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Film too dreadful to screen

## Evidence of village massacre

from Robert Fisk, Beirut

In their advance southwards from Beirut yesterday, Druze militiamen discovered horrifying evidence of the massacre of Druze villagers - apparently by the Christian Phalange - that took place five months ago when the Israelis hurriedly withdrew their army from the Chouf mountains.

The Druze have found dozens of bodies of men, women and children - most of them in an advanced state of decomposition - in and around the village of Kfar Matta, 15 miles south east of the capital.

Blaming both the Phalange and the Lebanese Army for the slaughter, the Druze allowed an American television crew into the village yesterday afternoon. Much of the film they took is too dreadful to show on television.

They found the corpses of women and children in fields around Kfar Matta, skeletons lying in the streets of the village and a whole roomful of corpses upon which lay the badly

decayed body of a woman in a scarf, her hands spread backwards. All the dead had apparently been shot.

The Druze also displayed a crumpled pillowcase partly covered in bloodstains on which a note had been written by Clarke Todd, the Canadian television reporter who was fatally wounded by shrapnel in the village last September. The message was addressed to his family in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, and said, in very shaky handwriting, "Please tell my family I love them. Clarke." Mr Todd's body was recovered by the International Red Cross last September a week after he died.

Mr Todd, who was accompanied by an American television crew, had gone to the village on the morning of the Israeli withdrawal last September, but was hit in the chest by shrapnel when the crew came under artillery fire. They took him to a barn end before walking back to Beirut under fire.

Mr Todd had ordered them to leave him and they at first thought he had survived. A week later, however, the Red Cross brought him to Sidon where it was by officials of Canadian television.

Several Druze militiamen said they could identify relatives among the dead. The film brought back to Beirut last night shows one young man with a rifle over his shoulder pointing to what he said was the body of his aunt. In a field beside him lay a skeleton in the remains of a woman's dress, clutching a much smaller skeleton, apparently that of a child. Human bones lay in some streets, at one point next to a torn woman's handbag, at another beside a gutted car. One forearm still had a wrist-watch attached to it.

In many villages in the Chouf last September, the Israelis left their Phalangist allies behind when they withdrew. Rumours began to circulate in Beirut within a few days of massacres

Continued on back page, col 8

Continued from page 1

by both Phalangist and Druze in the towns south east of the capital.

First reports of a slaughter of Druze at Kfar Matta came on September 5 and the Phalange at first offered to take journalists to the village to prove the claims untrue. At the last moment, however, they cancelled the trip, claiming the area was too dangerous for reporters to enter.

As always in Lebanon, there are unanswered questions. For the past five months, Lebanese Government troops have controlled much of the ruined village. They were driven out two days ago but - if they moved anywhere in that part of the village where corpses were seen lying yesterday - conditions must have been quite horrific for them. Yet many of the bodies were found in fields and had been there so long that bushes had actually grown through the cadavers.

Behind the roomful of bodies, bullet holes could be seen on the wall and several corpses had apparently fused together with age. The film also showed a grassy slope upon which lay a badly decomposed body in a small boy's clothes.

Last September, the Druze said more than a hundred of their people had been killed in Kfar Matta by the Phalange. Yesterday they said they had found 107 bodies. For President Gemayel, fighting to save his presidency with both his Government and army in pieces, the discovery of the murders could not come at a worse time.

Until he became President, he was himself a senior official of the Phalange, whose militia carried out the Sabra and Chatila massacre after Israeli troops sent them into the Palestinian camps in 1981. Now the Phalangists are being accused of yet more mass killings.

An official of the International Red Cross confirmed in Beirut last night that delegates of his organization had seen the bodies of civilians lying in the streets of Kfar Matta last September.

"We don't know whether they were killed by shelling or in crossfire but we saw dead people" he said.

"It is beyond our job to investigate whether it is a massacre or not. At the time, the security situation was very bad and for security reasons we could not take them out".