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ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE GOLAN HEIGHTS UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION

Preface

The study on "Economic conditions of the Golan Heights under Israeli occupation" relates to General Assembly resolution 40/432 of 17 December 1985 in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the financial and trade practices of the Israeli occupation authorities in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The June war of 1967 triggered off massive emigration from the Golan Heights to the inner regions of Syrian territory. The number of Syrians remaining as of September 1967 was only 6,396, compared with 110,000 inhabitants in early 1967.

A radical transformation has taken place in the educational system since the Israeli occupation. Israeli authorities exercise total control over the system after modifying school education and dismissing or arresting a number of teachers. Opportunities for higher education are extremely limited, especially as the entrance examinations for Israeli universities discriminate against the population of the Golan Heights.

The Israeli authorities have pursued a clear policy of annexation and have implemented settlement plans, but they faced strong resistance when in 1980 they decided to issue Israeli identity cards to Syrian nationals.

The Israeli authorities have confiscated about 1 million dunums (83 per cent of the total area of the Golan Heights). As a consequence of the Israeli occupation, the Druze villagers lost about 35,000 dunums of their cultivable land. The area of land under cultivation by the Druze is estimated at 50,000 dunums. Israeli authorities have applied discriminatory water policies in the Golan Heights, similar to those implemented in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The amount of water allotted per capita was 3,995 cubic metres (m³) for Jewish settlers and 236 m³ for Druze inhabitants.

Agriculture is the dominant sector in the economy of the Golan Heights. Owing to the climatic advantages of these territories, Druze farmers have developed the production of apples, which constitutes an important source of income for the population. The industrial sector plays only a minor role in the economy; most firms are small household operations.

Radical changes in the labour market have been brought about during the Israeli occupation. Israeli authorities took a number of measures to facilitate the gradual subordination of the Golan Heights labour force to the Israeli labour market. Because of the weak local economic base, about 50 per cent of the total labour force is employed in Israeli firms.

The Golan Heights are subject to the same discriminatory financial policy and practices as the occupied Palestinian territories. The only local bank was forced to close and Syrian currency was replaced by Israeli currency. Israeli banks in the Druze villages do not offer a full range of services. Their major function is to facilitate trade between the inhabitants of the Golan Heights, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

As in the occupied Palestinian territories, lending operations are subject to prior approval by the Israeli authorities, who display little interest in facilitating the emergence of a strong local production base. The volume of loans advanced for industrial and development purposes is

negligible. The informal monetary sector of Syrian villages in the Golan Heights is much less developed than that of the occupied Palestinian territories. Furthermore, co-operative societies in Syrian villages, which could play a role in the area of seasonal credit, do not exist. However, inhabitants of the Golan Heights rely mainly on personal savings to finance their capital requirements. It should be noted that, in contrast with the occupied Palestinian territories, Syrian nationals in the Golan Heights have had no access to external funding sources.

External trade in the Golan Heights has undergone fundamental changes during the Israeli occupation. Local markets were opened to a flood of goods from Israel. Apples constitute about the only export item from villages of the Golan Heights. About 75 per cent of the marketable output is channelled into Israel and 25 per cent goes to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Because of relatively low labour costs and the superior quality of their apples, producers in the Golan Heights have competed favourably with Israeli producers. Farmers have been able to solve their marketing problems through the establishment of cold storage plants and a modern packing plant.

The advent of the Israeli occupation has resulted in the subordination of the financial and trade sectors to the Israeli economy. However, no economic links have developed between Israeli settlers and nationals of the Golan Heights over the past 21 years.

I. GEOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

A. Area

The total area of the Quneitra Governorate, including the Golan Heights which is presently under Israeli occupation, was reported to be 1,710 square kilometres (km²).^{1/} Of this area, 1,250 km² fell under Israeli occupation in June 1967.^{2/} In 1974, following the 1973 Syrian-Israeli Agreement on Disengagement, Israel ceded an area of about 80 km² to Syria, leaving 1,176 km² under Israeli occupation.^{3/} Israeli authorities have divided this region into four administrative units, namely Hermon (104 km²), Northern Golan (479 km²), Middle Golan (307 km²), and Southern Golan (286 km²).

B. Borders

The Golan Heights lie at a strategic junction in central Greater Syria. The region is bordered on the west by Lebanon (for 20 kilometres) and by Israel (for 77 kilometres). To the east, the Golan Heights share an 80-kilometre border with the Syrian Arab Republic, and to the south a 20-kilometre border with Jordan.^{4/} The highest point under Israeli control is 2,224 metre-high Mount Hermon, although the altitude drops sharply to 1,200 metres at the foot of the mountain and then sinks gradually to 300 metres in the south, near Lake Tiberias.

The length of the Golan Heights along their middle axis is 62 kilometres; their maximum width is 26 kilometres.

C. Localities

By June 1966, the Golan Heights supported 163 villages and one city (Quneitra) in Quneitra Governorate. Of these, 139 villages were located in the area that later fell under Israeli occupation.^{5/} According to the census which was conducted by Israeli authorities in September 1967, only eight villages were still housed in the Golan Heights (see table 1). All deserted villages were destroyed during or shortly following the outbreak of the June war.

^{1/} Syrian Arab Republic, Directorate of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Statistical Abstract 1966 (Damascus, 1967), p. 26.

^{2/} Orni and E. Efrat, Geography of Israel (Jerusalem, Israel Universities Press, 1976), p. 420.

^{3/} Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1987 (Jerusalem), p. 16.

^{4/} E. Orni and E. Efrat, Geography of Israel (Jerusalem, Israel Universities Press, 1976), p. 420.

^{5/} Syrian Arab Republic, Directorate of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Statistical Abstract 1966 (Damascus, 1967), p. 2.

During the years following Israeli occupation, three more of the villages counted in September 1967 also disappeared (Quneitra, Sihita and Mansura). With only six inhabitants left, Mansura was deserted. Sihita residents were forced to abandon their village and move to other localities, presumably for "security reasons". Quneitra was completely demolished before it was returned to the Syrians in 1974. This left only five Syrian villages in the Golan Heights, all located in the mountainous northern region. The more fertile middle and southern regions are completely devoid of any Syrian population.

D. Population

In 1966, the total population of Quneitra Governorate was reported to be 147,613 inhabitants,^{1/} in addition to some 10,000 Palestinian refugees. The population residing in the area that later fell under Israeli occupation was estimated (in early 1967) to be 110,000 inhabitants.^{2/} Prior to 1967, the composition of the population of the Golan Heights was diverse. Sunni Muslims constituted the dominant majority, but sizeable minorities also inhabited the area, mostly within isolated rural settlements. After Sunni Muslims the most common ethnic groups in the region were the Druze, Alouite Muslims, Circassians, and Christians.

The June war of 1967 triggered massive emigration from the Golan Heights to the inner regions of Syrian territory. Emigration proceeded at a high rate during the first weeks at the end of military hostilities. According to a census conducted by Israeli authorities, the number of Syrians remaining as of September 1967 was only 6,396.^{3/} Thus, the number of emigrants during the period from June to September 1967 was in the range of 100,000-110,000. An examination of the emigration statistics with respect to ethnic origin reveals that all groups were vulnerable to factors which led them to emigrate.

During the period 1967-1986, the size of the Syrian population in the Golan Heights rose substantially. The total population at the end of 1986 was reported to be 14,100,^{4/} indicating an increase of more than twofold over a 19-year period. The annual rate of natural increase was calculated at 4.2 per cent.

