

Dossier on Canada Park

Obsequious Canadian Govt's Complicity in a War Crime



Canada Park

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From the editors of the Shunpiking Magazine

Table of Content

Canada Park: Canadian Complicity in a War Crime	5
THE ROAD TO EMMAUS	9
OUTRAGE AT EMWAS:	13
WIPED OFF THE MAP	17
Text of the supplication sent out by the Jewish National Fund of Canada.....	23

Canada Park: Canadian Complicity in a War Crime

By Dr. Ismail Zayid

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Here is our house", says Ibrahim Elsheikh, the 75-year-old mukhtar (village headman) of Imwas (Emmaus), pointing to the rubble of his home which stood there until June 1967, when Israel invaded and occupied Sinai, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights. Thousands of villagers, from Imwas, Yalu and Beit Nuba-my own hometown-still cry remembering their homes that stood there until Israel erased them from the face of The Holy Land, when they were systematically dynamited and bulldozed. In Beit Nuba alone, 18 old or disabled men, who were unable or unwilling to leave their homes instantly, were buried under the rubble.

No fighting took place in these villages when they were occupied in the early hours of June 6, 1967. The three villages were once part of what was called the Latrun salient. Over 10,000 people lived there; they had schools, mosques, agricultural land and many centuries of

history. It was in Imwas (Emmaus) where Christians believe that Jesus Christ first appeared after the Crucifixion.

The destruction of these villages was witnessed and described by the Israeli journalist Amos Kenan, who was a reserve soldier in the occupying force in Beit Nuba. He gave this account to the Israeli newspaper Ha'Olam Hazeh, which was prohibited by the censor from publishing it. It was sent to all members of the Knesset, and to the Prime Minister and Defence minister, but no response was received.

"The unit commander told us that it had been decided to blow up three villages in our sector; they were Beit Nuba, Imwas and Yalu ... We were told to block the entrances of the villages and prevent inhabitants [from] returning The order was to shoot over their heads and tell them not to enter the village.

"Beit Nuba is built of fine quarry stones; some of the houses are magnificent. Every house is surrounded by an orchard, olive trees, apricots, vines and presses. They are well kept. Among the trees, there are carefully tended

vegetable beds.

"At noon the first bulldozer arrived and pulled down the first house at the edge of the village. Within ten minutes the house was turned into rubble. The

olive trees and cypresses were all uprooted. After the destruction of three houses, the first refugee column arrived from the direction of Ramallah. We did not fire in the air. There were old people who could hardly walk, murmuring old women, mothers carrying babies, small children. The children wept and asked for water. They all carried white flags.

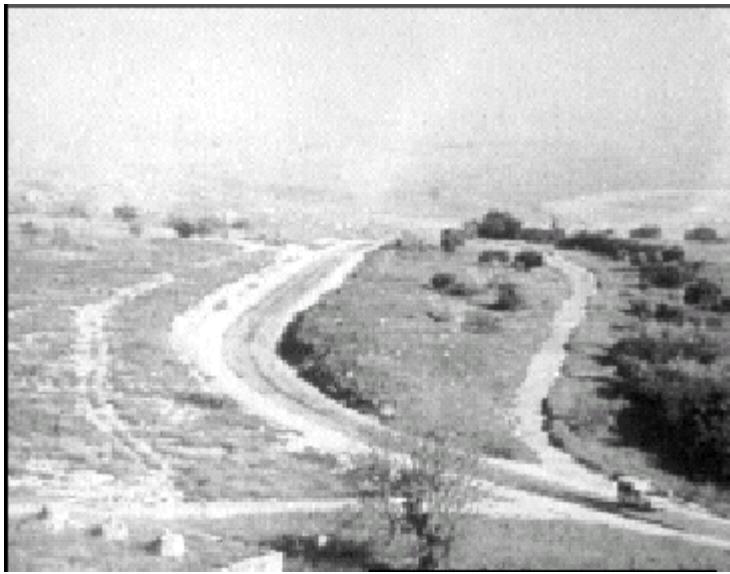
"We told them to go to Beit Sira. They told us they had been driven out. They had been wandering like this for four days, without food, some dying on the road. They asked to return to their village ... Some had a goat, a lamb, a donkey or a camel. A father ground wheat by hand to feed his four children ... The children cried. Some of our soldiers started crying too.

We went to fetch the Arabs some water. We stopped a car with a major, two captains and a woman ... We asked the officers why these refugees were sent from one place to another and driven out of everywhere. They told us that this was good for them, they should go. 'Moreover', said the officers, 'what do we care about the Arabs anyway?'

"We drove them out. They go on wandering like lost cattle. The weak die. Our unit was outraged. The refugees gnashed their teeth when they saw the bulldozers pull down the trees. None of us understood how Jews could behave like this. No one understood why these fellaheen [villagers] shouldn't be allowed to take blankets and some food.

"The chickens and doves were buried in the rubble. The fields were turned into wasteland in front of our eyes. The children who went crying on the road will be fedayeen [freedom fighters.] in nineteen years, in the next round. Thus we have lost the victory." (From Israel Imperial News, March 1968.)





Uri Avneri, then a Knesset member, described the destruction of these villages as a definite war crime. This was carried out on the direct orders of Yitzhak Rabin, then Chief of Staff of Israel's armed forces. These acts are in direct violation of The Fourth Geneva Convention, 1949, to which Israel is a signatory. Article 53 of the convention states: "Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the state, or to other public authorities or social or cooperative organizations is prohibited".

It is now difficult to spot the ruins and the rubble. Today there stands on the spot the infamy called "Canada Park", with picnic areas for Israelis, built with Canadian tax-deductible dollars provided by the Canadian Jewish National Fund (JNF).

It was in 1973 that Bernard Bloomfield of Montreal, then President of the JNF of Canada, spearheaded a campaign among the Canadian Jewish community to raise \$15 million to establish Canada Park, so as to provide a picnic area accessible to Israelis from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

At the entrance of Canada Park, just off John Diefenbaker Parkway (opened by Diefenbaker himself in 1975), is a sign

that reads: "Welcome to Canada Park in Ayalon Valley-a project of the Jewish National Fund of Canada."

The JNF, responsible for the upkeep of the park, has removed all signs of the villages and their inhabitants from the area. It would seem that only the Canadian donors are worthy of being remembered; their names are engraved in the bronze plaques which cover an entire wall. Interestingly, these donors are not directly informed that the park is built on the site of the demolished villages. The Director of the American JNF stated that, "It is a delicate

situation, and one cannot expect an institution [such as the Canadian JNF] which gathers money from abroad, to publicise the issue [of the demolition of these villages]." ("Canada Park: A Case Study," by Ehud Meltz and Michal Selah, Kol Hair, Aug. 31, 1984.)

The glossy guidebook, published by the JNF of Canada, has an entire page devoted to the history of the area, including the biblical, Roman, Crusader and British periods, but has no mention of these villages or their destruction. Another step in the obliteration of the villages from memory can be seen in their absence from Israeli maps.

