

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

A Bimonthly Publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace

Volume 5 Number 5

September 1995

NEWS

The long-anticipated Oslo II agreement on Israel's redeployment in the West Bank is awaiting resolution of the problems posed by the 400 settlers living in Hebron. Israel wants a special security regime for the Palestinian town of 60,000; the Palestinian Authority insists that it be treated like other West Bank towns.

A recent poll of settler attitudes commissioned by Peace Now reveals widespread confidence that settlements will not be evacuated as part of the final settlement with the Palestinians. More than three out of four settlers expressed such a belief. Thirty-two percent believe that settlements will be annexed to Israel. Forty-four percent believe that the IDF will continue to remain in control of their security.

Also in this issue:

From the Israeli Press 3
Settlement Updates 4, 5

The *Settlement Report* is now available on the Internet. To locate us:

1. Gopher directly to gopher.gdn.org
2. Choose *Report on Israeli Settlements*

OR

To subscribe to the *Report* mailing list e-mail majordomo@gdn.org; leave "Subject" blank. Write: subscribe settlements-L

Our Internet address is jeff@clark.net.

TO WITHDRAW WITHOUT WITHDRAWING

Geoffrey Aronson

Two striking aspects of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation stand out in the long-expected agreement on implementing the next stage of Israel's redeployment in the West Bank: Not only is Israel's "belligerent" occupation of the West Bank about to end, but what Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin calls the "hallucination" of a Greater Israel, fostered by a generation of Labor and Likud politicians, is also being repudiated. Diplomacy is creating an extraordinary, cooperative order between Israelis and Palestinians. Measured against their history of confrontation and violence, this rapprochement should be seen as progress.

The agreement Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Yasser Arafat is expected to sign will transform Israel's occupation army into what one Israeli commentator calls a "guest army," operating in the West Bank, as it now does in Gaza, not just by virtue of military conquest but with Palestinian authorization. The development represents a tremendous achievement for Israel's Labor Party, which has always sought Palestinian partners to a system for the West Bank that would relieve Israel of the burdens of administering the lives of Palestinians while assuring its military control and colonization efforts.

Unlike a true "guest," however, the Israel Defense Forces will not be leaving the West Bank. Nor will it be ceding its "overriding responsibility for security." This agreement will mark the transfor-

mation of Israel's belligerent rule over Palestinians into a partnership operating with Palestinian consent. And it will demonstrate that, in a year of negotiations, Yasser Arafat has been unable to sway Yitzhak Rabin from Israel's initial two-part offer—a partial, incomplete redeployment that awards the PA control over an as yet to be determined percentage of the West Bank, with uncertain promises about future expansion, combined with far greater control over the everyday affairs of Palestinians throughout the territories.

Leaders' Preferences

In the latter part of June, Rabin and Arafat each outlined their preferences for the agreement on the West Bank. Arafat insisted that the Gaza Strip and West Bank comprise one political entity and protested that Israel's plan to create islands of Palestinian authority was unacceptable. Rabin responded that he would prefer to reach an agreement on IDF redeployment only from four towns—Jenin, Nablus, Kalkilyah, and Tulkarem—and leave discussion of additional redeployment, from Ramallah and Bethlehem, to follow after Palestinian elections are held before the end of the year. At the time, Rabin excluded Hebron—the economic center for the southern West Bank, where 400 Israeli settlers live in a tense standoff with Palestinian residents—from the redeployment agenda. Throughout the extended negotiations, Israel has refused to accede

WITHDRAWAL, continued on page 6

TO OUR READERS

Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, having implemented a reasonably workable partition of the Gaza Strip, have now set their sights on a similar, albeit far more complicated, arrangement for the West Bank.

Over the last few months, the outlines of the eventual interim agreement for the West Bank have become clear. So much so that Israeli military and Palestinian security forces are already well on their way to building the necessary facilities and roads and deploying into positions to be specified in that agreement.

