

By June, 1981 there were over 60 inhabited Jewish settlements in the West Bank with a total population of 25,000 (Benvenisti, 1981:12). New regional councils were established to regulate the affairs of those settlements as a precedent to incorporating them into the Israeli state. By mid-1981 the area of the West Bank subject to Israeli law and municipal regulation was larger than the total municipal area of West Bank cities (ibid.). Nor was this annexation confined to administrative and legislative matters. Yehuda Litani, former Ha'aretz chief correspondent in the West Bank, revealed an extensive scheme for settlement integration into the Israeli army defensive network. Anticipating the Likud's replacement by the Labour bloc in the Summer of 1981 (falsely as it turned out), Settlers Associations, in alliance with segments of the Israeli army, sought to preempt any possible territorial concession by force of arms:

When Ariel Sharon spoke of a "struggle among brothers and worsening of relations" he knew what he was talking about. The settlers in Judea and Samaria must by now be considered full-fledged military units. They are equipped with weapons and other military equipment in the framework of the army's regional defence system. They have, also under the Likud government which lends them its support, demonstrated their skills -- outside the I.D.F. framework -- by smashing car windows at El-Bira and Halhoul, in what they termed "operations to impose law and order." In the days to come, under what is expected to be an Alignment government which will be of less friendly disposition than the Likud, they will most probably wish to demonstrate their ability to "maintain order" and to prove that "the land of Israel belongs to the people of Israel."

The moment a base has been established on the ground it will play its part in troubled days: it will disrupt every political move tied to any concession to the Arabs whatsoever, even where the realization of autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza -- a Likud sponsored plan -- is concerned.