SOVEREIGNTY, OWNERSHIP, AND "PRESENCE" IN THE JEWISH-ARAB TERRITORIAL CONFLICT
The Case of Bir'im and Ikrit

BARUCH KIMMERLING
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Despite the great flexibility of the Israeli sociopolitical system expressed, for example, in its ability to absorb a varied migrant population without creating basic instability and to create original social frameworks such as the kibbutz and the moshav (see, for example, Eisenstadt, 1967), several of its reactions to the problems it faces—particularly in the realm of the conflict with the Arabs—are of a basically ritualistic nature. A ritualistic reaction here refers to a *learned pattern of reaction* transferred from one situation to another without a reexamination by the system of its validity or appropriateness. The above is a reaction similar to that described by Merton (1957: 140-153), a disjunction between social goals and the means for their attainment that occurs when institutionalized means are applied in order to achieve goals which are no longer valid.

The best example of such a pattern of reaction seems to be the case of the two Arab villages, Bir'im and Ikrit. But before analyzing the controversy which this case aroused, the reactions of the various segments of the social system, and the "outputs" of the total political system, several of the characteristics of the Jewish-Arab conflict and some of the rules of the game which developed in its course must be specified and emphasized.

COMPARATIVE POLITICAL STUDIES, Vol. 10 No. 2, July 1977

THE JEWISH-ARAB CONFRONTATION AS A TERRITORIAL CONFLICT

Notwithstanding the emotional elements, the cultural and ideological gaps and the primordial differences between Jews and Arabs, the controversy between them was perceived as a realistic conflict (in the sense of Simmel and Coser; see Coser, 1956: 48-55), and was focused on the desire to control a defined territory (see Kimmerling, 1973, 1974). Most of this disputed territory was under various forms of Arab control. The Jews were faced with the task of transferring it to their jurisdiction (at the beginning, mostly by means of economic exchange, and, later, by the use of military power) in order to ensure the essential condition for the building of a total Jewish society which at first would be autonomous (Horowitz and Lissak, 1973) and later sovereign.

As a result of the combination of complex local conditions (political, economic, social, agrarian, and demographic), the pattern of actual control of the territories was a function of the interaction of three components: ownership, "presence," and sovereignty (Kimmerling, 1974b).

Ownership, in the present context, has a significance beyond the form of ownership prevalent in the postfeudal Western world. Private ownership of and by the members of a collectivity places this resource in the framework of economic exchange with the possibility existing of its retransference outside the collectivity's boundaries. Only public (or "national") ownership subject to strict rules forbidding transference can completely freeze the land within the collectivity's boundaries. Thus, since the beginning of Zionist activity in Palestine, distinct priority was accorded to the purchase of lands by the "national institutions," while the same act when undertaken by private initiative and by means of private capital met with censure. The end of the process was the "nationalization" of 95% of the state lands. But of course private ownership of a territorial expanse was also perceived as placing it under the collectivity's control, though in a form more fluid than public or state ownership. In the presovereign period, ownership was a substitute for sovereignty, inasmuch as the territories under Jewish ownership created territorial continua on which a political-social system having many of the components of sovereignty was established.

When attained in 1948, political *sovereignty* constituted another component of the pattern of control of territorial expanses and was meant to ensure:

(a) the possibility of acquiring ownership of additional territories by means of the political and physical power derived from sovereignty;

(b) the inclusion of additional territories within the physical boundaries of the collectivity;

(c) the maximum limitation of the fluidity of territories located within the collectivity's boundaries.

Originally sovereignty was an act of consolidation of the territorial expanses which in effect were under the collectivity's control, in exchange for areas which were only potentially under its control when the 1947 Partition Plan was agreed upon.

"*Presence*" is the third and final component and stems from the view that the fluidity of territories, whether under the collectivity's ownership or under its sovereignty, will be lessened to the extent that presence is established on them. Presence, like the other two components, is a pattern of control in and of itself, and can be divided into two types differentiated by rates of fluidity: (1) military presence—when armed forces of the collectivity are located on the territory or when the legal status of the territory, by the collectivity's own definition, is that of a "conquered territory"; (2) a situation whereby the territorial expanse is settled and "facts" are established on it. Lesser fluidity is attributed to the second type.[1]

While each of the three components constitutes a means of control in and of itself, the interaction between them—when they coexist or when one or two of them is absent—creates seven patterns of control differing in degree of fluidity (along with a theoretical pattern of lack of control). However, the degree of fluidity of a pattern of control is not only a function of the presence or absence of one or two of the components, but is also dependent on the nature of the component. Thus the ordinal scale of fluidity, as presented above, assumes that the components have differential weight in determining the degree of fluidity. The component of sovereignty is more dominant (inasmuch as it is a component of political power) than that of ownership (economic power), and ownership is more dominant than presence. Ownership and presence in combination (pattern 3) constituted a substitute for sovereignty over territories in the presovereign period, but are not less fluid than sovereignty alone.

