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Israeli Settlements in Occupied Arab Lands: Conquest to Colony

JANET ABU-LUGHOD*

The vast areas which Israel occupied in the aftermath of the war against several Arab states in June 1967 still remain almost entirely under its control. Only a tiny portion of the Golan was restored to Syria in 1973, and the partial return of the Egyptian Sinai has been dearly paid for by Egypt's capitulation to the Camp David Agreements, which have neither restored peace to the region nor brought Palestinian rights one step closer to achievement.

In fact, in the fourteen years that have elapsed since the initial conquest, Israel, in defiance of the world community, has systematically planned and operationalized a complex set of policies designed to absorb the *territory* it conquered while simultaneously expelling, subjugating or containing the Arab population which, to its unconcealed distress, it was forced to "take" along with the land. As Begin pledged openly on August 3, 1981, Israel intends to declare full sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza within five years.

The strategies Israel has employed to this end have been diverse, the variations relating to the specific exigencies and characteristics of the separate subareas rather than to fundamental differences in goals. Most of the methods it has used are not recent inventions (Adams, 1977: 32 makes a similar point); they had been developed, honed and refined over the

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preceding two decades (between 1948 and 1967) to reduce Israel's own Arab population to an internal colony (the term is from Zureik, 1979). However, there was a critical difference in the areas of post-1967 colonization. Whereas remnants of the Palestinian population (only 160,000) constituted only a small minority in the land pre-empted by Israel in 1948, the areas which Israel occupied in 1967 were exclusively and often densely inhabited by Arabs (over 1.3 million), which clearly required a new approach and more drastic mechanisms. Thus, whereas the earlier "undesired" residents were given citizenship, albeit second-class, the new populations could not be.

During the past fourteen years the Israeli goal has remained to consolidate its hold over the conquered lands and to suppress any resistance. Within this goal, the implanting of multiple centres of Jewish "settlement" has become an increasingly crucial technique in the overall strategy for converting conquest into annexation.

Needless to say, annexations, expulsions and the creation of settlements are specifically prohibited by international law. The Fourth Geneva Convention, in Article 47, proscribes the annexation of occupied territory, and the United Nations has repeatedly condemned Israel's precipitous annexation of East Jerusalem and a wide belt of surrounding suburbs, villages and towns. Article 49 of the same convention prohibits the forcible transfer or deportation of residents from an occupied area, *regardless of motive*. And yet thousands of Palestinians have been expelled (see Lesch, 1979:113-130, for a partial list of the "officially deported" ones) while many more have been, through measures to be described below, "pressured" to leave. The same Article expressly forbids the transfer by an occupying power of any of its civilian population into occupied areas. And yet, at most recent count, over 90,000 Israeli Jews have been officially "settled" within the illegally-annexed Jerusalem district, and more than 30,000 others have been "settled" in some 100 *nahals* (military forts), villages and even towns that the Israeli government has authorized, planned, financed and built in unannexed zones beyond the 1949 cease-fire line that Israelis refer to not as a border, but euphemistically as a "green line."

The purpose of the present paper is to describe the processes of post-1967 settlement in the Golan, the West Bank (including Jerusalem), and the Gaza Strip/Sinai occupied areas. To comprehend the meaning of these processes, one must do more than acknowledge the exponential rise in the number of "settlements" and "settlers." One must understand how priorities have shifted over time, how the measures undertaken evolved in adaptation to the particular characteristics of each subarea, and how settlement policies, rather than an isolated set of activities, are related both to *similar* strategies *within* Israel and to *different* activities (such as law, land and water expropriation, collective punishment and military governance) within the *occupied* areas.

To understand these connections it is necessary to conceive of “conquest to colonization” as involving an entire gamut of means, ranging from brute force and primitive might, at one extreme, to resource deprivation and economic sanctions at the other end, passing through gradations of quasi-legal to “legal” subterfuges. Throughout, it is important to bear in mind that while methods vary, the non-negotiable goals remain the same: namely, the incorporation and eventual annexation of the occupied lands.

I

The territories which most closely approximated the situation Israel enjoyed after 1948 were the Golan Heights and the valley land along the Jordan River (quite literally, the west bank of the river), since most of the inhabitants had been driven out by the war and forced to abandon farms, houses, infrastructures, possessions. It was in these districts that brute force cleared the area for “settlement,” and it was in these districts that settlements were first implanted after the hostilities. No attempt was made to conceal the strategic and military purposes of these settlements, although Israel was, as we shall see, not adverse to exploiting the prepared farmland or to appropriating whatever infrastructure existed, as a bonus.

From the Israeli point of view, the Golan was a perfect answer to its quest for “a land without the people,” even though that land lay outside Mandated Palestine. In the 1967 war, some 93 percent of the more than 100,000 residents of the conquered territory were driven out, leaving only a small Druze remnant of some 7,000 who remained huddled at the extreme north-east corner contiguous to Syria. The fertile grain fields of the Quneitra basin lay “unclaimed” and for the taking; the irrigable tropical farmland at the south-west corner, just above Lake Tiberias, was similarly available to settlers (Harris, 1980). Since there was little population to be ruled, military law sufficed for natives while Israeli law functioned for settlers. It was hardly surprising, then, that plans for the Golan should have been among the earliest, although for a long time plans far outdistanced execution.

The Allon Plan of 1967 recommended that some 20 “agricultural” villages, designed to contain some 7,000 “frontiersmen,” be established within fifteen years. A string of settlements near the Syrian “border” was clearly devised as a border “marker” and as a first line of defence. The settlements near Lake Tiberias, on the other hand, were to constitute a rearguard defence as well as an economically profitable set of investments. By 1969 plans had exploded to a more ambitious (but then unrealistic) scale which foresaw a resident population that would reach 45,000-50,000, in industrial and service towns and agricultural villages, within ten years. It should be pointed out that in 1969, when such plans were being set forth,

only 300 Jewish “settlers” had actually been implanted, scattered in 11 “settlements” that were mere military outposts.

In fact, the Allon Plan has proven to be the more realistic of the two, since at the present time the Golan contains some 28 skeletal settlements that, even with the post-1977 new town of Qatzrin under construction, contain a population barely exceeding Allon’s target. But it was set-backs and controversy that yielded what to the Israelis are considered disappointing results. The inhospitable Golan initially had to compete for scarce settlers with the economically more attractive Jordan Valley and Rafiah-Sharm al-Sheikh projects and with the crash projects in and around Arab Jerusalem. In consequence, by May 1972 there were only 600 “settlers” on the Golan, a number that increased only modestly by the time of the October 1973 war. About a third of the settlers, those in the first line of settlements, abandoned their indefensible sites on the first day of Syria’s tank thrust, while many of the remaining two-thirds, concentrated in the south, prepared to flee. It was only after the new cease-fire that settlement began in earnest.

As Allon told one interviewer in 1978 (Harris, 1980:82): “The lesson we learned from the Yom Kippur [1973] War was that every settlement should be fortified as if it were a military fortress.” In response to this view, by early 1974 a total of 18 settlements had been established containing a combined population of about 1,800 persons, a number that had risen to only 2,200 in some 20 settlements two years later. This slow progress was due more to intragovernmental controversy than to lack of intent and planning. In fact, the modest July 1973 plan for the Golan had been revised by April 1975 to one which was more comparable in scope and ambition to the Plan of 1969. The focus was on establishing proprietary rights over the central Golan which, up to then, had remained empty and been used only for grazing. The city of Qatzrin, whose site had been selected as early as 1974, was to be the key centre of a block of industrial villages between the Quneitra basin front line and the Lake Tiberias agricultural block. Obstructed temporarily by the opposition of Abraham Ofer, then Minister of Housing, construction did not begin on the proposed city until 1976 when he was overruled and a plan was devised for a town of 20,000 persons. The first settlers had begun to move into this projected centre before Begin’s government came to power in June 1977, but before that date the number of settlers on the entire Golan stood at less than 4,000.

Since the rise of Likud, however, expansions in settlements have been occurring rapidly. By the end of 1979 there were 5,500 Israelis on the Golan and one year later there were close to 7,000. But new priorities, rather than a failure of intent, have made Golan of secondary interest. It is not that Golan has been abandoned (indeed, pressure for immediate annexation has

been mounting), but merely that rapid control over the populated West Bank became imperative to forestall not only the establishment of a Palestinian state but even the modest amount of autonomy foreseen in the Camp David Agreements. Israel lacks manpower and financial resources to work maximally and simultaneously on all fronts. It eventually chose to concentrate its money and personnel in Palestine itself.

II

The relatively underpopulated zone along the Jordan Valley had been, next to the Golan, the most easily colonized of the occupied zones because it, too, had virtually been emptied during the 1967 war. Jericho, the major city near the river, had contained a stable population to which had been added large “camps” in which refugees from the 1948 war were housed. During the 1967 war most of this population crossed the river to East Jordan, many becoming refugees for the second time in their lives. In all, of the 85,000 Palestinians who had previously lived in the district, only 10,000 remained after 1967, leaving the zone apparently as available for colonization as the Golan. This turned out not to be the case, since later it was learned that some of the landed property in the district actually belonged to Palestinian Arabs living in the more populated hill regions of the West Bank. Furthermore, the residual population of the Jordan Valley could not be governed separately from the rest of the West Bank because of their common juridical status as Jordanian citizens. Since the Israelis decided to leave Jordanian law in force — although, as we shall later see, drastically “amending” it to give a quasi-legal appearance to their colonization — at least ritual attention had to be paid to the form of the conquest.

The chief similarity between the Golan and the Jordan Valley, however, was that each was deemed an essential component of Israeli military strategy. Just as the settlements in Syrian territory were basically intended as forts, so also were the first settlements in the Jordan Valley, again as part of the 1967 Allon Plan which recommended “absorption into Israel of a security zone running the length of the Jordan rift” (Harris, 1980:105). What was to have been a narrow strip only 10-15 kilometres wide along the river has, over the years, been progressively “thickened,” at first to a depth of 15-20 kilometres and then, by the August 1975 Jordan Rift Development Plan, all the way “to the very margins of Arab cultivation on the West Bank highlands” (*ibid.*: 106).

But those changes represented no departure from the initial military intent. By the end of 1971 the first ten “settlements” were in place along the first line of defence near the river. Of these, six were *nahals* (military forts), another three were defined as “civilian,” but at least one was the

suburb of Qiryat Arba, to which Jewish zealots wanting to settle in the Arab city of Hebron had been deflected in 1968. Despite the fact that settlers willing to move to the bottom lands were offered enormous economic incentives and subsidies, preferential water allotments and land that had been confiscated for their use, few Israelis chose to do so. By June 1975 there were presumably 15 settlements in the Rift, but these were populated by only 1,800 "settlers," of whom all but 620 lived in the industrial Hebron suburb of Qiryat Arba (*ibid.*:112), yielding an average of only some 30 persons per non-urban settlement.

Gradually, as Israel's policy of colonization on the West Bank became more intense, the special treatment originally accorded the Rift area vanished. Allon's plan, which foresaw annexation of the security belt but had left a corridor of transit between Jordan (East Bank) and the populated hill regions of the West Bank so that the two might later be relinked, was abandoned. Settlements in the "security belt," by then "thickened" to meet the hills, diversified and proliferated, until by June 1977 there were 25 with a combined population of well over 3,300, although still heavily concentrated around Hebron. Since the Begin government came to power, the distinction between hills and valley has virtually disappeared and the Allon Corridor has become the site of some of the more important industrial/service towns and villages planned for the West Bank.¹

Despite these transformations, the Allon line settlements are still treasured chiefly for their military value. At a 1980 lecture at Tel Aviv University, for example, Israeli Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan said:

The Jordan Valley and the Golan Heights' settlements are part of Israel's *military formation* and I regard them as regular army. The settlers are equipped with highly sophisticated weapons, they are well trained and know their role exactly should a war break out. Some of the settlements possess anti-tank rockets. (As quoted in the Israeli Press and translated in *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 83, December 1980, p. 11 of the supplement "Report on Palestinians under Israeli Rule.")