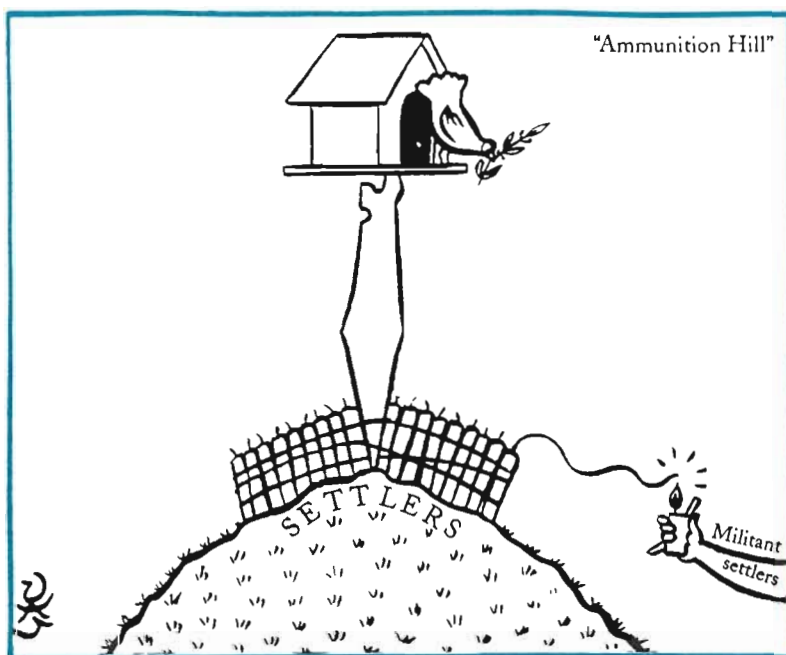
The settlement movement, whose relations with Rabin have deteriorated as the prospects of such an agreement became clearer, is adamantly opposed to any extension of Palestinian authority in the West Bank. The settlers scorn the policy for two principal reasons: First, and most important, because it signifies the end of what Rabin has called the "hallucination" of "Greater" Israel; second, because they fear for their security, particularly those living cheek by jowl with Palestinians—fears that many Israeli military officers share.

Settler protests, which erupted during

late July and continued through August, have not altered the ongoing implementation of the interim agreement on the ground, including expensive measures aimed specifically at safeguarding the 140,000 settlers and their still-growing communities. Nor have they convinced the vast majority of Israelis, or even of most settlers for that matter, to translate their anxiety about the agreement into a demand to scrap the deal with the Palestinians.

Nevertheless, the settlers have succeeded in forcing both Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to place protection of settlers' interests at the top of the diplomatic agenda. They should not be rewarded for this achievement with Israeli policies that promote the settlements' continued growth and expansion, nor by American decisions that compensate Israel directly or indirectly for expenses associated with what is perceived as the settlers' well-being. More is at stake than merely settler concerns—peace itself, for example.

Lucius D. Battle



Ha'aretz, August 8, 1995

FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Merle Thorpe, Jr.
Founder
(1917–1994)

Lucius D. Battle
President

Jean C. Newsom
Executive Director

Geoffrey Aronson
Editor

ADVISERS

Landrum R. Bolling
Former President, Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem;
President Emeritus, Earlham College

Murray J. Gart
Former Chief of Correspondents,
Time Magazine, Senior Editor,
Time, Inc.

Peter Gubser
President, American Near East
Refugee Aid

Sally S. Thorpe

TRUSTEES

Peter M. Castleman
Chairman
Lucius D. Battle
Calvin H. Cobb, Jr.
James J. Cromwell
Stephen Hartwell
Richard S. T. Marsh
Frank Reifsnnyder
Sally S. Thorpe

The Foundation, a non-profit, I.R.C. 501(c)(3) organization, receives no U.S. or foreign government funds. It supports peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians through mutual recognition and a negotiated division of historic Palestine.

