

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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NEWS

The Washington declaration initiated by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein has reintroduced the future of annexed Jerusalem to the center of Arab-Israeli diplomacy. While the Israeli-Jordanian accord was limited to questions of religious rights, Palestinians have renewed their concerns about the implications of Israel's construction and settlement activities in the city.

These concerns however are outside the scope of the current diplomatic agenda Prime Minister Rabin has established for the post-Gaza-Jericho phase of negotiations. See story page 1.

Most settlers in the West Bank find themselves in unusual tactical agreement with the negotiating strategy Rabin is following. See story page 1.

In Gaza, settlers and the IDF are adjusting to the new situation prevailing there following the inauguration of Palestinian self-rule. The *Settlement Report* includes a facsimile of the Gaza map appended to the Cairo agreement. See pages 4-5.

Also in This Issue:

PLO Official on Settlements	2
From the Israeli Press	3
Settlement and Security	8

SETTLEMENTS REMAIN A KEY FACTOR IN CURRENT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS

By Geoffrey Aronson

A little more than one year ago, while secret talks were going on between Israel and the PLO, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared that an agreement on "Gaza-Jericho first" would ease the pressure for a solution to Israel's continuing occupation of the West Bank and Jerusalem.

Gaza-Jericho is now in place. The Israeli army has redeployed in the 15 settlements that still control about 30 percent of the Gaza Strip. And Yasser Arafat has returned to Gaza to oversee the transition to limited Palestinian autonomy—the first short step, he

declares, on the road that will lead to Jerusalem.

Israel, however, has its own views on what is to follow in the wake of Gaza-Jericho and how negotiations with the PLO are to be conducted on implementing the Oslo agreement. These views, not surprisingly, are at odds with Arafat's desire to move quickly beyond Gaza-Jericho, beyond even the restrictive autonomy outlined at Oslo and Cairo. In light of Israel's demonstrated success in determining both the framework and the scope of Israeli-PLO diplomacy, Rabin's view of

NEGOTIATIONS, *continued on page 6*

SETTLERS AND RABIN IN RARE AGREEMENT ON NEGOTIATING STRATEGY

After an extended period of increasing acrimony and distrust, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Israeli settlers in the West Bank have developed remarkably similar views of the next stage in Israel-Palestinian negotiations. They both prefer a prolonged "time-out" before going beyond the Cairo agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho regions, the terms of which command the support of most Israelis.

Settlers anticipate that the extension of Palestinian autonomy into the West Bank—where the presence of 136,000 settlers living in 140 settlements makes the introduction of Palestinian self-rule far more problematic than in Gaza—will be postponed during what may turn

out to be a prolonged "testing period."

"Once you get into the future of Judea, Samaria [the West Bank], and Jerusalem," explains Bob Lang, a settler from Efrat, south of Jerusalem, who is active in the settler leadership, "you lose the consensus that exists about Gaza. I would like to see the process stop and to see where it is going. I oppose its extension to the West Bank. Let the Palestinians first get their act in order.

"At present, the Rabin government is slowing down on the Israel-PLO front. The agreement with Jordan takes the pressure off the Rabin government to do more. It gives him the ability to say that

SETTLERS, *continued on page 7*

TO OUR READERS

The signing and implementation of the agreement for the introduction of limited Palestinian rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho marks the beginning of a new phase in the contest between Israelis and Palestinians for control of the land of historic Palestine.

The very nature of the accord as an interim measure, which the parties believe does not prejudice the "final status" agreement that will eventually be concluded, has produced a variety of contradictory assessments of its impact.

Palestinian proponents see the agreement as the first small step on a long road to the dismantling of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the realization of Palestinian independence throughout the occupied territories. Israeli supporters view the accord as establishing a *modus vivendi* with a credible Palestinian representative that recognizes Israel's security requirements.

Critics of the accord regard it as a prescription for continuing Israeli occupation, including the growth of settlements, now legitimized by the assent of the national movement of the Palestinian people itself.