As noted earlier, however, the setting up of settlements in the valley was more complicated than in the Golan where ownership rights could be

¹"The recently established Beit Haarava is one of six settlements planned by the Likud Government in the Jericho area with the explicit purpose of 'blocking' the area and preventing an Alignment government.... According to the Allon Plan, a 12 km-wide strip called the Jericho Corridor would be free of Israeli settlements. Until 1977, when the Alignment lost power, [they]... were careful not to settle the Corridor. The creation of such a corridor was intended, firstly, to serve as a trump card in future negotiations with Jordan and, secondly, to leave Jordan a direct passage to West Bank areas due to be returned to Jordan.

"Of the six settlements projected for the Jericho Corridor, three have already been established." (See *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 83, Supplement, October 1980, p. 3.)

ignored. In the valley, therefore, Israel called into use the very techniques it had developed after 1948 to appropriate the property Palestinians had “lost” through defeat. Because these earlier precedents were utilized so directly, it is necessary to review what they were, to demonstrate the parallel. Sabri Jiryis (1976, especially chapters 4-5 on land expropriation) has lucidly summarized the “legislation” used to expropriate Palestinian landed property for Jewish use in post-1948 Israel. Most important were five early laws.

The first was the 1950 Absentee Property Law (finalizing earlier provisional regulations), which gave the government full power to confiscate the property of Palestinians or any other Arabs who either were not then present or had, at any time after the end of November 1947(!), removed themselves, even temporarily, from their properties. John Ruedy (1971:137) has pointed out that this meant that even an Arab citizen of Israel who had never left the territory but “during the fighting or at any other time had moved a few yards or a few miles was classified as an absentee.” A Custodian of Absentee Property was charged with supervising or “selling” this property to Jews.² In an early study, Peretz (1958:142) estimated that in addition to permitting the confiscation of all refugee property, the law actually resulted in the confiscation of some 40 percent of the properties held by Arab citizens of Israel. It is significant that much of the land confiscated in the Jordan Valley (as well as land in other parts of the West Bank) belonged to persons who were either temporarily or permanently absent from their residences after June 1967; this land “passed to the Israeli Military Administration in its capacity as ‘Custodian of Absentee Property’ ” (Harris, 1980:115).³

Second, there were the laws that permitted the “closing off” of privately owned land, thus prohibiting its owners from access. These had an even earlier origin in the British Emergency (Defence) Regulations of 1945 which gave the military governor power to restrict entry to areas declared “closed.” These “laws” had been effectively used by the Israelis in 1948-49 to prevent Arabs from returning to their homes and villages after the fighting. On the

² “By 1953 a ‘Development Authority,’ [specifically set up for the purpose] had purchased... 2,373,677 dunums [of land] from the Custodian” which it in turn sold to the Jewish National Fund. The latter, in turn, “leased” the property “to groups and individuals who in most cases had already been there for years. By this legal fiction the state avoided... the censure that might have accrued on direct confiscation” (Ruedy, 1971:138).

³ Property “leased from” the Custodian of Absentee Property is exempted, by Military Order 293, from the protective provisions of the Jordanian rent control law, thus denying protection to Palestinians “renting” from the Custodian who may “as is often the case, merely *hold the share of the property belonging to... a sister or brother* of the owner [occupants] of other shares in the household, who happened to be outside the West Bank at the time when the 1967 war took place.” (Quoted from Shehadeh and Kuttab, 1980:111, with emphasis added.)

West Bank, in an exact parallel, the Israeli Military Commander has fully utilized his "right" to declare vast amounts of land as "closed areas." "This means that except for those holding permits from the Commander, no one may enter or leave the area," not even its rightful owner. (See Shehadeh and Kuttab, 1980:110.)

Until 1972, the Israeli Minister of Defence was permitted to designate any portion of any area that was heavily populated by Arabs as a "security zone" in which no one was permitted to live permanently nor to build, nor even to enter. Jiryis (1976) points out that almost half of the Galilee, all of the Triangle and a buffer between Israel and the Gaza Strip were all designated as security zones. It will be recalled that the Allon Plan formally established a "security zone" in the Valley which included all but the Jericho-to-Jerusalem corridor. Within this security zone, military districts were freely declared. Gradually this system has been extended to other parts of the West Bank. Military Order No. 393 allows the military governor to prohibit building or to stop construction activities "if he believes that this is necessary for the security of the Israeli army in the area of for public order" (as cited in Shehadeh and Kuttab, 1980:109).

The significance of these last two "laws" cannot be overestimated, since customary law makes the right to use communal and/or unclearly titled land contingent upon continued usage. By prohibiting entry, the Israeli government within Israel and the Military Governor on the West Bank can force Arab farmers or herders to "abandon" usage and therefore "create" uncultivated land whose title reverts to the state.⁴ This, too, was a "legal" device well honed since Israel was first established.

Fourth, the 1949 Ordinance governing the "cultivation of waste lands" (No. 5709) gave the Minister of Agriculture power "to assume control of the land in order to ensure its cultivation" in cases where "he is not satisfied that the owner has begun, or is about to begin or will continue to cultivate the land" (Article 4, as translated by Jiryis, 1976). On the West Bank, the Military Governor exercised this power not only on lands in the Jordan Valley itself but also on "mountain lands belonging to villages situated to the west of the Rift Strip but only cultivated in years of good rainfall" (Harris, 1980:115).

The fifth Israeli precedent for seizing property was law 5710 (passed in 1949), Article 3 of which permitted the government to "order the seizure of property or the use of property as housing" whenever it deemed such orders

⁴ Islamic law, adapted to societies living in areas bordered by deserts, had always made provisions for the ownership of fringe areas which, through the application of human labour, were brought into cultivation. Customary law conferred use rights on the land to those working it.

necessary for "the protection of the country, public security, safeguarding essential supplies and services, or for *settling* immigrants, veterans or disabled soldiers" (as quoted and translated by Jiryis, 1976, emphasis added). Since the original emphasis in the Rift was on agricultural and grazing land, there was little need for a law of this kind, although it pointed the way to "amendments" to the Jordanian laws governing "expropriation" for public purposes, laws which will be more fully discussed when we examine settlement policies in the hill regions of the West Bank.

By far, however, maximum confiscation of land in the Jordan Valley (as had been the case in post-1948 Israel) came from the fiction of government succession. State lands, which under Islamic Law existed in trust for the community, were assumed to pass automatically to the State of Israel which would hold them in trust for the *Jewish* community. In the Middle East, it was only after the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 that the concept of absolute freehold tenure over land became significant, as powerful landlords registered claims over territory which, through usage, had "belonged" to those who worked it, despite the fact that it was nominally in the name of the state. Even so, by 1948 a substantial proportion of Palestine remained "state land" (Ruedy, 1971:122, 135). This was particularly true for desert, marginal and/or uncultivated lands or for lands used communally for pasture or grazing. In addition, over the centuries property, including land, had been placed in mortmain (the system of *waqf* in which the usufructs of land or buildings might be earmarked for a charitable purpose while the title remained immobilized and under central religious administration). This too was treated as "state land" and therefore "absorbed" into the Israeli state.

While the confiscation and reassignment of "state land" to Jewish settlers is inherently no more *legitimate* than any other form of expropriation, the Israelis have made much of this distinction between public and private ownership in their defensive arguments. This is especially true on the West Bank, where lands which had been under the jurisdiction of the Jordanian government were transferred directly to the Israeli military administrator (Harris, 1980:115), even though the areas were considered "occupied," rather than annexed. As will be seen in the section on more recent developments in the West Bank, the occupier is making maximum efforts to "create" as much "state land" as possible, for reasons even more important than legitimating expropriation.

III

The third portion of the occupied territories which received immediate attention by the Israelis after the 1967 war was Jerusalem, even though it afforded none of the ease of settlement of the Golan or even the Jordan

Rift. Despite the difficulties involved, it was accorded highest priority and has actually been the recipient of the lion's share of Israeli "investment" and the destination of most of the Israeli Jews "settled" in the occupied areas. This large zone includes not only the old walled city of Jerusalem but many of the suburbs, villages and farms within a large circumference.

Oddly enough, when the question of Jewish "settlements" is discussed, and especially when figures are released presenting the total number of Jewish "settlers" in the occupied areas, Jerusalem tends to be overlooked, despite the fact that at least 70 percent of all Jews who have "settled" in the occupied areas actually live in the zone illegally annexed to Israel on June 28, 1967.⁵ It is impossible to extract from Israeli statistics the exact number of Jews living in this zone, since they are enumerated in the general totals for Jerusalem; similarly, it is difficult to monitor the extent to which Arabs have been displaced from this region, since they too, although disenfranchised, are enumerated as part of the "non-Jewish" total for Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, one can estimate that somewhere in the neighbourhood of 110,000 Palestinian Arabs remain in East Jerusalem and its vicinity while there may possibly be as many as 90,000 Jewish settlers who, through incentives and other motivations, have occupied not only the cleared "Maghrabi Quarter" of the old city but virtually all of the surrounding hills as well. In 1958 the population of Israeli-held Jerusalem was 156,500, of whom only slightly over 2,000 were "non-Jews," not all of them Arab Palestinians. By 1968, the population of the combined (east and west) district had reached 275,000, of whom more than one-fourth were non-Jews, almost all of them Palestinian. This increase came overwhelmingly from the annexation of not only Arab Jerusalem but a wide hinterland around it. By the end of 1979, the total population of the district approached 400,000, of whom 203,225 were Jews, yielding a net increase over 1968 of some 84,000 (we have computed these from data presented in *Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1980*, 1981:3). Since that time the pace of expropriation and construction has accelerated dramatically.⁶

⁵ It is amazing to read the carefully researched and dispassionate study of Harris, 1980, and realize that, although his 200-page book is subtitled "Israeli Settlement in the West Bank, the Golan and Gaza-Sinai, 1967-1980," he devotes almost no direct attention to, nor does he have a separate chapter on, the "settlement" of the Jerusalem region.

⁶ According to an article published in *Zu Haderekh*, August 20 and 27 (translated and reproduced in *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, December 1980, Supplement:11-12), by the end of 1980 about 130,000 dunums of land had been expropriated in the Jerusalem-Ramallah-Bireh corridor, and close to 80,000 Jewish settlers were living in over 20 "settlements" that contained some 27,000 dwelling units. However, I doubt that this total includes Jews living in the "old" city of Jerusalem itself. More ominously, the article reports that an additional 45,000 dwelling units were already planned for construction in the same area, giving evidence of the scale intended for the immediate future.

In 1976, three different plans, all recommending further expansion of settlements in the Jerusalem region, competed for adoption.⁷ The first, set forth by the Ministry of Housing, recommended 2 to 3 new cities as well as a number of “neighbourhoods” around Jerusalem, including a town of Givon, to house some 1,200 families, etc. These satellite cities — all, it should be pointed out, quite far *beyond* even the annexed boundary of Jerusalem — were self-consciously designed as a step towards further annexation. As the architect of the Ministry of Interior commented on the plan, “there is sense and purpose in building the settlements as proposed in the plan *only* if there is an intention to *annex that area and the area between the settlements and Jerusalem* to the Israeli state” (*MERIP Reports*, August 1977:20, emphasis added). The second, presented by the Israel Land Administration, foresaw the construction of a large (25,000 to 40,000 inhabitants) city in Lower Beit Horon, with the zone between it and Jerusalem linked by a series of rural settlements some five kilometres apart, i.e., Upper Beit Horon, Givon, Nabi Samuel, and Ma’ale Abram. The third plan to “fatten” Jerusalem on the north was advanced by the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency, which recommended that four industrial villages be established at Givon. Note that *whether* or not settlements should be located to “expand” the perimeter of Jerusalem was not in question; the object of debate was only to determine the best way to do it. While none of these plans was adopted in full, subsequent developments have taken the substance if not the exact form of the plans. Maximum attention has been paid to creating satellites and distant suburbs, with the clear intent of eventually adding these outlying zones to the region “annexed” in 1967.