The Syrian population of the Golan Heights possesses distinctive demographic characteristics. The distribution of the population by age reveals that it is an extremely young population, with 44.6 per cent aged 14 years and under.^{5/} Surprisingly, the Jewish population of the Golan Heights

^{1/} Syrian Arab Republic, Directorate of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Statistical Abstract 1966 (Damascus, 1967), p. 4.

^{2/} Ibid.

^{3/} Census of Population 1967 (Jerusalem, Israel Defence Forces), vol. 1.

^{4/} Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1987 (Jerusalem), p. 44-45.

^{5/} Ibid., p. 45.

is even younger than the Syrian population, with 46.1 per cent aged 14 years and under (as compared with an overall average for Israel's Jews in 1986 of 29.9 per cent). Even more surprising is the fact that the rate of live births for the Syrian population of the Golan Heights, estimated at 28.3 per thousand, is noticeably lower than that of the Jewish settlers in the region (37.2 per thousand).^{1/} The birth rate of the Syrian population of the Golan Heights is also considerably lower than that of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which was estimated at 42.8 per thousand in 1986.^{2/}

The atypically low birth rate of Syrians in the Golan Heights deserves special attention, especially as it indicates a sharp departure from pre-occupation trends. According to Syrian estimates, the natural growth rate for the Golan population amounted to 43 per thousand during the middle 1960s, with the average fertility rate estimated at 266 per thousand per annum.^{3/}

The distribution of the Syrian population of the Golan Heights by religion dates back to the census of September 1967, when it was revealed that

Table 1. Population by religion and locality (September 1967)

	Total	Muslims	Christians	Druze	Unknown
Majdal Shams	2 918	-	4	2 912	2
Masa'ada	705	4	2	690	9
Bek'ata	1 425	1	-	1 424	-
Quneitra	206	55	42	107	2
Ein Kiniah	578	-	10	563	5
Sihita	173	-	-	173	-
Mansura	6	-	-	6	-
Ghajar	385	377	-	-	8
Total	6 396	437	58	5 875	26

Source: Census of Population 1967 (Jerusalem, Israel Defence Forces), vol. 1.

^{1/} Ibid., p. 114.

^{2/} Ibid., pp. 701-704.

^{3/} S. Khayr, The Golan Region (Damascus, Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, 1976), pp. 79-80.

91.8 per cent of the remaining inhabitants were Druze (see table 1). Muslims, mostly of the Alouite sect, were concentrated in the upper north village of Ghajar. Sunni Muslims and Christians, especially those living in Quneitra, later abandoned the region. There are now only a few Christians still living in Majdal Shams and Ein Kiniah.

E. Education

Prior to the Israeli occupation, Quneitra Governorate already had a fairly well-developed school system consisting of 133 governmental elementary schools and intermediate and secondary schools. In addition, there were seven United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools and seven private schools, of which five were at the intermediate and secondary level.^{1/} There were no institutions for post-secondary education.

The profound transformations that have occurred in the educational system during the post-occupation era are a cause of great concern to the Syrian population of the Golan Heights. It is abundantly clear that the Israeli authorities exercise total control over the system and are directing it in a manner that suits their long-term interests in the region. Most importantly, a conscious and vigorous effort is under way to modify school education in such a way as to cut off the young Druze generation from its Arab identity. To this end, for example, Syrian syllabuses were banned shortly after the occupation began and were replaced by those used by the Druze community in Israel.

In all aspects, the administration of the school system of the Golan Heights reflects Israeli policies and interests. For example, those teachers who oppose Israel's annexation policies have been discriminated against. Between 1969 and 1981, 21 teachers were dismissed for "security reasons";^{2/} many were also arrested. New teachers, on the other hand, are recruited primarily on the basis of their political persuasions, rather than in accordance with their teaching qualifications. Many, in fact, are woefully unqualified to teach. According to informed local sources, in 1984 only nine of 35 teachers at Masa'ada High School had college degrees.^{3/} Meanwhile, 40 qualified academics from the same village were employed outside the educational system because they were unable to obtain teaching jobs.

Another disturbing feature of school education in the Golan Heights is the appalling condition of the school buildings themselves. Many schools are

^{1/} Syrian Arab Republic, Statistical Abstract 1966, cited in Uri Davis, The Golan Heights Under Israeli Occupation, 1967-1981 (England, University of Durham, 1983), p. 9.

^{2/} A. S. Qasem, The Golan (Nablus, An-Najah National University, 1985), p. 32.

^{3/} Data furnished by the Educational Committee of the Academic Association.

forced to accommodate pupils in rented store rooms. In 1986, of the 19 classrooms at Masa'ada High School, eight were actually rented store fronts.^{1/}

The annexation of the labour force of the Golan Heights to the Israeli labour market has given rise to a strikingly high drop-out rate at the secondary school level. This process has been further aggravated by the role played by vocational training centres, which act as transit stations for high school drop-outs. This is clearly evidenced by the markedly low ratio of high school to elementary school pupils. For the Golan Heights, the ratio was 11 per cent in 1985,^{2/} as opposed to 18.4 per cent in the West Bank and 18.2 per cent in the Gaza Strip.^{3/}

Opportunities for higher education are extremely limited. In 1977, Israeli authorities permitted 50 Golan Heights students to pursue their studies at Syrian universities, but the programme was discontinued four years later in accordance with Israel's de-Syrianization policies. The Soviet Union has also provided a relatively large number of scholarships (160 by 1988). However, travel abroad for inhabitants of the Golan Heights is contingent upon the procurement of Israeli travel documents, which is subject to unpredictable local politics.

Syrian students in the Golan Heights are in principle permitted to attend Israeli universities, but only a relatively small number actually attend. Local educational sources say that fees are too high, entrance examinations are inherently discriminatory and the choice of majors open to students of the Golan Heights is extremely limited.

^{1/} Al-Awdah (English weekly) (Jerusalem), 8 June 1987.

^{2/} Calculated from figures cited by A.S. Qasem, The Golan (Nablus, An-Najah National University, 1985), p. 65.

^{3/} Judea, Samaria and Gaza Area Statistics (Jerusalem, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1986) (2), p. 177.

II. LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STATUS

A. The Golan Heights under Syrian administration

Until 1964, the Golan Heights were administratively affiliated to the two governorates of Deira'a and Damascus. In 1964, it was decided to give the Golan Heights the administrative status of a governorate, with Quneitra as its capital city. Quneitra Governorate consisted of two administrative districts, Quneitra and Fiq (Zawiyya) (see table 2). Of the five villages currently remaining, only one (Majdal Shams) had a local municipal council prior to Israeli occupation. In other villages, local mukhtars acted as representatives of the administrative authority.

In the years immediately preceding Israeli occupation, the economy of the Golan Heights experienced a rapid rate of growth. Agricultural production expanded substantially, although it remained traditional in nature. The presence of a relatively large military establishment in the region had brought about marked growth in a number of related service sectors. As will be explained later, official estimates reported minimal rate of unemployment.

Table 2. Administrative structure of Quneitra governorate (1966)

District	Subdistrict	No. of villages
Quneitra	Quneitra	36
	Khan Arinaba	16
	Khishniyya	29
	Masa'ada	32
Fiq	Fiq	32
	Al-Mahajir	18
Total		163

Source: Syrian Arab Republic, Directorate of Statistics in the Ministry of Planning, Statistical Abstract 1966 (Damascus, 1967), p. 2.

