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14 SETTLEMENTS FINANCED Canada's stake in the Galilee

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Abstract (Abstract):

Ishi Mimon, a robust, dimpled-cheeked man from the Galilee town of Safad, plans to move his young family soon to Calamit, now under construction, because he believes "the Galilee should have a Jewish majority." He was one of the high school students injured in the 1974 Ma'alot massacre in which 22 young Israeli Jews were killed by Palestinian terrorists from Lebanon. "I've always thought we must settle the Galilee and the attack reinforced my ideas." Dalia Tshuva, the...

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14 SETTLEMENTS FINANCED Canada's stake in the Galilee

Saturday, June 27, 1981

JOHN GODDARD

DEIR HANNA, Israel -- BY JOHN GODDARD Mr. Goddard is a freelance writer living in Montreal.

DEIR HANNA, Israel A S IF PERFORMING a primitive spring ritual, Arab peasants of this village in Upper Galilee dance hip-to-hip in a snaky chorus line around the central square, chanting and shouting tributes to the land.

Village chieftains, old women in print dresses and young men and women in tight jeans and T-shirts all join the line, clapping in unison while children race between them and underfoot.

It is the Day of the Land, a holiday marked annually in Arab villages throughout the Galilee, a region in northern Israel of stony hills and fertile valleys where Jesus of Nazareth once roamed preaching good will. The holiday goes back only six years, though, and the land being celebrated is land Israeli Arabs say they have lost and are losing to Israeli Jews. "The Government is building Jewish settlements on our land, surrounding us and turning our villages into ghettos," said Khateeb Raja, mayor of Deir Hanna.

The settlements he refers to are being financed mostly by Canadians through the Jewish National Fund of Canada. Fourteen settlements, each a cluster of concrete bungalows on a desolate hilltop, have been built in a large section of the Galilee dubbed Galil Canada by the JNF in Israel. Most donors are Jewish, but a Pentecostal congregation in Vancouver, the Glad Tidings Temple, has given \$1-million. "The campaign has been a great success so far," said Michael Yarosky, executive vice-president of the JNF of Canada, who added that he hopes to raise \$35-million for Galil Canada during the 1980s. Mr. Yarosky maintained that Jews are not taking land from Arabs but that Arabs are taking land from Jews. "Huge areas are being encroached upon (by Arab farmers)," he said at his sixth-floor office overlooking Sherbrooke Street in Montreal.

His assertion conforms to that of the Israeli Government, which initiated the settlement program after appealing for funds from JNF organizations in Canada and several other countries.

To understand the discrepancy between what Mr. Yarosky said and what Deir Hanna villagers say, one must go back at least to 1948, when Israel was created. The Galilee then was mostly Arab and remains so - the population being roughly 70 per cent Arab to 30 per cent Jewish. What the Arabs call land confiscations began soon after the 1948 war, when the Israeli army cleared Israel's border areas of Arab villages for what it called "security reasons." Estimates vary as to how many villages were razed, but Sabri Jiryis, the most authoritative Arab scholar on the subject, put the number at 374 in his book, *The Arabs in Israel*.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Israel passed a series of land laws. One law put the onus on the Arab farmer

either to prove the land was his or forfeit it to the state, a law the Arabs say took advantage of Islam's informal land-tenure rules. Other laws, the Arabs say, were simply tricks to take as much land as possible. For example, the army would invoke a law to fence off a field for military training and later the Government would claim the land under another law that said any land left fallow for an extended period becomes state land.

These and other laws enabled Israel's JNF, on behalf of the state, to acquire most of the Galilee from Arab farmers for use "directly or indirectly beneficial to persons of Jewish religion, race or origin," to quote the JNF's charter. By this definition, state land is Jewish land, though 500,000 citizens of the state are Arabs.

But Jewish control of the land was on paper only. Many Arabs continued to farm land that legally had become state property. Nobody was around to stop them. The Government made plans to populate the area with Jews, but the program gave way to other priorities of the fledgling country.

Not until three years ago did the Government turn its attention again to the Galilee, this time with a novel idea - to build a network of mini- settlements, called mitzpim in Hebrew, or look-out posts. "The Government decided to stop the wholesale plunder (by Israeli Arabs) of state lands," said Akiva Einis, an Israeli who oversees JNF of Canada projects from his Jerusalem office. "The settlements are all on mountain tops and look out over large areas of land. If an Arab squatter takes a plow onto land that is not his, the settlers lodge a complaint with the police." The Government had no problem finding idealistic young pioneers for the new settlements.

Ishi Mimon, a robust, dimpled-cheeked man from the Galilee town of Safad, plans to move his young family soon to Calamit, now under construction, because he believes "the Galilee should have a Jewish majority." He was one of the high school students injured in the 1974 Ma'alot massacre in which 22 young Israeli Jews were killed by Palestinian terrorists from Lebanon. "I've always thought we must settle the Galilee and the attack reinforced my ideas." Dalia Tshuva, the 20-year-old chief executive of Tafahot settlement, said she grew up in a Jewish farming community in the Galilee and wanted to stay in the area after leaving home. "Also, I wished to respond to the appeal to make the Galilee Jewish." Hildy Gal, a U.S.-born Israeli, gives two reasons for moving to Moran, one of the first new Galilee settlements, built three years ago. "Here we have control over our own lives. We decide what our kids learn or don't learn . . . Also, if we weren't here, this place would be one big olive orchard. All this land is basically up for grabs, but we've made known the fact that we're here." Israeli officials emphasize that the settlers are moving onto state land only, but Arab villagers are convinced the Government has designs on all the land.

When Tawfiz Daggash, Deir Hanna's deputy mayor, was shown the brochure the JNF of Canada sends potential donors, he was quick to spot the paragraph saying, "The JNF will clear and reclaim tens of thousands of dunam of land near the settlements for agriculture." Deir Hanna villagers are particularly sensitive because six years ago the army declared most of Deir Hanna's farmland a military area and stopped farmers from going to their fields. The move set off the first Day of the Land protest, which the army put down by shooting six area villagers dead and wounding scores more, 22 of them from Deir Hanna.

Most dispossessed farmers now commute daily to jobs in Tiberias, Haifa and Tel Aviv - the rule on the new settlements is not to hire Arabs - so most Galilee villages have been converted from farming communities to what the Arabs call ghettos of cheap labor. "Deir Hanna used to be 80 per cent farmers and 20 per cent merchants," said Mr. Daggash. "Now it is 20 per cent farmers and 80 per cent merchants and workers." Prime Minister Menachem Begin's adviser on Arab affairs, Benyamin Gur Arye, said the British used the valley in question as a military training ground before 1948 and the fields are needed again for that purpose now that Israel has given back the Sinai Desert to Egypt, as agreed at Camp David.

He and other Israeli officials denied they intend to turn the valley over to Jewish settlers, but Rachel Paltinovitch, chief executive of Lotem settlement, across the valley from Deir Hanna, said the settlers of Lotem expect some day to farm the valley.

There is a levelled area on the hillside at Lotem, overlooking the contested valley. A stone wall and monument have been erected there, supporting hundreds of small plaques etched with names and home towns of

Canadians who have contributed money to the Galilee settlements. You can see the clearing from Deir Hanna. Mr. Daggash shook his head at the sight and said, "I want to say to the people of Canada that every dollar they contribute is helping the Israeli Government in its attempt to destroy the Arab people here."

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