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Zionist Revisionism and the Likud: From Jabotinsky to Netanyahu

JABOTINSKY'S LEGACY

The main division within Zionism has been between the Labour and the Revisionist movements. The latter, the forerunner of the present-day Likud, was established by Vladimir (Zeev) Jabotinsky in 1925 and advocated the 'revision' of the Palestine British Mandate to include Transjordan as well as Palestine.¹ Many Israeli and pro-Zionist authors still propagate the myth that the Palestine Mandate had encompassed both Palestine and Transjordan, an area within which the 'promised' 'Jewish National Home' of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 might be established. The myth of the so-called 'partition of Palestine' in 1921–22, encouraged mainly by Revisionist Zionists,² instilled the belief that in 1921–22 the British 'betrayed' the Zionist movement by 'separating' Palestine from Transjordan (the East Bank of the Jordan River), and by establishing the Arab Hashemite Emirate on 80 per cent of the 'Jewish National Home'.³ However, while most Labour Zionists came to terms with the Hashemite state in Transjordan and sought a tacit alliance with its ruler, among these the commitment remained strong to the principle of establishing a Jewish state in all Mandatory Palestine – in Zionist terminology, 'the western Land of Israel', that is, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

In contrast to the pragmatic and gradualist expansionism of Labour Zionism, with its perception of political reality and what was possible under local, regional and international conditions, Revisionist Zionism has always been known for its maximalist political aims, which during the Mandatory period included the establishment of a Jewish state ('Malchut Yisrael' or the 'Kingdom of Israel') on both sides of the Jordan River. While Labour Zionism concentrated on numerous objectives at the same time, the

Revisionists focused on one idea: the ‘territorial integrity of *Eretz-Yisrael* in its biblical boundaries’, which was the hallmark of Jabotinsky’s largely ‘monistic’ ideology, an ideology which also embraced militant right-wing nationalism and the celebration of military prowess. In 1935, the Revisionist Party, bitterly protesting at the so-called ‘separation’ of Transjordan from Palestine and violently opposing the idea of any sort of partition, left the World Zionist Organisation and declared its unswerving devotion to the principle of establishing Jewish sovereignty on ‘both banks of the Jordan’.

With regard to the ultimate solutions related to the ‘Arab problem’ in Palestine, Jabotinsky (1880–1940) frequently accused Labour Zionism of hypocrisy; in his view, the creation of a Jewish state had always meant imposing the will of Zionism on the Palestinian Arabs, and the resistance of the latter to the former was but the natural and logical consequence of Zionist objectives. In the 1920s, Jabotinsky wrote that Zionist settlement had always been carried out against the wishes of the Arab majority in Palestine:

Zionist colonisation, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population. This colonisation can, therefore, continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population – an iron wall which the native population cannot break through. This is, *in toto*, our policy towards the Arabs. To formulate it any other way would be a hypocrisy.

Jabotinsky propagated his concept of an ‘iron wall’ of Jewish military might which would protect Greater Israel. He also argued that Zionists believed in an ‘iron wall’: ‘In this sense, there are no meaningful differences between our “militarists” and our “vegetarians”. One prefers an iron wall of Jewish bayonets, the other proposes an agreement with Baghdad [that is, Faysal I’s Iraq], and appears to be satisfied with Baghdad’s bayonets – a strange and somewhat risky taste – but we all applaud, day and night, the iron wall.’⁴

The ‘iron wall’ concept was to form a central plank in the Revisionists’ attitude towards the Palestinians from the 1920s to the present-day Likud. Jabotinsky consistently ignored the nationalist aspirations of the Palestinians (the ‘Arabs of the Land of Israel’, in Revisionist terminology): agreement with them was neither desirable or necessary; on the contrary, confrontation with them was natural and inevitable and would be resolved only by the creation of an ‘iron

wall', that is, a militant, homogenous and organic Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River.⁵ In Jabotinsky's mind, to conclude an agreement with the Palestinians allowing the creation of a predominantly Jewish majority and eventual statehood in Palestine – which Labour Zionism publicly advocated in the 1920s – was neither possible nor desirable. Only an 'iron wall', of a Jewish armed garrison, would be able to secure Jewish sovereignty over Greater Israel.⁶

Jabotinsky was, evidently, a proponent of 'population transfer'. In a letter, dated November 1939, to one of his Revisionist colleagues in the United States – and written against the background of the German–Soviet pact of August 1939 – he wrote: 'There is no choice: the Arabs must make room for the Jews in Eretz Israel. If it was possible to transfer the Baltic peoples, it is also possible to move the Palestinian Arabs', adding that Iraq and Saudi Arabia could absorb them.⁷ Jabotinsky also alluded in a number of articles to the Greco-Turkish 'transfer' in the early 1920s, describing it as a brutal, coercive action imposed by the victorious Turks but which proved ultimately beneficial to the Greeks.⁸

Typically, Jabotinsky expressed racist contempt towards the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine, and, unlike the leaders of Labour Zionism, he did not mince his words: 'We Jews, thank God, have nothing to do with the East ... The Islamic soul must be broomed out of Eretz-Yisrael.'⁹ On another occasion Jabotinsky described Arabs and Muslims as a 'yelling rabble dressed up in gaudy, savage rags'.¹⁰

The Revisionist movement founded by Jabotinsky went through an ongoing process of fragmentation and coalescence. The authoritarian and militarist tendencies and the cult of personality which Jabotinsky absorbed from the growth of the far right in Europe during the interwar period were transmitted to, and enthusiastically received by, his disciples in Betar, the Revisionist movement's youth group.¹¹ Jabotinsky's ideological legacy found expression in two offshoots. The first was the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (National Military Organisation, or the Irgun), an underground military organisation formed in 1931 and commanded from 1943 to 1944 by Menahem Begin (later to become Prime Minister), who assumed the leadership of Revisionist Zionism with Jabotinsky's death in 1940. The Irgun became closely associated with the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946, the hanging of British Army sergeants and the massacre of Palestinians at Dayr Yasin in April 1948. The second offshoot was Lehi (Lohamei Herut Yisrael, also known as the Stern Gang after its

founder, Avraham Stern), which broke away from the Irgun in June 1940. From 1942 onwards, Lehi was co-commanded by Yitzhak Shamir – later to become Likud leader and Prime Minister – who had arrived in Palestine in 1935 and had become the chief of operations of Lehi. Shamir's belief in the importance of political assassination is evident from the fact that his work involved the planning and carrying-out of numerous assassinations and individual terrorist attacks: between September 1942 and July 1946, when Shamir was finally arrested by the British and exiled to Eritrea, there were 14 assassination attempts, including seven attempts on the life of the British High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Harold McMichael, and several more were planned, for example, against Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary. One successful attempt on the life of the Cairo-based British Minister Resident in the Middle East, Lord Moyne, was carried out in 1944.¹²

The founder of Lehi, Avraham Stern (1907–42), had emigrated to Palestine in 1925; in the late 1920s, he went to Florence on a scholarship, returning to Palestine in the early 1930s as a fascist. Until his death in 1942, Stern was firmly convinced that the Axis powers were going to win the war. In 1940–41, he contacted Italian and German agents in the Middle East, proposing collaboration for solving the 'European Jewish problem', outside Europe.¹³ Stern had also instilled in Lehi the notion that the 'Land of Canaan' had been conquered by the ancient Israelites' sword. Like Jabotinsky, Stern's right-wing orientation regarded a clash between the Hebrew and Arab worlds as unavoidable. He also described the Palestinian Arabs as 'beasts of the desert, not a legitimate people'.¹⁴ 'The Arabs are not a nation but a mole that grew in the wilderness of the eternal desert. They are nothing but murderers,' wrote Stern in 1940.¹⁵

Stern's maximalist territorial ambitions and mystical inclination led him inevitably to the Bible rather than to the British Palestine Mandate when defining the boundaries of the envisioned Jewish empire in the Middle East. His 'Eighteen Principles of National Renewal', which was written in 1941, and became the ideological basis of Lehi, proclaimed a Jewish state from 'the great River of Egypt' (the Nile) to the Euphrates in Iraq and the rebuilding of the Third Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁶ In this document, under the heading, 'Principles of Rebirth', the borders of the Land were defined by a quotation from Genesis (15:18): 'To your seed, I have given this Land from the River of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates ...' The third principle in the document stated: 'THE NATION AND ITS

HOMELAND: The Land of Israel was conquered by the Jews by the sword. It was here they became a nation and only here can they be reborn. Not only has Israel the right of ownership over the land but this ownership is absolute and has never been or can ever be rescinded.¹⁷ The fourteenth principle proposed 'ethnic cleansing': 'DEALING WITH ALIENS [that is, the Palestinian Arabs]: This will be done by means of exchange of populations.' The sixteenth principle envisaged the establishment of a new Jewish imperial power in the region: 'Strengthening the nation by developing it into a major military, political, cultural and economic power in the East and on the shores of the Mediterranean'.¹⁸ Lehi also advocated that any Arab resistance to Zionist objectives should be crushed mercilessly. Moreover, in its memorandum to the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) in 1947 as well as in its political programme of July–August 1948 in preparation for the first Israeli Knesset election,¹⁹ Lehi called for the compulsory evacuation of the entire Arab population of Palestine, preferably to Iraq, and declared it 'considers an exchange of the Arab population and the Jews of Arab countries as the best solution for the troubled relationship between the Jewish people and the Arabs'.²⁰

The Revisionist groups were instrumental in exacerbating Jewish–Arab tensions and violent clashes during the Mandatory period. Jabotinsky himself endorsed the terrorist campaign launched in the late 1930s by the Irgun, a campaign that involved such actions as placing bomb-loaded vegetable barrows in crowded Arab markets in Haifa and Jerusalem and firing indiscriminately on Arab civilian houses.²¹ While Irgun's bombing attacks of the late 1930s and 1948 were aimed at Palestinian civilians, the group also launched attacks against the British from 1944 to 1948. Lehi, it has already been shown, specialised in political assassinations. Later, during the 1948 war, these campaigns were intensified and played an important role in the exodus of the Palestinians from what became the State of Israel. The most infamous outrage carried out jointly by the Irgun and Lehi was the Dayr Yasin massacre of 9 April 1948, in which some 250 Palestinian villagers were murdered in cold blood. The Dayr Yasin massacre was perhaps the most important single factor precipitating the 1948 Palestinian exodus.²² Dr Yisrael Eldad, who was in charge of Lehi's ideology and propaganda, regarded the Dayr Yasin massacre as an authentic expression of Lehi as a right-wing political movement. Eldad explained that the massacre articulated the need to 'transform Jerusalem into the

Archimedean point of the Hebrew revolution' and more specifically he was convinced that 'without Deir Yasin [sic] the State of Israel could never have been established.'²³

THE PROPOSALS OF JABOTINSKY'S DISCIPLES

The following will discuss proposals and plans put forward by two close associates of Jabotinsky in the period leading to the Palestinian exodus of 1948–49.

Eliahu Ben-Horin's Proposal and Campaign, 1943–49

Eliahu Ben-Horin was a Revisionist publicist, a close associate of Jabotinsky, and an editor of the Yishuv's Hebrew newspaper *Doar Hayom*. In 1935, when the Revisionists seceded from the World Zionist Organisation, Ben-Horin was elected to the world executive of the New Zionist Organisation led by Jabotinsky, operating out of London from 1937 to 1940 and from New York from 1940 to 1943. After the Second World War, Ben-Horin served as adviser to the American Zionist Emergency Council, which was then chaired by Abba Hillel Silver, and continued to lobby for Zionist causes in the United States.

In 1943, three years after Jabotinsky's death, Ben-Horin's plan for Arab 'transfer' to Iraq or a 'united Iraq–Syrian state', was publicly put forward in his book *The Middle East: Crossroads of History*.²⁴ The plan was important mainly because it served as the basis of former US President Herbert Hoover's own transfer plan of 1945.²⁵ Not surprisingly, Ben-Horin's arguments bear the stamp of his mentor, Jabotinsky. As a maximalist Revisionist Zionist who believed in the establishment of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River, Ben-Horin wrote:

I suggest that the Arabs of Palestine and Transjordan be transferred to Iraq, or a united Iraq–Syrian state. That means the shifting about 1,200,000 persons. A larger number were involved in the Greco-Turkish exchange of population; many more in the internal shifts in Russia ...