B. The Golan Heights under Israeli military occupation

The Golan Heights came under Israeli occupation during the last two days of the June war of 1967. Driven by a combination of military and economic motives, since the early years of their rule over the region, the Israeli authorities have pursued a clear policy of annexation. Ambitious settlement plans were drawn up as early as 1969 by Uzi Gador and subsequently reviewed and expanded by the World Zionist Organization during the mid-1970s. Clearly, the virtual total emigration of the Syrian population has helped the Israeli authorities to implement their settlement plans quietly.

In order to facilitate gradual annexation and achieve uncontested authority over the region, in 1975 the Israeli military authorities appointed local councils in all villages. This move was strongly resisted by local inhabitants and their leaders, particularly as the new appointees were suspected of being collaborators. Appointed village councils are still in existence today, but they have been effectively boycotted by local inhabitants.

No local council elections have been permitted since the five villages of the Golan Heights came under Israeli occupation in 1967. Deprived of genuine representation, residents of the Golan Heights called for a general meeting on 20 March 1986 to discuss alternative forms of representation. Those who attended the meeting elected a 10-member Popular Committee, which was designated the national leadership of the Golan Heights.

C. Annexation of the Golan Heights to Israel

The Israeli authorities launched their first serious attempt to annex the Golan Heights in August 1980, when they decided to issue Israeli identity cards (IDs) to Syrian nationals. This move triggered a fierce wave of protest and resistance that ultimately achieved success. Of about 800 IDs distributed by various means, 790 were returned by their recipients.^{1/}

On 14 December 1981 - in a surprise move orchestrated by Menachem Begin, Israel's Prime Minister at the time - the Israeli Government presented to the Knesset a new law calling for the "enacting [of] Israeli laws in the Golan Heights". In order to preempt unforeseen objections and impediments, the proposed law was ratified by the Knesset on the same day it was presented, a highly irregular procedure.

^{1/} A. S. Qasem, The Golan (Nablus, An-Najah National University, 1985), p. 88.

III. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

A. Natural resources

The Golan Heights are endowed with few, though nevertheless important natural resources, namely land and water. The natural features of the region offer additional touristic advantages. Mining resources are restricted to some high quality rocks used for the production of building stones and gravel.

1. Land resources

Of the total area of the Golan Heights under Israeli occupation (1,176 km²), only 200,000 dunums (17 per cent of the total) is owned by the four Druze villages.^{1/} The area of land under cultivation by the Druze is estimated at approximately 50,000 dunums. It should be noted that the Druze villagers have lost about 35,000 dunums of their cultivable land as a consequence of the Israeli occupation. Extensive areas were closed off inside the cease-fire line with the Syrian Arab Republic, and about 5,000 dunums were confiscated (1,000 dunums in Bek'ata for "security purposes" and 4,000 dunums in Masa'ada that have been turned into a nature reserve).^{2/}

Of the land area under Israeli control (close to one million dunums), Israeli settlement authorities estimate that 15 per cent is fit for commercial cultivation. The land area projected for other uses is estimated as follows: 650,000 dunums for grazing, 150,000 dunums for the military and 50,000 dunums for other purposes (such as roads and building sites).^{3/}

Ownership of land in the Golan Heights has traditionally been feudal, as was common in other parts of the Syrian Arab Republic prior to 1967. Land ownership patterns in the four Druze villages, however, were markedly different from those in other parts of the Golan Heights. Several local leaders report that informal schemes for land reform were enacted by the previous Druze leadership, which ultimately resulted in relatively equitable forms of land distribution.^{4/}

^{1/} Uri Davis, The Golan Heights Under Israeli Occupation, 1967-1981 (England, University of Durham, 1983), p. 24.

^{2/} Al-Awdah (English Weekly, Jerusalem) 8 June 1987.

^{3/} U. Gador, The Golan Heights: Early Planning Proposals for Agricultural Development (Tzefat, World Zionist Organization, 1967), p. 13, as cited in Uri Davis, The Golan Heights Under Israeli Occupation, 1967-1981 (England, University of Durham, 1983), p. 24.

^{4/} A. S. Qasem, The Golan (Nablus, An-Najah National University, 1985), p. 22.

2. Water resources

The Golan Heights is a relatively humid region. Average annual rainfall in the northern parts of the Golan Heights is estimated at about 1,100 millimetres (mm), although the amount of precipitation drops gradually from the north to the south, sinking to 600 mm in the southern region bordering on Jordan and Lake Tiberias. This lower level of rainfall is about equal to the highest average for the West Bank.

Syrian nationals of the Golan Heights derive most of their irrigation water from pools trapped between volcanic rocks. The largest of these pools is Birkit Ram, which holds around 2 to 3 million cubic metres (m³).^{1/} Artificial collection pools have also been constructed by farmers for irrigation purposes, often despite opposition from Israeli authorities.

Irrigation techniques used by farmers in the four Druze villages are noticeably advanced. Water is pumped into elevated steel tanks, each with a storage capacity of 700-800 m³. Water is then carried from the storage tanks and distributed through apple orchards by a system of drip plastic pipes. The average total construction cost per storage tank is estimated at 12,000 United States dollars (\$US), and the cost of plastic pipe installations is estimated at \$US 350 per dunum.

Druze farmers in the Golan Heights are now confronted with serious problems with regard to the great number of steel tanks they have constructed over the past 10 years. The Israeli authorities have declared that all such tanks have been constructed illegally, and they have accordingly taken a number of farmers to court to demand the demolition of their tanks. The authorities argue that by constructing such tanks, farmers have exploited State-owned water without a permit, spoiled the surrounding landscape, and that they may eventually impede military activities. If the Israeli authorities succeed in soliciting sufficient legal backing for their hostile stand to the steel tanks, and if these authorities find it necessary to increase pressure on the Druze community in the Golan Heights, they may enforce drastic measures in this connection. Should this happen, it may result in the destruction of commercial apple farming in these Druze villages.

Springs are common in the northern regions, but extremely rare on the Golan Plateau.^{2/} Majdal Shams used to draw much of its water from a spring that later fell inside the cease-fire line. With the consent and support of the Syrian Government, water from that spring is now carried to Majdal Shams through a pipeline that was completed in 1984.^{3/}

^{1/} Uri Davis, The Golan Heights Under Israeli Occupation, 1967-1981 (England, University of Durham, 1983), p. 24.

^{2/} E. Orni and E. Efrat, Geography of Israel (Jerusalem, Israel Universities Press, 1976), p. 422.

^{3/} A. S. Qasem, The Golan (Nablus, An-Najah National University, 1985), p. 75.

According to Israeli hydrologists, the Golan Heights are not endowed with rich underground water reserves. In the years just after occupation, the total amount of usable reserves was estimated at 12.5 million m³. More than 90 per cent of these reserves are to be found in the northern districts. The same Israeli sources project a potential underground water supply of about 20 million m³^{1/} that could be obtained by using modern techniques, in addition to water collected in surface pools.

