

The Uprising's Impact on Israeli Security

This is the third and concluding part of the study on Israeli security and the intifada which we began in preceding issues of *Democratic Palestine*. We call attention to the fact that this study was made on the basis of information available to us as of last autumn. However, we stand by our conclusions with one exception: In this study we tended to downplay the possibility of massive Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel, whereas this has since become a major danger facing the Palestinian cause.

From failure to end the uprising militarily, and the resulting demoralization and loss of stature of the army, stem all the other questions about Israeli security, pertaining to settlements, international relations, demography, relations to the Palestinians in the Zionist state itself, economic considerations, etc., which we will address below.

Settlements - A provocation

Our examination of settlements in the first part of this study showed that their role in security is ambiguous; they are more related to the drive for control of the land than to defense needs. The uprising, and the international push for a political solution that accompanied it, led part of the Zionist leadership to clarify their position, as when Rabin said on Israeli radio, May 2nd, that settlements don't necessarily contribute to security with the exception of those in the North, Golan Heights, Jordan Valley and Arava, but that they do symbolize the «return to Zion.» However, the overriding phenomenon is polarization on the role of settlements, which parallels the controversy concerning territorial compromise.

Those who continue to oppose any withdrawal also maintain that settlements have a security role. Shamir and Sharon are the most outspoken proponents of this line. In an interview printed in the *Washington Report*, September 1989, Sharon said that the following in answer to a question about self-rule for the Palestinians: «...people must understand, the settlements are not an obstacle to peace. On the contrary, the settlements are a very important factor in our security. Once we manage to accomplish our plan, the possibility of granting that autonomy becomes wider». Here it is obvious that security is doublespeak for demographic and military control that would preempt any concessions to the Palestinians. On May 7th, Arens stated that the settlers are the main obstacle to a Palestinian state.

If such statements are often rhetorical, let us look at what the Israeli government has actually done concerning settlements, as an indication of the importance attached to them. In the first year of the uprising, two new settlements were established in the West Bank, and the year ended with the Labor-Likud coalition agreement - a compromise - to create eight more settlements within a year. In 1989, at least two new settlements have been

established, while the settler compound in Al Khalil (Hebron) was expanded. Throughout the period, the Housing Ministry has pushed for building new houses in existing settlements. While this is clearly a drop compared to previous years, we cannot attribute it solely to the impact of the uprising, for settlement-building had already slowed in the mid-eighties due to economic constraints. This summer there was extensive land confiscation in areas of the West Bank for expanding settlements, and roads to settlements and military outposts, while the government was reported to have a new plan for expanding settlements in Jerusalem.

Ironically, the intifada has actually spurred an attempt to revive the settlement boom begun by Begin's government in 1977. An article in *Haaretz*, September 1, 1989, was entitled: «Despite the intifada. Also because of it.» It reported that the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip grew by 10.3% in 1988; a slightly higher increase is expected this year; and more families have applied for places in settlements than could be accommodated. This increase is much less than in earlier years; still it is noteworthy because of its political connotations. As explained by one of the new settlers: «I'm very fearful, but we came to settle here despite the intifada. The intifada has strengthened our feelings that we have to show the Arabs we aren't afraid of them.» Another family quoted in the article had moved from Hadera (Israel), because Palestinian Arabs had begun moving into their neighborhood. In the West Bank, they

Correction

In the first installment of this study, there was a mistake in the last half of the middle paragraph on page 20, second column. Here we print the sentence as it should read:

A report from Tel Aviv University Strategic Studies Center referred to a poll which showed that Israeli public opinion was becoming more hard-line on short-term issues (increased support to repression vs. the intifada), even while becoming more realistic concerning a long-term solution (those who accept a Palestinian state rose to 25%, compared to 20% at the onset of the intifada).