As a new Canadian, my personal pain was compounded when I read on Dec. 4, 1978, in our local newspaper, The Halifax Herald, that Peter Herschorn, a prominent Halifax businessman and past chairman of the Atlantic branch of the JNF, was honored by the JNF for his humanitarian work and "choosing the right goodness" in his participation in the building of Canada Park. The Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, the Premier of N.S. and the Mayor of Halifax were in attendance and offered their greetings. I was mortified that political leaders in my new country, Canada, would consider the erection of



recreation centres on the site of ruins of criminally demolished peaceful villages, illegally occupied, as a humanitarian act.

Canada continuously brags about its reputation for upholding the UN Charter, international law and human rights, yet allows its taxpayers' dollars to sponsor such a war crime. Over many years, I have written repeatedly-supported by some honourable politicians like Senator Heath Macquarrie and Mr. R.A. Corbett, MP-to successive Revenue Canada

Ministers, expressing concern about this, and receiving only vague unhelpful answers.

Father Louis, who worked at the Latrun Franciscan Monastery for 40 years, said, "Every time I go by Canada Park, I still get angry. Why does the Canadian government allow it to be called Canada Park? It is built on the ruins of people's homes".

Every Canadian should be asking: why should our country's name be associated with this infamy?

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THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

BY MICHAEL ADAMS

THERE WAS no reason for me to suspect, as we drove down through the hills northwest of Jerusalem on a crisp January morning in 1968, that my life would never be quite the same again.

My companion was a Palestinian woman, middle-aged and taciturn, who had lived all her life in Jerusalem. She had offered to drive me to the airport at the end of two crowded weeks I had spent investigating conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, which the Israelis had occupied six months earlier. We must make an early start, she had said; there was something she wanted to show me, something...exceptional. She would say no more; and since much that I had seen and heard in those two weeks was already, by any reasonable standard, exceptional, there was something ominous about the silence that fell between us.

She didn't take the main road to the airport, but a little country road which wound its way out to the hills, rejoining the main highway close by the Trappist monastery of Latrun. As we came down into the plain, she asked me what I could see ahead. Nothing in particular, I said, puzzled. All about us was empty farmland; the soil looked rich, in contrast to the bare hills behind us. But whereas in the hills there had been small villages, here in the fertile plain there was no sign of human habitation.

Presently we overtook three women in the richly embroidered dresses of Palestinian villagers, carrying baskets on their heads. We stopped to ask where they were going. "To Beit Nuba," one of them said, "to gather sticks." And then, disconcertingly, they began in unison to cry.

For a few moments, while my companion spoke gently with them in Arabic, I stood uncomfortably aside. When we drove on, she explained that they were from Beit Nuba, one of three villages that had stood where, just below us, the hills ran out into the plain. The villages had been there for longer than anyone could remember and their inhabitants had lived comfortably on the produce of the rich soil. But since 1948 they had been right up against the border with the new state of Israel; and in the wake of their lightning victory in June 1967, the Israelis had brought in bulldozers and destroyed all three villages. They had made no provision for the inhabitants, about 9,000 Palestinians, but simply drove them off, young and old alike, to wander over the stony hillsides in the June heat. And when some of them returned, exhausted, saying they had been told by another detachment of Israelis that they could go back to their homes, the soldiers drove them away again, while the bulldozers pulled down their houses and uprooted their orchards.

Some of these details I learnt later, from an account written by one of the Israeli soldiers who took part in the destruction of Beit Nuba. He happened to be a journalist who was doing his military service as a reservist and was posted to the Latrun area. He didn't write his account for publication, but to bring to the attention of the civil authorities in Israel what he saw as a tragedy which would have fateful consequences. He sent a copy of it to every member of the Knesset. There was no response, and there the matter might have ended but for a Palestinian poet, Fawzy al-Asmar, who had got hold of a copy which he translated and arranged for it to be published abroad.

The soldier's name was Amos Keinan and his account was vivid and very moving, animated as it was by a lively indignation at what he called "this idiotic concept of collective punishment". He told of the consternation of the Israeli soldiers as the villagers, "old people who could hardly walk, mothers carrying babies, small children who wept and asked for water", pleaded to be allowed to return to their homes. But, he went on, "the order was to shoot over their heads and tell them not to enter the village".

The Israeli soldiers, Keinan wrote, were "outraged", so much so that their officer went off to headquarters to see if there was some mistake. When he came back, he said: "There were no orders in writing, simply, that they were to be driven out." The soldiers didn't like it, but they did as they were told - so thoroughly, in fact, that, as Keinan recorded: "Chickens and doves were buried in the rubble. The fields were turned into wasteland before our eyes. The children who went crying on the road will be *fedayin* in the next round. Thus we have lost the victory."

When my companion and I came to Beit Nuba six months after Keinan, much had changed. Most significantly, the rubble had disappeared. It had taken the Israelis six months to clear it, in great secrecy; while relays of volunteers were engaged in this macabre task, the authorities closed the approach road to Latrun. When we came there on that January morning in 1968, the road had just been reopened.

Without a guide, I should probably have driven straight through without realising that there had been villages here at all. The demolition squads had been thorough. But when we stopped

the car and got out to look, there were plenty of tell-tale signs; it isn't easy, even in six months, to wipe out a thousand years of history without leaving a trace. There were a few pieces of masonry, a broken tile, a twisted rod of steel from some concrete extension and - a sure sign that people had once lived here - the cactus hedges, which the Palestinians use to protect their gardens and orchards against marauders, were starting to grow back. They are very hard to eradicate.

After Beit Nuba, on the other side of the road, was its sister village of Yalu, which had suffered the same fate and where a group of prefabricated huts on a ridge above the site of the village gave an indication that the Israelis were planning to establish a settlement here. Beyond Yalu the road swung off to the right towards the monastery of Latrun and beside it the third of these villages in what strategists called the "Latrun salient", because it jutted out like a finger poked irritatingly into Israel's side. This was the village which the Palestinians called Amwas and which appears in the Gospel of St. Luke as Emmaus, the place where Jesus appeared to two of his followers shortly after the crucifixion.

Amwas presented a quite different picture from Beit Nuba and Yalu. Whereas they had stood in the midst of open farmland so that once the Israelis had blown up the villagers' houses and carted away the stones the site remained open and exposed. Amwas had been situated on sloping ground on both sides of the road steep in places and much of it covered with fruit and olive trees. The Israelis had not uprooted the trees as they had done at Beit Nuba, and they had planted oleanders in the open spaces between them so that when I came to Amwas there was a tangle of old and new vegetation. All this must have made it more difficult to dispose of the evidence of human habitation, and you could still trace in the undergrowth the paving stones of a terrace or the mouth of a disused well - and even find here and there a more personal and poignant

reminder, in the shape of a page from a child's exercise book or a scrap of torn clothing, of the life that, after so many centuries of continuity in this corner of Palestine, had now been stilled, abruptly and forever.

THERE WAS a lot for me to think about as I flew back to London, exchanging the clear sunshine and the cruelty and the stifled protests of the Palestinians for the drizzle and the humdrum, good-natured, self-absorbed preoccupations of the England of Harold Wilson and The Archers.

At the beginning of 1968, when the occupation was only six months old, it was generally assumed - such was Israel's reputation in those days - that the conduct of the army of occupation was scrupulously correct, and even (the word was actually employed by the BBC correspondent and echoed by a few gullible leader-writers) benevolent. The reason for this belief was a simple one: in 1968 no British newspaper retained a correspondent of its own in Israel, depending instead on the services of an Israeli "stringer", a local journalist who earned a little extra money in his spare time. None of them knew anything about the occupied territories or their Palestinian inhabitants. Nor had they any means of finding out about them had they wanted to. They did not speak Arabic and if they tried to communicate with Palestinians they came up against a wall of resentful silence.

