

REPORT ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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NEWS

Negotiations on a permanent agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority are set to begin on May 5. Substantive talks, however, will not resume until after Israel's elections on May 29. The next Israeli government will demand broad, permanent safeguards for settlements. (See story opposite.)

A Likud victory will raise the profile of an extensive settlement plan put forward by the settlements' council, YESHA. (See story on page 3). Shimon Peres will maintain policies which have increased the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza by one-third since 1992. (See story on pages 4 and 5).

In the wake of the Palestinian National Council's decision to amend its Covenant, Israel's delayed redeployment from Hebron may now proceed.

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PERES AND NETANYAHU PLEDGE SUPPORT FOR SETTLERS AS ELECTION NEARS

As Israel's May 29 election approaches, Labor and Likud are each heading for the political center in search of the critical swing voter who holds the key to political victory. The Labor Party, led by Shimon Peres, is proclaiming its intention to build on the advantages won during its diplomacy with the Palestinians to secure Israel's permanent presence in the occupied territories. The Likud distinguishes itself by emphasizing its ideological commitment to settlement. Led by Benjamin Netanyahu, it acknowledges acceptance of the political facts created by Labor while adhering to its existential commitment to settlement throughout Greater Israel.

On February 15, Peres agreed that the government must provide an answer to the "natural development of the Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza," according to Minister Rabbi Yehuda 'Amital, whom Peres brought into the cabinet following the Rabin assassination as a gesture to the religious-settlement lobby. Amital explained that "natural development" includes population growth, more housing and public buildings.

Later that week, Peres said that he did not see the need to remove any settlement, even in the context of a final

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LABOR'S INCONSISTENT POLICIES: SETTLEMENTS AND A SEPARATION PLAN

By Geoffrey Aronson

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, responding to four quickly paced attacks that left more than 50 Israelis dead in February and March, has decided in favor of a far reaching plan for controlling all manner of Palestinian access to Israel. Public demand for action in the aftermath of the bombings led Peres to endorse a separation plan that he previously had opposed—a plan that propels him on a course at odds not only with the concepts at the heart of his rapprochement with the PLO but also of his view of the "New Middle East."

The establishment of a 2-3 kilome-

ter-wide security zone east of the 350 km-long, pre-1967 border was agreed on unanimously in a cabinet meeting on March 3. The government announced that "in order to forge a reality of coexistence in security and peace between Israel and the Palestinians" an extensive system of controls would be established to limit and regulate the movement of Palestinian labor and goods from the West Bank and Gaza Strip into and out of Israel.

Such restrictions will operate in one direction only. Israel, by embracing the idea of separation, may have decided to

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TO OUR READERS

The Palestinians, as part of their national effort to win Israel's withdrawal from territories captured in June 1967, have made good on their commitment to delete elements of their covenant opposed by Israel. This symbolic act is one more reflection of the evolution of a Palestinian policy reconciled to the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Palestinian aspirations alone, however, are not enough to realize this goal, which will be the focus of Palestinian diplomacy during negotiations with Israel on final status. Before these talks begin, Israel should implement its commitment to redeploy in Hebron and to establish a transport link between the West Bank and Gaza.

The problem facing Palestinians is Israel's continuing occupation of lands beyond its recognized boundaries. They face an additional dilemma—Israel's intention to remain permanently in occupied territories and its pursuit of a settlement policy aimed at cementing that claim.

The Labor Party platform that Prime

Minister Shimon Peres will promote in the weeks before Israeli elections on May 29 has removed previous statements of opposition to a Palestinian state. It has also modified Israel's position on the Golan Heights. These are necessary and welcome steps along the long road to Palestinian sovereignty. Neither Labor nor Peres, however, has adopted policies supporting Palestinian independence. Nor is Peres prepared to reduce the obstacles to a Palestinian state by adopting a policy of active opposition to the expansion of settlements. To the contrary, the platform reaffirms an intention to claim sovereignty over existing settlements.

Even with the positive steps taken in recent days in the midst of bloodshed, wide gaps still exist. The fundamental truth to be accepted is that occupation does not produce security. Only peace, trade, and eventual trust can accomplish that.



