



New Soviet immigrants living in Ariel settlement in the occupied West Bank.

state's status as an expanded regional superpower.

The settlement junta now in place with Shamir's new government has been in the making since mid-April, when Likud MK Michael Dekel was appointed Shamir's advisor on settlements. Dekel was deputy minister of agriculture in Begin's government and became deputy defense minister in 1985 - both posts being pivotal in the Begin-Sharon land grabs. Dekel was involved in the promotion of private land purchase and settlement-building; he was subsequently implicated in the land scam which came to light in 1985, whereby an estimated 30,000 dunums in the West Bank were acquired through swindle and violence. This became a scandal in Israel - not because Palestinians were being robbed of their land, a daily occurrence under occupation, but because Israelis were sold fictitious plots in would-be settlements; proceeds from these sales went directly to the Likud's campaign coffers.

A record high of 10,000 new immigrants arrived in Israel in April. The government's official stand has been that while Jews have «the right» to settle wherever they want, there is no special effort to settle them in the 1967 occupied territories. This is only rhetoric aimed to neutralize international protests. Already on February 23rd, peace activist Danny Rubinstein wrote in *Davar*: «The statement claiming that only half a percent of all arriv-

ing immigrants reached the territories is irrelevant. Thousands of apartments in the territories are in stages of planning and construction and can be purchased at better conditions than anywhere else. Money for absorbing immigrants from Russia is flowing now through implanted bypasses to the settlements from public funds and donations.»

In its March edition, *Israel and Palestine* magazine wrote about what was an open secret in Israel: «namely - that in the Maaleh Edunim area, a Greater Jerusalem residential area built on former Arab-owned land, the authorities were preparing massive settlement of a considerable percentage of the 250,000 Jews which some Israeli officials claim will arrive from the Soviet Union this year.»

In this light, Gush Emunim's declaration, that it plans to settle at least 10,000 Soviet Jews in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, must be taken seriously. On May 1st, *Haaretz* reported that Shamir had agreed to push a plan to create previously approved settlements, and listed 14 sites being considered. In the same period, the ultrarightist parties were calling for 26 new settlements. In April, settlers moved into the new settlement Allon, billed as an extension of Kafr Adumin a few kilometers away on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Less than a month later, settlers moved into Dugit, close to Shatta and Jabalya camps, whereas most settlements

before in the Gaza Strip had been placed some distance from densely populated Palestinian areas.

The most obvious provocation came in Easter week when 150 settlers occupied St. John's Hospice which belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church. This was the biggest single land grab in the Old City since the concerted Judaization attempt began after the 1967 occupation. The government provided \$2 million in funding towards this new settlement in the heart of the Christian quarter. Although the Israeli High Court ruled that the settlers must leave in late April, 20 were allowed to remain, as representatives of the Panamanian company that claims to have leased the building, while the ownership case continues. This caused Patriarch Diodoros I to comment: «The settlers were taken out through one door and in through another» (*Al Fajr*, April 30th).

On May 3rd, with the Palestinians of Nablus under curfew, the military commander of the West Bank, Yitzhak Mordechai, joined Gush Emunim and rightist MKs in celebrating the inauguration of a settlement under the guise of a religious school at Joseph's Tomb. They had obtained High Court approval for this move in advance, injecting a new settlement in Nablus in close proximity to four Palestinian schools.

Another show of Zionist force came on May 23rd, which the Israelis consider «Jerusalem Day» - celebrating the 1967 occupation of all the city in accordance with the Hebrew calendar. That day, Palestinian women protesting the May 20th massacre had been teargassed in Jerusalem. Hours later, thousands of Israelis were allowed to march throughout the city, while the police protected some right extremists in their effort to pray at the Temple Mount, pressing claims to East as well as West Jerusalem. In his speech to mark the occasion, Shamir reiterated Zionist refusal to give up any part of the city and defended the settlement in the Christian quarter, saying: «There is no limit and there is no barrier to (Jerusalem's) expansion and nobody will stop this settlement» (Associated Press, May 24th)