Israeli authorities have applied discriminatory and exploitative water policies in the Golan Heights, similar to those implemented in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This is clearly evidenced in the development plan laid down in 1975 by the World Zionist Organization, which allotted 7.59 million m³ to Jewish settlers, as opposed to only 2.1 million m³ to the Druze population.^{2/} On the basis of the size of both population groups at the time, it was noted that the amount of water allotted per capita amounted to 3,995 m³ for Jewish settlers and 236 m³ for Druze inhabitants.^{3/}

The main source of drinking water is artesian wells. There are at present six deep-bore wells, all drilled by Mekorot (Israel's national water corporation) following the Israeli occupation.^{4/} These wells are used primarily by Israeli settlers, but they also provide drinking water to Druze inhabitants. In addition to water procured from local sources, Syrian nationals in the Golan Heights derive around 20 per cent of their total water consumption from a well located on the Syrian side of the border to the north of Majdal Shams. The Syrian authorities are now drilling another deep-bore well for this purpose. The pipe connected to Majdal Shams was in existence prior to the Israeli occupation.

3. Agriculture

Agriculture has always been the backbone of the economy of the Golan Heights. Syrian sources estimated the total area under cultivation in 1966 at 390,000 dunums, of which 20,000 dunums were under irrigation.^{5/} About 75 per cent of all cultivated land was planted with cereals and legumes. The area devoted to fruit crops was estimated at 40,000 dunums, half for vineyards and the rest divided equally between apples and olives.

1/ Uri Davis, The Golan Heights Under Israeli Occupation, 1967-1981 (England, University of Durham, 1983), p. 24.

2/ Ibid., p. 36.

3/ Ibid., p. 37.

4/ Data furnished by Department of Agriculture, Qiryat Shmona.

5/ Syrian Arab Republic, Directorate of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Statistical Abstract 1966 (Damascus, 1967).

The raising of livestock occupied a key position in the agricultural sector of the Golan Heights. The population of sheep and goats was estimated at 176,000 head, raised almost entirely by nomadic methods. The number of cows was estimated at 22,000 head.^{1/}

The dominant role of agriculture in the economy of the Golan Heights was clearly apparent in the 1967 census. It was found that 77 per cent of all heads of households were farm owners.^{2/} About 56 per cent of all farmers were engaged in a single branch of agriculture, primarily fruit plantations.

Despite the vital role played by agriculture in the local economy, production techniques were noticeably primitive and predominantly manual. In 1967, three tractors served the entire region.^{3/}

Production and marketing techniques have obviously undergone rapid changes over the past 21 years. This is clear, for instance, from the sharp rise in the number of tractors, which had increased to 407 units by 1979.^{4/} The extensive dissemination of spraying equipment has facilitated the effective application of insecticides and weed-killers. Such technological change has come mainly as a result of direct exposure to the farming techniques of Israel, especially through work on Israeli farms or contact with salesmen of production inputs. The transfer of technology has also been expedited by extension personnel through the staff at the Qiryat Shmona Department of Agriculture. It should be noted, however, that during the 21 years since the Israeli occupation, no Druze have been recruited as personnel by the said department.^{5/}

Farming patterns have undergone significant structural transformation over the past 21 years. As an immediate result of the complete evacuation of the middle and southern parts of the Golan Heights, extensive farming areas were deserted. This has resulted in a dramatic drop in the total cultivated area from 390,000 dunums in 1966 (for the whole of Quneitra Governorate)^{6/} to 50,000 dunums in 1984.^{7/} The vast majority of land removed from cultivation had originally been devoted to cereal and legume crops. Similarly, emigrating villagers contributed to a sharp drop in the aggregate livestock population by taking their livestock herds with them when they left.

1/ Ibid.

2/ Census of Population 1967 (Jerusalem, Israel Defence Forces), vol. 2, pp. 47-48.

3/ Aharon Zebaidah, The Druze in the Golan Heights: Thirteen Years of Military Rule (Tel Aviv, Israel Defence Forces), p. 56

4/ Ibid.

5/ Data furnished by Department of Agriculture, Qiryat Shmona.

6/ The Golan Heights comprised 73 per cent of Quneitra Governorate.

7/ Uri Davis, The Golan Heights Under Israeli Occupation, 1967-1981 (England, University of Durham, 1983), p. 31.

Within the perimeters of the remaining villages, agriculture has obviously grown considerably over the past 21 years. There are no data on the value of outputs and net income generated in this sector, but evidence of growth can be seen in a number of tangible indicators. Realizing the unique climatic advantages for producing apples and grapes, Druze farmers introduced and promoted these patterns of farming long before the onset of the occupation. In 1967, the area devoted to apple orchards was estimated at 2,420 dunums and vineyards at 4,000 dunums.^{1/}

Following the occupation, grape producers suffered a severe setback as a result of competition from Israeli produce grown under more favourable conditions in central Israel and the West Bank. Consequently, the area devoted to vineyards in the Golan Heights dropped substantially to 2,400 dunums.^{2/} On the other hand, the area devoted to apples has greatly expanded, reaching approximately 10,000 dunums in 1988 of which 4,800 dunums are irrigated,^{3/} mostly in small holdings of around 4.5 dunums per farmer.^{4/} Apple farming has developed into a cash crop that is almost exclusively market-oriented. The expansion of apple orchards has necessitated extensive reclamation of rocky and steep hills. Land development costs are estimated at about \$US 1,500 per dunum. This includes excavation work, construction of retaining walls and the cost of adding top soil. Contrary to Israeli regulations, new apple orchards are often established without obtaining relevant permits from the Fruit Marketing Board.

Apple farming has proved so far to be an attractive source of income on investment and a plausible form of employment for surplus family labour. Annual earnings fluctuate widely in accordance with variations in yield, quality of produce and ruling prices. The average yield per dunum is estimated at about 2.5-3.5 tons. A farmer is assumed on average to sell one third of his output to the juice factory and two thirds for table consumption. The delivery price for processed apples is about \$US 300 per ton, of which the farmer receives a net value of \$US 230 per ton. The average delivery price for table apples is about \$US 900 per ton, of which the farmer receives a net of around \$US 585. With an average marketable yield of three tons (one for processing and two for table use), a farmer's earnings are estimated at about \$US 1,400 per dunum. By deducting the value of purchased production inputs (around \$US 450 per dunum), producers are left with a net income of approximately \$US 950 per dunum, which covers the cost of family labour and management in addition to the opportunity cost of investment. With an average of 4.5 dunums, apple growers therefore earn an annual income of \$US 4,275.

1/ Aharon Zebaidah, The Druze in the Golan Heights: Thirteen Years of Military Rule (Tel Aviv, Israel Defence Forces), p. 56.

2/ Ibid.

3/ Data furnished by Department of Agriculture, Qiryat Shmona.

4/ Leading local farmers provided considerably lower estimates, where total apple orchards are estimated at 7,000 dunums, of which only 2,400 dunums are under irrigation.

Field crop production continues to occupy a major position with respect to other types of production. The area devoted to field crops is larger than that for all kinds of tree orchards combined. Most of the cereals and legumes produced are used to meet domestic demand.

In 1987, the total area under cultivation in the Golan Heights was reported to be about 84,000 dunums, of which about half was devoted to field crops (see table 3). Tree orchards, largely consisting of apples, constitute 36 per cent of the total cultivated area. As official sources consolidate data relevant to both the Druze population and Israeli settlers, it is not possible to delineate the area of plantations for each group.

Table 3. Area under cultivation (1987)

	Dunums	Percentage
Total	84 163	100.0
Field crops: rainfed	16 015	19.0
irrigated	28 615	34.0
Vegetables and melons	5 784	6.9
Trees (excluding citrus)	29 252	34.8
Citrus	1 175	1.4
Fallow	3 322	3.9

Source: Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1987 (Jerusalem), p. 360.