Copyright © 1995

SHORT TAKES

There are currently 2,886 dwelling units, divided among 50 West Bank settlements, which are completed but for which occupancy has been forbidden by the Rabin government. In the settlement of Ariel, the government has agreed that 300 long-finished units will soon be put up for sale. Construction of these units was begun before 1992 by the Shamir government, but completed during Rabin's tenure. MK Dedi Zucker has revealed that 850 of these units have been occupied by settlers.

"The meaning of this is that in these 850 instances, the government has failed to uphold the rule of law. The occupation of these units is a political act. Those who do this do not suffer from lack of housing. They act as part of an organized and planned effort against the government, an effort that wants to destroy the political process," said Zucker in a Knesset debate.

Deputy Minister of Defense Motta Gur rejected Zucker's criticism that settlers had acted illegally and stressed that the addition of settlers in five or ten houses in West Bank settlements would not affect the negotiations with the Palestinians.

In the Gaza settlement of Nisanit, 14 units were similarly occupied.

Ma'ariv and Ha'aretz,
June 15, 1995

During the coming year, five factories will be built in the industrial area of the Shaked-Hinnanit-Reihan settlement bloc west of Jenin at a cost of \$8 million, excluding the cost of land and its development. The total area of the construction will be 180,000 square feet. The World Zionist Organization along with the local regional council of settlements, a government body, will finance \$750,000 of the site's development.

According to one of the project's proponents, the fact that the land was provided free encouraged the investors to move their factories to the area. As in other areas [in Israel] suffering from unemployment, these investors will benefit from benefits and a tax holiday during their first years of operation.

There are efforts under way to annex this industrial area of 50 dunams [200 acres] to an existing park belonging to the Israeli village of Um al Fahum 1.5 km distant.

Ha'aretz, June 18, 1995

In the industrial area of Ma'ale Adumim, the addition of 28 new enterprises has been approved by the government. The new operations will include high-tech, aluminum, plastics, and food. The industrial area of Ma'ale Adumim is the only site in

the center of Israel which enjoys the highest level of state subsidy. Construction is booming at the site, where space is rented for \$3.50-\$5.00 sq. meter, far less than the \$8-25 per square meter in Jerusalem. The industrial park is sited on 2,100 dunams [8,400 acres, with an additional 16,400 acres in reserve] and contains 100 enterprises. Sixteen hundred workers from Jerusalem, its surrounding settlements, and the Jordan Valley are currently employed in the park.

Yerushalim, July 21, 1995

Israeli transportation companies are considering the purchase of specially armored buses for use in public transport and the transport of students in West Bank settlements. Twenty buses, costing \$270,000 each, are expected to be purchased and put into use by September.

Ma'ariv, June 26, 1995

During the next three or four years, 19,000 residential housing units will be built in Jerusalem, according to Deputy Mayor David Casuto. Included in this number are 7,000 units at Har Homa [where 3,500 units are to be started this year] and 2,000 units at Airplane Hill—areas of East Jerusalem annexed by Israel in June 1967. Casuto also noted that 7,000 units are to be built for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, half of them in the next two or three years.

Ha'aretz, July 4, 1995

"Our position with regard to the settlements is clear. We demand the dismantling of the settlements and the evacuation of the settlers from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. The settlers are a foreign body sitting on land that is not theirs.

"However, since we agreed not to discuss the settlements during the present stage of the negotiations, all we ask is that the Israeli Government prevent their expansion and restrain the settlers. The settlers are a time bomb. Without the government's material assistance and the large quantities of weapons it places at their possession, the settlers would not be able to hang on and would not permit themselves to run amok and harm Palestinians at every opportunity."

Marwan Kanafani, Palestinian Authority [PA]
Chairman Yasir Arafat's adviser,
Ha'aretz, June 14, 1995



Creeping Annexation Continues

Danny Rubinstein

The settlements and the Israeli concept of what belongs to the Arabs continue to top the Palestinians' list of priorities. Headlines in [the Palestinian daily newspaper] *Al Quds* deal with the tunnel underneath the Western Wall that the Waqf [the Islamic trust for religious property] has been opposing for many years; a picture in the paper shows Faisal Hussein at the head of a group of *fellabin* from the village of Um Tuba in southern Jerusalem who are protesting that their lands are being taken for the neighborhood of Har Homa. There are also reports of demonstrations of villagers from Wadi Rachel and Artas in the Bethlehem area, where 200 dunams [50 acres] belonging to them are to be used to establish a new neighborhood for the settlement of Efrat.