Just occasionally, during those early months of the occupation a word or a picture suggested that all was not as it should be. Malcolm Muggeridge wrote of his surprise at seeing, in Jerusalem, an Israeli patrol suddenly grabbing a young Palestinian in the street and hustling him off with a black bag over his head; and David Holden, in a dispatch to The Sunday Times, referred to dark rumours of ill-treatment by the Israelis, but without giving any details. It was this article that had made me decide to take advantage of an invitation to make a series of programmes for the BBC about the state

of mind of the Arab world after the June War, and to see for myself.

From a base in Jerusalem, I travelled for two weeks through the occupied areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, meeting at first with blank suspicion on the part of the subject Palestinians, who had learned to keep their mouths shut in the presence of unidentified strangers. But I had sought the advice of a Palestinian friend in Beirut, one of the many exiles from Jerusalem, a man whose family had played a distinguished part in the life of the city for centuries before the creation of a Jewish state, and who had armed me with a list of names and a scrap of paper bearing a few words in Arabic. With these I found myself passed from hand to hand all through the occupied territories, among people who felt themselves imprisoned and who had almost despaired of re-establishing contact with the outside world. From them I learned the truth about the occupation.

The worst aspect of all was the universal sense that a screen of prejudice had been erected between them and the rest of the world, against which the truth seemed powerless to prevail. I was to discover for myself how effective that screen could be - and what the penalties were for trying to break through it. A series of articles I wrote for The Guardian, which described for the first time in the British Press the methods the Israelis were using to impose their rule (exactly the same methods they are using today to try to suppress the Palestinian intifada), caused a storm of protest from Israel's supporters, with the editor as well as myself coming under violent attack. At first he stood by me, but as the pressure on him intensified, I could feel his support melting away.

There was a warning after he had published four of my articles, of which the first was about Gaza, where the situation was especially bad, and the last about Jerusalem, where the Israelis, defying a vote of 99 to nil at the United Nations, had just expropriated 800 acres

of Arab-owned land on which to build settlements for exclusively Jewish use. The facts were not in doubt and the Israelis did not try to pretend otherwise; but their friends in England set up a great hullabaloo about The Guardian's coverage of the issue and actually went so far as to accuse the editor of anti-Semitism.

On my return to England I had sent The Guardian a long list of people in Jerusalem, other than Palestinians, who could vouch for what I had written. The list included the Anglican Archbishop, senior UN officials, doctors at hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza, representatives of aid agencies and diplomats. The editor never referred to this list and it soon became clear that there was a quite different set of people who were closer at hand and who found it easier to catch his attention.

I could feel the ground slipping away from under me, but it still came as a shock when the editor refused, point blank, to publish my final article, which told of the destruction of Amwas and other villages along the old armistice line between Jordan and Israel. At first I was angry, but not alarmed. I still assumed that whatever the obstacles put in its way, the truth must in the end prevail; that there was a limit to the extent to which unwelcome facts could be kept out of sight, and even erased from the historical record altogether. In the long run this proved to be true, as it always does (and as we are seeing in Eastern Europe today). But in the short run, the Israelis were allowed to achieve their objective. They must have weighed it up and decided it was worth a try.

The Israeli government and whoever in the army command gave the order (not in writing, of course) to destroy the

villages must have thought that it was possible to rearrange both history and geography in this way; that if they carted away the rubble and raked over the ground and planted seedlings where the homes of 9,000 people had been, all of which they did, they would be able to get away with it. Why? Because of the Holocaust, and because Western newspaper editors don't like to be called anti-Semitic, and because of those Israeli stringers in Jerusalem in 1967 who either didn't notice or didn't think it worth reporting to British newspaper readers what was going on 15 or 20 miles away.

And the Israelis might well have got away with it, at least for long enough to put the matter beyond dispute, but for the Israeli soldier who happened to be a journalist with a conscience, and but for the middle-aged Palestinian woman who took it upon herself to drive me to the airport that morning by a roundabout route. As it was, the facts did eventually become known. But it all took time. The article which the editor of The Guardian refused to publish went to and fro in Fleet Street, and I had almost given up hope when The Sunday Times decided to publish it - a full year after the events it described. At about the same time Amos Keinan's account was published in English in Israeli Imperial News, a samizdat-style satirical magazine put out by dissident Israelis. And the editor of The Guardian sent a home reporter, Harold Jackson, to Jerusalem to take into the story about Amwas. Jackson was a good reporter and an honest man; he wrote a moving article and The Guardian ran it in full.

WHAT DIFFERENCE did it make? Not much, on (lie face of it; the villages had gone and not many people would know that they had ever been there. But the

story is not quite ended. A short time ago, out of the blue, there dropped through my letterbox an envelope with a Geneva postmark. Inside there was a leaflet, four pages of it and well printed, with the heading "Association for the Reconstruction of Emmaus" and on the back page were three photographs, taken at 10-yearly intervals from the same spot just outside the village of Amwas.

The first showed Amwas as it was in 1958, with the village houses scattered across the hillsides on either side of the road. The second showed the same hillsides as I had seen them in 1968, with the same road running between them, but bare of houses. And the third picture showed the site in 1978, thickly wooded on both sides of the same curving road and now transformed, thanks to the generosity of the Jewish community in Canada (can they have known what they were paying for?), into a recreation area called Canada Park.

The leaflet explained that a group of Christians in Switzerland had set themselves the objective of rebuilding the village as a symbol of reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis. They had an ally in Jerusalem, in the person of Father Tournay, a distinguished French theologian and former director of the Ecole Biblique, and through him they were in touch with a few of the former inhabitants of Amwas who were still in the area and who longed for the opportunity to rebuild their homes on their ancestral land.

A pious hope, against the backdrop of conflict and repression in the Holy Land in 1991? Maybe - but sooner or later someone has to give reconciliation a chance, and Emmaus seems as good a place as any to make a start.

OUTRAGE AT EMWAS:

What was once an Arab village between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv is now part of a recreation area called Canada Park.

BY JOHN GODDARD

“HERE is the house of Yusef Mustafah Saadeh,” my guide was saying, yet I saw no house at all, just two picnic tables in the middle of a sandy clearing, and a garbage barrel to one side. “And these are his grapes,” he said, descending the crest of the hill to a barren, neglected vine. The whole tour was going this way. Where I saw pine trees and picnic sites, he saw stone houses two storeys high, water cisterns, vegetable gardens, and fruit stalls. We were walking in Canada Park, a recreation ground just off the main highway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

My guide was Haidar Mustafah Ahmad, a seventy-five-year-old Palestinian. I had shown him a brochure that described the park as “a proud tribute to Canada and to the Canadian Jewish Community whose vision and foresight helped transform a barren stretch of land into a major national recreational area for the people of Israel.” Ahmad was bent on showing me that the park is, in the Palestinian view, a disgrace to Canada because part of it is built not on barren land, but on the ruins of the village of Emwas, where he was born.

