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QUARTERLY UPDATE ON
DEVELOPMENTS

EDITED BY GEOFFREY ARONSON

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Settlement Briefs

Geoffrey Aronson, a writer and analyst specializing in the Middle East, is the editor of the *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories* (hereinafter *Settlement Report*), a Washington-based bimonthly newsletter published by the Foundation for Middle East Peace. Unless otherwise stated, the items in this section have been written by Geoffrey Aronson directly for this section or drawn from material written by him for the *Settlement Report*. The Institute for Palestine Studies is grateful to the Foundation for permission to draw on its material. Major documents relating to settlements appear in the "Documents and Source Material" section.

Journal of Palestine Studies XXV, no. 3 (Spring 1996), pp. 131-139.

AFTER THE RABIN ASSASSINATION

Romancing the Right: Peres's New Approach

From *Settlement Report*, January 1996.

Since Rabin's assassination, the government of Shimon Peres has begun to establish new approaches to settlers and settlements that distinguish it from those of its predecessor. What has transpired thus far has served to illuminate the extent to which the central ideas concerning settlers embodied in the Oslo II agreement reflect a broad Israeli national consensus. The new government's actions also reveal a more concrete political aim—to split the right-wing coalition opposed to Labor's reelection in 1996 by drawing the religious community and moderate Likud voters into the Peres camp.

Peres has changed the public atmosphere of the relationship between the prime minister and the settlers. Rabin, even as he determined to protect settlements and had no intention of undermining their vitality, could not refrain from conducting a public firefight with the settlement movement. Peres, on the other hand, has used the post-assassination period not to isolate and denigrate the movement, but to encourage its mainstream to understand that the Oslo process protects rather than threatens their everyday interests if not their cosmological aims.

Peres has traditionally viewed settlements and settlers as a problem to be managed by negotiating a new relationship between them and the Palestinians. He believes that settlements can be permanently secured and expanded while satisfying Palestinian national aspirations, and a close reading of the Oslo II agreement reflects that Yasir Arafat has accepted this seductive view.

In the presentation of his government before Israel's Knesset on 22 November, Peres explained, "Even though we have reached an agreement with the Palestinian Authority, we have no intention of ignoring the distress of the settlers in the territories. . . . We will not lessen our responsibility for their security, and we will not turn a blind eye to their needs. And without violating agreements, we will talk with them, in order to resolve the real problems that have arisen—or will arise—because of changes on the ground."

This public commitment has been fortified by a number of initiatives. Peres has sought to split the settlement movement by attempting to isolate religious extremists from the settler mainstream. On 19 November, the cabinet declared that "extremist, violent, racist, and terrorist organizations are a severe danger to Israel's democratic regime, the security of the state, and public welfare; the cabinet will work to outlaw them."

Administrative detention orders have been issued, confining members of right-wing groups living in the Hebron area settlements associated, for example, with the late Meir Kahane. More than 120 indictments for such offenses as disorderly conduct, assault, and violating military commands have been handed down against settlement activists, including members of the "This is Our Way" and "Women in Green" groups that led protests last summer, notably at Efrat. A number of prominent rabbis were also called in for questioning, although all were released for lack of evidence. Among members of the government, Meretz Minister Yair Tzaban noted that the government had failed to respond to the "fanatic rabbis whose role in incitement is clearly evident." Another minister, Efraim Sneh, said that a confrontation with the radical right wing is unavoidable.

Peres, however, is attempting to defuse what Sneh and others see as an inevitable conflict. And it is true that even the actions taken so far have proven halfhearted. Peres has dismissed calls, for example, to end the massive government funding of the military education system of "Hesder Yeshivas" in the settlements, which combine military service with religious studies often led by rightist rabbis. Indeed, his actions so far suggest that he will continue to coddle settlers and to subsidize the incitement of extremist rabbis. He shows no inclination to stop funding the expansion of settlements by spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year. Like Rabin, he appears to view settlers as instruments of Israel's permanent control over the West Bank, but unlike the more combative Rabin he does not see them as bearers of an ideology that cannot be appeased but only fought and defeated.