A separate problem is the determination of degree of fluidity for those territories to which Israeli sovereignty applies, but which are not under the collectivity's ownership although there is military or "settle-

TABLE 1
Patterns of Control of Territorial Expanses

	Sovereignty	Ownership	Presence
0.	-	-	-
1.	-	-	+
2.	-	+	-
3.	-	+	+
4.	+	-	-
5.	+	-	+
6.	+	+	-
7.	+	+	+

ment" presence upon them (such as the Arab villages which were under the jurisdiction of the custodian for absentees' property), relative to territories which are sovereign and Jewish-owned but with no presence on them (such as the Arab villages which were under the jurisdiction of the custodian for absentees' property), relative to territories which are sovereign and Jewish-owned but with no presence on them (such as the majority of the Negev and the Galilee). However, it seems that in this case as well, ownership is the greater determinant of the degree of fluidity as seen in the comparison of the fluidity of pattern 1 (the territorial expanses which are "occupied" but not annexed in the wake of the 1967 War) with that of pattern 2 (the territories purchased in the "prestate" period but unsettled).

The least fluid pattern is pattern 7 in which appear the three components of control which "complement" one another. From an empirical standpoint, there is no case in which a territorial expanse (to which Israeli sovereignty was applied) left the collectivity's area of control. Along with this, strong action was taken within the system to have ownership applied to territories which were under Arab ownership. Thus activities were undertaken to intensify presence in territories where Jewish presence was sparse, or where Arab presence was greater.

From the beginning of Jewish settlement in Palestine, as a result of a series of Ottoman and Mandatory laws, ownership of a territorial

expanse did not constitute a sufficient condition for maintenance under the collectivity's control. In addition the patterns of land use and ownership by the local Arab population encouraged the need to supplement legal ownership with physical presence on the land in order to avoid disputes over ownership and control of controversial territories (Kimmerling, 1974b: 13-18).

The results of the Israeli-Arab confrontation of 1947-1948 were, at first glance, decisive. Not only was Jewish sovereignty applied to a territory of 20,000 square kilometers, but Arab *presence* on these territories was almost completely eliminated. Out of about 700,000 Arabs located in the territory in which Israeli sovereignty was established, 150,000 remained on November 8, 1948, while out of about 400 sizeable Arab settlements, 96 remained in the Israeli territory. The Arabs who remained in the Israeli territory became at least de jure citizens of Israel with equal rights. The application of sovereignty on these territories, including those (private or national) which were not owned by Jews, should have changed the system's aspiration to gain ownership of these areas and to demonstrate its presence on them—patterns which had previously constituted a substitute for sovereignty.

However in many spheres of Jewish-Arab interaction, the system continued to act and react with the same patterns which characterized the presovereign situation. One of these cases was the affair of the two villages of Bir'im and Ikrit.

THE BACKGROUND

In the end of October 1948, fighting took place between regular and irregular Arab and Israeli troops. The Israeli army attacked and captured many Arab villages. The two villages of Ikrit and Bir'im, whose inhabitants were Greek Orthodox Arabs, surrendered to the Israeli forces without resistance, and their inhabitants did not flee. The two villages were known for their nonhostile relations with the Jews, so the inhabitants did not fear their coming. About a week later, on November 5, 1948, the inhabitants of the two villages were instructed by the military commander of the Galilee to leave their villages "for a period of two weeks, until the end of military activity in the area" (State of Israel, 1951: 1011). The original plan seems to have been to transfer the inhabitants to a location across the lines of the Lebanese front (Haaretz, 1972d), but the command was revised, and they were trans-

ferred to the Arab village of Rama. But even after the fighting's end, the government refused to allow the inhabitants to return to their villages. In July 1951 the inhabitants appealed to the Supreme Court, which declared that no *legal* barrier existed to their return. But on September 10, 1951, the evacuees were ordered to leave their villages in accordance with the 1949 Emergency Regulations (defense areas). According to this regulation an area may be designated as a "security area" and "a regular resident of such an area may be commanded to leave." Thus official and quasi-legal approval was given to the evacuation of the two villages. The inhabitants again appealed to the Supreme Court, but before the court convened, on December 25, 1951, all the houses in Ikrit (except for the local church) were bombed. The area, which amounted to about 300,000 dunam, was therefore declared to be an "abandoned area," and was first placed under the auspices of the Custodian for Absentees' Property and was later transferred to the ownership of the state. The land was redistributed among Jewish settlements, and mostly to Kibbutz Baraam (1949) and Moshav Dovev (1958). The evacuees scattered to several Arab villages in the area, but because of the extended family (chamula) structure of Palestine society, were not absorbed in these villages and periodically renewed their demand to be returned to their two villages even without the return of all their lands (since in the meantime most of the evacuees had changed their trade from agriculture to service employments). The political center made considerable efforts to persuade the villages' inhabitants to give up their demand in exchange for material benefits such as damage payments, housing, and even the allocation of lands in other locations. As of 1964, only 15 families agreed to renounce all their claims in exchange for financial payments and the receipt of land (Israel, 1964: 32).

