

A meeting took place in the village on July 7, 1980 and was attended by the West Bank secretary of cooperatives, the mukhtar of Zbeidat, seven leading farmers and heads of hamayel, and by this writer. While the benefits obtainable from the registration of their own cooperative was deeply felt by all those present, it became clear that the organizational power of Zbeidat was not up to par with the connections that neighbouring landlords in Jiftlek and Jericho have versus the Jordanian authorities and West Bank wholesalers. The suggestion by the director of cooperatives that Zbeidat farmers join the already existing Jiftlek marketing cooperative was firmly rejected by the Zbeidatis. In Jiftlek (see Map 11:4), it should be clarified, the control of water resources is firmly in the hands of the absentee landlords from Nablus (average ownership 200 dunums), while small farmers and sharecroppers (average 15-25 dunums) have established two separate, and uneven, cooperative marketing societies (Al-Ansari, 1980:Inter.). It transpired during the meeting that three of Zbeidat's own landlords (including the resident landlord) had discretely signed up their names in the Jiftlek society, an act which reinforced fears among the Zbeidatis that the Jiftlek farmers are out to "swallow" them. At stake in particular were the procurement of "certificates of origin" for the export of West Ghor vegetables to Jordan. Zbeidat farmers feared (on the basis of past experience) that the Jiftlek landowners would manipulate the nominal presence of the Zbeidat farmers in the proposed joint society to the benefit of the big farmers in Jiftlek.

It seems, in conclusion, that there are inherent limitations in the capacity of Zbeidat peasant, regardless how well organized they may become, to transcend the obstacles imposed on them by the alliance of commission agents, landlords, and vegetable wholesalers in the hisbehs of Nablus,