Thus Peres has sought, with great success, to convince the National Religious Party (NRP) to moderate its opposition to Oslo. Peres views the NRP, which commands the support of many religious set-

tlers and whose prosettlement views led it in 1977 to desert Labor in favor of a coalition with the Likud, as vital to his plan of broadening public support for his government and the Oslo process. In his effort to court the NRP he has reversed his view of the need to dismantle the NRP settlement of Netzarim in Gaza. He also engaged Minister Yossi Beilin to declare, in the context of a dialogue with the NRP, not only that he was glad that the settlement in Hebron existed, but also that Israel "can attain a permanent arrangement in which most of the settlers would remain in their settlements and the areas they live in would be annexed to Israel and become part of sovereign Israel."

The NRP, and the settlers they represent, are far more comfortable with Peres's preference for a "functional" compromise of the kind outlined in the Oslo II accords rather than Rabin's preferred territorial "separation" from the West Bank.

In discussions Beilin conducted with the NRP during November, it became clear that the party was prepared to refrain from toppling the government if Peres promised to increase settler security, to support increased settlement construction (especially in greater Jerusalem), and not to move beyond the Oslo II accord before the 1996 election. Members of the Meretz party vetoed Peres's positive formal response to the NRP's demands. Even so, Peres won NRP support for Oslo II when the party's Knesset members issued a statement on 28 November that declared, "the NRP has not changed its position about Eretz Israel and our right to live in it. Nevertheless the NRP believes that no future government will embark on war in order to return to the [West Bank and Gazan] cities we left, unless security circumstances or gross violations call for a response."

An editorial in Israel's leading newspaper *Ha'Aretz* two days later observed that Beilin's remarks to the NRP were "especially surprising to those who thought that the Peres government would be at least as dovish as the previous government." It suggested that "the electoral future of the Labor Party depends on it being able to point to clear differences between it and the right."

Meretz minister Yossi Sarid, a supporter of Rabin's preference for territorial separation, criticized Labor's growing affinity for a functional solution: "To my dismay, a cantonization plan for the West

Bank is taking shape in the Labor Party today that returns us to the old and terrible idea of a functional compromise. I can only describe this plan as a policy of annexation-in-the-making, little different from the enclave plan of Ariel Sharon" (*Ma'ariv* 11/29).

Despite such reservations, it is increasingly clear that a national Israeli consensus supporting Oslo II, shrouded by rhetorical opposition during Rabin's tenure, has blossomed in the wake of his assassination. Peres has sought to encourage this sentiment by going all out to promote a spirit of national unity since he took over the government. The NRP statement is one indication of the backing he has received. Former Likud Minister Ariel Sharon reiterated a kind of support for the agreement when he noted that a Likud government could accept the implementation of Oslo II. Even Likud leader Benyamin Netanyahu has suggested a plan not far different from the Oslo II map, calling for a "demarcated autonomy, not a Palestinian state" in which Palestinians will rule Arab-inhabited areas while most of the West Bank, uninhabited by Arabs, will remain as a security area as defined in both the Camp David accords—formulated by a Likud government—and the Oslo agreement devised by Labor.

The growing accommodation to Peres's policies by the religious settler movement was given another boost when Uri Elitzur, the editor of the settler magazine *Nekuda*, published by the Council of Jewish Communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip [Yesha], called for a settler dialogue with the Palestinian Authority. The question, noted the editor, is not whether Oslo II is good or bad, but "how to live with it" (*Ha'Aretz* 12/14). The editorial caused an uproar among settlement leaders, forcing Elitzur to withdraw his suggestion. Nevertheless, the action reflected an evolving accommodation by settlers to the reality that Oslo II represents and an understanding that their future strategy has to aim at maximizing their advantages under the system Peres is creating.