As in the past, similar reports are heard from almost every corner of the West Bank. Residents of the villages of Salem, Deir-al-Hatav and Azmot, east of Nablus, report that they are forbidden [by order of the Israeli military government] to enter lands that they own which are near the settlement of Elon Moreh. Hamdan Taher, from the village of Labad near Tulkarem, complains that 2,500 trees and saplings on his land have been removed—it seems that the area is supposed to serve the settlement of Avnei Hefetz. And of course in Hebron, Arab residents continue to complain that the few score of settlers living in the city make their lives an absolute misery.

The impression that one gets from the Palestinian press is not only that the Rabin government is not “drying out” the settlements . . . but that the policy of expanding settlements in the West Bank continues almost as it did in the past [under Likud governments]. . . . The invasion of young couples from [the Israeli town] Kfar Saba in need of housing into a new neighborhood in the Karnei Shomron settlement—houses whose completion has been frozen by the Ministry of Housing which refuses to populate them—is perhaps the exception that proves this general rule.

So, too, in the area described as Greater Jerusalem, which comprises almost one-third of the West Bank, Jewish communities are being expanded at a particularly fast rate: Ma'ale Adumim, Beitar, Efrat, Givat Ze'ev—all of these are new cities, tremendous settlements within the West Bank. Also in other places like Alfe Menache and Kiryat Sefer in western Samaria, they are building with large government investments.

In tens of other settlements there is private construction, and even in these places indirect government aid is supplied.

Government ministries must supply public services to residents of the settlements. From all over the West Bank come reports on the paving of roads, school construction, clinics, and similar institutions. In one place, settlement fences are being improved, and in others, water and sewer systems, electricity, and telephone networks are being constructed. Within settlements, industrial and commercial areas are being established, and these activities are eligible in one way or another for public support, as is the case with communities in Israel.

In other words, the development and strengthening of settlements in the West Bank seems to be a process over which there is no control. Even if there is in part a slowdown, most settlements are not only maintaining their ground, but they are also developing and strengthening. This is the product of a process which does not seem to have any inhibitions.

The government's decision not to remove settlements has actually resulted in their increased vitality. Their population has increased, government offices must provide them services and even improve them. It seems that even a government hostile to settlement is being dragged in support of a process it did not intend.

The settlements in Hebron are a perfect example of this. The security tension in the city has actually improved their situation and worsened that of the Arabs. In the aftermath of the massacre at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, a large number of troops implemented new security procedures,

whose objective was to separate settlers from Arabs in the city as much as possible. Since the massacre, there has been a long line of incidents, the result of which has been that Hebron this year is the only city in the West Bank to have suffered extended closure and curfew. In May, an evening curfew on Arabs, in place for three months, was lifted. The center of the old city is, for all practical purposes, off limits to Arabs. . . . The large military presence in the city assists the settlers and fortifies their standing in the city, and so the trauma of the murders of Baruch Goldstein has contributed to the settlers' strength in the city.

In similar fashion, the large security investments, made in anticipation of the army's redeployment in the West Bank, advance the well-being of the settlements. The bypass roads, the new military bases, the creation of roadblocks—all these lend an even more permanent air to the settlements than existed in the past and convey the impression that the current development of the peace process can no longer stop the creeping annexation of most of the territory in the West Bank.

Ha'aretz,

May 29, 1995

“The impression one gets . . . is not only that the Rabin government is not ‘drying out’ the settlements . . . but that the [settlement] policy in the West Bank continues almost as it did in the past.”

CONSTRUCTION ESCALATES

In the Israeli settlements of the West Bank, 5,000 dwelling units are currently under construction. The figures represent 6 percent of the 82,000 units under construction in Israel and in the occupied territories in March 1995, the latest date for which numbers are available. The territories' current share of national construction is consistent with past years. Throughout the West Bank, extensive plans for the construction of additional housing are being delayed by the special ministerial council established in January to review settlement plans.

