

to form an entity of its own. The economic consequences of this change were particularly grave. The West Bank lost an important market for its domestic produce and a source for a wide range of inputs. It lost access to all Mediterranean ports and had much of its transportation and communication systems disrupted. Wide areas of fertile land owned by West Bankers were lost inside the newly established Jewish state and thousands of jobs were also lost.

The net economic impact of these drastic transformations was severe, but the situation worsened further due to ensuing demographic shifts. The West Bank received about 43 percent of all displaced Palestinian refugees in the late 1940s, estimated at 620,000. This almost tripled the population density on agricultural land, raising it from 200 to 590 persons per square kilometer, and it created excessive strain on scanty resources. The impact was particularly severe during the crisis interval of 1948-52 when the West Bank was plagued by extreme poverty, famine and outbreaks of epidemic diseases. The situation could not have improved much with annexation to Jordan, which itself was until then an extremely impoverished desert kingdom.

Against this background, West Bank Palestinians embarked on two adaptive survival mechanisms, emigration and higher education. Both phenomena proceeded at a considerable pace and have later become instrumental in shaping the socio-economic life in the occupied territories. The Hashemite rule for 18 years gave additional impetus to both phenomena.

Political and economic life under the Hashemites (1949-67)

Palestinians and Jordanians constituted one nation until 1918 when they were separated into two entities, essentially in

anticipation of the eventual establishment of Israel in Palestine. However, following the installation of Prince Abdullah as ruler of Trans-Jordan in 1921, he developed a long-term aim of annexing those parts of Palestine which would be eventually left for Arabs after the formation of the Jewish state. This, together with competition with Palestinian leaders, resulted in four years of oppressive rule of the West Bank (1948-52) ending with his assassination in 1952 and a further deepening of the rift between the Hashemite monarchy and the Palestinian people.

Jordan's rule of the West Bank during 1950-67 was permeated with anti-Palestinian policies.\* The regime was opposed to manifestations of Palestinian identity, on the premise that Palestine no longer existed and loyalty should go to the merged state. But the Jordanian leadership appeared to develop deep insecurities arising from the potential hazards posed by ruling a nation which had a history of opposition during the eventful years of British mandate. Consequently, the Jordanian government adopted strong measures for controlling opposition. To help it do so, the Jordanian regime was able to utilize a stratum of Palestinian leaders who actively co-operated with the government in Amman in their capacity as "representatives" of the Palestinian people, exacerbating tensions on the West Bank.

In brief, the Palestinians in Jordan remained until 1967 largely deprived of any genuine form of free expression or any opportunity for expressing an independent identity.

\* Jamil Hilal's book (op cit) has provided an elaborate documentation of Jordan's policies in the West Bank. Some examples on economic and social discrimination will be cited later in this section.