

effort. The new talks and the Palestinian concessions that paved the way for them, laid to rest Henry Kissinger's infamous 1975 agreement with Israel that the US would refuse to talk with the organization until it renounced terrorism and recognized Israel.

On the ground in the intifada, the effect of this new series of diplomatic maneuvers has been alternating between hope and despair. Certainly there are different views on how - and whether - to continue the present PLO diplomatic strategy of making concessions in the hopes that the «Cairo gate» will open the door to concessions from the US and Israel.

But so far the Shamir, Mubarak and Baker 4, 10 and 5-point plans have gained nothing, and the new stage's challenge continues to be the effort to realize tangible political gains - steps toward an independent state - to make worthwhile the sacrifices of the intifada.

In the new stage, Palestinians must look outside their occupied country to interact with international diplomatic realities - and to ensure that the voice of the intifada remains the central voice articulating the Palestinian reality to the world. But this outward focus is challenged by the virtual absence of the foreign press from occupied Palestine, and the reality that today's intifada cannot rely on the sympathy generated last year by televised coverage of Israeli brutality. That brutality continues, but too often invisibly and the intifada itself now is much harder to see, to quantify, to televise, than the mass demonstrations and community-wide garden projects that characterized the uprising only half a year ago.

The very success of the institutionalization of the uprising brings with it new difficulties and new challenges. At bottom, this phase is one of maintaining and consolidating the gains of the last 27 months in the face of Israel's continued economic and physical assaults. In a fluid process like the Palestinian intifada, of course, it is never enough to simply stand still. Maintaining even the current level of dual power will require a significant expansion of the network of popular committees to villages and other areas where earlier efforts to build branches of the UNL structure were tried and failed, or where no attempt had been made. Strengthening

the Palestinian side of the dual power equation will require a return to mass action; new, creative methods must be devised that will allow a reemergence of the broad-based mass character of the early resistance, without repeating the unacceptable high price in casualties from large-scale street confrontations.

This revitalization of mass popular activity is absolutely necessary to prepare the political groundwork for the next, future stage. That period, of national disobedience, will represent the culmination of a long-term effort to prepare the

political, cultural, financial and organizational framework for an all-sided disengagement between the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation and the occupation authority itself. Such a break demands a high level of political consciousness, active society-wide mobilization, and careful organizational structures.

For now, the dual-power period must be viewed as one that will last a relatively long time, and through which the seeds of true national disobedience will be sown and watered. ●