The site of the developed area of the park is splendid. On a slope overlooking the fertile Ayalon Valley are several picnic areas, a playground with slides and monkey-bars, and a network of stone footpaths leading to the ruins of a Roman bathhouse and the remains of ancient Emmaus, where Jesus first appeared after the crucifixion. Part (**In fact all .. publishers**) of the park is in former Jordanian territory, occupied by Israel since 1967. The rest is spread over

6,500 acres of hills, mostly in Israel proper (**That is incorrect .. publishers**), covered in pine forests and bisected by a winding hiking trail - the John G. Diefenbaker Parkway, officially opened by Diefenbaker himself in 1975.

Ahmad led me through the picnic grounds, pointing out clusters of cactus plants yielding sweet prickly pears, plants traditionally used as fences in Arab villages. We inspected the park’s walkways and retaining walls, finding some new stones but others old and poorly cut for the purpose. “The stones of the houses of Emwas,” Ahmad said through our interpreter. On one wall were hundreds of strips of metal arranged like miniature ladders against the stone, each engraved with a person’s name and the name of a city in Canada. A map given to me by the Jewish National Fund in Jerusalem identified the wall as the Commemorations Centre, dedicated to the Canadians who had contributed \$15 million toward the building of the park

But what of the village of Emwas? How had it disappeared? To find out, I spent a few weeks talking to Arabs and Jews involved in the events that led to the creation of Canada Park

IN THE early morning of June 6, 1967, the second day of the Six Day War, the villagers of Emwas, Yalu, and Beit Nuba heard the shooting. “There was a Jordanian army outpost nearby but the soldiers told us, ‘We’re leaving, defend yourselves,’” recalls Ibrahim Isa Zayyad a former Yalu merchant, now a janitor at Kalandia refugee camp near Jerusalem and self-appointed archivist

of Yalu. “About 3 a.m. we saw lights from Israeli tanks. They fired on the village and we raised white flags. At 5 or 6 a.m. the Israelis entered the village and called us together. Then they fired their guns into the air, telling us to flee for our lives to Amman.”

A Swedish UN envoy, Nils Goran Gussing, filed a similar report a week later: “According to accounts from displaced persons, the Israel forces entered the three villages...at 4:30 a.m. on 6 June and called the inhabitants to assemble, after which they were ordered under threat to leave in the [easterly] direction of Ramallah.”

Some villagers left their houses in night-clothes, some without shoes - and certainly without food or water - for what turned out to be a two-day walk. Zayyad says one Yalu woman left her house with six children but was unable to take her seventh, an infant. “She wasn’t allowed back to get it”

Most of the people were obliged to go cross-country rather than by road, over stony hills terraced with vineyards and dotted with olive trees, a landscape charming to the eye but hard on the foot. The 10,000 villagers pressed on, and after two days arrived at Ramallah, the largest Arab population centre in the area, aside from Jerusalem to the south. The war ended three days later, and villagers heard on the radio and from loudspeakers mounted on Israeli jeeps that everyone was to return home. They went back, again on foot. But at the approach to the villages, they were stopped. Amos Kenan, an Israeli journalist, was then a forty-year-old reserve soldier assigned to keep

villagers out of Beit Nuba. The task upset him. and he tried to have the orders reversed

by writing a quick report to the Knesset. His 1,200-word testimony tells not only of the suffering of the Arabs but also of the anguish felt by the Israeli soldiers:

“There were old men hardly able to walk, old women mumbling to themselves, babies in their mother’s arms, small children weeping, begging for water They said some had perished on the way.... The children wept and some of our soldiers wept too....

“Our platoon commander decided to go to headquarters to find out whether there were any written orders as to what should be done with them He came back and said there was no written order, we were to drive them away. Like lost sheep they went on wandering along the roads. The exhausted were beyond rescuing....

“The soldiers grumbled ... At night we stayed on to guard the bulldozers, but the entire battalion was seething with anger; most of them did not want to do the job. In the morning we were transferred to another spot.” By the time Kenan’s testimony was read in the Knesset, the villages were gone.

DURING one of my visits to Canada j Park I met a man sitting on top of a picnic table, fingering a string of yellow worry beads as he stared out at the valley, farmed now by a West Bank Jewish settlement. “I’m sitting here meditating on how it all happened,” he said, after I opened the conversation. He was born in Emwas but he left in 1956, at age ten, when his family moved to Jordan. This was his first trip back to his boyhood home. “I know this isn’t a real cemetery,” he said. “But it feels like one.”

Ahmad had told me seventeen old women and one old man who were too feeble to flee the village had gathered in the house of Hagar Khalil, and were

bulldozed with the village. Every villager I talked to told me similarly grisly stories of people who had either been shot by the soldiers or bulldozed in the rubble. I walked to the site where Ahmad said Hagar Khalil’s house once stood, near the entrance of the park where a large sign announces: “Canada Park A Project of the Jewish National Fund of Canada.” From the sinking of the ground and the broken stones lying around, it was evident that a house had once stood there. I spoke to Ahmad again.

“How do you know eighteen people went to one house and were buried alive?”

“Did you see it happen?” “No. I was still in Ramallah.” “How did you first hear of it?”

“One of the women who died was the wife of the brother of my wife. She told us when we left the village, ‘I’m going to stay with Hagar; because others were doing the same. We haven’t found a trace of any of those we knew to be inside this house.’”

“Can you name the eighteen?” I asked. He named eleven right off.

I called on Amos Kenan in Tel Aviv. He received me in a room at the top of a narrow spiral staircase that would like a fire-escape from the kitchen. “Blah, blah,” he said when I told him the story of the eighteen. “When there is war there is blah, blah. Enough damage is done in war without the lies afterwards.” He said he had seen soldiers from his unit check the houses, bringing out a wounded Egyptian and several old people. He also said he spent most of his time on the outskirts, keeping the villagers back.

I continued to meet villagers with atrocity stories.

“How do you know these things happened?” I asked Dr. Moussa Abu Ghosh, a native of Emwas who now practises in Ramallah.

“In spite of all the difficulties, some of the younger people managed to infiltrate back to their homes to pick up some belongings, and when they dug into the rubble, some found bodies;” he said. “A relative of mine was found this way - Hasan Shukri, the son of my cousin. He was nineteen, an invalid, paralyzed from polio. They found his wheelchair outside and found his body underneath his house.”

A French monk from the Latrun monastery next to Canada Park Michel Khoury, said he went to Emwas two weeks after the war to sift through the rubble for bodies. The monks had close relations with the village because the villagers worked the monastery’s vineyards and wine-cellar.

“I was in charge of the poor people of Emwas,” the monk said. “Two old blind women, sisters named Hadiéh and Fatmeh Hamden, used to eat lunch here every day. After the war their nephew came to me and said he thought they were buried under a house. It was a Saturday, and we went to where the house was. Israeli soldiers came and told us to leave, but I smelled the odour.”

“What odour?”

“I smelled the bodies under the ruins.”

I began asking people to write down names of those who died. They usually remembered two or three, almost always relatives. The lists sometimes had names in common. In all, I collected thirty-nine names of people said to have been killed in the villages, seventeen from Emwas, eleven from Beit Nuba, and eleven from Yalu.

How could as many as three dozen villagers, most of them old or invalid. be killed without anyone hearing about it for fourteen years?