And Israel's settlement lobby sees the accord as the death knell for "Greater Israel" and the beginning of the end of Israel's sovereignty in "Judea and Samaria."

Despite these profound disparities, all recognize that the new dynamic that has been created by the Israel-PLO agreement retains the potential to produce an unprecedented accommodation between Israeli and Palestinian national aspirations.

Palestinian independence is not ordained by the Cairo agreement, nor is the creation and expansion of settlements explicitly circumscribed. Yet the new world created by the accord may well evolve in such a direction.

Over the months ahead it will be essential to monitor the development of this new order—to measure and test both Israeli and Palestinian actions against their solemn commitments and duties. The Foundation for Middle East Peace, and the *Settlement Report* in particular, will do its best to perform such a task.



PLO OFFICIAL SAYS NO RATIONALE EXISTS FOR SETTLEMENTS

The following excerpt was taken from an interview with PLO official Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), which appeared on May 6, 1994, in the newspaper Ma'ariv.

Question: In the next stage of the interim agreement is there a chance that settlements will remain?

Abu Mazen: We agree to the settlements remaining where they are, only without the settlers! We divided the land between us. We take the lands of 1967 and [Israel] takes the rest. Frankly, at the end of the road, after everything is finished and we want to tighten our coexistence, if [Israelis] want to live among us, and we among [them]—this is another matter. Let's assume that they want to live in [east] Jerusalem and I in Tel Aviv.

But until then there will have to be clear borders. The government of Israel must understand our intentions and assist us. We took upon ourselves this solution of [territorial] division. But we won't agree to less than that.

Aside from this, Rabin has said that there are political and economic reasons for not removing settlements. Political reasons no longer apply, and security reasons will disappear the moment that we undertake mutual projects. The economic cooperation between us will ease all fears in the security realm. We can undertake mutual projects on the Jordan River or on the Egyptian border.

If there will be mutual economic interests, there will be no need to worry about security. ♦

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Self-Made Impasse

Yitzhak Rabin has chosen the wrong way to defend the wise agreement he made with Yasser Arafat. In a television appearance, he ridiculed Menachem Begin, saying that his ceremony at Camp David was not marred by an incident like that orchestrated by Arafat in Cairo because Begin gave everything to Anwar al-Sadat, whereas Rabin was not so generous toward Arafat.

Why should Begin be derided? Faced with giving in to U.S. pressure and going for the chance of peace with Egypt on one hand, or caving in to the rage of the settlers and extreme right-wing demonstrations in the territories on the other, Begin decided to uproot the Sinai settlements, and this was a reasonable decision.

Rabin already knows that the establishment of the Katif Bloc [in the Gaza Strip] was an act of political madness on the part of former Labor leaders. He would prefer it to be abandoned, because the presence of the settlers in the Gaza Strip increases unnecessary friction in this test period of neighborly relations between the two nations.

The prime minister, however, still lacks the courage to tell the settlers that the refrain “do not uproot what has been planted” is only a prayer and not an expression of hard political reality.

There is a serious contradiction in Rabin’s attitude toward this issue. On one hand, he had the courage to tell the United Kibbutz Movement that in exchange for peace with Syria, he will disband settlements on the Golan; on the other, he refuses to explain why this logic should not apply to the Gaza Strip as well.

If it is possible to disband Merom Golan [in the Golan Heights], it should also be possible to relocate Kfar Darom [a Gaza settlement]. Were it not for Rabin’s obsessive stubbornness, which prevents him from relocating any settlements even a few meters away, many issues could have been solved without planting an explosive device right in the middle of the festive Cairo ceremony.

The maps with the problematic attached signatures are, to a large extent, the result of a settlement concept that forced the two sides to put the solution of the problems off to a later stage. Have we forgotten the Taba affair, which placed so many obstacles on the path of Israeli-Arab diplomacy before being solved with a clear victory for the Egyptians?