ISRAELI LAND CONFISCATIONS SINCE OSLO

According to Palestinian sources, Israel has confiscated almost one-quarter million dunams* throughout the West Bank since the Oslo accords were signed in September 1993. Most of these actions have proceeded on the basis of confiscation orders issued before 1992. Construction of numerous bypass roads throughout the West Bank has entailed the confiscation of an additional 16,000 to 20,000 dunams. The latter confiscations proceeded according to an agreement reached with the Palestinian Authority. Settlers have unilaterally taken an additional 23,000 dunams, according to the Land and Water Establishment for Studies and Legal Services in Jerusalem.

These actions, and in particular the continuing construction of bypass roads, have elicited sporadic, popular Palestinian protests, as well as complaints by Palestinian officials.

*Four dunams equal one acre.

"It was agreed that this [settlement] issue should be postponed to the final status negotiations," explained Ahmad Quray, minister of the economy of the Palestinian Authority, "provided that neither side takes measures which would harm the other side's rights or tries to change the situation on the ground. What we have now is land seizure on the pretext of building bypass roads, and expansion of the settlements, despite former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's promise that no settlement's boundaries will extend further than 50 meters beyond the last house in it. Worse still is the fact that Israeli Housing Minister Ben-Eliezer is now an expert at announcing new confiscation and new projects for building Israeli homes on Palestinian land. With regard to Jerusalem, there is an attempt to stifle it and isolate it from the other Palestinian areas by setting up road blocks and attempting to limit Palestinian activity there." ♦

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SETTLERS PROPOSE MASSIVE SETTLEMENT PROGRAM AFTER ELECTIONS

Amana, the settlement arm of the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip [YESHA] has prepared an extensive \$4 billion construction plan to more than triple the settler population in the occupied territories to 500,000 by the year 2,000.

This grandiose plan is in the spirit of settlement programs advocated by settlers and their patrons in the Likud and National Religious Party (NRP) since the early 1970s. While most schemes did not reach their stated goals, they did succeed in determining the direction of settlement efforts during the rule of both Labor and Likud governments. Even if the Likud forms the next Israeli government, it is unlikely that Israel's housing sector could manage the precipitous expansion outlined in the plan.

Written in the expectation of taking quick advantage of a Likud victory in elections at the end of this month, the plan aims to create additional "facts on the ground" that will preclude an expansion of Palestinian control significantly beyond the 28 percent of the West Bank (Areas A and B) and 70 percent of the Gaza Strip that the Palestinian Authority currently controls.

"It is necessary to concentrate settlement resources according to the premise that after the elections a government desirous of continuing settlement will be established," noted the settlement plan. "The size of these communities, the connection between them, and their access to centers of Jewish population [i.e., Israel] will greatly influence their status in the eyes of the Israeli public—and therefore exert a direct influence on the political decisions that will be made in the coming years."

Under the direction of Amana leader Ze'ev Hever, a small group of settlers, as well as politicians like Ariel Sharon, were mobilized soon after the Oslo accords were signed in September 1993 to draw up a blueprint for large-scale settlement. They have prepared, at great cost, computer generated maps incorporating extensive aerial photos of the region. The maps are not yet publicly available.

Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu has been presented with

the plan as have members of the NRP.

The plan, however, has been crafted in such a way as to enable it, with some modification, to be adopted by a Peres government as well. It is based upon expanding the existing settlement infrastructure, particularly by "thickening" the larger settlements, and aims at exploiting the opportunities for settlement growth opened by the creation of the extensive series of bypass roads (costing \$600 million in 1995) developed in the wake of the Oslo agreement.

The road plan has transformed many settlements around Jerusalem into suburbs of the city, and today a ready market awaits new construction in settlements like Kokav Ya'acov, Psagot, and Adam.

"The bypass road plan," Hever explained, "even without intention, has given settlement in Judea and Samaria a big boost."

The settlement movement appears prepared to accept at least nominal Palestinian control in Areas A and B, where the Palestinian Authority has exercised a measure of control since late 1995. None of the anticipated settlement expansion is located on lands in either area. The twelve new settlements called for in the plan were approved before 1992 during the Shamir era. Like the anticipated expansion of existing settlements, they were to be located on lands either declared as state lands by the Shamir government or within the master plan boundaries of existing settlements. The Palestinian Authority, in the Oslo II accords, recognized Israel's "legal rights" over state lands.