“Who was listening?” said Ismail Zayid, a refugee from Beit Nuba, when I phoned him on my return to Canada. He now teaches at Dalhousie Medical School in Halifax. “Whom were we

supposed to tell? Even today when I tell how my village was destroyed and how people were killed there, nobody believes me.”

The Palestinians had no voice in 1967, a predicament that led some to hijack airplanes and commit other acts of terrorism. Besides, a war had just been fought. Canada and other Western countries were elated by Israel’s victory. If there was concern afterwards, it was over East Jerusalem and other issues of greater international consequence than Emwas, Yalu, and Beit Nuba.

THE ISRAELI government gives two explanations for the destruction of the villages. One is that the villagers were part of an enemy population and deserved to be treated as belligerents. The other is that the events took place in heavy fighting during the war.

The first explanation comes from Moshe Dayan, then Israel’s defence minister, who said in a speech to the Knesset on June 21, 1967, while the last few houses were being destroyed: “The inhabitants of the West Bank were not an objective, neutral population in this war, but part of the Kingdom of Jordan and of the deployment of those forces that began warfare against Israel The civilians in the various villages and their families were partners to this war; the cannons which fired on Lod airport and Tel Aviv were stationed in these villages. They were not fired from Transjordan.... I would be much happier if I could come here and say that the Jordanian Legion forces carried on this war and the West Bank inhabitants did whatever they did under coercion or remained neutral; but it was not so.”

The second explanation has become the standard one, summed up by M. H. Sharon, then Israeli press counsellor in London, in a letter to the London Sunday Times in June, 1968 “These villages suffered heavy damage during the June war and its immediate aftermath, when our troops engaged two Egyptian commando units which had established themselves there and

continued fighting after the ceasefire.” Yet eyewitness accounts from both sides seem to agree that the Israelis met no resistance, and that the houses were destroyed one by one after the war.

There is a good reason why Israeli generals wanted the villages wiped out : their location. The villages were part of what is called the Latrun salient, a pocket-shaped piece of land jutting into Israel and commanding the hills at the entrance to the main corridor to Jerusalem. Jewish forces tried to take the heights in the 1948 war, the war in which Israel was created, but lost the campaign at enormous cost. “Latrun was Israel’s nightmare,” said Mira Meir, the general secretary of Kibbutz Nachshon opposite Canada Park “It was called the Latrun monster, the site of very bad battles in 1948 and a synonym for something unconquered.”

When the war broke out in 1967, the Israeli army was determined not only to neutralize Latrun but to make it part of Israel, said Uri Avnery, a long-time Israeli member of parliament known for his criticism of Israel’s treatment of the Arabs. “The Israeli mentality is that you change boundaries by changing populations,” Avnery told me. “The idea was, let’s get rid of the Arabs before we get to the negotiation table.” (Nobody at the time predicted Israel would hold on indefinitely to the Arab territories overrun in the war.) “Of course, what happened at Latrun is manifestly illegal. This was a war crime, very simply.”

KIBBUTZ Nachshon is within walking distance of Canada Park It was here that I spoke to Mira Meir. Besides being general secretary of the kibbutz, she is an accomplished writer of children’s books and recently helped adapt *Sesame Street* for Israeli television.

“We never had any trouble with our neighbours,” she said. “Quite the opposite. We were separated by a strip of no-man’s land, and each side began to cultivate it - a little more each year, because the border was in no particular place and it was very good soil. In 1965,

something marvellous happened. Our fields were so close that we began taking coffee breaks with the Arabs from Emwas, sitting with them. We exchanged small souvenirs, key-holders and things, which we still have today. We stopped when soldiers from the Arab Legion outpost opened fire and badly wounded one of our members.”

After the 1967 war, when most of the men from the kibbutz were still mobilized in the army, she heard the Israeli soldiers blowing up the houses at Emwas. “I and other members of the kibbutz tried to have it stopped. Each tried in his own way. I went to Jerusalem to lobby members of the Knesset. There was no reason to take quiet citizens and send them away. Everyone was saying how benevolent the Israelis were - and here, through our windows, we saw something different.

“Later we heard a park was going to be established there, and people would be going for picnics. Nobody from this kibbutz has ever gone to sit there. It is painful to have it next to our door.”

Shaul Sharon, another long-time member of the kibbutz, joined in: “I’m a farmer. There are many things I don’t understand, but when I pass the park there is something - I can’t explain it - that I feel right here.” He put his hand to his stomach. “I don’t feel very good. What I’m sorry about is that we never had a chance to live with them as real neighbours. I don’t feel very proud about it”

Amos Kenan concluded his report to the Knesset: “The children who dragged themselves along the road that day, weeping bitterly, will be the *fedayeen* of nineteen years hence. This is how, that day, we lost the victory.”

Uri Avnery drew the same conclusion in a speech to the Knesset on June 21, 1967, in a reply to Moshe Dayan’s speech equating the Arab villagers with a belligerent army: “I blame Minister Dayan from this podium for us having lost a most important campaign after the

war. We achieved a brilliant victory in the days of the war. Almost the whole world was on our side. How did we lose this fantastic moral advantage within a few days? What for? What is the use of it? ... It will cause weeping for generations, a residue of hate among those with whom we shall wish to live together tomorrow.”

I

In 1973, Bernard Bloomfield of Montreal, then president of the Jewish National Fund of Canada, acted on a suggestion from JNF headquarters in Jerusalem that he raise money for a park easily accessible from both Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Funds were raised, and work on the park soon began.

Rubble from the Arab houses was carted away. Pine trees were planted among the fruit trees of Emwas. Names of Canadian donors were placed on the stone wall of the Commemorations Centre. Even now, workers can be seen carting off the remaining signs of Yalu for another picnic ground.

“I don’t know anything about any Arab villages,” Bloomfield told me angrily by

telephone. I began telling him the story, but he hung up.

Akiva Einis, a JNF official in Jerusalem who oversees Canadian projects, said he was instrumental in persuading the JNF of Canada to sponsor the park. He said he told the Canadians the park would cover the ruins of at least one Arab village, and that the park would be partly in Israeli-occupied Jordan. The Canadians liked the site, he said, because of its easy access from both Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The name Canada Park came from Einis, following the tradition of naming JNF projects after the country of the sponsors. “I actually chose the name because they [the JNF of Canada] suggested the Great Canadian Forest or something,” Einis said. “But the idea that the name include Canada came from them.” Elsewhere in Israel there were already parks called Canada Forest, the Canadian Centennial Forest, and the Canadian Friendship Forest.

The Canadian Embassy in Tel Aviv is uncomfortable about having a site with such a history bearing Canada’s name.

As Don Sinclair, Canada’s first secretary in Tel Aviv, put it: “We find ourselves in the position of having to explain the name - of having to explain that this is a private venture involving private Canadian money, that the Canadian government is not involved in planning it or funding it.”

Canadian government representatives avoid stepping into the part of the park in occupied Jordanian territory because Canada considers development of occupied territory, other than for military security, illegal under international law. Michael Yarosky, vice-president of the JNF of Canada for the past two years, said he wasn’t aware of the Canadian governments attitude toward the park, or that a portion of the park is in occupied territory. Yarosky continues to solicit donations toward the park’s upkeep and development. In what better way, he argues, could a Canadian contribute to the well-being of Israel’s Jews and Arabs than by creating a place of recreation and relaxation for them?

