

JERUSALEM AND THE HOLY PLACES

On December 9, 1949, the United Nations General Assembly adopted for the third time a resolution recommending that Jerusalem and a number of the small towns and villages surrounding it, including Bethlehem, should be placed under international administration.

The 1947 Resolution

When the Assembly in November 1947 worked out its first checkerboard plan for the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish segments, to be incorporated respectively into Arab and Jewish states bound together in a close form of economic union, the Jerusalem area was designated as a separate political entity within the economic union, located in the heart of the largest of the Arab segments of Palestine. The city and its environs were to be administered for the United Nations by a governor responsible to the Trusteeship Council, under a special statute to be prepared by the latter. After ten years the whole scheme was to be subject to re-examination by the Trusteeship Council.

This plan was rejected by the Arabs, who desired a unitary Palestinian state. It was accepted, however, by the Jewish Agency for Palestine. The latter apparently decided that international control of Jerusalem for a ten-year period, subject to re-examination in 1958, was not too high a price to pay for the successful achievement of statehood with United Nations aid. The disturbances in Palestine, however, prevented the application of the Trusteeship Council's draft statute.

The Resolution of December 1948

A year later at Paris the Assembly for a second time voted that the Jerusalem area should be placed under effective United Nations control. This time a Palestine Conciliation Commission rather than the Trusteeship Council was instructed to prepare detailed proposals for a permanent international regime for Jerusalem. The area was to be accorded special and separate treatment from the rest of Palestine, under a plan providing the maximum local autonomy for distinctive groups consistent with Jerusalem's special international status.

As in 1947, the Arabs were still opposed to the creation in Palestine of anything but a single state, including Jerusalem. The Jewish attitude had changed, as a result of recent events in Palestine. The closing weeks of the British occupation of Jerusalem had been marked by almost continuous Arab and Jewish violence. On the withdrawal of British forces both Arabs and Jews sought to take over the city. The Arabs were able to establish control of the old walled city on the east, from which the Jewish residents were finally evacuated by agreement. The Jews took possession of the more extensive residential quarters of the new city on the west, from which the Arab inhabitants had been driven, and established a corridor from the coastal plain through Arab territory to the new city. The Arabs, however, continued to hold the small towns and villages north, east and south of Jerusalem. On November 30, 1948, commanders of Arab and Israeli forces in Jerusalem agreed on a line defining the limits of their respective jurisdiction. Meanwhile the representatives of Israel at the Paris meeting of the Assembly argued that they could no longer