

their ties to the remnants of their land. This can best be described as the semiproletarianization of the peasantry. The peasants who have continued to farm are obviously involved in a daily struggle to maintain their cultivation in the face of the occupation authorities' restrictions and the ever-present threat of expropriation.

In addition to these objective factors motivating the Palestinian peasantry to confront the occupation, subjective factors played a role as well. Many of the peasants who migrated to urban areas for work, were influenced by the political atmosphere and national organizations. Also, children of peasant families have gone on to study at universities in the towns and abroad. Those who return after graduation have played an important role in raising the political consciousness in the rural areas. Moreover, the Palestinian resistance has directed more attention to the countryside. Committees were formed to aid the peasantry, such as voluntary work committees, literacy committees and farmers aid committees.

## VILLAGERS IN REVOLT

Due to the media black-out imposed by the Israeli authorities, and the difficulties of journalists reaching the rural areas, there was initially little information about the Palestinian villagers' participation in the uprising. Their role has, however, been substantial.

Of the first 100 martyrs of the uprising, 29 were from the countryside, as were 693 of the first 1,000 injured, all from 62 villages. These figures rose as the uprising went on. The largest percentage of martyrs in the second 100 martyrs was among the peasants (54%), as compared to 27% in the towns and 19% in the camps; 29% of the second 1,000 injuries occurred in the countryside, as compared to 28.4% in the towns and 43.1% in the camps. Casualties rose in the countryside, especially in the third and fourth months of the uprising, as villagers took a more active part in confronting the Israeli troops, while their brothers in towns and camps suffered under almost continuous curfews, closed military areas and massive arrests. In the first three weeks of the uprising, 20 villages participated. By the end of January, 86 villages were involved. By the end of February, nearly 200 villages were participating. As of late March, this number rose to 232.

The names of some villages were frequently repeated in the media. These were the scene of daily mass demonstrations and bloody confrontations.

All the villages of the West Bank participated in the Day of Rage called on February 16th by the United National Leadership. On April 4th, clashes between villagers and the occupation troops took place simultaneously in Qabatya, Arrabah and Yaabad. The general strike protesting Schultz's visit, called by the United National Leadership, was observed throughout the countryside.

The Israeli authorities reacted viciously, employing the most fascist methods against the villagers. In Anabta, for example, Israeli troops killed three and injured 32 in single day, while confronting a demonstration. In Salem village, the Israelis buried four young men alive. In the village of Beita, over 50 homes were demolished and the school was transformed into a prison in «retaliation» for the death of an Israeli girl who was shot by a settler. In the villages of Batear and Al Khada, soldiers completely destroyed the water lines. Both Al Yamoun and Seelet Al Harthyeh villages were closed off for over a month, and many homes were destroyed. In Al Izereyeh

village, the Zionist authorities sealed the headquarters of the Muslim Youth. In all of these villages, fierce battles had taken place between the villagers and the occupation troops.

Villagers have shown great courage in confronting the Israelis. In Dhahriah, for example, the inhabitants were able to prevent soldiers from entering the village; they destroyed 15 military vehicles during a confrontation. Many villages have been declared liberated areas for several days after fierce battles with the occupiers.

## CONFRONTING TRAITORS/COORDINATED ACTION

Palestinian villagers have implemented the calls of the United National Leadership with great precision. Late in February, following Call No. 7, villagers in Qabatya hung the collaborator, Mohammad Al Ayad, and burned his house. In Kafr Al Deek, villagers attacked the homes of several collaborators. In Al Aseera, the homes of Village League collaborators were attacked by the people. On March 25th, four collaborators in the village of Alas announced their repentance in the mosque and turned over their weapons to the village council. Such disciplinary actions scared other collaborators into recanting, as happened with the infamous Zuhair Mahmoud in Silwad.

Workers from the villages joined in the workers' strike. Villagers also participated in the strike by burning buses that transport Palestinians to work in 'Israel', as happened in Izbat Al Jarad. Following the directions of Call No. 10, a military bus was burned in Beit Ommas.

Villages near camps that were constantly under curfew sent food supplies to these camps. The residents of Tamoun village, for example, sent a convoy of three trucks to the besieged Balata camp. Following Call No. 11 of the United National Leadership, residents of several villages forced the appointed village councils, mayors and mukhtars to resign. On March 29th, the date set by Call No. 11, 80% of town and village councils in the Gaza Strip had resigned.

Peasants constitute a major force in the Palestinian liberation struggle. To elevate their contribution to the struggle against the occupation, more attention should be devoted to organizing them in the existing political organizations. Organizations, especially for peasants should also be formed in all villages, in order to eventually establish the union of Palestinian peasants in the occupied territories. The peasants should be given material aid to enable them to adhere to and cultivate their land. This is especially needed at this stage of the uprising, since the move to civil disobedience depends to a great extent on the Palestinian people's ability to attain a greater level of self-sufficiency. Palestinian agriculture and the peasants' role are crucial in providing the material base for steadfastness.

## THE MERCHANTS' ROLE

Probably the most dramatic proof of the unity of the whole Palestinian people in the current uprising is the role of the merchants. Though all Palestinian classes have suffered under the occupation, the merchant strata is the one least harmed. The merchants of the 1967 occupied territories are part of the Palestinian bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie. They can be divided into two strata: brokers and shopkeepers. The brokers function mainly as middlemen, marketing Israeli goods in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Historically, this strata has benefited from the occupation in economic terms, and the end