

Bridges and Gates

LIVING TOGETHER SEPARATELY: ARABS AND JEWS IN CONTEMPORARY JERUSALEM. By MICHAEL ROMANN and ALEX WEINGROD. Princeton University Press. 258 pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by DANIEL PIPES

IN *Jerusalem: City of Mirrors*, Amos Elon observes that Jerusalem "has never been 'one' or 'united,' never a 'mosaic,' as its well-wishers hoped, but a collection of alienated islands" of Jews, Muslim Arabs, Circassians, Armenians, and others. Michael Romann and Alex Weingrod, two other long-time residents of the holy city, argue in this fascinating book that nowadays there are just two islands: Arab and Jewish. The many other ways to categorize Jerusalem's population (for example, Muslim and Christian Arab, pious and secular Jews) pale in significance. The authors count no fewer than four lines—language, religion, national affiliation, ethnic-group membership—dividing Arabs and Jews. Add to this brew a clash of aspirations, and the result is a "tight, almost impermeable" ethnic boundary.

And they do mean impermeable. There are Jewish blood banks and Arab ones, Jewish and Arab electricity companies, Jewish and Arab brands of cigarettes, and two kinds of telephone books. Likewise, hotels, movie houses, schools, and buses all come in two forms, as do

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social services and most government offices.

The ethnicity of a product or institution can be defined in many ways. The identity of a store is established by its location (Arabs do not buy land or open businesses in the Jewish areas, and vice versa), the provenance of its goods, the alphabet of its signs, the religion and languages of its proprietor, its days of rest. There is no room for ambiguity. Segregation prevails even at the few institutions used by both groups. Take the Hadassah Medical Center: when heart-transplant operations began in 1987, the hospital's director reportedly assured the public that Jewish hearts would not be placed in Arab bodies, or the reverse.

THEN there is the double-minority syndrome. Arabs feel embattled in the Jewish state and suspect Israel of seeking sovereignty and exclusive possession; *sumud* (steadfastness) is their ideology. Jews, surrounded by an often hostile world and by twenty very hostile Arab countries, are determined to establish control over the most sacred city; creating facts is the Israeli response. Not surprisingly, tensions bubble just below the surface of Arab-Jewish relations. Individuals get along when on best behavior, quashing political instincts and views. In the memorable words of an Arab furniture upholsterer: "Anyone who wants to get along here must be deaf, blind, and dumb; otherwise he'll never make it."

The upholsterer's sentiments derive from his work for Jewish customers; and, indeed, workplaces are the "most active arenas of ethnic social interaction." Economic roles have their own peculiarities. When Arabs and Jews work side by side, they adopt an approach to each other that Romann and Weingrod sum up as, "we came here to work, not to talk politics." The authors note that Jewish workers are willing to serve under Arab bosses, but only if the ultimate control of an institution (company, government office) is in Jewish hands; in other words, Jews are willing to work "for Arabs, but not under Arabs." Then there is the question of pay:

if Arab laborers demand higher wages to work in the Jewish part of town, Jewish employers demand that Arab laborers accept lower wages. Standards of living are so far apart that both sides can get what they want: Arabs earn about 40 percent more in West Jerusalem than they would in East Jerusalem, while Jewish workers receive about that much more again.

THE strength of *Living Together Separately* lies in the authors' immersion in their subject, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of their reporting, and the range of topics they cover. Dealing with sensitive, even explosive, issues, they employ restrained language and display political sensitivity.

Still, the book has defects. On occasion, it sinks into mild Palestinian propaganda. One example: before 1967, we read, "the local Palestinian residents [in Jerusalem] were opposed to Jordanian rule." The reality was far less categorical, with King Hussein of Jordan enjoying important support in the city.

More serious is the study's dated quality. The authors admit that they finished a draft of the book in 1987; here and there, evidence seeps through suggesting it was the final draft. Since they see the *intifada*, which began in that year, as fundamentally altering Arab-Jewish communal relations (as a result of it, they write, "peaceful coexistence and *sumud* were replaced by direct action, violent confrontation, and greater uncertainty"), this is a damaging lapse. Many of the patterns explained in detail turn out to be defunct. Admittedly, book publishing is a slow business, but the authors and their editors were decidedly remiss in letting *Living Together Separately* appear with this fundamental flaw. At the least, they should have presented the book as a historical inquiry covering the years 1967 to 1987.