In the West Bank itself, settlers may not like the Oslo agreement, but they are becoming reconciled to its existence. The implementation of the initial IDF redeployments, including the opening of bypass roads, has produced complaints by settlers, principally because of continuing attacks on West Bank roads. But redeployment has not yet produced any calamity.

Settlers are anticipating with trepidation what Oslo II calls "further redeployment": the transfer of parts of Area C—comprising almost three quarters of the West Bank—from Israeli to Palestinian rule. Settlers are determined that this land will remain under Israeli control.

Peres's Dreams for the Territories

Shalom Yerushaimi, "Trying to Understand Peres" (excerpts).*

Yehuda Harel and Hayim Guri, two of the founders of the Third Way Movement, always say that Shimon Peres is the only real supporter of Greater Israel in the present government. He did not want to partition the Land of Israel lengthwise and was not enthusiastic about separation between Israelis and Palestinians. Peres, who, already in the 1970s, established the settlements Ofra and Sebastia [now called Kedumim], was always opposed, according to those two, to dismantling any of the settlements. Moreover, Peres mocks the Likud hawk MK Tshai Ha'negbi and his friends who were evacuated by Begin from Yamit in 1982 and claims that he would not allow himself to be so evacuated. He dreams about the industrial parks on the frontier between Israel and the Palestinian entity where Palestinians will be employed, but apparently under Israeli ownership of these parks.

Anyone who listened to Peres's speech two days ago,** at the opening of the Knesset's winter session, and anyone who has heard his statements in various closed forums, understands better what Harel and Guri are saying. Peres would like to stabilize the map of the interim settlements, hoping that this will be the permanent map of Israel and the Palestinian entity—neither separation, nor annexation; to swallow the Palestinians, but not to eat them. That is why Peres is so enthusiastic about Oslo II, which gave the Palestinians control of only about 27 percent of the West Bank and left Israel with authority over Palestinian security and foreign affairs. Perhaps that is also the reason why he rubbed his hands with glee after the Accord was signed and said in a private conversation at the home of the Chinese ambassador, "We screwed the Palestinians."

* *Ma'ariv*, 25 October 1995, translated in Israel Shahak, *From the Hebrew Press*, December 1995.

** See Special Document B in *JPS* 98.

Indeed Peres focused the lengthy negotiations at Taba mainly about the authority to be transferred to the Palestinians and said hardly anything about the borders. Peres believes, or wants to believe, that the 140,000 Jewish settlers will remain in the territories in perpetuity and that no Jewish settlement will ever be evacuated.

"Eight hundred thousand citizens live in Israel, and there is a respectable and nonviolent arrangement between us and them. There is no reason why the same relations that exist in Israel should not exist there," said Peres in the Knesset, borne on the wings of imagination about his New Middle East. Unusually, this time the foreign minister did not mention the town Ma'alot-Tarshikha of Israel where Arabs and Jews live in harmony.

Peres did not stress that the Arabs who live in Israel recognize the Israeli government and agree to live under its sovereignty. They participate in the elections and are elected to the Knesset. In contrast, the tens of thousands of Jews who live in the territories among the Palestinian population do not recognize the Palestinian entity and do not want to accept its laws or to be elected to its governing bodies. They have extreme views and contain violent elements that do not believe in any reasonable arrangement with the Palestinians and pray for the day when the Oslo I and II accords would fall apart and Yasir Arafat would be brought to trial in an Israeli court and sentenced to death. Peres can receive accurate details about all this from the right-wing extremists such as Geula Cohen. . . .

Back to Square One: The January 1996 Peace Index*

From *Ha'Aretz*, 5 February 1996.**

The sharp rise in the Israeli public's support for the peace process immediately after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was—as we anticipated—temporary. It gave a transient expression to the general shock at the event or to the

* The Peace Index Project is conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Studies at Tel Aviv University; headed by Professor Efraim Ya'ar, Dr. Tamar Herman, and Professor Aryeh Nadler; and carried out by "Moodi'in Ezrahi."

