



By purchasing the produce directly from the local farmers, the cooperative allows these products to be used. When providing employment and playing a major role in dealing with the social integration of women into the production process, into the work force, and taking on the questions of women's oppression that exist within Palestinian society in the context of challenging the occupation.

It's very exciting to see how the women are responding and how they are leading this struggle. Of course, there are different women's organizations with different views of the role they play. But there is a very high degree of unity on the importance of integrating the social needs of the women's movement (kindergartens, child-care centers, literacy classes, etc.) with confronting the occupation. So the political and social character of the women's work have become very integrated. That is a very exciting development.

Another example of women's participation, and of cooperative and committee work is the community project in Jerusalem's Old City, that has been going on for the last year. It began as a means of developing collective protection for people living in the Old City who were faced with massive settler encroachment. The area abuts the quarter that Jewish settlers are renovating. There was a serious problem of settlers buying up the top apartments in a bunch of buildings and physically attacking the Palestinians living below them with rocks, fire bombs, molotov cocktails, etc. The project began as a sort of community guard duty and protection group, but has since expanded into a much broader committee to take on community development. What they have done is to buy a couple of abandoned buildings. They have built a very big, modern clinic. They are opening a dental clinic in the next few months as soon as they get the money for the equipment. They have a full-time staff of doctors, nurses and a pharmacist. They are now working on a community center with a library, a meeting hall, a lecture room. Women are very much in the forefront of this committee.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZED CHARACTER OF THE UPRISING

The institutionalized, organized character of the uprising is deeper than ever. For example, the question of self-sufficiency, which has been part of the call of the leadership, has resulted in a massive move towards community gardens. In Ramallah, we saw everybody digging gardens. Of course, part of this is symbolic, but everywhere there are huge plots where people are picking up the stones, clearing the land, digging it up and planting tomatoes and cucumbers and potatoes. In

small gardens in apartment buildings, gardens are shooting up. There are gardens everywhere now. It is springtime - the spring of the uprising and everyone is growing things.

I think the leadership has a mature understanding of the boycott issue, so the call is to boycott Israeli goods when there is a national product available to substitute for it. No one is saying, «Don't use medicines made in Israel,» if the medicine is needed. It is not that kind of ultraleft moralism. That's one thing that has been very impressive. There is no hint of moralism - it is very political, very grounded. The various calls are rooted not in moralism or eliciting guilt, but on the basis of what can be accomplished by doing or not doing various things.

The few, small-scale Palestinian factories that exist in the territories are trying to expand their production to 24-hour shifts, to hire more people and produce more so there will be more products to compete with the Israeli products... meanwhile providing employment.

Looking at the next stage which is likely to be an increase of the civil disobedience - opting out of the occupation administration, there are some very interesting examples of popular organization. For example, the medical relief committee is rooted in the medical association that existed in all the towns and villages before the uprising. With the uprising, there was more need for emergency services as the result of the widespread casualties. Then later, the health effects began to be felt in the camps in particular when curfews were imposed for long periods of time; kids were getting sick from bad water; there was lots of diarrhea; people got skin diseases because there was not enough water for washing, etc. The medical resources were stretched pretty thin. Many new people, paramedics, had to be trained to take responsibility. We met a second-year nursing student, who was in training at Al Ali hospital in Gaza city (private hospital), who lives in Khan Younis with his family. He described his work in Khan Younis during a six-day curfew, when a number of people had been shot. He had to do minor surgery. Though a second-year nursing student, he was the best equipped there to do the job, and he did it.

Responding to the needs creates a stronger bond between the medical personnel and the community; it strengthens their sense of responsibility. A doctor we met in Ramallah was describing the phenomenon of a number of doctors who ordinarily work in clinics in Jerusalem and just come home for weekends, who now suddenly feel that they have a responsibility to stay in their home town or village, because that is where they are needed. So the uprising has a cyclical effect where more people take responsibility to build these committees to ensure that the work gets done. In the process, they develop a stronger commitment to their people; they consolidate their own political role in the uprising.

On the local level, food distribution is handled by the popular committees during curfews, to insure everyone gets a fair share of what is available. In the cities it is not the same. There is what appears to be a self-imposed tax on the factories that are trying to expand, stay open longer, hire more workers and lower their prices, because they will still be making a profit, presumably a higher one with the expansion. They are expected to pay a tax to the uprising, matching the call for them to stop paying Israeli taxes. Those exempted from the commercial strike - the bakeries, pharmacies and taxi drivers - are also expected to pay a tax to the uprising. I think this is fairly informal now but how it develops is of course an internal matter for the Palestinians to determine