The Palestinian Arabs will not be removed to a foreign land but an Arab land ... The distance between their old and new homelands

is small, involving no crossing of oceans or seas, and the climatic conditions are the same. If the transfer and the colonization project are well planned and systematically carried out, the Palestinian fellah will get better soil and more promising life conditions than he can ever expect to obtain in Palestine. The city Arab, too, can find a much wider field for his activities and ambitions within the framework of a larger and purely Arab state unit.²⁶

Ben-Horin suggested that the 'shifting' of the Arab populations of Palestine and Transjordan to Iraq, and the simultaneous transfer of Iraqi, Yemeni, and Syrian Jews to Palestine, could be executed within 18 months: 'Should the above course be adopted, western Palestine [that is, west of the Jordan River] alone would offer to Jewish immigration all the land at present cultivated by the Arabs', and 'then there is Transjordan with considerable areas of fertile soil, and good irrigation possibilities.' Both the speedy transformation of Arab Palestine into a Jewish state and the evacuation of its Arab inhabitants into Iraq could be achieved with active international assistance.²⁷ The evacuation project should be carried out with 'firmness'. He added:

... such a solution being both just and practicable, the Jews and the Arabs will soon develop good neighborly relations ... The one imperative pre-requisite to such a happy development is the absolute determination on the part of the major nations that will dictate the peace [at the end of the Second World War] and lay the foundation for future world-order – that this and no other solution of the Arab Jewish problems be adopted and carried into effect.²⁸

Ben-Horin appealed to the US administration to support the Zionist drive and 'dictate' Arab evacuation. His efforts appeared especially to focus on obtaining the support of Herbert Hoover, the former US President, a well-known Zionist sympathiser. Ben-Horin first met Hoover in late 1943. According to him, the meeting led 'to a close contact with a great American ... Hoover's interest is aroused in one idea outlined in my book ... It is the plan for an Arab-Jewish exchange of populations between Palestine and Iraq.'²⁹ Hoover apparently agreed to join the Zionist campaign in support of the Ben-Horin plan. Two years later, on 19 November 1945, the so-called 'Hoover Plan' – in fact, a repackaging of Ben-Horin's initiative – was published in the *New York World-Telegram*.

Until the late 1940s, Ben-Horin was still active in the attempt to relocate the Palestinians to Iraq. In May 1949, during the last stage of the Palestinian exodus, *Harper's* magazine published an article by Ben-Horin entitled 'From Palestine to Israel'. The editor noted that in an earlier article in the magazine's December 1944 issue, Ben-Horin had advocated a plan which at the time 'looked far-fetched ... that the Arabs of Palestine be transferred to Iraq and resettled there. Now, with thousands of Arab refugees from Palestine facing a dismal future, the transfer idea appears to be a likely bet ... in view of the sound character of Mr. Ben-Horin's earlier judgments and prophecies, we feel we can bank on his word about present-day Israel: "It works."³⁰

Joseph Schechtman's Plan, 1948

Dr Joseph Schechtman (1891–1970) was involved in Zionist activity in Russia from his early youth. He left Soviet Russia in 1920 and became co-editor of the Russian Zionist weekly *Rassviet* in Berlin (1922–24) and Paris (1925–34), co-edited with Vladimir Jabotinsky. A very close associate of Jabotinsky for three decades, Schechtman was a founder of the Zionist Revisionist movement, and the New Zionist Organisation. Schechtman served on the Revisionist executive in Paris, London and Warsaw, and was a member of the Actions Committee of the World Zionist Organisation (1931–35, 1946–70). He was also a deputy member (1948–51) and member (1963–65, 1966–68) of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency for Israel, chairman of the United Zionists-Revisionists of America, and a member of the executive of the World Jewish Congress.

Schechtman published numerous books, many of which reflected his maximalist Zionist Revisionist outlook and his obsessive preoccupation with population 'transfers'/movements. These books included *Transjordan within the Framework of the Palestine Mandate* (in German, 1937); a two-volume biography of Jabotinsky, *Rebel and Statesman* (1956) and *Fighter and Prophet* (1961); *Jordan: A State That Never Was* (1969); *History of the Revisionist Movement* (vol. 1, 1970); *European Population Transfers 1939–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1946); *Population Transfers in Asia* (1949); *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe, 1945–1955* (1963); *The Refugee in the World: Displacement and Integration* (1963); *The Arab Refugee Problem* (1952); *On Wings of Eagles: The Flight, Exodus and Homecoming of Oriental Jewry* (1961).

In 1941, Schechtman had settled in New York. He had served as a research fellow in the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1941–43, as Director of the Research Bureau on Population Movements, which he had helped to establish, and as consultant for the United States Office of Strategic Services in Washington, DC, as specialist on population movement, 1944–45. With this background in mind, members of the Israeli government's 'Transfer Committee' of 1948 had invited Schechtman to contribute to their efforts of encouraging Palestinian exodus. Members of the Transfer Committee had met Schechtman during his visit to Israel in September 1948 and hired him to carry out research and advise them on the question of the Palestinian refugees' resettlement in Arab states.

More significantly, sometime in early 1948, Schechtman had worked out his own plan entitled 'The Case for Arab–Jewish Exchange of Population', and submitted it in May 1948 in the form of a 'study' to Eliyahu Epstein (in Hebrew, Elath), Israel's ambassador to Washington, who later forwarded it to the Israeli Cabinet Secretary, Zeev Sharef, and to the head of the Transfer Committee, Yosef Weitz.³¹ Schechtman explained that his 'study' was not merely a descriptive and historical explanation of the facts; rather he believed 'that many important conclusions for the future can and must be drawn from the experience of past transfer and that the underlying idea of any transfer scheme is basically a preventive one'. If a problem of an ethnic minority cannot be solved within the existing territorial frame, then 'timely recourse must be taken to the essentially preventive devise of transfer'. According to Schechtman, 'the case of Palestine seems to offer a classic case for quick, decisive transfer action as the only constructive possibility of breaking the present deadlock' and 'no constructive solution can be arrived at without a large-scale [Arab] transfer'.³² In addition, 'The only workable solution is an organised exchange of population between Palestine and the Arab states mainly to Iraq of Palestine Arabs', and the transfer to Israel of the Jewish communities in Arab countries.³³

Schechtman's scheme called for the 'compulsory transfer' of the Palestinians to Iraq and cited Ben-Horin's plan of Arab transfer to Iraq of 1943 as justification.³⁴ Both Revisionist men, Schechtman and Ben-Horin, appealed to the US administration to support the Zionist cause and 'dictate' Palestinian evacuation to and resettlement in Iraq. In November 1945, the so-called 'Hoover-plan' – in fact, a repackaging of Ben-Horin's initiative – was launched in the *New York World-Telegram*.³⁵ Schechtman's plan of early 1948, which was

directly inspired by the 'Ben-Horin-Hoover plan' of 1945, was supplemented by a brief additional section written in the wake of the Palestinian refugee exodus of the spring of 1948. In this addition to his plan, he observed 'unmistakable indications to the effect that the Israeli Government begins earnestly to weigh an Arab-Jewish exchange of population as the most thorough and constructive means of solving the problem of an Arab minority in the Jewish state'. As evidence of transfer discussions in Israeli government circles, he cited remarks by Arthur Lourie, the head of the Israeli United Nations Office and the representative at the Lake Success talks in New York, in an interview that appeared in *The New York Times* on 20 July 1948.³⁶ In the spring of 1948, Schechtman had written to Israel's ambassador to Washington, Eliyahu Epstein, saying that the Arab flow out of the area of the Jewish state 'only strengthens the case for the organised Arab transfer' to Iraq.³⁷

In his ethnic cleansing plan, Schechtman maintained that, although it was evident that the Palestinian Arab leaders would never agree to any plan of this kind, 'which provoked on their part limitless indignation',³⁸ 'once uprooted, they [the Arabs] would probably be responsive to any plan of their resettlement in Iraq, with full compensation by the state of Israel for their property left behind'.³⁹ The working of the transfer/resettlement scheme would be underpinned by an interstate treaty between the governments of Israel and Iraq and possibly other Arab states. These treaties 'would provide a compulsory, but not all-inclusive, ethnic sorting out. As a rule, every Arab in the Jewish State and every Jew in Iraq would be subject to transfer; no specific option to this effect would be necessary'.⁴⁰ For Schechtman, 'the equality of numbers on both sides' of the so-called exchange of population 'in this particular case was of no importance whatsoever, since the prospective Palestine Arab transferees in Iraq' would be resettled 'not on land vacated by the Jewish evacuees', but on land provided by the Iraqi state. As a result 'the amount of land ... would be sufficient in Palestine where millions of dunams would be left behind by the departing Arabs'.⁴¹

Schechtman wanted formal Israeli government acknowledgment about the research he was carrying out for the Transfer Committee. In mid-October 1948, he asked Arthur Lourie of the Israeli United Nations Office in New York whether Foreign Minister Sharett

... could sent him [Schechtman] a note stating that you [Sharett] are glad to learn that he has been in touch with friends in Israel

who are interested in this matter of resettlement of Arabs, particularly in Iraq, and that you could be pleased if he would continue with his investigations. On the basis of such a letter, Schechtman would approach men like [former US President Herbert] Hoover with a view of interesting them further in this work.⁴²

Two weeks later, on 27 October 1948, Schechtman received a cable from Cabinet Secretary Sharef: 'Approve your proposal collect material discussed. Danin [and] Lifschitz will refund expenses five hundred dollars.'⁴³ Schechtman's urgent assignment on behalf of the Israeli government and its Transfer Committee included collecting material and conducting further 'study' on Palestinians' resettlement in Iraq. On 17 December, Sharett himself wrote to Schechtman from Paris telling him how 'glad' he was to hear that he was pursuing his 'studies with regard to the resettlement possibilities of Palestinian Arab refugees. Now that Mr [Zalman] Lifshitz [sic] is in the United States I am sure that you two got together and pooled your knowledge on the subject.'⁴⁴

In December 1948, Lifschitz arrived in the United States to lobby for the Israeli policy to resettle the Palestinian refugees in Iraq. On the initiative of the Israeli ambassador to the United States, Elyahu Epstein, a meeting was held in mid-December in the ambassador's office in Washington, in which Epstein, Schechtman, Lifschitz, Edward Norman, a New York-based Jewish millionaire who had devoted much of his fortune to supporting the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine and had been secretly lobbying for his plan to transfer the Palestinians to Iraq between 1934 and 1948,⁴⁵ and Elish'a Friedman, economics consultant from New York and member of the Ben-Horin-Hoover team which was active from the middle to the late 1940s in the attempt to resettle the Palestinians to Iraq.⁴⁶ Epstein had been in close contact with Schechtman throughout 1948 and had received a copy of the typescript of Schechtman's plan in early May 1948. On 18 May, three days after the proclamation of the State of Israel, Epstein had written from Washington to Schechtman in New York telling him that he had read his manuscript 'with great interest and found it to be an important and constructive contribution to the subject of Jewish-Arab exchange of population':

The events in Palestine are developing meanwhile in such a way that if not your conjectures, at least certain of your conclusions

will have to be modified in view of the Arab flow out of the area of our State. Certain problems, however, in the exchange of population will remain, especially in view of the necessity of a transfer with possibly a very short time of the Jews living in the Arab countries to Israel.⁴⁷

Epstein and Schechtman had also met in New York in mid-June 1948 to discuss the subject. In mid-December 1948, Lifschitz told the gathering in the Israeli Ambassador's office in Washington about the activities of the official Transfer Committee and suggested that Schechtman, Norman and Friedman

... might be of very great help in this matter, in two directions in particular. The first that he [Lifschitz] mentioned was in the presentation of ideas and supporting data, on which a plan to be adopted by the Government of Israel might be based. The second was to mobilise the leaders of public opinion in this country [US] to speak out in support of such a plan as soon as the Government of Israel would make public announcement of it. It was agreed that the three of us who were present, who are American citizens, would be considered a sort of advisory committee, with myself as chairman, working in close cooperation with Mr Epstein. It is our purpose now to produce a more or less detailed plan, which presumably will be forwarded to you [Sharet] for your consideration and possible presentation eventually to your government.⁴⁸

Like Eliahu Ben-Horin, Edward Norman and former US President Hoover, Schechtman appealed directly to the US administration and the White House to support the Israeli policy and 'dictate' Palestinian resettlement in Iraq. A revised version of his 'study' of early 1948, in which he outlined his plan for the removal of virtually all the Palestinians to Iraq, appeared in Chapter III of Schechtman's book *Population Transfers in Asia*, published in March 1949.⁴⁹ At the same time, the actual research carried out by Schechtman on behalf of the Israeli government and its Transfer Committee in late 1948 and early 1949 appeared in his polemical work *The Arab Refugee Problem* (1952).⁵⁰ In his letter to Hoover, dated 9 April 1949, Schechtman wrote:

I take the liberty of sending you the enclosed copy of my study *Population Transfers in Asia* whose chapter on the Arab-Jewish

population transfer owes so much to the inspiration provided by your plan for the resettlement of Arabs from Palestine in Iraq, published in 1945 ... Recent events in the Middle East have pushed this idea into the foreground of public attention, and have impelled me to publish this study of the transfer issue against the background of similar transfer movements elsewhere in Asia ... As one of the world's elder statesmen who helped originate the transfer idea as a way out of the Palestine conflict, and from whom the public hopes to receive further wise guidance in this issue, you will – I sincerely hope – be interested in this book of mine.⁵¹

THE POST-1967 PERIOD

The 1967 war reopened the question of Israel's territorial ambitions and borders and helped Revisionist Zionists to escape from the political wilderness into Israeli mainstream politics. Within roughly a decade, Menahem Begin became Israel's first right-wing Prime Minister, heading a Likud coalition, dominated by the Herut movement. His political ascendance was a result of his charisma, his huge appeal to the deprived Sephardic masses of Israeli society and the inability of Labour Zionism to offer a remedy to Israel's mounting problems. Prime Minister for seven years, Begin did not introduce a fresh ideology; concern for the territorial integrity of 'Eretz-Yisrael in its biblical boundaries' was the main content of his rigid *Weltanschauung*. Employing impassioned biblical and East European rhetoric, he always believed that his mission was to see that all the 'biblical Land of Israel' would be under Israeli rule⁵² and that the Zionist goals could be achieved only by force.⁵³ This was in large measure an adherence to Jabotinsky's 'iron wall' philosophy and the 'monistic' ideology of Greater Israel. Begin, the caretaker of Jabotinsky's ideas, believed in a Jewish state with a Jewish majority on both banks of the Jordan River and a strong Jewish army to defend it.

