

## **Introduction to the Second Edition**

One element I did not mention in the first edition of this booklet, is that one of the goals of writing it in English is to approach the English reader as the majority in the world. In addition to the fact that the possibility of translation from English to other languages is certainly better than a translation from Arabic.

Most of what has been written about Palestine and the Arab Homeland was mainly written by westernized Arab liberal bourgeois writers, or non-Arabs who are academics, bourgeois, or organic intellectuals of the ruling capitalist classes in the center of the world order.

Therefore, the aim of this booklet and my other English writings, is to introduce to the English reader the other Arab viewpoint about our Homeland. In this booklet, I deal with the Palestinian Arabs in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

What should be noted here is that progressive people worldwide are always in support of, or at least not neutral towards the struggle of peoples in the era of national liberation or people who are struggling for revolutionary changes. However, those who support our

just struggle shouldn't hesitate to criticize conservative or fundamental practices of the Palestinian liberation movement, especially regarding women rights for equality.

This is a right for any revolutionary in the world who sees him/her self in support of revolutionary change in any spot of the world. Many revolutionaries have voluntarily joined the struggle in those areas. This is legitimate, it is Guevara's spirit. But at the same time, critical writings about an area must come from people of that area. Based on this assumption, this booklet was critical to the Palestinian liberation movement in its position towards women, and against women's movement inside the occupied West Bank and Gaza, especially those women who support male chauvinism in the Palestinian leadership. This same criticism has been oriented against colonial feminism which is, in fact, part of the counter-revolutionary camp. All these, and other criticisms, have been placed into the main and large context of the analysis and critique of capital.

While this booklet was written at the end of the first Palestinian Intifada, and the beginning of the rule of the Palestinian Authority, the developments that followed, unfortunately did not bring about better

developments for women in the West Bank and Gaza. Unfortunately again, the “black-holes” which have been raised, analyzed, and criticized in this booklet remain unresolved or unchanged in our country and had probably worsened. This emphasizes the importance of the booklet, and makes it necessary to continue the line of critique.

The status of women has deteriorated, as well as the status of the left camp in general even more than the case of the left in the former Soviet Union. All leftist organizations in the West Bank and Gaza are calling themselves now “democratic forces”, which replaced their old and long time pretend that they are Communist and Marxist-Leninist organizations. Many local and foreign NGO’s, as well as NGOs with foreign financing are proliferating. Many local feminist organizations are being financed directly by the World Bank and other international agencies which are financed by the US State Department and/or the old imperialist powers of the European Union.

These forms of suspicious connections are “good ammunition” to the non-secular and fundamentalist political groups to justify their opposition to women rights.

The world is subjugated to the capitalist system in its new phase, globalization. While capital has achieved temporary gains and victories following the deterioration of the socialist camp, this can not conceal the most important consequence which resulted from these developments, i.e. the intensification of class exploitation inside each social formation and the war against other countries. These developments justify class struggle in this era and make it even more necessary more than in any other era in the history of capitalism. In such situation, the main and first loser is the woman. The future path of world revolution will give us the answer to: whether the movement towards achieving women's rights has deteriorated because of the disintegration and collapse of the socialist camp?

Adel

Samara

Ramallah August 2003

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## Preface

Despite the recent defeats suffered by the revolutionary-radical left camp internationally, the radical left is still the only social and class force able to struggle against exploitation, alienation, and gender inequality, and for genuine development and socialism.

With regard to the clear and continued weakness of the Palestinian and Arab left, in addition to the deterioration of revolutionary forces internationally, this situation is generating a new form of `dependency' in Arab countries - 'feminist dependency'.

My main aim in this booklet is to try to emphasize to Palestinian and Arab feminist activists, radical militants and most especially, young Marxist militants who read this booklet, the importance of feminist struggle and women's rights

for equality. But it is important to note that women's rights and struggles may be dangerous if they do not target their opposition against their main oppressor, which is capitalism.

Today, most women leaders ally themselves with the new *Iqlimi* dependent capitalist authority in the Limited Self-Rule (LSR). This alliance in fact strengthens the power of capital of which women are some of the first victims. In addition, many

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western and local liberal bourgeois feminists are exploiting the reactionary position of a number of political Islamic groups for women's liberation and equality, and have launched a campaign against Arab and Islamic culture. Their aim is to replace our culture with a dependent capitalist one. To fully explain the role of capital in women oppression, it is necessary to emphasize the economic factors, and not the legal and political factors alone.

In this booklet, I deal first with the push and pull historical developments which influenced women's

employment in agriculture. Such an analysis involved going back to the last decades of the previous century. While most of the Palestinian women's labour force is in family agriculture and domestic se-ups, these women's work is not recognized as value creation: more concretely, it is not rewarded with money. The result is an unequal balance of power within the family which results in the economic dependence of the wife as the source of personal services for the husband, who's work, as the wage [earner. is](#) exchanged for money. The guilty force here is capital, as the ruling power. Capital is to blame more than the Domestic Mode of Production (DMP), which generates this patriarchal oppression, because capital is able, at least today, to transcend DMP, when capital's interests needs this oppression. I am in doubt that capital will continue this exploitation during the LSR.

I have included only a brief analysis of women's employment in industry because their employment there is

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limited. While women's employment in the service sector was, and still is, limited, my argument is that the service sector's demand for women's labour will expand given the insecure nature of the LSR economy.

And finally, I end with a discussion of the areas in which women's and Marxist political and class struggles should concentrate.

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**National, Gender and**  
**Class Struggles**

The struggle for women's right to equality is increasingly becoming a central aspect of all social, economic, political and national struggles. Most

Marxist organizations and thinkers place a high priority on the struggle for women's rights. It has become clear that the attainment of gender equality is one of the main pre-conditions for human emancipation in general, and for the development of the peripheral countries in particular.

However, the question of the relationship between gender, national and class struggles in Palestine is highly complex. Palestinian society is a society under occupation on the one hand, while on the other, is in the process of transformation from a society colonized for centuries by foreign powers to one that is internally colonized - not towards independence as the Limited Self Rule (hereinafter: 'LSR'- what is conventionally known as the Palestinian Authority or PA) leaders are arguing. This complex situation is due to developments which followed the Imperialist' peaceful settlement, i.e. the creation

of the LSR which neither provides justice for the Palestinian Arabs on the national level, nor is able to provide a framework in which social and gender inequalities could be resolved. In fact, the inception of the LSR is introducing further complexities and obstacles to these struggles. Accordingly, in this new era, a new conceptualization of all aspects of the Palestinian struggle, including the feminist struggle, is vital.

While some feminists try to make women's struggle for equality the sole aim of their struggle, I would like to argue for another approach, one which stresses the need to integrate and unite the national, class and gender struggles. Such a unification does not exclude any of the three struggles at any stage. As Martha Gimenez has noted:

`The alternative, that everything is

'gendered' or 'raced' or 'ethnicised' is a play on words rather than substantially helping one understand the connection on these levels'. (Uimenez, 1995:262).

The Palestinian struggle has been mainly a national struggle. This does not mean that the challenges faced by the Palestinian people can be fully comprehended by exclusive focus on the national level. It is the ideology of the male leadership of the Palestinian national movement which has given the struggle its limited character. This male chauvinism is a product of different objective and subjective factors.

The objective factors flow from the level of socioeconomic development of Palestinian society, based on its

dominant mode of production, in particular, the social relations of production. The subjective ones flow from the political and social conservatism, as well as the theoretical backwardness that has characterized most Palestinian political organizations if not all of them, especially their leaders, who were and still are leading the national struggle. This criticism applies to both left-wing organizations, as well as right-wing ones. The result of male domination of the leadership of the national struggle has been a total marginalization of the women's struggle for equal rights, almost completely ignoring women's struggle for equality and their role in the national struggle.

However, the attempt to correct this imbalance must not lead to fall into the opposite trap: that of a one-sided struggle. We must always look to the common interests of the national, class and gender struggles. Marxist-Leninist

organizations and activist hold gender equality to be a matter of principle and believe that women should have equal rights with men. But this belief must be actualized in practice more than it has been in the past. This means that Marxist-Leninists must strengthen their understanding of revolution as a vehicle for social transformation and emancipation on every level, the gender as well as the national and class levels. It is Marxist-Leninists who are genuinely able to address the question of women's rights in the proper way. If put into practice, women will certainly be ready to be actively involved in the struggle rather than continue to allow men to dominate revolutionary activity. And, thereby women will in fact come to play an equal role.

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National struggle in Palestine is not limited to the Palestinian level. It is a part of the pan-

Arab national struggle for development, unity and liberation of occupied lands. The fragile agreement of Oslo exposes the limitations of the *iqlimi* (local) Palestinian ideology, which, having isolated itself from the pan-Arab national dimension, produces an LSR, at best. In this context, it is important, and even urgent, to insure that given the destructive content of the imperialist "peaceful" settlement, especially its effects on the Arab popular classes, the pan-Arab national struggle must stay in the forefront of struggle priorities. The joint Arab nationalist struggle has become more urgent than ever, after the long experience of limited Palestinian *iqlimi* struggle has ended with the formation of an LSR, a situation little different to the continuation of Israeli occupation in another guise. It is important to note here that these developments may remarginalize the struggle for gender equality for many years to come.

**The Imperialist 'peace' settlement is not the proper solution**

In this period of domination by western capitalism on an international scale, the women's struggle needs to make itself aware of the influence of the global cultural campaign which the western bourgeoisie is waging to impose a new version of Eurocentrism.