However, the matter came up from time to time, with about 6,000 of the displaced persons from the two villages demanding to be returned. The government acknowledged their right, but rejected their claim on the grounds that the "security situation" did not allow the fulfillment of their demands. In the beginning of 1965, the villages' inhabitants suggested that they stay where they were, but that the land be registered in their names in the Land Register, and that they would return to the lands when a peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon was settled (Haaretz, 1965). Their request was rejected.

In June 1972, the displaced villagers renewed their demands under the militant leadership of Bishop Raya, the head of the Greek Catholic community in Israel. This time the demand earned unprecedented

salience in the communications media, which until now had dealt with this affair with caution and ambivalence.[2] In the wake of the focusing of attention on this matter by the media, several events took place which were quite unusual in light of the internal "rules of the game" in Israel.

PROTEST FORMATION

1. Elite groups, not previously critical of the management of the conflict, began to exert pressure to allow the inhabitants to return to their villages. On August 2 a spontaneously organized group of 20 of the best-known writers in Israel requested a meeting with the prime minister. The debate between the writers and the prime minister lasted for about seven hours (Maariv, 1972a) without either side convincing the other. A week later, the prime minister met with six eminent professors from the Hebrew University who demanded that "justice" be done with the residents of Ikrit and Bir'im. These two groups did not continue to act as *groups* after their meetings with the prime minister, but some of their members continued to speak out individually in favor of the displaced villagers by means of the communications media and by participating in demonstrations. In Tel Aviv a committee for action on behalf of the villagers was established, but its members did not belong to the main elite groups.

2. It seems that the main result of the sporadic participation of central elite groups in the protest movement centered on this matter was the institutionalization of this movement, which became not only legitimate—in contrast with protests over other subjects connected with the management of the conflict—but also *continuous,* and succeeded in recruiting many participants who were not members of marginal groups and who acted on a regular basis in the Israeli political arena. Thus, for example, on May 8, 1972 "about one thousand Israelis [that is, Jews], intellectuals and students, university lecturers and leftist activists, participated in a march to Bir'im and Ikrit" (Maariv, 1972b). After about three weeks, a demonstration was organized in Jerusalem with 3,000 participants (a demonstration of rare size in Israel)[3] in which Bishop Raya addressed the crowd and said, among other things: "It is said that Arabs and Jews cannot live together. This demonstration is testimony to the opposite" (Maariv, 1972h). On

March 30, 1973, the "Tel-Aviv Committee on Behalf of the Evacuees of Biraam and Ikrit" took advantage of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of the State of Israel in order to organize a solidarity rally on behalf of the Bir'im and Ikrit evacuees. About 3,500 people participated in the demonstration (Haaretz, 1973a). These demonstrations of solidarity continued intermittently for over a year, until the political center, in August 1973, decided to close off the area of the villages in accordance with the defense regulations for times of emergency, in order to prevent the demonstrative presence of the evacuees there, and especially the pressure of Jewish demonstrators in their behalf.[4] Thus, for example, *Maariv* (1972), reported that on one weekend about 600 people organized a sit-down strike there: "During the day about 500 Israelis signed the 'Visitors' Book'—although some people refused to sign and claimed that they do not identify with the struggle [of the evacuees] or have not yet formulated an opinion on this matter." During that year, the police were often forced to exercise force and to make several arrests.

3. The demand to yield to the evacuees' claim created, within the institutionalized political framework, a rare coalition which included the extreme left (the two Communist parties, Matzpen, The New Israeli Left, Haolam Hazeh, and Mapam—the party which is in a coalition with the ruling Labor Party) and the right, including the Independent Liberals (who also participate in the government coalition) and Gahal (which represents the large and nationalistic right-wing opposition). The other parties—among whom the religious parties are the most prominent—voiced no opinion. The only group which expressed outright opposition to the demands of the evacuees was the Jewish Defence League (Rabbi Kahana demanded the return of the Jewish evacuees from Hebron in the wake of the slaughter and expulsion of 1929; Maariv, 1972h). The Gahal leadership decided on August 9, 1972 that the claim of the Bir'im (not Ikrit!) evacuees was justified. The extreme leftist groups continuously acted on behalf of the displaced persons, but the latter consistently rejected their assistance (see the following).