CANADA PARK, West Bank - Zahda Shaker Abu Qtaish wipes tears from her eyes as she sits on a pile of rocks.

“This is my house,” she says, pointing to the rubble. “Right here is the bedroom; across the street is the coffee shop and over there is the post office. When you open a window, you can see out over all of the plains.

“I see everything; I remember everything; I will never forget.”

For Zahda Shaker Abu Qtaish, 65, this pile of weed-choked stones in the midst of leafy trees will always be special. From it, in her mind, she still sees a store, a schoolhouse, a medical clinic, a cafe, children laughing, goats, donkeys, orchards.

park is an 32,000-hectare (80,000-acre) oasis of greenery within sight of the main Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway. A glossy brochure describes it as “a creative innovation in recreation in Israel . . . matching the natural conditions of the area with the archaeological ruins to meet the need of rest and recreation in the heart of nature.”

Israeli tour guides point out the park to Canadian tourists - Christian and Jewish alike. They conveniently skip over the fact that Arab towns once existed here. One of the destroyed villages was Emmaus, known to Palestinians as Amwas. It was where Qtaish was born, raised, attended school, married and gave birth to her

Jerusalem. On a clear day you can see Tel Aviv and the Mediterranean Sea 35 kilometers (20 miles) away. Thousands of Israeli Jews flock to the park to enjoy picnics, to camp, to hike along the terraced hillsides, to dip their feet in cool spring water.

Watching over them are Israeli soldiers, who sometimes join children in buying snacks from the ice-cream trucks that cruise the park’s paved roads.

Amwas dates back to biblical times. It was here, accordingly to the Gospel of St. Luke, that Jesus Christ appeared in the first days after the crucifixion and ate with two disciples who failed to recognize Him until He performed a

WIPED OFF THE MAP

Park funded by Canadian Jews hides ruins of Arab villages.

By Bob Hepburn TORONTO STAR

In reality, though, the pile of rocks is all that remains of her family’s ancestral home. It is also a constant, brutal reminder of hatred and fear in this tension-filled region.

Canada Park is built on the ruins of three once-thriving Arab villages that Israeli soldiers bulldozed into the ground during the 1967 Mideast War. Nearly 9,000 Arab residents were driven out of their homes and forced to march for days over rocky hillsides to safety.

When the residents were gone, the soldiers pulled down the homes and plowed under the orchards. Israel wiped the villages off the map.

“I feel like I was slaughtered on the alter,” Qtaish says in a quavering voice. “Those Jews from Canada who built Canada Park, they should see what they did. Why did they build it?”

Today, Canada Park is a source of pride for Canadian Jews, who funded it as a sign of Canadian-Israeli friendship. The

children. The other villages were Beit Nuba and Yalu.

The story of Amwas is 24 years old but is important once again - especially for Canadians - because the proposed Middle East peace conference could result in Israel giving up some of the West Bank lands seized during the 1967 war. Places like Amwas could be up for grabs in a land-for-peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Several Christians in Switzerland have already formed the Association for the Reconstruction of Emmaus with the prime objective of rebuilding the Arab village as a sign of reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. So far, the group’s activities have been limited to promoting their cause. An exhibit of photographs and a large clay model of Amwas will be on display late this month in Geneva.

Canada Park sits on a spectacular site. It lies where the Israeli coastal plain meets the hills that climb up to

ritual blessing: “And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.”

Jews say the area is closely linked to the history of Israel. Joshua Ben Nun defeated the Canaanites here, and near the ancient city of Emmaus Judah Maccabee launched a surprise attack on the Seleucid Greeks, winning his first important victory in seizing Judea. Later, the Romans built two forts to guard the road to Jerusalem. Julius Ceasar may have visited here. Many other ruins go back to the Byzantine era.

From 1948 until 1967 Amwas was in Jordanian territory. The so-called Green Line that separated Israel from Jordan ran right along the western edge of the village. Before 1967, the village of Amwas, or Emmaus, appeared on Israeli maps of the Holy Land along with its sister villages of Beit Nuba and Yalu. They no longer appear on official Israeli maps. It is as if for Israel the villages never existed.

Zahda Shaker Abu Qtaish was 30 when war erupted on June 5, 1967. She was pregnant. Her youngest daughter, Naheda, was celebrating her first birthday that morning. Three other daughters were at home while her husband and two sons were in Jerusalem.

Her father was a major landowner in the Amwas area, with many laborers working in his orchards and olive trees. The family had lived in the village for centuries.

“As long as I remember, I only remember living in Amwas,” Qtaish said through an Arabic translator.

In the days immediately before the war, she could hear sporadic gunfire between Israeli and Jordanian soldiers. Some Jordanian soldiers were posted on the rooftops of houses on the highest points in the village. “The shooting was going on for a few days, but we kept working, plowing the land, fixing tiles on the veranda,” she recalled.

When the war actually started on June 5, Jordanian soldiers came to every house in Amwas and told the residents not to worry, that everything would be all right. No one believed them.

“People started to leave, running in every direction,” she said. “I couldn’t go anywhere. My husband was in Jerusalem. I didn’t know what to do.”

Qtaish hid the night of June 5-6 with her children in the basement of her home. When she came out the next morning, she saw soldiers. “I thought they were Arab soldiers, but when they saw me, one of them ran toward me, yelling, ‘Where are the men?’ I realized he was Jewish.

“They told us to come with the children to the mukhtar’s (community-leader) home. I replied that I couldn’t; I had bread baking in the oven, the closets were open, the house was not tidy, the chickens were hungry.

“The Jew said it was not important, that later I could come back and fix everything. I took the children. One was holding my hand, one was on my shoulder, one was holding my dress.

“When we got to the mukhtar’s house, the Israelis said to keep walking, to go to Yalu. I pled that the house was open, that the bread was in the oven. We left everything, our clothes, our money, everything.

“When I reached Yalu, my legs gave up. Everybody from Amwas was there. We were told to keep walking. We walked for three days to Ramallah (north of Jerusalem). A lot of people died on the road. My feet were bleeding.

“For the next two months we slept under the trees. We had no tents, no blankets. We slept on dirt. My family was thirsty and hungry.,,

Five years passed before Qtaish returned to Amwas with her family. By then, her husband had died and she was living in a small house near the Jalazun refugee camp north of Ramallah. It is still home today.

I couldn’t believe it,” Qtaish said, waving her hands in the air and placing them on the side of her head in anguish, “My home was down to the ground. They had turned the village into a park. They called it Canada Park. I cried and cried.”

Qtaish showed her children where the family home had been and tried to pick olives from the family’s trees. “Jewish men chased us away. I said these were my olives, but they still chased us.”

Israel offered the Amwas villagers compensation for their homes but no one ever accepted. Today, the former residents of Amwas are scattered around the world - in the West Bank, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Europe, the United States and Canada.

At least once a month, Qtaish and her family travel the 50 kilometers (30 miles) to Canada Park. They stop and pray

outside the barbed wire fence that blocks their access to her grandfather’s tomb. Inside the fence, which also encloses the ruins of a Roman bathhouse, is a sign stating that the “Children of Montreal helped fund the archaeological excavations at the site.