Rabin’s adamant refusal to soften his position regarding

some of the settlements raises serious doubts about his confidence in his ability to insist on issues he really considers paramount—perhaps even that of the Etzion Bloc [settlements south of Jerusalem], which he considers absolutely vital. The prime minister is afraid that he will not be able to keep this bloc of settlements intact. As a result, he is entangling himself in a self-made impasse regarding all the settlements, both the vital and the insignificant ones.

Rabin’s adamant position regarding the settlements has hurt the Oslo and Cairo agreements, because it is a mistake to leave a large Jewish population in the Gaza Strip under physical and psychological conditions that are a breeding ground for Jewish terrorism.

It is also a mistake to insist on leaving the Jordan Valley settlement of Na’ama in its present location, because this makes it difficult for Israel to evince even modest generosity regarding the size of the Jericho autonomous area.

The stubborn decision to keep these settlements in their present location fails to placate the turbulent right wing in any event. The right wing considers the Gaza-Jericho agreement “the beginning of the Palestinian people’s redemption,” and if this is indeed the case, it is regrettable that the government is denying instead of confirming it.

Does Shimon Peres really reject the establishment of a Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip with a federative link to the West Bank and Jordan?

I believe it is high time the government admitted this reality. All the ministers, however, refuse to acknowledge this possibility. This will force them to again fall back on Peres’ fertile imagination to produce another original and helpful—albeit partial—solution.

It is reasonable to assume that in the near future, Peres and Arafat will raise the possibility of a mini-interim arrangement in the framework of which another city and town will be transferred to Palestinian authority every three months: Qalqilyah, Jenin, Nablus, and Qabatiyah, and another year will have passed.

Dan Margalit
Ha’aretz, May 6, 1994

“There has never been a period like this year in which the regular army served so much in the territories. It has to divide itself up into a thousand little pieces to guard small children who must be taken to school, to run three times a day after busloads of them on their way to school. This isn’t the real IDF.”

Yitzhak Rabin
Jerusalem Post, June 14, 1994

GAZA SETTLERS ADJUST TO PALESTINIAN AUTONOMY

In Gaza, world attention is focused on PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and his efforts to jump-start Palestinian autonomy. The 6,000 Israeli settlers living in 15 settlements scattered throughout the Strip have become a mere sidebar to this main story.

It is important to remember, however, that, as Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said, every line of the Cairo agreement was written with the settlers' interests—especially their security interests—in mind. A recent visit to the settler regions illuminated just how complex, and problematic, is this uneasy attempt to live together by living apart.

A new border fence is being built (by Palestinian laborers) around the entire Gaza Strip. When complete, the new border area will have two fences—a barbed-wire barrier next to a shorter, electrified fence. Some new barricades are in place. But most of the fence remains in the initial stages of construction.

The settlement of Netzarim is equidistant from Gaza City and the Burrayj/Nussayrat refugee camps. Rabin has disparaged Netzarim, saying that “if this is a settlement, then I am a monkey’s uncle.”

Nevertheless, Netzarim, home to 30 families, is the most vivid symbol of the lengths to which Israel was prepared to go in its successful effort to maintain a rationale for its commanding military presence throughout Gaza during the interim period of Palestinian self-rule.

A quick look at a map of Gaza demonstrates why Rabin and his military advisers insisted on keeping this tiny settlement, which, together with its access road running from Israel west to the sea, splits Gaza in two—separating Gaza City in the north from the Palestinian towns of Khan Yunis and Rafah in the south.

Reaching Netzarim and other settlements from Israel is no mean feat. Israelis no longer travel along the length of the main north-south road within Gaza, the most direct route to the settlements. Instead, travelers approach the Strip from the east. There is no lateral road from Israel directly across Gaza into Netzarim. To get to Netzarim, one must travel from a point in Israel east of Gaza City and go south for two kilometers—far enough to avoid passing through the city itself—along a pitted dirt track, which parallels the Gaza-Israel border, before turning west and into “Palestine.” (See map, opposite page.)

