However, growing opposition in the United Nations and Soviet threats to intervene put an end to the occupation. Israel had occupied Gaza during the invasion and dragged its feet from withdrawing but President Eisenhower pressured Israel to withdraw. Nasser emerged as the victor and liberator. He became the most popular nationalist figure in the Arab countries. The Arab students in Chicago, including myself, were thrilled at

5

Back to Tripoli

At the port my parents and brother Sidqi were waiting to see me after almost 6 years. It was an emotional and happy reunion. We drove in my father's old Renault and headed to the apartment. Nothing had changed. The neighbors, the grocery store, and the furniture were familiar. My sisters Khawla and Bashira were there and I was thrilled to see them. My sister Salwa was in Syria finishing secondary school. She lived with Sidqi who had moved to Damascus in 1957 to take up a teaching job at Haifa Secondary School, which was financed by UNRWA, and to continue his college education. It was lucky for Salwa and Sidqi that Uncle Ishaq and Aunt Fakhria were there to take care of them. Later, our uncle was stricken by cancer and passed away in his late fifties.

After his graduation with a Bachelor's degree in history Sidqi went to Libya to take a position as a teacher in a school near Tripoli. He brought Aunt Fakhria with him. Salwa moved in with my mother's brother Ali and his family who had earlier moved to Damascus from Egypt where they emigrated after leaving Jaffa. A year later Sidqi transferred to Teachers College in Tripoli, which cut down on the time he spent commuting to school.

Sidqi had announced he was ready for marriage and at the suggestion of mother he traveled to Beirut to visit Kamel Dajani and meet his daughter Sana. Salwa went with him. He asked for Sana's hand in marriage and it was agreed that she would follow him to Tripoli where the wedding would take place. Sidqi took an apartment near my parents' and the wedding was held in 1960 as planned. I believe Sidqi and Sana only met this one time before marriage. Nowadays there are phone calls and e-mails after the initial meeting but much the same system prevails.

On that IMF mission were other members whom I got to know well in future years, particularly Said Hitti who has become a long time friend.

Ali Attiga whose transfer to the ministry of planning had come to an end returned to the research department. I told him about having sent an application for employment to the IMF. He suggested that I send a copy of the study I did on public finance to John Gunter, the head of the Middle Eastern department, and he said he would follow it with a letter of recommendation. I was lucky that the IMF had just begun to expand its lending operations and several newly independent countries had become members. I was hired as an economist in the Bureau of Statistics. None of this would have been possible without having my Jordanian passport.

Soon after, I got married to Sheila Whitehead whom I had been dating for two years. I met my future wife Sheila in October 1962, at a party given by my friend Mufid Jabbour, who was manager of Arabia Insurance Company. The party was held at the company's citrus grove on the beach near Tripoli. There were about thirty people. Mufid's girl friend had invited several of her English friends, including Sheila.

After a hearty barbecue lunch and drinks I went to talk to Sheila who stood out as a flower with pink petals. She told me she was working as a legal secretary at American Overseas Oil Company. She had recently arrived in Tripoli and was staying with friends until the company found her an apartment. I asked her if she would like to have a stroll on the beach. We walked and talked. Sheila was born in Eltham, a suburb of London, England. Her father, Arthur Whitehead, and mother Alice Whitehead were born and raised in South East London where many of their relatives lived. Sheila's younger brother, Christopher, was still in school. Arthur held an administrative job in a large industrial company and Alice was a stay-at-home mother. After graduating from grammar school Sheila went to business school for one year. Her first job was as a secretary to a stockbroker in the City. She left after one year to take a job with an export/import company.

I told Sheila who I was and what I did and we seemed to hit it off nicely. Sheila was twenty-three years old and I was twenty-eight. After the party we drove to the Beach Club where we played a round of ping-pong.

The next day was a holiday and I told Sheila that I, my friend Usameh and his girl friend, who was visiting from the United States, were planning to go to Leptis Magna, the site of famous Roman ruins about fifty miles from Tripoli, and wondered if she would like to joins us. She said she would. We enjoyed the trip a great deal.

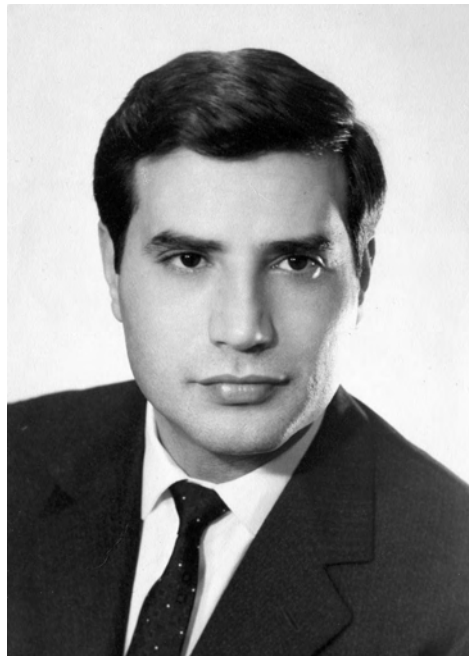


Sheila in 1962

Sheila and I began to see each other frequently. We had a group of friends with whom we mixed regularly. Usameh and Mufid and their girl friends were particularly close.

One afternoon Usameh and I were almost swallowed by the waters of the Mediterranean. As we were swimming several hundred yards away from the shore the water started to swell; the shore and everything on it were covered by as much as twelve feet of water, which reached the top of the wall that separated the club's green grounds and tennis courts from the beach. It took a while for the water to recede and we swam back to shore

unharmful. We did not lose our cool but were surprised and shaken up by what happened. The story might have been different if we had been swimming in shallow water. It was a dangerous tidal surge. The people on the outside deck of the clubhouse, Sheila among them, watched aghast and eventually retreated inside. There was nothing anyone could do and no higher place to move to. There was a sucking sound as the water pulled back, the beach with up-turned chairs and shades reappeared. Usameh and I started waving to show we were all right. The sun was shining; it was hard to believe anything had happened.