Livestock production has undergone a number of important changes. Because of restrictions on grazing areas, the population of sheep and cows dropped sharply during the early years of the occupation. But livestock raisers have since acquired the expertise to allow considerable growth to be achieved in the livestock sector. The number of cows rose from 689 in 1967 to 4,000 in 1979, and that of sheep and goats during the same period rose from 3,800 to 21,000.^{1/} Improvements in veterinary services have facilitated the development of a healthier livestock sector. A slaughterhouse was recently established, the first in the Druze region in the Golan Heights.

^{1/} Aharon Zebaidah, The Druze in the Golan Heights: Thirteen Years of Military Rule (Tel Aviv, Israel Defence Forces), p. 56.

Agricultural development has proceeded over the past 21 years with a very low level of external support. As is the case in other territories occupied in 1967, Israeli authorities have not rendered credit services to farmers. The financing of agricultural development has been effected largely through the high income earned from apple farming.

B. Local industry

The industrial sector has played only a minor role in the economy of the five Syrian villages in the Golan Heights, both before and after the Israeli occupation. A survey of industries conducted in 1984 revealed that there were 52 industrial firms, primarily catering for the basic commodities and services required by the Syrian population of the Golan Heights (see table 4). Most of these firms are merely small household operations, primarily employing their owners and immediate relatives.

Table 4. Number of industrial firms (1984)

	Number
Cold storage	2
Apple packing plant	1
Shampoo and detergents	1
Cement blocks	1
Concrete mixers	1
Butane gas bottling	1
Marble cutting	1
Kerosene heaters	1
Construction of lorry frames	1
Auto repair garages	6
Blacksmiths	21
Carpenters	15
Total	52

Source: Aharon Zebaidah, The Druze in the Golan Heights: A Minority Community in Crisis, MA thesis, University of Haifa, 1984, p. 220.

Despite inequitable competition with Israeli industries, the success of typical manufacturing industries - like those for detergents and cement blocks - has been facilitated by strong political sentiments. Local consumers of the Golan Heights have given much support to local firms, which in return do not seem to be motivated by unduly strong profit motives.

When viewed against the size of the Druze population, the number of industrial firms in the Golan Heights is slightly greater than that in the occupied Palestinian territories (3.5 firms per thousand inhabitants as compared to 2.8 in the occupied Palestinian territories). But, as in the occupied Palestinian territories, a more vigorous development of industry is constrained by the small size of the domestic market, scarcity of raw materials, lack of funding and uncontrolled entry of Israeli products into local markets.

C. Labour and employment

Syrian statistical data indicate that the unemployment rate in 1966 amounted to less than 2 per cent. The total labour force in Quneitra Governorate was estimated at 24,609 workers (20 per cent of the population), of which only 395 were classified as unemployed.^{1/} According to the same source, the employed labour force was distributed as follows: 64 per cent in agriculture, 20 per cent in mining and quarrying, 7 per cent in trade and 6 per cent in other sectors. It may be assumed, however, that the above estimates of employment disguise a pronounced degree of under-employment and seasonal unemployment, precipitated mainly by the seasonal nature of the dominant rainfed patterns of agriculture.

The post-occupation era has seen fundamental transformations in the labour market. Agriculture, for example, has become much more market-oriented; consequently owner-operators have become more conscious of the implicit cost of disguised and extended seasonal unemployment. This change was paralleled by the opening of the Israeli labour market to Golan Heights workers, which resulted in a sudden rise in the opportunity cost for unemployed or under-employed labourers. The sharp rise in the standard of living has further encouraged Golan Heights inhabitants to try harder to raise their cash income.

Israeli authorities have taken a number of measures with the implicit aim of facilitating the gradual subordination of the Golan labour force to Israel's labour market. In addition to the direct economic benefits derived from a substantial wage differential, the Israelis envisaged this policy as a means of weakening the attachment of inhabitants of the Golan Heights to their land and their affiliation to their mother country. An important step in this direction was the establishment of vocational training centres, which attracted young men of high school age. By 1979, 1,786 school-age boys had

^{1/} Syrian Arab Republic, Directorate of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Statistical Abstract 1966 (Damascus, 1967), pp. 108-109.

graduated from these training centres; most of them then sought work in Israeli firms.^{1/} The bulk of this training was in professions related to the construction sector.

Because of the weak local economic base and their proximity to Israeli industrial zones, Syrian workers of the Golan Heights have displayed a greater tendency to seek employment in Israel than workers in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is estimated that about 1,500 workers from villages in the Golan Heights (about 50 per cent of the total labour force) are employed in Israeli firms and institutions, mostly in the city of Qiryat Shmona.^{2/} Employment in Israel is most pronounced in the villages of Ghajar, Masa'ada and Bek'ata, where 70-80 per cent of the labour force is employed in Israel. In Majdad Shams the corresponding ratio is only about 30 per cent.^{3/}

The size of the labour force employed locally in the Golan Heights is estimated at about 1,500 to 2,000 workers. Agriculture and related branches employ the bulk of the local labour force, but many workers have sought part-time employment in the 200 workshops and retail stores which have sprung up in recent years.

D. Money and banking

The Golan Heights are subject to the same financial policy and practices as the occupied Palestinian territories. Immediately after the occupation, Syrian currency was replaced by Israeli currency and the only local bank in the region was forced to close. In order to fill the resulting gap, a few years later Israeli authorities permitted the opening of Israeli banks. By early 1988, two Israeli banks were operating in the Druze villages, one in Majdal Shams (Hapoalim) and the other in Masa'ada (Leumi). Because of the inadequate volume of business, the latter bank was closed down, leaving only one bank in the Druze villages. A third branch serves Qatzrin, the largest Israeli settlement in the Golan Heights. In the annual reports of the Bank of Israel, no separate data are provided on the performance of banks of the Golan Heights, although such data are provided for banks of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Officials at the Bank of Israel emphasize that Israeli banks in the Druze villages are extremely small and do not offer the full range of services. The major function they perform at present is that of facilitating trade between inhabitants of the Golan Heights, Israelis and inhabitants of the West Bank through checking accounts. Overdraft facilities and lending services are provided on a very small scale and only for trading purposes. The volume of loans advanced for industrial and development purposes is negligible.

^{1/} Aharon Zebaidah, The Druze in the Golan Heights: Thirteen Years of Military Rule (Tel Aviv, Israel Defence Forces), p. 51.

^{2/} Aharon Zebaidah, The Druze in the Golan Heights: A Minority Community in Crisis, MA thesis, University of Haifa, 1984, p. 220.

^{3/} Data obtained from interviews conducted with local community leaders.

As in the occupied Palestinian territories, lending operations are subject to tacit intervention by local Israeli authorities; hence private individuals generally opt not to apply for bank loans. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities display little interest in facilitating the emergence of a strong local production base, an attitude clearly reflected in the credit policies promulgated by local Israeli banks. In any case, inhabitants of the Golan Heights tend to harbour strong religious sentiments against the concept of interest on loans, even more so than in the West Bank. They have further declined to borrow from Israeli banks on account of strong national sentiment, and they resort to banks only for such unavoidable services as paying their tax bills, cashing their wage cheques and receiving national insurance dues.

The informal monetary sector in Syrian villages in the Golan Heights is much less developed than that in the occupied Palestinian territories. Money changers do not exist, although several large shopowners perform money changing functions on a very limited scale, usually involving American and Israeli currencies. Unlike money changers in the West Bank, those in the Golan Heights do not perform such functions as transferring money or advancing loans.