"In the current situation, all construction in the territories is problematic," a housing ministry official said. "It is simply preferable not to convene the ministerial committee."

In January, the committee approved the construction of 4,100 units this year, part of a four-year plan for the construction of 16,000 units in the West Bank. Subsequent meetings, during which the Housing Ministry was expected to put forward plans for constructing almost 6,000 additional units—most of them in the Jerusalem region—have been postponed.

The following figures were compiled from press reports and official Israeli government statements. They do not cover activity in every settlement and should be regarded as informed estimates only, given the incomplete nature and constant fluctuation of the numbers appearing in published reports. ♦

West Bank Construction Activity, 1995

	Construction starts approved	Under construction	Completed in 1995
Ma'ale Adumim	2,000	2,000	800
Beitar	1,100	900	1,920
Givat Ze'ev	500	1,300	1,140
Givon	250		
Alon Shvut		34	
Elazar		95	
Neve Daniel		46	
Kiryat Sefer		200	400
Kedar	42		
Har Adar		703	
Oranit		400	
Pnei Hever		22	
Mitzpe Jericho			25
Beit Horon		50	
Mod'in		600	
Omarim			35
Pdu'el		20	
Hinnanit		30	
Aley Zahav		20	
Sdemot Mehola	10		
Ro'i	8		
Hamra	8		
Argaman	8		
Yafit	6		
Tomer	10		

SETTLEMENT PACE PICKS UP

"[Minister of Housing and Construction Benjamin ben Eliezer's] policies . . . remind one very much of the policies of his predecessors at the ministry, Ariel Sharon and David Levy."

—Moti Basok in *Davar*, May 23, 1995

During the first quarter of 1995, construction starts in Israel and the occupied territories were recorded at a pace not seen since the building boom of 1991. The increase has occurred exclusively in the realm of publicly financed construction.

In the settlements near Jerusalem during the first four months of 1995, construction was begun on 1,126 units, far more than the 324 units begun during the all of 1994. During the second quarter, 224 units were begun. Most of this construction is occurring in Beitar (718) and Ma'ale Adumim (616) as part of the 4,100 units approved by the government in January. The Ministry of Housing intends to start building 2,285 units in the Jerusalem region during 1995.

The figures below illustrate how the housing construction market in the occupied territories has fluctuated during recent years, after an extended period of stability. Figures for 1994 and 1995 suggest that construction rates in the West Bank—after the upheaval occasioned by the influx of immigrants from the Confederation of Independent States—are now stabilizing near their traditional level. ♦

Construction Starts (dwelling units)

Year	ISRAEL			WEST BANK & GAZA [not East Jerusalem]		
	Total	Total Public	Total Private	Total	Total Public	Total Private
1989	19,850	3,490	16,360	1,470	680	790
1990	42,410	19,380	23,030	1,810	830	980
1991 ^a	83,510	61,730	21,780	8,110	7,040	1,070
1992	44,900	21,820	23,080	6,210	5,000	1,210
1993	36,980	6,820	30,160	980*	410*	570*
1994	43,320	10,460	32,860	1,290	550	740
1995 [1Q]	17,970	9,170	8,800	1,398*		

^a Not including placement of 3,735 prefabricated units and trailers.

* Preliminary estimates only.

Source: Israel Bureau of Statistics.

to Palestinian requests for maps specifying the exact territorial dimensions of the IDF redeployment. (The boundaries of the Jericho region, established more than one year ago, have yet to be defined.)

The agreement now taking shape is more in keeping with the vision held by Rabin rather than by Arafat. The PA chairman has won the promise of IDF redeployment from most Palestinian population centers called for in the Oslo agreement. However, a number of villages in the Jerusalem area and along the Green Line—Deir Balut, Rantis, and Abood, for example—will remain under complete Israeli control. There will be no “geographic continuity” within and between the islands of Palestinian control created by the agreement: Area A—the four Palestinian cities of Jenin, Nablus, Kalkilyah, and Tulkarem and Area B—Ramallah and Bethlehem and approximately 400 Palestinian villages.