The anticipated growth of settlements is to be achieved

without large-scale public sector participation or concessional financing in housing construction. Amana is depending on the private sector to respond to market demand for new housing in settlements throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The government is being asked to continue to provide mortgages to purchasers at competitive rates. By refraining from the obvious use of public funds to satisfy the "natural growth" of settlements, Amana has thus crafted a program geared not to elicit strong U.S. protest. ♦



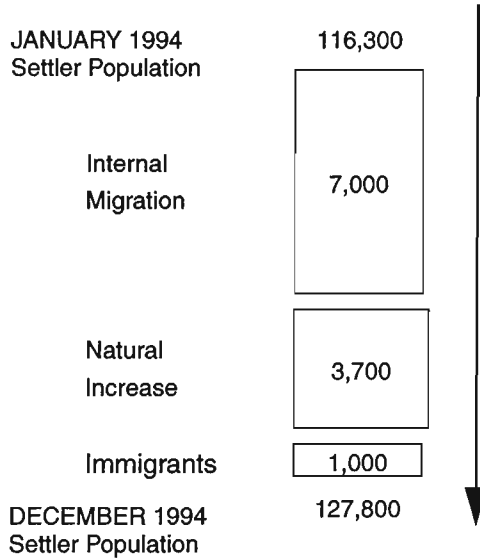
SETTLERS AND SETTLEMENTS AT A GLANCE

The following statistics on various aspects of Israel's settler community in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are drawn from the most recent annual publication (1995) of Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics—*The*

Statistical Abstract of Israel. They portray a settler community growing more slowly than during the early years of the decade but at rates at or above the historical average. The charts below and opposite exclude

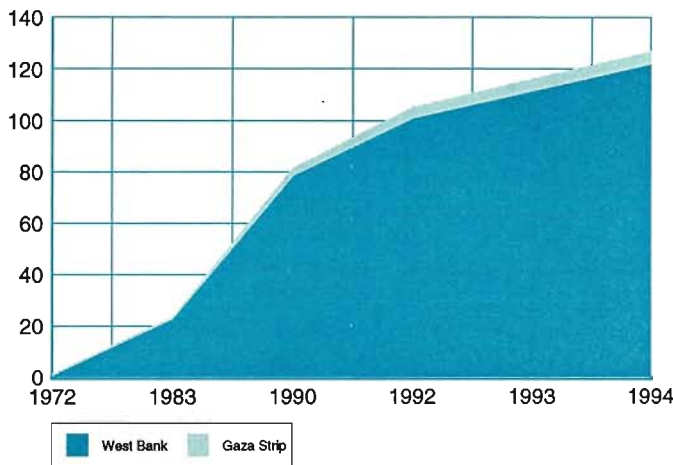
the almost 200,000 Israelis residing in East Jerusalem. Construction figures may also exclude some construction in settlements around Jerusalem. In some cases the figures used are not internally consistent.

Sources of Population Growth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 1994



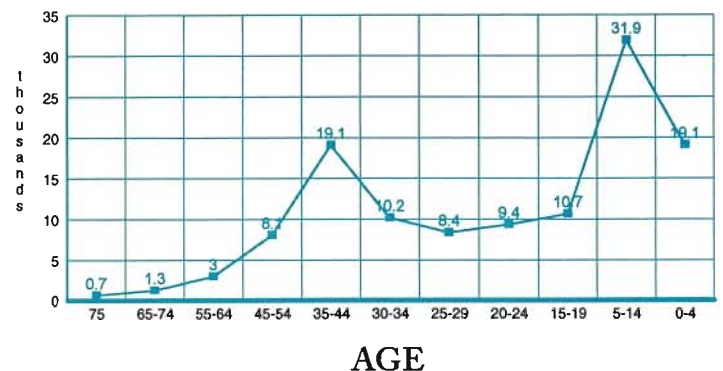
- Total population growth in Israel in 1994 was 2.7%; settler growth was 9.8%, over three times the national figure.
- The settlements also absorbed 1,000 new immigrants. Israel, it will be remembered, committed itself in 1990 to a policy of not encouraging immigrant settlement in the territories.
- Israelis are still moving across the Green Line in large numbers. This internal migration is also considered by the United States to be part of the “natural increase” in settler population and has thus not been a topic of U.S. criticism since the August 1992 understandings between President George Bush and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Settler Population, 1972–1994
(thousands)



■ Note the almost 20% increase in the settler population of the Gaza Strip during the 1992–1994 period.