This campaign confronts the Arab women's struggle with two dangers, both of which are actual in the present:

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- the loss of its Arab/Islamic cultural character, leading to social alienation
- the inability to properly assimilate western capitalist (including Israeli) feminist values, which are themselves in crisis.

Progressive Palestinian women have to either fight against local feminist liberal currents which are suffering from an inferiority

complex *vis-à-vis* the western bourgeois culture' including that of Israel (see later), or fall into the trap of blind imitation of western capitalist feminists, which means following the example of liberal bourgeois women who have never suffered in the same way as Palestinian women. Nor have their demands for equality ever transcend the demand for 'rights' in the formal bourgeois sense.

During the national struggle some intellectual Palestinian bourgeois or upper middle class feminists suffered from political and national inferiority complexes. Since they failed to fully participate in the national struggle, they failed to acquire the special political/ national and social respect which they sought to gain as intellectuals. Accordingly, they found in the abstract and even anarchist feminist stand a good refuge and means of revenge. They became antagonistic towards all political and national struggles. It should be noted here that the backwardness of the national movement, including its Marxist-Leninist components, should not be counter-

posed by a nihilistic attitude towards the national struggle - while an occupation is still threatening the very physical existence of the Palestinian people! Let us not forget that the Israeli

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occupation continues to oppress the entire Palestinian people, - women, men, and children.

The aim of these Western-oriented feminist currents today is to market the western-capitalist bourgeois culture, reeducating Palestinian women to the ideas of private property, free enterprise, free market ideology; training women to look for jobs (often office and service) and not to struggle to create productive cooperatives, and finally working against leftism, Marxism and Arab nationalism.

Western-capitalist feminist groups and organizations, who are not struggling against the imperialist capitalist regimes of their own countries (which blocked the development of the peripheral world, plundered its wealth and launched aggression against any peripheral country if it tried to control its own wealth), they are, in fact, supporting these regimes, and have nothing to offer women in peripheral countries of the world order.

But at the same time, we must not confuse genuine feminism on the one hand with Eurocentrism on the other. Feminism is a human phenomenon. It is a struggle initiated for the right of women to equality in all aspects of life. Although feminism arose in the period of hegemony of the capitalist mode of production (which had its historical origin in Western Europe), this should not lead us to conclude that it is an exclusively European phenomenon. Feminism started in the western countries as they were the first societies to transform to capitalist social formations,

dominated by the capitalist mode of production.  
In these capitalist formations,

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wage labor intensified women's exploitation and strengthened male domination despite supposed formal gender equality. In addition to this, the increase of women's education and intellectualism in this stage of development of civilisation, encouraged women's demand for equality.

**A joint struggle with Zionist Feminists is not the proper approach**

An Israeli bourgeois woman whose son is a

soldier, and whose husband an officer in Israel's war-and-occupation machine - the watchdog for imperialism in the region - is unable to create a healthy relationship with a Palestinian woman whose son is a martyr and whose daughter and husband are prisoners of the same son and husband of the Israeli woman. A real joint struggle is impossible unless Israeli feminists decide to struggle against the Zionist regime and ideology.

In fact what is happening is the opposite.' The Israeli women themselves are soldiers in the same male-dominated settler-colonial army. The Israeli liberal feminists justify the role of women in the military establishment as a step towards equality. 'They insist, for instance, on women serving in the military in order to transform it and as a way of gaining access to greater social power' (Lentin, 1995:5). However, '...even when women do become part of the military, they are kept in their place as women' (Lynn Segal, 1978:174-

75). `Early in 1995, a top ranking IDF officer told secondary school students that 'historically, men were born to be heroes and women were born to be whores.'" (Lentin, 1995:5). Ofra Friedman,

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chairperson of Na'amat (Israeli Women's Labor Federation) criticized this 'machoism' but called for deepening of women's involvement in the IDF as the answer:

`Israel is fighting for peace ... which is why conscription is still necessary ... The IDF has a vital social role and as such it must enable girls, as well boys, to serve the state' (Friedman, 1995:5).

If Israeli feminists were to deepen their understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict, they would be able to clarify their feminism and politics more. `With new trends in interpreting Israeli sociology (e.g. Ram, 1993) which analyze Israeli society as a settler-colonial society, current Israeli feminism is challenging the debate from looking at the status of Israeli women to analyzing Israel as a masculine-military society' (Shohat, 1991; Shadmi, 1992; Sharon, 1992). 'Españoli criticizes the Israeli peace camp for ceasing its activities after Oslo' (Lentin, 1995:12). The position of Israeli feminists during the Gulf War was similar: `Israeli women's political responses during the Gulf War stemmed from deep fears of Iraqi threats, but they sided with the West, while Palestinian women's point of reference was the Third World' (Deutsch, 1994:92-93).

Most liberal and academic Palestinian women were `busy' proving to the Israeli

bourgeoisie and Zionist feminists that  
Palestinian women were ready to start joint  
work with them while still under occupation.  
While Palestinian youths

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were being beaten, arrested, killed or assassinated by Israeli soldiers, joint meetings between the liberal bourgeois Palestinian women and Israeli feminists never stopped. The male political leadership, needless to say, manifested the same way of thinking and behaving.

It is worth noting that the liberal bourgeois Palestinian women never shared the supportive position of the majority towards Iraq.' Hanan Ashrawi went too far in opposing the stand taken by the Palestinian national struggle by putting it on the same

level as Israeli settler-colonial aggression:

'War has traditionally been the domain of men ... and conversely, peace is the domain of women ... and we know that peace has to be based on justice, not on domination, not on discrimination' (Lentin, 1995:6)

Through this form of generalization Ashrawi fails to differentiate between wars of different natures. She equates the Palestinian national struggle with Israeli aggression. The Israeli-Arab struggle is in fact larger than a regional one, because imperialist forces (in various forms) involve themselves in this struggle directly and have often intervened on Israel's behalf. Israel has never fought its war alone. But Ashrawi considers the Palestinian struggle as 'male dominated', just like the aggressive wars of imperialism! By rejecting the Palestinian resistance to gradual destruction, the Palestinian and Israeli liberal feminists are in fact serving the

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imperialist 'peaceful' settlement, i.e. the settlement designed by world capitalism.

Palestinian women could share in a joint struggle with Israeli women if the latter emancipate themselves from the domination of the Israeli political and ideological project, i.e. Zionism. On any

other basis. 'joint struggle' would be fake and lead Palestinian feminism to deteriorate into a new form of dependency.

### **Ignoring the national dimension is not the proper approach**

Palestinian feminists who are deliberately neglecting the national struggle and adopting the joint bourgeois and anarchist struggle with the Zionist Israeli feminists are in fact supporting the policy and *iqlimi* ideology of the LSR which is in fact part of the Ruling Arab Nationalism (hereinafter RAN) policy against the Latent Arab Nationalism (hereinafter ALN).

Nahla Abdo is one of the positive exceptions in this level. While she didn't place the *intifada* as a Palestinian struggle in the context of the wider Arab nationalist struggle, she rightly noted that: '*Intifada* combines the trajectories of two movements - a national liberation movement and a women's movement. While it is hard to conceive of the *intifada* without the decisive role of women, it is equally difficult to perceive of the women's movement in isolation from the wider national liberation movement`

The RAN is the nationalism of the ruling Arab dependent capitalist classes who are mainly of comprador (linked directly

to foreign capital) and merchant nature. They are not nationalistic classes in the sense of having any inclination to adopt a development policy to invest in the productive sectors, protect the national markets and de-link from the World imperialist order. Their nationalism is purely verbal. Its content is an *iqlimi* and dependent one. That is why this form of nationalism, including its Palestinian version, is amenable to the imperialist/Zionist peace settlement in the Arab Homeland. A settlement which is actually a device to serve imperialism in its project of re-ordering on the regional scale and deepening of Arab fragmentation.'

ALN is the nationalism of the popular classes who are looking for Arab unity, development and the right of return for the Palestinian people. It is the nationalism of the oppressed and artificially fragmented Arab nation. It is the nationalism which is under continual attack by imperialism, Zionism, Arab capitalist *iqlimi* regimes, many Islamic political currents (PI - political Islam) and the traditional revisionist communist movement.

### **The Self Rule regime is for capital, not women**

The irony is that the bourgeois and anarchist form of feminism has ended up serving male domination, i.e. the capitalist system, in which male domination is deeply

embedded. Before the imposed imperialist 'peace' settlement and the creation of the LSR, the Palestinian national liberation movement was united around a national liberation

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programme. Under the cover of national liberation, many important issues were abandoned. Gender equality was the first to be 'sacrificed' for the sake of national struggle.

Here, we have two levels of argument: first: the Palestinian political factions who support the Oslo Agreement have declared that the national struggle is over. The same position is taken by those who are currently controlling the LSR regime (either directly or indirectly). Accordingly, there is no excuse for these political organizations and social factions to continue justifying their marginalization of the struggle for women rights and equality. By signing the Oslo Accords, the representatives of Palestinian capitalism signalled their decision to join the new project 'Capital and Class re-ordering' on a regional scale, including dependency and integration with the dominant Israeli capitalist system despite the fact that the Israeli occupation of Palestine continues. This situation is rife with numerous social and class contradictions. One of the most important is capital

versus women's rights.