** Provided over the internet by the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Information Division.

lack of a wish by a large part of those questioned to voice a different stand from that supported by the majority of the public.

That is brought out by the Peace Index's findings for January, which follow the trend of the findings from the end of November through December. Already in the previous two months, the findings had hinted that the significant rise in the wake of the assassination of the strength of the camp supporting the peace process did not express a substantive change in the pattern of stands taken by the Israeli Jewish public.

And indeed, the General Peace Index for January—in the survey conducted on 29 January—showed 60.3 points (compared to 73.1 right after the assassination, at the start of November; 65.7 at the end of November; and 62.1 at the end of December). In addition, the "Oslo" Index for January fell in comparison with its predecessor and stood at 51.5 points (compared to 57.9 right after the assassination; 58 at the end of November; and 55.8 at the end of December).

Perhaps an even more significant drop occurred in the level of support for full withdrawal from the Golan in return for full peace with Syria. In the previous month, those supporting, or greatly supporting, the withdrawal on those terms were 31.6 percent; and the opponents, or strong opponents, were 45.3 percent. In January, supporters totalled only 24.2 percent, and opposition rose to 54.8 percent.

There was also a meaningful decline in support of aspects relating to the scope of withdrawal from Golan. In December, 23.9 percent backed full withdrawal for full peace, while 30 percent opposed any withdrawal. In January, by contrast, only 18.3 percent agreed to full withdrawal, 37.7 percent accepted partial withdrawal, and 41.7 percent opposed any withdrawal.

There were also substantial changes in public preference in political and party issues, as evinced in replies regarding candidates for prime minister: right after the assassination, 57.3 percent favored Shimon Peres; while 24.5 percent backed Benjamin Netanyahu. In December, 53.0 percent of those questioned said they would vote for Peres, and 30.4 percent for Netanyahu. The latest survey (January) showed Peres being supported by 46 percent, and Netanyahu garnering 35.2 percent.

In effect, the January index shows virtually a return to the prevailing pattern of

forces in the country before Rabin's assassination. This finding is particularly interesting in the light of the changes in the Jewish public's stands toward the Palestinians and their leadership. On this issue, two kinds of questions were posed: one related to the conduct of affairs within the zone of the Palestinian authority; and one that dealt with the pattern of relations between the Palestinians and Israel.

In the first context, we reverted, *inter alia*, to the question asked previously: "How, in your opinion, have the Palestinians been managing affairs till now in their autonomy?" Those with a clear opinion split as follows: Very badly or badly, 27.8 percent (compared with 70 percent in November 1994); rather well or very well, 20.3 percent (compared with 5.7 percent a year ago).

An example of the change in the public's views on relations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel can be found in answers to the question: "To what extent, in your opinion, have the Palestinians so far been carrying out their share of the Oslo agreement?" In January, 21.5 percent maintained that the Palestinians are altogether or sufficiently doing so (compared to 10 percent in November 1994). And 27.7 percent thought they were not either sufficiently or altogether carrying out their part (compared to 57.4 percent in November 1994).

A significant change can also be discerned in the public's attitude in this country [Israel] to Yasir Arafat. When people were asked to give their opinion whether Arafat today is more of a statesman or more of a terrorist, 40.6 percent said he was more of a statesman, while 34.3 percent said he was more a terrorist. (The remainder took an intermediate stand.) This was a considerable change of image compared to December 1994. Then, only 23.3 percent thought he was more a statesman, while 43.7 percent regarded him as more a terrorist.

The January survey indicates, in addition, a marked rise in the sense of personal security by those responding. Of them, 36 percent thought the personal security situation of the residents of Israel had improved since the peace process began, while 29.9 percent thought it had remained unchanged and 30.9 percent felt the situation had worsened. The remainder had no clear stand on the matter.