The extensive concern for settler security, evident in the Cairo agreement, has been addressed by an extensive Israeli military redeployment, but by no means a withdrawal, in Gaza.

Alert Israeli soldiers, wearing flack jackets and holding

M-16s with loaded magazines, stand guard atop huge cement blocks at the checkpoint marking the entrance to Gaza and the Palestinian self-governing authority. A large yellow sign in English, Hebrew, and Arabic tells travelers that they are now entering the autonomous area and advises drivers to coordinate their route with the Israeli army.

Visitors to Netzarim must hazard an extended period on “Palestinian” roads, and at least two Israeli checkpoints, before reaching the road running into Netzarim and the coast.

Just outside Netzarim, a sign greeting visitors announces that “The Land of Israel belongs to the people of Israel”—a sentiment belied by the profusion of Palestinian flags that line the road to the settlement.

The settlement has a neglected look. Yards are untended. There is nothing of the settled, permanent appearance that exists in most settlements today with their well-kept lawns, flourishing vegetation, and children’s playgrounds. The settlement looks thrown together. There is no place to buy vegetables, no health facility, no commercial enterprise of any kind. Had Netzarim been abandoned, it would be hard to notice the difference.

Rivka and Eliahu, together with their seven children, have lived in Netzarim for two years. They moved there from the trailer camp just down the road—today the main camp for units of the Israeli border patrol deployed throughout Gaza.

They have recently broken through the cement block wall

separating their two-bedroom flat from the adjoining one, which, like many in the settlement, was empty. (Rabin halted plans to construct an additional 200 apartments.)

Like all of Netzarim’s residents, Rivka and Eliahu are deeply religious. For them, Rivka explains, “The Land of Israel is what is important. It would be paralyzing to deal with all the speculation about Netzarim’s ultimate fate. If we become paralyzed by the thought of leaving, then that is what will happen. We believe that the government is strong enough not to evacuate settlements—even this one.”

Rivka looks forward to buying her apartment, which is now rented for a nominal sum. “We’d like to build more houses,” she says. “There’s room for fifty families, and we now have thirty.”

She has trouble getting the refrigerator repaired, or the jagged entry way into her expanded apartment finished. Israeli

“Netzarim has no security value, offers no political benefit, and it has no economic importance. We are leaving it in place only in order to prevent domestic strife, and I am not sure that it is worth it. Now, when we are talking about our order of priorities, do we need to maintain Netzarim at a cost of \$5 million each year? Netzarim will be evacuated, the key is only when and how.”

Shimon Peres

Yediot Aharanot, June 24, 1994

GAZA, continued on page 5

technicians are afraid to come to Gaza. Gunfire is almost a daily occurrence around Gaza settlements. Israeli vehicles, when leaving settlements or entering Gaza from Israel, routinely drive with military escorts or in convoys, which leave at scheduled times from Netzarim. "It's a little difficult here," Rivka acknowledges, "but we didn't come for quality of life."

Indeed not. The idea of the Land of Israel is what brought them here and what will keep them here. The fear of Palestinian attack that has frightened away most Israelis is not an issue for those who put their trust in God. Rivka, for example, has no trouble sending two of her young daughters out to the nearby hot houses to look for their father.

"Life and death are in God's hands," says Haim Yafrak, who with his wife and five children, the oldest of whom is seven, plans to move to Netzarim from the Israeli port city of Ashdod before summer's end and the birth of his sixth child, "and for those who believe this it doesn't matter where you live. I understand that there are those who fear for their security, but it is only a question of faith."

Yet, when Rabin sits down with Arafat to discuss Gaza's fate, faith is in short supply. It is security that most concerns the Israeli leader, and it is Arafat's ability, through his military forces, to assure the security of settlers and of the IDF deployed in Gaza against Palestinian attack that will make or break their historic rapprochement.