Some Palestinian women's organizations submitted a document on gender equality to the LSR authorities. For the time being their struggle for gender equality has not yet transcended this level. Feminists who fall into the trap of attempting to achieve their rights by demanding new legislation are acting in a similar way to those who place their trust in the ideology of human rights. As Gimenez notes:

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'... 'the ideology of civil rights also reinforces these divisions, due to the belief that the worst effects of class exploitation and oppression - which fall disproportionately upon women workers and populations classified as non-white, so that as they are perceived primarily as the source of sexism, and racism, can be fully redressed through civil rights legislation and litigation'. (Uimcncz, 1995:258).

Secondly, the opposition, which believes that the national struggle has not yet concluded and argues for its expansion on a pan-Arab scale, must be wary of repeating the mistakes of the past, not least male chauvinism - if they are to fully appreciate the lessons learned during the failure of the revolution in the former Soviet Union or in the

Occupied Territories.

Capitalism is the incubator of male domination.

The category of `women does not constitute a homogeneous social class But women compose the majority of the exploited and oppressed classes (the workers and peasants). Moreover, the majority of Palestinian women are members of these oppressed classes. Women members of the oppressed classes are the lowest on the social ladder, especially since they suffer from oppression from oppressed males - who exploit them insofar as their work on family farms and at home is unpaid labor. Thus, the contradiction between the majority of women and the capitalist social system is intense, because of the

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double or triple exploitation they suffer (class, gender, national).  
The fact that the capitalist system is dominated by males does

not mean that it benefits all males, nor that every male is a capitalist and exploits women. In the capitalist system we might say that every male is a potential oppressor of females, but he is not a potential capitalist.

Men exploit women as an aspect of male domination. But it is not every man, 'absolute man' - it is the capitalist man protected and supported by 'law' as a class law, designed by the bourgeois regime to protect bourgeois interests:

Man as capitalist oppresses women, both by exploiting her largely unpaid or under-paid labor power and by oppressing her as a female. Owing to the deformed social consciousness prevalent amongst them, the oppressed and exploited male workers and other poor classes oppress their wives and daughters more than their sons. It is only with the attainment of a greater degree of class consciousness that men from the working-class, poor peasants and other oppressed social layers will realize that they have nothing in common with the capitalists (as rulers and representatives of the capitalist system) other than biological similarity.

The more that humanity learns to apply scientific yardsticks, the less it will be concerned with supposed male physical superiority over females. It is worth noting, however, that the lessening of the importance of physical difference between males and females will not automatically guarantee gender equality in regard to wages. It is only a classless social system - real socialism - which will be able to do that. In class

societies, natural gender equality has been deformed by all the various systems of private ownership, culminating in the capitalist system. Gender inequality, in turn, strengthens the capitalists. In this way:

The feminist philosophy has the double merit of not only denouncing the injustice perpetrated against women, but also of shaking up the power-foundations of traditional epistemology ....<sup>8</sup>

Men in patriarchal class societies have always been inculcated with the belief that they acquire a sort of property right by marrying any woman, "absolute woman." Thus the character of men (and women) in class society is not a natural one, as it may have existed before the inception of class societies. The character of men today bears the traces of the male heritage of serfdom and feudalism. The man of today is the result of the [past.as](#) well as the product of the male-dominated capitalist system and the hegemonic male capitalist culture. Man in capitalism believes that with money he is able to `buy' human beings (including women) and the labor power of human beings (workers, both male and female). When the capitalist pays different wages to men and women, he is acting as a capitalist who considers this world both a male domain and a realm of private property in

which he as capitalist is in a position to estimate for human beings their share in life according to his own wealth and mainly his own interest.

However, it should be noted here that not all males have this powers. It is only at the disposal of males who possess

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capital. If the capitalist class weakens, it will constitute a major step towards the abatement of male privileges, and thus, towards the promotion of gender equality.

So, the women's main battle is against capitalism and not against `absolute man'. Capitalism is a system of social relations defined by ownership and power, more concretely: a system of social relations of production. Capitalism is the force behind male capitalist domination and exploitation of both males and females from the

subordinate classes. Structurally, it is capital which is the incubator of the male-dominated bourgeois dictatorship.

In addition, capitalism prevents the full development of bourgeois democracy, allowing for only a very limited political democracy. Political democracy under capitalism has never expanded to include industrial and economic democracy, democracy in work, production, management, ownership and the right of every human being to freely develop according to his/her own capacities and needs. Capitalism is essentially anti-democratic, and its democracy is an elitist one. The first to be harmed by capitalism's blockage of economic and industrial democracy are women, through their subjection to discrimination in wages and even in the right to employment.

In the final analysis, capitalist democracy guarantees the rights of a few at the expense of the many - it is democracy of, by and for the capitalists themselves. But not every male is a capitalist. In capitalism, everyone's share of democracy is determined according to their share of private ownership. It should be pointed out that this private ownership has emerged

from exploitation, theft and plunder of others' production (although a full exposition of this reality cannot be undertaken in this booklet).

I would venture to suggest that capitalism is the main motivating factor behind men's desire to block women's struggle for their rights, and to deflect their struggle from dealing directly with the gender oppression, (including among men from oppressed classes who have internalized capitalist cultural norms). Since the capitalist mode of production (hereinafter 'CMP') is the dominant mode, and the domestic mode of production (hereinafter 'DMP') is subjected to the CMP, the CMP is the primary reason for women's oppression. Accordingly, real women's liberation from male domination is impossible without the collapse of capitalist domination. So male capitalists are not be able to contribute to women's liberation, even should they so desire - at least not as long as they are acting as agents of their own class interests.

In the Arab and Palestinian situation, it should be noted that development, democracy, unity, and a civil society are impossible without gender equality. Without, at this point, explicating the point at length, I think it should be obvious that the capitalist social formation will never be able to meet these demands.

Feminist struggle in Palestine is still limited by the bourgeois mentality and legalistic concerns, both of which are actually male-dominated spheres. It should be noted that many feminist organizations, separating their struggle from the class one, have not in fact initiated new spheres of

struggle. They

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try to 'struggle' within the limits set by bourgeois 'law'. And, explains Gimenez:

'No challenges to the politics of identity are likely to be successful as long as people continue to believe that all that is needed to solve their problems is effective legislation' (Gimenez, 1995:262).

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according to the internal laws of motion of the dominant mode of production.

According to Marx, each mode of production is composed of the forces and relations of production. Forces of production are the base on which the socio-economic formation rests, while the relations of production are the expression of the superstructure in the same formation. While the base is the determinant in the socio-economic formation, the forces of production are the determinant in the mode of production. The question of the 'determinant' factor was and still is a highly debatable one. Although, it seems that both determinants (of the formation and the mode of production) play their respective roles. In the case of the mode of production, some Marxists attribute it to the relations of production, which they characterize as primary vis-a-vis the forces of production.

Such people argue that emphasis on the relations of production rather than forces of production opens the way for an analysis of power, gender, race, and social conflict, as well as for rejection of technological or economic determinism. Other Marxists maintain that the determinant factor in the mode of production is the force of production, while the relations of production, of course, play a relative role.

As to the respective roles of the determinant factors in the formation and the mode, Bottmore has noted: '... but at least the text shows that determination by the base does not reduce politics and ideas to economic phenomena. This aspect has been rendered as the 'relative autonomy' of the

superstructure' (Bottmore, 1983:44). Marx noted that '...the relations of production are determined by the forces, and they themselves determine the superstructure' (Bottmore, 1983:179). Marx writes as though the capitalist relations of production revolutionize the instruments of production and the labor process. Such formations need not be a problem for the idea that the forces of production are primary if Marxism was to offer a conception of the articulation between forces and relations of production, such as how they interact, but with the forces being the determinant, in some sense, both of the relations and the way the two elements interact would be clear. But Marx's own texts are silent on this, and some writers have argued that they preclude the possibility of such interaction between two distinct elements because they collapse and 'fuse' forces and relations together, with the forces becoming a form of the relations."<sup>1)</sup>

A mutual interpretation of the base and superstructure takes place through the conscious activity of human beings and of social classes. The same social classes are the mediating agency which transfers the mode of production from its abstract form to a concrete and substantial one. Accordingly, the social moment is the factor which transfers the material, political, and ideological social formation into concrete things. An abstract discussion of the mode of production is insufficient. It has to be dragged into the social field. Any meaningful discussion must mention (and more than mention) the social classes which are operating, interacting and producing laws, and the various levels of the

superstructure - such as laws and ideologies - which thereby maintain the current mode of production. These are, in fact, maintaining the ownership of the propertied classes through the relations of production.

Many Marxists are questioning the mode of production : how are social relations organized to appropriate and distribute surplus labor? what are the main dynamics of control in the given set of social relations? who benefits from them and who pays for them? These are useful questions because they direct attention beyond psychological and ideological processes to the forces and relations of production involved in male dominance. The forces of production would, in this analogy, include: women's labor power (defined in traditional Marxist usage as including the education of the laborer and, by only a small extension, her gender socialization into specializing in certain kinds of work); the technology of reproduction, child rearing, and housework; and women's reproductive capacity, including women's struggles to control their own bodies. The relations of production would include structures of control over the labor and reproductive powers of women, forms of organization of both exploiter and exploited, legal controls over women, etc. The conceptualization of male control over women as a mode of production is a powerful analogy, and a very useful one, in that it directs our attention to the fact that the production and distribution of gender relations and meanings is a dynamic system (Contooz, 1990).