Thus, in March 1980, construction of another 10,000 dwellings was announced for the French Hill/Neve Yakov northern axis. To the east of Jerusalem a much more serious venture has been taking shape in the form of the Ma’ale Adumim Block which is “targeted to become a major residential and industrial complex which will complete the encirclement of Jerusalem,” and which, when completed, “will extend the municipality eastward more than eight miles towards the floor of the Jordanian Valley” (see eye-witness account of Sheila Ryan and George Cavalletto, “Israeli Settlements in West Bank and Gaza,” as reproduced in a supplement to *Palestine!*, dated September, 1980, pp. 9-17; quotation from p. 10). The satellites at Beit Horon (which it should be noted is located *north* of Ramallah) and Efrat (located to the *south* of Bethlehem) have both been receiving land allocations of hundreds and thousands of dunums, thus clearly delimiting the

⁷ This information is taken from an article by Yehiel Limor which appeared in the August 6, 1976 issue of *Maariv*, as translated by Israel Shahak and reprinted in *MERIP Reports*, August 1977:20-21.

north-south axis of the intended “thickening” (or rather elongation) of the Jerusalem district many kilometres beyond existing annexation boundaries. At Givon, west of Ramallah, an urban centre intended to accommodate 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants has already been authorized.⁸

The scheme that is evolving is clear. A crash programme has been mounted to construct a ring of major urban satellites to the north-west (Givon), north (Beit Horon), east (Ma’ale Adumim) and south (Efrat) of the Jerusalem district, but quite distant from its contiguous suburbs. Once these settlements are in place, at least provisionally, they, together with all the *intervening* land between them and Jerusalem, will be annexed to Jerusalem, and thus to Israel. Not creeping but leaping annexation is the strategy that evidently has been adopted. (See Figure 1.)

These developments in the Jerusalem area are clearly linked to a change in tactics, or rather a final resolution of the debates about strategy, *vis-à-vis* the fate of the entire West Bank. As we shall see below, the 1978 Camp David accords, in which Israel agreed to “consider” an “autonomy plan” for the West Bank and Gaza, merely intensified the urgency to “create facts” quickly to forestall any possibility of autonomy. The final decision immediately and drastically to alter the geographic and demographic character of the Occupied Area — especially of the West Bank including outlying parts of Jerusalem — was revealed in full detail in the Drobles Plan dated October 1978. We must, therefore, turn to the heart of the “settlement” strategy by looking more directly at the rest of the West Bank. Before doing this, however, we should look briefly at the settlements in the south-west — in the Gaza Strip, the so-called Rafiah Salient, and the Sinai proper, since the Camp David agreements also signalled a shift in the strategy there.

⁸ The full plan, as it is now being revealed, dates from 1979 although nuclei had already appeared. We thus have October 1979 records of Israeli cabinet decisions to allocate more land to these settlements, including 2,000 dunums to Efrat and more to Ma’ale Adumim (see *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 79, March 1980, with a Supplement for October 1979, p. 3); newspaper accounts of the inauguration of the first “urban neighborhood” at Efrat, for which 6,000 dwelling units had already been built at an investment of 26 million Israeli Pounds (see *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 82, September 1980, Supplement for August 1980, p. 11); an account of the Joint Ministerial and Jewish Agency Settlement Committee meeting of December 9, 1980, approving the establishment of the city at Givon (*Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 83, December 1980, Supplement for December 1980, p. 20). All of these were in line with the plan Ariel Sharon presented to the Cabinet at the end of 1979 which called for 15 new settlements on the West Bank during 1980 alone, as well as the establishment of the large “settlement belt” around Jerusalem, so as to “ensure the Jewish character of the capital, in the face of dense Arab construction in that area.” (Cited and quoted in a newspaper account translated into English and published in *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 79, March 1980, Supplement for November 1979, p. 6.)

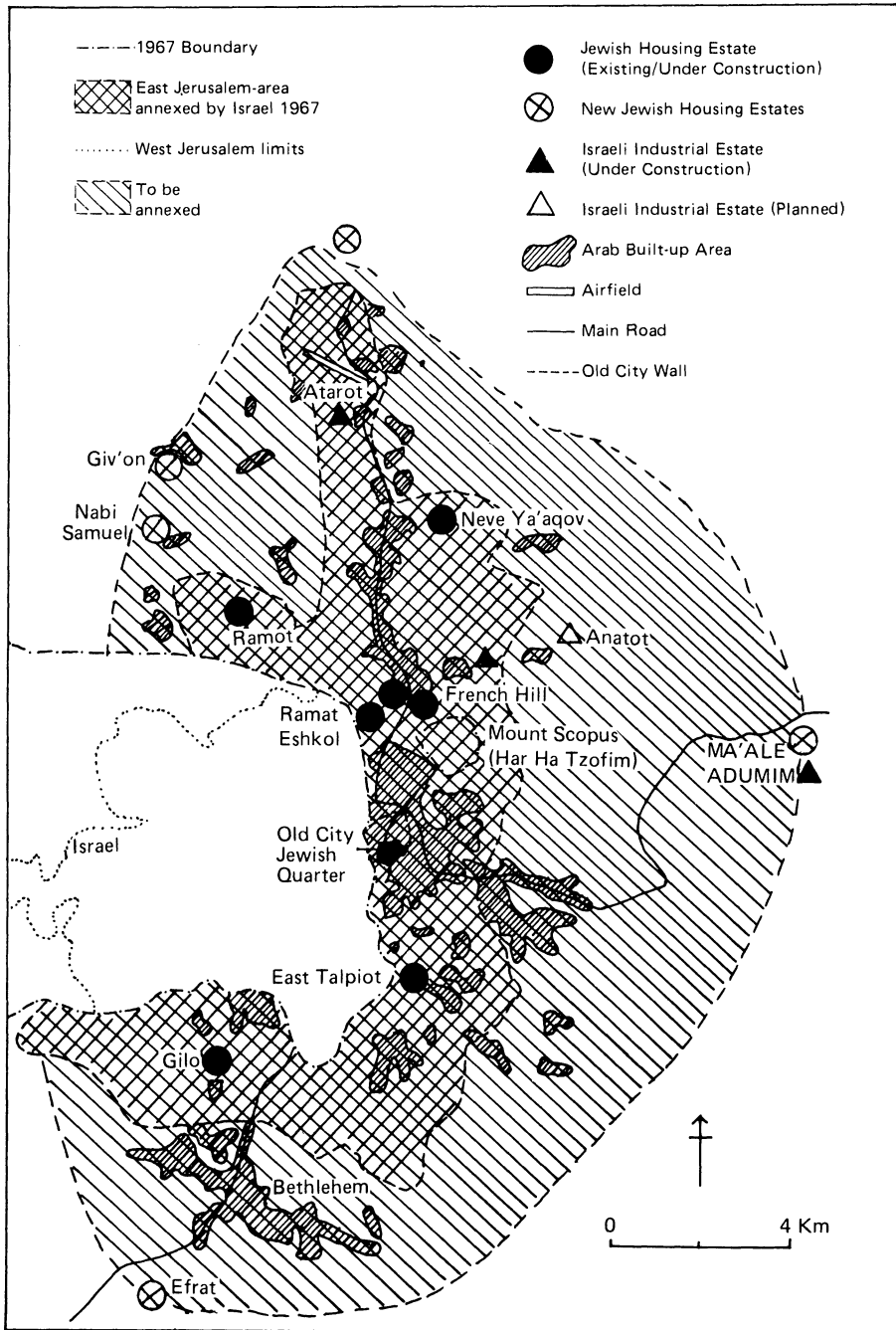


Figure 1. East Jerusalem and Environs: Existing and Proposed Israeli Construction Sites, 1967-1979 (Adapted from Harris, 1980, Figure 12).

Note: Place-name spellings here and subsequently are those used in the original documents – Ed.

IV

In 1967 Israel also expanded southward, overrunning the Gaza Strip which since 1948 had been administered by Egypt. Within a few days Israeli advanced units had reached the eastern bank of the Suez Canal deep in Egyptian territory. All of Sinai lay behind the front lines and the major Egyptian cities on the western bank of the Canal, although not occupied, suffered severe destruction and depopulation. For the next 12 years Israel continued to occupy all of this territory, but in only a few subareas were settlements implanted.

The Gaza Strip, inhabited by over 400,000 Palestinians and already badly overcrowded, was clearly not the most congenial setting for colonies. Indeed, by 1978, there were only 500 Jewish "settlers" in Gaza, all in military posts or at the edge of the Rafiah Salient at the Egyptian border. Even after some of the Sinai settlers were regrouped, their number had risen to only 1,000 (circa 1980, as per Israeli newspaper accounts reproduced in *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 82, Supplement for July 1980:3). Unlike the Golan, Gaza had not been "emptied" during the war, in part because there was no escape route through the encircling Israeli army. The modest drop of about 50,000 in Gaza's recorded population between pre-war Egyptian estimates and the post-war census conducted by the Israel Defence Forces in the fall of 1967 was due to (a) persons temporarily absent (working or in school abroad) who could not return; (b) some overestimation in the original Egyptian figure; (c) some war-time evacuations eastward towards Jordan or westward with the retreating Egyptian forces; as well as (d) some possible under-reporting in the Israeli census. Despite this decrease, the Strip remained too crowded for settlements.

After the war a military administration was set up to govern what was essentially a Bantustan or "native reserve." Movement in and out of the Strip was rigidly policed, harsh suppression of dissent has been the rule, and no effort has been made to cloak the penal colony coloration of the occupation by legalistic niceties. Collective and summary punishment, massive "preventive" detention, imprisonment, often without charge or trial, and expulsion have been the chief sanctions used to control the population.

But while governance has been military, economic relations have been civilian and profitable to Israel. On the export side, the Strip provides its chief product, oranges, and also its cheap labour. Israel controls the disposition of the citrus crop, of which about one-third is marketed in Israel, the rest exported chiefly to Jordan (*Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1979:746*, Table XXVII/28). Over the years the proportion of Gaza's employed labour force that commutes daily to fill unskilled jobs in Israel has climbed steadily, from only 10 percent in 1970 to 43 percent by 1979 (*Statistical Abstract of*

Israel, 1980:696, Table XXXII/19). From the very beginning, of those working in Israel, the largest proportion (between 40-50 percent) has been employed in construction, although a stable number (albeit declining proportion) also worked as agricultural labourers (*ibid.*). On the import side, the population has had no choice but to serve as an equally captive market for industrial and other products imported from Israel. Over 90 percent of all Gaza's imports now come from Israel, while Israel accounts for only 67 percent of the Strip's exports. This imbalance in trade yields a significant "deficit," assuring that the wages paid to Gaza Strip workers in Israel will be systematically "recycled" to the Israeli economy (*Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1980:685, Table XXVII/11*).

If the best analogy for the Gaza Strip is a Bantustan, the closest functional parallel to the Rafiah Salient is the original Allon "security belt" along the Jordan River. The Sinai strip is a narrow band, about 20-30 kilometres wide, that stretches inside Egyptian territory from the Mediterranean coast all the way to the southern tip of Sinai, paralleling both the Palestine-Egyptian frontier and the east arm of the Red Sea. Israeli settlements in this area included a handful along the Red Sea which, in 1978, "housed" only 930 settlers. Most settlements, however, were concentrated on the Mediterranean coastal plain, where they were designed to encircle Gaza from the southwest; by 1978 there were some 15 or more *nahals* and civilian units containing a resident population of some 3,500 in this area. Some 1,700 of these settlers were located within Dayan's ambitiously conceived port "city" of Yamit for which, in 1972, Israeli soldiers had driven off "some ten thousand farmers and bedouins, bulldozed or dynamited their houses, pulled down their tents, destroyed their crops, and filled their wells" (article by Israeli journalist Amnon Kapeliouk in *Le Monde*, May 15, 1975, as quoted by Adams, 1977:38).