Within the Labor Party, which seems to be the only political party opposing the return of the evacuees to their villages, there is far from a consensus on this matter, just as in reference to all other controversial matters there is generally no consensus within this party of the masses. *Yediot Achronot* (1972d) reported the existence of debates in the party center on the subject of the evacuees, with many of the party's younger

members, among them prominent political figures such as Vice Prime Minister Yigaal Allon, demanding immediate support of the evacuees' demands. Opposing them was the prime minister (and, so it seems, Defence Minister Moshe Dayan), who was supported mostly by Labor Movement old-timers.[5]

At one point in the controversy it seemed as though the problem of the displaced persons would be solved by having them return to their villages as tenants on government land and without causing any damage to the kibbutzim and moshavim that had perceived the lands (Maariv, 1972c). This compromise suited at least the open statements of the evacuees.[6] This, at least, was the news published in the Israeli press at the beginning of July, probably as a result of the initiative of Allon, "who from 1967 on several times requested of Mrs. Meir to allow the return of the evacuees to their villages" (Maariv, 1972c). A day later *Maariv* reported that "In the village of Raama, where most of the Ikrit evacuees are concentrated, the villagers hugged and kissed and even made toasts to Israeli justice." But on July 23, 1972, the Israeli Government decided by majority vote and "in a final way" not to permit the return of the displaced persons to their villages. The government thus made a far-reaching commitment which would prevent any possibility for change in the foreseeable future, that is, for as long as the Israeli government would be composed of the same people, and perhaps even beyond that time. Nevertheless the public protests within the Jewish sector continued, as most of the press reported—Ikrit and Bir'im will continue to be an "open wound" in the body of Israeli society (Haaretz, 1972b).

What are the justifications which brought the political center to a decision which not only placed it in confrontation with many of the country's elites, but also broke down part of the broad consensus in reference to the conflict's management and aroused (along with other factors which will be dealt with further) basic questions as to the very nature of and legitimation for the collectivity's existence. For the purpose of our discussion, we will differentiate between (a) the justifications and (b) the analysis of the "reasons" for this government action, although, as we shall see, there is a strong connection between the two.

Until the 1967 War, the only justification for preventing the return of the evacuees to their villages was one based on security factors. The villages are located fairly near the Lebanese border, and infiltrations were quite frequent there, at first undertaken for purposes of theft, and later taking on the character of guerilla warfare. The security-factor

justification, as expressed in the refusal to obey a Supreme Court order, was likely to sound satisfactory and reasonable in the period between 1949 and 1967, especially in light of the fact that all the chiefs of staff who served in this period stated that this factor was indeed relevant.

After Israel's decisive victory in the Six Day War, and especially after the fedayeen organizations ceased to be a security hazard for Israel as a result of the blows they were dealt in Jordan (September 1971) and the reprisal attacks of Israel against Jordan and Lebanon, the claim that a security risk was involved in the return of the evacuees to their villages seemed irrelevant. Bar-Lev, the minister of trade and industry, who participated in the meeting between the prime minister and the group of Jerusalem professors, and who was the previous chief of staff of the Israeli army, said that "there is no need to add one soldier for this [for the preservation of security if the evacuees are returned to their places], and the security problem is not cardinal in this context" (Haaretz, 1972b).

REACTION FORMATION

During this period, the justification given for the government position was the avoidance of the creation of precedents for the return of Arab lands which had already been transferred to Jewish ownership. Two types of precedents were feared: (a) the claims of Arabs from villages which remained within Israel's boundaries after the cease-fire agreements of 1949;[7] (b) the creation of a precedent contrary to Israel's position that even when a peace agreement or any other arrangement is arrived at with the Arabs, the refugees will not be allowed to return to their places, but will rather be settled in the Arab countries. The common denominator for the two has its source in the basic position, already formulated at the beginning of the conflict, that after any Arab land is purchased or confiscated by Jews, the ownership of it must be frozen at any price.

Mrs. Meir, in the Labor Party's center, said in reference to the first type of fear:

> I do not make light of the feelings of the people of Bir'im and Ikrit. I understand them, and I do not envy them. But I do not accept the argument which states that their case will not set a precedent. I have already received letters and telegrams from other villages

> whose people wish to return to their lands, and in the Galilee there are 22 such villages whose inhabitants either abandoned them or were evacuated. For seven hours I sat with writers. . . . Some of them said that Bir'im and Ikrit will not set a precedent. Then others said that actually, why shouldn't we discuss the other Arab villages as well. [Yediot Achronot, 1972e]

The other fear was well expressed in the statement of General (res.) Meir Zoreya, the head of Israel Land Authority:

> We must not be "gentle souls." The case of Ikrit and Bir'im should be seen as part of all the questions concerning settlement. As long as there is no peace treaty, there is no possibility of re-settlement. [We should not return] one meter to anyone, because each is vital to us. After the return of the evacuees to Ikrit and Bir'im, Jaffa will be evicted, and for anyone who is familiar with the geography of Israel—after Jaffa comes the sea. [Davar, 1972a]

At the meeting of the Labor Party's center in which in prime minister spoke of the 22 villages wishing to return to their lands in the Galilee, the argument was raised that "One cannot speak only of these two villages. Let us begin to speak of Israel's entire territory" (M.P.Y. Harari; Yediot Achronot, 1972e) and that "The problem does not only relate to the Galilee or the Negev but to other places as well: Tel-Aviv too" (D. Rozolyo; Yediot Achronot, 1972e). On this occasion we find the expression of a trend of thought anchored in an even broader ideological context, with the affair being linked to all the history and suffering of the Jewish people and especially to the trauma of the Holocaust, and these are brought as arguments in the controversy focused on the two villages. Thus A. Hartzfeld, whom the newspaper calls "the father of the settlement," said:

> The world wanted and wants to destroy us. We still have not forgotten the picture of a live person being placed in an oven. We are merciful people towards others and cruel to ourselves. After all the hell we went through, this is how we behave? Who can be brazen enough as to challenge the government's decision [not to return the evacuees]. [Yediot Achronot, 1972e]

But it seems that the main reason for the political center's behavior was anchored in the basic perception of the nature of the conflict with the Arabs and the tactics of the management of the conflict derived from this particular nature. The journalist Z. Schiff summarizes

this perception in a sarcastic, almost simplistic fashion (Haaretz, 1972b):

> One of the people involved in the security sphere defined the main justification [for the refusal to return the evacuees] thus: the fear of decolonization of Zionism. That is, the fear of the recession of Zionist settlement and the "dispossession" of Jewish agriculturists. If the first stitch is opened, say the supporters of this thesis, the whole cloth will come apart. . . . The main thesis of those who fear decolonization of Zionism is: We have always stolen lands. We always chased our Arabs. Don't bother us with the argument that in the past we purchased the Arabs' lands. Indeed, we bought lands from the effendis but we chased away the tenants who lived on them. . . . If this is what we did in the past, why not continue doing so in the present and future? God forbid that we should stop this tradition. If we deviate from it we will only be admitting that we were not right in the past. In such a case, our whole basis will be shaken and the entire Zionist structure will tumble down, God forbid.

In September 1975, more than a year after the inauguration of a new government in Israel, the communications media again raised the subject of Bir'im and Ikrit. On this occasion the committee of the Galilee moshavim publicized their opposition to the return of the evacuees, again on the basis of defense and security arguments.

ARAB ZIONISM?

It is very likely that the stimulus for the linkage of the Bir'im and Ikrit affair to the basic Zionist questions stemmed partly from one of the characteristics of the evacuees' protest, which boomeranged against them. This protest was managed by a socially integrated group and led by an expert and sophisticated leadership.[8] In this may lie a partial explanation for the fact that these two Greek Catholic villages (and not the Moslems or Druze) were the ones to conduct a stubborn and consistent battle for the return of their lands. This protest was characterized by three main features: (a) in most of its stages it was conducted within the framework of the law and by means of attempts to enact the law in the interests of the evacuees; (b) the evacuees tried to prevent the participation of marginal political groups, and especially leftist groups,[9] in their struggle, in order to avoid the identification of

their struggle with that of these marginal and stigmatized groups and in order to maintain the support of the majority of public opinion. For this reason they did not frequently attempt to recruit support from external parties—not even from world Catholicism—inasmuch as they were aware of the extreme sensitivity which exists in Israel over the transfer of various matters from internal struggles to forums outside the state;[10] (c) the case of the two villages was removed from the context of the Jewish-Arab conflict, and it was stressed that this was a *special* and *deviant* case demanding a particular reaction. Yet at the same time use was made of symbols taken from the Zionist myth in order to emphasize the parallelism existing between the historical tie which the Zionists postulate between the Jewish people and the territory of the state and the evacuees and the territory of their villages. Thus, for example, use was made of the following symbols:

— "If I forget thee Bir'im, may my right hand lose its cunning" [a slogan used in a demonstration on August 24, 1972], which is a paraphrase of the Jewish oath taken by the Babylonian exiles in reference to Jerusalem—an oath which was incorporated into Jewish prayers.

— "If there be justice—let it appear immediately" [in a demonstration on August 7, 1972], which is a line from one of Bialik's poems—the poet of the Israeli national revival—which was written in reaction to a pogrom against Kishinev Jewry in 1903. This pogrom was one of the main pushes to the beginning of the Second Aliya.

— "Our hope is not yet lost" [the last sentence of a manifesto of Ikrits' residents on July 24, 1972 in the wake of the Government decision to prevent their return]. This is the opening line of Hatikva ["Our Hope"], the Zionist hymn which became Israel's anthem.

In reference to this matter, one of the evacuees—a young lawyer living in Haifa—said: "We [the Maronites] take the Jews as our example. They built their home quietly, and we are adopting the slogans of their struggle to our case, and are learning from them" (Haaretz, 1972b).

The use of these symbols seems not only to have intensified the matter by its reverse linkage to Zionist ideology, but also brought to the surface questions and doubts in reference to the very legitimacy of the collectivity's existence or, as the professors claimed in their meeting with the prime minister, "views reminiscent of those of the Fatah"

(Haaretz, 1972b). One of the editors of *Maariv* (S. Shnitzer; 1972i) expressed this well:

> The public controversy on the affair of the dispossessed villagers . . . brought forth a debate in a much broader basic question—the question of the moral character of the Zionist movement: We asked ourselves what action is permissible in the name of Zionism? Is Zionism basically a movement of dispossession? Does the goal of the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people sanctify the means of taking away lands from peace-loving Arabs in order to settle Jews on them? . . . Must the preservation of moral rules and fairness in our relations with the Arabs lead to the weakening of the Zionist undertaking? Is there basically a question of "either them or us" with no possibility of coexistence: them, us, and justice as well? The questions are not new. They have accompanied the movement for Jewish revival from its beginnings. Anyone with a soul and a conscience meets up with them at some of the crossroads of the past.