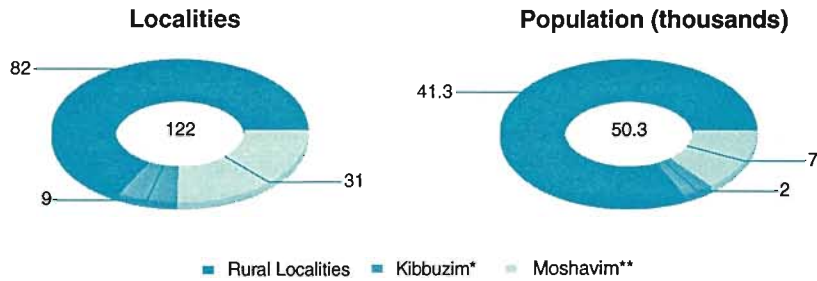
Population by Age, 1994
(thousands)



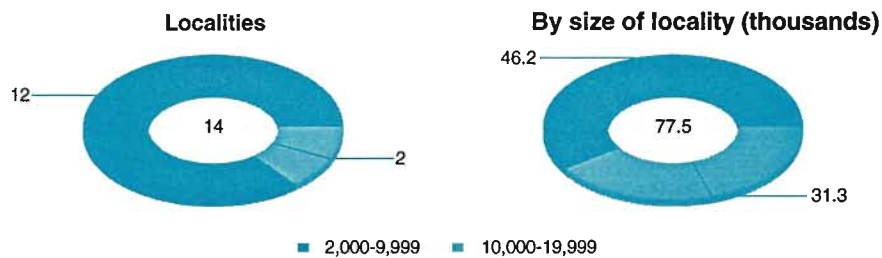
- The median national age is 26.7 years—significantly higher than the median settler age of 19.7.
- 42% of the settler population is under 14 years of age; 50% is under 20 years of age.

Settler Localities and Population by Type of Locality, 1994

RURAL

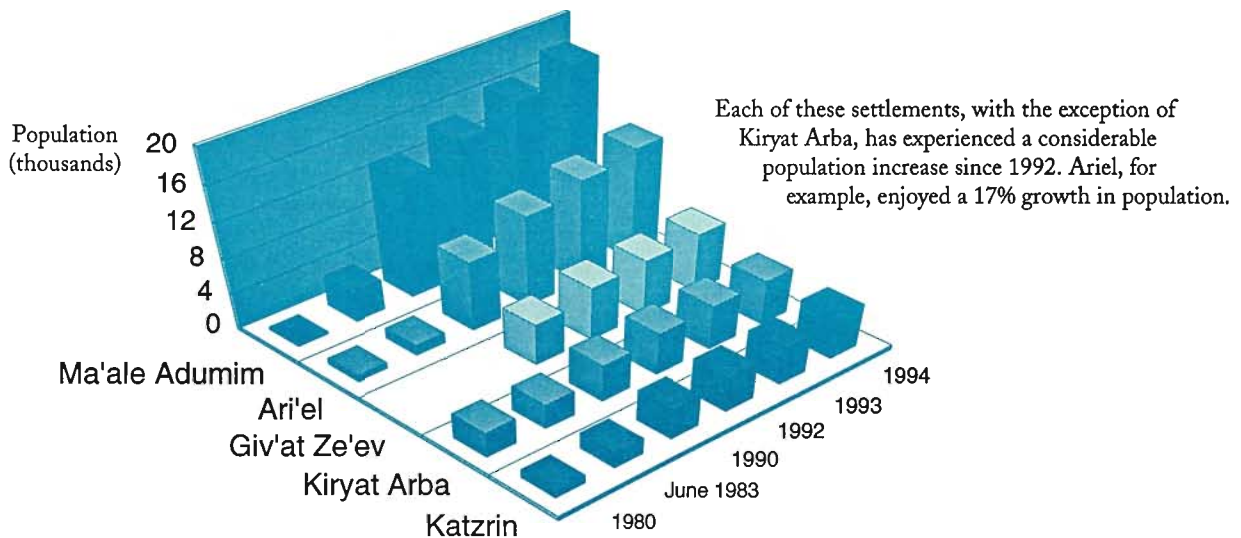


URBAN



Total population: 127,800. The 82 rural settlements average only 500 inhabitants each. The 14 urban settlements account for 60% of the total settler population.
 *In Kibbutzim all property is owned collectively.
 **In Moshavim only some property is owned collectively.