Another major distinctive feature of the monetary sector relates to the non-existence of co-operative societies in Syrian villages in the Golan Heights. In addition to not having been exposed to co-operative experience prior to the Israeli occupation, the inhabitants of the Golan Heights are effectively discouraged, and have themselves resisted, the establishment of co-operative organizations. Obviously, local Israeli authorities are excessively concerned about all efforts aimed at building local institutions which may eventually weaken the Golan Heights' subjugation to Israel.

Suppliers of production inputs have played a vital role in the area of seasonal credit. There are eight specialized shops in Syrian villages which have all become major conduits for technological change, as well as sources of loans in kind. According to the estimates of local experts, local suppliers of production inputs offer overdraft facilities to their customers for periods of about 6-8 months. No interest is charged on the unpaid balance of a farmer's bill, but the deferred balance is converted into United States dollars. The aggregate volume of credit facilities advanced by suppliers of production inputs is estimated at \$US 400,000.

Borrowing for economic purposes does not seem to pose a special problem to Syrian farmers of the Golan Heights. Additional capital is occasionally needed for such modest purposes as reclaiming one or two dunums of land (\$US 1,000-3,000), replacing irrigation pipes or paying for a share in a water tank. With high income earnings, such capital requirements are usually met from personal savings. In rare cases where a supplementary loan is needed, farmers and businessmen resort to friends and relatives. This source seems to play a more important role in the credit market than in the occupied Palestinian territories. As in the latter territories, usurers do not play any significant role in the monetary market.

In sharp contrast to their counterparts in the occupied Palestinian territories, Syrian nationals in the Golan Heights have not had access to external funding sources. They were not, for example, included within the mandate of the commission set up by the 1978 Arab Summit, later known as the

Joint Jordanian-Palestinian Committee. Again, in contrast to the occupied Palestinian territories, the Golan Heights have not attracted the interest of foreign agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). No private voluntary organization or NGO functions in the Golan Heights at present, whereas there are about 40 currently operating in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Far from being disturbed by the reluctance of seemingly concerned parties to advance financial aid, many inhabitants of the Golan Heights feel that the lack of aid has actually led them to make spectacular achievements and they have done their utmost to mobilize their own resources for developmental needs.

E. Trade

Trading services have developed at a rapid rate over the past 21 years. Internal trade has flourished as a result of a marked rise in per capita income and a swiftly evolving conversion from a subsistence to a market-oriented economy. By 1983, 148 stores provided the goods and services needed by the local population. About two thirds of these were grocery shops engaged in selling consumer goods (see table 5).

Table 5. Distribution of shops (1983)

Number	Type of goods	Number	Type of services
7	Construction materials	10	Restaurants
2	Bookstores	3	Gas stations
8	Agricultural inputs	5	Barbershops
1	Jewellery and watches	3	Insurance agencies
7	Carpets and furniture	2	Photographers
93	Grocery shops		
7	Electrical appliances		
125		23	

Source: Aharon Zebaidah, The Druze in the Golan Heights: A Minority Community in Crisis, MA thesis, University of Haifa, 1984, pp. 221-222.

External trade in the Golan Heights has undergone a fundamental transformation during the post-occupation years. Immediately after the occupation began, local markets in the Golan Heights were opened to the flood of goods from Israel. But as was the case in the occupied Palestinian territories, the counterflow of agricultural goods from the Golan Heights into Israel was put under tight Israeli control. No data are available on trade between the Golan Heights and Israel, but it is clear that Syrian nationals are more heavily dependent on Israel for their goods than Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories. Unlike merchants in the occupied Palestinian territories, businessmen in the Golan Heights have not established direct trade relations with overseas countries.

Apples are about the only export item of external trade from villages of the Golan Heights. Annual output is estimated at about 10,000 to 15,000 tons, with a farm-gate value of around \$US 15 million.^{1/} About 75 per cent of the marketable apple output is channelled into Israel, where quantities in the range of 1,000-4,000 tons are purchased by the juice factory in Qiryat Shmona, depending on the quality of the fruit of that season and prevailing prices. The West Bank and Gaza Strip receive about 25 per cent of the output.

Delivery to Israeli wholesalers is sometimes made in the apple packing plant of the Golan Heights using buyers' boxes and trademarks. The bulk of apples going to Israel is disposed of in the Tel Aviv wholesale market. All shipments from the Golan Heights to Israel must be accompanied by individual permits from the Fruit Marketing Board, as is the case with other Israeli producers. The Board issues these permits at a nominal fee (five per thousand) and without undue delay. Since 1981, the shipping of apples from the Golan Heights into Israel has been free of quota restrictions. Deductions on produce sold in Israeli wholesale markets amount to 25 per cent of the sales proceeds (commission 15 per cent, taxes and handling charges 10 per cent). The cost of transportation to wholesale markets in Israel amounts to 8-10 per cent of the sales proceeds.

Because of the relatively low labour costs and the superior quality of their apples, producers of the Golan Heights have competed favourably with Israeli producers. This has recently prompted Israelis with vested interests, particularly those living in settlements in the Golan Heights, to call for the imposition of restrictions on the entry of Druze apple produce from the Golan Heights. A bill was presented to this effect by Knesset member Grupper in February 1988. Echoing the sentiments of Israeli settlers, Grupper argues that Druze inhabitants in the Golan Heights have expanded their apple orchards illegally and beyond the local market capacity.^{2/} So far the Knesset and Ministry of Agriculture have not acted in response to Grupper's appeal. Some Israeli experts expect that a compromise may be reached whereby certain restrictions will be imposed on the entry of apples destined for industrial purposes. But even limited restrictions may have grave consequences for the economy of the Golan Heights.

^{1/} Data furnished by Department of Agriculture, Qiryat Shmona.

^{2/} At a farm-gate price of about \$US 1,000 per ton, Grupper's assertions are not taken seriously by most apple traders and agricultural officials.

Owing to the relatively short production season, for many years apple farmers of the Golan Heights faced serious problems in marketing their produce, since price levels often dropped to very low levels during the picking season. In order to solve this problem, seven cold storage plants have been established with a total capacity of 6,800 tons. This has effectively alleviated the problems of surpluses and has helped to stabilize prices. Another major development in apple production and trade was the establishment of a modern packing plant in the early 1980s. Owners of cold storage plants charge \$US 12 per ton for produce stored from October to January, and an additional fee is demanded for longer periods.

Trade between villages in the Golan Heights and the Syrian Arab Republic ceased in both directions when the Israeli occupation began. Efforts to channel apples from the Golan Heights via the Syrian Arab Republic to other Arab markets has been advocated in recent years, but so far no practical steps have been taken to implement this.

The smuggling of goods across the Syrian border was reportedly very common for a considerable time after occupation began. Syrian nationals in the Golan Heights were tempted to bring in goods of Syrian origin because of substantial price differentials. Fearing economic and security repercussions over this kind of trade, the Israeli authorities have enforced stringent border controls which have helped to reduce this form of trade to a negligible level.

Table 6. Indicators of living conditions (September 1967)

(Percentage of households)

	Golan Heights	Gaza Strip	West Bank
Toilet inside building	11.2	44.0	40.5
With kitchen	31.0	55.7	45.5
With bath	6.6	19.5	17.3
Running water inside building	29.6	29.3	17.8
With electricity	58.9	17.9	23.1
With radio	46.1	47.7	57.9
With TV	1.9	3.3	1.8
With electric refrigerator	0.6	2.5	4.8
Average number of persons per room	2.0	2.6	2.6

Source: Census of Population 1967 (Jerusalem, Israel Defence Forces); publication No. 2, pp. 5, 25, 45, 46, vii, xv and xix.