FACTS ON THE GROUND

In December 1994, by contrast, the answers were 16.4 percent (much better); 27.7 percent (the same); and 54.8 percent (slightly or much worse). This means that while the number of those thinking that the personal security situation had deteriorated was much larger in the past than those who thought it had improved, today the number of those thinking it is better than before the peace process is slightly higher than those thinking it has worsened.

How is it possible, therefore, to explain the fact that the improvement in the image of the Palestinians and the rise in the sense of personal safety by Jewish Israelis did not contribute to a higher level of support for the peace process, anticipated immediately after Rabin's assassination? The answer resembles that given in the past when people were asked how to explain the fact that, even after serious terrorist attacks, support for the peace process had not vanished.

We explained then that the basic stands of the public in the country vis-à-vis the peace process are not influenced by exceptional events, at least not in the long run, and not substantively. Accordingly, even positive assessments regarding the functioning of the adversary are not enough to alter, in a period for some months or even years, the positions originating in basic beliefs, in belonging to groups, and in deeper concepts, which in most cases have a strong component of nontrust in Arabs and no desire for coming closer to them.

As proof, even today a decisive majority of those replying (62.8 percent) agree with the argument that most Palestinians have not reconciled themselves to the existence of Israel and would destroy her if they could. Only 21.2 percent of those replying said they oppose this claim. As in the past, most Israelis (73.5 percent) also believe that even in a situation of peace it is preferable, from Israel's viewpoint, to have a closed and clearly-defined border with the Palestinian entity, and only a minority of 13.2 percent oppose such a separation.

Settler Population Grows by 4 Percent in 1995

From *Settlement Report*, January 1996.

Israel's settler population in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip (excluding annexed East Jerusalem) grew 4 percent to 133,000 during 1995, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). This growth rate is higher than for any region in Israel. According to the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip (Yesha), however, the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza now numbers 147,200.

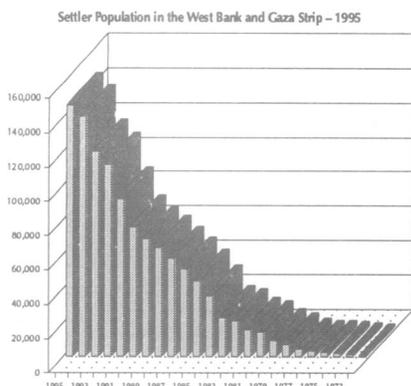
All settler population numbers are necessarily approximations, reflecting informed estimates as well as either the political bias or caution of the reporting organization. Yesha's figures, which are based on local tax records, are usually higher than those of Israel's CBS.

The Yesha estimates are the first that have been issued in more than one year. According to a report in the newspaper *Ha'Aretz*, "Yesha has refrained from publishing estimates because of the government's policy of freezing construction and fears that reports of an increase in population would result in further construction cutbacks."

Settler Population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Year	Estimated Population*	Year	Estimated Population*
1995	147,220	1983	22,800
1994	140,000	1982	21,000
1993	120,000	1981	16,119
1992	112,000	1980	12,424
1991	92,000	1979	10,000
1990	76,000	1978	7,361
1989	69,000	1977	4,400
1988	63,600	1976	3,176
1987	57,700	1975	2,581
1986	51,100	1974	2,019
1985	44,100	1973	1,514
1984	35,200	1972	1,182

* Not including Israelis living in annexed Jerusalem. Population figures vary [sometimes by as much as 20 percent] depending upon the source. These numbers should be considered conservative approximations.



Building Quietly: An Interview with the Housing Minister

From *Settlement Report*, January 1995.

Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, a former general in the IDF, has held the construction portfolio in Israel since July 1992. During that time, he has eased the transition from a housing construction market forced into overdrive by massive immigration from the former Soviet Union; absorbed large numbers of dwelling units left empty when immigration slowed; and continued construction at a pace enabling the continuing growth and expansion of settlement communities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Unlike his predecessor Ariel Sharon, Ben-Eliezer prefers, in his own words, to "build quietly." Like Sharon, Ben-Eliezer, known by his nickname "Fuad," has also been called "the Bulldozing Builder" for his energetic efforts on behalf of settlers.