I would like to add here that while technological development and innovations should minimize discrimination

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I would like to add here that while technological development and innovations should minimize discrimination against women, no social and cultural developments are taking place to parallel to this.

In a patriarchal mode of production, are all men dominant over all women? Are black American men dominant over white American women, working class men dominant over upper class women? If it is true that the oppression of women makes all women subject to rape, it is also true that class and race make some men particularly vulnerable to charges of rape. If men have certain advantages *vis-à-vis* all women, in what ways are these limited by class and race? The notion of patriarchy as a mode of production provides no clear conceptual tools for answering these questions (Contoos, 1990).

The social-economic formation in the Occupied Territories during the period of the Israeli occupation (1967 - to date) may be characterized as a peripheral capitalist one. But it is not the normal case of even such a formation, for in formations which are developing normally and independently the forces of production are the determining factor. Or, put somewhat differently, the determination may be said to take place through the 'fuse' of the forces and relations, as if the forces are becoming a form of the relations (Balibar). In any event, this is not the case in the OT, where the determining factor is the Israeli occupation. It is the same in the LSR."

The formation here is dependent economically and colonized politically. The occupation authorities were the sole

largely the case under the LSR arrangements. All banks were closed and replaced by branches of Israeli merchant banks. A very limited number of factory licenses were granted to Palestinian business people (almost all were businessmen) - only 6 per year! Exchange between the OT and Israel was unequal, its terms being dictated by military power (an armed unequal exchange).

In the LSR era.. the expected change in this formation will be in form not content. It will be a change from direct settler colonialism to a situation of internal colonialism\_ What is important here is the fact that this capitalist formation will continue to be unproductive, dependent directly on the external center - in this case, primarily the Israeli economy, but the world capitalist system as well - for the LSR areas will be required to be open to penetration as before, without any protective mechanisms. This fake `transformation' is due to the fact that the capitalist class factions in the LSR lack the integrity (and perhaps the resources) to embark on the journey towards economic independence, i.e. to control the national market.' The LSR/peripheral capitalist formation is a fragile and unproductive structure, unable to carry a national project of real independence. Its administrative role will make it, in effect, an organizational section in the apparatus of the State of Israel

Its main social and class components will be the merchant\_ comprador and sub-contractor capitalist factions, whose interests are in alliance with the bureaucratic capitalist faction of the PLO leadership. All these factions will, in fact,

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be administrative assistants for the Israeli master. The absence of Palestinian independence, will perpetuate dependency and normalization, a situation correctly termed an 'Internalization of Defeat' (hereinafter IOD), receiving its orientation and led by retarded capitalist class interests.

LSR capitalism has chosen dependency in order to satisfy its own limited interests and ambitions. This is also the reason it promotes iqlimi political ideology as opposed to panArab nationalism, as alluded to earlier. Because the Palestinian bourgeoisie is a dependent one, its political ideology is iqlimiah, and it will remain unable to control the produced surplus\_ despite the installation of the LSR. The surplus will continue to be drained abroad, either by foreign banks or local and Arab ones. This surplus will never come back to be invested in its supposed homeland.

Thus the vicious circle will continue to reproduce itself in this formation. The surplus is drained to the outside, whilst foreign capital is hesitant to invest in the LSR economy (except the housing and construction sector) which lacks a nationalist, productive and independent ruling-class to impose formal national protection (much less a

socialist authority willing to apply the strategy of 'Development by Popular Protection')." At the same time, the Israeli occupation itself was and still aims to destroy all remnants of the Intifada strategy of 'Development by Popular Protection'. And now it is joined in this attack by the LSR authority. This authority is daily reasserting its approval for, and readiness to apply, the World Bank and IMF prescriptions." The result is a selective

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elitist investment strategy<sup>s</sup> which looks for fast and ease profit paying scant attention to production to meet the basic needs of the population. Accordingly, the investment policy of the LSR is currently in the hands of foreign capital, under guidelines set by the IMF and the World Bank, which preach the ideology of the 'free market'. In addition, they advocate concentration on creating regional infrastructural projects which will tie the LSR areas and Jordan to the Israeli infrastructure in order to facilitate the Israeli Integration through Domination (hereinafter ITD) over the region. This strategy aims to make the 'integration' of these three regimes a pilot project of the Imperialist Market in the Middle East.

To summarize the situation, there was no national authority on the political level in the OT during the direct phase of the Israeli occupation. And today, there is LSR in place which is likely to consolidate itself to be nothing more than an authority directed by Israeli colonialism. This situation will result in three levels of authority:

- The Israeli central authority will continue to be in charge of security and foreign affairs inside the LSR
- The Israeli military authorities inside the LSR will continue to be in charge of land, water, export, import and indirect taxation
- The LSR authorities will be in charge of direct taxation, education, health, etc.

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The LSR regime will not be a sovereign or self-determining one. for it lacks the power of independent decision-making with regard to land use, water control. investment, saving, consumption, production and accumulation. It is no accident that this formation (the LSR formation), with its fragile economic base. will be without

political sovereignty. This is built into the design! The following two phenomenon will confirm the fragility of the imperialist peace settlement:

1. Zionism has never changed its ideology or project in terms of land, expansion, immigration and domination.<sup>16</sup> The form the project now takes is the policy of ITD into the Arab Homeland. The first level is to colonize all of Mandatory Palestine, and the second to play a role in the imperialist penetration and domination of the Arab countries. This will deepen and perpetuate Arab countries' dependency. Arab dependency and/or unequal development and exchange with Israel will bring great benefits to Israel, and will help it to minimize its dependency on other imperialist countries. This new situation will see Israel move from the category of being the centre of the Ots periphery and a periphery for the imperialist centre on the one hand, to being nearly pure center on the other.

2. As a result of the above dependency, the LSR areas will be deprived of any form of real sovereignty, even if it will later be called an independent Palestinian state (see below). In order to preserve Israel's ability to export its products to and through these areas without obstacles from a genuinely

independent state, the LSR areas will act as Bantustans for Israel, using Arab merchants (as importers) and providing cheap labor (when it is needed) for the Israeli market without any controls from an independent Palestinian state. As a further complication, Jordan will serve as a competitive counter-weight to this dependent LSR entity in the Israeli employment market, since it has opened direct borders with Israel by-passing LSR bridges and communications to Jordan."

The early or first features of this imperialist market in the Middle East, indicates that a new form of sovereignty for the LSR is on the way. It will be a sovereignty of the people, a sovereignty of power (authorities) over the population. It is not sovereignty over land and resources. This is a direct expression of the globalization which minimizes sovereignty in peripheral societies, while expanding sovereignty of the center beyond its national boundaries. Such an expansion is camouflaged by the false pretence of 'liberalization of trade', openness, a global village, and finally globalization.

Since the open borders are benefiting the center at the cost of the periphery, with Israel, Jordan and the LSR as a 'pilot project' of the imperialist market in the Middle East, Israel as the center will have the opportunity for the free movement of its capital and products to the other two countries, while these other two will be unable to compete with Israeli capital and goods. In such a situation, Israeli sovereignty will be strengthened, and that of Jordan and the

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LSR will be completely curtailed. This in addition to the fact that Israel will only permit labour from the other two countries to enter its areas on its own terms, regardless as to whether its argument will be based on security, or economic, reasons, or both.

To sum up, the situation in the OT/LSR areas is a peripheral capitalist formation dominated by the peripheral capitalist mode of production in which class and political forces play the decisive role, with dependent local capital facilitating this role. It is a peripheral capitalist mode with two

main characteristics:

- First, the level of development of its forces of production in agriculture and industry is low. This backwardness contributes to the continual blockage of its development.
- Second, relations of production in the OT/LSR areas are not pure capitalist ones

In agriculture, production takes place in several forms, one is capitalist (waged labor) but on a limited scale, and the other, share-cropping, mainly of a family basis. While distribution takes place in a direct market manner, agricultural production is largely for self-sufficiency, not the market. It is important to remember that those dependent on agriculture are a large percentage of the population, especially since the large number of small plots of land minimizes production for the market.

The complex nature of women's position and role in the peripheral capitalist mode of production in the OT/LSR

consider the number of newly-unemployed or indirectly-fired women. These women are mainly not registered in the Israeli labor offices.

Many of these women head families. They have to find a substitute for the income provided by their former work in Israel in order to support their families. The only available income source is to work in the informal sector, for example, to peddle inexpensive items on the pavements of city streets. Since the redeployment of the Israeli forces out of the cities of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the LSR authorities have promulgated regulations forbidding both men and women from peddling on the city streets, including their own produce. In such a situation, women are harmed more than men since they lack the qualifications to compete with men for jobs in the formal sector. The authorities are obligated to find alternative jobs for these people - and not simply push them back to unemployment. And presumably even if a solution for the now outlawed

peddlers is [concocted. it](#) will be designed primarily for males.

Even in commercial agriculture, where women work as wage earners. their jobs are seasonal, or on a daily basis, working days are too long, their wages are low, there are no trade unions, no collective bargaining agreements, etc. Accordingly, the condition of women's rights and status in this sector is no better than it is *vis-à-vis* women engaged in domestic work or working on the family farm. However, owing to its need for cheap labor. Israel is again employing Palestinian women from border villages and refugee camps,

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despite the closure, as women are considered less

dangerous  
than men.