Middle-ranking officers and many Israeli soldiers serving in Gaza do not conceal their disdain at the quality and commitment of the Palestinian forces. In the field they tell of a lack of Palestinian motivation to respond effectively to reports of gunfire, and they point to daily shooting incidents, most of which are never reported in the Israeli press.

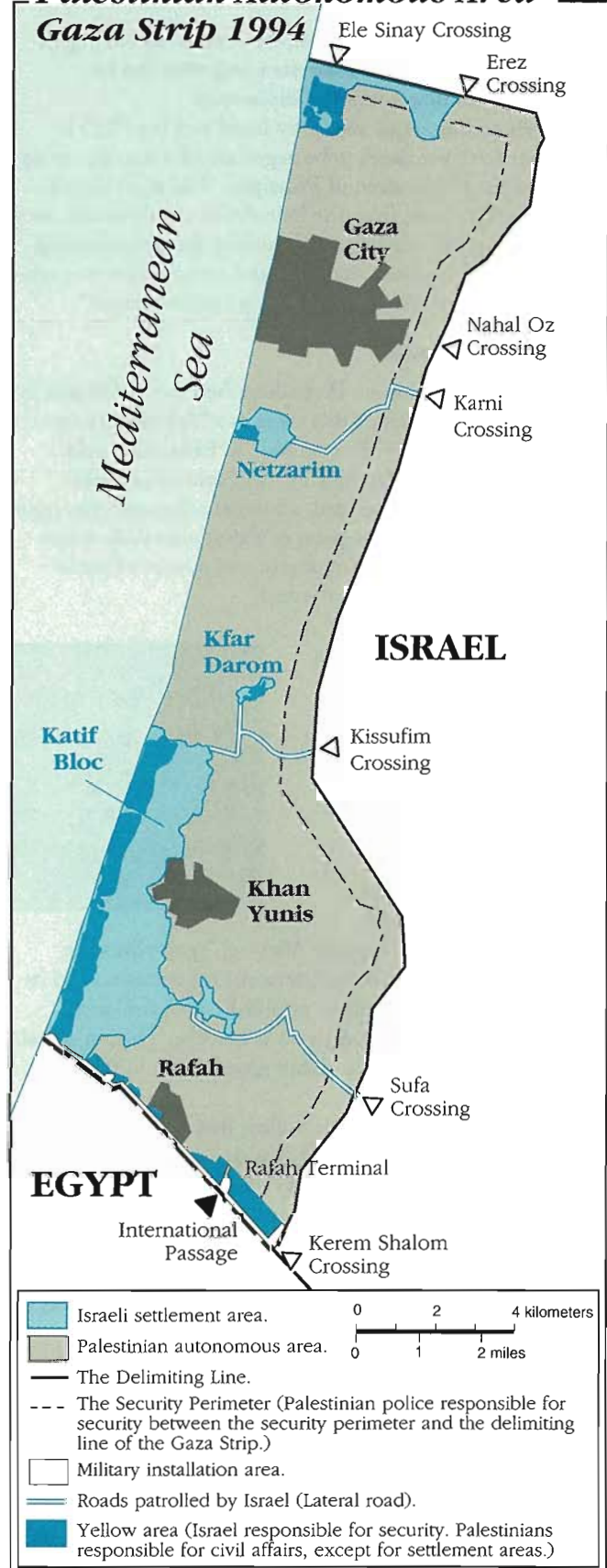
The pressure from IDF ranks to respond aggressively to security breaches is already being felt. During mid-August attacks by Hamas militants on Israeli civilians, IDF troops entered the autonomous areas of Gaza—a violation of the Cairo agreement—in pursuit of gunmen who Palestinian forces have proven unable to capture or uninterested in doing so. If this deterioration in security continues, the faith of the signatories of the Cairo accord will surely be tested.