When the Egyptian-Israeli peace talks began, the Sinai settlements were placed "on hold," since Egypt expected to regain all its lost territory at the end of a long process of piecemeal Israeli withdrawal. Some disgruntled Israeli settlers were relocated in Galilee or on the West Bank and others lost interest, once incentives were reduced. But despite these contractions, it is clear that Israel considers its presence in the Rafiah Salient absolutely essential, in order to tighten the encirclement of Gaza and to ensure that the Strip will never again have administrative or geographic links to Egypt, even after (or if) the bulk of Sinai is returned.

While the Camp David accords removed some of the motivation for Israel to colonize all but the absolutely essential ring needed to isolate Gaza, they heightened the urgency of settlement elsewhere. The discussions, with their threatening allusions to "Palestinian autonomy," created an emergency situation. Israel had to use the interim five-year period (which Egypt

anticipated would eventuate in Palestinian autonomy but which Israel even more strongly determined would lead to full Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza) to render even a partial and impotent Palestinian state absolutely impossible.

While no attempt had been made to conceal Israel's intent to absorb the remainder of Palestine, attempts were made in the western press from time to time to confuse the issue. All doubt has been recently dispelled, not only by the written pledge Begin gave to the religious parties in August 1981 (quoted p. 16), but in a statement by Ariel Sharon, director of settlement planning and now newly-appointed Minister of Defence, who said unequivocally in February 1981:

I shall not allow the establishment of a Palestinian State in Samaria, Judea [the Israeli terms for the northern and southern sections of the hill region of the West Bank] and the Gaza Strip. (Interview with Sharon conducted by David Shipler entitled "Israeli Says he is Satisfied with Settlement 'Skeleton,'" *New York Times*, February 19, 1981:4.)

In these positions, both politicians were merely confirming the statement of principles that introduced the October 1978 *Master Plan for the Development of Settlement in Judea and Samaria*, the so-called Drobles Plan prepared by the Settlement Department of the World Zionist Organization, which has become the guiding document for subsequent settlement activities. Paragraph 1 baldly states that "settlement throughout the entire land of Israel [which includes "Samaria and Judea"] is for security and by right...[and makes concrete]... our right to Eretz-Israel." Paragraph 3 foretells the strategy to be employed:

The disposition of the settlement must be carried out not only *around* the settlements of the minorities [sic], but also *in between them*, this in accordance with the settlement policy adopted in Galilee [the region within post-1948 Israel which contains the highest concentration of Palestinian Arabs] and in other parts of the country. (See the Drobles Plan, 1978, mimeo, p. 1. Italics in original.)

Given the centrality of the West Bank to Israel's current strategy for colonization, we must look in detail at this zone which contains, even without Jerusalem, over 700,000 of the million and a quarter Palestinians who live in that area which has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967.

V

The somewhat densely populated hilly sections of the West Bank had, from 1967 onward, been a tiger by the tail for the Israelis. The region was agriculturally productive, in contrast to the moonscape terrain between it and the Jordan Valley irrigated plain, was dotted with villages and a hierarchy of small towns and modest-sized cities that culminated in the

primate of Jerusalem, and it, rather than the lush Mediterranean coastal plain Israel had taken over in 1948, was, according to Jewish lore, the *real* location of the ancient and short-lived state of Israel. All these factors made it the most logical candidate for immediate annexation.

The problem was chiefly demographic. Even though population was down somewhat from the pre-June 1967 total,⁹ at the time of conquest the region still contained close to 590,000 Palestinian Arabs, not including those who lived in the annexed Jerusalem area or in the Jordan Rift. To have added this population to Israel would have been to practically *treble* the number of Arabs in the state. The major internal debate in Israel just after the war (between the “maximalists” and the “minimalists”) turned on how best to incorporate the area without annexing its inhabitants.

Over the opposition of such maximalists as Begin and even Dayan (the classification is Harris', 1980:34-35), the Allon Plan was adopted, which effectively postponed the question of West Bank [referred to as Samaria and Judea] annexation and settlement. By 1968 the only Jewish settlements beyond Jerusalem were three small ones in the Etzion Block (between Bethlehem and Hebron) and the “illegal squatters” from Gush Emunim who had pre-empted parts of Hebron (theoretically defined as Rift but in reality part of the hill zone). The total settler population numbered no more than 800. But 1970 forced the terms of the debate. In that year, the urban settlement of Qiryat Arba was given official recognition, as a technique for satisfying the Gush Emunim while drawing settlers to the outskirts, rather than the centre, of Hebron. Policy was shifting, but the exact outcome was still under debate.

Dayan was advocating more aggressive alteration in the status of the West Bank, the “mixing” of Jewish and Arab settlements, and even the application of Israeli law over the entire zone, since existing Jordanian laws were proving a stumbling block in the way of changes the Israelis wanted to introduce. Caution was recommended, however. Not only were the Jerusalem and Qiryat Arba areas being overbuilt and undersettled,¹⁰ but insufficient groundwork had been done in reducing the resident population to the state of dependency required and in creating the legal apparatus needed to assemble sites for Jewish settlements since, unlike the Golan or

⁹ According to my best estimates (Abu-Lughod, 1980), some 300,000 Palestinians crossed the Jordan River during and immediately after the 1967 war, of whom more than half were drawn from the hill regions of the West Bank.

¹⁰ Vacancy rates ran 50 percent and “settlers” had to be offered reduced rents, interest-free loans, and finally, had to be allowed to occupy the new units only a few days a week or a few months a year while still retaining their rights to their “real” homes elsewhere. These problems have persisted since, as we shall see, Israel lacks the population needed to “settle” the enormous territory it has swallowed.

even the Jordan Rift, the area was well-occupied by a population which cultivated and had rights over the land. While efforts were redoubled to “fill up” the settlements that already existed, work also intensified on the two more basic issues of economic “integration” and the creation of a legitimating legal structure. The former was to prove a long and complex task, while a decision about the latter had taken clear shape by 1970. As Shehadeh and Kuttab observe:

In 1970 Moshe Dayan proposed that a governmental committee be set up to study Jordanian laws, with a view to replacing them with Israeli laws. A month later, Dayan withdrew his suggestion. After evaluating the situation he realized that applying Israeli law over the West Bank would be tantamount to annexation.... The same advantages for Israel could be gained if Jordanian law were preserved and the Area Commander made substantial amendments to it.... The Area Commander then began to exercise more freedom in amending Jordanian law to meet Israel's needs, and the subject matter and the pace of issuing new orders underwent a basic change.

In effect, the Area Commander assumed full legislative power. Judging from the quantity of military orders already passed, numbering 854 [as of 1979], these powers have been fully exercised. (See Shehadeh and Kuttab, 1980:102-103.)

The advantages of this subterfuge have been considerable. Not only did Israel avoid premature annexation and the potential claims of the population on citizenship (which, in fact, had proven of little protection to other Palestinians before them), but it could conceal the arbitrary non-legislated changes in the “law” by hiding behind Jordanian “legitimacy” (*ibid.*, 103-104). Not until maximum harm had been done to deprive the occupants of their land, resources, economic independence and geographic contiguity would the question of annexation *and* autonomy have to be raised, but by then it would be too late to reverse the process. Israel counted on accomplishing that groundwork gradually, after it had consolidated its settlements in other subregions. But the pressures from the religious Gush Emunim, from one side, and the threatened talks about autonomy, from the other, forced the stepped-up pace evident in the post-1977 period.

Soon after the 1973 war, the Labour government drew up a Fourteen Point Document that “explicitly stated that Israel would not return to the 1967 borders and that there would be no Palestinian state on the West Bank” (Harris, 1980:126). However, for the next two years settlements to back up this claim were hard to mount, because immigration had fallen off drastically and settlers were difficult to recruit. Emphasis was therefore laid on settling the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem and tightening the bonds of dependency between the rest of the West Bank and Israel through “economic integration.” This strategy had the immediate advantage of providing Israel with labour power which was in short supply while assisting, in the long run, with “freeing up” land for eventual Israeli settlement.

The West Bank labour force, however, was neither as underemployed nor as captive as that of the Gaza Strip, which meant that both carrot and stick were needed to recruit Arab labour to Jewish projects. The carrot was clearly jobs, primarily in construction and ironically largely to assist in “creating new realities” in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Although in 1970 only 12 percent of the West Bank labour force was employed in Israel, that percentage was to increase to 22 by 1971 and 28 by 1972. The peak was reached between 1973 and 1975, when some 31 percent of all West Bank workers “commuted” to Israel for employment. Since that time, the percentage has stabilized at about 28 percent, but this masks the fact that, increasingly, those working within the West Bank itself are employed by Jewish enterprises (*Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1980:696, Table XXVII/19*). The “sticks” were of two kinds: first, the rapid rise in the cost of living, brought about through the importation of Israel’s heightening inflation, as the West Bank market was captured; and second, by the deprivation of alternative livelihoods, through confiscation of farm land and enclosure of communal pastures, and through the pre-emption of scarce water supplies, without which land is valueless.

Van Arkadie’s study for the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, *Benefits and Burdens: A Report on the West Bank and Gaza Strip Economies Since 1967*, published in 1977, focuses on the market forces that governed Israel-West Bank relations between 1967 and 1975/76. While acknowledging the peculiarities of the forced integration and the inequalities of power, which could not help but ensure that integration would most benefit Israel by providing it with a cheap source of labour and a captive market for expensive consumer goods, Van Arkadie’s analysis minimizes Jewish settlement possibilities and tends to dismiss the increasingly harsh military rule as an unpleasant but not crucial (to the economy) concomitant of occupation. Somewhat more realistic is Salim Tamari’s analysis (in Nakhleh and Zureik, 1980: especially 89-92, which depends heavily on Hilal’s 1975 study of the West Bank) which, while still arguing that economic factors have been more important than settlements in bringing about the subjugation of the West Bank, recognizes clearly the temporary and *transitional* nature of this stage of colonization.

These analyses have been rendered obsolete by more recent changes in Israeli strategy which were becoming evident during the last two years of Labour rule and have become even more marked since Likud came to power in the spring of 1977. The linkages between economic dependency, land confiscation, population “displacement,” and the implantation of tiny settlements (many of them only fortified “look-outs”), now so apparent on the West Bank, resemble patterns developed by Israel to “deal with” the major Palestinian concentration it inherited after the 1948 war in the

northern province of Galilee. It would be helpful, therefore, to look at that case in which economic "integration" was supplanted by internal colonialism and then by the system which currently serves as the acknowledged model and test case for the projected settlement of the West Bank via the Drobles/Sharon plan.

The parallels are obvious. The "Northern District" (especially the rich agricultural district of Galilee) was the only densely-occupied part of the portion of Palestine taken over by Israel in 1948 in which Jews constituted a minority.¹¹ Out of the 156,000 Palestinians remaining behind Israeli lines, close to 91,000 (or 73 percent) lived in the northern district where they constituted 63 percent of the total population. In a concerted effort to break up this concentration and reduce the Arab population to "minority" status, as much land as possible was confiscated, villages were destroyed, and Jewish "settlements" implanted. At the same time, efforts were mounted to incorporate the labour force into the Israeli economy and to gain control over the agricultural production in the region. By 1961, despite high rates of natural increase that raised the Palestinian Arab total to almost 143,000, Jewish residents had increased from only 53,000 to over 194,000, almost entirely through migration, making them a majority (of 58 percent) in the district. Since that time, however, the momentum has not been sustained, and by 1971-72 the Arab minority had crept up to 46 percent. Competition with the occupied areas for potential settlers was beginning to drain the limited pool. The "demographic nightmare" of Israeli fantasy was coming to pass; Arabs were again likely to outnumber Jews in the district.

A new plan for "Judaization" of the Galilee was therefore set forth in 1973, to guide the establishment of settlements there. Land confiscations were stepped up, on the assumption that even if there were insufficient Jews to populate the zone, control over the inevitable future majority could be better exercised if the Arab population were compressed into smaller and smaller "pockets," interspersed by surveillance fort-towns, and if the livelihoods of Arab residents could be made increasingly dependent upon Jewish enterprises.