To reiterate: it is the role in production that determines the social position. As mentioned above, however, it is not the case that in capitalist society social positions are determined by the role of production in a precise manner. In fact, for women, the process of the determination of their social position is more deformed than it is for men. In Palestinian society, women's employment is a temporarily change for women from the kitchen to the work place, but without a similar transformation in her social position. In such situations, women are in constant risk of being pushed back to the kitchen, as happened during the continuous Israeli sieges on the OT which led to more male unemployment. Women were even deprived of those modest measures of political equality they had achieved during the peak of the Intifada. Despite the fact that when women are employed in paid labor they have already entered in a process which begins with increasing their income, and could potentially continue by providing them with the opportunity to participate in management

and contribute technical innovations, this is not a process that necessarily leads to a change in the superstructure, with, for example, the enactment of laws to enforce equality, for example (even though both males and females are, in fact, contributing equally to the production process). The recent crisis in the capitalist centre has proved that even here, the position of women in the production process is not a condition that is able to guarantee them full social equality

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with men. Working women and women who are heads of families are for the most part not even able to enjoy the fruits of their income or wages. They have to save it for the marriage of their sons.

Here is an instance in which we can see the power of capital taking on a male form crystallized in a social role which oppresses women. It is a power which cannot be

opposed solely on the basis of academic challenges presented in courses of sociology and philosophy in universities, or by the verbal manifestoes of bourgeois-feminist circles - especially by the bourgeois anarchist trend which always argues that independence and homeland are 'male concepts', for males only, and who call for joint Israeli-Palestinian women's movement despite the fact that Israeli practices after the imperialist/Zionist peace settlement have not changed, and the policies and basic nature of the Zionist state are still as they were before the settlement.

This trend fails to see the role of colonialism and imperialism in blocking not only development in the periphery, but democracy and equality as well. A joint Israeli/Palestinian women's movement is just another variant of capitalist joint ventures. In all these bourgeois joint activities, the Israeli side remains dominant - and represents the interests of the Israeli occupation, and the coming Israeli plan for Integration Through Domination (ITD) of Arab countries in the near

future, via the increase of the number of Arab capitalist regimes who will sign the imperialist-Zionist 'peace' settlement. Under this scenario, Arab women become

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an inferior and colonized partner to the capitalist Zionist feminists.

One should not conclude from this that women have no right to establish their own organizations. Experience under conditions of dependent capitalism makes it clear that joint national and class struggles have led to male domination. Joint gender and class struggle, requires a higher level of class consciousness, which surpasses the current level of many Marxists in both the centre and periphery. It has become clear that a non-bourgeois women's struggle is necessarily a socialist one.

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## **Women in Industry, Co-operatives and the Service Sector**

Little has been written about women's socio-economic position in general, and women's labor in particular, neither by Palestinian political organizations, trade unions (the number of women in trade unions is very limited), nor women's organizations.

While trade union statements and publications do not confine themselves to economic issues, but also express consistent support for the political leadership of the PLO, they nevertheless refrain from dealing much with women's issues, and the same is true for the political organizations. As to Palestinian women working in Israel, they are hardly ever mentioned. Of the few articles on the subject that do exist, many are translations from Israeli newspapers.

Women's employment in industrial sector of the OTs is

low. Industry's share in the GNP is 8-9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>0</sub>. As already mentioned, women's employment in the OTs was not mainly due to an internal dynamic, but is a result of external demand, from Israel and the Gulf area. This external demand absorbed a large amount of surplus labor from the OTs. However, very

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few Palestinian women were employed in industry. This is due to the fact that most Palestinian workers in Israel are employed in such jobs as cleaning homes, hospitals, etc., in addition to the low level of development of industry in the OTs. While the Palestinian dependent sector of industry which often sub-contracts from Israeli companies employs more women, it also severely exploits them in terms of wages, working hours, and the like.

The main difference between agriculture and industry is that women's work in industry is

considered as work, entitled to monetary remuneration, despite women's lower position in comparison with men, at least in terms of wages.<sup>20</sup> And, in general, the 'equality gap' in industry is smaller than it is in the agricultural, service and domestic sectors.

The mere existence of the Israeli occupation, and the Israeli policy of destroying the Palestinian infrastructure, preventing its development and employing Palestinian men in menial, low-paid jobs inside Israel, contributed greatly to keeping women out of the work-place. The occupation deformed the development of the OTs economy by cutting-off its 'natural' process of development, and by preventing it from having its own local authority. This is one aspect of the obstructive role of the occupation.

Another is that Palestinian women employed in Israel were confined to such sectors as house-cleaning and crop harvesting and collection - with few employed in textiles. The so-called 'modern' Israeli

labor laws never applied to these Palestinian women since most of them were not formally

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registered with the Labor Bureaus. This is in contrast to the situation of Palestinian males employed in Israel, who are mostly registered, and who received some - but by no means all - of the protection and entitlements granted by Israeli labor law. Accordingly, Palestinian women in the OTs industrial sector were in a better social and human position in comparison to those Palestinian women working in Israel or working inside the OT for Israeli capitalists, especially those forced to do 'home-based' contract work in their own homes (especially in the textile sector).

Israel's economic policy of obstructing productive investment in the OTs, established and deepened these territories' dependency on the Israeli economy. As a result, sub-contracting economic

relationships became common. and increasing numbers of Palestinian capitalists became agents for Israeli companies.

This form of capitalist dependency on Israel bore its 'fruits' when the Imperialist peace settlement for the ArabIsraeli struggle was implemented. The Palestinian dependent capitalist factions were the first to support the settlement. The new Palestinian dependent capitalist authority which has, since the beginning, been at the mercy of World Bank and IMF 'experts'. and their prescriptions, which concentrate on infrastructure, and not productive investment. will not maintain or create jobs for women. These two instruments of global capitalism have a long tradition of ignoring women in the Third World.' Contemplating these hard facts illustrate that women's battle is with capital .

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on male chauvinism and on efforts to keep women marginalized.

During this popular democracy period, women achieved the chance to contribute freely in: fighting in the streets, participating in the popular committees, starting domestic co-operatives and participating in productive cooperatives.

Women, as managers of family budgets, were the main factor behind the success of boycotting Israeli products during the Intifada. They determinedly educated their children to stop consuming Israeli products and encouraged them to buy local products. This was one of the main pillars of the 'Development by Popular Protection' (DPP), a strategy which to a certain extent succeeded during the first years of the Intifada.

It was not difficult for the Palestinian people in the OTs to practice DPP. for they were as yet 'untrained' by western capitalist countries who have now introduced their 'experts' into the OT's and Limited Self-Rule areas on a relatively large-scale. In this context, two main developments should be noted:

- First, some money was transferred from western countries, which was spent on renting luxurious offices, and employing foreigners or locals on good salaries as 'experts' to 'advise' the popular cooperatives. The result was the bankruptcy of the cooperatives which employed such 'experts'

Second. the Palestinian leadership devoted all its efforts to achieving political results from the Intifada, and neglected - and in some ways

suppressed - the social aspects.

One of the results of these two developments was the end of the spontaneous Intifada, and increasing pressure on women to limit their economic activity to work in the home.

During the period of popular Intifada-democracy, women's activities were in both the political and economic fields; but the PLO. leadership insisted in limiting the Intifada to the political sphere. The result was the re-subjugation of the national movement to the traditional male leadership (constituted by the Unified National Command or UNC.) to recapture hegemony over the Intifada, a result of the marginalisation of women's political struggle. In addition to this, the failure of the Intifada to generate lasting economic, social and cultural Intifadas, resulted in the suppression of women's role in the struggle as a whole. This maybe the reason why the women's struggle was never

mentioned separately, but always merged with the national struggle, which is largely considered as a male struggle. Little is spoken of women's rights and gender equality. The trend is in fact in the opposite direction. When the PI (political Islam) campaign to force women to cover their heads took place, the nationalist movement.. including the Marxist-Leninist organizations. compromised their stance and did not support women against this pressure.

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What is worse is the fact that feminist liberal bourgeois figures compromised with the political leadership and accepted the traditional male political domination. This (bourgeois) women's leadership raises feminist slogans, but fails to challenge male chauvinism in practice. The reason why this liberal bourgeois NN omen's

leadership has maintained its leading role in the women's movement is due to the ideological poverty of the radical women's movement. This poverty is rooted in the backwardness of the Marxist organizations, and their failure to develop a proper analysis and strategy concerning women's issues. Without a proper analysis and strategy, the left will continue to be unable to generate popular women's leaders and cadres.

Under the influence of western NGOs, which provided support and 'orientation', Palestinian women's organizations started economic and income-generating projects for women, but refrained from struggling for women workers' rights to equal work opportunities, equal wages and work conditions, and so forth.

Some women did establish women's productive projects, employing women. They

were a promising initiative - on a micro level, as it were, to transform the political Intifada to an economic and social one as well. But these projects largely failed.

This failure was due to several reasons. including the Israeli tax campaigns, the total dependence on foreign financing, the passive role of the (foreign and local) so-called

experts, and the hiring of people who never believed in popular or co-operative activities.

Another reason for their failure is the fact that political groups, even the radical ones, failed to support the aim of starting productive and employment projects for men and women. This was due to their lack of a development philosophy or strategy for the country as a whole, let alone for women. This failure comprises both the male and female leadership of the national movement in general, which was not mature enough to draw up its own theory of development. It should be noted here that the lack of theory and philosophy, the shortage of cadres with experience in cooperatives and the failure to create productive, self-financing, and sustainable projects, led most, if not all, women's organizations to depend on and follow blindly the bourgeois western NGOs.