New Arrivals in Gaza Settlements

From September 1993 to June 1994, 140 Israeli families moved to settlements in the Gaza Strip, increasing the settlements' population by approximately 850, or almost 20 percent. The two most popular settlements were Nisanit, with 61 new families, and Neve Dekalim, 41 new families. Nisanit is located in the Erez bloc of settlements along the northern border of Gaza. Neve Dekalim is the administrative center for the Katif bloc in Gaza's southwest corner.

Additional arrivals are expected during the summer months, traditionally the most active season for establishing new residences.

Palestinian Autonomous Area — Gaza Strip 1994



Source: Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area.

the precedents established in the Gaza-Jericho accord regarding settlements is critical to understanding what can be expected in the coming rounds of diplomacy.

The Paris communiqué issued by Israel and the PLO in early July set forth the issues to be negotiated for implementing stage two of the Declaration of Principles. The most significant of these topics are, first, the Palestinian elections and, second, the assumption of PLO responsibility for administering health, education, tourism, taxation, and social affairs throughout the West Bank—the so called “early empowerment.”

Functional Compromise

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres described the PLO’s role in the West Bank at the end of this stage as a “functional extension rather than a territorial extension” of Palestinian rule. According to this formula, the PLO will assume unprecedented, but highly circumscribed, administrative authority over a few key (and very costly) aspects of Palestinian daily social and economic life. The existing status and powers of settlements and settlers will not be affected.

Rabin regards Gaza-Jericho as a great victory in his campaign to secure a permanent Israeli role in the occupied territories: winning the PLO’s collaboration in a system of continuing Israeli rule in Gaza and establishing this precedent for the entire West Bank.

“Arafat’s arrival [in Gaza],” writes Israeli commentator

Chelmi Shalev in the newspaper *Ma’ariv*, “symbolizes the PLO’s liquidation as an external, terrorist organization and its conversion into the Palestinians’ established political arm, operating in the territories under an Israeli eye. This, in actual fact, was the main goal of the Rabin government in the entire Oslo process.”

In Paris, Rabin himself made it clear that he is in no hurry to expand the powers of the PLO outside of Gaza-Jericho:

“Peace will be built slowly, day by day, through modest deeds. . . . It will be built step-by-step. Allow me to remind you that the Gaza-Jericho agreement negotiations took six to seven months. I am afraid that the issue in regard to the interim arrangement in the Judea and Samaria area [the West Bank] is much more complicated.”

A timetable for negotiations that stretches into 1995 may well mean that Rabin can run his campaign for re-election in 1996 without having to justify any progress with the PLO beyond that achieved in Gaza-Jericho. This scenario would suit Rabin’s political preference—to avoid confrontation with settlers who oppose any extension of Palestinian authority.

The presence of this large number of settlers living between and among Palestinian towns and villages is the primary

logistical factor complicating the next stage. Far more than in the Gaza Strip, where securing the interests of a few thousand settlers was the key obstacle to agreement, and the principal reason for justifying Israel’s continuing occupation, Rabin’s determination to extend the protections won in Gaza throughout the West Bank all but insures protracted negotiations.

Early Empowerment

In any case, the security and settlement issues that formed the heart of the Gaza-Jericho talks will not be directly addressed for some months. The first major topic on the agenda is the issue of early empowerment. As the name suggests, the transfer of authority to Palestinians in this sphere was initially perceived, even by Rabin, as fairly straightforward and relatively simple. When the Declaration of Principles was first announced one year ago, many assumed that these powers would be given to Palestinians before an agreement on Gaza-Jericho.

If early empowerment is to mean anything more than Palestinian administration of Israeli occupation laws and programs in the five spheres under discussion, it must come not as a pre-

lude to, but as a result of, the establishment of Palestinian governing institutions throughout the West Bank. The negotiating framework envisioned by Rabin, however, establishes exactly the opposite order—a formula seemingly designed to produce a stalemate.

Although a discussion of settlements has been postponed,

they are clearly a factor even in the current negotiations on early empowerment.

