

this question authors imply that the migrant labour force created and reproduced by colonial capitalism is necessarily passive and docile. Burawoy, for instance, states that by employing migrant workers the capitalist can avoid potential economic losses, due to strikes and other work disturbances usually associated with unionized labour bodies (Burawoy, 1974). This position, it will be argued, is inaccurate since it exaggerates the extent to which repression can effectively work, while at the same time, underestimates the real power of the labour force in challenging repression.

The recent history of the labour movement in South Africa is proof of the inadequacy of this approach. Despite the imposition of a state of emergency there, the labour movement in South Africa proved to be both economically and politically powerful. In 1987 alone South African industry lost about 9 million work-hours because of labour unrest. Moreover, the political power of the Black working class has become a real threat to white rule. For example, in June, 1988, 2 million to 3 million workers were able to defy the two year old state of emergency imposed on them by staging a nation-wide strike demanding radical economic and political changes. (2)

As this chapter will demonstrate, the same phenomenon occurred in Palestine. Strong resistance by the indigenous Palestinian peasants and working class was widespread throughout the colonial period. The machinery of repression employed against the indigenous Palestinians has been successful in facilitating the reproduction and expansion of capitalism. However, this same machinery failed to suppress the political will for resistance among the working population.