Both systems had been tried before. As Zureik notes, by the mid-sixties many of the Jewish "settlers" who had been assigned confiscated agricultural lands in the Galilee

were gravitating to urban centres seeking more profitable employment.... [These] settlers were leasing land to Arabs. The arrangement was that Palestinian peasants

¹¹ See *Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1980:34-35*, Tables II/3,4 for population information. See also Zureik, 1979:108-111. The sparsely-populated Negev was the other district which in 1948 had an Arab majority, but this population, being chiefly nomadic, was more easily dislodged and "relocated."

would cultivate the land (which originally might have belonged to them, but was later confiscated by the authorities) in return for a payment of a portion of the crop's yield....The situation as a whole obliged the authorities to pass in 1967 the Agricultural Settlement Act to avert the danger of Palestinian Arab repossession of their land. (Zureik, 1979:116)

The situation was summed up by Israeli critic Uri Avnery, in his discussion of Jewish effendis and Arab cultivators: "land was confiscated from the Arabs and handed over through favouritism to Jews who then leased it back to the Arabs who have thus become its cultivators" (as cited in Zureik, p. 118). Despite laws to the contrary, the system continued, reducing Arab farmers to share-croppers. But not all of the Galilee's labour force could be thus accommodated. Instead, many, once they had been deprived of land and water rights, had to enter the urban labour force, working in Jewish factories, as domestic and other servants, and in construction. By the 1970's less than one in five Arabs in Israel was engaged in farming, in contrast to close to 60 percent in 1948.

But by the mid-1970's it was clear that mere economic dependence was insufficient to assure docility in Israel's increasingly vocal Palestinian Arab minority. The growing population of the Galilee would have to be disengaged completely from the land, and their geographic concentrations "broken up" and contained. In October 1975, a publication by the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture spelled out the "dilemma" and signalled the creation of yet another plan to deal with the Galilee:

[The] special problem of the Galilee is that the Jewish population is out-numbered by the non-Jewish [sic] population.... It is necessary to change the existing situation regarding the demographic ratio... by means of a long-term development plan.... Since the fundamental task of... making the Galilee into a region with a Jewish majority cannot apparently be implemented in the immediate future, the plan was devised to comprise of an early part extending to 1980 and a later stage from 1980 to 1990. (As quoted in English translation in "The Land Question in Israel," *MERIP Reports*, No. 47, p. 4.)

Later events revealed the nature of this new plan. First, extensive additional areas of land to be confiscated, "in and between" existing Arab settlements, even if sufficient Jewish "settlers" could not be found to take over cultivation. Such a process would force Arabs to "deconcentrate." And second, Jewish "settlements," even if they consisted of only single "look-out" towers that permitted a few armed Israelis to prevent Arabs from entering or farming the confiscated and enclosed land, were to be implanted in the midst of Arab areas, thus fragmenting geographic contiguity and, hopefully therefore, preventing political organization.

In February 1976 the Israeli cabinet decided to confiscate thousands of areas of Arab-owned land in the Galilee (as well as in the Negev). It was this new campaign to break the backs of the Arabs of Galilee that led directly to

the Palestinian protest march on March 30, 1976, referred to as “Land Day.” Since that time, despite growing bitterness and mounting protests, confiscations have continued and “look-outs” (called settlements) have been systematically sprinkled between Arab villages. The rise to power of Likud marked an intensification of this process. As Ariel Sharon, then Minister of Agriculture under the Begin government, said in June 1979, “We are going to spray the Galilee with Jews” (in an exchange with a correspondent from *Maariv*, reported by Shoukri Abed, whose interview appears in *MERIP Reports*, No. 83 (1979), p. 24).¹²

The parallels between Galilee and the West Bank are of more than passing significance. Too often, the “Jewish Settlements in the Occupied Areas” are treated as something new and different, rather than as mere extensions (with even fewer inhibitions) into new areas of the methods and techniques that have been utilized within Arab sections of Israel from the establishment of the state in 1948 up to the present. Nor is the “transfer” simply one way. While originally it was methods honed in Galilee that were applied to the occupied areas, it now appears that some of the methods being refined in the West Bank are being reimported for use inside Israel. Present actions in the Galilee are guided by the theory made explicit in the Drobles Plan for the West Bank.

Figure 2 shows the spatial organization of this plan which, since 1978, has guided the implantation of Jewish “settlements” throughout the West Bank. It is in striking contrast to the more restrained Allon Plan of 1967 (reproduced as Figure 3), although it is clearly related to the sites settled by the Gush Emunim between 1975 and June 1979 (as shown in Figure 4). By 1978, so few Jewish settlers had been relocated to the West Bank, outside the Jordan Valley and the annexed portion of East Jerusalem and environs, that one could easily have been misled into dismissing the plan as sheer megalomania — “demographic lunacy,” as Harris calls it (see his graphic presentation of the situation as of 1978, reproduced as Figure 5). Given the persistent shortage of settlers and the astronomical expenditures required to install each additional person — estimated at \$20,000 per settler in the Drobles Plan of 1978 and undoubtedly higher now with inflation — it might seem hard to take the plan seriously. And yet, within the past four years the number of Jews living on the West Bank (outside annexed Jerusalem) has apparently increased from about 3,200 to 20,000 or 25,000, and the number of “settlements” has risen exponentially from perhaps 24, most of them in

¹² Abed, a Christian Palestinian from the village of Mi'ilya which was being decimated by land confiscation at the time, noted ironically that the phrase “to spray” implied that there was some sort of pestilence in Galilee, and acknowledged that “we are that pestilence.”

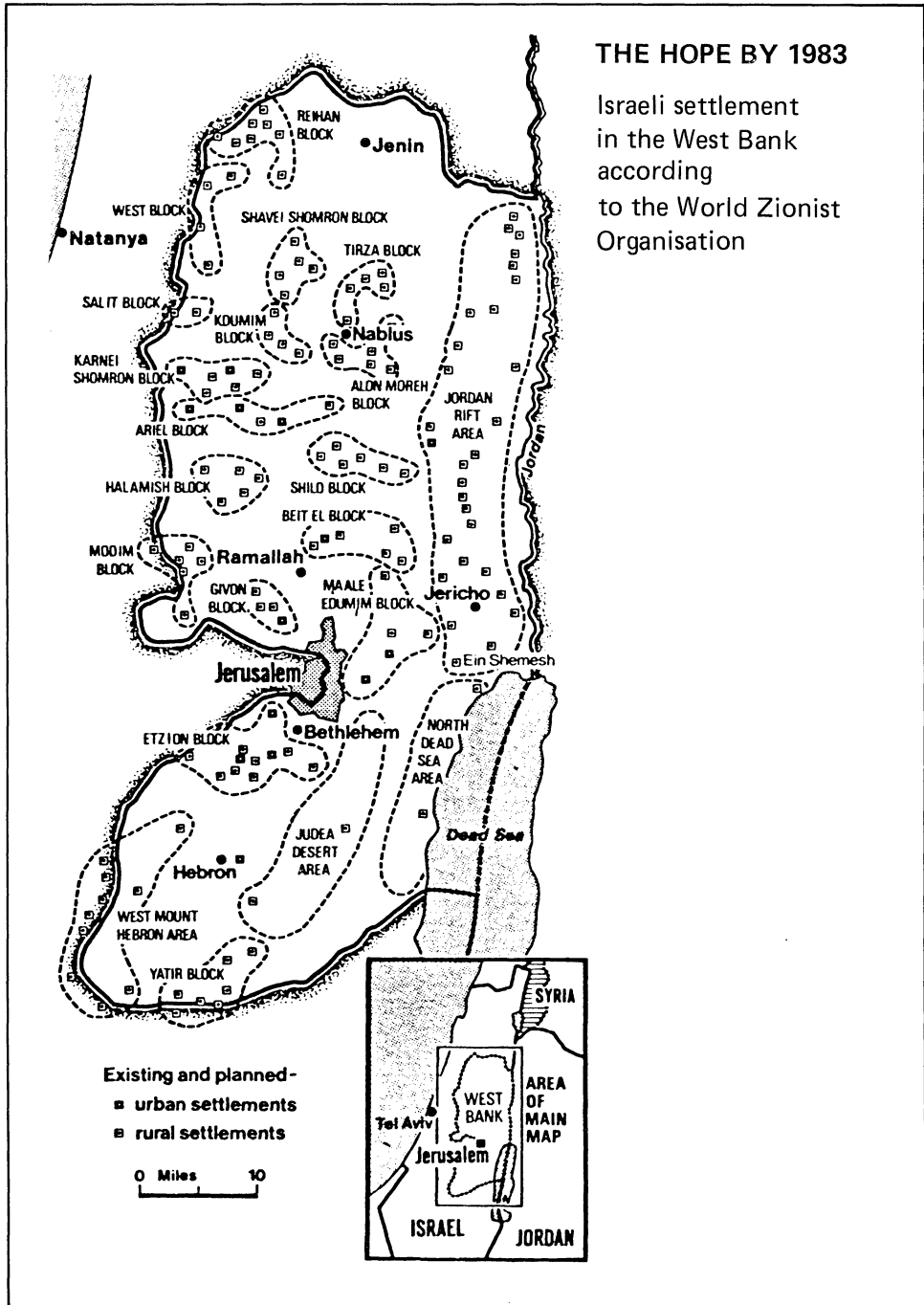


Figure 2. Drobles Plan for 1979-1983 (dated 1978).

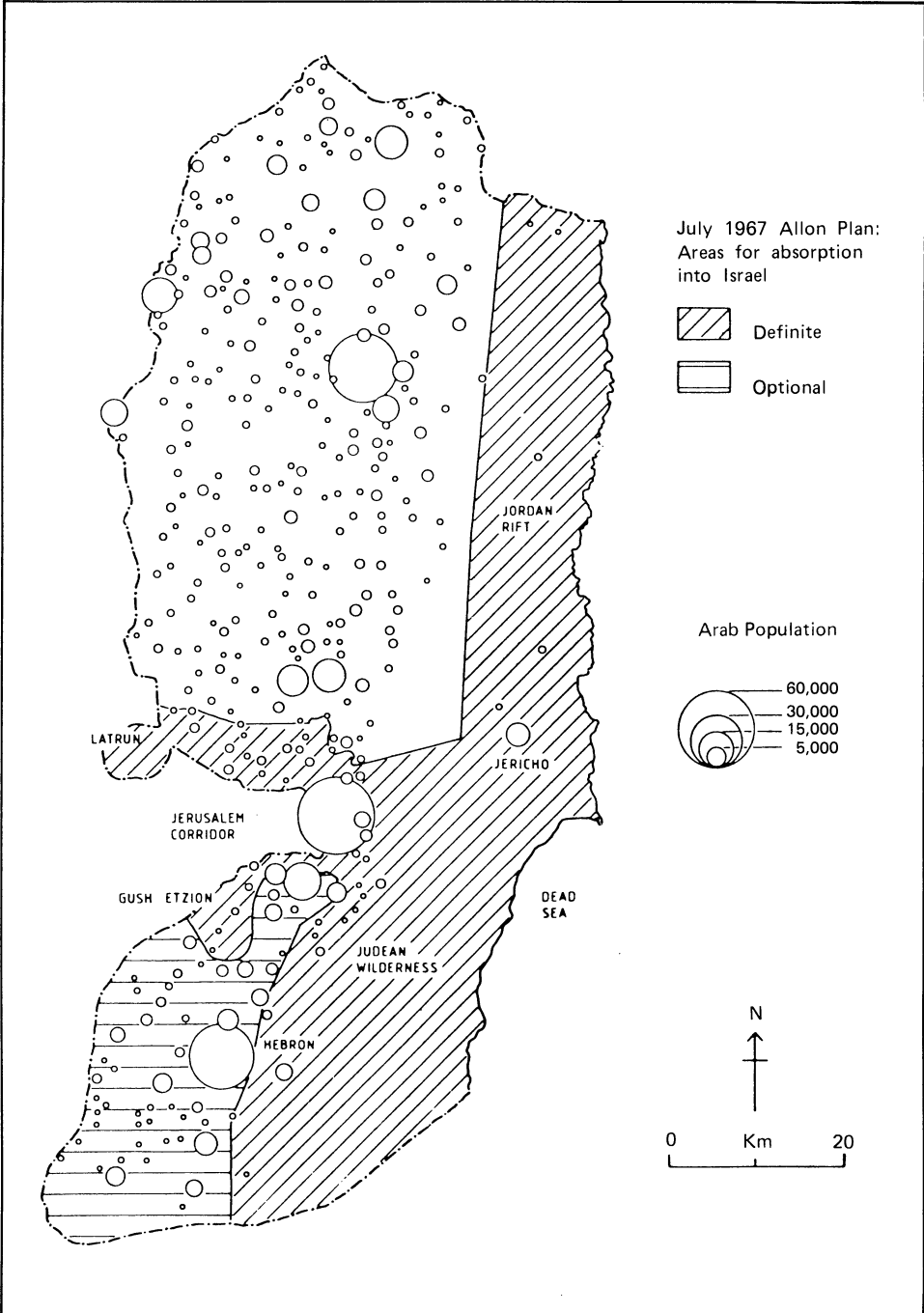


Figure 3. July 1967 Allon Plan (from Harris, 1980:39).