Of course, this financial dependence on foreign NGOs minimizes the room for manoeuvre of the local ones, including the grassroots organizations. This dependence obliged the local organizations to apply the policies of the foreign NGOs, which are in fact the policies of the western capitalist regimes: such as re-orienting their activities from productive projects (an area in which these organizations faced a bitter failure),` to training programs, or sharing in joint projects with Israeli organizations. Joint projects with Israelis is in fact the activity most favoured by the western donor countries.

The Jerusalem Link is an example of the latter tendency:

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'As a result of another EC-sponsored

conference in Brussels 1992, the EC-funded Jerusalem Link, was founded. The Jerusalem Link coordinates and supports two independent centers: the West Jerusalem Bat Shalom (the Daughter of Peace), a feminist center for peace and social justice whose main goal is to work for change within Israel towards a more pluralistic society, where women's views will have more influence, and the East Jerusalem Markez Al-Quds al'Nsaswi, (the Jerusalem Center for Women). Programs are developed jointly, as part of the process of learning to work together in partnership' (see 'The Jerusalem Link', Lentin, 1995:12)

But, as Tikva Honig-Parnas, a radical anti-Zionist and feminist from Israel, noted: Israeli radical women have been co-opted by Zionist policies, and their Palestinian women partners failed to protest, despite the fact that Palestinian society hardly accepts any joint activities, even with radical Marxist Israelis. For Palestinian society, co-ordination is enough, because the Israelis (the Jews) are the occupiers of

Palestine. and accordingly, cooperation should only take place with those who are ready to openly recognize Palestinian rights.

Dependency on foreign support resulted in the bankruptcy of the financed projects. Women political figures from the leftist organizations obtained jobs in foreign NGOs or international associations, while local women's grassroots

organizations lost most of their members and supporters, most especially from the rural areas. Consequently, whereas during the popular phase of the Intifada, one could find dozens of women in most West Bank villages who were active members or supporters in women's grassroots organizations, today in most of villages there are none. This means that NGOs are in fact destroying the grassroots organizations in Palestinian society.

An experiment to try to develop a more sophisticated theoretical framework, while at the same time deepening the practice of the strategy of self-sufficiency was started in Ramallah: 'The Co-operative School'<sup>23</sup> (other practical attempts took place in several other towns as well). These all failed. Their failure is due mainly to the fact that these co-operatives were actually owned by organizations, and their members were no more than wage earners, often low-paid ones,

and they were semi-volunteers (see below).

The external factor also made its effect felt passively as well. While labor power immigrated to the Gulf areas, or commuted to Israel, now capital came from abroad as monetary donations. My point here is that, this money wasn't generated from an internal dynamic - from productive work inside the local economy itself - but from two external sources:

- the Arab regimes, which were not interested in developing the Intifada
- the foreign NGOs, which are mainly loyal to the imperialist regimes

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In the first two years of Intifada, substantial amounts of money were transferred from a number

nationalist Arab countries to support Intifada activities. This money was channelled to and through political figures, most of them males. Some was channelled through the United National Command (UNC). But neither the individual political figures nor the UNC invested in productive sectors. More money was transferred to the right-wing of the PLO - and the money channelled from Arab regimes served one purpose only: to gain the loyalty of the political activists. During these two years, western bourgeois NGOs consolidated their infiltration of the area and started paying more money for office rents and administrative costs, but not for productive investment. Since the Palestinian grassroots organizations failed to invest in productive projects, this made them even more dependent on foreign aid.

These western sources concentrated on women's projects to encourage the westernization of Palestinian women, not to radicalize them or to establish productive projects for them. It is interesting to note here that formal Arab financial donations never took women into consideration, which allowed western

capitalist sources to claim to the role of

women's liberators! Most of their activities are in field of

women's training'. More attention has been paid to training, especially after the failure of what so-called "development" activities. In fact, the intensive activities and budgets for training are a manoeuvre to hide the failure of productive

projects. ^a

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To illustrate the process, I will share my own experience working for two years with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Jerusalem in its department of Business Development (BDC). The UNDP obtained for the BDC a donation from Japan of \$1 million for loans and another \$1 million to cover administrative costs, but it never granted any loan during the whole period between 1989-1992. What is astonishing is the fact that the BDC asked academic people to conduct feasibility studies, and some of the studied projects were feasible even under the prevailing highly sensitive conditions, but the board of the BDC, headed by an 'international' person (i.e. a foreigner), never granted any loan. Aside from the head, the entire board and staff of the BDC was Palestinian. We, the whole local staff, protested and resigned. We realized later that the manager of UNDP was planning to change the BDC to a center for women's training. The new women's center for

training would employ women political cadres to do the job. An ingenious way to 'keep them off the street'!

This concentration on women's training, instead of women's productive projects, minimizes the amount of potential women's labor in rural areas, and increases the number of women who are looking for jobs in the service sector which is not productive and which, moreover, is unable to absorb many workers. Nevertheless, it is vital for women to have their own productive co-operatives, or to gain support for small and independent women's projects.

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It should be pointed out here that, following the second year of the Intifada, voluntary co-operatives and development projects which were initiated at the grassroots level by both men and women, were incorporated into the political organizations to

serve their politicized economic activities; in other words, they were bureaucratized. The simple co-operative 'productive' projects suddenly received large donations, which replaced contributions from members as a source of sustenance. They became totally subsidized. Accordingly, the projects became dependent on outside funding. They were no longer able to survive without outside subsidies. After a short period of time, all that remained was service projects, which are dependent on annual external budgets. Since that time, women's organizations are training women locally and abroad, conducting seminars, operating offices, but largely ignoring the necessity for a productive base.

In some cases, foreign funds were invested in productive projects, but without market evaluation. They were operated by intellectuals who lacked both the requisite practical experience and the required commitment to this form of work. They accepted these jobs because they were unemployed. When any office job became available, they left the

cooperatives to new, unexperienced managers - who had to be trained from scratch all over again. Technical control was placed in the hands of political activists who had no experience in economic activity or business. Some radical cooperatives were controlled by non-experts who did not

believe in cooperatives, and who advocated the classic capitalist ideas of completely free market and private enterprise which are impossible to apply in today's conditions.

The miserable fate of the relatively large productive and popular co-operatives was mirrored by that of the simple women's home co-operatives as well. The initiators of these simple co-operatives were women from a single town or village. These home cooperatives were basically the link between one kitchen and a neighboring one. Women started preparing food (fruit jam, za'atar, pickled cucumbers, etc.) which costs little to produce, and which can be sold in the market at proper prices, in order to generate money for political groups. When these simple cooperatives were based on voluntary work by women from town and country, they worked well. But, soon, these small scale activities were 'hijacked' by

financial subsidies by political groups. This financial support replaced women's own financial contributions. This deformed the cooperative spirit, since the local women themselves were excluded as financial supporters of the projects. This dependency terminated the possibility of developing these beginnings into mature co-operatives.

Women in these simple cooperative activities, started and stayed as volunteers, not builders or owners of the projects. When the external financial support decreases or stops, the cooperative is finished. Gradually, women begin to feel that they are working for others (the owner of the project, i.e. the political group), even if the working women are from the same political party. It is the bureaucracy of the party

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which 'buys' the volunteer's production, which produces at low wages. whereas the products are sold at market prices. Since women either work as a volunteers. or semi-

waged or waged worker. without paying a share in the project. they will never acquire the requisite emotional commitment to the continuity of the project as if it were their own.

As mentioned above. because women in co-operatives did not contribute to the financing of the projects. they became captives to the notion that outside funding sources are solely responsible for the future of the projects. This excluded them from real co-operative praxis. If women do not share in financing the start-up and operative costs of the project, it means that they are not independent economic personalities - not permanent economic workers. Their husbands, sons, the NGOs. the political organizations are jointly working to obstruct the possibility of women's transformation into productive persons whether in cooperatives or as independent producers. However, women themselves have collaborated with this destruction. perhaps due to the internalization of feelings of

dependence.

In summary\_ the political groups acted as entrepreneurs. financial backers and owners. They failed to play a role in liberating women. or in radicalizing the Intifada on the economic. social and gender levels. The 'co-operative' sector failed to develop projects involving joint male and female labor. while capitalist factories employ both genders, to a limited extent at least.

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Foreign NGOs and western capitalist consulates adopted a mechanism of capitalizing the political organizations, especially those of the Left. This strengthened both male domination, and the role of the right-wing leaders against those of the left-wing. The result was a dependent nationalist movement, an ideological retreat, male domination, a retreat of the social

for the sake of the political agenda, and the deterioration of party and political organizations to mere NGOs. <sup>s</sup>

Thus does capital play its real destructive role against gender equality, social transformation and national struggle.

### **The Service Sector:**

### **A Different Role in Waiting for Women**

I have refrained from dealing in this chapter with the service sector in the period before the LSR because its role during this period was limited.