F. Living conditions

Prior to the Israeli occupation, living conditions were characteristic of a relatively underdeveloped rural community. The census of September 1967 revealed that only 11.2 per cent of the population had toilets inside their houses, 31.0 per cent had kitchens, 6.6 per cent had baths and 29.6 per cent had running water. Table 6 shows that the Golan Heights lagged far behind both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with regard to all the said indicators, except water.

When compared with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, inhabitants of the Golan Heights have fared well on electricity-related indicators. Golan Heights' villages were supplied with low-cost electricity from generators owned and operated by the Syrian army.

The standard of living in the Golan Heights continued to rise during the post-occupation years. The change has been most dramatic in regard to those criteria that are not contingent on Israeli approval or funding. In 1967, for example, there were only 13 cars in the five remaining villages in the Golan Heights; by the end of 1979 the number had increased to 510.^{1/} No recent data are available on food intake or the ownership of electrical appliances, but improvements in these areas have also been substantial.

Despite the seemingly tangible improvements in many aspects of their standard of living, the overall economic well-being of inhabitants of the Golan Heights is not particularly impressive. An Israeli study involving a sample of 253 respondents indicated that only 27.6 per cent felt their economy was good, 57.7 per cent thought it was only average and 14.7 per cent rated it as bad.^{2/}

The situation with respect to government related aspects of living conditions is drastically different. Governmental health services are extremely deficient. No hospital has yet been established in the region and each village is served only by a local clinic staffed by a nurse. All five villages are served by a single mother and child care centre.^{3/} Medical services are provided through a governmental insurance scheme, but because of deficient services and high premiums, only 50 per cent of households have subscribed.

^{1/} Aharon Zebaidah, The Druze in the Golan Heights: A Minority Community in Crisis, MA thesis, University of Haifa, 1984, p. 230.

^{2/} Ibid., p. 236.

^{3/} Uri Davis, The Golan Heights Under Israeli Occupation, 1967-1981 (England, University of Durham, 1983), p. 10.

A number of pioneering local endeavours have been launched with the aim of improving health services in villages in the Golan Heights. A dental clinic was recently opened by four local dentists, all graduates of Damascus University. This clinic provides services at low rates. A "co-operative" health clinic served by two medical doctors has also been opened. In view of the Israeli reluctance to build a local hospital, leaders of the Golan Heights hope to implement a project once funding has been secured.

The housing situation is a major source of concern for inhabitants of the Golan Heights. Village boundaries have remained the same as they were 21 years ago, forcing people to construct their houses "illegally" in areas outside village borders. Unlike those designed to serve the Israeli settlements in the Golan Heights, the roads used by the Druze population are inferior in quality. With one post office to serve all five villages in the Golan Heights, postal services are gravely inadequate.^{1/}

^{1/} Al-Awdah (English weekly) (Jerusalem).

IV. IMPACT OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

Israeli ambitions in the Golan Heights have been manifest since the early years of the occupation, perhaps even more so than in most of the other parts of the newly occupied territories. Unlike the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israeli claims to the Golan Heights have no historical or religious basis; rather they are based purely on strategic and military factors. Planning for settlement activities commenced soon after the end of military hostilities.^{1/} By 1972 there were four Israeli settlements inhabited by 600 residents, and the population had risen to 6,800 in June 1983.^{2/} The population of Israeli settlers at the end of 1986 rose further to 9,100 living in 29 settlements (see table 7).

Israeli settlement activities are concentrated in the middle and southern parts of the Golan Heights (69 per cent of settlements and 81 per cent of Jewish inhabitants). The average size of the population per settlement is 314 inhabitants, as compared with 2,820 for Syrian villages.

Table 7. Population and settlements by ethnic origin

(At the end of 1986)

	<u>Syrian</u>		<u>Israeli</u>	
	<u>Localities</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Localities</u>	<u>Population</u>
Total	5	14 100	29	9 100
Hermon	2	14 100	1	1 700
North Golan	3	-	8	-
Middle Golan	-	-	6	3 800
South Golan	-	-	14	3 600

Source: Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1987 (Jerusalem), p. 39.

The concentration of Israeli settlements in the middle and southern parts of the Golan Heights is mainly owing to geographical factors. Compared with the northern regions, the topography of the Golan plateau is much more gentle, the quality of land is superior and the weather is milder. Most importantly, however, these parts of the Golan Heights were completely abandoned by their inhabitants after they came under Israeli occupation, and this facilitated the acquisition of land without arousing local opposition.

^{1/} Uzi Gador (of the World Zionist Organization) presented a preliminary settlement plan in 1967.

^{2/} Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1987 (Jerusalem), p. 39.

The economic motives for Israeli settlement activities in Golan Heights were obvious from the early days of the occupation. Uzi Gador of the World Zionist Organization pointed in 1967 to the great potential of the Golan Heights in the area of agriculture and tourism.^{1/}

The economic base of Israeli settlements in the Golan Heights rests on agriculture. The total area under cultivation is estimated at about 50,000 dunums.^{2/} Like Syrian farmers of the Golan Heights, Israeli settlers have focused their attention on the cultivation of apples, but they also cultivate fairly wide areas of fieldcrops and vegetables under irrigation.

The Golan Heights are endowed with outstanding natural features such as snow-covered mountains, beautiful wadis, pools and spa springs (at Al-Hamma). By constructing modern facilities and infrastructure, tourism has developed into a major economic sector, but because of its strictly seasonal nature, it has not developed to a level where it can sustain a major part of the labour force. Israeli development planners are therefore diverting attention to industry, but again they find it particularly difficult to identify those lines in which the region may enjoy tangible comparative advantages.

Israeli settlement activities did not have any significant consequences, either positive or negative, on the economy of the population of the Golan Heights. Israeli authorities inherited so much deserted land that they did not have to resort to coercion or fraud to acquire more. Land was confiscated only in a few cases, and rarely for direct settlement purposes. The total area confiscated or closed off is estimated at 35,000 dunums,^{3/} some of it is reserved for military training purposes and the rest has been turned into a natural reserve.

The impact of the occupation on water resources has been even more pronounced than that on cultivated land, at least as far as the remaining Syrian population is concerned. Israeli authorities exercise total control over Ram Pool, and have imposed a ban on the drilling of artesian wells by local residents, allowing Mekorot to drill deep-bore wells which have nearby springs and have tried to obstruct the implementation of surface water projects.

^{1/} Uri Davis, The Golan Heights Under Israeli Occupation, 1967-1981 (England, University of Durham, 1983), p. 22.

^{2/} The area of land cultivated by Israeli settlers is estimated by Yosef Goelt at 80,000 dunums (see the Jerusalem Post, 4 January 1985). The total area under cultivation, including that of Syrian villages, is estimated by the Central Bureau of Statistics to be 84,163 dunums. (Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1987 (Jerusalem), p. 360).

^{3/} Al-Awda (English weekly) (Jerusalem).

No economic links have developed between Israeli settlers and nationals of the Golan Heights over the past 21 years. One reason is that the local economic base of Israeli settlements in the Golan Heights has not developed to a level where it needs additional labourers from among Syrian nationals except, perhaps for menial jobs. Moreover, workers from Druze villages are closer to the urban and highly industrial centres around Kiryat Shmona than to the sparsely populated settlements in the southern regions.

