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NEW SETTLEMENT INITIATIVES ACROSS THE GREEN LINE

by Joseph Zuriel

The West Bank is opening up for settlement; in the last 18 months 15 settlements have been established. Although it seems that there has been no clear settlement policy nor has there always been complete coordination between all the organs concerned with settlement, the results have been impressive. Since the end of the Six Day War, 109 settlements extending over the Golan Heights, the Jordan River Valley, Judea and Samaria, the Yamit region and the Gaza strip, and the Sinai have been set up.

This deployment necessitated investments on a scale to which the Settlement Department of the World Zionist Organization/Jewish Agency had not been accustomed. Pressing factors emerged, resulting in part from policy considerations and in part from Gush Emunim. One of these, discussed at the end of February, deals with the possibility that a Jewish city will be built south of Nablus. At least two ministers are working towards the fulfilment of this idea -- Chairman of the Ministerial Committee on Settlement Ariel Sharon, and Minister of Education and Culture Zevulun Hammer.

Considerations and Pressures

The promise made four months ago to Gush Emunim that a Jewish city would "in time" be established in the area stands. Regardless of whether this commitment will soon be carried out or be postponed, the budget available today for the settlements across the Green Line is impressive. After harsh arguments between Simcha Ehrlich and the head of the Settlement Department of the World Zionist Organization/Jewish Agency, Matityahu Drobles, and following the intervention of the Prime Minister in the controversy between the two, Ehrlich last week authorized the amount of IL 1.1 billion. If we recall the gaps between what the various government authorities requested and what they actually received from the Ministry of Finance, we find that the budget for settlement across the Green Line was doubled, and that all the items listed in the proposed budget were authorized.

This response resulted from policy considerations and from pressures from already existing settlements still in the first stages

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of consolidation. The government had to decide either to consolidate what it had already authorized or to create a situation whereby the nucleus settlements would collapse and all that was already invested would be lost.

A study of the details of the budget for the coming fiscal year demonstrates that the main points were promised, and at times even more:

- In Judea and Samaria, 18 settlements and 4 Nahal camps
- In the Jordan Valley, 20 settlements and 3 Nahal camps
- In the Golan Heights, 30 settlements and 3 Nahal camps
- In the Yamit region, 15 settlements
- In the Gaza Strip, 4 settlements
- In Sinai, 4 settlements and 1 Nahal camp.

The settlement organs have their reservations. Arik Sharon, Chairman of the Ministerial Committee on Settlement Matters, and Matityahu Drobles, Chairman of the Settlement Department of the World Zionist Organization/Jewish Agency, as well as the leadership of Gush Emunim -- which sees itself as the vanguard and stimulator of settlement across the Green Line -- claim that the settlement policy is not clear, and that it is being carried out in patchwork style. They also protest the fact that every camp set up is portrayed as a "political problem" as well as objecting to decision-making carried out in secret, and with all kinds of excuses.

While Arik Sharon is involved with the areas across the Green Line out of political considerations, and with the conviction that there will never be an Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria, the Jordan Valley and the Gaza Strip -- Matityahu Drobles, on the other hand, aims at one main objective: to provide pioneering challenges for Jewish youth here and abroad, and to respond affirmatively to initiatives of young families wishing to settle across the Green Line.

There are opposing views on this matter within the Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency, and certainly within the Ministerial Committee on Settlement. Those in favor of mass settlement and of establishing facts in the area in the face of important policy decisions claim that hundreds of families enthusiastic for settlement could be aroused. Those making this claim base themselves on lists found in the hands of Gush Emunim. According to them, approximately 1500 families from the big cities, development towns, moshavim and kibbutzim are prepared for a massive settlement operation.

Those opposed to them claim in contrast that there is little substance behind these lists, just as there is little substance behind Gush Emunim's claim that it is a mass movement supported by most of the Israeli people, be it silently or in actual deeds. One of these is Gideon Patt, Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. As a member of the Ministerial Committee on Settlement, he is conscious of the magic inherent in the word "settlement" or "pioneering effort." But he reasons that the government cannot be dragged into this sensitive area and that any settlement decision

across the Green Line is inherently a political decision. Minister Patt does not see in Gush Emunim the virtues that his colleague Minister Arik Sharon attributes to them. According to him, Gush Emunim are not so much representatives of a settlement movement as they are a political movement.

New Concepts

In the Settlement Department there are those who question the eagerness to rush the setting up of Jewish settlements across the Green Line. They claim that in the last several years new settlement concepts have emerged, whose precise nature no one quite knows. One hears of a "yishuv kafri" -- a rural-type settlement, of a "yishuv kehilati" -- a community settlement, and it is not quite clear what character these would take, what human element would be absorbed, how resilient they would be, how they would integrate into a mostly Arab area.

The Gush Emunim leadership does not bother itself with this controversy. They would like to see the subject of settlement across the Green Line directly in the hands of the government, and meanwhile take upon themselves the task of catalyzer and of spurring on efforts, forced by circumstances into becoming a settlement movement.

Benefiting the Most

Gush Emunim has no experience in settlement but there is within the movement a group of educated young people of vision who know no obstacle and who believe in the righteousness of the path they are taking.

Today the Gush Emunim movement finds itself in the status of a "common law wife." Its representatives are received in every ministry, and the officials relate to their demands. But there are many powerholders in the government ministries as well as in the Jewish Agency who view this movement as a deviant and unusual phenomenon that cannot be trusted too much, often trying to unravel the true intentions of their members and their actions.

However, doubts and suspicions on one side, reality on the other. Experience shows that it was actually Gush Emunim which knew how to derive the utmost benefit from differences in outlook within the government and among the executives of the Jewish Agency. It manoeuvred well between "hawks" and "doves" and the outcome was once more settlement, one more camp in Judea and Samaria.

The results are known. During the last year and a half, 15 settlements have either been set up or are in the process of being set up, in which hundreds of families live. One should note that Samaria, which until recently had been off limits to Jewish settlers, has now been opened up.

Settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley

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| 1. Elon Moreh | 15. Elazar | 29. Masu'a |
| 2. Bet Horon | 16. Kfar Etzion | 30. Ma'ale Adumim B' |
| 3. Matityahu | 17. Migdal-Oz | 31. Ro'i |
| 4. Nof Zuf | 18. Rosh Zurim | 32. Almog |
| 5. Selait | 19. Kohav Hashahar | 33. Gilgal |
| 6. Shnor | 20. Mevo Shilo | 34. Gitit |
| 7. Shomron | 21. Rimonim | 35. Itav |
| 8. Bet-El | 22. Reihan | 36. Mitzpe Shalem |
| 9. Mitzpe Yeriho | 23. Argaman | 37. Naaran |
| 10. Ofra | 24. Bikot | 38. Netiv |
| 11. Shilo | 25. Hamra | 39. Phatsael |
| 12. Tapuah | 26. Mehola A' | 40. Kalia |
| 13. Tekoa | 27. Mehola B' | 41. Tomer |
| 14. Alon Shvut | 28. Mehura | 42. Yafit |

