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PROPOSED REMARKS: Jewish National Fund, Gala National Bicentennial Dinner
June 22, 1976

In only a few days, we will celebrate the Fourth of July, and for many years to come, the events of that day will be remembered with pleasure and pride by Americans and our friends around the world.

I've been especially excited this year by the projects I've seen that will keep the spirit of the Bicentennial alive. The restoration projects, not only in the original 13 colonies, but all across America, will be a permanent reminder of this special year.

But I think the sharing of this occasion by other countries has been equally important. America truly is a symbol to the free world of the survival and strength of democracy. I know the Bicentennial Forest in Israel will be enjoyed by many people, who will be reminded of America and her friendship with Israel.

I'm delighted I could be here tonight to present this key to the forest to an old friend of our family -- Milton Hoffman. To all of you this bicentennial wish: "May your Fourth of July be one of joy, pride and expectation for the future."

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 17, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: KAYE PULLEN
FROM: MILT MITLER *Handwritten initials*
SUBJECT: THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND,
AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL PARK

Following is the information you requested.

- This program to produce a recreation area in a park about 25 kilometers southwest of Jerusalem was established to commemorate this nation's 200 years of independence.
- The park site is on land owned by the Jewish National Fund and will be maintained by that agency's counterpart in Israel.
- The plan is to turn a ~~forest~~ ^{WILDERNESS} into a recreation area complete with hotels, picnic and recreation areas, swimming, etc. - a complete complex for tourists.
- The first phase will be to plant 1,000 acres to be followed by another 1,000 acres. There will be two forests planted for each state in our union - each forest contains 25,000 trees.
- The area has biblical significance and is purported to be where David fought Goliath. It is about 45 minutes from Jerusalem in the Judean Mountains.
- At the present time, there is no recreation area for the settlements surrounding the site.
- So far, 53 Senators and 17 Governors have joined the program as supporters.
- The project will eventually cost about 6.0 million, and thus far, they have raised about one third. It is funded entirely from contributions.

- The Jewish National Fund has planted over 130 million trees in Israel and will be celebrating 75 years of accomplishment. The Fund is the largest land owner in Israel next to the State.
- The Park will be dedicated on July 4th in ceremonies there. This is 10 years to the date on which they dedicated the John F. Kennedy Memorial Park.
- They call this project a miniature Yellowstone Park.
- The Reception will begin at 6:00 and last for about 45 minutes. No receiving line is expected.
- Mrs. Ford will be introduced by Dr. Maurice S. Sage, President of the Jewish National Fund. Other speakers will include Mayor Beame and Israeli Ambassador Dinitz.
- Press will cover the dinner.

[1970]

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BACKGROUND ON JEWISH NATIONAL FUND
BICENTENNIAL DINNER - JUNE 22

The Jewish National Fund (JNF) dinner will highlight interest in the Park which the JNF is sponsoring inside Israel proper in honor of our Bicentennial. The JNF, however, has at times been involved in controversial activities with implications for our Middle East policy, and the background of the organization is worth noting.

The JNF is the largest and most important organization involved in land reclamation and development in the Occupied Territories [territories occupied by Israel as a result of the 1967 war]. These activities are preparatory to the establishment of Israeli settlements in these areas -- one of the most sensitive issues of the Arab-Israeli dispute because it signifies in Arab eyes an unwillingness to withdraw from these areas as part of an overall settlement. The President has made clear that US policy with respect to the status of the Occupied Territories remains unchanged from what it has been since the 1967 war -- that the status of these areas must be decided in negotiations among the parties themselves. As a matter of policy, we do not recognize the activities of any party in these areas as prejudging the outcome of their future status. The Israeli Government is well aware of US policy opposing settlements in the Occupied Territories and other related activities.

Because of our policy on the Occupied Territories, the USG has carefully refrained from giving any appearance of support for activities whose primary objective is to raise funds for the planting of trees and other development in these areas and particularly on the West Bank. Thus, JNF requests for Presidential and other messages for its annual brochure seeking support for its tree-planting and land reclamation activities have regularly been turned down, as have requests that trees be planted in the President's name in specific areas in the Occupied Territories.

However, this year the JNF is sponsoring the development of a Park in honor of our Bicentennial and it is located in Israel proper or pre-1967 Israel. Since its location is not in the sensitive Occupied Territories, it was accorded official recognition by our Bicentennial

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WHTM 11/22/00



Commission, ARBA. [Because of the Park, a Presidential message of an exclusively Bicentennial nature has been sent to the JNF brochure but no reference was made to other JNF activities and the request was treated as an exception for the Bicentennial].

This year's dinner will dramatize the Park. At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that there may be some attendant publicity of JNF's regular programs (which extend into the Occupied Territories) in an environment which could suggest official USG endorsement. It would therefore be appropriate to focus any remarks exclusively on the Bicentennial Park and avoid reference to JNF's general activities or to future JNF projects.

Appropriate conversational points might include the following:

- Relations between Israel and the US remain especially close. Symbolic of this is the fact that Prime Minister Rabin was the first head of government to visit Washington in our Bicentennial year.
- We are proud of our long history of close relations with Israel and all that the people of Israel are doing to help us celebrate our Nation's birthday.
- Israel and the US have an affinity not only for each other but also for the basic principles of democratic self-government which distinguish our two nations from most other nations.
- We are very grateful for all who are participating in the Bicentennial effort this year. We especially appreciate the Bicentennial Park being celebrated here tonight. It will serve as a permanent reminder of the friendship between our two peoples.
- I hope that all who visit the Park will enjoy it in the spirit of the true and lasting friendship between our two countries.

[Attachment: Background materials on the Park]