The Arab–Israeli Rhodes talks, leading to the armistice agreements of 1949, were accompanied by a public debate in Israel, which reached its climax in the election campaign for the first Knesset. Menahem Begin, then leader of the newly formed Herut, objected to giving up any part of the 'historical Land of Israel', and certainly any part of the territory west of the Jordan River. Begin's Knesset speeches were full of typical emotional rhetoric: 'They have carved

up not the territory, but our very soul!’⁵⁴ Other more extreme members of Herut spoke in terms echoing the Sternist conception of Greater Israel. The poet Uri Tzvi Greenberg, then a member of the first Knesset, stated: ‘Right now we might – without exaggeration, if we had only been ready in time – be across the Jordan and on the slopes of Lebanon and en route to the Nile. And then, instead of a worthless armistice, we would have obtained peace on very comfortable terms to us ...’⁵⁵

In Knesset debates in May 1950, Begin again argued that the West Bank was part of the biblical Land of Israel and as such belonged to the Jewish people,⁵⁶ and rejected a suggestion to federalise Palestine on the pattern of Switzerland’s cantons based on ethnic lines. Also in the early days of the Israeli state, he advocated a war to achieve the ‘liberation of parts of the occupied homeland’.⁵⁷ In the spring of 1957, following the first occupation of Gaza and Sinai by Israel, Begin attempted to rally world Jewish opinion against the decision of the superpowers to impose a withdrawal on Israel. In a press conference held in Canada, Begin stressed that peace in the Middle East would become a reality only when both banks of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip became part of the Jewish state.⁵⁸ Two and a half years later, in 1958, the issue of the ‘lost territories of Eretz Yisrael’ was raised at the Fifth National Conference of Herut, which by 1955 had become Israel’s second largest parliamentary party. Begin spoke about ‘shlemut historit’ – the ‘historic completeness’ of Eretz Yisrael – and pointed out that there were at least three other political parties in the country which did not recognise the Green Line with the West Bank as the final border of Israel. A year later, Herut leaders such as Ya’acov Meridor publicly claimed both sides of the Jordan River: ‘The primary goal of foreign policy is to re-create historic Israel – by liberating Transjordan. Israel can never rest until this is accomplished.’⁵⁹

Shortly before the outbreak of the 1967 war, Begin was co-opted into Levi Eshkol’s cabinet as a full partner in a National Unity government. He became a minister without portfolio, but this was an important step in his political ascendancy, legitimising Herut’s struggle for political power and paving the way for the future electoral successes of right-wing groups led by Herut. During the years 1967–70, Begin served as the head of various committees in the National Unity government. He proposed the establishment of Jewish quarters in Arab cities in the occupied territories. In 1970, when the US Secretary of State William Rogers proposed his second

peace plan to end the War of Attrition between Egypt and Israel, Begin and five Gahal ministers (drawn from Herut and its right-wing liberal allies) resigned, calling the plan a 'Middle Eastern Munich'.⁶⁰

MOSHE DOTAN'S PROPOSAL, NOVEMBER 1967

Moshe Dotan was the chairman of the editorial board of *Haumah* ('The Nation'), a quarterly, published by Misdar Jabotinsky (the 'Order of Jabotinsky'). *Haumah* is the most important journal of the Revisionists, the Likud camp and the supporters of Greater Israel. Dotan's 'transfer' plan was published in *Haumah* in November 1967⁶¹ in the euphoric period which followed the June war's spectacular conquests. Predictably, he found it necessary to remind his compatriots that the 'whole Land of Israel', which the Revisionist movement claimed, stretched beyond the newly 'liberated' territories: 'Our claim for a homeland on both banks of the Jordan [River] is a just matter and it has a chance of being realised if it is accompanied by force. The Israel Defence Force is a powerful force and is used for a just matter. The Arabs, perhaps more than other peoples, appreciate force and are bound to take it into consideration.' More immediately, however, Dotan's preoccupation was with the 'demographic time-bomb which is activated non-stop against us' in the newly conquered territories, which overnight quadrupled the Arab population to 1.3 million in comparison with 2.3 million Israeli Jews.⁶² Such a large Arab minority could not be 'digested' and in order to 'prevent the creation of a bi-national state' and to maintain an exclusive Hebrew state in Greater Israel, 'one must be industrious [ensuring] that it has a decisive Hebrew majority and as tiny a minority as possible.'⁶³

In justification of his ethnic cleansing plan, Dotan cites the 'transfer' campaign of Israel Zangwill – one of the most outspoken and vociferous of early Zionists on the subject – before and after the First World War, as well as the proposal of Baron Rothschild to transfer Palestinians to Iraq in the 1920s.⁶⁴ In order to ensure that 'the Arab minority within the boundaries of our state would be as small as possible', Dotan suggests:

'We had to adopt a policy which promotes and speeds up the organised emigration of the Arab minority. Towards the Arabs of Israel [including the Arab citizens], refugees as well as residents, we

need to adopt a new approach ... it is possible to entice and ensure the exodus of individuals and groups to countries overseas, in which the absorption conditions are convenient. Those [deportees] who would strike roots in the new countries in need of farmers – and the Arabs have acquired in this field no little knowledge from our agriculture – are likely to receive large tracts of land, houses, water and equipment. Every family, whose emigration has brought it benefit, would attract its relatives who remained in villages, or the sons of landless farmers, or the disappointed among their friends. The encouragement of emigration will come from two sides: from the inside and from the outside. We are capable, through the exploitation of our great experience ... in organising Jewish immigration to turn the emigration of refugees and youth to an efficient non-profitable humanitarian project.⁶⁵

For Dotan, every Palestinian on either side of the Green Line is a potential candidate for ‘transfer/emigration’:

In the emigration of the refugees there is a humane, healthy and just element. This is an act of preventive medicine: we must not leave [this] population ... in a small plot of land that is poor in natural resources and its ownership controversial ... every young worker from the ‘Triangle’ villages [in Israel], who comes to a [Jewish] city in search of work is a potential candidate for emigration. It is known that his purpose in the town, in addition to satisfying his needs, is to collect a respectable sum (6000–8000 Israeli lira) for paying the dowry for his bride’s father. Within a few years he establishes a family with many children in his birthplace village, and because there is not sufficient land in his village, also his children, the number of whom has doubled and tripled, are bound to come to the city. It is worthwhile for our state to ensure the emigration of the young man who comes to the market-place of our city even at the price of paying his dowry at once and recompensing him for his part in the village land, so it would become [Jewish] national property.

Moreover, ‘by creating adequate conditions for orderly emigration we would be able to stop the relative growth of the Arab minority and constantly remove the undesirable and dangerous elements ...’

Dotan believes that this emigration ‘policy should be carried out at the initiative and encouragement of the government, but not

implemented by it – just as the Jewish Agency deals with [Jewish] immigration. It would not be difficult to work out agreements with the governments absorbing the emigration, and indeed the few initial contacts have certainly proved themselves as having great chances.’ Would the Palestinian Arabs accept this mass, organised exodus? Dotan’s answer: ‘This thing depends, of course, on the conditions and means we would mobilise and on the skill and wisdom we would be able to direct for the success of the emigration project.’ As for the sceptics and critics ‘who will doubt the practical value of the mass emigration plan of Arabs’, he suggests they should be simply ignored. The destination of the government-initiated, mass, organised Arab exodus should be, according to Dotan, South American countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Venezuela:

All these countries, as well as Canada and Australia, are looking particularly for migrants who are from the white race, Christians or other monotheists, workers at a certain level who could be absorbed and migrants who would be ready to work in agriculture ... Indeed for the refugees in our country these conditions are good ... [the Arab emigrants] would be given the opportunity to start a new life overseas with our guidance and assistance, until they stood on their own feet in the wide open spaces of Australia, Canada, and Latin America which need settlers.⁶⁶

The plan of Dotan envisaged an officially orchestrated, carefully planned and massively organised operation:

In addition to our settlement experience in this country, we have proved that we possess great organisational, planning, technical and economic forces which are successfully operating already for years in Africa and Latin America. If we do harness them for the project of emigration and resettlement we could ensure its success. It is not impossible that other international, national and public bodies would agree to take part in the planning – and perhaps not only planning – of this humanitarian project.

As for the financial cost of this project, Dotan explains:

The financial problem of putting into effect emigration on a large-scale should not deter us in spite of the large sums we would have

to allocate. It is possible to imagine that even if the emigration countries would participate (the allocation of land, housing, etc.), we would have to spend a sum estimated at 5000 dollars approximately for the emigration of a family with six to seven persons on average. This sum would cover the cost of the flight, and the remainder (not an insignificant sum for an ordinary Arab family) would be handed over to the exclusive control of the emigrating family. The initial reasonable price would be as the following: for the emigration of 100,000 families, 500 million dollars would be needed. Let us suppose that the emigration would be implemented over five to six years (it must not be executed too slowly otherwise the weight of the natural growth would increase), this means one hundred million dollars annually. If we did not receive foreign aid to finance this plan we would have to be compelled in the worst case to shoulder the entire burden of expenditure. Clearly we would have to care about acquiring long-term loans from financial elements abroad ... Understandably, it is possible that the sums set are too high, and the allowance per capita will be much lower. However, we must be prepared for every effort to solve once and for all the 'refugee problem' and the Arab 'demographic time-bomb'.⁶⁷

The mass 'emigration' of 100,000 Arab families – 600–700,000 persons – within a few years, Dotan (whose figures echo the figures of Eli'ezer Livneh's proposal of 1967, discussed in Chapter One) envisages, 'is likely to change our demographic balance unequivocally and be most valuable in many respects ... We are likely to look forward to the start of 1975, at the end of the five-year plan of programmed emigration, to the following composition in the population of the Land of Israel in its present borders: instead of 1.3 million Arabs (today) there will be about 600–700,000 Arabs against over 3 million Jews.' With such a decisive Jewish majority of five to one in Greater Israel, it would be possible to maintain an exclusive Jewish state.

In conclusion, Dotan argued in November 1967 that the Israeli leaders should treat his plan as a top priority of their national agenda; mass Arab 'emigration' is perhaps 'a brutal solution ... but it is anyway an extreme and efficient [one] for all.' Consequently it is vital that 'our public opinion exercises constant and consistent public pressure on the leaders of our state ... for the execution of a project which has political, demographic and humanitarian

implications and whose results are likely to ensure the future and character' of Greater Israel.