Population in Settlements Numbering above 5,000 Inhabitants, 1994



status agreement with the Palestinians.

"The current map is a very complex one, with settlements in all sorts of places, and we definitely must adapt ourselves to the new reality," the prime minister said in a television interview on March 6. "I said we would neither remove settlements, nor add new ones," he explained. "That is the difference between us and the Likud."

Peres has made clear his intention to engage the settler community in a dialogue aimed at achieving two goals:

- to increase the chance that settlers and the religious parties representing them will be more amenable to political collaboration with the Labor Party after the May elections;
- to reduce settler fears that Oslo will force their evacuation or their transfer to Palestinian rule.

Labor Encourages Settlers

The pre-election season has provided a forum for the Labor Party leaders to amplify their views on the future of settlements. Without exception, these statements have demonstrated Labor's intention to reassure settlers and Israelis generally that they intend to preserve the special status of settlers and settlements achieved during the Oslo process as well as to continue Israeli military control of settlement areas.

Haim Ramon, currently minister of the interior and leader of a younger generation of "doves" in the Labor Party, believes that "Yossi Beilin's idea is the only solution: that is, most of the settlers will remain under Israeli rule and the question of sovereignty over these areas will remain open for 15-20 years."

Beilin, a cabinet minister, said that he prefers the creation of large blocs of Israeli settlements in the West Bank annexed to Israel.

As for the settlements not under Israeli sovereignty," he added, "no one is suggesting to evacuate or move them. The options will be in the hands of settlers themselves: to stay in an area not under Israeli sovereignty, with some security agreement, or to move to another place with government assistance."

Beilin and Peres have endeavored to increase the prospect of religious-settler votes in favor of Peres' candidacy by negotiating an agreement with Rabbi Yoel ben Nun, a member of YESHA (the Council of Jewish Settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip). Ben Nun has said that he and other settlers would organize support for Peres' re-election if Peres guarantees the future of all settlements under Israeli sovereignty as part of a final status agreement, continues building in settlements, and makes a public goodwill gesture such as increased budgets for settlements or recognition of their master plans.

According to *Ha'aretz*, on April 3 Peres "agreed in principle that settlements will not be evacuated and agreed to the settlement bloc concept aimed at creating territorial continuity between settlements." One day earlier the Knesset approved an additional \$7 million allocation to the settlements.

Ben Nun's actions have been criticized by other YESHA

leaders who are officially supporting the election of the Likud. One settler leader, however, expressed approval for Ben Nun: "Putting all our eggs in Netanyahu's basket is political suicide."

In early April, Peres made perhaps the most substantive revision of his political strategy by announcing that, as with Syria, any agreement with the Palestinians on the final status of the occupied territories would be submitted to a public referendum. The intended political effect of the announcement is to increase the prospect that religious voters with doubts about Peres' commitment to settlements would vote for him, knowing that they could always vote against whatever agreement he reaches with the Palestinians. The referendum idea, first raised last November by Yossi Beilin in talks with religious parties after the Rabin assassination, has been welcomed by the Israeli public, which registered over 70 percent approval for the idea.

Opposition to the referendum came from the Meretz Party, Labor's current coalition partner. Meretz is expected to lose perhaps half of its twelve seats in the next Knesset, imperiling its chances of being included in a Peres government, and its liberal supporters oppose Peres' efforts to woo the religious-settler vote.

Likud Favors Autonomy

Likud has not endorsed the Oslo II agreement which resulted in the redeployment of the Israel Defense Forces out of the West Bank's major cities last autumn. The party supports the creation of an autonomous Palestinian entity in the territories that the IDF has already left.

Regarding settlements, the Likud promises simply to increase construction in all settlements, rather than follow Labor's policy of concentrating public resources in the greater Jerusalem region, where there is a ready market for additional housing.

