



Street in Cairo

More important is that whereas the overwhelming majority became small farmers, owning less than an acre, the number of the wealthy rural landowners, with more than 100 acres, decreased from 5,000, owning 500,000 acres, with an average holding of 100 acres, to 2,000, owning 413,000 acres, with an average holding of 206.5 acres. This indicates the extent of class differentiation in the rural areas. More than half the owners have less than an acre, while the filthy rich own more than double the maximum set by the last land reform law, issued in 1969, that limited land ownership to 100 acres per family. Thus, we see the phenomenon of more and more poverty among small land owners (bearing in mind that the

income of agricultural wage laborers is much lower still). On the other hand, ownership of land and means of production is concentrated in the hands of the rural rich. The accumulating land ownership confirms this fact.

The data which we relied on to analyze the changes in the social constellation stops with the year 1976, due to the absence of a current census that can be relied upon. It is necessary to apply the same indicators and directions of investments, concentration of capital, poverty and wealth, on the entirety of this constellation. We will find that the tendencies noted above have intensified with the furthering of the open door policy which has accelerated over the past ten years.

Palestinian Popular Arts Ensemble

— The Popular Arts ensemble was established in Al Bireh in the occupied West Bank in 1979, by a group of men and women who were interested in the arts, particularly Palestinian popular arts.

— The group was interested in exploring the Palestinian people's original cultural roots and employing these in artistic works that encompass progressive humanitarian contents in a sophisticated, aesthetic framework.

— The ensemble dispatched trainers to several institutions in occupied Palestine in order to establish groups there.

— In 1981, the ensemble won first prize in the dabka (folkdance) festival held by Bir Zeit University.

— In 1983, the Friends of Society charitable association in Al Bireh began to sponsor the ensemble, putting all capacities at the group's disposal so as to advance it.

— In 1983, the ensemble presented its first long work which was entitled «Folklore Scenes» and also won the first prize in the dabka festival of that year.

— In 1984, the ensemble participated in the Bir Zeit Nights festival, performing the play entitled «Wadi Al Tuffah» (Apple Valley) which received first prize at the festival.

— In 1985, the ensemble once again won first prize at the Bir Zeit University's dabka festival.

— In 1986, the ensemble presented its



new work called «Mashaal» which is a name, while also meaning torch.

MASHAAL

The story of «Mashaal» is rooted in Palestinian popular legend. The ensemble did not stick to the exact historical details or the original story. Rather they formulated it in a new artistic style, adding new incidents which served the main line of the story. The story goes back to the outbreak of World War I, when the Ottoman sultan issued an ordinance for drafting Arab youth to participate alongside the German and Turkish troops in the war. This elicited a new phenomenon called 'escapees' and Mashaal was one of those. He escaped to the mountains, but could not stand staying away from his village and home, his wife, Aysha,

and the village spring. This homesickness led him to endanger his life by heading for the spring where Turkish soldiers were waiting. They arrested him.

Mashaal was carried by ship to Europe to fight for the cause of others, to fight a war that was not his own, this crazy war being waged by the capitalist powers with the people as cannon fodder.

When the war ended, Mashaal returned to his village, carrying with him the British promise that if they were victorious and the country (Palestine) came under their rule, they would withdraw shortly after the war ended. Mashaal then started looking for a sword, a horse and a rifle for the purpose of showing off, for there was no need to worry anymore.

After a short period of time, Mashaal discovers that the British were lying and had broken their promise. So he continues looking for a sword, horse and rifle, but this time for purposes other than showing off. Thus, he sells Aysha's jewelry, but it is not enough to buy all the things, so he decides to travel to Haifa to work as a porter in the harbor. There he spends several long years. During his stay in Haifa, he participates in the famous harbor workers' strike. Afterwards, he returns to his village with the three things - sword, horse and rifle, to create a bright new dawn for his beautiful Aysha.