

Chapter Twelve

The Diffusion of Agricultural Technology:

A New Subjugation for Palestinian Peasants?

Recent assessments of the Green Revolution in third world agriculture indicate that technical innovations have, in the main, been favourable to landlords and rich peasants at the expense of poor farmers. Griffin, in summarizing the conclusions of several of those assessments refers to increased income inequalities in the countryside, and the strengthening of the political hegemony by the landowning classes (Griffin, 1979:92-93). Furthermore, changes in the land tenure system often adapted itself to the new technology with unfavourable consequences:

The larger farmers -- because of preferential access to the means of production -- have been quicker to innovate than the smaller . . . in some cases the large farmers have ejected their tenants and begun farming with wage labour. In other cases the landowners have retained the sharecropping system and have simply reduced the share received by the tenant. Evidently, either contracts have been revised or the tenure system had been changed whenever landowners found it in their interest to do so (ibid.:93).

There is considerable evidence to support these findings in the recent history of the Jordan Valley (cf. Sharab, 1975:47, 86; Dajani, 1979:16-17), but the term "preferential access to the means of production" assumes, rather arbitrarily, a number of variables, including credit and technological initiative on the part of the farmer, which oversimplifies the complexity of agrarian relations under conditions of tenancy. It furthermore assumes, incorrectly as we have argued (Chapter 10), the loca-