Nor has Arafat won Israel’s agreement to his fallback position—a specific, unalterable timetable for redeployment beyond those areas (A and B) that Rabin is prepared to evacuate prior to the PA elections.

Area C is composed of settlements, state and rural lands, and those areas controlled by the IDF that together may comprise at least 70 percent of the West Bank. Only limited civil authority will be handed over to the Palestinians in Area C. Water, electricity, land, and telecommunications will remain exclusively in Israeli hands.

An arrangement for Hebron has yet to be formulated.

“The agreement leaves by far the larger part of the West Bank in our hands,” explained Israeli Minister Yossi Sarid, “leaving us all the options open for a permanent solution. Even in the next redeployment, scheduled for July 1977, a considerable part of the territory will remain under our authority.”

Pact Details

In making such concessions, Arafat has acquiesced to a framework for limited expansion of his authority that leaves Israel in control of the region’s strategic security and that is conditioned by the success of PA’s performance—particularly in stemming attacks against Israel and its settlements.

Rabin, for his part, has not succeeded in postponing consideration of redeployment beyond Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus, and Kalkilyah. Indeed, in making this agreement Rabin is overriding the grave concerns of top military officials who doubt the workability of the complicated, cooperative security arrangements called for in the proposed agreement.

Although a final accord has not been initialed, Rabin and Arafat have reportedly reached the following agreements:

- Evacuation of Israeli military and civilian administrations to the city limits of Jenin, Kalkilyah, Nablus, and Tulkarem (Area A), and the reestablishment of 62 new Israeli military bases in surrounding areas.
- Israel’s transference of civilian powers and withdrawal to the main roads leading into the town centers of Ramal-

lah and Bethlehem by year’s end, to be followed by complete evacuation, in Rabin’s words, “graduated according to the problem of [constructing] bypass” roads—a multi-million dollar construction project now under way.

- Continuation of exclusive Israeli control over 145,000 settlers and their 150 settlements, comprising 110,000 acres, or 8 percent of the West Bank.

Outside of the cities, the West Bank will be divided into two parts: one of which will be free of permanent IDF installations and one where civilian control will pass from Israel’s Civil Administration to the PA. This part includes most districts inhabited by Palestinians (Area B) and combined with Area A may total no more than 5 percent of the West Bank (68,310 acres). Uniformed Palestinian police will be in charge of law and order in these areas, similar to responsibilities Palestinian internal security forces have already quietly assumed throughout Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank. The IDF, however will maintain overriding security responsibility and intervene as it feels necessary. “The problem,” Rabin said, “is not [the army’s] permanent presence, but its freedom of action.”

State lands, military areas, and private and uninhabited Palestinian lands outside municipal jurisdictions comprise the other part—Area C. In June 1996, powers and responsibilities not relating to land and resources will be transferred to the PA. Powers and responsibilities that do relate to land and resources will be transferred gradually to Palestinian jurisdiction. This authority will cover West Bank and Gaza Strip territory, except for the issues to be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations.

Dividing the West Bank

This extremely complex arrangement will divide the West Bank into at least five zones:

1. East Jerusalem, annexed by Israel.
2. The 150 Israeli settlements and state lands—under exclusive Israeli control.
3. A Palestinian zone administered on both security and civilian levels by the PA—Area A.
4. A Palestinian zone administered on both security and civilian levels by the PA, but where the IDF retains overall security control—Area B.
5. A Palestinian zone administered on the civilian level by the PA and on the security and territorial level by the IDF—Area C.