Since the death last year of Mordechi Gur, Ben-Eliezer has been an important government contact with settlement leaders, with whom he meets weekly. He has been their advocate in a largely successful effort to market hundreds of completed but unsold apartments in settlements such as Ariel. And he sympathizes with widespread settler efforts to extend the boundaries of settlements beyond the fences that surround their built-up lands to as far as their planning authority permits.

He expressed his views on settlements in an interview in the Israeli periodical, *Bonus*, on 29 September 1995.

On Jerusalem

Ben-Eliezer: There are building sites in East Pisgat Ze'ev, Har Homa, in Gilo, in Ramot [all located in East Jerusalem], and also other parts of the city. We have authorized 1,100 units in Pisgat Ze'ev, 2,300 in Har Homa. . . . We are in an era of heavy political pressure, there are many "Movements Now" that cause problems for our construction efforts. There is Peace Now and Peace Yesterday and Peace Two Days Ago, and with all these movements I look for peace with our children, with our young couples, and I need to provide them with housing.

The Politics of Settlement Construction

Question: Until a year ago you were the preferred minister of the right wing—the Bulldozer of Building, that didn't care about Meretz and the moderate ministers in your own party. You spoke of Greater Jerusalem, of the confiscation of land, and even today you repeat these expressions.

Ben-Eliezer: Fuad does everything quietly.

Question: That is to say?

Ben-Eliezer: In Ma'ale Adumim, in Givat Ze'ev and Beitar, I am building. It is clear that all the noise [protest] doesn't affect this effort. The moment that I have the complete protection of the prime minister, I build quietly. My goal is to build and not to encourage opposition to my efforts. . . . Meretz is not exactly a party which believes that Har Homa should be built for Jews. It is a fact that Har Homa is about to be put up for bid. The neighborhood will be built, even if Meretz manages to put thousands of its activists in the streets and prevents construction.

I prefer to build and not to play with politics. It is important to me to build with the greatest effort in Givat Ze'ev, Ma'ale Adumim, and Beitar. [Jerusalem Mayor Ehud] Olmert speaks of politically joining [these areas with Jerusalem]. This may occur, but not today. What is important to me is to build, build, build, and build some more. . . . No one considers raising the possibility of dismantling Ma'ale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev. It won't happen.

Question: The ministerial committee on settlement established to vet new construction has prevented you from building according to your priorities?

Ben-Eliezer: What a question! Of course! This is a political committee [established

after the dispute over construction near Efrat settlement in January 1995]. It had not permitted me to do all that I want, but in the meantime, I get along with it, and continue to build in Ma'ale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev. Within the framework of limitations imposed by the ministerial committee we continue to build.

On Greater Jerusalem

Question: Do you see Ma'ale Adumim, Givat Ze'ev, and Beitár as part of Jerusalem?

Ben-Eliezer: Without a doubt. I see one Jerusalem. I see a chain of settlements that surround it in two circles. The first circle is Ma'ale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev. The natural growth of these communities will continue. If you ask whether apartment prices in these places will fall—my answer is no. Half of Meretz lives in Givat Ze'ev and Ma'ale Adumim.

Question: Will these communities be under the authority of the Palestinians?

Ben-Eliezer: God forbid! That isn't to say that the Arabs don't believe otherwise. It is important to know what we want. . . . I, Fuad, don't see any possibility of returning Gush Etzion. For me, this is Greater Israel. Givat Ze'ev, Ma'ale Adumim, and Beitár are integral parts of the State of Israel.

Question: And what of the Palestinians?

Ben-Eliezer: We need to impart to them that we are the authority which must also serve them.

