

Conclusion: Political Consequences of Economic Dislocation

In Chapter 3 we discussed how the conditions of demographic dispersal of an agrarian society affected its contemporary class structure(s). In Chapter 4, above, we traced the specificity of that dislocation on the West Bank (and Gaza) under Israeli rule. In that discussion we took the position that unlike the situation among the Palestinian population in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza strip have maintained their traditional hierarchies and urban elites. This was primarily related to the fact that the lines of dislocation in Palestine were drawn by the fighting terrain in the 1948 war (in which, according to the partition plan of 1947 the two regions had been allocated to the Arab State). Israeli economic policies further accentuated these results: Israeli capitalism made no attempt to create a satellite capitalist class in the occupied territories, nor did it encourage Israeli businessmen to invest in the territories (except for minor subcontracting ventures). To restate the obvious, it was more interested in the land than in exploiting the people. This is the historic distinguishing mark of the Israeli form of colonialism from its European varieties, and it was only partly reversed by the incorporation of Arab labour into Jewish industries.

In the above analysis we distinguished two types of Palestinian declassment: (1) that which occurred as a result of population dispersal -- involving the adaptation of Palestinians to life in the Arab "host" countries, and (2) that which took the form of dislocation of Palestinian class structure within the boundaries of historic Palestine. In the first case we emphasized the emergence of a lumpen-proletariat, camp refugees who became a marginal and replaceable sector of the native working class. In Israel and in the occupied territories, on the other hand, Palestinian