There is no evidence to suggest that Dotan has changed his views on the territorial and transfer issues since November 1967. In May 1981 he wrote again in the journal *Haumah* – which has since been turned into a platform for many other advocates of 'transfer' – suggesting that after the 1967 war, 'it would have been preferable to open [the Jordan River] bridges only in the exit direction and to encourage the emigration of labourers to neighbouring Arab states abundant in petro-dollars. We have lost years, in which dangerous thorns, that have greatly weakened the state, have grown.'⁶⁸

THE LIKUD IN POWER

In May 1977, Labour Zionism was finally defeated by the disciples of Jabotinsky. The Likud assumed power and remained effectively in government for 15 years until 1992. In 1996, after four years in opposition, the Likud returned to power for another three years. Menahem Begin, labelled by his supporters 'Begin, melech yisrael' ('Begin, King of Israel'), maintained loyalty to the traditional slogan of the Revisionist movement, still officially valid: 'Both banks of the Jordan – this one is ours and that one is also.' Begin never abandoned Jabotinsky's claim to both sides of the Jordan River and indeed he was the only Israeli Prime Minister who refused to meet King Hussein of Jordan, even clandestinely.⁶⁹ Apparently this attitude led President Jimmy Carter to believe that Begin laid claim not only to the West Bank, but also to the East Bank, that is, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.⁷⁰ When Begin assumed power in 1977, he decided that the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza were to be called 'liberated land', as opposed to the 'administered territories', an expression coined by the Labour government. In a press conference in Kaddum, a Jewish settlement in the West Bank, established shortly after he came to power, he said: 'We don't use the word annexation. You annex foreign land, not your own country.'⁷¹

Until 1977, the Labour governments had sought a political solution which would allow Israel to retain control over parts of the occupied territories (under the Allon Plan). Under Begin's leadership, the Likud organised a coalition government with the National Religious Party dominated by the settlement movement of Gush

Emunim. Espousing a fundamentalist and emotional attachment to 'Judea' and 'Samaria', Begin and his coalition partners pursued a settlement policy with the highest priority of consolidating Israel's permanent control of the whole of Eretz Yisrael Hama'aravit (the 'western Land of Israel'). Under the Likud administrations of Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir and Binyamin Netanyahu, Palestinians were subjected to a colonial policy designed to encourage emigration. Drastic demographic changes were also introduced. To fulfil its settlement/colonial goals, the Likud government rapidly increased the number of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

In September 1977, Ariel Sharon, the new agriculture minister and head of the ministerial committee on settlement, announced a plan to settle more than one million Jews in the West Bank within twenty years. The following year Mattityahu Drobless, Chairman of the Land Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency, who, like Sharon, was closely associated with Gush Emunim, issued the first version of a similar document: the 'Master Plan for Judea and Samaria'.⁷² From 1977 until the end of the Likud second term in August 1984, two Likud governments poured more than \$1 billion into Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and various support activities.⁷³ By August 1984, some 113 settlements were spread over the entire West Bank, including a half-dozen sizeable towns. By 1990, the Jewish population of the West Bank settlements had grown to 140,000 (excluding expanded East Jerusalem).⁷⁴ Today, over 160,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank with a similar number in Arab East Jerusalem; the number of settlers in the Gaza Strip has remained relatively small. Up to 1987, only 2,500 Jewish settlers resided in the Gaza Strip and by 1993, this number had reached 3810.⁷⁵ In the Syrian Golan Heights, at least forty settlements were established. Sweeping land confiscation and zone restrictions were implemented to provide a land reserve for current and future Jewish settlement. The increasing number of Jewish settlers' areas was intentionally planned by the Likud to make it difficult for future Israeli governments to remove the settlements in any future agreements with the Arabs. Many settlements were built by members of the fundamentalist movement of Gush Emunim which, with the support of the Likud government, was able to utilise economic incentives as well as ideological motives.

It would be misleading to take a simplistic and monolithic view of Israeli politics since 1967. Labour Zionism has remained more

sensitive to Western public opinion and its style has been more subtle, more politic and above all more pragmatic on the territorial issue than Zionist Revisionism. However, until the Oslo Accords of 1993, the political programmes of both the Likud and the Labour Parties had much in common. Although, following the 1967 conquests, neither Likud nor Labour advocated outright and legal annexation of the West Bank and Gaza, both parties were deeply opposed to Palestinian nationalism and ruled out Palestinian self-determination and statehood in the West Bank and Gaza. Both parties categorically refused to negotiate with the PLO and unconditionally opposed the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the occupied territories. In essence, both major groupings have taken the position that Jordan is a Palestinian state – the ‘Jordanian Palestinian Arab state’, in the official parlance of both the Likud and the Labour Parties. On 5 October 1981, Yitzhak Shamir, then Israel’s Foreign Minister, gave a speech at the Foreign Policy Association in New York:

Public opinion in the West is being exposed to loud clamors in support of the Palestinian cause ... Arab propaganda is calling for a homeland, as they put it, for the homeless Palestinians ... It is important to understand the ‘Jordan is Palestine’ aspect and that the conflict is not, and never was, between Israel and a state-less people. Once this is understood, the emotional dimension that evokes problems of conscience in some minds will be removed. If it is perceived in this light, you have on the one hand a Palestinian–Jordanian Arab state, and Israel on the other, then the problem is reduced to a territorial conflict between these two states. The conflict will then have been reduced to its true and manageable proportions.⁷⁶

It was General Ariel Sharon as Defence Minister in the second Begin government who promoted the idea that the Palestinians already had a homeland – the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Interestingly the foundation of this view had been laid a decade earlier by Labour Prime Minister Golda Meir, who, while dismissing the existence of the Palestinian people, suggested on occasion that ‘they had a state in Jordan anyway.’⁷⁷ However, the idea of Transjordan as a ‘Palestinian homeland’ has been used extensively by Likud leaders largely for polemical purposes and as a propaganda exercise aimed at delegitimising the Palestinians. Most prominent members of

Herut, including Begin and Shamir, had an abiding ideological aversion to surrendering formally Jewish sovereignty claims over large portions of the East Bank. For Shamir, in particular – with his emotional and ideological attachment to the Sternist conception of ‘a Land from the Nile to the Euphrates’ – there could be no compromise on the issue of the borders of the ‘Land of Israel’. In April 1974, a few months after his election to the Knesset, he appealed to Prime Minister Golda Meir to annex formally the Golan Heights, some seven years before Begin actually carried it through.⁷⁸ Even when he became the head of the Likud and Prime Minister in September 1983, having been chosen because he came from the same ideological background as Begin, Shamir was still at heart a loyal member of the ‘Stern Gang’. Shamir remained in office until 1992, with a hiatus of two years as Deputy Prime Minister in the National Unity government of 1984–88. With the exception of Ben-Gurion, no other Israeli Prime Minister has served longer. He had strongly opposed the Camp David Accords and the return of Sinai to Egypt. Throughout his long tenure, he stubbornly adhered to an approach which was based on a coupling of Stern’s maximalist philosophy to Ben-Gurion’s perception of political reality of what was possible under current local, regional and international conditions.⁷⁹

According to Labour’s pre-Oslo ‘Jordanian option’, some densely populated Arab sections of the West Bank were to be returned to Jordanian control⁸⁰ (these sections are not contiguous but made up of three areas totalling about 60 per cent of the West Bank territories) and that would take the bulk of the Palestinian population out of the Jewish state. Labour has always ruled out withdrawing from occupied East Jerusalem and the Jordan valley and has backed ‘security settlement’ in the Jordan valley and elsewhere in the West Bank.

On the other hand, after 1977, the Likud governments moved fast towards settling the West Bank and Gaza and unilaterally annexed the Golan Heights. Already during Begin’s premiership the Knesset had passed a law prohibiting the evacuation of any Jewish settlement from the West Bank and Gaza, which was tantamount to *de facto* annexation.⁸¹ This move was in line with the Likud party manifesto:

The right of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael is eternal and indisputable, and linked to our right to security and peace. The State of Israel has a right and a claim to sovereignty over Judea,

Samaria and the Gaza Strip. In time, Israel will invoke this claim and strive to realise it. Any plan involving the handover of parts of western Eretz Yisrael to foreign rule, as proposed by the Labour Alignment, denies our right to this country.⁸²

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, restating the Likud policy at a meeting of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs Committee in June 1991, declared: 'We think that Judea, Samaria and Gaza are an inseparable part of the State of Israel, and will fight to put that thought into practice.'⁸³ Five months later, in December 1991, Shamir, while participating in a rally of the 'Shorashim Society' in Tel Aviv (a rally held in honour of Yisrael Eldad, the ultra-nationalist ideologue who was Shamir's comrade-in-arms before 1948 in the leadership of Lehi) affirmed the core objective of the camp of Greater Israel:

This is it; this is the goal: territorial integrity. It should not be bitten or fragmented. This is an *a priori* principle; it is beyond argument. You should not ask why; this is the be-all and end-all. Why this land is ours requires no explanation. From as far back as the pre-state days, I have not been able to abide by such words. Is there any other nation in the world that argues about its motherland, its size and its dimensions, about territories, territorial compromises, or anything similar? What may be forgiven when it comes from people in the diaspora cannot be forgiven in this land, from the people ruling it.⁸⁴

In fact, the Likud administrations have not called for legal comprehensive annexation of the West Bank and Gaza. Instead, Likud pursued the formula of *de facto*, creeping integration, which would have enabled Israel to settle the land, while restricting the Palestinian inhabitants to ever-shrinking enclaves or Bantustans, and at the same time finding ways to remove part of the population. Outright, comprehensive legal annexation, on the other hand, would sharply raise the question of citizenship for the residents of the territories, while a *de facto*, creeping annexation appeared to be widely supported in Israel. In any event, the logic of the Likud's extensive settlement policies seemed to be that the Arab population must be reduced one way or another. As Danny Rubinstein, the Israeli journalist who has covered the occupied territories for the daily *Davar* for many years, put it as early as January 1979:

Regarding those [people] who on no account want Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria – these [transfer] ideas are very logical. Anyone who aspires to and claims Israeli sovereignty over Judea, Samaria and Gaza – including the Begin government – must understand that there is no way out save the removal of the Arabs from the territories. With over one million Arabs Israeli rule will not be established in Nablus and Hebron, and all the settlement will not help. The supporters of the Likud government know this secretly in their heart. The Gush Emunim people and the ‘Whole Land of Israel’s Faithful’ are talking about this, some privately and some publicly. Whereas Rabbi Kahane is not interested in the refined tactic. He and his followers bring the principles of the government policy to absurd truth.⁸⁵

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that some important Likud leaders have, both openly and privately, voiced support for Arab ‘transfer’. Immediately after the 1967 conquests, at a secret meeting of the Israeli Cabinet, Menahem Begin, then minister-without-portfolio, recommended the demolition of the refugee camps of the West Bank and Gaza and the ‘transfer’ of their residents to the Sinai Desert, which had been captured from Egypt.⁸⁶ In the early 1980s, during the negotiations between the Likud and Tehiya over the latter joining the Begin government, a member of the Tehiya delegation, Tzvi Shiloah, asked Begin whether his ‘government is thinking about the transfer of refugee camps in southern Lebanon to northern Lebanon, thus reducing their danger to peace in Galilee?’ Begin’s reply was: ‘The question of refugees is indeed a serious question. I am about to appeal in a statement to Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iraq and other Arab countries to absorb in their countries the refugees of the camps in Lebanon. What, Iraq has no lands and water and Saudi Arabia and Libya have no oil revenues?’⁸⁷

Some of the men around Menahem Begin were even more extreme than the Prime Minister. There were two senior advisers of Begin, Shmuel Katz and Dr Moshe Yegar, who publicly declared their advocacy of Arab ‘transfer’. Yegar was also an adviser on ‘hasbarah’ (information) in the Prime Minister’s Office in 1979. Formerly he was a Consul in Los Angeles, General Consul in Philadelphia and New York, Director of the Instruction Division and the Information Division in the Foreign Ministry and Deputy Director General of the Foreign Ministry. He was also Israeli Ambassador to Sweden from 1988. Yegar revealed his advocacy of ‘transferring’ the Palestinians,

including those citizens of Israel, in an article, published in the Revisionist periodical *Haumah*, in May 1979,⁸⁸ while he was still serving as an adviser in the Prime Minister's Office. His article, entitled 'Zionism, the State of Israel and the Arab Question', discusses the views and transfer campaign of Avraham Schwadron (in Hebrew, Sharon), a Zionist journalist and publicist and a proponent of the theory of 'Cruel Zionism', who openly campaigned in the 1940s for the total 'transfer' of the Palestinians and, significantly, continued to do so in the 1950s with the aim of removing the remaining Arab citizens of Israel. Having researched into, and described, Schwadron's views on Greater Israel, Jewish organic nationalism and Arab 'transfer', Yegar concludes: 'It seems there is an actual importance, whether Zionist theoretical or publicly educational, for the reconsideration of his writings and the bringing up of their content to public knowledge.' In his sympathetic summing-up of Schwadron's campaign, Yegar writes that Schwadron

... demanded from the Arabs [including Israeli Arabs] to evacuate the land of Israel which is not their country. Because he was convinced that there is no chance of coexistence with them. The solution is that the Jews leave their diaspora ... and immigrate [to Israel], while the Arabs cross to neighbouring countries, to live with their brothers. This solution seemed to him humane, fair and ensuring the prevention of trouble in the future. Historical examples of population exchange strengthened his opinion that this is the right solution. There is no other alternative ...

