

Chapter Six

The Subjugation of Labour to Capital

In spite of all the forces which hindered the full integration of the Palestinian working class into the European Jewish capitalist economy, this chapter will demonstrate that the exploitation of this class was the most crucial factor in the reproduction and further expansion of the capitalist mode of production.

Indigenous Palestinian workers were absorbed and exploited by both the state and European Jewish capitalist sectors of the economy. This exploitation took place at various levels. These workers were exploited as a class, on racial (or national grounds) and, in the case of women, on the basis of sex.

A special role in the exploitation process was played by the General Federation of Jewish Labour, the Histadrut. The Histadrut's exclusivist policy of Jewish labour which was aimed at excluding the indigenous Palestinian workers from the European capitalist economy did not prevent their exploitation as various writers claim (Flapan, 1979; Kimmerling, 1983). On the contrary, these policies enhanced further the subordination of the indigenous workers to the dominant European Jewish economy.

The Palestinian working class, it will further be demonstrated, was not marginal or passive. The forces of oppression which accompanied the capitalist development in Palestine triggered massive political resistance among the workers.

In the literature to date, there are two major theoretical frameworks applied to the study of labour. The first maintains a separation between the Jewish capitalist and the indigenous pre-