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ISRAEL

GOLAN HEIGHTS ANNEXATION PROPOSAL VIEWED

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[Article by Yoram Hamizrahi: "The Golan in the Shadow of the Threat"]

[Text] "If Israel does not annex the Golan Heights now, precisely because of security and the political warmup in the region, it will be bad; enemies of the state will raise their heads even more," Mr Makhsin abu-Salah, chairman of the Mis'ada Local Council, said to me. The man who served 2 1/2 years in the Syrian Army ("I was a clerk in the recruitment office in Latakiya") today carries in his pocket an Israeli identity card since in these insane days of practically a gathering of the storm, he can find fewer people who openly share his political perceptions and opinions and he can recount the idiosyncrasy and nervousness of the public opposing Israel and, in particular, among youth who are increasingly assembling and discussing the new situation.

The Druzes in the Golan Heights well remember the Yom Kippur War which descended on them like a bolt out of the blue, "when they suddenly saw the Syrian troops and tanks and understood that nothing is secure," a local cab driver, who joined the calm dialogue said to me as he leaned on the fender of his red Mercedes, adding that "since then they have understood that the Syrians can return and so they are not as secure; now there are those who are afraid and others who hope that this is the true situation!" Mr abu-Salah, of medium height, curly-haired, mustachioed, can tell of threatening letters which he received recently and also about the raising of the Syrian white, red and black flag over the schoolhouse of the neighboring village of Majdal Shemes.

The road which winds between Mis'ada and Majdal Shemes passes over greening apple orchards. Farmers in white head coverings and youth in parkas, or reticent women walking along in small groups seem to be dodging among the trees. A few are actually working beside the separation fence opposite the narrow blacktop road leading to Syria. The view includes a tin hut which once a week serves as a site for family meetings, an outpost which has been whitewashed and beside which stands a soldier in a blue helmet, and a bit further a concrete structure above which there is the flag of Syria, and an even taller Syrian observation post and bunker. The post and the flag are also visible from the settlements of Majdal Shemes as a constant reminder to the 15,000 Druzes of the Golan, while within the fence there is the UN and the political reality--a divided and confused world, silent and cautious people torn between two loyalties. Above a few of the village houses flies a blue-white flag, and in the sky one sees a flight of slow, lazy storks. Still higher, one can see a

pair of the long, thickening entrails of fighter planes, and on the sides of the Hermon, isolated and last spots of frost or snow, clusters of clouds and the faraway and mysterious forest of antennas.

At the bend in the road, a monument commemorating several of the fallen of the Golan Brigade, a palm of a hand hewn in stone carrying at each finger joint a name of the fallen. Memorial Day is still close. At the side of the monument, a soot-covered helmet and flag of an orphan. On the road, a military vehicle loaded with young soldiers singing with parched throats. It's cold in the Golan, and the soldiers are clad in parkas or gray, cold-weather coveralls. On the main road, one can at times see, also, UN and diplomatic vehicles whose passengers sit tensely with their eyes darting in all directions, and many foreign television crews, cameras curious and at the ready. Somewhere at the side of the road tanks are rolling, there are brown dense clouds of smoke, the noise of pounding axles and the clatter of chains. The delicate antennas quiver and shake. The young boys in the turrets appear large and confident beneath their heavy helmets; a young officer leaps forth from his fast-moving jeep, "No pictures! This isn't a circus." While the man seeks to identify the photographers on the road, actually among the heavy and thundering tanks, a busload of tourists goes by and after that another bus loaded with children. A tour guide leans down from the window and pours forth explanations in a stream. The officer capitulates; "If the tourists are taking pictures, who am I to chase you away? In any case, I've noted the names. The censor will deal with the matter."

A large, modern tractor goes by in the adjacent field and someone is inspecting the irrigation system and the sprinklers. Here, too, one sees large flights of storks and pelicans. The noise of the armor rolling in routine security maneuver drives away the birds, who disappear beyond the horizon.