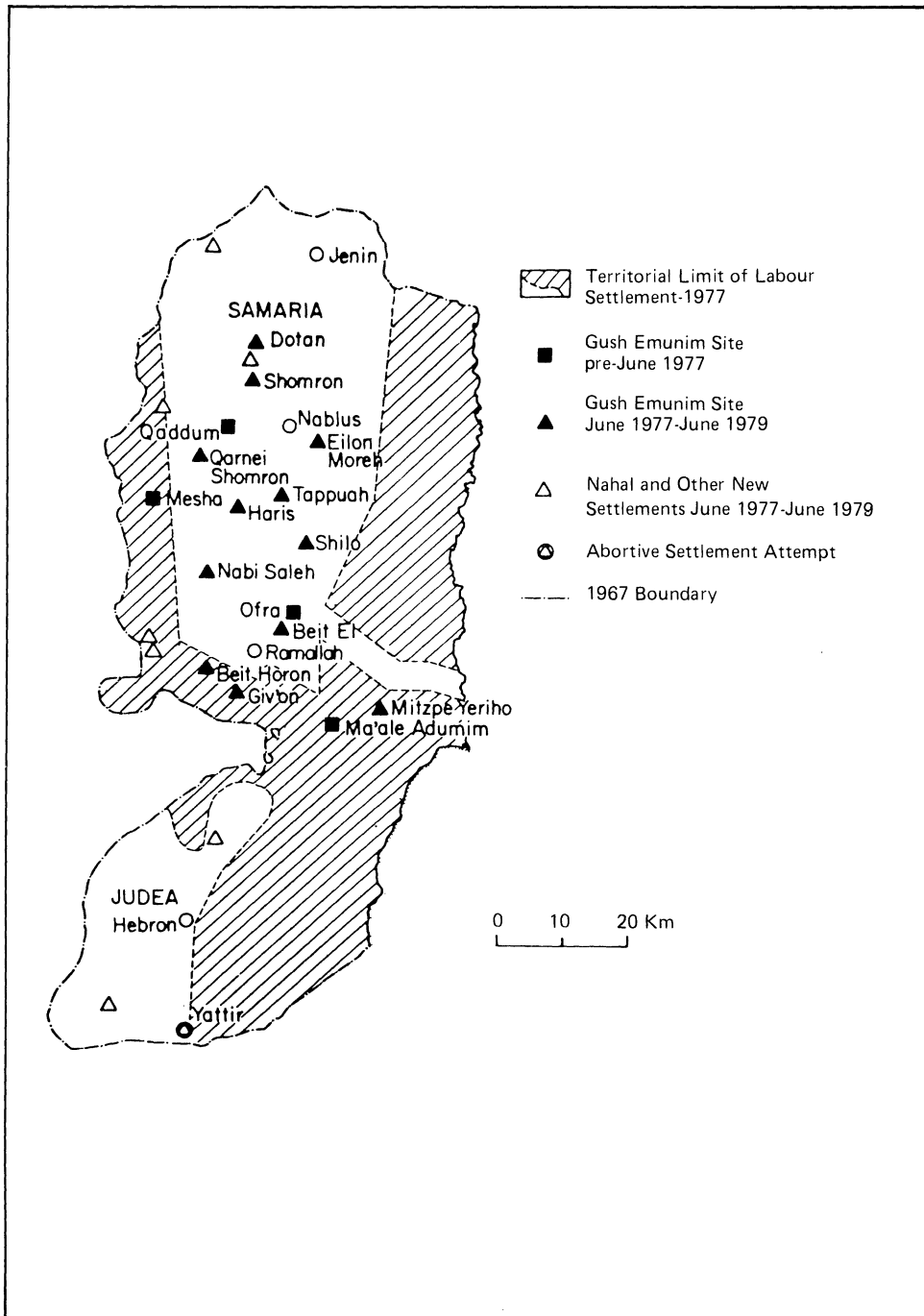


Figure 4. Gush Emunim Settlement Foundations on the West Bank, 1975-1979 (from Harris, 1980:150).

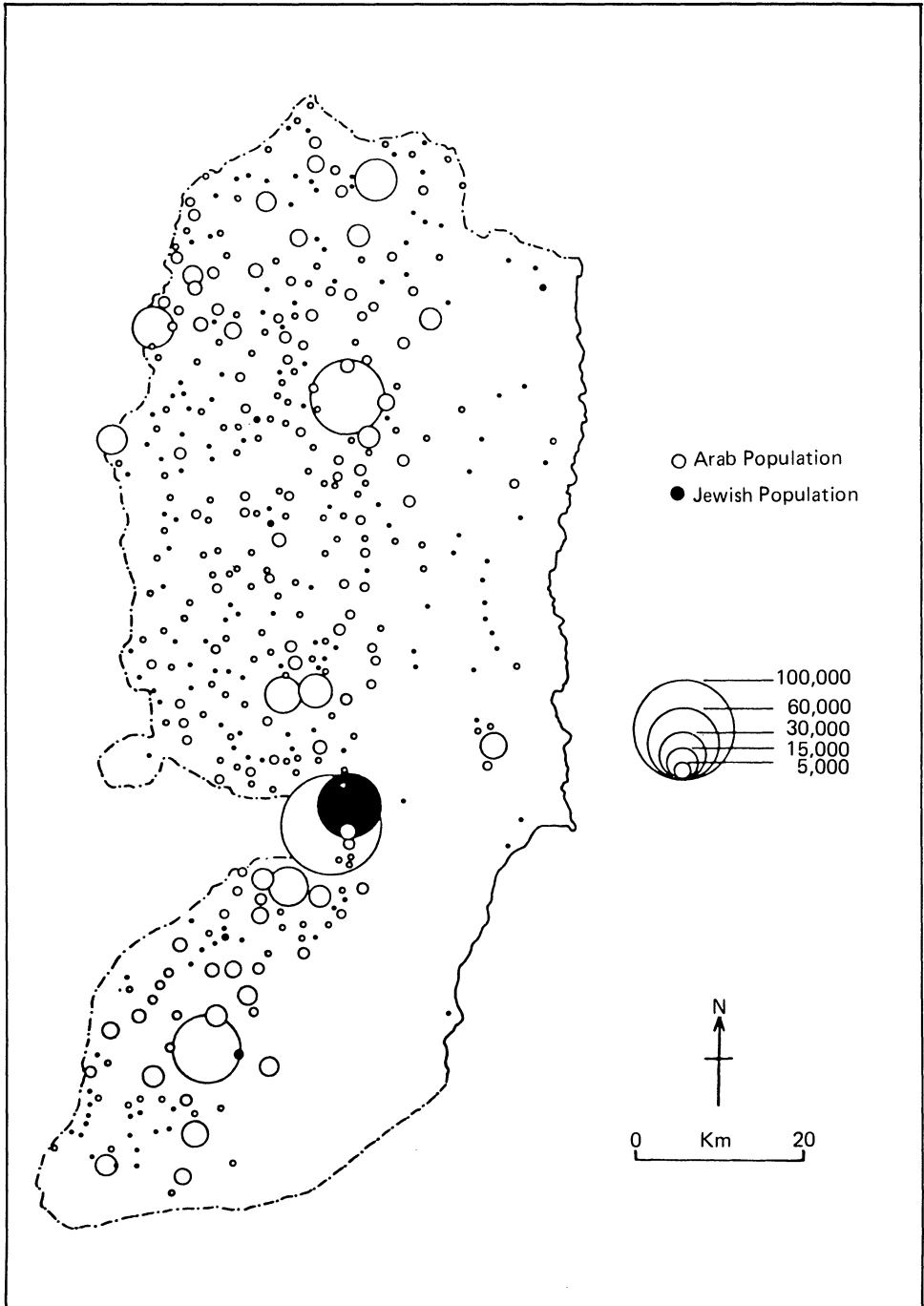


Figure 5. Arab and Jewish Populations on the West Bank, 1978.

N.B. Jewish settlement sizes slightly exaggerated for visual purposes. (Harris, 1980:144.)

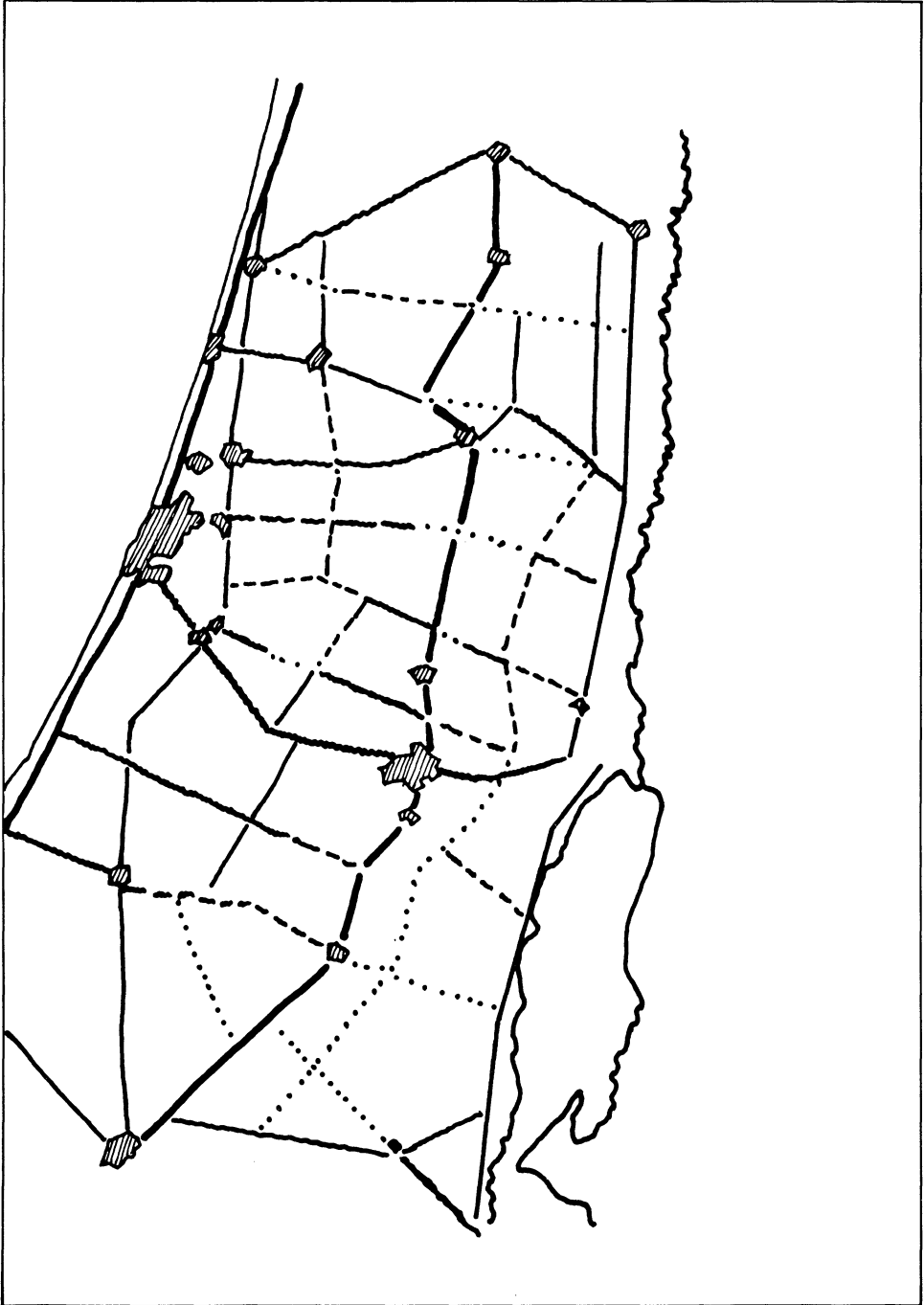


Figure 6. Gush Emunim "Peace Plan," 1976.

the Jordan Valley “security belt,” to 85, most of them in the populated hill areas.¹³

While current claims are undoubtedly exaggerated for political purposes,¹⁴ only wilful self-deception could conceal the fact that, especially within the past two years, the entire government apparatus of Israel and virtually unlimited funds have been thrown behind a crash programme on the West Bank. While this programme obviously cannot overcome the basic fact of an Arab majority, it can go a long way, as in the Galilee, to fragment, control and eventually drive out the Palestinian residents.