Yegar's conclusion, which is not less important than his description of Schwadron's philosophy, includes the following:

Sharon [Schwadron] would have said that all these events [the radicalisation among Israeli Palestinians in the 1970s, the Land Day on 30 March 1976, etc.] are no more than a confirmation of his opinion that there is no remedy for the problem, in spite of what Israel has invested in the Arab minority, and that the only alternative is the complete separation between peoples by encouraging the Arabs to emigrate. Among the first he would have wanted to see departing are of course, the [Israeli] Arab students who do not recognise the state ... It is reasonable to assume that if Sharon [Schwadron] had lived after the Six Day War he would have supported the annexation of the regions conquered and

liberated in this war, while encouraging their Arab residents to get out, and he would have demanded that the emigration matter be included in the peace agreements signed between Israel and whatever Arab country. Reading today Dr Avraham Sharon's articles, one stands surprised in front of the actuality of his analysis, his views, ideas and the solutions proposed by him.⁸⁹

Shmuel Katz, a Revisionist publicist and publisher, served as an adviser for hasbarah to Prime Minister Begin in 1977–78, but resigned his post in protest against the peace negotiations with Egypt. He was a member of the High Command of the Irgun in the Mandatory period, a co-founder of the Herut Party, a member of the First Knesset and a co-founder of the Whole Land of Israel Movement in 1967. Apparently Katz was a proponent of the geopolitical and imperialist ideas of Professor Karl Haushofer (1869–1946), whose intellectual influence on the geopolitical conceptions of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi *Lebensraum* doctrine of territorial expansionism remain controversial. Haushofer defined *Lebensraum* in practical terms as the right and duty of a nation to provide ample space and resources for its people. Limited resources and population growth among nations guaranteed constant friction in the international power structure; it was thus the duty of the stronger state to expand at the cost of the weaker.⁹⁰ Katz preached that history was shaped by space and political geography, not economics. Israel needed the territories occupied in 1967 as 'living space', and should not give up any of the occupied territories, including Sinai.⁹¹

Remaining loyal to Jabotinsky's philosophy, Katz dismissed the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism: 'The Arabs of Palestine are not a nation. There is no 'Palestine Arab' nation. They were and have remained a fragment of the large Arab people. They lack the inner desire, the spiritual cement and the concentrated passion of a nation.'⁹² In an interview in the periodical *Haumah* in the summer of 1989, Katz was asked the following question: 'Do you see transfer as a humane solution?' His unequivocal answer was

... certainly a humane and logical [solution], it is possible to create acceptable conditions, compensation, etc., if they want to leave. Also in America there is a movement of citizens from one end of the continent to another. Also in this country a little transfer has already taken place. During the years [19]48–67, 382,000 Arabs

left Judea and Samaria. In these years, a Jewish body operated which gave financial support to Arabs who wanted to get out. The activities of the body were stopped at the end of the [Prime Minister] Eshkol government.

Katz added in sorrow that when Begin came to power in 1977 the heads of this 'Jewish body' for transfer submitted a memorandum to him requesting the renewal of their activities, but Begin took little notice.⁹³ It is not clear to what 'Jewish body' Katz was referring or whether he was himself involved in that organization. It is clear, however, that Katz was also advocating the transfer of the Israeli Arab citizens and that as a founder, publisher and manager of the Karni Publishing House, he was responsible for the publication of Tzvi Shiloah's book, *The Guilt of Jerusalem* (1989), cited above, in which the author devotes a large section to the argumentation in justification of Arab expulsion within the context of Greater Israel.⁹⁴

Another veteran Irgun commander and an associate of Begin, Dr Shlomo Lev-'Ami, openly preached Arab 'transfer' in 1988. Lev-'Ami had joined the Haganah in 1936, rising to the rank of company commander. Two years later, he moved to the Irgun and took part in 'retaliatory' strikes against the Arabs. In the Irgun he rose to the rank of chief training officer. In 1973 he was appointed head of briefing in the Ministry of Education for state schools' biblical and 'Jewish consciousness' teachers. He also lectures at academic institutions and at Histadrut Ha'ovdim, the Israeli 'non-socialist' labour organisation which upholds the idea of a Jewish state within the 'historic' boundaries of the Land of Israel. He is also a co-founder of the institute for research on Zionist pre-state underground movements at Bar-Ilan University.⁹⁵ In his book, *Did Zionism Fail?* (1988) Lev-'Ami argues that 'one hundred years of Zionism prove that so long as too many Arabs exist in the western Land of Israel [that is, Palestine] the future of Israel will be in danger'. Ben-'Ami devotes a section to what he calls the Arab 'Return to Arabia', a recurrent slogan in the Zionist-transfer apologia, that is, the transfer of the Palestinians to their so-called 'historical homeland' in Arabia or other Arab countries; there is no

... escape from the re-adoption [of the transfer plan] ... the return of the Arabs from the Land of Israel to Arab states, as an exchange for Jews who have departed from Arab states, is just and logical. This plan of return to Arabia is more necessary than that plan of

exchanging the minorities on behalf of the League of Nations in Europe was vital ... There is no comparison at all between the necessity of return to Arabia with the expulsion of Jews from various countries in the world.⁹⁶

Lev-'Ami believes that Israel must extend its sovereignty at least from the Mediterranean to the River Jordan, leading logically and inevitably to the 'return' of the Palestinians 'to Arabia':

In their exodus from the Land of Israel to their historic homeland in the Arabian peninsula or any other Arab country, the Arabs would be likely to receive full assistance from Arab countries and the United Nations. In the framework of a settlement of population and property exchange between Arab states and Israel the Arabs of the Land of Israel would be able to receive the appropriate assistance, also from Israel.⁹⁷

While he was still Prime Minister, Begin sent to New York Hagai Lev as leader of the Herut Party in the United States. Following an interview with Lev in 1982, Robert Friedman, an editor for the pro-Zionist magazine, *Present Tense*, explained:

Neither Lev nor Begin ... advocates forcibly evicting the Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem and the West Bank ... But, pointing out that Israel has a particular problem in the occupied territories – for Judea and Samaria could hardly be Jewish with a population of nearly 1 million Arabs and only some 20,000 Jews – Lev suggested that the Arabs would eventually get fed up with life under Israeli rule and leave 'voluntarily'. In fact, in a way that is already happening, Lev noted with some enthusiasm, for the number of Arabs in the West Bank has remained constant since 1967, even though the area has the highest birthrate in the world.⁹⁸

Begin remained faithful to Jabotinsky's concept of an 'iron wall' of Jewish military might which would secure Greater Israel. On 6 June 1982, a massive Israeli expeditionary force began the long-planned for and expected invasion, 'Operation Peace for Galilee', with the aim of rearranging the Middle East map to suit Israel's imperialist interests. Begin's attempts to delegitimise the PLO by branding it a 'terrorist organisation akin to the Nazis' and to destroy the PLO in order to facilitate the absorption of the West Bank and Gaza into

Israel were central to his initiation of the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Begin originally endorsed the 'big idea', while leaving the details to his Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, allowing the latter to develop the war into catastrophic proportions⁹⁹ – resulting in the death of some 20,000 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians and over 600 Israeli soldiers. There were, however, Israeli commentators and critics who said the ultimate aim of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, ordered by the Israeli Cabinet and overseen by Sharon, was to bring about forcible 'transfer' of the inhabitants of the occupied territories. Professor Yesha'ayahu Leibovitz of the Hebrew University said that the invasion of Lebanon was the consequence of a 'phenomenon of Judeo-Nazism', which resulted from Israel's control over the occupied territories.¹⁰⁰ The American-based Israeli historian and strategic analyst and biographer of Begin, Amos Perlmutter, wrote in *Foreign Affairs*:

Begin and Sharon share the same dream: Sharon is the dream's hatchet man. That dream is to annihilate the PLO, douse any vestiges of Palestinian nationalism, crush PLO allies and collaborators in the West Bank and eventually force the Palestinians there into Jordan and cripple, if not end, the Palestinian nationalist movement. That, for Sharon and Begin, was the ultimate purpose of the Lebanese war.¹⁰¹

Three weeks before the start of the Israeli invasion, Perlmutter wrote in the *New York Times* that Sharon 'hopes to evict all Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza and drive them to Jordan'.¹⁰²

During the invasion, Ya'acov Meridor, a long-time associate of Begin and the then minister-without-portfolio, visited the Sidon area and, on being asked what to do with the Palestinian refugees, he replied: 'You must drive them east, towards Syria ... and let them not return.'¹⁰³ (Shortly afterwards, Meridor became Minister of Economic Cooperation and Planning until 1984). Writing in the same issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Harold Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs under President Jimmy Carter and former member of the National Security Council with responsibility for Middle Eastern affairs, explained:

With a fragmented and dispersed PLO, Israeli leaders foresaw the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza – deprived of outside moral support – coming to accept permanent Israeli

control there, in a situation in which much of the Palestinian population could be induced (or gradually coerced) to migrate across the Jordan River into Jordan ... The Israeli invasion of Lebanon ... was designed to break any final resistance to total Israeli control and to pave the way for making life so difficult for those who valued their freedom and political self-expression that they would eventually leave for Jordan.¹⁰⁴

Before becoming Defence Minister and presiding over the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, General Sharon, as Minister of Agriculture and Chairman of the Ministerial Committee on Settlement, was at the heart of the Likud's intensive settlement policies in the West Bank, whose trends and evolution since 1977 have been extensively documented by many researchers.¹⁰⁵ Though the Likud government cited security arguments in defence of its settlement policies, it is clear that the government's position was founded on the abstract, uncompromising ideological claim of the 'whole Land of Israel' for the 'Jewish people'. To all intents and purposes, the settlement policies of the fundamentalist movement of Gush Emunim and of the Israeli state had become one and the same after Begin's/Sharon's rise to power. Sharon, who had used the 'iron fist' to smash Palestinian resistance in Gaza in 1970 and to evict, ruthlessly, thousands of the Arab inhabitants of the Rafah salient from their homes around the same time, believed that the blitzkrieg strategies he had employed on the battlefield could be applied to the political and demographic problems of the West Bank and Gaza. In the opinion of General Mattityahu Peled, who subsequently became a Knesset member, Sharon (then, in 1981, Defence Minister) would try to thin out the Arab population of the territories 'by a variety of measures which will fall short of forcible deportation or open atrocities'.¹⁰⁶

The creation of economic distress and economic discrimination against the Arab population of the occupied territories has long been deliberate and systematic, and growing ever worse. Mass expulsion, however, was never, for understandable reasons, a publicly stated policy of the Likud governments between 1977 and 1992, and 1996–1999. The *Jerusalem Post* reported in 1982 that more than 100,000 people had emigrated from the West Bank since 1967.¹⁰⁷ While the colonisation and increasing Judaisation of the occupied territories vastly increased the tensions between settlers and the Palestinians, economic migration has, in part, been precipitated by

the seizure of Arab land. 'The seizure of Arab land does not increase friction with the Arab population,' Sharon argued, 'it will prevent such friction in the future.'¹⁰⁸ But the creation of economic hardship was not the only measure taken to make people leave 'voluntarily'. Israeli journalist Amnon Kapeliouk, writing in the Hebrew daily *'Al-Hamishmar* on 6 June 1980 (p. 3), described the growth of pro-'transfer' groups in Israeli society as well as within the Likud government. These ruling circles were proposing a 'final solution' for the Palestinian problem:

There are also people in official posts who are prepared to create a situation which would force most of the population of the territories to leave their homes and to wander off to Jordan ... The instrument for creating such a situation is collective punishment. The policy of collective punishment is not new. We saw it in its full glory in the days when Moshe Dayan served as 'the emperor of the territories'. But the difference between the policy pursued then and the one carried out under the Likud government is that now it is done with the clear purpose of making the inhabitants' life unbearable [and making them want to leave]. The curfew in Hebron, which lasted over two weeks, was not the end of the story. The daily harassment of the inhabitants and the cutting of all the elementary services – such as the disconnection of all the telephones in the town, even those in doctors' clinics – all of these are not designed to deter the inhabitants ... and not to punish them ... but to make life unbearable so that the inhabitants will either rise up and be expelled by the instruments that have been prepared for this (as revealed by General Yariv, who condemned these horrific plans), or they will prefer to leave voluntarily.

Kapeliouk was referring to public remarks made two weeks earlier by MK Aharon Yariv, a former chief of military intelligence, at the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, that 'there exists widely held opinion in favour of exploiting a [future] situation of war to expel 7–800,000 Arabs – things are being said to this effect and the means are being prepared'.¹⁰⁹

It is not clear from Yariv's remarks whether this 'expulsion plan' had been prepared by the army itself, or put forward by senior officials and ministers in the Begin government. However if such a plan was conceived and prepared by elements in the military estab-

lishment, then it is inconceivable that the then Chief of Staff Raphael Eitan was not privy to its formulation. In any event, however, Yariv's critical remarks were also part of an ongoing public debate about the transfer solution beginning in the late 1970s and intensifying as the 1980s progressed and drew to a close, and in turn generating outspoken condemnations from a small, though significant, group of liberal academics, journalists and members of the peace movement. Arguing against the Likud's annexationist policies, Dr Arie'el Ya'ari, a political scientist and academic director of the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East, wrote in 1984: 'Formal annexation is liable to dangerously arouse the population in the territories, who will see in this move a plot to deny them their national independence. This uprising would, in turn, provoke a bloody repression and might be exploited for a mass expulsion of the West Bank residents – an idea that has gained momentum in recent years, not only among the masses but among some higher-ups as well.'¹¹⁰ Ya'ari also took issue with Meron Benvenisti, arguing that nothing was more reversible than a military occupation. As we shall see, much of the Likud held similar latent views in favour of transfer.