About two months earlier, the publicist Y. Gefen (a third-generation Israeli) wrote (Maariv, 1972d) of a "Midsummer Night's Dream" in which an old Arab comes to his home and everywhere identifies the remnants of his own past ("He removes my grandfather's picture"—the writer's grandfather was one of the Second Aliya's prominent personalities—"and underneath it reveals the picture of his grandfather's," and so forth).

> For a long time [writes Gefen] I feel that this house isn't mine. And lately . . . I have another feeling which is very characteristic of the dreams of an average Israeli adolescent: I feel that someone lived in this house before we came . . . I'm not telling you this story because of the Ikrit evacuees. I'm also not from "Matzpen." It's just a dream I had on a summer night.

Those who sought the full symbolic implications and the dramatic contexts of the Ikrit and Bir'im affair could not help but note that on this site is located one of the most ancient remnants of the Jewish past:

> Bir'im can serve as an ironic illustration for Zionism. In this village stands one of the most glorious synagogues of the Roman period . . . a living testimony to the flourishing Jewish settlement in he Galilee in the distant past, a testimony to the powerful historical link between the Jewish people and its land. [A. Kaynan, Yediot Achronot, 1972a]

STRESS TO REDEFINITION OF ZIONISM

Even the most modern social system which is capable of absorbing a certain amount of anomie within it, seems required to supply an immediate answer to questions which disturb the basic consensus among its members and the legitimation for the collectivity's very existence. And indeed, for the duration of the Ikrit and Bir'im controversy and linked to it, we may distinguish two types of immediate reactions to the basic problems which became manifest during this controversy. One type of reaction reinforces the original perceptions of the situation while the other aims at absorbing the changes in perception and granting legitimation to these changes.

1. The reaction of the first type was an attempt to conduct a Zionist reindoctrination by reinforcing the old arguments: (a) that the situation is not a "zero-sum" situation, (b) that the Zionist rules of the game were almost always fair, (c) that there is no basis for comparison between the historical link of the Jewish people to Israel and the rights stemming from this link and the link to and rights over the land which the Arabs have. Thus, for example, the labor unions' newspaper, *Davar,* published (between September 29 and November 3, 1972)[11] an unusually lengthy series of articles (six in number) which aimed at disproving the "legend of dispossession by the Zionists," and the comparison of the Jews' behavior toward the Arabs with the behavior of the first settlers in America "who erased the Indians from the continent by fire and by sword." The recurrent theme of these articles was that "the areas which served as the focal points of attraction for Zionist settlement—both rural and urban—were so sparsely populated that the saying 'a land without a nation is waiting for a nation without a land' was not an empty phrase" (Davar, 1972c).

2. In the reaction of the second type we find an attempt to "rationalize" the conflict by openly viewing it as a conflict of interests with a zero sum quality. On a moral plane, this approach removes the conflict's management from its universalistic contexts and grants action in reference to its particularistic moral legitimacy. Thus, for example, the satirist E. Kishon (Maariv, 1972f), wrote in "Praise to the Bad Man":

> The writer of these lines was not invited to participate in the War of Independence as well [just as he was not invited to participate in the writers' meeting with the Prime Minister on the subject of

> the evacuation]. I missed it by a few hours, and that's why I'm not familiar with the wonderful events—which converted a small Jewish minority into a majority ruling in the land of its forefathers—except from books and debates. From my reading, I arrived at a sad and accurate conclusion: it seems that all the historical acts which we are likely to be ashamed of are for the good of the country. And once they are for the good of the country, we are not willing to be ashamed of them. There is nothing more loathsome in our eyes than the formula which divides the community into good people and bad . . . the bad Jew causes the Arabs to flee, while the good one settles on the lands they abandon and from there criticizes the bad Jew on the charge of conquest.

But the most daring attempt *to redefine the goals and aims of Zionism* in an explicit and clear manner was made by the journalist, Y. Ben Porat (Yediot Achronot, 1972b):

> It is the obligation of the leadership to openly and bravely remind the public of truths which have been whitewashed and blurred in the course of time. One of them is that there is no Zionism and no settlement and no Jewish state without the evacuation of the Arabs and the expropriation of lands. . . . If the public so desires it will accept Zionism as it is, with all its implications and "deviations"; if not, it will negate Zionism from its beginnings until today.

In the "case study" of the controversy focused on the fate of the land of these two Arab villages, emphasis has been given to several basic problems which the Israeli social system faces in coping with some of the matters stemming from the perception of its interests and those of its opponents on the one hand, and from the nature of the system as an open society—at least toward its Jewish members—with a *need* for a collective self-image that is "positive" and humane on the other.