Eliahu ben Elissar, a hard-line Likud leader, said he was "even ready to give up sovereignty [over the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip] if only there will be Israeli rule over settlements."

Raphael Eitan, leader of the Tsomet Party who is running on the Likud list, favors opening 2,700 unoccupied dwelling units in West Bank settlements to new immigrants. "We carry the flag of Greater Israel," Eitan said. "The state needs to lend a hand to settlement in all available territory."

Likud leader Netanyahu has promised that the Likud will "establish more and more new communities in the West Bank. We see in this a fundamental part of the settlement process of the people of Israel in its land," he said.

Netanyahu supports a "clear, solid, and massive presence in all of Hebron," part of which Israel was supposed to evacuate in April under terms of the Oslo II accord. "We will reach peace without giving up all our most basic values," he said. "Whoever is ready to rush out of Hebron is willing to leave half of Jerusalem. . . . The basic difference between us and Labor is that we will restore to the peace process with the Palestinians the principle that we are taking responsibility for security." ♦

detach Palestinians from Israel, but it is not separating Israel from the occupied territories. Peres has not modified his insistence that Israel's military remains in strategic control of the area west of the Jordan River and north of Egypt's coastal city of El Arish. Nor does separation mean that Israel is reducing its commitment to its 150,000 West Bank and Gaza settlers, whose numbers continue to increase.

Peres has taken pains to reassure settlers that the separation plan will not impair settlements. He has explained that, like Gaza, Israeli settlements in the West Bank will be organized into territorially contiguous blocs—a process now being facilitated by the construction of numerous bypass roads. Separation, in Peres' view, "does not mean barbed wire fences, or land mines. It means control over the comings and goings [of Palestinians] along different roads. There will be only one fence," he explained in a March 30 interview, "and that will be for 12 kilometers in the Kalkilya-Kfar Saba region."

The plan for separation entered Israel's national debate after the January 22, 1995, suicide bombing at Beit Lid, which killed 19 Israelis, 18 of them soldiers.

In his address to the nation after the attack, then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin declared, "We want to attain a separation between us and you [Palestinians]."

Separation Plan Unveiled

Under the patronage of Minister of Internal Security Moshe Shahal, a grandiose program of checkpoints, patrols, sensors, and border zones along the Green Line was devised by mid-1995. Shahal's April 1995 plan outlined the creation of a \$300 million "separation sphere" east of the Green Line, monitored by thousands of Israeli troops and police. Palestinian entry to Israel would be limited to eight crossing points and only to those Palestinians with permits. Electronic surveillance and patrols, rather than a fence, would monitor the 350-km-long zone (along with the existing fence around Gaza). Entry to Jerusalem would be similarly restricted, and no provision made for free passage between the Gaza Strip and West Bank as promised in the Cairo and Oslo accords.

The plan was almost unanimously criticized as a needlessly costly and ineffective response to the problems posed by suicide bombers. Security experts viewed it as a politically inspired plan that would not obstruct terror.

"In the entire history of our conflict with the Palestinians there has not been such an idiotic idea to rival that of separation," wrote columnist Yoel Marcus. "It is politically dangerous. It is militarily useless. And it is too burdensome on the public treasury."

Peres' opposition was one factor in former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's May 1995 decision not to implement the separation plan. Rabin also had to consider that Arafat had yet to assume control in the West Bank and had therefore not had the opportunity to demonstrate that he could preempt terrorist attacks. Establishing the separation plan before Arafat had the

chance to prove himself would have been viewed as an elementary lack of Israeli confidence in his ability to fulfill his part of the security bargain—damaging not only to Arafat but to Rabin himself. In the absence of attacks after Beit Lid, Rabin's credentials as "Mr. Security" enabled him to shelve the separation plan in May 1995 without political damage.

Peres today has few of the advantages that enabled Rabin to defer the separation plan one year ago. Notwithstanding the ongoing closure of the occupied territories imposed in the wake of the Hamas attacks earlier this year and the war in Lebanon, he enjoys no reservoir of public support as a "hawk" on Israeli security issues. His enthusiastic advocacy of the Oslo process is deemed suspect by an electorate traumatized by the Rabin assassination, the recent series of bombings, and the conflict on Israel's northern border.