The advent of the occupation has resulted in the subordination of the local infrastructure to that of Israel. Local electricity generators were eventually forced to close down, and all Syrian villages were connected to the national Israeli grid, against the wishes of Syrian nationals.^{1/} A high quality road net was constructed for the purposes of connecting Israeli settlements with each other and with Israel, but local roads in Syrian villages remain in bad condition. These villages are also supplied by drinking water from Mekorot.

^{1/} A. S. Qasem, The Golan (Nablus, An-Najah National University, 1985), p. 35.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following set of recommendations have been made in the light of information collected in the course of this study, they aim at identifying those measures and projects which seem to have a high priority under present circumstances. Needless to say the implementation of some of the proposed recommendations will have to be preceded by specific in-depth studies.

A. General recommendations

1. It is imperative that the international community exert pressure on Israel to put an end to the application of Israeli laws in the Golan Heights, to the confiscation of land, the establishment of settlements and the policy of annexation, which are in violation of United Nations resolutions and international conventions.

2. Practical steps are needed to allow the free movement of Syrian nationals and their goods between the occupied Golan Heights and the Syrian Arab Republic. More particularly, the Israeli authorities should allow Golan Heights students to enroll in Syrian universities.

3. The international community should also exert pressure on the Israeli authorities to allow the election of local municipal councils, in order to permit Golan Heights citizens to manage their own affairs. This includes the creation of co-operatives, the execution of infrastructural projects and the creation of institutions.

4. United Nations agencies and international and non-governmental organizations are called upon to provide assistance to the Syrian nationals of the Golan Heights, including social, financial and economic assistance.

B. Education

Improving educational services at all levels is perceived to be a top priority. The following measures are recommended for this purpose:

1. The replacement of school curricula by an alien curriculum and against the unanimous wishes of the population should be scrutinized both legally and educationally by specialized United Nations and international bodies.

2. Higher education has to be made more widely available to Golan Heights students. As long as the Israeli authorities continue to prohibit these students from enrolling in Syrian universities, and in the light of the limited access to Israeli universities, greater efforts should be made to identify other alternatives. A much greater role could possibly be played by friendly Governments and specialized NGOs (such as the following: the British Council, UNESCO and Amideast). More importantly, institutes of higher learning in the occupied Palestinian territories could play a vital role in this regard.

3. Local organizations in Syrian villages in the Golan Heights should be provided with the financial and technical means to initiate a private schooling system, as is common in the West Bank and other parts of the world.

This recommendation would be even more relevant if the Israeli authorities object to the restructuring of curricula at government schools, as was suggested above.

4. The administration of the government schooling system should be carefully and continuously monitored by concerned United Nations bodies. In particular, every effort should be made to prevent the administration of schools in accordance with Israeli local politics, which are inevitably detrimental to school children.

5. Because of the appalling deficiency in recreational facilities, local groups should be given assistance to build a civic centre or centres that would provide athletic and cultural services to all five Syrian villages.

C. Health

1. Local groups should be given assistance to establish a regional hospital that would serve all five Syrian villages of the Golan Heights.

2. Private voluntary organizations are called upon to investigate the health situation of women and children, and to help in setting up maternity centres.

D. Economic development

1. The expansion of apple cultivation should be continued. The major obstacle at present, other than potential Israeli opposition, is the high cost of land reclamation, which is estimated at about \$US 1,000 per dunum. The availability of funds does not seem to pose a serious problem, at least in view of the unusually high rates of income enjoyed by apple growers. Yet it is essential to assist farmers to reduce land development costs, possibly by helping a local group to set up a "co-operative" machinery unit which would be able to provide services at a low cost (a similar project has been implemented with marked success by the Hebron Agricultural Co-operative in the West Bank). The estimated capital outlay for the suggested unit is around \$US 250,000 (for a bulldozer, hydraulic compressor and lorry).

2. Profit margins will inevitably drop, perhaps substantially, as a result of increasing competition in local markets. It is therefore imperative that every effort be made to reduce production costs and to raise productivity. Much could be done by setting up one or more technical service units equipped to provide such basic services as pest control and ploughing at low rates. Each unit would be provided with the required machinery and equipment, to be owned and operated by young entrepreneurs. Funding for the project and technical expertise would have to be provided by a qualified NGO preferably from among those based in the West Bank.

3. No serious problems have been encountered relative to the marketing of Golan Heights apples, but the situation may change drastically owing to mounting pressure from neighbouring Israeli settlements and the continued

growth in output. It is therefore suggested that precautionary measures be taken before marketing problems start to pose a serious threat. The following ideas are suggested:

(a) A major outlet for disposing of surplus apples, especially those of relatively low quality, is to channel them to a processing operation. Learning from Israeli experience, local markets in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel could possibly consume large quantities of apple juice and jam. It is therefore strongly recommended that an appropriate organization extend technical and financial assistance to an eligible local group willing to act as the implementing agency for the proposed project.

(b) No Golan Heights apples are currently channelled to external markets, mainly because as yet there has been no need to do so. It is, however, extremely important that trading links between Syrian villages of the Golan Heights and the Arab world are seriously reconsidered. In order to avoid the mistakes and problems such as those encountered in trading regulations relative to the occupied Palestinian territories, it is recommended that Golan Heights farmers be effectively involved in discussions relative to their produce.

E. The funding of development

The channelling of funds to the Golan Heights for developmental purposes touches on extremely sensitive issues and should be handled with great care. Inhabitants of the Golan Heights have succeeded over the past 21 years in following a self-reliant course of development and mobilizing their own resources so skillfully and tenaciously that they had no cause to resort to external funding sources for financial assistance.

Taking the peculiar setting and needs of the Golan Heights into consideration, the following guidelines are suggested in relation to funding from external sources:

1. No grants should be advanced to individual entrepreneurs for developmental purposes. Similarly, credit for seasonal production purposes should not be given a high priority.

2. Loans on concessional terms should be advanced to local groups which are eligible to undertake major developmental projects, provided that they agree not to pursue excessively profit-oriented policies.

3. Grants should be sought to finance those public service projects which are not likely to be sponsored by Israeli authorities, especially in the areas of education and health.

F. Organizational guidelines

The implementation of recommended developments will have to be based on a solid understanding of some of the fundamental overriding realities. It is clear, to begin with, that the Israeli authorities will try to obstruct those projects which they view as having underlying antagonistic political motives

and funded by what they might describe as hostile sources. It is therefore essential that projects be identified and implemented on a low key and as far as possible without provoking needless confrontations with the Israeli authorities.

Notwithstanding the previous guidelines, those NGOs interested in assisting Syrian inhabitants of the Golan Heights will have to accommodate a different set of reservations expressed by local experts. Most importantly, NGOs interested in operating in the Golan Heights should not succumb to pressure calling for "co-ordination" with the relevant Israeli authorities. In addition to the dangers of directing aid to the wrong projects and beneficiaries, this kind of co-ordination will inevitably provoke an adverse reaction on the part of the population relative to donor NGOs.

Embarking on a course of action which accommodates conflicting views is certainly very difficult and may lead to unforeseen problems. Nevertheless, the earlier experience in the occupied Palestinian territories, and even in the Golan Heights itself, suggests that there might be common ground between all sides concerned which will permit NGOs that do their homework correctly to assume a useful role in helping the inhabitants of the five Syrian villages.

