

The war of 1948 stripped the Palestinians not only from the bulk of their land (20,850 sq. km. or 77.4 percent of Mandated Palestine) but also from the best agricultural areas. The area that fell to Israeli control after the armistice agreement (1949) included 95% of the "good" soil, 64% of the "medium" soil, and 39% of the "poor" soil (Ruedy, 1971:135). Ruedy, on the basis of calculations made by the Conciliation Commission for Palestine established that 80% of that territory, and 72% of all cultivable land was held by Palestinians who became refugees as a result of the war (ibid.).

Moreover, the loss of land in 1948, and the Palestinian exodus to the West Bank, Gaza, and the neighbouring Arab states, coincided with the dearth of local employment possibilities in Jordan (East and West Bank) during the fifties and sixties - as well as the major pull for skilled and unskilled workers in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. But it must be noted also that the demographic pressures on the land elicited two other responses to the availability of cheap (refugee camp) labour within the agrarian regime: one was the intensification of share-tenancy contracts among the land hungry former peasants and the depreciation in the cost of agricultural labour during harvest periods. Another was the rejuvenation of uncultivated land in the Jordan Valley. Our hypothesis in this study is that only in intensive farming areas (primarily in irrigated farming) were Palestinian peasants in a position to resist the pull of both wage labour opportunities internally, and alternative employment abroad.

Loss of land, nevertheless, was a major factor in the occupational transformation of village structure on both sides of the armistice lines separating Israel from Jordan after the War (of 1948). The strains of de-peasantisation were particularly severe in the so-called frontier villages whose land was separated from the village residential quarters