



## Cyprus

EVERYTHING POINTED TO IT—THE *Exodus* 1947 PEOPLE were to go to Cyprus; the baggage labels, the mimeographed notes the British sailors had passed around on the ship, Major Cardozo's reassurance that the families separated in the search tents would be reunited in the prison camp.

Everything pointed to it, but when the prison ships left Haifa, they disappeared. The British Army had prepared the dock in Famagusta for the ships and they did not come. Inside the camps in Cyprus, the prisoners cleared space on the floors of their tents to welcome the newcomers. Some hurried to the barbed-wire barricades and stood waiting in the heat to catch the first glimpse of the new arrivals. Maybe their relatives were among the *Exodus* people. But a day of waiting stretched to three and longer. And in London there was a total blackout of news.

I decided to fly to Cyprus. The British had consistently barred correspondents from entering the prison island. They made no difficulties for me, though I was the only correspondent attached to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine to whom they gave a visa. In two hours, I flew the two hundred miles from Lydda Airport to Cyprus. My headquarters were the Savoy Hotel in Famagusta, where Morris Laub and Joshua Leibner, the directors of the JDC, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, welcomed me.

With them, or with some British officers, I drove each day to the two camps in which the British detained the Jews, Caraolos on the edge of the tiny harbor of Famagusta and Xylotimbu, thirty miles away. The *Exodus* people were to be housed at a third campsite, just being cleared.

You had to smell Cyprus to believe it. You had to smell the latrines for twenty thousand people to believe it, and you didn't believe it. You had to smell the sweat of men and women as they cooked the food over open stoves and the sweat poured into their pots and pans; you had to smell the garbage which piled up waiting for the trucks which didn't come to believe it—and you didn't believe it. Each evening I left the prison camps and went back to the Savoy Hotel and showered for an hour, but I could never wash the smell away.

The American boys had described it well. Cyprus was a twentieth-century purgatory, a hot hell of desert sand