Throughout the 1980s, General Sharon was among the most powerful 'higher-ups' who promoted public debate on the transfer solution within the framework of Greater Israel. In 1982, while he was Defence Minister, Sharon implied, shortly before and perhaps while contemplating his planned invasion of Lebanon, that the Palestinians might have to be expelled, warning that they should 'not forget the lesson of 1948'.¹¹¹ 'The hint is clear,' Amnon Kapeliouk commented, citing Sharon's statement.¹¹² Sharon's threat of a new mass expulsion if the Palestinians did not mind their manners also seemed to be directed towards the Palestinians as a whole (those citizens of Israel as well as the inhabitants of the occupied territories). Upon becoming Defence Minister in 1981, Sharon initiated the most brutal period of repression in the West Bank and Gaza and set about crushing all opposition to the Israeli occupation. Shortly after Sharon's threat was made, the *Middle East International* correspondent Amos Wollin reported from Israel that intensive preparations were continuing in the West Bank and Gaza for much harsher measures to combat their Arab inhabitants' opposition to the Likud's settlement policies. Wollin, hinting at Sharon's threat, commented:

Palestinian residents have been warned that resistance to occupation, colonisation, and the civil administration's effort [launched by Sharon] to impose Begin's version of 'autonomy for the Arabs of the land of Israel', or eventual territorial annexation, may easily lead to a repetition of the 1948 tragedy, when the local Arab population was forced into permanent exile in the neighbouring states. In the same way hundreds of thousands of 1948 refugees in the West Bank and Gaza camps would again be required to move east-wards, this time to Transjordan, which Israeli government leaders describe as 'the already existing Palestinian state.' Repeated hints of such a scenario becoming reality (thus also solving demographic and land problems in Israel's interest) may be meant to reduce Palestinian resistance and encourage the 'moderates' to cooperate with the autonomy plan.¹¹³

As we have seen, and will show, there were many threats of new expulsions if the Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories did not mend their ways, made from the late 1970s onwards. Several threats were made during the intifada (the Palestinian popular uprising in the occupied territories which began in December 1987) by Prime Minister and then Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin, President Haim Hertzog and the then Likud minister Gide'on Patt. Earlier on in January 1979, Sharon's mentor and cabinet colleague Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, who had been involved in and responsible for numerous expulsions during the 1948 war, threatened the Palestinians with another tragedy if they rebelled: 'they would better remember and have in mind what happened with the Arab people in 1948 ... they find themselves, some of them, as refugees in Lebanon and this should serve as a lesson.'¹¹⁴

General Sharon was greatly inspired by Ben-Gurion's and Dayan's thinking and action. In an attempt to legitimise his open transfer advocacy, Sharon was among the first to reveal publicly, in November 1987, the transfer plan of Dayan which discreetly operated between 1967 and 1970. He told a Tel Aviv audience: 'For several years after the Six-Day War, assistance was given to Arabs who wished to emigrate from here. There was an organisation [set up by the Ministry of Defence] which dealt with it.'¹¹⁵ Sharon is not usually known for speaking in euphemisms as to how the Palestinians should be dealt with, and he had no hesitation in openly describing the Palestinian citizens of Israel as 'foreigners'.¹¹⁶ However, Sharon, then one of Yitzhak Shamir's challengers for the

Likud leadership, was fully aware, like other Likud leaders, of the highly sensitive nature of the transfer issue. In an interview in 1988, Minister Sharon put it more delicately: 'You don't simply bundle people on to trucks and drive them away ... I prefer to advocate a positive policy, like enhancing the level of technical education in the [occupied] areas – to create, in effect, a condition that in a positive way will induce people to leave.'¹¹⁷ Moreover, shortly before the eruption of the intifada, a Morasha Minister in the Shamir government, Yosef Shapira, raised the transfer issue, proposing that Israel actively promote mass Palestinian emigration, especially among the intelligentsia. (Morasha was a Knesset faction within the National Religious Party in the 1980s.) Shapira suggested that the Israeli government pay \$20,000 to each Arab who agreed to depart. Sharon, then Minister for Industry and Trade, repeated Shapira's proposal but added that Israel should stop talking about transfer and instead put it into action.¹¹⁸

After the eruption of the intifada, several prominent Likud members called for the appointment of Sharon to a key ministerial post with direct responsibility for dealing with the Palestinian uprising. Among these figures was Rafi (Raphael) Eitan, a former adviser to the Prime Minister and then Chairman of the Board of Directors of Israel Chemicals. Rafi Eitan urged the government 'to declare all the parts [of the territories] in which the intifada is active as zones in which a war situation exists. This would enable me legally to do things that today I cannot do; for instance to transfer population from one place to another in Judea and Samaria, to expel inciters without a prolonged legal process, to confiscate for security needs land and property.'¹¹⁹ Eitan had already urged ten years earlier that

... every Israeli who enters the territories, and even the Old City of Jerusalem, should carry arms and know how to use them. In my judgement more Israeli civilians must be allowed to carry weapons. Some claim that such a state of affairs will be exploited for the worst purposes. My answer: already at this time several thousands of weapons are in the hands of the IDF personnel, the police and Israeli civilians.¹²⁰

Clearly statements made by key Likud politicians in favour of mass expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza began long before the eruption of the intifada in December 1987. As early as

May 1976, Knesset Member Amnon Linn – an old-timer of the Mapai Party and a self-styled ‘expert’ on Arab affairs who had joined the Likud in the 1970s – had this to say in a Knesset debate on Palestinian protests against the Israeli occupation: ‘We should begin mass expulsion of entire communities which took part in demonstrations and riots – and to transfer them across the border. This applies to women, men and children.’¹²¹ Commenting on Linn’s statement, Meir Pa’il, of the small left-wing Sheli Party, reacted indignantly in the Knesset debate of the following day: ‘I think that the proposal of MK Linn to expel the Arabs causes [huge] ... damage [to Israel’s image]. Generally, I am astonished by the insolence of such a man.’¹²² More importantly, on 16 March 1983, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset Meir Cohen-Avidov expressed support for Arab mass transfer at a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. Cohen-Avidov added that ‘Israel had made a great mistake by not expelling 200,000 to 300,000 Arabs from the West Bank’ in 1967.¹²³ The *Jerusalem Post* commented at the time that the failure of the Begin Cabinet to reprimand Cohen-Avidov and dissociate itself from his remarks ‘inevitably’ created the impression that ‘he articulates the tacit premises of official policy.’¹²⁴ Cohen-Avidov was cited on another occasion to the effect that Arab ‘terrorists’ should have their eyes torn out.¹²⁵

These remarks represented a growing tendency in the 1980s among Likud MKs and stalwarts towards a more blunt and less guarded attitude when publicly discussing Greater Israel’s ‘demographic problem’ and the transfer solution. A senior colleague of Cohen-Avidov, Michael Dekel, who was Deputy Defence Minister in the 1980s, was among the most consistent public proponents of transfer. Since the early 1980s, a group of Likud party activists, campaigners and senior figures congregated around Dekel; they openly argued that a mass transfer was ‘the only way to solve the Palestinian problem’.¹²⁶ A very ‘worrying’ problem for Zionism, Dekel declared in October 1982, is the ‘frightening natural growth of the Israeli Arabs within the Green Line, which is among the highest in the world’. As for the population of the West Bank and Gaza, which the Likud government would never give up, ‘there is nothing left to them, apart from looking for their future in [countries] overseas,’ Dekel said. With a ‘mocking smile’, he added that Israel should set up ‘schools for construction work for the Arabs of Judea and Samaria in order to encourage them to emigrate to Arab countries while equipped with Israeli certificates’.¹²⁷ Dekel and his

colleagues argued that the West Bank and Gaza can be radically transformed by a combination of massive Jewish settlement, and the mass dispatch of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians across the Jordan River, starting with the residents of the refugee camps. Was Deputy Defence Minister Dekel articulating the tacit premises of Likud government policy towards the Palestinian population? It should be pointed out that Dekel was known to be a close associate and stalwart of Prime Minister Shamir who had never dissociated himself from the public statements of his protégé. Tzahi Hanegbi, Geula Cohen's son, who was an assistant to Prime Minister Shamir – and subsequently became a minister in the Binyamin Netanyahu government of 1996–99 – had close connections with Rabbi Meir Kahane, the co-founder of the Jewish Defense League and campaigner for Arab expulsion from the early 1970s until his death in 1990, and was said to hold similar views.¹²⁸

It has already been shown that threats of mass Arab expulsion made by senior Likud figures were becoming more frequent in the late 1980s against the background of the continuing Palestinian intifada. During the same period, Gide'on Patt (Minister of Housing, 1977–79; Minister of Industry and Trade, 1979–84; Minister of Science and Development, 1984–88; Minister of Tourism between 1990 and 1992) warned the Palestinian citizens of Israel that if they did not behave themselves they would be put on trucks and in taxi cabs and sent to the border.¹²⁹ Patt's colleague Yitzhak Moda'i (Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, 1977–84; Minister of Finance, 1984–86; Minister of Justice, 1986–88; Minister of Economy and Planning between 1988 and 1992) suggested that 'it would be possible to destroy the intifada by a combination of military, economic and social means', including the 'evacuation' of Arab neighbourhoods to other regions.¹³⁰ Another senior Likud figure, Binyamin Netanyahu, then Deputy Foreign Minister, told an audience at Bar-Ilan University, according to the *Jerusalem Post* of 19 November 1989, that the government had failed to exploit internationally favourable situations, such as the Tiananmen Square massacre in June 1989 when world attention and the media were focused on China, to carry out 'large-scale' expulsions at a time when 'the danger would have been relatively small'. Later, when Netanyahu denied making these statements, the *Jerusalem Post* produced a tape recording of his speech at Bar-Ilan University.¹³¹ Was Netanyahu speaking just for himself or was he revealing the Likud government's hidden agenda?

Moreover, on 16 November 1989, the Ministry of the Interior gave a certificate approving the registration of a voluntary organization ('Amutah), whose single-minded aim is the 'transfer' of the Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories. Avner Ehrlich (who in the early 1970s was a member of the executive of the Whole Land of Israel Movement), based in Tel Aviv, placed an advertisement and article in the name of 'Amutah, the management of this 'transfer', which stated: 'Its principal aim is explicit in the registration certificate: a lobby for explaining the necessity of transferring the Muslim Arabs of the Land of Israel, because this is the most humane and just way for achieving peace in the Middle East.' The only way to prevent the development of a bi-national state in Greater Israel is to

... implement the plan of evacuating the Arabs of the Land of Israel outside the boundaries of the Land of Israel ... we have reached the 12th hour and we should know that this country would be either for us or for the Arabs. And if we want this country [Greater Israel] a decision should be taken immediately to set up a parliamentary lobby, the aim of which is to bring about that the state of Israel, the whole Jewish people and most peoples understand that peace in the Middle East will be established ... only if the transfer of the Arabs of the Land of Israel is carried out to Arab countries ... if the evacuees decide on another destination, it would be the role of the United Nations to provide it for them. I am convinced and certain that the United States could absorb 300–400,000 of them; France, England, Italy, Germany and Canada would have to absorb the rest of the evacuees. Only thus would the problem of the Arabs of the Land of Israel be solved in a humane way.

Other Likud activists such as Aharon Pappo (also a member of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority Executive) have argued that expulsion would be a humane and practical solution.¹³² Like many Likud members, Aharon Pappo is not a recent convert to the transfer doctrine. In 1973, Pappo acted as a solicitor for Rabbi Meir Kahane who had been indicted by an Israeli court for his letter-writing campaign urging Arab citizens to emigrate from Israel. The line of defence Pappo intended to employ during the trial – which in the event was postponed indefinitely – was that Kahane's campaign was perfectly legitimate since it was in line with the attitudes espoused

by the founding fathers of the State of Israel, including Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Berl Katznelson, Yitzhak Tabenkin, Zeev Jabotinsky, Moshe Sharett and Golda Meir.¹³³ Pappo pointed out that the then Prime Minister Golda Meir used to confide to her close entourage that she was apprehensive about waking up every morning and hearing that another Arab baby had been born in Israel.¹³⁴

In the early 1990s, Pappo, while remaining a Likud member, became closely associated with two groups of the extreme right which campaigned for Palestinian expulsion: 'The National Circle' of Ora Shem-Ur and the Moledet Party led by General Rehava'am Zeevi. In an article entitled 'Moledet is the Message', published in the mass-circulation daily *Yedi'ot Aharonot* during the second Gulf War and shortly after Moledet joined the Shamir cabinet in January 1991, Pappo wrote:

The Moledet movement's joining of the government is important and has a significance because of the latest events which proved ... that there is no possibility of 'living together' with the Arab residents of the Land of Israel ... the joining of the government by Gandhi [that is, Zeevi] will give legitimisation to the possibility that indeed, in certain circumstances ... the solution of their transfer to Arab countries in general, and the desert of Iraq in particular, is possible and legitimate.

