

water needs through such means as desalination plants, reclamation<sup>1</sup> of sewage water, and raising efficiency of water use. Consequently, there is a growing conviction in Israel that the only real opportunity to solve Israel's "grave" water problems lies in tapping new resources lying beyond its borders, namely in the West Bank and South Lebanon.<sup>2</sup> Conforming with this policy, Israel is beginning to exploit surplus reserves in the West Bank which, as indicated earlier, amount to more than 150 mcm per year, concentrated mostly in the eastern drainage basin. A large part of this surplus will be exploited in meeting the rapidly growing needs of West Bank Israeli settlements.

3. In pursuance to its opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian state, Israel appears keen on preempting the economic viability of such a state should that be considered as a solution to the Palestinian problem. Even in the event that a Palestinian entity is eventually established, Israel seems intent on undermining its productive base and maintaining it subservient to its own economy. Constricting water supplies available to West Bank agriculture would be an effective step in that direction.

With the onset of occupation, Israel had its main opportunity to achieve these objectives. It immediately assumed total control of all water resources and started to promulgate policies and measures which serve its interests. A cornerstone of Israel's

1. For a comprehensive evaluation of Israel's water crisis and its alternative solutions, the reader is referred to Uri Davis, et al, "Israel's Water Policies", *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, Vol IX, No 2, Winter 1980.
2. This is clear enough in the famous statement made by Ben Gurion ... "We should remember that the continuity of the Jewish state necessitates that the water of Litani and Jordan rivers be included within our borders". *Ma'ariv*, April 18, 1972.

water policies in that direction is the ban imposed on further drilling of tube wells for agricultural uses (only one has been drilled since 1967), and attempts to minimize the discharging capacity of existing wells.

The Water Department has installed meters in all wells and imposed a ceiling on quantities to be discharged. Violations of overpumping are taken to military courts. Conversely, Israeli settlers have drilled many deep-bore wells with a considerably stronger discharging capacity. While Arab wells tap only a shallow aquifer, Israeli wells go three times deeper (around 500 meters) where they reach much richer aquifers. This has inflicted serious damage on neighbouring Arab wells and springs, causing many of them to go completely dry.<sup>1</sup>

The number of Israeli wells and their annual discharge is not published. According to official data for 1977-78 there were 17 wells in the Jordan Valley which discharged during that year more than one third of the quantity produced by 314 Arab wells (see Table II-22). However, the actual number of Israeli-owned or controlled wells is certainly larger. There is evidence that there are at least 27 wells owned directly by Israeli settlements (i.e. the Mekorot Water Company). In addition, seven other wells are supposed to be utilized for domestic purposes by Arab communities but owned by the Water Department in the Military Administration. The ultimate proprietorship and utilization of

1. Two examples are those of Bardala (North Jordan Valley) and Auja (near Jericho). The former had its two wells and 11 springs dried out after a neighbouring settlement drilled a deep-bore well in 1977. Auja springs and wells had similar problems in the summer of 1978.