The Americans and the Israelis are confident that Yasser Arafat, whose popularity remains high and whose administration of Gaza has recently been the subject of increased praise in the American and Israeli press, can sell this package to his people. Arafat can expect the international community to be more forthcoming with aid in the wake of the agreement and the now obligatory signing ceremony in Washington. Rabin himself is prepared to submit to another difficult handshake on the

PRINCIPLES GUIDING AN INTERIM AGREEMENT SIGNED

[The following is the text of the agreement reached during the August talks between the Palestinian and Israeli delegations.] "The Palestinian delegation, headed by al-Ra'ees Yaser Arafat, and the Israeli delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, met in Taba, Egypt, between August 7-11, 1995, and agreed on some of the principles, to be elaborated in the Interim Agreement, as follows:

1. Area B

In Area B, there will be a complete redeployment of Israeli military forces. The Palestinian Police shall assume responsibility for public order for Palestinians and shall establish (I:25) (P:30) police stations and posts in towns, villages, and other places, as agreed. In Area B, Israel shall have the overriding responsibility for security for the purpose of protecting Israelis and confronting the threat of terrorism. While the (I: activities) (P: movement) of uniformed Palestinian policemen in Area B outside places where there is a Palestinian police station will be carried out after coordination and confirmation, three months after the completion of redeployment from Area B, the DCOs (District Coordination and Cooperation Offices) may decide that movement of Palestinian policemen from the police stations in Area B to Palestinian towns and villages in Area B on roads that are used only by Palestinian traffic will take place after notifying the DCO.

These procedures will be reviewed within six months.

2. Further Redeployments

The further redeployments of Israeli military forces to specified military locations will be gradually implemented in accordance with the DoP [Declaration of Principles] in three intervals, every six months, after the inauguration of the Council, to be completed by (P: February) (I: July) 1997. In Area C, while Israel will transfer civil powers and responsibilities not relating to territory in the first phase of redeployment, powers

and responsibilities relating to territory will be transferred gradually to Palestinian jurisdiction that will cover West Bank and Gaza Strip territory, except for the issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations, during the further redeployment phases, to be completed by (P: February) (I: July) 1997.

3. Hebron

With regard to Hebron, both sides exchanged ideas and decided to continue the negotiations on this issue.

4. Prisoners

In addition to the two stages of prisoner release agreed in the context of the Ministerial Committee [one upon the signing of the interim agreement and the other before the Palestinian elections], there will be a third stage of prisoner release. The Ministerial Committee will work out the details of this third stage.

5. Revenues

The Israeli side will transfer tax revenue to the Palestinian side upon the signing of the interim agreement.

6. Joint Committee

A joint Israeli-Palestinian-American committee will be formed to deal with (1) economic issues; (2) water production; and (3) political coordination.

7. The Palestinian Covenant

Two months after the inauguration of the Palestinian Council, the Palestinian Covenant will be amended in accordance with the letter of Chairman Arafat to Prime Minister Rabin, dated September 9, 1993.

[Note: In the text, the letter "P" signifies the Palestinian position, and the letter "I" the Israeli position.]

WITHDRAWAL, from page 6

White House lawn if it will loosen the purse strings of international donors to the PA.

Rabin, far more than Arafat, is the architect of this accord. Like the Gaza agreement, which left Israel in direct control of 40 percent of the Strip, the West Bank redeployment gives Palestinians little that most Israelis aren't glad to be rid of. Extensive protests by settlers during August highlighted the fact that while many Israelis lack enthusiasm for Rabin's policies and are concerned about their security implications, vociferous opposition is confined to the settler movement's strident religious elements. As with Gaza, Israelis will not mourn the loss of Nablus, Jenin, Kalkilyah, and Tulkarem.

"Just between us," wrote former Rabin confidant Jacques Neriah recently, "how many Israelis go out for a shopping spree in Jenin? What is the chance that an Israeli taxi driver will take someone from Tel Aviv to the *casbah* in Nablus?"

Rabin has fashioned a timetable in which no dates are "sacred" and which keeps the Palestinians under constant pressure to prevent murderous attacks upon Israelis. The extension of Palestinian authority can be stopped unilaterally at any number of points, for any number of reasons. Rabin has adopted the view of his security and intelligence apparatus, which believes that the security situation in Israel, towns along the Green Line, and settlements will not suffer as a result of redeployment. He has determined that the agreement with Arafat will fall far short of provoking either the Likud opposition or the settlement movement beyond acceptable limits. It is no mere coincidence that there is to be no large-scale IDF retreat from the West Bank before the Israeli elections in 1996.

