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behalve dan door op te merken dat het er schilderachtig was: 'À l'intérieur des terres, villages druzes et arabes tres pittoresques: Kfar Yasif, Abou Sinan, Makr, Joudeida, Joulis, Yirka.'<sup>47</sup>

Een ding stond als een paal boven water: het eigendomsrecht van de vruchtbare bodem in de vlakte van Aser had drastische wijzigingen ondergaan. Simha Flapan, hoofd Arabische zaken van de marxistische Mapam-partij erkende dat volledig:

Vast areas of both cultivated and uncultivated land were deserted as a consequence of the 1948 war. The Military Administration set about to transfer them into state property. These lands did not include only the refugee property which was transferred to the Custodian for Abandoned Property and later to the Development Authority. Security considerations also prompted the establishment of settlements in vulnerable areas in the vicinity of Arab villages whose inhabitants had not left the country. For this purpose land was confiscated from these villages by various means, which were subsequently legalized in the Land Requisition (Acquisition) Act of 1953.

The Israeli public still recalls the stormy discussion in the Knesset and the press on the legality and correctness of these measures. The measures, however, were so effective that there are still nearly 20.000<sup>48</sup> Arab "absentees" living in Israel, who enjoy all the rights granted to all citizens, except one: to regain their former possessions. In addition to this, the lands of many villages have been cut down to a minimum to make possible the establishment of new settlements around them.

As a result, many of the villages have become a reservoir of landless peasants or smallholders who must make a living as hired workers outside the village. If they were allowed to move freely, thousands of Arab villagers would probably have left their village for good, and settled in areas with opportunities for permanent employment, especially in industry and the building trades. This process could not take place, however, because of the Military Administration, which imposed severe restrictions on movement and prevented changes of residence. These restrictions were partly prompted by the desire to prevent the labour market from being flooded by cheap and unorganized Arab labour.<sup>49</sup>

Stuk voor stuk speelden deze problemen een rol in de streek waar Bernath en Pilon een christelijke kibboets overwogen. Het was een publiek geheim dat Lohamei HaGettaot, Regba, Amqa en Beit HaEmek dit resterende Arabische blok graag bij hun eigen akkers wilden trekken. De mogelijkheid van onteigening op basis van de

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<sup>47</sup> Elian Finbert, *Israel (Les guides bleus)*, Paris 1955, 180.

<sup>48</sup> Het aantal 'present absentees' is omstreden. De hieronder te noemen Ran Kislev gaat uit van 75.000.

<sup>49</sup> Simha Flapan, 'Integrating the Arab village', in: *New Outlook. Middle East Monthly* maart-april 1962, 24-25.