He added that Israel should follow the example of Czechoslovakia which 'expelled' three-and-a-half million Germans after the Second World War.¹³⁵

The atmosphere created by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and second Gulf War of 1991, coupled with the general Israeli tendency to blame the Palestinians for Saddam's actions as well as public statements made by Israeli ministers and Likud MKs who exploited the Gulf crisis to threaten the Palestinians, greatly heightened the Palestinians' fear of mass expulsion. In August 1990, shortly after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a confidant of Prime Minister Shamir told the daily *Haaretz* that 'if ... Israel is forced into a war and if the Palestinians in the territories are as a result emboldened enough to cause us a problem, they will find themselves outside Israel's borders'.¹³⁶ Emil Habibi, a leading Israeli Palestinian writer and former editor of the Israeli Communist Party daily '*al-*

Ittihad, explained in an interview with the Israeli periodical *New Outlook* (September/October/November 1990, pp. 22–23):

We have a real fear that an atmosphere of chaos and hatred might develop which would allow the resumption, and completion of the 'job' of 'transfer' begun in 1947–48. We have 'seen death' – expulsion from the homeland – twice in our lifetime: in the 'great catastrophe' of 1948 ...

We may argue with the Palestinian leadership over the justification of some of the positions they have taken during the crisis. But to place the stress on blaming them would divert attention from the substantial danger Palestinians now face. The appearance of new 'Arab refugees' – the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and other Arabs from the Gulf Arab states – is again putting us face to face with the danger of expulsion from our homeland. Focusing on Palestinian guilt will only help the 'transferists' in Israel create a smokescreen for hiding, or even worse, justifying, their intentions. No honest individual has the right to forget the fate of the Palestinians in 1947–48, a fate which became possible because of just such a smokescreen.

The more the Likud became entrenched in power in the 1980s, the more many of its government officials and ministers became persistent in their public support for a radical solution to Greater Israel's 'demographic problem'. In 1990, the Likud dissolved its coalition partnership with the Labour Party and formed a coalition government with the far-right parties – including the Tehiya, Tzomet, Moledet and the National Religious Party; this coalition lasted until 1992. The leaders of these extreme-right parties were among the most vocal advocates of territorial maximalism and Arab 'transfer'. In January 1991, General Zeevi, the leader of the Moledet Party, with its single-minded transfer platform, joined the Likud coalition as a minister-without-portfolio and member of the policy-making inner cabinet.¹³⁷ Shamir's last government (1990–92) was a right-wing radical administration in which the extreme right exerted unprecedented influence, but there was a sense of fatalism about its prospects of longevity. Shamir told the Knesset that his new government contained 'all the national forces which have fought for the sake of Eretz Israel, for settlement in all parts of Eretz Israel'.¹³⁸

With the Likud entrenchment in power and the subsequent rise of extreme right-wing forces in Israel, the most far-reaching

imperialist proposals were now entering mainstream Zionist thinking and official circles. Such proposals, including Arab population removal, were outlined in an article entitled 'A Strategy for Israel in the 1980s', which appeared in the World Zionist Organisation's periodical *Kivunim* in February 1982, a few months before Israel's invasion of Lebanon. The article was authored by 'Oded Yinon, a journalist and analyst of Middle Eastern affairs and former senior Foreign Ministry official. The importance of the article's contents lie in the fact that *Kivunim* is published by the World Zionist Organisation's Department of Information and it may have expressed the view of some elements within official circles. 'Oded Yinon analyses the weaknesses that characterise the national and social structures of Arab states and concludes that Israel should work to bring about their dissolution and fragmentation into a mosaic of ethnic and confessional groupings. In the short term, Yinon proposes, Israel should bring about the 'dissolution' of Jordan:

There is no possibility that Jordan will exist in its present shape and structure in the long-term, and the policy of Israel, whether in war or in peace, must be to bring about the dissolution of Jordan under the present regime [and the consequent] termination of the problem of the [occupied] territories densely populated with Arabs west of the [River] Jordan, whether in war or under the conditions of peace; emigration from the territories, and economic-demographic freeze in them ... we have to be active in order to encourage this change speedily, in the nearest time ... It is no longer possible to live in this country in the present situation without separating the two peoples, the Arabs [including the Arab citizens of Israel] to Jordan and the Jews to the territories west of the [Jordan] River ... [The Palestinian Arabs] can only have security and existence in Jordan.

Yinon believes, like many advocates of transfer in Israel, that 'Israel has made a strategic mistake in not taking measures [of mass expulsion] towards the Arab population in the new territories during and shortly after the [1967] war ... Such a line would have saved us the bitter and dangerous conflict ever since which we could have avoided then terminated by giving Jordan to the Palestinians.'

The long-term objectives, Yinon suggests, encompass the whole Arab world, including the imposition of a *Pax Israelica* on, and the determination of the destiny of, Arab societies: reinvading Sinai and

'breaking Egypt territorially into separate geographical districts'. As for the Arab East:

There all the events which are only our wish on the Western Front [that is, Egypt] are happening before our eyes today. The total disintegration of Lebanon into five regional, localised governments as the precedent for the entire Arab world ... the dissolution of Syria, and later Iraq, into districts of ethnic and religious minorities, following the example of Lebanon, is Israel's main long-range objective on the Eastern Front ... Syria will disintegrate into several states along the lines of its ethnic and sectarian structure ... As a result, there will be a Shi'ite 'Alawi state, the district of Aleppo will be a Sunni state, and the district of Damascus another state which is hostile to the northern one. The Druze – even those of the Golan – should form a state in Houran and in northern Jordan ... Oil-rich but very divided and internally strife-ridden land of Iraq is certainly a candidate to fit Israel's goals ... Every kind of inter-Arab confrontation will help us to prevail in the short run and will hasten the achievement of the supreme goal, namely breaking up Iraq into elements like Syria and Lebanon. There will be three states or more, around the three major cities, Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, while Shi'ite areas in the south will separate from the Sunni north, which is mostly Kurdish ... The entire Arabian Peninsula is a natural candidate for dissolution ...¹³⁹

Given the auspices under which Yinon's proposals were put forward, this article generated wide echoes in Arab countries¹⁴⁰ giving the impression that the World Zionist Organisation was endorsing a detailed plan for Zionist territorial expansionism, including the destruction of several Arab countries and Arab transfer. Regardless of whether Yinon's transfer proposal was endorsed by official circles in the World Zionist Organisation, the Palestinians, as has already been demonstrated, have good reason to fear mass transfer from the occupied territories. To the Palestinians, the massive immigration of Russian Jews into a small country in 1990–91, which was channelled by the Likud government into 'creating facts on the ground' in the form of Jewish settlements, aroused the gravest fear of a 'new 1948 exodus'. 'One million newly arrived Jews dropped into the laps of Shamir and Sharon ... will destroy the (demographic) argument of the Labor Party and strengthen support for transfer,' stated Saeb

'Erakat, professor of politics at the al-Najah University in Nablus, and later member of the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace talks. Hanna Siniora, the editor of the East Jerusalem-based *al-Fajr*, said in a similar vein: 'In the context of the lack of a political initiative to end the conflict and reach a solution, the Palestinians see Soviet immigration as a threat and part of a plan to transfer them from their homeland.'¹⁴¹ The Palestinians viewed this large-scale immigration as giving further impetus to the whole dimension of Greater Israel and wreaking havoc on the views of Israel's 'demographic doves'¹⁴² and the supporters of the Israeli Zionist peace camp, who stood to lose the basis of their whole 'demographic' argument used to stave off increasing settlement and annexationism. Such fear has been evidently expressed in rumours of impending mass expulsion widely circulated in the West Bank and Jordan in 1990. On 9 January 1990, an Arab newspaper claimed that 'the PLO has a report on a plan endorsed by the US administration calling for the expulsion of half a million Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip within two years.'¹⁴³ It is very questionable whether the US had ever endorsed such a plan. However, such a report appears to have been taken very seriously in Jordan. Four days later, on 13 January, a Jordanian newspaper warned against the mass transfer of Palestinians from the West Bank across the Jordan River:

We must, through awareness and decisive clear measures, differentiate between opening the bridges to keep the economic veins alive and opening them to fulfil the enemy's desire to uproot and deport the Palestinians and drive them to emigrate or seek work outside the land of Palestine. Hence, attention should be paid – for strategic, national and Pan-Arab reasons in the interests of the Palestine question and Jordan – to standing firmly against the desire by any Palestinian citizen to reside in Jordan after the decision to disengage ties with the West Bank, taken on 31 July 1988. It follows that those who came to visit and failed to return, hoping to stay, should not be allowed to stay. Nor should there be silence over the large number of people who came but failed to return.¹⁴⁴

In the event, however, only a minority of the 800,000 new Russian immigrants who had arrived from the former Soviet Union between 1990 and 1998 found themselves in Jewish settlements in the West

Bank, despite the price incentives. Although many Russian Jews were encouraged to settle in Greater Jerusalem, most opted for a quieter life in Israeli cities and towns on the Mediterranean coast. But those new Russian immigrants who settled in new Jewish neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem or settlements on the West Bank tended to display the same hard-line and territorially maximalist Zionism found in the Likud and other parties of Greater Israel. Many of the new immigrants did not identify themselves with most other secular Ashkenazis and supporters of liberal Zionism, but gravitated to the Israeli right. For instance, Binyamin Netanyahu received the votes of 60 per cent of the Russian immigrants in the general election of 1996.¹⁴⁵ Among these immigrants, there was also solid support for both Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet Zionist dissident whose Yisrael b'Aliya party was an essential component in Netanyahu's cabinet until May 1999, and Avigdor Lieberman, Prime Minister Netanyahu's former lieutenant who in 1998 was planning a new Russian party further to the right of Likud.¹⁴⁶

Throughout the 1990s, the Russian vote was generally seen to be the wild card of Israeli politics. In mid-1998, however, the Russian votes remained solidly on the Israeli right. 'Most of the Russian immigrants have a strong imperialist sense from the Soviet Union. For them what counts is control of maximum territory,' remarked the editor of the Russian-language *Vesti* newspaper, Eduard Kuznetsov.¹⁴⁷ Some Russian immigrants have even drifted to the extreme right. In June 1997, one woman, aged 25, set off weeks of Palestinian protests and rioting on the West Bank by drawing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad as a pig and pasting them to walls in the West Bank city of Hebron.¹⁴⁸

Moreover, with the Likud entrenchment in power there was, in conjunction with the increase in public support for radical solutions to Greater Israel's 'demographic' problem and territorial disputes, a coarsening of political rhetoric towards, and a stirring up of racism against, the Palestinian population.

NETANYAHU AND THE OSLO PROCESS

Binyamin Netanyahu served as Prime Minister from 1996 to May 1999. His Likud Party returned to power in the post-Oslo period which followed the conclusion of a series of agreements on Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza between the

Labour government and the PLO – agreements whose frameworks and contents were largely shaped by Labour Zionist premises and fundamentals. A master of the sound-bite and tough on rhetoric, the American-educated Netanyahu envisaged a model of the Likud shaped in the image of Jabotinsky's 'iron wall' philosophy and Israel's pragmatic politics of the post-Oslo period. Netanyahu's father, Ben-Tzion, is an academic and long-time Revisionist, and the strong Revisionist legacy was passed from father to son. However, Netanyahu sought to modernise and change the hitherto crude approach of the Revisionist old guard and mould it using the political vocabulary of the 1990s.

