



stones at the Khaderah railway station, injuring an Israeli soldier.

ORGANIZATION

In the first weeks of the uprising, there was much talk about it being spontaneous. Antagonistic forces promoted such talk trying to create the impression of a separation between the masses inside and the PLO. In fact, this whole idea is built on a false premise. The masses in occupied Palestine have been among the first to rally around the PLO, and protect its reputation and unity. They *are* the PLO just as much as is the leadership. *If* the masses in occupied Palestine did rise up based on their national instincts and using their own resources initially, this is not at all in contradiction to the PLO which has served as their sole, legitimate representative and the rallying point of their struggle for years.

In any case, the prolonged continuation of the uprising has made all such talk irrelevant. Within a few weeks, it became clear who was leading the uprising. Call no. I was issued in the form of leaflets spread throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As of March 8th, when the uprising entered its fourth month, nine such calls had been issued. (See call no.9 in this issue.) The calls outline the detailed program of action for a set period and give guidelines for organizing the uprising nationally and locally (the formation of committees, etc.).

The calls are signed by the United National Leadership of the Uprising, the clandestine leadership in the field,

composed of trusted Palestinian militants from the organizations who are active in the occupied territories. This leadership has evolved in direct confrontation with the enemy, and enjoys the confidence of the masses who abide by its calls. Above all, this leadership evolved from the existing underground framework of the PLO in occupied Palestine. In the West Bank, the component forces are Fatah, PFLP and DFLP. The Palestinian Communist Party is involved in unified coordination of the uprising at the local level. In the Gaza Strip, the Islamic Jihad is included in the United National Leadership, alongside Fatah, PFLP and DFLP. It is noteworthy that the Islamic Jihad has been part of the PLO since the last PNC session. Unlike some other Islamic tendencies, such as the Muslim Brotherhood which has at times attacked the progressive nationalist forces, Islamic Jihad gives top priority to fighting the Israeli occupation.

In addition to the national unity achieved in the uprising's leadership, unity prevails at the base where scores of mass organizations join efforts in adherence to the United National Leadership's guidelines. This includes trade and professional unions, women's and students' organizations, social service and cultural committees,

Since the writing of this article, the Palestinian Communist Party has joined in the United National Leadership.

etc., whether these are affiliated to a particular political organization, to the PLO as such, or were independently established.

The fact that the United National Leadership has evolved in direct confrontation with the occupier has lent it a high degree of political clarity and militant commitment which can guarantee the uprising's continuity. This gives the potential for the uprising to have a decisive impact on the PLO itself, in terms of consolidating its political line and internal democracy. The United National Leadership sets a precedent in terms of the fact that the Palestinian organizations enjoy influence in direct proportion to their active input in the uprising and their overall practice. The democratic forces in the PLO have long worked for such democratic reform, and its viability is now being proved in a pivotal struggle.

In their demonstrations, the masses are daily exhibiting their sentiments about national unity and indicating who the active forces are. It is commonplace in West Bank demonstrations to see the pictures of Yasir Arafat and George Habash raised side-by-side. A frequent chant in the streets and alleys of the Gaza Strip is «Unity, National Unity... Fatah, Jihad and Popular (Front)» - a slogan which in Arabic rhymes.

On the local level, there are several types of organizations and committees affiliated to the United National Leadership. Those we see daily on television throwing stones constitute the strike force of the uprising. In every village, camp and town quarter, Palestinians have organized a strike force responsible for confronting the Zionist soldiers and settlers on a daily basis. Round the clock, people prepare roadblocks, guard their areas and collect stones.

There are also the unknown soldiers organized in committees we don't see on the TV screen. There are supply committees that distribute and ration food. There are medical committees, affiliated to the existing Palestinian medical institutions, that provide first aid, take the injured to hospital and care for those who prefer not to be hospitalized. (There are numerous instances of Israeli soldiers breaking into ►