Jonathan Khuttab, an attorney advising the Palestinian delegation on early empowerment in educational matters, commented that Israel has always considered security as an absolute value. In the sphere of education, Israel maintains powers of curfew and closure over Palestinian schools, even the power to take over schools for security purposes. Its continuing demand to hold such powers will complicate a quick transfer of powers as originally envisioned by both sides.

“The settlements are connected with everything,” says Ziyad Abu Ziyad, a confidant of Yasser Arafat. “Do they want us to take over health affairs in the West Bank? The question of the settlements contaminating the environment with their sewage water will immediately come up. Do they want us to take over education? There are places in the territories where the Army forces schools to open at 7:00 a.m. so that there are no children on the roads when the settlers drive to work. If they want to talk with us about elections, according to the agreement the IDF must withdraw its troops from populated areas. How can it do that when it must also guard access roads to the settlements?” ♦

Early empowerment . . . must come not as a prelude to, but as a result of, the establishment of Palestinian governing institutions throughout the West Bank.

he can't go forward on all fronts.

"This strategy works very nicely for him," Lang continued. "He is still bringing an Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty to the voters in two years [when elections are scheduled]. There is a consensus for that."

This meeting of the minds between moderate settlers and Rabin on Israel's negotiating strategy does not, however, reflect an end to the deep schism that exists between them.

"Rabin has no credibility with settlers," Lang says. "So his views on this issue aren't trusted."

Israel Harel, head of the Council of Jewish Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and a leading settlement ideologue, laments the chasm that has opened between Rabin and the less extreme wing of the movement:

"Rabin has compared me to Hamas, he asked Arafat to come on the Sabbath so that I couldn't demonstrate against him, he has been carried away into almost a total abandonment of our communities. Rabin has simply destroyed for me many things that only a short time ago were solid beliefs about what was permitted and what was prohibited in a political struggle."

Even as they concur with the tactical direction of Rabin's strategy toward the next stage of negotiations, settlers doubt that Rabin will be able to control and limit the process of Palestinian empowerment set in motion at the meetings in Oslo. They view Rabin's inability to keep Jerusalem off the agenda, for example, as evidence of the troubling direction that the dynamic of Israeli-PLO relations may take despite Rabin's preferences.

Rabin and the settlers, however, share an informal consensus on these elements: to delay the expansion of Palestinian self-rule; to pursue an accelerated program of settlement construction in Jerusalem and its West Bank environs, if not in the West Bank as a whole; and to determine the success of Gaza-Jericho first as a precondition for the next stage.

Settler Extremism

At a time when this measure of tactical agreement between settlers and Rabin has been reached, settlers have nonetheless continued to isolate themselves from the general public by their increasing extremism and violence.

For religious settlers, who comprise the dynamic political engine of colonization and who number perhaps 30 percent of West Bank settlers, any diminution of "Jewish sovereignty" in the Land of Israel, including Jericho, is first of all a repudiation of God's design and only secondly a political error.

At a recent demonstration one settler declared, "Do you

remember that the last high priest was drowned by Herod in Jericho?" The recollection is deemed sufficient justification to demand sovereignty today over the small oasis along the Jordan River.

The sense of "messianism denied" is at the heart of settler radicalism. It fuels antipathy toward Rabin and any agreement with the PLO. In recent weeks, settler opposition has erupted in mayhem and violence—in Jerusalem and in the settlement of Kiryat Arba near Hebron. A July demonstration against PLO claims on Jerusalem degenerated into violent mob action against Arab property in East Jerusalem and the Old City.

In Kiryat Arba, an IDF general was greeted with insults when he arrived to discuss the killing of a settler by Hamas militants.

Renewed Violence

The Jerusalem incident embarrassed Likud leaders, including the city's mayor, Ehud Olmert. It once again put settlers on the public defensive. Instead of reaping political capital from their opposition to the PLO's influence in Jerusalem, Likud

leaders were forced to answer for their association with the settlers' violence. And settlers found that they had squandered a political opportunity and lost yet another round in the battle for public opinion.