Certainly, the timing of the crash programme bears out Harris’ contention that June 1979 marked the “ending of timidity” in Israeli settlement policy on the West Bank (p. 115), or rather the full disclosure of Sharon’s hand. As Harris quite perceptively concludes (*ibid.*, italics added):

The new settlement framework had major implications for Samaria’s Palestinian population. In the longterm the Arab community would be cut into isolated blocks, separated from one another by the Sharon lines [major highways connecting the settlements], from Judea by a Jewish outer ring around Jerusalem and from the outside by the pre-existing Jordan Rift. *On a West Bank segmented in this fashion it would be difficult to imagine any genuine self-government beyond the municipal level as a practical possibility.*

¹³ The figures in the text come from Sharon’s *New York Times* interview of February 19, 1981. As recently as early 1976, according to Yekiel Admoni, then Director-General of the Zionist Organization’s Settlement Division, there were only 17 settlements in the Jordan Valley, of which 13 were permanent, plus another 3 urban settlements (Etzion Block) and 2 “footholds” in “Judea-Samaria,” i.e., the West Bank hill region (see *MERIP Reports*, No. 59, 1977, “Documents: Israeli Settlement Policy,” as translated from Hebrew:18-23, but especially p. 19). According to this same report by Admoni, some 2.6 billion Israeli Pounds (approximately 350 million US dollars) had been spent on all settlements “in the territories” (including Gaza) between 1967 and 1976. This was less than the amount earmarked for settlement expenditure in fiscal 1980 alone (*Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 79, Supplement for December, 1979:11). By the end of 1979, however, there were at least 7,800 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, of whom about half were in the Jordan Valley, the other half in the “Judea-Samaria” hill region. After that, the number of settlers spurted to 10,000 in 44 settlements by December 1979, to over 17,000 in 68 settlements by November 1980, to 20,000 by February 1981 and, by June 1981, the goal of 25,000 settlers in 85 settlements on the West Bank had been reached, according to available Israeli census and newspaper reports.

¹⁴ There is no way to verify the exact number of settlements, because they are, for the most part, tiny and “grouped” into so-called “blocs” divided or collapsed as suits the discussion. Furthermore, Jerusalem hinterlands are sometimes included, sometimes forgotten. Nor is there any way to verify the exact number of settlers, because recently the government of Israel has begun to present its targets and totals in terms of “x number of families,” without specifying average family size. When government officials report the number of settlers, they tend to multiply the number of families by a high figure of 4-5; and yet, observers report seeing only young single males in many of the settlements. The Israeli census now enumerates Jewish settlers in the occupied territories separately. These totals fall far short of official pronouncements, in part because some of the so-called settlers have more permanent abodes within Israel and are presumably enumerated at their regular place of residence.

One must see the new policy as *chiefly* directed against any possible "autonomy." John Ruedy, in his discussion of Zionist land strategies even before the state was established, points out that one of the perennial objects of land acquisition has been "for political purposes in order to confront the great powers and international organizations with established Jewish presence in areas susceptible to loss in possible negotiations" (1971:129).

Therefore, this policy also gave high priority to the land ownership question. Because the areas to be "settled" were located in the midst of existing Arab villages and their surrounding farm lands, Jewish settlements could not be implanted without seizing Arab land. Thus, along with the physical plan for settlements went a legal plan whose goal was to maximize the amount of land that could be defined as "state land" and be sequestered. This, too, was extremely relevant to the issue of autonomy. The Drobles Plan (paragraph 4) boasted that "*new settlements will be established only on State-owned land, and not on private Arab-owned land which is duly registered.*"¹⁵ The emphasis on state land was more than a legal nicety. The true function of the heightened campaign to convert as much privately-owned land on the West Bank to state ownership was revealed by Ariel Sharon himself, in an interview published in the *New York Times* on February 19, 1981. In it, Sharon baldly stated:

Israel has proposed that land [in the West Bank and Gaza] be placed in three categories: privately-owned, which would be under the local Palestinian authority; publicly-owned, without a usage designation, to be administered jointly by Israel and the Palestinians; and *state-owned for military or settlement purposes, whose disposition would be exclusively in Israeli hands.* (Emphasis added.)

From this it is clear that, even if "autonomy" were to be granted to the Palestinians, they would be allowed to exercise highly circumscribed power *only* in the limited plots which Israeli administrators had determined *really* belonged to them! Land belonging to the "state" was to be Israeli ruled and, since the Israeli government had authorized Jews to purchase property in the occupied territories from September 1979 on, land purchased by Jews was also to be Israeli ruled. Here indeed was a peculiar plan.

After the 1973 war something termed a "functional division" of authority over the West Bank had been set forth, suggesting that "Israel would retain the *geography* of the 'administered territories,' even if it gave back to Jordan the 'administrative role' over Arab communities" (Tamari, 1980:86).

¹⁵ October 1978 English translation, mimeo., of the *Master Plan for the Development of Settlement in Judea and Samaria*. It is significant that in the original version, underlining emphasizes the first phrase, namely, that settlements will be restricted to state land. I have added the second set of italics, to call the readers' attention to the fact that private land was to be defined in extremely stringent terms as being registered in a manner satisfactory to the military commander.

Now there was to be further “functional division,” with the geography being retained, and the putative “administrative role” given back to the Palestinians — but *only where they could prove they owned the land* on which they lived by showing titles that the Israelis accepted as valid.

Once we understand how crucial land ownership redefinition has become and how settlements are to be used to justify Israeli rule, it alters our view of the Israeli settlements. *The success or failure of the present programmes of settlement are not to be judged in terms of their demographic representation.* It is quite true that, if all Jews in Israel were scattered proportionately throughout the territory of Mandate Palestine, they would now constitute only a bare majority of 60 percent of the total resident population; and that, given the higher rates of natural increase among Arabs, this would soon yield an Arab majority (the old Zionist “nightmare scenario”). But this is *not* the issue. The intent behind implanting Jewish settlements on the West Bank (outside Jerusalem) is not to outnumber the Palestinians. It is to take the *land*, while crowding, isolating, and eventually forcing out its people, whom it never sought to add to the state. The mechanisms for doing this have been both legal and economic.

The “legal mechanisms” are designed to place as much land in state ownership as quickly as possible, for the political reasons outlined above. In an earlier section we showed how land clearly in the “state domain” was immediately transferred to Israeli state ownership, on the grounds that Israel was the “successor state” to Jordan. The only problem was that such lands were located chiefly in uncultivated parts of the Jordan Valley — which meant that they were concentrated on relatively undesirable terrain and, given the decision to “tackle” the populated sections of the West Bank, were in the *wrong places*. The new problem was how to “create” more state land and in the *right* location. It is here that the amendments, to Jordanian law, alluded to earlier, have become indispensable.

One of the earlier to be “amended” was Jordanian Law No. 2 of 1953, dealing with “Expropriation of Land for Public Purposes.” Like similar legislation in many countries, this law permitted an official authority or corporate body requiring land for a public purpose (for example, a school, a public housing project, a reservoir, etc.,) to expropriate the site, after first publishing its request to the Council of Ministers in the *Official Gazette* and waiting 15 days for objections to be registered. If no objections were raised, application could be made to the Council of Ministers which, upon approval, had to be ratified by the King and again published in the *Official Gazette*. Finally, after all approvals had been obtained, the official body had to provide the Land Registrar with a complete list of all persons with ownership rights, and compensations had to be agreed upon. Appeal to the courts was possible if an owner disagreed with the compensation offered.

This law was amended by Military Orders that (a) transferred all powers and privileges for expropriation formerly vested in the Jordanian government to a military authority appointed by the area commander; (b) exempted all expropriations undertaken by this military authority from requirements to publish intent, gain approval or submit pertinent documents to the Land Registrar; and (c) transferred all rights of appeal by owners, either over the confiscation itself or the amount of compensation to be paid, from the governing court to an "Objections Committee" (created by Military Order No. 172) which was composed exclusively of Israeli military officers. Later, another amendment to this "law" was added, giving the area commander the "right" to use force to evacuate an owner who refused to leave and to impose a summary punishment of five years in prison and/or an unspecified fine. (This section has been abstracted from Shehadeh and Kuttab, 1980:101-108, 31.) If one adds to this law the fact that, by another Military Order, the "taking of land for Jewish settlements" had been defined as a "public purpose," one can see that, in theory at least, *no privately-owned Palestinian land is protected* from the expropriation powers of the military area commander. However, appeals were made by Arab communities to the Israeli Supreme Court which, at least in the beginning, sometimes ruled to override the most obvious exercises of arbitrary power by the military commander. More recently, however, these appeals have been by-passed by a different approach to expropriation which has been available since 1979 (to be discussed below).

A second important mechanism for "creating" state land is the simple device of announcing that a specific parcel of land is *already* in state ownership, thereby allowing the military authorities to designate it for construction of a settlement. The representative of the military commander notifies the *Mukhtar* of the concerned village of this "fact," and asks him to find out whether any individual in his village *claims* to own the land. As Shehadeh and Kuttab (1980:108) point out:

In this way the burden is then placed on the owners to prove their ownership, and this they are obliged to do before the Objections Committee.... The Objections Committee [all military officers, it will be recalled], which has little or no knowledge of the prevailing land law and the law relating to the accepted methods of proving title to land, usually rejects this evidence and decides in favour of expropriating the land. *This decision is not subject to any right of appeal.* (Italics added.)

It was a short step from this system to the variation suddenly "discovered" at the beginning of 1980 — a variation which an Israeli critic (Dani [Danny] Rubinstein, in an article that appeared in *Davar*, March 20, 1981,*

* See also *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. X, No. 4 (Summer 1981), pp. 136-39 — *Ed.*

translated by Israel Shahak) points out could have avoided, "had they discovered this system earlier, all the scandals in the Supreme Court in the cases of Bet El, Nabi Saleh, Alon Moreh," etc. According to this account, when the Gush Emunim¹⁶ were trying to establish the settlement of Alon Moreh, just outside Nablus, they discovered what "was already known," namely, that only a small percentage of the land on the West Bank had been fully surveyed and titles to clear ownership established and "duly registered." "Concerning the rest, there are various claims, estimations and registrations but no clear and precise arrangement, stating which land belongs to whom," since most family and clan lands have never been subdivided:

In short, most of the West Bank lands are not arranged and divided between the various owners according to plots. Some of the lands are cultivated and some have buildings on them, so that the owners can prove ownership relatively easily. But much of the "unorganized" [into lots] land is... not suitable for cultivation and only a bit of it is cultivated, and not regularly. Some of it serves as pasture land or has small islands of olive trees, etc.

