

where peasant farming is markedly land and labour intensive. In addition to its economic significance, the land question lies at the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

It is evident that Israel is working towards eventual absorption of all West Bank land within its borders as part of Eretz Israel. The evidence in this regard is overwhelming. A particularly dramatic document is the newly released "confidential" Drobilis Plan which calls for the addition of 46 settlements (16,000 families) in the West Bank at the cost of IL 32 billions (see map on next page for the cluster grouping of existing and suggested settlements). It is clear from this map that Israel's settlement policy is motivated more by annexation hopes rather than by the claimed security hazards.¹

Conversely, Palestinians consider their sovereignty on the West Bank and Gaza Strip as the minimum that they might agree to in the context of a political settlement.* With Israel having control of the occupied territories since 1967, it has been concerned with realising its long-term aims. This section discusses some of the measures employed in this regard and their ramifications on the West Bank agriculture.

Post-occupation trends in land use

Analysis of secular trends in land use reveals that significant transformations have taken place since 1967. Table (III-3) presents a summary of these trends as derived from Israeli statistics.

1. Jerusalem Post, May 8, 1981, p 1.

* Although this is not stated officially, the PLO has made its intentions clear by its implicit acceptance of the Saudi "Fahd Peace Plan", which calls for the recognition of Israel in return to the establishment of a Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A particularly worrying fact for Palestinians in the West Bank, where de facto land use is more powerful than legal claims, is to see that less than one third of its land area is under cultivation. Still worse, Table (III-3) indicates a drop of some 50,000 dunums in the area under cultivation during 1968-78. In fact the actual drop in area under active cultivation is certainly many times larger, since official figures make no reference to vast areas of deserted tree orchards which, nominally, are still in production.

Table (III-3)

Trends in land use, 1968-1978

(thousand dunums)

	1968	1978
Total area	5572	5572
Uncultivated for all reasons	3889	3937
% of all area	69.8	70.7
Area under actual cultivation	1683	1635
% of total area	30.2	29.3
Area under irrigation	57	90
% of cultivated area	3.3	5.5

Source: Mose Levi, Judea and Samaria Agriculture, (Beit Eil: Department of Agriculture in the Military Administration, 1978), p 8.

Surprisingly, Table (III-3) shows a rise of 55 percent in the area under irrigation. Although there is no accurate data, the researcher believes that, based on his own field work, the physical area under irrigation has probably stayed about the same. The drop in area caused by the decline in the number of artesian wells and closure of large stretches in the Jordan Valley is just