The plan Peres endorsed is a scaled down \$100 million version of the Shahal plan unveiled one year ago. Like its predecessor, it aims at further regulating Palestinian access to Israel. A 2-3 km-zone, with fixed entry points to Israel, will be established east of the entire 350-km-long Green Line.

Today, in contrast to a year ago, there is virtually no criticism of the plan—its cost, its effectiveness, or what it says about the prospect of amicable relations between Israelis and Palestinians. Even the Likud, which formerly attacked the concept as a prelude to Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank, has bowed to the overwhelming public desire to shut Palestinians out of Israel. Likud politicians are far more confident than one year ago that Peres intends no such withdrawal. Netanyahu, who advocates IDF operations throughout the territories, including those areas under total Palestinian authority (Area A), has criticized the plan for not going far enough.

Settlers and Separation

Settlers no longer view separation as a means of "drying out" settlements. Many settlements long ago imposed restrictions on the use of Palestinian labor. Some even banned it outright. They support Peres' natural preference to engage in a selective rather than a blanket prohibition on Palestinian access to Israel—and for much the same reason. Settlers believe that they have a stake in the economic stability in the Palestinian sector, whose rehabilitation is threatened by the draconian measures now imposed on the occupied territories. If the separation plan makes permanent the harsher features of the current closure, settlers anticipate the creation of a "pressure cooker" in the occupied territories and fear that their security will deteriorate.

For just this reason, some U.S. diplomats question whether Peres intends to implement permanently a separation plan of the kind approved by his government. Tight controls on Palestinian movement will be kept in place until the May 29 elections. The Labor Party has presented separation as a key element in its platform. Support for a Palestinian economic revival—viewed as critical to an Israeli-Palestinian rapprochement—and a harsh separation regime are incompatible objectives. ♦

THE PERMANENT AGREEMENT WILL BE SUBJECT TO A NATIONAL REFERENDEUM

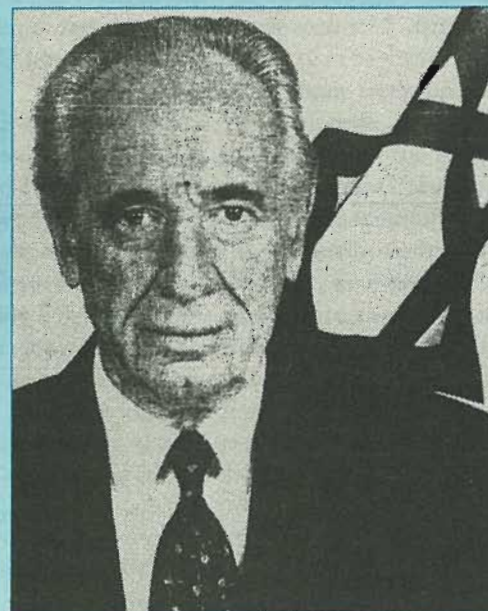
An Israeli government led by Shimon Peres commits itself to continue and to conduct peace talks with the Palestinian Authority on the permanent agreement according to the following principles:

- A united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty.
- Separation between Israel and the Palestinians.
We are here—they are there.
- The Jordan River is Israel's security border.
- Most of the Jewish communities [in the occupied territories] will remain under Israeli sovereignty.
- No recognition of the Palestinian right of return.

The agreement will be put to a referendum before signing.

THE PEOPLE WILL DECIDE ON THE PERMANENT AGREEMENT

A strong Israel with PERES



Source: *Yediot Aharanot*, April 9, 1996.

“... nothing will change the fact that East Jerusalem is occupied Palestinian territory and that the settlements are hostile and illegal actions. The U.S. side has a great moral responsibility: First, as a superpower, second, as the main sponsor of the peace process, and third, as the host on whose soil all agreements were signed. In my view, the U.S. side has not made a satisfactory . . . effort to put an end to Israeli violations, especially with regard to Jerusalem and the settlements issue. . . . The previous U.S. Administration made it a condition of issuing of the credit guarantees . . . that none of these funds would be spent on settlements or construction in the occupied territories.”

*Abmad Quray, minister of the economy in the Palestinian Authority,
in Al-Quds Al-'Arabi, February 27, 1996*

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