.Walking through the forest, Qtaish points out pieces of iron, fragments of stones that once formed the foundations for her neighbors’ houses. “I know exactly where everything is,” she said. “Every family has a special place.”

Her son, Adnan, said he brings his mother whenever she is feeling tired. “Look at her,” he said “Running around like a young lady, a big smile on her face.”

Zahda Shaker Abu Qtaish wonders to this day why Israel destroyed Amwas. “It was the Jordanian army that was fighting them, not us from the village,” she said.

Walking arm-in-arm with her daughter Naheda through the ruins of the village, Qtaish paused, then in a voice barely above a whisper said: “If the Israelis gave me a tent, I would come here and live again.”

Yaacov Golan was a 19-year old private in an Israeli infantry platoon when the war broke out. His unit was stationed on Hill 364, a barren peak above the 100 year-old Latrun monastery. From there, Golan could see the entire Ayalon Valley, a small demilitarized zone where members of nearby Kibbutz Nahshon were harvesting wheat.

Golan was a radio operator, able to listen to the military commanders in the valley below.

The area around Amwas was called the Latrun salient. It was thumb-shaped piece of Jordanian territory that jutted into Israel. For years, it had been considered one of the most strategic zones in the region.

It was the easiest place where Arab troops could break into Israel, having been a base for Arab commandos since the 1948 Mideast war. Whoever held it controlled the vital Tel Aviv-Jerusalem corridor. Thus, both Israeli and the Arab forces were poised for a major battle at Latrun.

“We were south of the Jordanian fortifications,” Golan recalled “When the war started on the afternoon of June 5, we were shelled by the Jordanians. At night, the Israeli attack started. As the radio man, I could listen to what was happening. About 2 a.m., I heard one of the commanders in the valley describing the mass evacuation of Jordanian soldiers and civilians from the area.

The next day, about noon, we got orders to move into the occupied area. We took up a position on a fortified hill abandoned by the Jordanians right above Amwas, just several hundred metres away.

To get there, we drove a jeep through the narrow alleys of the village. I remember it was completely abandoned.

“About a week later, we were told to move again, this time to east Jerusalem. When we came down the hill we saw the village was already gone, levelled. It was rubble. There were a few old people, donkeys and goats.

It came as a big surprise.”

Amos Kenan was a 40-year-old Israeli army reservist assigned to the Latrun area during the war. He was also a professional journalist in civilian life. Today he lives in Tel Aviv, an often surly man who dislikes reporters prying into Amwas.

Yet Kenan witnessed first-hand the horror at Amwas. His job was to stop the villagers from re-entering the area. It so horrified him he wrote a private journal about the scene and sent copies to every member of the Israeli Knesset (parliament).

His journal, later translated in- to English, provides a gripping account of the actual destruction: “There were old men hardly able to walk, old women mumbling to themselves, babies in their mother’s arms small children weeping, begging for water. ... They said some had perished on the way. . . . The children wept and some of our soldiers **wept** too.

“Our platoon commander decided to go to headquarters to find out whether there were any written orders as to what should be done with them. . . . He came back and said there was no written order, we were to drive them away. Like lost sheep they went on wandering along the roads. The exhausted were beyond rescuing.

“The battalion grumbled and the villagers gritted their teeth as they watched the bulldozers flattening trees. That night we stayed on to guard the bulldozers, but the entire battalion was incensed, and most of the men didn’t want to carry out the orders. In the morning we were transferred out.

“Not one of us could understand how Jews could do such a thing. Even those who defended the action conceded that (the authorities) could have put up temporary accommodations for the villagers until a final decision was reached on where they were to go, and then they could have taken their belongings along. It was impossible to fathom why those *fellahin* (peasants) should not have been allowed to take their kerosene stoves, blankets, and provisions with them.

“Chickens and pigeons were buried under the rubble. The fields were laid waste before our very eyes. And the children straggling along the roads wailing and crying bitter tears will be the fedayeen (warriors) of the next round in another 19 years. That’s how we bungled the victory that day

Kenan also sent his report to then prime minister Levi Eshkol and defence minister Moshe Dayan. They never replied.

Eventually, Israel gave several explanations for why it ordered the bulldozing and dynamiting of Arab villages in the West Bank. Dayan said the operation was for strategic reasons.

“The inhabitants of the West Bank were not an objective, neutral population in this war, but part of the Kingdom of Jordan and of the deployment of those forces that began warfare against Israel,” he told the Knesset 10 days after the ceasefire was announced.

“The civilians in the various villages and their families were partners to this war, the cannons which fired on Lod airport and Tel Aviv were stationed in these villages. They were not fired from Transjordan. . . . I would be much happier if I could come here and say that the Jordanian Legion forces carried on this war, and the West Bank inhabitants did whatever they did under coercion or remained neutral, but it was not so.”

A year later, in response to an article on Amwas in the Times, the press attaché in the Israeli embassy in London wrote a letter to the editor in which he argued the Jordanians would have destroyed Israeli towns if they’d had the chance.

“These villages suffered heavy damage during the June war and its immediate aftermath when our troops engaged two Egyptian commando units, which had established themselves there and continued fighting after the ceasefire,” M.H. Sharon wrote.

“There is no need to speculate as to what would have happened to our villages and towns had the tide turned the other way. The intentions of our neighbor are shown by Jordanian battle orders that fell into our hands, instructing units ‘to kill all inhabitants’ of the places they were supposed to take.”

As in many post-war reconstructions of events, of who gave the orders and who carried them out, there are still conflicting Israeli accounts of exactly

who decided to bulldoze Amwas, Beit Nuba and Yalu.

Was it a definite order by Dayan? Or was it soldiers acting on their own?

Rafik Halaby, a former Israeli Journalist who wrote a detailed book called *The West Bank Story*, said that regardless of who gave the exact order, it was clear the villages “were deliberately razed for reasons of strategic necessity.

“When Latrun fell in 1967, the military authorities decided to settle the problem of the salient once and for all and literally wiped the three settlements off the face of the Earth,” he wrote. “Even the carefully hewn stones of demolished buildings were carted off by private building contractors.”

At the entrance to Canada Park, just off John Diefenbaker Parkway (opened by Diefenbaker himself in 1975), is a sign that reads: “Welcome to Canada Park in Ayalon Valley - A project of the Jewish National Fund of Canada.”

Other signs mark contributions from individual Canadians, such as Joseph and Faye Tanenbaum of Toronto, who funded the Valley of Springs.

Bernard Bloomfield, the late president of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) of Canada, was the driving force behind the idea for Canada Park. His widow, Neri, is now JNF president.

In 1973, he spearheaded a campaign among the Canadian Jewish community to raise \$15 million to establish the park. One of its early brochures boasted how the site of Canada Park was “liberated by the Israeli Defence Forces” in 1967.

Under the terms of the agreement between the JNF and Israel, no Canadian money was to be spent on those parts of the park located on occupied land - in other words, on most of it. Individual Canadian Jews, however, made donations that were clearly spent in occupied territory. The Joseph and Faye Tanenbaum

Recreation Area, for example, is on former Arab land.

The Canadian fund drive for Canada Park ended in 1984

Since 1973, more than 5 million trees have been planted in Canada Park. In 1986 former Ontario Premier David Peterson ran into a storm of protest from Arab-Canadians when he offered to plant a tree in Canada Park as a gift of friendship to Israel.