Aiming to 'sell' the imposed LSR solution to the Palestinian people, its designers (US imperialism, other imperialist countries, Israel and the international financial institutions - the World Bank and the IMF) promised large amount of financial aid (grants and loans), claiming that their aim is to solve the unemployment crisis and to improve the economic situation of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The real aim of these dubious financial promises is to neutralize the resistance of the Palestinian people. As a result of the massive propaganda about the promised and expected huge money transfers to the LSR areas, large sections of the

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Palestinian people fell into the trap of thinking that, despite the fact that their national rights are farther than ever from being restored or attained,

nevertheless some kind economic improvement/boom is on the way, and that every individual will find a solution for his or her economic hardship.

But these mere promises were soon counter-balanced by several forms of practical economic sieges imposed against the Palestinian people: sieges imposed by Israel, the PLO leadership, Arab regimes and the western 'donor' countries alike.

Soon after the signature of the Israel/L.S.R Economic Agreement in Paris, unemployment in the LSR areas skyrocketed as a result of continuous Israeli closures of its borders preventing Palestinian laborers from working in Israel. The closure policy violates the Paris Economic Agreement which states that Israel will continue to employ 100,000 Palestinian workers in Israel.

The ongoing closure represents a U-turn

from the long-standing policy of the Israeli occupation to make Palestinian employees' dependency a material fact. However, this employment dependency is still required by Israel, at least for the time being. if only because it is one of the means by which Israel can exert pressure on the Palestinian people when their resistance intensifies, for example, after the Hamas military operation in Tel Aviv in October 1994.

In such circumstances, women's employment will continue to be much more limited, as male unemployment is still high. This will lead to further deterioration of women's

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position in civil society which many progressive Palestinians aim to achieve, and

many of whom actually expect to see realized in the coming period. Indeed, in genuine civil society, women's contributions are important. Therefore, women's role, position and contribution is one of the best means to measure the extent to which actual progress towards a civil society has been achieved.

One of the benefits of a public sector is the creation of new jobs. Some of these jobs will be occupied by women. But the LSR authorities' policies support a free market economy, supporting the private sector, often at the expense of a real public sector. The same is true for the expected 'industrial zones' which, it is proposed, will be built on the 1967 borders. As isolated, and relatively remote places, women's chances to reach and be employed there is likely to be limited.

Since the Oslo Agreement states that control over land and water will stay in the hands of the Israeli authorities during the entire 'interim' period, this will further reduce the agricultural

potential of the LSR areas, as Israel will undoubtedly retain and expand its control. This will obstruct future development of the agricultural sector. The final result will be, either directly or indirectly, more constriction in women's employment, and an increase in their dependency on men.

It is expected that under the LSR that the service sector will be the largest employer of women. The 'expected' remittances from abroad are unlikely to be invested in productive sectors, including the public sector , but rather will

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be concentrated in services, especially since the top priority of donors is to 'develop' the service sector, and in the private sector which is motivated by the highest rate of profit alone.

The Palestinian economy under the LSR will be an 'Stand-By Economy'.<sup>21</sup> It will compete with the Jordanian economy in offering services for the Israeli economy in its efforts to penetrate other Arab countries. The services will be in tourism, marketing, advertising, etc. This sector will employ women who, owing to their subordinate position in a strongly patriarchal society, will accept lower wages and make lower demands than male employees. This, in addition to the fact that services in the tourist sector needs women to satisfy a variety of the tourists' needs. For this variety of services. NGOs, and 'donor' countries were and still are educating and training Palestinian women through their training courses.

Accordingly, no real change will take place at the level of male domination, and gender equality will remain as far from attainment as ever. Under occupation, neither Palestinian men nor women were able to exercise real political (governing) authority. But under the LSR, the Palestinian male elite is interested in

strengthening its power in politics, the economy and society. This means women will have little chance for equality with men. Under such a regime, bourgeois males represent a dependent capitalist Iqlimi power which practices repression and exploitation of women, and of men of the working class.

The new developments which will inevitably follow in the wake of the imperialist peace settlement will strengthen

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the grip of male repression. During the Casablanca Economic Conference for the Middle East and North Africa, held in October 1994, the idea of a new form of power 'partnership' between the private sector and the state was emphasized. This partnership will mean a strengthening of male power in its

direct form, i.e. capital.

The first year experience of the LSR shows that one of the main inclinations of the 'donor' countries is to support the private sector and technocrats over the bureaucratic political elite, i.e. LSR groups. The support for this form of a dependent capitalist regime, especially one that lacks sovereignty, is bad news for women who wish to work outside the home and attain social equality in a much wider sense.

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### **Where to Concentrate?**

Except for the obvious progress of the women's struggle during the first few years of Intifada, women's role in the Palestinian political struggle during occupation continued as it was before occupation. Women remained a subordinate, albeit integral, part of the male-

dominated political struggle and political programs. The struggle against occupation strengthened this form of women's political dependency, especially as the struggle put more emphasis on the military, than the social and economic aspects.

Accordingly, women's specific struggles continued to be ultimately led by male, and some female, cadres. Leading women's cadres never transcended the status of being a 'token' for male domination. Since the beginning of the LSR authority in Gaza and Jericho, women's organizations started writing petitions for equality and political declarations supporting the new regime. Gender equality, however, cannot be achieved through demands or petitions to the ruling power. Any equality or freedom can only come through some form of balance of power, which is in the final analysis a class struggle. Standing (1989) and others have argued that the growing informalization of the labour force, globally over the 1980s, is a major

factor that explains the increase in the

female labour force's participation over the same period, and the feminization of many jobs and activities traditionally done by men' (Baden & Milward,1995:30).

On a world scale, the large expansion of the information sector, the domination of financial capital and monetary speculation are strengthening male domination and all forms of exploitation, as represented by a drastic decrease in the number of employed workers. Strengthened male chauvinism, in parallel with economic crisis and the decline of the rate of profit, is leading to revived forms of capitalist and social reaction; for example, Christian 'Fundamentalism', which argues that women should return home to take care of their children, be 'good' mothers, nice and 'conservative' wives, and 'good' house-keepers, etc. This ideological and religious justification facilitates the new phenomenon of employing women and even men

inside their homes. This is a new dangerous campaign against trade unions to disintegrate the worker's class struggle. This form of a new and globalized form of exploitation, especially against women, is expected to take place in the LSR areas.

As in the center, so too in the dependent periphery: today, the most 'active' sector of the LSR economy is the speculative one, mainly in land purchase, homes prices and money-changing. Money-changers are paying high interest rates to those who gave them their savings to use. A large number of people looking for fast profits deposited their savings with money-changers. Many lost all of what they had as a result of the bankruptcy of the money-changers and their

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brokers. The newly-opened foreign, joint and local banks are accepting deposits

from people without delivering loans. These banks are transferring local deposits to their centers abroad. The LSR authority's 'open door' policy, is facilitating this drain of surplus. "8

The end result of these policies, practices and ideologies is to marginalise women in the labor market, thereby minimizing official and recorded unemployment. If such are the results of economic crisis in the center, how will it be in a dependent, occupied peripheral capitalist formation like that in the LSR where unemployment is already approximately 60%?

It is important for the women's movement and feminism to elaborate their demands, and to fight for them properly. Their demands will never be achieved through support for the LSR authorities. Male domination can only be terminated through struggle from below, not from above or through compromise with the

authority. Women's organizations who are writing petitions to the LSR authorities for gender equality are in fact strengthening the power of this authority and achieving nothing for women as women. During the years of occupation, traditional systems broke down without being replaced, by social or state arrangements, leaving women vulnerable to poverty and destitution. There are, as yet, no signs that the LSR authorities are willing or capable of instituting measures to fill these gaps. Reforms of social security and economic regulation are needed in order to offer guaranteed income and jobs to the popular classes in

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general, and to female-headed households in particular. In fact, what is taking place is the opposite. The Palestinian LSR authorities are

adopting World Bank and IMF economic policies which are directly contrary to the interests of popular classes, and of women.

Gender equality will never be achieved through abstract discussions among intellectual elites on issues of women, nationalism and class. Knowledge concerning these issues is important, but this consciousness should be disseminated to the places in which oppressed women are living, to areas where poor people, workers and peasants live - and feminists from the intelligentsia should work among these communities in order to see directly what are their problems and demands, socially as well as politically. In these places, feminists will see women's real needs and aspirations and can then adopt a path of genuine struggle in accordance with these needs and aspirations.

What is needed is not a policy for poverty alleviation, or support for diverse and creative coping strategies, sustainable livelihood or dreams of a welfare state.

What is needed is equality in both rights and struggle of men and women against monopoly and comprador capital. A struggle by the popular classes as classes, not only men, especially wage labour against capital. Any attempt to transfer the poor a few degrees over poverty line is no more than a social manipulation. It is a formal policy to offset any expected social unrest, and to guarantee more consumption.

This policy is still in the range of labour market

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policy which even if it will succeed in alleviating (partly) women's [poverty](#). it will not guarantee the continuity of the new situation. either economically or legislatively. An economic crisis will push them back to the below the poverty line. Thus. women's

contradiction is with capital as an economic, social cultural and legislative system.

The real path of struggle is to democratize the grassroots organizations, trade unions, professional unions, social institutions and most importantly the political parties. The demands of struggle here must mean that women have the right of representation in the leadership in all these forums in proportion to their percentage in the membership. It is important to note here that the real place of feminist struggle for equality is through the political party. But, a political party which is able to transcend the long heritage of male domination. A Marxist political party must realize its potential as the only party organization able to adopt gender equality. An equality which shouldn't be on behalf of women or imposed on them. but chosen by them and achieved through their own direct involvement in the struggle. Men should criticize feminists if they fail to struggle for achieving equality.