In the settlement of Kiryat Arba, bordering Hebron, settlers demanding more housing in the settlement occupied 15 uncompleted apartments. Residents greeted the arrival of the IDF chief of staff with shouts of

"traitor" and "Nazi." After consultations with President Ezer Weizman and other top officials, a deal was struck to make new housing available in another part of the settlement for settlers currently living in trailers.

The newspaper *Ha'aretz* criticized the compromise in an editorial: "The Rabin government does not need to suffer a situation in which a group of marginal people prescribe, and actually dictate, its [settlement] policies. It is the government that needs to determine its policies and to enforce them as long as it remains in power. The government's ability to fulfill the peace agreement depends upon its determination to implement its policies on the settlement issue."

The events in Kiryat Arba were, for Israelis, even more damaging than the violence in Jerusalem, for this time the target was the revered Israel Defense Forces. Insulting an IDF general is not a prescription for winning public sympathy.

Even as they find themselves in the unlikely position of sharing Rabin's preference to slow down the Palestinian track, settlers, including the more moderate ones, are being led farther down the road of extremism and political isolation. ♦

Even as they concur with the tactical direction of Rabin's strategy toward the next stage of negotiations, settlers doubt that Rabin will be able to control and limit the process of Palestinian empowerment set in motion at Oslo.

HIDDEN SECURITY COSTS OF SETTLEMENTS

"Undoubtedly, the number of the troops the Israeli army deploys in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is unprecedented. In the long run, their continuous service there can incapacitate the army during the next war. Although the neglect of training of the combat troops has no precedent, those who decide the order of national security priorities [in Israel] have decided that, right now, Israel's next war is being fought in the territories. This is why most Israeli army troops, including a greater part of its elite units, are deployed there, even to the detriment of their training."

Ronny Sofer

Ma'ariv, April 21, 1994

Shabtai Bloch, aged 11 and a half, from Pe'duel settlement in Samaria, is a gifted child. That fact seemingly should not disturb anyone. On the contrary, his proud parents are probably certain that one day he will bring honor to all Jewish settlements. But in practice, every morning at 7:00 a.m., Bloch's high IQ rates are expressed in a private transport, accompanied by a full-size military patrol, which collects him from his parents' home and takes him to school in Karnei Shomron. The rest of the children in the settlement, the number of families in

which is no higher than 50, are taken by a bus to Kfar Saba. According to army regulations, every vehicle transporting children, kindergarten teachers or school teachers to educational institutions is accompanied by a patrol that must include three combat soldiers. Every day, except on Saturdays and holidays, the Israeli army invests three whole hours in the gifted child Bloch. Frequently the patrol is forced to wait for the little Shabtai who, like every other child, sometimes stays behind to play with his friends after school. In those cases the soldiers comb the school to catch him, hoping to find Shabtai and finish their journeys for the day. But the daily meeting with Shabtai does not lack grace. He has, for example, developed a unique concept regarding the neighboring residents of the Arab village of Brukin, which he does not hesitate to share, day in and day out, with the accompanying soldiers. Each time the ride passes by a local resident riding a donkey, the gifted Jewish boy emits loud shouts, mimics the braying of a donkey, and tells the soldiers, "Look, a donkey is riding a donkey." Truly, he is a gifted Jewish boy.

Moshe Zigdon

Yerushalayim, April 8, 1994

"On the Sabbath I felt very secure when I sat in my house all by myself . . ." said one settler after she had participated in a day of survival training organized by the security committee of the Gaza settlements of Netzarim and Kfar Darom.

Training consisted of self-defense, defense against attack, defense against a knife-wielding assailant, and driving skills during an attack on the roads.

"In One Bloc—the Newspaper of Settlements in the Gaza Strip," July 2, 1994.

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