The complexity of this agreement also serves Rabin's ultimate objective for the West Bank—in his words, "a Palestinian entity [that is] less than a state, and which works together with Jordan and Israel in a "system of economic and other amalgamation and cooperation." ♦

IMPASSE IN THE WEST BANK

Israel's military redeployment is hard to discuss seriously while negotiations on the settlers' future remain censored

Missing the latest Israeli-Palestinian deadline does not matter; the reason why it was missed may. The slippage was written into Israeli calculations weeks ago: even back in May officials were saying that there would not be an agreement on July 1st but probably would be one a couple of weeks later. The negotiators now say that a deal is in the bag but will not be signed until July 25th. Why the delay? More time to build bypasses for West Bank settlers, for a start. And perhaps more time to wear down Palestine's Yasser Arafat, rendering him worried enough, as a deadline he was depending on flitted by, to agree to Israel's terms on military redeployment.

Which Mr. Arafat is likely to do—but at the further expense of his shredded credibility. Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, alert to his own domestic problems, appears blind to Mr. Arafat's. . . .

No compromise over security, says Mr. Rabin. That might be all right, if it were Israel's security. But it is not: it is the need to protect and quarantine the 120,000 or so Israeli settlers in the West Bank that is keeping the Israeli army in place—and will continue to keep it there: the dangers are by no means imaginary. The Israelis are not obliged to discuss the settlers' future until the "permanent status" talks begin, supposedly in ten months' time. But the reason the settlers originally wanted to establish themselves in the West Bank heartland was to stop the land from ever being returned to the Palestinians. Now, by preventing serious redeployment, they are achieving their aim.

Redeployment and settlements are inseparably linked.

Behind the official reticence, public-spirited Israelis have begun to chew over ideas. Few propose the logical solution of dismantling all the settlements, since they know it would be suicidal for any Israeli government. More advocate an alternative at the other extreme: leaving the West Bank a tight patchwork of enclaves under different jurisdictions—an invitation to disaster. Among the compromises, based on separating Israeli and Palestinian jurisdiction, is one proposed by an academic, Joseph Alpher, which has won some Israeli interest and might be the basis of a deal. It suggests that Israel should annex an area (mainly an uneven strip along the northern part of the pre-1967 border, and accounting for 11% of the West Bank) that holds about 70% of the settlers; the other settlers, mainly in the heartland, would have to accept either compensation or Palestinian authority. The Palestinians would get sovereignty and a bit of extra land, some of it desert, in exchange.

An exchange of land promises a way out of the impasse—though if the Palestinians were to agree, they should certainly bargain for a fairer swap, and a stake in Jerusalem. The virtue of plans like these is that they tackle a central issue: Jewish settlers and Arab villagers live too close to one another for the Israeli army to protect the one while leaving the other in peace. Mr. Rabin, believing he has trouble enough already, would much prefer not to take on the settlers until he has to. But since their continued protection is making even interim self-rule untenable, Mr. Arafat should press him to face the inevitable.

July 8, 1995, *The Economist Newspaper Group*
(Reprinted with permission.)

“With respect to the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, obviously the terrorist incidents have been a serious problem for both the parties. . . . With all of its difficulties, with all the problems created by the terror, nevertheless, the parties are continuing to negotiate—negotiate in good faith on what must be some of the most difficult negotiations of all time, because of the presence of the Israeli settlements.”

Secretary of State Warren Christopher at a hearing of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 18, 1995

Foundation for Middle East Peace
555 - 13th Street, N.W.
Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20004-1109
Telephone: 202-637-6558
Fax: 202-637-5910
E-mail: Jeff@clark.net

Back issues of the *Report* and the 1991-1994 Index are available on request from the Foundation's office.