Now one can see Kuneitra, a phantom city were here and there thrust toward the skys from among the ruins, bare towers of mosques or a church, gray and damaged as the bones of a corpse, in addition mounds of earth, black stone barriers, and everywhere flags of the UN are seen. Near the apple orchards of the Ayn-Zivan kibbutz we met Herbert Kuschnitz, a corporal from Vienna, lean, pale-faced, bespectacled and appearing somewhat ludicrous beneath his blue helmet, with a modern Austrian storm-rifle in his hands; "It won't do me any good if everything bursts into flames." A UN flag waves in the light breeze and the protruding communications instrument spews forth words in German. Opposite and beyond the fence the Syrian barrier is visible. A few of the soldiers are engaged in digging a pit and in cleanup chores, and on the road a heavy military lorry, loaded with earth, is parked. From time to time a group of Syrian hikers or press people approach the barrier to look out toward our side.

From afar the sounds of dull artillery fire reach us. "Practice," someone decides. These days it is unpleasant to hear the sound of firing and even the farmers in the field listen attentively. At the entrance to Katzrin an armored troop vehicle is parked, and on its deck children are playing with the soldiers who happened upon the place. The city still displays the Independence Day decorations on its clean streets with many privately owned vehicles, also visible are young vegetable patches and tender, low trees. "Just so a confrontation doesn't come," a lady who was angry at the sight of the camera crews and correspondents said to us. "These are like ravens gathering for a meal!" At the offices of the local council there is business as usual. Mr Sami Bar-Lev, head of the council strokes his beard, his narrow features bronzed; "Concerned but not afraid," he says. In the adjacent building the heads of the

- The Revolutionary Role of Remembrance and the Reminders, Husayniya-yi Irshad, Shahrivar 1351/1972.

A Revolution in Values, lecture at the University of Tehran.

Science or the New Scholasticism, lecture at the Faculty of Medicine, Tehran.

regional council and the activists of the Committee of Golan Settlements are sitting. Mr Shimon Shabess of Afik Kibbutz, bearded and energetic, again notes the importance of the Golan Heights. "We are concerned about the situation in Lebanon, but also we remember well the War of Attrition. Up to 1974 we were still living in shelters. We are confident in ourselves and have confidence in the IDF but despite this we are concerned."

On the Golan Heights one does not dare call a child by name. Those aware of what is happening listen to the news and also interpret it on an individual basis, but speak circuitously. There is "worry, fear, suspicion." The word war 's almost never mentioned and when needed they prefer to use less threatening words such as "confrontation or escalation," anything, just not war, not even a war of attrition. A week after Memorial Day they remember well the other possibility. At the sides of the Golan Road there are many small or large monuments, names, hundreds of names, and here and there even iron skeletons.

As the lead for the April issue of ERETZ HAGOLAN, the organ of the Committee of Golan Settlements, one member wrote an article with the headline "Fear and Overflowing" and the member says the following, among other things:

"The order to fire from Damascus was given to the big guns in Lebanon and not to the big guns on the Golan Heights, not because the Syrians love us more than they love the Lebanese, it's simply that we're stronger, that we're sitting higher up and we can threaten Damascus."

The radio spews forth up-to-the-minute information, accurate details of the travels of Phillip Habib, the firing on the port of Joniah, quotations from the various and weird radio stations, identified or unidentified spokesmen of Mr Begin or his opponent Mr Peres. "How old are you?" someone asks one of the young armored corps personnel who comes down from his tank turret. "Nineteen years old," comes the answer. "So, you were 11 when I did battle here from these very heights in 1973, come let us pray that you will be privileged to be demobilized without a similar experience."

It's cool at the Golan. Flocks of sheep or cattle graze. Donkeys loaded with firewood pass. Tractors plowing beside observation posts and tourists riding air-conditioned buses cross this strange region, pass between a wild and enchanting landscape with tools of destruction and the sounds of alertness. Spring is nearing a close and someone reminds me that once, not many years ago, we used to talk about an "electric summer."