CONCLUSIONS

On first glance, we are witness to the familiar story of an ethnic or a national minority at the mercy of an arbitrary majority which, for reasons of social distance and delicate relations between internal forces (Peres, 1971), distorted moral judgment (Tamarin, 1973), and possibly

marginal profits (a few hundred acres of land), does not apply the same criteria of universalistic behavior which it accepts itself to its relations with an ethnic minority. Without negating the role of these factors in the "explanation," we may view the Bir'im and Ikrit affair in a more general context.

Until 1947-1948 the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine were engaged in a constant struggle over a given territory that both sides wished to acquire (see Kimmerling, 1973; Cohen, 1970). The collapse of the social and political system of the Palestine Arabs and the abandonment of most of their territories were not accompanied by an end to the Jewish-Arab conflict in general (Kimmerling, 1974) or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict specifically.

Remnants of the Arab society remained in Israel. The Israeli social structure was not sufficiently flexible to allow for a differentiation between the "Arabs" as enemies of the state and the Arabs as its citizens. In such a situation a distinction was created between formal membership (Horowitz and Kimmerling, 1974).[14] Inasmuch as the Arabs were perceived as potential members of the collectivity with which the conflict proceeded, their ownership and/or presence on a given territory, even if under Israeli sovereignty, was perceived as a threat to the extent of the collectivity's control of the territory.[15]

In such a case, independently of how and why the complete control of the contested territory was attained, it could not be returned, since the return of Arab control would negate the basic conception of the irreversibility of Jewish territorial control. As in the Mandatory period, (a) the achievement of control of territory—including sovereignty over it—was not final, but rather necessitated struggle, and (b) the territories are linked to one another, so that the weakening of control over one is likely to be accompanied by the weakening or even loss of control over others. In addition, (c) the challenge over the *right* of the collectivity to control a *specified* territory was perceived as a challenge of the legitimacy of control of the whole territory.

Thus the system operates as though the element of sovereignty does not exist, or actually makes only instrumental use of sovereignty and the power which accompanies it, in order to accomplish the other components of control (while lessening the control of the perceived partner in the conflict). In this context sovereignty is perceived as an additional component in increasing the degree of control over the territory and as a means toward this end, rather than the *completion of the process* of the attainment of control.

The system maintains two rituals (or patterns of management of the conflict) as remnants from the presovereign period. (1) The Arabs—even if they are citizens of the state (and independently of their present behavior) potentially constitute part of the "other side" in the conflict. Their ownership of land or their presence on territory constitutes a potential threat to the collectivity's control. (2) In respect to every territory under the collectivity's control, the desire exists for the completion of such control.

In the case of Bir'im and Ikrit such ritualistic behavior caused heavy damages to Israel's image in the international arena, and even greater damage as a result of the destruction of the internal consensus as to the means for the conflict's management. But the system seems to have been willing to pay this price in order to avoid adjusting to the new situation vis-à-vis the territories under its control as a result of the application of sovereignty to them.[16]

NOTES

1. An intermediate pattern of military settlement exists and was enacted by a special branch of the army (the NAHAL). Some of these settlements, which between 1949 and 1967 were scattered along the cease-fire lines especially in areas where it was difficult to establish new immigrant settlements, took on a civilian character.

2. In this context, the position of the most popular newspaper in Israel (*Maariv*), which is known for its nationalistic opinions, is interesting. During the first two weeks of the renewal of the evacuees' struggle, the newspaper took no position and brought almost no reports, in contrast to the electronic media, which are under government supervision. But on July 3, 1972 the paper reprinted an article by its first editor and founder, A. Carlebach, which had first appeared in December 1953. Under the heading of "Cry the Beloved Country"—which was aimed at creating a clear association with South Africa—Carlebach took the government to task and charged that it not only stole the lands of the evacuees, but also created a legal fiction to justify the theft. In his pathos-filled article, which is in the form of a letter to his daughter, Carlebach writes: "I do not fear my own skin, for we have the power. . . . They are the minority. The operation will be a success, and all will be registered on our names in the Land Register. . . . But, this is only the beginning of the matter. The big conflict with them doesn't end there—it only begins . . . And I fear for you, my daughter, because I am afraid that when you grow up, it is you will pay the price for all this." Since then, the newspaper, like most of the Israeli media, has consistently supported the evacuees' demands. On July 26, 1972 the political center attempted to order the communications media under its supervision to stop giving such prominence to the affair (Haaretz, 1972a), but with no success.

3. The only large demonstrations with an ideological background which occurred previously in Israel were those concerned with the acceptance of reparations from

Germany and which were organized primarily by the right-wing sectors in 1952. In 1959 (in Haifa) and in 1972 (in Jerusalem) there were demonstrations for changes in the criteria for the allocation of material resources, and these demonstrations had an ethnic quality. In addition, from time to time there are demonstrations of Orthodox religious groups focused on the preservation of tradition (and dealing with such matters as stopping public transportation on the Sabbath) which succeed in recruiting entire neighborhoods to demonstrate their power.