Taher in 1962

Soon after we met, Sheila came to my home for lunch. She loved my mother's cooking, particularly the stuffed grape leaves and squash, kibbeh (burghul ground to a paste and shaped into oblong balls and stuffed with spicy meat and onions), and sfeiha (dough patties topped with ground meat). As the days and months went by we fell in love. Sheila lived and

7

Monrovia

In the summer of 1970, the position of resident representative in Liberia became vacant. I knew the IMF representative who was stationed there and he filled me in during one of his visits to Washington on the work situation and living conditions in Monrovia. I asked Sheila if she would like us to live in Monrovia for a year or two. She was excited at the idea of an overseas assignment in Africa. I applied and was selected for the position. On the way to Monrovia we spent a few days in Geneva, Switzerland where Amira developed a fever. We called a doctor with the help of the hotel. The doctor examined Amira and gave us a prescription to reduce the fever and assured us it was safe to travel the next day. We left for Liberia as scheduled. We checked in at Monrovia's Ducor Intercontinental Hotel, which was built on a cliff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean on one side, the city and the river on the other.

It was August, hot, steamy with lightening and thunder and sudden massive downpours of rain. Electricity service was erratic and I remember us getting stuck in the hotel elevator one day when the power went off. It was totally, utterly black, not one glimmer of light showing. I still smoked at the time so I flicked on my lighter and somehow it was a comfort to get a glimpse of each other and the other passengers. It took the hotel about 10 minutes to get the emergency generator going by which time we were all feeling warm and sticky and, I think, somewhat scared. The relief was enormous when the power came back on.

We stayed in the hotel until my predecessor vacated the house rented by the IMF. The two-story house was on the outskirts of town close to a rocky beach and to the houses of the Egyptian ambassador and Stephen Tolbert, brother of the vice president, who later became minister of

9

Kabul

In 1976 a position for an IMF resident advisor in Afghanistan became open and I was selected to fill the position. The family and I spent two years in Kabul. For a while we lived in the Intercontinental Hotel until my predecessor left the house rented by the IMF. We enrolled Amira and Zena in the American School and they adjusted quickly and made new friends. Sheila did not seem to adjust as quickly. She felt closed in as the house had high walls around it and bare mountains in the distance with an elevation of 5,876 feet. Most women walking around wore a burqa, which covers the whole body and has a padded headpiece and a mesh screen in front of the eyes.

The house had a large front lawn and a swimming pool. It was located in an upscale neighborhood next to the American and Indonesian ambassadors' houses. The Jam Hotel was also a close neighbor. It catered to foreign tourists of the hippie type who were not well off and whose main interest was using drugs, mainly opium and heroin.

My office in Da Afghanistan Bank, the central bank, was on the second floor overlooking the town square where the ministries of finance and planning were located. A side door to my office connected to the research department. At my office door sat two elderly messengers who did little besides making tea. I worked closely with one of the deputy governors and with the staff of the research department who provided me with economic and financial data needed for analysis and for periodic reporting to the IMF. I also developed strong relationships with officials from the ministries of finance, planning and trade who were involved in policy matters and who participated in the annual consultation discussions with the IMF.

11

Palestine

My visit to Palestine in October 1994 came on the heels of major developments in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which influenced the prospects of peace between the PLO and Israel. First, there was the Intifada, an Arabic word for uprising, which began in 1987 as a result of disillusionment on the part of the younger generation of Palestinians over the lack of progress in securing self-determination. The Intifada was fueled by the rapidly expanding Jewish settlements and the expropriation of land and property by the Israeli government. The harsh response by the Israeli military forces resulted in the death of a large number of Palestinians and focused world attention to their plight.²⁴ Secondly, the Gulf War in January 1991 between the United States-led coalition and Iraq resulted in the ejection of Iraqi forces that had invaded Kuwait; Arab countries participated in the war as part of the coalition. In September 1991, the United States convened a Middle East peace conference in Madrid to resolve outstanding issues between the Arab countries and Israel.²⁵ As little progress was being achieved in bilateral discussions between the Arab and Israeli delegations, PLO and Israeli officials held secret meetings in Norway in 1993 to hammer out what became known as the Oslo Accords.

The Accords called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and affirmed the right of the Palestinians to self-government within those areas through the creation of a Palestinian authority. Palestinian rule was to last for a five-year interim period during which a permanent agreement would be negotiated and would cover major issues such as Jerusalem, refugees, Israeli settlements, security and borders.²⁶ In 1996 Palestinians held elections for president and for a legislative council. Yasser Arafat won by a large majority as president. In the

were friends of my grandmother had lived. My brother Mahmoud and I had visited them periodically. They made sesame halva for us on the little primus stove. We happily devoured the sweets and took some home. The little house had been turned into an artist studio. Really very little remained of the Jaffa I remembered.

I traveled by car a short distance south to my old neighborhood of al Ajami. I could not see our house. I went to a fish restaurant across the street from where we lived. I was told that many of the houses in the area had been torn down and the rubble pushed over the cliff into the Mediterranean Sea; a tourist area was planned to occupy the extended land overlooking the water.



The site of our destroyed house in Jaffa, 1994

The restaurant occupied the site where a four-story apartment building used to stand. All the clientele at the restaurant except for the driver and me were Israeli businessmen.