But the most serious problem is the study's lack of context. Romann and Weingrod give the impression that the Jewish-Arab relationship in Jerusalem is a sport, something apart. They emphasize the uniqueness of post-1967 Jeru-

salem, pointing to "the multi-dimensional and nearly total scope of Jewish-Arab segregation." In one passage, they call Jerusalem an "extreme instance of polarization."

They are right, but not entirely. Jerusalem is not a freak phenomenon but an extension of the characteristic geographic and social segregation found throughout Israel. Arabs live in Jaffa and Jews in Tel Aviv; the former inhabit the ancient town of (lower) Nazareth, the latter inhabit Upper Nazareth. Where the two peoples do live more closely together (as in Haifa and Akko), they still live apart. Nor is this a recent development. Residential segregation has been in place from the time of the first modern Jewish immigration to Palestine in the mid-19th century, for Labor Zionist ideologues intent on creating a Jewish proletariat avoided Arab laborers, and Arabs had no use for Jews of any sort. By mutual accord, the Jews did not move into existing residential areas but established new settlements.

In turn, this pattern fits into something larger, an approach that extends throughout the Middle East and much of the Muslim world. Villages are invariably inhabited by a single ethnic group and towns are divided into quarters. From Morocco to Indonesia, Muslims and non-Muslims live apart. Further, the pattern of economic interaction and residential segregation (open bridges and closed gates, as it is sometimes known) is found throughout the Middle East, especially in areas subjected to the Ottoman millet system (in which sectarian communities had considerable administrative autonomy). Jerusalem may look odd from a Western perspective, especially when compared with such ethnically divided cities as Brussels, Belfast, or Montreal; but it looks perfectly normal when seen in the context of Beirut, Aleppo, or Tabriz.

The root cause for this persistent segregation has to do with the tenets of Islam. Briefly, while Islam permits most non-Muslims under Muslim rule to practice their faith in peace, it also discourages interaction between Muslims and the

adherents of other faiths. This fosters the separate residential patterns that Romann and Weingrod so capably describe for Jerusalem; it also accounts for the special cast of communal relations in such disparate places as northern Nigeria and Kashmir.

LIVING together separately has several political implications. One has to do with the overriding importance of politics. Rather naively, the Israeli victors in 1967 thought that improving the quality of life for East Jerusalem Arabs would change their political aspirations. But in Jerusalem political passions generally determine economic behavior, not the other way around. (This lesson also applies to most other confrontations in the Middle East.)

Another implication has to do with the limits of Arab-Jewish co-existence. Patterns found in Jerusalem render unlikely the possibility of any quick path to mutual understanding and friendship, because they show that time has not brought the two peoples together, improved their relations, or inspired mutual toleration. Quite the contrary, as the *intifada* suggests, mutual exposure has deepened animosities. Accordingly, plans for a bi-national or "secular democratic" state are unrealistic.

Still, all is not bleak. If Arabs and Jews are not coming together, they stay far enough apart that they can for the most part ignore each other. However ugly the *intifada*, it is based on an argument over abstract issues of sovereignty; not over matters of everyday life. To a surprising extent, Arabs and Jews can and do live side by side. Knifings at bus stops are a recent exception; for most residents of Jerusalem, avoidance and indifference characterize relations more than does active hostility.

These are alien perspectives for Westerners, especially Americans. We take pride in the way Cubans and Vietnamese melt in our pot. But Middle Easterners revel in exclusion; their approach may seem deficient both morally and politically, but it is a proven way to deal with the age-old Middle Eastern problem of keeping tolerable rela-

tions between antagonistic populations. In Jerusalem and other cities, spatial segregation is mutually voluntary for the very good reason that it works. Given the ethnic-based rage and violence in the Middle East, "tight, almost impermeable" segregation is probably about as good as it gets.