4. When the rule took effect, the staff of the Tel-Aviv University Law Faculty (23 professors and lecturers) published a manifesto condemning the use of these regulations: "The use of emergency powers must be limited to purposes specified in the law—that is, 'in order to ensure public safety, defence of Israel and public order, and to suppress uprisings, rebellion, and riots.' . . . In our opinion, there is no justification for the use of these far-reaching powers against citizens of the State of Israel who wish to act legally in order to return to the villages of their birth" (Haaretz, 1972c).

5. See the following for the positions of all the sides to the controversy and the ideologies behind them.

6. In an open letter of the Ikrit evacuees it was said, among other things: "We promised the Government that we are willing to give up our lands which were given to kibbutzim and moshavim. We have said that we and the Jews of the Moshavim are brothers and that we are ready to share and live a life of love, friendship, and brotherhood if it is decided to return us to our village and our other lands" (Haaretz, 1972a).

7. All or most of the residents of 23 Arab villages have a status of "present absentees" as defined by the Law of Property of Absent Persons, 1950. According to this Law, Arab residents who had remained within the lines of the State after the cease-fire settlements were signed (in 1949), but who for one reason or another had abandoned their place of permanent residence, were also declared as "present absentees."

8. This leadership was strengthened when George Hakim (who was appointed patriarch of the community in the entire area) was replaced by Bishop Raya in 1968. Raya is a Lebanese linguist and theologian who studied in various U.S. universities and served as the head of a community there. Since beginning his job in Israel, he, to a certain extent, sees himself as the spokesman for all minorities. He wrote a memorandum on their situation to the prime minister in August 1969 and published articles on the subject in Hebrew (for example, in Haaretz, 1970).

9. *Maariv* (1972g) reported that the committee of the Ikrit and Bir'im evacuees decided "not to recognize the 'public committee' established by a group of Israeli leftists. The chairman of the committee, Iyov Matans, said yesterday that the evacuees demand of Rakach and Haolam Hazeh to stop 'worrying' about them. It is not worthwhile for these parties to court our votes." The Bir'im evacuees have 400 votes, and these have always been given as follows: 200 to the Labor Party, 100 to Gahal, and the rest (by those working in the kibbutzim in the area) to Mapam.

10. The only ones who violated this rule of the game—that is, tried to recruit international support for the sake of an internal struggle—were the members of "Matzpen," and maybe this is the reason (even more than for their anti-Zionist position) they earned social stigmatization.

11. See Aryeh L. Avneri, "The Legend Of Zionist Dispossession" (Davar, 1972a, 1972d, 1972e, 1972f, 1972g).

12. For example, B. Evron (Yediot Achronot, 1972c) argued against Ben-Porat's approach because "such an argument destroys any moral basis for the existence of the State . . . [since] the right which one ethnic group declares to have to chase another from its land just because it believes that it needs more room for itself is very reminiscent of the 'Lebensraum' policy which the Germans adopted towards the Slavic Eastern nations while relying on their own 'holy interest'."

13. This trend of thought, which views the "moving" of the Arab population from its place as a transfer of population based on principles of reciprocity, was adopted by the former Minister of Defence, Moshe Dayan, as well. In a speech at the Technion on June 27, 1973 he stated: "The War of Independence brought about a Jewish-Arab transfer, which was imperfect, unplanned, and unintentional but which occurred and was almost total in its scope" (Haaretz, 1973b).

14. An additional expression of this approach was the system of military rule which was imposed (until 1966) on most of Israel's Arab population. This rule limited and controlled in a very real sense the activities of the Arabs and also served as an instrument for recruiting the political support for the ruling party of the Arab population (see Landau, 1969; Geries, 1969). But more important for our discussion is the fact that the military rule served also as an instrument for an entire complex of methods for the transference of control of lands from Arab control (ownership and presence) to Jewish control (by means of purchases and expropriations).

15. This should be viewed against the more general background of the fear of the relative decline of the Jewish population in the Galilee relative to the Arab population, with the former constituting a minority in the area. Thus the entire area was perceived as being in danger (Kimmerling, 1974). In order to forestall the threat, an accelerated process of the "Judification of the Galilee" was decided on along with (from 1963) the building of a city (Carmiel), to strengthen Jewish *presence* in the area. All the parliamentary actions necessary for this were undertaken in secret, in a way similar to the settlement activities prior to the establishment of the state.

16. The ritualistic reactions, that is the use of means such as establishing territorial facts by establishing settlements (presence) and by the secret purchase of lands from Arab owners, became even more salient in the wake of the capture of territory in the 1967 War, when the "fluid" Yishuv situation seemed to repeat itself, and the major powers (especially the United States) were perceived as fulfilling the role of the British, whereby their support was to be struggled over as a third side in the conflict.

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Baruch Kimmerling is affiliated with the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he writes and teaches in the fields of social change and the sociology of the Jewish-Arab conflict. Dr. Kimmerling is the author of Land, Conflict and Nation Building *(forthcoming).*