The names of thousands of Canadians who contributed to Canada Park are on a commemorative wall in the park. The site, which is just a few metres outside the Green line, also includes the names of individual Canadians and Canadian companies that have donated money over the years to various Israeli projects.

The Toronto Star Newspaper Ltd. has a nameplate attached to a wall at the commemorative centre. The Star made a contribution in 1989 to the Bassett Foundation for Environmental Action in Israel.

“We were told that the money would go toward the promotion of environmental care-in Israel, not toward building a park on the West Bank,” says Burnett Thall, vice-president of The Star.

The commemorative centre is barely 50 metres from the ruins of Zahda Shaker Abu Qtaish’s home.

It is also less than a kilometre from the Latrun monastery, where Catholic monks have reported tales of Palestinians being buried alive when the Israeli bulldozers smashed into Amwas.

For nearly a century, dozens of Amwas laborers had worked for the Latrun monks in their winery and the surrounding fields.

Father Tournay, a Catholic priest who has lived in east Jerusalem since 1945 and was head of the Ecole Biblique

there, said the Latrun monks “smelled bodies” rotting inside the demolished homes.

In an interview from his bed at St. Joseph’s Hospital in east Jerusalem, Tournay told of how the Latrun monks visited Amwas in the days immediately after the Israelis captured the village.

“They demanded answers from the soldiers, from the Israelis,” he said. “They got no reply.”

The Latrun monks insist there were no serious battles between Jordanian and Israeli troops on June 5, 1967, near Amwas. The Jordanian soldiers simply fled without much of a fight.

To this day, the Trappist monks at Latrun are reluctant to discuss Amwas in any detail. They worry about upsetting Israeli authorities.

Father Louis, a monk who has lived at Latrun for 40 years, shrugged his shoulders when asked about reports of bodies. “I hear things,” he said in a meeting at the monastery.

Israeli authorities have consistently denied any Palestinians were buried in Amwas, Beit Nuba or Yula.

Father Louis remembers his first visit to Amwas after the war. “I cried,” he said. “I knew these people. They worked for us. They were gone. Their homes were gone.

“Every time I go by Canada Park, I still get angry,” he said in the monastery’s guest house. “Why does the Canadian government allow it to be called Canada Park? It is built on the ruins of people’s homes.”

Residents of the nearby Kibbutz Nahshon, the closest Israeli community to Amwas, also are convinced the residents of the Arab village had little to do with the fighting.

“I am sure no one from Amwas” was involved, said Shadmi, a glassmaker from the kibbutz. “We were shocked,

there was hardly any fighting there during the war.”

Shadmi (the only name he gave) said there was little contact between residents of the kibbutz and the Arab villages before the 1967 war. They lived in separate countries, he noted. He didn't set foot in the village until several days after the ceasefire.

“Nobody was there, but there were a lot of cows, small houses, shops,” Shadmi said. “The next week they (the Israelis) bombed all the small houses.”

Shadmi is sorry the Arab villagers lost their homes but isn't sorry the threat of Arab violence in the region was erased.

“Until 1967 I always worried about my children,” he said. “I shall never forget all those years. I told my children to stay away from the hills, that Arab terrorists are sitting around and from time to time shooting at Israelis. We were always afraid of Arab shooting because we were very near the border.”

“Latrun and Amwas were the key point in wars. They controlled the high road to Jerusalem. We had to close it forever. It was an order and the poor people of Amwas were caught by it.

“Michael Adams, a British reporter who has researched Amwas extensively since 1968, wrote recently he had a great deal of trouble convincing editors to carry articles about villages destroyed by the Israelis.

“The Israeli government and whoever in the army command gave the order to destroy the villages,” he wrote, “must have thought that it was possible to rearrange both history and geography in this way: that if they carted away the

rubble and raked over the ground and planted seedlings where the homes of 9,000 people had been, all of which they did, they would be able to get away with it.

“Why? Because of the Holocaust, and because Western newspaper editors don't like to be called anti-Semitic.”

The mere mention of Canada Park is a sensitive issue for Canadian diplomats in Tel Aviv.

Canada's official position is that it has no opinion on Canada Park because it was “a private initiative” by Canadian citizens, according to Michel de Salaberry, senior counsellor at the embassy. He declined to discuss the issue any further.

In an obvious private protest, however, few if any of the Canadian diplomats assigned to Israel have ever set foot in the park

Morris Zilka, executive vice-president of the Jewish National Fund of Canada, conceded that . Canada Park is a “sensitive” issue for the Montreal-based group.

“I guess Canada Park is back in the news again with the peace process and the issue of returning land for peace,” he said in a telephone interview from Canada.

Zilka admitted openly that “some” Arab villages had been destroyed on the site of Canada Park But he quickly added that ‘ the money raised by Canadian Jews was only a small fraction of the funds needed to develop the park

“We finished with the project in 1984 and haven't raised any money for it since,” he said. “We are not selling anything now, we are not even publishing any pamphlets” about the park

“Some” Canadian Jews who donated to Canada Park probably never realized it was built on the site of three demolished Arab villages, he said. Others, though, knew exactly where the park was located, he added, noting that, some Jews are quite forceful in demanding their funds be spent' on projects in the West Bank.

Over the years, many Israelis, Palestinians and Canadians have protested to the Israeli government about Canada Park and what happened at Amwas.

But Shadmi of Kibbutz Nahshon, where many residents violently opposed the demolitions, says the complaints are useless:

“Everyone can talk but in war who will listen? So what if we protest? Soldiers also protested. If we still protest, then what? Who will listen?”

Israeli television recently broadcast a beautiful 10-minute travelogue on Canada Park

It was filled with inspiring music and scenes of green trees, grass, toddlers happily playing on swings, picnics, fresh springs and streams. It described the area's archaeological importance and its heritage from the biblical days of Joshua and the Romans to the 1948 War of Independence.

The film made no mention of the Arab village of Amwas.

Text of the supplication sent out by the Jewish National Fund of Canada.

Yom Tov 5745
September 1984

Dear Member:

In a few days, Jews will gather in synagogues to observe Yom Kippur. As we recite the Yiskor Prayer, we will recall our parents, relatives and friends who are no longer with us.

But Yiskor is more than just a reminder of the past. It is a summons to serve our people. It is a prayer whose key component is "tzedakah", as we act not only with prayers, but with deeds.

Your donation to the 'Yiskor Appeal' of the Jewish National Fund will enable the vital work of land reclamation, road-building, infrastructure preparation and tree-planting to continue. It will give meaningful expression to your prayers by linking the names of your dear ones with constructive efforts to strengthen the land and ensure a secure future for our people.

Please respond on the attached form. **Income Tax receipts will be issued for all contributions and your donation will help complete the Grove in Canada Park-**, in Israel, undertaken by the members of the Beth Hamedrash Hagadol-Tifereth Israel synagogue.

May you and your family be blessed with a New Year of Health, Happiness and Peace.

Sincerely yours,

Ben C. Hilner
President
Beth Hamedrash Hagadol-

Nat S. Bernstein
Chairman, Synagogue Liaison
JNF of Montreal Tifereth Israel synagogue