Democracy at the grassroots level is the

only possible course to be followed in the circumstances facing Palestinians in the OT's and LSR areas. It is the first and imperative condition to progressing towards achieving democracy between citizen and authority. This, without ignoring the fact

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that in a dependent country, political democracy is relatively impossible.

For women to achieve equality, the first condition is to struggle for their right to work outside the home, for equal pay and under equal working conditions, opportunities to advance, etc. Women should demand special laws which give women heading families priority for jobs over males or females who are not heading families.

We do not oppose demanding rights from the ruling power. But we must never forget the fact that the ruling capitalist class is always a potential enemy to oppressed classes, both men and women. Accordingly, to attain their rights, women must realize that their rights can never be achieved without a real struggle -just circulating petitions will never suffice. When women demand equal wages with men, this is not a direct struggle against the political authority. It is a struggle against capital in general, which largely takes the form of struggle against individual capitalists alone (as in a strike at an individual factory). The demand for equal rights with men in the work place is important as a practice to prepare women to fight for a more radical struggle for broader rights, e.g. to a job and for wage equality. The right to maternity leave should also be a goal of women's struggle

One of the most social and human demands which women must put forward is the right to initiate divorce on an equal basis with men, i.e.

when he is sterile. This is especially important in the Middle Eastern context since the region's traditions strongly emphasize women's 'obligation' to beget

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children. yet these traditions do not accord her respect when she does fulfil this 'duty'.

Women's organizations' struggle cannot be restricted to that against the capitalist regime in the general sense. A struggle on the ideological level, and the legislative level is also important. The Palestinian legislative body which wrote legislation for the LSR election council never referred to women's share of the seats of the council. An order issued by the LSR Ministry of the Interior on the issue of Palestinian passports. for example. stated that: 'an unmarried or divorced daughter should have written approval from her father confirming his approval for her to have a passport. A wife

must have approval from her husband stating that he allowed her to have a passport for her self and the children'. (An*Nahar*. 12-1-1996)

Struggle for social recognition of women's role as producers of goods and services in the formal and informal sectors . and as reproducers of society is important. However, ultimately this recognition is conditioned by the attainment of a civil society, which is a long way under the current LSR, since this authority lacks sovereignty. and 'civil society' under colonial or even semi-colonial conditions is necessarily an artificial construct. Those Palestinians dreaming of, or marketing the notion of, civil society and democracy, are ignoring the fact that the LSR is in fact still subject to a military occupation.

Women's social struggle for their rights is in itself a contribution to raising the social consciousness of the

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population, and at the same time, it is a challenge to the political groups to radicalize their programs. Reactionary social and political groups in our society still oppose genuine gender equality. The influence of their position is leading to a dangerous situation in which the western capitalist feminist mentality and 'missions from abroad' are dominating large numbers of women. These western trends and their local dependents are attempting to impose on Palestinian women false and moribund western capitalist ideas, many of which are disappearing even in western societies.

In our country, western agents are posing as fighters for women rights, while at the same time serving their imperialist masters who are responsible for all 'crimes' against the peripheral societies including women. Recent 'crimes' include: the imposed famine against the Iraqi people, the invasion of Somalia, the economic blockade against

Libya and Cuba, etc. Liberated feminist western women roust struggle against the ruling classes in the imperialist countries before earning the title of allies, not to speak of experts, in the struggle to liberate women in Palestine. Women in the center are now losing most of their achievements owing to the rise of the new western capitalist reaction, i.e. austerity programs and Christian fundamentalism, so why do Palestinian women look to them as role models to be imitated?

The struggle against the new fundamentalist capitalist campaign which has been launched by the center of the world capitalist order, against women inside the central formations, to deprive women of rights they had won, is

highly relevant to the women's struggle in the Arab homeland and in Palestine. All these struggles are part and parcel of the struggle against capital. This struggle is first and foremost against the Arab ruling capitalist Iqlimi classes who are dependent, and whose interests are enmeshed, with the interests of dominant finance capital on a world scale.

### **Endnotes**

The Madrid-Oslo settlement is an imperialist\Zionist settlement because it is designed by the United States for the Arab homeland. When the United Nations asked the United States to participate in the Madrid negotiations and the Oslo Agreement, the United States refused

their demand as if the settlement in the Arab homeland was an internal American affair! This has never happened in recent world history that a peace settlement has been designed for a peoples by their enemy

<sup>Z</sup> See Rosi Braidotti, *Pattern of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, in Sabina Lovibond, *Feminism and the Crisis of Rationality*, New Left Review No. 207, 1994 pp. 72-86. And '6 Hour Working Day', *Policy of Worker's Communist Party of Norway: 6 hour day and the women's struggle*, Oslo 9-12-1994, AKP, Goteborggt, 8, 0566 Oslo. See also Swasti Mitter, 'What Women Demand of Technology' New Left Review, No 205, 1994, pp. 100-113. See also next foot note.

<sup>3</sup> See Tikva Honig-Parnas: 'The Radical Women's Peace Movement: From Leading Force to Co-optation', in News From Within, No 6

4 June 1995,  
pp. 21-25.  
ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See Emy Siganga, *The (World Bank) Long Term Perspective Study and the Role of Women In The African Response: Adjustment or Transformation*, Introduction by Bade Onimode, A workshop held January 1991 at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Printed by Billings Book Plan. And, Drs Vandana & Mira Shiva, 1994, '*Is Cairo a step forward for Third World women?*' in Third World Resurgence No 50, pp. 1316.

<sup>6</sup> Nahla Abdo in Race and Class, No. 32, 4, 1991:22

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See. del Samara, *Developing of*

*Unequal Development in the Arab homeland*, in Al-Mustagbal AI-Arabi, No 197 July 1995 pp. 16-28 H Nahla Abdo, *ibid*.

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Bott pore, 1983:42.

Cutler, et al. 1979. Ch 5: Balibar, 1970, p.235, quoted in Bottmore, 1983:179

:According to Oslo Agreement, every aspect of lice and economic sectors in the I, SR are to he controlled by a joint Israeli-Palestinian convuittee.

When a the joint committee has a disagreement over any issue, it will re-negotiate until it reaches a solution. None of the two partners have the right to ask a third party to mediate .

- For the inability and the lack of ambition of the Palestinian dependent capitalist factions to control the local market, see Add Samara. A Financial!Political Crisis Or 'Capital' in Class Re-Ordering (in Arabic with

English summary). Published by *Al-Afashriq for Economic and Development Studies*, Jerusalem 1993. See Adel Samara, *Al-Tanmiya bil-Hi naya. Al-Shobiya*, Al-Zahra Publications, Jerusalem 1990. See also Adel Samara *Beyond DeLink7ng* (to be published soon).

The Palestinian Limited Self Rule authority is following World Bank and IMF prescriptions completely. The agreement between the World Bank and the PA signed in December 1994 stated that the priority of loans which are supposed to be given to the authority must go to the private sector. While the Limited Self Rule, the PA is following the World Bank's prescriptions, their investment policy is a selective one. They are unable to elaborate a 'National Development Plan'. Even, if the PA had the will to do this, according to the Oslo Agreement and the Paris Economic

Agreement, the authority is not entitled to conduct an independent development policy. This is the main reason why its policy is selective, due to two main reasons: the lack of a free hand, and the unproductive mentality of the authority itself.

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6 Despite the Oslo Agreement, the Israeli authorities are continuing to confiscate land in the West Bank for the already existing settlements, and for newly created ones. Land confiscation and the immigration of new immigrants are examples of the fragility of this form of peace and

the settler colonial nature of  
Zionism.

17 Today, cheap Jordanian labourers are  
available for the Israeli labour market.

18 See Schloch Alexander, '*The Economic  
Development in Palestine*', Journal of  
Palestine Studies, No. 10 (3): pp. 35-58

<sup>19</sup> For an analysis of early Jewish  
boycotting of the Palestinian produce, see,  
*The Other Israel: A Radical Case Against  
Zionism* (ed.) Arie J3ober. Anchor Books,  
New York 1972.

20 Women's wages in the West Bank and  
Gaza industrial workshops and factories are  
approximately 50-70% of males wages.

21 Emi Siganga, op cit.

" In 1993, I conducted a study for the  
Income Generation Project for  
UNRWA/Jerusalem on the Credit Schemes. It  
showed that most of the projects failed.

23 The only Co-operative School which was

established in the Occupied Territories during the Intifada was in Rarrallah in 1989. The initiative was by the Palestinian Women Committees. It was for males and females.

24 Since most productive projects which were financed by the foreign and local credit schemes, NGOs, UN and international agencies failed, these associations moved towards training programs. areas in which it is difficult to undertake evaluation.

25 Many leftist NGOs in the O'1' argue that political organizations should be changed to NGOs. See Adel Samara: *The Palestinian Left: Prom Leninism to NGO-Style Organizations*, in News From Within, No5

26 *May* 1995, pp. 13-16.

See the World Bank papers about the LSR economy.

See Adel Samara, (*Iktisad Taht Al-Talab*) *A Stand-by Economy: A Study on the Peripheralization of the West Bank and Gaza Economies by Exchange with the EEC*, 1989 A1-Zahra Publications.

<sup>a</sup> See Adel Samara, 'The Role of Banks in Development in the Self Rude Areas', in The Chamber of Commerce Magazine, December 1995, pp. 9-15

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