

Chapter III

British Colonialism and the Agrarian Economy

The aim of this chapter is to examine the colonial nature of British rule in Palestine, the relationship of this rule to Zionist colonization, and the effects both forces had on the social and economic structure of Palestine. It will demonstrate that these were the major forces in the acceleration of the process of capitalist development in Palestine. More particularly, they created what Marx describes as the historical condition necessary for the emergence of capitalism; the expropriation of land and the expropriation of the peasantry.

This chapter provides an extensive analysis of the phenomenon of land and peasant expropriation. It will be argued that the transfer of land from the indigenous Palestinians to the European Jewish settlers was not a simple and peaceful matter of sale and purchase as most of the current literature suggests but was, rather, a far more complex phenomenon. It will be shown that, in fact, the process of land and peasant expropriation was anything but peaceful, legal or a matter of simple market transaction.

The historical documents show that almost all cases of land transfer were made possible only by the intervention of the colonial state. As these documents demonstrate, political, legal and sheer physical force were at the core of the process of land transfer. Expropriation of land and peasants, it will be demonstrated, was accompanied by other colonial policies which devastated peasant economy and peasant agriculture. Of particular significance in this