SETTLEMENT BRIEFS

"The most ridiculous Likud accusation is that of abandoning the settlers. The agreement was delayed for months in order to guarantee that all the settlements would remain intact and that the settlers would have maximum security. This entailed an immense financial investment. The situation in the settlements was never better than that which was created following the Oslo II agreement."

Yossi Beilin, Ma'ariv, 27 September 1995

"The security of the settlers is the heart of Oslo-II. The agreement is detailed and complex particularly because we wanted to guarantee 100 percent security—if there is such a thing—while not removing any settlements. These were the prime minister's two instructions, and they dictated

the structure of the accord. The agreement is primarily security-oriented. It is multifaceted, but its core is security, and we can ensure the security of the residents. The areas of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza have always been the target of attacks. Nobody thinks that the attacks will now disappear, but we do believe that residents of the area have been offered an appropriate answer."

Mata Vilna, Deputy Chief of Staff, Davar Rishon, 24 November 1995

"Since January 1993, when the Rabin government ordered a halt to all planning for West Bank settlements, the government's 'exceptions committee' has approved 417 requests for settlement construction and planning, according to information provided by the government of MK Dedi Zucker.

"The government reported that 80 settlement plans were deposited and 89 approved by the committee. The plans range from single building plots to settlement master plans."

Yedi'ot Ahronot, 26 October 1995

"In 1996, military expenditures and repayment of military debt will total 54 percent of the budget. In the 1995 budget, for comparative purposes, this section swallowed only a little less [52 percent]. The peace process remains far from producing a proportional change in the state budget.

"The increase in the security budget results not only from the fact that the process is still in its initial stages, but also because of the character of the agreement with the Palestinians. Because of the new military redeployment in the territories, including the paving of bypass roads [for the settlers] and heavy logistical burdens, military expenditures will increase in coming years. . . .

"In the budget of the ministry of agriculture, for example, a sum of \$40 million is allocated for 'new settlement in the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip.' Only recently the ministry began the 'Growth of the Negev' project, part of which includes extensive benefits to the settlers of the Katif Bloc [in the Gaza Strip], which has been annexed for these purposes to the Negev. Every new applicant who wants to settle is entitled to monetary grants for the development of hot houses and fish ponds."

Davar Rishon, 27 November 1995

“The government has approved a 15-percent increase in the budget of the Jewish Agency Settlement Department. Some 140 million shekels are earmarked for the development of the Golan Heights, Jordan Valley, and Dead Sea areas. Finance Minister Shohat also said he will approve an additional 15 million shekels for regional projects. The allocations are part of the government’s overall development budget.”

Qol Yisra'el, 26 December 1995

“The government has decided to ‘thaw’ some seven hundred apartments and cottages in Ariel which have been frozen for the past three years, since the Labor-led government came to power. . . .

“The housing units were built by the Africa-Israel, Dankner, Schechter, and Ashdar construction companies, as well as others, during the Likud government’s term. When Labor came to power, all the construction works in Judea and Samaria were frozen, and the Construction and Housing Ministry bought all the apartments these companies had built.”

Yedi'ot Ahronot, 31 December 1995

“Anyone who still recalls the evacuation of Yamit in 1982 and the massive demonstrations of the settlers immediately following the Oslo agreement can see that there is no genuine concern here and that the rebellion [settler demonstrations at Efrat in July 1995] was a play staged by the settlers. It is no coincidence that the secular right wing did not succeed in mobilizing thousands of its supporters for these demonstrations. The secular right wing knows that the government is faithfully and thoroughly implementing the demands it has posed for years. In an interview in *Davar*, 14 July, Sharon boasted that the plan now implemented is exactly what he has been proposing since 1974 and he even praised Rabin for his cunning, using such statements as: ‘I also have no doubt that there are people abroad who think that Rabin gave the Palestinians some big deal. No way. These things are being done with cunning.’”

Tanya Reinhart in Yedi'ot Ahronot, 19 July 1995