Although the British government originally tried to organize a modern cadastral survey and registration system and the Jordanian government continued with these efforts, in fact, most rights over land are determined by earlier Islamic codes and through customary usage, rather than through a Torrens-type registration system.

Taking advantage of this situation, Decree No. 59 of the military regime of the "Judea-Samaria" region was issued. It stated that *land with "no ownership claims" is to be considered state land*. By "no ownership claim" was meant any land for which a [Torrens-type] registration could not be produced, showing that the land had been surveyed, subdivided into separate plots, and the plots "properly registered." Rubenstein notes that, since this order has been in effect, "there is hardly any problem in seizing lands in the West Bank for settlements."

¹⁶ The Gush Emunim was founded in early 1974 by young "whole land of Israel" zealots of the National Religious Party who have been used as "shock troops" for opening new Palestinian areas for Jewish settlement. Their tactic is to "squat" until their right to settle is given official sanction. Flushed with their early success in Hebron (which resulted in the Qiryat Arba settlement), they soon moved into the heart of "Samaria," gaining parliamentary "approval" for numerous settlements in 1977-1978. "Finally, in March 1979 Gush activists scored their most sensational coup" by gaining official recognition of their settlement of Alon Moreh, just outside Nablus. As Harris notes, with this, "the last vestige of geographic constraint was overthrown" (Harris, 1980:135-137, 149). The October 1979 Supplement to *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 79, March 1980, contains a translation from the Hebrew press reporting that the Gush Emunim "set up 31 encampments during the night of October 14 in various parts of the West Bank. They [the Gush] described them as 'not being settlements but as measures aimed at foiling the establishment of a Palestinian State'" (p. 3).

When this new system is coupled with more conventional means, it creates a "field holiday" for confiscations. The enclosing of areas for "military purposes" was, like the "Custodian of Absentee Property" ruse, among the earlier methods used to expropriate land on the West Bank. In conjunction with the regulation that "uncultivated land" reverts to state ownership, it has operated to "reclassify" land from one category to another. The military commander had only to close off land to prohibit its cultivation, and then declare the land uncultivated after the crops had spoiled. In cases where abandonment could not be obtained through military enclosures, the Israelis have resorted to more coercive techniques. The October 6, 1980 *Report of the [United Nations] Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories* (p. 80) concluded that "coercive methods, such as the destruction of crops and the appropriation of water resources, whether engineered by 'accident' or as punishment have resulted in the forced abandonment of land by Palestinians."

Finally, Israel has recently begun to expropriate land for roads designed to connect each and every small Jewish "settlement point" on the West Bank with all others, in a complex (*and as yet unbuilt*) web of "highways" which exists chiefly on paper as an excuse for "taking land" by exercise of normal "police power." Every government has the right to design a circulation system needed for the public good and to construct roads, after having condemned the needed right-of-way and paid compensation to the owners. That is not the question. In the recent cases that have been proliferating, it is clear that the condemnation of extremely wide rights-of-way (that often pass through or next to existing Arab villages) is designed chiefly to transfer additional land into state ownership before "autonomy" must be discussed, and that the sites for this newly-created state land are selected to subdivide and gerrymander Arab communities and farms into the tiny checkerboard the Gush Emunim, in their plan of 1976, recommended for fragmenting and policing the Palestinians who refused to leave (see Figure 6).

We lack up-to-date figures that could tell us exactly how much land on the West Bank has already been appropriated into the Jewish-owned or State-owned category and therefore "removed" from any possible Palestinian "autonomy." The only source disclosed so far is a 1979 Report by the Ministry of Defence which acknowledges that, between June 1967 and 1979, Israel expropriated some 61,000 dunums of land on the West Bank and another 400 in the Gaza Strip for "military and security purposes." Of this land, some two-thirds had already been given over to so-called civilian settlements. The same report revealed that, since 1967, Israel purchased some 80,000 dunums of privately-owned land (much of it after private purchase was authorized in September 1979). "Custodian of Absentee

Property” lands were said to account for an additional 430,000 dunums in the West Bank and about 8,000 dunums in Gaza. Land that had been registered in Jewish names before the 1948 partition was presumed to add another 30,000 dunums on the West Bank and 800 dunums in Gaza. But the same report ominously suggested that *much of the land on the West Bank and in Gaza was unclearly titled*. It claimed that 1,530,000 dunums (or most) of West Bank land was of “*unclear title*,” and that another 63,000 dunums in Gaza were similarly without proper title. In fact, after the Ministry of Defence report had specified the Israeli claims over these various types of land that they classified as either state or privately-owned Jewish land (over which presumably Israel intended to exercise administrative control in any autonomy arrangement), there was hardly any land left which Israel was willing to acknowledge *really* belonged to the Palestinians and over which they could presumably enjoy “home rule.” *Out of the entire vast area of the West Bank, they conceded only 200,000 dunums as privately owned by Palestinians; in Gaza, only 253,000 dunums.* (Report summarized and translated into English in *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 79, March 1980, Supplement for November 1979, p. 6.)

The legal mechanisms recounted above have all been designed chiefly to lay physical claim to the occupied areas. In combination, and working together with the settlements (many of them mere outpost towers with no permanent population), the *fiction* of state land is to be used to remove the *substance* of any concessions Israel might be required to “ratify on paper” to satisfy Egyptian requests for Palestinian autonomy during the interim five-year period foreseen in the Camp David accords. We have already noted Begin’s declaration that the five years of so-called autonomy will be transformed into Israeli sovereignty over the entire West Bank and Gaza. Given those five years and using the “laws” of land acquisition already in place, it should be possible for Israel to complete the construction of an entire apparatus that “proves” that *all* the land actually belongs to Israel and should therefore be annexed to the State.

One problem still remains unsolved, however. What is to be done with the people, once they are divested of their land? Short of another war, the only methods available to Israel are police brutality and economic strangulation. Although both of these tactics have been used since the beginning of the occupation, one can now anticipate an intensification of them. Harsh methods of military rule have already been amply documented (see, for example, the reports of Amnesty International, the National Lawyers’ Guild, the works of Israeli lawyer Felicia Langer, and most recently the *Report* of the United Nations Special Committee, 1980) and, while important, lie somewhat outside the scope of a discussion on settlements. Far more important for our purposes are the mechanisms of economic strangulation.

The key to agricultural strangulation is water. In a region such as Palestine, rainfall is insignificant except in the winter, which means that ground and surface water must be tapped and, because it is not plentiful, husbanded carefully in order to grow anything. The ecology of land use required wise specialization, with those zones especially blessed with water used for intensive irrigated farming, the dryer slopes used for terrace gardens and especially arboriculture. Olive trees from ancient times were located on drier fertile soil (since they required little water), and other regions, even less fortunate, were used on a rotational basis for some extensive crops or for grazing.

Because of the need to conserve water for maximum efficiency and to ensure that overusage by some would not destroy the crops of neighbours, the Jordanian Law No. 31 on the Supervision of Water was promulgated in 1953. The law required the approval of the Manager of the Department of Irrigation and Water for any irrigation scheme. As Shehadeh and Kuttab observe (1980:113), the Israeli military commander has amended this law to deprive Palestinian farmers of their water lifeline. They note that in the Jordanian arrangement, the

Department of Irrigation and Water... is a civil department which will grant permission unless convinced that the irrigation scheme will cause damage to any land or other scheme or road. Military Order No. 158 [in contrast] provides that installations for drawing subterranean water [wells, etc.,] require a 'license from the Area Commander.'

The "amendment" states specifically that, "It shall not be permissible for any person to set up or to assemble or to *possess* or to *operate* a water installation unless he has obtained a license from the Area Commander" (italics added for emphasis). According to this "amendment," therefore, even irrigation and well installations that were in place and owned by Palestinians *prior to 1967* are covered by the regulations. Their owners have to submit applications to the Area Commander for *new* licenses, and "the Commander may refuse to grant the license without showing any cause... [and may determine] to cancel any license or amend it or make it conditional..." (above has been abstracted from Shehadeh and Kuttab:113).

Therefore, even in the absence of competing needs from Jewish settlements, the Area Commander can "turn off the spigot" and destroy farms whenever he chooses. (Renewal of existing licenses, leases for water rights, etc., are now also required, so that even current possession of a right does not assure its continuance.) Whenever land has been sought for Jewish settlements, the result has been a foregone conclusion. Deeper wells have been drilled on the Israeli settlement, thus draining ground water and drying out existing Arab wells nearby; permission to sink new wells has been denied to Arabs so affected. The net effects of years of such water deprivation have

been documented by Paul Quiring of the Mennonite Central Committee in a study (1977) which reaches conclusions that go far beyond the technical to capture the true impact of the economic strangulation being created by Jewish settlement:

For farmers..., the impact of settlement construction is very real and can easily be measured in terms of money and lost assets. Apart from the political implications of Israel's settlement policy, the settlements produce a readily visible impact on the West Bank's indigenous economy. Although the losses vary, with some suffering more than others, the cumulative effect is to dispossess a people from that which they value most highly: their land. People continue to live in their homes, with some perhaps even prospering in their new employment, but the economic base on which the village was built has been taken out from under them. When the political or economic climate changes and it is no longer possible for the labor force to find work as laborers, they will have nothing to return to in their villages. Like thousands of others from the West Bank, they will be forced to leave their country in search of employment outside. The villagers recognize and resent this process, feeling that those who remain are becoming like museum pieces – quaint and intact, but supported by those outside and with little control over their future.

This indeed, is close to the bottom line of the strategy of Israeli settlements in the occupied areas. Thus far, emigration for employment outside has been forced upon many of the younger and best educated Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. Almost every family remaining in the West Bank and many in Gaza have at least one member “abroad,” in the Gulf or elsewhere, upon whom they have become increasingly dependent for support. The remittances from abroad, indeed, are an important subsidy to the economy of the West Bank/Gaza, and therefore, indirectly, to Israel itself.

But the processes of slow strangulation and emigration, either for employment or through expulsions, are unlikely to alter demographic facts in Palestine quickly enough to satisfy Israeli ambitions. Harris, in his otherwise dispassionate and even occasionally sympathetic account of Israeli settlements, comes to a most disturbing conclusion, almost as an afterthought. Evaluating the prospects for Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza, he concludes that Israel lacks “the demographic capacity to support a credible long-term colonisation programme,” and that finances will prove an ultimate stumbling block. In his words, “a more pointed threat to the whole colonisation stems from increasing chaos in the grossly overheated Israeli economy which, quite simply, may not be able to sustain extended settlement construction...” (1980:165).¹⁷ He then goes on to say that he

¹⁷ It would be hard to conceive of *any* economy capable of sustaining the grandiose plans set forth. On November 15, 1979, Begin's Ministerial Committee for Settlement Affairs accepted the Ministry of Defence Plan for settlements, with an estimated price tag of 100 BILLION ISRAELI POUNDS (see *Israel and Palestine Monthly Review*, No. 79, March 1980, Supplement for November, 1979, p. 7).

senses that what the Israelis are therefore really counting on is that, "the unfavorable trend in the internal demographic balance will be offset by accelerated out-migration from the West Bank, *perhaps accentuated by another round of hostilities.*" (Harris, 1980:170, italics added.)

In such a round of hostilities, made more rather than less likely by recent cease-fires, the Palestinians in the West Bank are likely to bear the brunt since, under cover of such hostilities, an attempt will undoubtedly be made to drive them finally from their homes. In this scenario, the true meaning of the 127 Jewish settlements now in place or under construction in the occupied areas will become tragically clear. They will constitute the armed forts, placed *in and around* areas of Palestinian concentration, that will be used to help subdue resistance and herd more Palestinian refugees to the next cease-fire line in Israel's expansionary search for Eretz Israel. But this time they will have over-stepped their capacity.

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