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### **Settlement, Strategy and Hypocrisy**

US President Jimmy Carter recently restated a principle of great importance in democratic government. A striking feature of the current American scene is Carter's declining popularity in the polls, now down to about 30 per cent. Nevertheless, he said, "If I should ever modify my positions away from what's best for the country in order to pick up support, then I would not deserve to be president".

Democracy, and indeed governmental performance, would become a caricature if every few weeks the course of operations were altered because of a presumed change of wind in the electorate.

This principle applies even more forcefully in parliamentary democracies like Britain or Israel. Here an adverse parliamentary majority may force a government to resign; but as long as the government commands the majority, it is its right and its obligation to carry out the mandate it was accorded by the electors through parliament — until it is faced by the verdict of the people at the next election.

Too many people in Israel appear to have forgotten, or prefer to ignore, this vital principle of its democratic system. The Likud Government came to power on a reasonably clear political programme, including a very specific undertaking to foster Jewish "settlement" in all parts of Eretz Yisrael.

This policy conflicted with the more circumscribed attitude of the Alignment. That party, now in opposition, is in its turn perfectly entitled to voice its concerns over the government's policy. Equally legitimate is the opposition evinced by some Alignment elements, in cooperation with other more "leftist" groups, under the beguiling born-yesterday banner of "Peace Now".

What is not legitimate is the notion widely disseminated by these opposition groups that somehow, somewhere, the government's policy is morally wrong in that it contradicts some imagined code of continuity in national policy (which the Alignment seems still to regard as a kind of property exclusively its own).

This propaganda, moreover, pretends that the government is supported only by a minority. Even if this were somehow proved true, the government would have no right to change policy in mid-term in order, as Carter put it, "to pick up support".

As it happens, there are no grounds for the suggestion that the government is supported on this issue by a minority. Quite the contrary. Its parliamentary majority on this issue is quite solid. As for public opinion, in spite of the intensive almost daily brainwashing to which it is subjected by and through the media, the majority's support is quite clear.

In a poll conducted for *The Jerusalem Post* by Modi'in Ezrachi a few weeks ago, 57 per cent of those expressing an opinion were in favour of “continuing with new settlements in Judea and Samaria”.

Alignment spokesmen attack the idea of Jewish reconstruction in Judea and Samaria because it does not conform to their doctrine of Israel's security requirements and to their formula for peace. The apparent inspiration of most of their pronouncements is the Allon Plan.

That plan required the setting up of a number of villages in the Jordan Valley and the retention of those in the Etzion-Hebron area. The rest of the territory — Samaria and most of Judea — would be handed over to Jordan, whose state would thus encompass both sides of the river. But at its very centre, along the river, Israel would rule over a swath of land, containing those villages as well as a series of army camps.

Moreover, Jordan would be expected to agree to the demilitarization of its territory in western Eretz Yisrael.

For nearly 10 years, Yigal Allon and his supporters offered this singular contraption to Jordan, to the Arabs in general, to the world at large. Nobody wanted it. Indeed, no Arab ever gave any reason to believe that any Arabs were prepared to accept a territorial compromise of any kind, Allon-planned or otherwise.

The Allon Plan is, in fact, a theoretical concept, unrelated to any political reality. If the Arabs were clever enough to accept it momentarily, in order “meantime” to ensure the departure of Israel from Samaria and from most of Judea, an unprecedented barrage of world opinion would descend on Israel as an openly “colonialist” power, maintaining an army in what she herself had recognized as sovereign Arab territory.

Nor would the demilitarization of the sovereign Arab territory meet with a more friendly reception. Not, of course, that it would last. Who would prevent the inevitable introduction of arms, even heavy arms, and the build-up of a sizeable “Lebanese” situation within Judea and Samaria?

Then, not only would Galilean towns and villages serve as targets, but also the major part of Israel.

Retaliatory raids by the IDF, airforce attacks — on territory just recognized by Israel, after years of struggle, as Arab sovereign territory?

The orchestrated denunciation of Israel to which we have become accustomed in the wake of Israeli action in Lebanon would pale before the chorus of world-wide obloquy that would be poured down on Israel.

It is indeed a sad reflection on the quality of political thinking in Israel that the supporters of “territorial compromise” refuse to face the implications of the glaring realities. The harsh centre of those realities is that Israel's elementary security requires its control of the whole of

Western Palestine. The essence of minimal security this side of the Jordan, and indeed the needs of elementary strategic reach in what is, after all, a tiny area — is the control of the central mountains.

The no less obvious reality, which Israel has had to learn twice at heavy cost in the past is that, in the topographical and political circumstances in this country, strategic control is impossible, just will not work, without political control; and political control requires a substantial Jewish presence throughout the area. Not merely a military presence, but a thriving civilian community.

Those media which have been pouring contumely and insults on Gush Emunim carefully avoid publishing a map of the villages already established, and those planned. In fact, the network (still inadequate, but clearly delineated) makes a clear strategic pattern. Those villages would be the first line of defence, adding the bare minimum of depth to the normal security needs of Petah Tikva, Netanya and Tel Aviv.

It is an unbelievably childish (and hypocritical) pretence that somehow settlements approved and established by the Alignment Government are any more acceptable to the Arabs than Gush Emunim settlements. The Arabs make no bones about it; and they do not let us forget it. Only last Friday Egypt's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Butros Ghali (in an interview in *The Jerusalem Post*) reiterated without equivocation the "self-evident" axiom that all existing Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria will have to be dismantled — as in Sinai — "if Israel wants peace". Ghali makes no distinction between new and old settlements, or between Samaria and the Jordan Valley, or of Judea.

Because his purpose, and the purpose of all the Arabs, openly and repeatedly stated, is the expulsion of Israel from "all the territories occupied in the 1967 war".

This is being articulated by the "moderates" like Ghali, who does not refrain from mentioning (in another conversation) his expectation that the "refugees" of 1948 will, in the next phase, be returned to their homes (in Jaffa and Haifa *et al*).

At the same time the less "moderate" elements continue to be explicit about the total Arab purpose. The meeting of notables in Nablus in the winter expressed its designs on Jaffa and Acre; and only a few days ago, in a poll of Arab citizens of Israel, 50 per cent expressed themselves against her very existence.

Naturally, the Arabs will oppose each new Jewish village as it arises. The collaboration, direct and indirect, of woolly-minded Jews of the opposition minority with rational, nationally motivated Arabs in resisting the establishment precisely of Eilon Moreh, will no doubt provide much amusement to future historians fascinated by the phenomenon of Jewish stupidity.

Unfortunately, it is providing here and now a source of encouragement to Israel's enemies and to those of our friends in the US and elsewhere who (for their own reasons) are ceaselessly pressing Israel to adopt a policy tantamount to national suicide by stages.