

mately 80 Jewish settlements (26 in the Golan, 22 in Gaza and Sinai, and 32 in the West Bank -- excluding the suburban settlements around Arab Jerusalem) were already established (cf. Lesch, 1977; Fershafsky, 1978).

When the Likudists came to power in May 1977, the issue of settlements was primary in their programme. The Allon Plan (which envisaged a territorial settlement with Jordan by which most of the West Bank, minus a strategic belt along the Ghor, would return to Jordan) was scrapped, and the Sharon Plan was adopted. The latter was a comprehensive scheme of rezoning the occupied territories for civilian Jewish settlement. It aimed at the encirclement of the Arab population in the West Bank by civilian-military settlements along its four boundaries, but especially along the Jordan Valley. In its second phase the plan envisaged the segmentation of centres of Arab demographic concentration in the West Bank with a gridlike network of interlinked Jewish colonies (see Map 4:1; Shapira, 1978).

The core of the plan is based on the establishment of five large urban centres in the West Bank (near the present areas of at-Taybeh, Mashah, Beit Sira, Givan and Teqoa) by the early eighties. The several industrial plants which had already been established under the Rabin government in Ma'ale Ha'Adumim, near Jericho, with each employing about 50 workers, had been integrated with the Sharon plan to diversify the economic activity of the settlements. In most cases, however, the urban centres were intended to serve as dormitory communities for Jewish citizens who will commute daily to their work in the Israeli sector.

The Sharon plan envisaged 2,000,000 settlers in the West Bank alone, with a proposed 150,000 settlers designated for the five urban centres mentioned above. Behind the hectic zeal for "redeeming the land" lies the decline in the proportion of the Jewish population in several areas of