

and Samaria (the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip will participate in defining their future in accordance with the Camp David agreement.» These two points reaffirm that Palestinians who participate in the Jordanian delegation will not be from the PLO. The 14th clause gives a clear idea of what the present Israeli government might agree to as a result of negotiations: «No implementation of any sovereignty other than Israeli in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.» There is also a clause stating that 28 new settlements are to be established in these areas.

The national unity government, due to its composition, is unable to agree to change the present status of the occupied territories; each of the two main parties, Labor and Likud, have the right to veto any such change. If things reach this point, the government will be dismantled and new elections will be held, according to the government document.

In general, it can be said that the present government cannot take any decision on the question of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. The most probable result of any controversial political development would be to destroy the present government. Thus, the government is not in a position to make any allowances to Jordan during the present period, but only to agree on «autonomy for the residents within the boundaries of the Camp David agreement» which according to the Likud (which has the right of veto) means «autonomy within the boundaries of Israeli sovereignty».

Peres maneuvers

Peres' initiative presented at the UN (autumn 1985) was merely political maneuvering aimed at appearing flexible towards Hussein's overtures. During the Knesset sessions where this initiative was discussed, he said: «It is important to be in control of the dynamic situation emerging.»

The initiative itself relies on ambiguous statements. «It is possible that what results from negotiations are interim agreements which become permanent settlements, as is possible that they be related to defining borders, provided that Camp David be the basis for solving these questions.»² (One is reminded of Sadat's statements about Camp David being an interim settlement.)

Peres did not make any progress with what was proposed in Camp David and did not clarify the content of the 'interim settlement'. Nor did he define the borders - the Jordan River? the middle of the West Bank? somewhere else? The intention is to draw Jordan into negotiations so as to impose conditions after cancelling all Jordan's other alternatives. Peres' statement, before forming the present coalition government, is well known: «The Labor Alignment will be generous with words and appear to be flexible and willing to negotiate. We will expose our firmness at the negotiating table where we will be generous with words not territory.»³

This is the Labor position on which those calling for a settlement pin their hopes. Regarding the Likud, one gets a clear idea of their position from the statement of Moshe Arens in Afoula on November 3, 1985: «Those who believe that we will be content with peace in exchange for land are mistaken. The Likud will never agree to withdraw from Judea and Samaria in exchange for peace as some may think. *The problem of the Palestinians should be solved in Jordan which is a part of the land of Israel*, and where the Palestinians are the majority, not in Judea and Samaria.»⁴ (our italics)

In the light of the present situation and the government's general guidelines, this government will have been dissolved before 'Israel' is ready to enter negotiations. It is possible that

new elections will be held before that time comes. This would naturally result in a new government with a somewhat different composition. Thus, it is not easy to predict the results of negotiations between Jordan and the present government in the existing situation, because they are not probable. What is more probable is that negotiations will take place, but with a different Israeli government. Either Labor will form a minority government which would also have difficulties in making clear-cut decisions, or a whole new situation will emerge.

In any case, the establishment of the principle of negotiations will remain an Israeli goal in the context of the Zionist entity's efforts to establish its own legitimacy on the local and international level. It is impossible to predict what will result from negotiations, but it is certain that they will take a long time and probably result in interim settlements which do not touch on the basis of the conflict, and do not collide with imperialist-Zionist plans for the region.

On this topic, *Al Hamishmar* newspaper of October 29, 1985, stated: «Those who think that the peace settlement between us and the Palestinians will be clear-cut and simple, like the Camp David agreements, are mistaken. Peace on our eastern borders will be a complicated matter, full of fog. Many political forces from near and far will participate, as will peoples and committees of conflicting interests. It will not be possible to compromise until the very end, or to find a solution to please all.»

For the Israelis, the matter of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip differs completely from that of the Sinai, because of (a) Zionist ideology and the claim of historical rights on which this ideology is based; (b) the Israeli security strategy; and (c) the Israelis' excessive sensitivity regarding any form of Palestinian entity. Concerning the West Bank and Gaza Strip, what the present Israeli government agrees on is, in short, «autonomy for the residents on the basis of Camp David.» The Likud has its own definition of this, as does Labor. The essence of the Labor's definition is that 'autonomy' in densely populated areas should be tied with Jordan. 'Israel' keeps under its authority the Ghour (Jordan Valley), the area of Jerusalem and Gush Etzion, the south of the Gaza Strip, and large areas of the West Bank adjacent to the 'green line'. Thus 'Israel' would rid itself of responsibility for the Palestinians as Peres made clear in the following statement: «Those who express readiness to forego the densely populated Arab areas do so not so much out of desire to forego these areas as to preserve the Jewish identity of the state of Israel.»

Conditions for negotiating with the PLO?

It is difficult to say that there are Israeli conditions for negotiating with the PLO because of the consistent Israeli stand of not dealing with the PLO at all. Instead we will elaborate on the main indications of this position in this government's term. The 13th clause of the government document states: «Israel will not negotiate with the PLO.» It limits negotiations to Jordan and «Arabs in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip» within a Jordanian delegation or a Jordanian-Palestinian one. This position was seen in the Israeli government's rejection of any person affiliated with the PLO participating in the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation which was supposed to meet with US envoy Richard Murphy in Amman in the summer of 1985. The government approved only two of those proposed to participate in the delegation: Hanna Siniora from the West Bank and Fayez Abu Rahmeh from Gaza, both non-PLO. A campaign was launched against the US to prevent any meeting with a delegation that includes persons affiliated ►