

It should be noted that in the majority of cases Arab methods of cultivation were still primitive; and owing to the hunger for land, especially in the hill regions, the Arab farmer paid no attention to economic considerations and could be seen engaged in the cultivation of small patches of soil between the rocks sometimes by means of a pick-axe, or in terracing still smaller pockets and placing olive tree-shoots in them in the hope that they would survive. Many village families were able to subsist, though miserably, on such marginal land, which, according to Government standards, was classified as non-cultivable and therefore non-taxable. While such land was held in individual ownership, the tax distribution committee failed to enter the land and ownership in the tax lists because there was no tax to be assessed, and the owner was only too pleased to evade payment of the tax. Cases are known to exist in which influential members of the tax distribution committee would include their own lands under the non-taxable category in order to escape taxation.

The defect in the government classification of 'cultivable' land was condemned by Mr. Maurice Hexter, of the Jewish Agency, before the Royal (Peel) Commission, because, he said, "the figures, based on a fiscal survey, were necessarily falsified by the natural desire to evade the tax. They were compiled," he said, "by surveyors unable to classify cultivability, and limited to recording areas actually under cultivation, omitting fallow lands. The estimate of Government," he went on, "excludes all or nearly all land not under cultivation; secondly, it excludes all or nearly all land requiring considerable capital outlay; thirdly, it excludes all land under water, such as Huleh; fourthly, it does not distinguish between quality and productivity of the soil; fifthly, the figures are still estimates; sixthly, their present basis seems to us no more final than the estimates which they displace; and, lastly, the definition is unrelated to realities, because it omits, as it shows by its very contents, technology, capital, education, skill and markets."⁹

Another critic of the government classification of 'cultivable' land was Mr. A. Granovsky. To support his argument, he said: "In order to test the accuracy of the survey statistics, Jewish Agency experts classified the lands of two villages into the prescribed categories. In one village, near Jerusalem, where the survey made for the introduction of the Rural Property Tax, had shown 2,794 dunums, or 51.8 per cent, of the lands as uncultivable, the Jewish Agency experts could find only 975 dunums, or 18.8 per cent, of uncultivable land. In the second village, near Haifa, where 2,185 dunums, or 28.1 per cent were registered as uncultivable by the Government, the Jewish experts found no more than 726 dunums, or 9.3 per cent, of such land."

Mr. Granovsky then explained: "It would also seem that the terms 'cultivable' and 'cultivated' were often used interchangeably during the survey, and that only such lands were registered as 'cultivable' as were then actually under

(9) *Cmd. 5479* — The Royal (Peel) Commission Report, Chapter IX, para. 48, p. 236.