

of recession, or individual unemployment, by periodic return to their villages.

It was this situation of de-peasantization and economic marginality which established the camp refugees as the bearers of the 'cult of return' (al-awdah) to Palestine as the core of their political ideology, and it was from their ranks that the fighting cadres of the various contingents of the Palestine Liberation Movement were recruited. The 'cult of return' and the organizational independence of Palestinian movements which it entailed, however, were not always forms of self-imposed political restrictions. We are not suggesting here a necessary determination of ideology and organizational structure dictated by refugee de-classment. Both in Jordan and Lebanon the Palestinians entered into various forms of alliances with the local forces in order to face the repression of the national authorities--but the conditions under which the Palestinian refugees lived and worked rendered these alliances much weaker than if they were fully integrated in the host countries. In Lebanon, where these alliances were more effective, the capacity of their combined force was severely limited by the historic predicament of the Lebanese left into the webs of the confessional system. The civil war (1975-present) finally brought this system into a dramatic convulsion, and pushed the Palestinians as a chief protagonist not only of their own cause but also of the cause of secularism and anti-confessionalism for the Lebanese themselves.

But although the effective social base of the PLO existed in Jordan (1967-1971) and Lebanon (1971 - 1982) among its refugee camps and rootless intelligentsia, its political constituency was dispersed in several social formations, throughout the Arab world and the state of Israel. As the quest for nationhood altered the movement's ideological direction, from the "cult of return" to the quest for sovereignty, from total liberation to limited statehood, so did the PLO's political centre of gravity began to gravitate from its de-classed diaspora to those segments of Palestine that remained