In the 1980s, Netanyahu had believed it was a political imperative to block off any discussion of the Palestinian case in the West. During his time in the United States, he had developed Israel's hasbarah (public relations industry/propaganda) to a new level. Netanyahu, then seeking to delegitimise the Palestinians, developed the idea that 'Jordan is Palestine' as a purely propaganda tool to the extent that a network of 'Jordan is Palestine' committees were established linking most major Jewish communities in the West.¹⁴⁹ Netanyahu had also referred to Jordan as 'eastern Palestine' (that is, eastern Eretz Yisrael) in an article in the *Wall Street Journal* of 5 April 1983. He argued that the demand for 'another Palestinian state in Eretz Yisrael' had nothing to do with Palestinian self-determination; it simply provided the basis for an irredentist drive to destroy the State of Israel. The 'Jordan is Palestine' hasbarah line gained wide currency among Jews and non-Jewish Zionist sympathisers, even spawning an entire conference in Jerusalem. It was a diversionary measure in support of Likud policy, with the aim of marginalising the Palestinians and delegitimising them as negotiating partners.¹⁵⁰ The Likud's acceptance of the peace treaty with Jordan signed in October 1994 suggested they were *de facto* ideologically reconciled to the so-called 'loss' of the East Bank, even though they did not shout it out loudly for the party faithful to hear.¹⁵¹ While the subsequent abandonment of the Jabotinskite notion of Jordan as part of the 'homeland' was crucial to the Likud prospects in the 1990s, Netanyahu still remained the intransigent opponent of the slightest concession regarding the West Bank – 'the old biblical lands of Judea and Samaria', in which there was no room for a real Palestinian autonomy, let alone a Palestinian state.

Throughout his tenure as Prime Minister, Netanyahu – like his predecessor Shamir – pursued a policy which admitted little

deviation from Jabotinsky's 'iron wall' concept, believing that the international community and the Arab world would acquiesce in the continuation of the Israeli hold on the West Bank and Gaza. Moreover, it was assumed that the situation would become more permanent with each new Jewish settlement. The strategy of seeking peace with the Arabs on these terms, it was argued, would minimise the degree of interference from the West. It was therefore in the Likud's interests to reject or drag out any political initiatives which hinted at the possibility of withdrawal and the renunciation of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied territories. Netanyahu also shared with Shamir an enforced political immobility and lack of ability to manoeuvre. Indeed, the more the prospect for a decision on the future of the West Bank and Gaza drew closer, the more difficult it became to contain emotions towards the West Bank within the Likud.

Netanyahu's effort to establish himself as Likud leader had received a severe jolt when the Oslo Agreement suddenly emerged and Yitzhak Rabin hesitantly shook Yasir 'Arafat's hand on the White House lawn in September 1993. Given the psychological assault which embracing the PLO entailed, Netanyahu had no other choice if he wished to maintain his position as Likud leader.¹⁵² In the post-September 1993 period, Netanyahu's approach to the Oslo process was, at root, ideological and hard-line, repeating the pattern of decades by embracing undiluted Revisionism. Netanyahu emulated Begin and Shamir in making common cause with the far-right parties. His espousal of a radical populist approach was the path chosen to confront the Oslo process. This was highly reminiscent of Menahem Begin's tactics of the past. Netanyahu called the Oslo process 'an enormous lie' and 'a crime against Zionism' and demanded a national referendum. In the Knesset debate, he went further and stated that the Likud might not honour the Oslo Agreement if they were returned to power.¹⁵³

Under the settlement-backing, land-grabbing, new-right Likud government of Netanyahu, which came to power in June 1996, things got much worse. Confidential Israeli documents leaked to the *Observer* in June 1996 showed that Netanyahu's government had drawn up plans to 'devour Arab East Jerusalem and reduce its Arab community to an insignificant minority'. The godfather of the master plan was Jerusalem's Likud deputy mayor, Shmuel Meir, who believes the Palestinians have no rights in the holy city. His ideas include the demolition of at least 2,000 Arab homes which he claims

have been built without planning permission, and the construction of some 7,000 new homes exclusively for Jews in Arab East Jerusalem – which has already 160,000 Jewish settlers in ten major settlements ringing the Arab sector. ‘Every time he [Yasir ‘Arafat] says Jerusalem is his, we will respond by building a thousand homes for Jews,’ explained one of Netanyahu’s advisers.¹⁵⁴

Netanyahu fervently embraced the cause of undermining the Oslo process. However, under intense American pressure, in October 1998, he and the head of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Yasir ‘Arafat, signed the Wye Memorandum at the White House. In essence, the Wye Memorandum was a long-overdue mechanism to implement aspects of earlier agreements, notably the Interim Agreement (Oslo II) of 28 September 1995 and the Hebron Protocol of 15 January 1997. The overarching principle that governs the Wye agreement is the concept of security/reciprocity. The sections on security consume about 60 per cent of the memorandum, while the rest is taken up with further redeployment and unresolved interim issues, including Israel’s commitments to negotiate safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the opening of the Gaza airport and eventually a seaport.

Under the Memorandum, Israel agreed to turn over 13 per cent of area C (currently under full Israeli control) in a combined first and second stage of further redeployment; 1 per cent will go directly to area A (under PA control), 12 per cent to area B (though 3 per cent will be ‘nature reserves’ in which new construction is banned). Israel will maintain full security control in the nature reserves, but PA security forces may enter with prior Israeli approval. Israel will also turn over 14.2 per cent of land currently in area B to area A, leaving the PA at the end of twelve weeks with full control of 18.2 per cent of the West Bank and in partial control of 21.8 per cent. Israel also committed itself to carry out a third stage of further redeployment. Under Wye, Israel’s other responsibilities were open-ended. They included: a) to open the Qarni industrial estate in a ‘timely’ manner; b) to revive talks of safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank; c) to resume talks on the Gaza airport, and d) to address outstanding legal disputes with the PA. The PA and Israel also agreed to prevent acts of terrorism, crime, hostilities, and incitement against people and property.

Under Wye, the PA’s specific obligations were concrete and to be met by specific dates. These included pledges: a) to submit and implement a work plan to the US on combating ‘terrorist organisa-

tions'; b) to resume full security cooperation with Israel; c) to outlaw organisations or wings of organisations that incite violence; d) to apprehend specific individuals suspected of violence; e) to prohibit and collect illegal weapons; f) to issue a decree prohibiting all forms of incitement, and g) to provide a list of all PA police 'in conformity with prior agreements'. Concerning the PLO charter, the Memorandum stated that the PLO Executive Committee and Central Council should reaffirm Arafat's 22 January 1998 letter to President Clinton, listing the 26 out of 33 articles of the charter annulled on 22 April 1996, after which Arafat should invite members of the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinian Legislative Council, and heads of the PA ministries to a meeting to reaffirm their support for the Executive Committee and Central Council's decisions.

Both sides also agreed to resume final status talks immediately, with the goal of concluding an agreement by 4 May 1999, and to refrain from taking unilateral steps that would change the status of the West Bank and Gaza. Following the signing of the Memorandum, the PA immediately began taking steps to meet its obligations, sometimes sparking riots and prompting accusations of human rights abuses in its areas. Meanwhile, on 27 October, Netanyahu postponed Cabinet and Knesset ratification of Wye on the pretext that the PA would not meet its obligations on security issues. While delaying Wye, Netanyahu proceeded with settlement expansion, declaring on 26 October that he had not agreed at Wye to halt settlement construction or confiscation of Palestinian lands. Around 28 October, Netanyahu approved the addition of a thousand new units to existing West Bank and Gaza settlements within 18 months. Also, the Israeli government approved the fortification of 33 settlements near the expanded area A prior to redeployment, on 13 November it approved the construction of 13 bypass roads requiring the confiscation of large tracts of Palestinian lands. When Netanyahu's Cabinet finally reconvened on 11 November, under intense US pressure, and ratified the Wye Memorandum (8–4, with 7 abstentions), it set up so many conditions on its approval that more disputes and delays were inevitable. At the close of 1998, it was uncertain where Wye implementation was headed. With the peace process apparently dead, the right-wing government began disintegrating.

Netanyahu's term of office as Prime Minister had been marked by incessant acrimony and the Likud itself was wracked by bitter infighting. Netanyahu's credibility was in shreds among his own

colleagues. Two-and-a-half years after coming into office, Netanyahu underwent the humiliation of being forced to support an opposition motion dissolving the Knesset and calling for early elections, scheduled for 17 May 1999. But it was not the parliamentary opposition that toppled the Netanyahu government. The ruling coalition simply imploded under the burdens of its own contradictions – above all, the tension between a professed commitment to the peace process and its compositions of factions and individuals implacably opposed thereto.

The vote to dissolve the Knesset did not put an end to the Likud's disintegration. Netanyahu's leadership was challenged by senior Likud figures, including Benny Begin, whose father Menahem Begin was a long-time standard bearer of the 'Greater Israel' cause. In January 1999, Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was dismissed by Netanyahu, after he had met with leaders of the emerging Centre Party, Amnon Shahak (a former army chief of staff) and Dan Meridor, a former Likud finance minister (together they were joined by the outgoing mayor of Tel Aviv, Roni Milo, another erstwhile ally of Netanyahu). Humiliated by Mordechai's move and his evident intention to leave the Likud, Netanyahu struck first. During his 31-month tenure, Netanyahu had parted company with two ministers of finance (Ya'acov Neeman and Dan Meridor), one defence minister (Mordechai) and one science minister (Benny Begin). Netanyahu's former foreign minister, David Levy, had gone even further, crossing the lines to ally himself with Ehud Barak of the Labour Party. Mordechai (born in Iraqi Kurdistan) became a major boost to the fortunes of the new Centre Party, which aimed to capture Israel's middle ground, appealing to well-to-do, secular and middle-class voters. However, Mordechai, who was running against Netanyahu as candidate for prime minister for the Centre Party, entered the increasingly crowded arena of contestants for the post of prime minister.

This mass defection decimated the Likud leadership. Netanyahu proved a bitter disappointment to significant sectors of his own constituency – that is, settlers and other hard-liners – and the Russian immigrants were equally disillusioned. Furthermore, Netanyahu had never enjoyed much sympathy in the Israeli media and most journalists disliked his manipulative rhetoric. He had done no better with other elite groups, including the academic and business communities. Despite an enthusiastic espousal of globalisation and Reaganite free-market dogma, much of the business

community laid the blame for economic recession in equal measure on his sabotage of the peace process and his espousal of the monetarist dogma. The stalled peace process continued to take its toll on the Israeli economy. In October 1998, the Finance Ministry had reported that 1998 had been Israel's worst year in the past decade, with real foreign investment in the Tel Aviv stock exchange down to 73 per cent for the first six months, according to the Bank of Israel. The Central Bureau of Statistics had reported a 'considerable' economic slump in the second half of 1998.

As the countdown for the general election of 17 May began, Netanyahu stepped up his efforts to woo right-wing voters. His hard-line Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, within weeks of the Wye Memorandum's signing, had publicly called upon settler groups to 'grab' as much West Bank land as possible to prevent it from remaining in Arab hands. On 9 January, Netanyahu threatened to annex the bulk of the West Bank if the head of the PA, Yasir 'Arafat, declared Palestinian statehood when the Oslo process expired on 4 May. Netanyahu's tough rhetoric was combined with the escalation of settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In early January, he gave the go-ahead for the construction of the Har Homa settlement at Jabal Abu Ghunaym on Jerusalem's southern outskirts, a step which triggered fierce Palestinian opposition. The new settlement will effectively complete the cordon of Jewish settlements around East Jerusalem, virtually cutting off the city from the rest of the West Bank. Jabal Abu Ghunaym was one of several settlement expansion schemes the Israeli government was putting into effect, to take advantage of the election atmosphere in Israel. Since the Wye agreement was signed, Israel had established 17 new 'hilltop' settlements in the West Bank, all located close to areas slated for transfer to the PA under the terms of Wye. Their aim was not only to swell the West Bank settler population from its current 160,000 to a potential 200,000, but also to enclose the existing Palestinian autonomous areas to prevent their expansion much beyond the 10 per cent of extra territory granted them in Wye's 'second further redeployment', if and when implemented.

On 17 May, the Israeli electorate summarily booted the incumbent Prime Minister Netanyahu out of office and elected One Israel Party leader Ehud Barak, a former army chief of staff, in his place. Barak, of the opposition Labour Party, won the prime ministerial elections by a landslide, taking 56.8 per cent of the vote compared to 43.1 per cent for Netanyahu. In the second ballot to the Israeli Parliament,

Likud's strength fell from 32 to 19 seats in the 120-member Knesset. In an unprecedented action, Netanyahu conceded defeat less than 40 minutes after the polls closed, when exit polls clearly pointed to a sizeable defeat for the Likud candidate. He immediately resigned the leadership of the Likud Party. Subsequently, the senior leaders of Likud recommended that the outgoing 71-year-old Foreign Minister, Ariel Sharon, become acting chairman of the party in place of Netanyahu. A new Likud leader is expected to be elected in three months to a year. The outgoing Finance Minister, Meir Shitrit, has announced that he intends to run for leader of the Likud but the Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert appeared the clear front-runner for the leadership. However, even the most 'moderate' and pragmatic of these Likudniks aspire to a reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians which would include acceptance of the Israeli presence in the 'entire historic Land of Israel'.