1. The Organisation of Resistance

Introduction: the Palestinians as a subject people

At the heart of any successful resistance movement is a stubborn refusal to accept the status quo, and an equally determined struggle to change it. However, for as long as that stubbornness and determination is not crystalised into effective collective action, the character of resistance is prone to take the form of sporadic outbursts of anger and frustration, interspersed with sullen periods of resentment. The relative lack of success enjoyed by the Palestinians in their pursuit of some form of self-determination prior to the outbreak of the Intifada can be attributed, in part at least, to their failure to achieve the degree of social solidarity necessary for sustained mass struggle and to inadequacies of organisation and leadership.

Throughout the twentieth century the experience of the Palestinians has been that of *subjects*, subordinated to the power of more or less alien states, and denied the full rights of citizenship. Subjects of the Ottoman Empire at the start of the century, after 1917 they lived under British rule until the end of the mandate in 1948. In 1949 the Palestinians of the West Bank became subjects of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Whilst they thereby received Jordanian citizenship, few of them identified with or felt a part of a state that treated them as "second class" citizens, discriminating against them politically and economically. During this same period, following the withdrawal of the British up to the Israeli conquest in 1967, the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip were living under Egyptian military rule. Although the Egyptians established an "all-Palestine government" in Gaza late in 1948, this was little more than an instrument of Egyptian rule.

Since 1967, of course, the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been living under Israeli occupation, still a subject people, denied their right to self-determination. The Israelis, like occupying powers before them, have sought to prevent the emergence of any indigenous unified political authority that could command the allegiance of the subject people and effectively coordinate resistance activities against the imposed rule of the occupier. In pursuing its policy of frustrating the growth of any rival to its own power, the Israeli state has followed a three-fold path, the pattern set by its predecessors. The first major component has been the repression and suppression of any organisational vehicle that threatened to succeed in uniting the Palestinian people in opposition to the occupation. The second element has been the age-old device of "divide and rule": trying to foment divisions within and between resistance movements. An integral part of this second strategy, and the third element in their overall policy, has been the attempt to promote alternative organisational structures with an accommodating and compliant leadership, in order to undermine the claims to legitimacy of those

organisations and leaders that the Israelis have deemed to be most threatening to their interests.

In its efforts to frustrate the emergence of any mature and coherent political entity within the occupied territories, the Israelis have been assisted by the divisions that have traditionally existed within the Palestinian social structure and within its political community. In addition to the "vertical" divisions between different social classes and groups, Palestinian society has been riven by "horizontal" fissures between town and country, between different villages and regions, between different family and clan networks. So deep have some of these divisions been that they have not been completely transcended, even in the face of a common enemy.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how the Palestinians, during the Intifada, have attempted to organise themselves as a coordinated and effective force, with their own political authority; an authority that has grown to rival, and in many ways to supersede, the power of the Israeli state.

The first months: the establishment of the UNC

The outbreak of the Uprising in December 1987 was as great a surprise to the leadership of the PLO as it was to everyone else, although in the first few days there was little to set it apart from previous confrontations with the occupying power. However, as the weeks went by the insurrection took on a distinctive character. One aspect of this was its scale. Whereas previous outbursts had been dispersed in nature, which made them relatively containable, this time whole sectors of society became involved as the revolt spread from Gaza to the West Bank, from the camps to the towns and villages. The other key distinguishing feature was the emergence of an instrument of political unification for all the various political factions in the guise of the Unified National Command of the Uprising (UNC).

Following the first announcement of its existence in a leaflet distributed in the first week of January, 1988, the UNC succeeded in establishing itself as the undisputed guiding force behind the Uprising, commanding the allegiance of the vast majority of the population in the struggle to end the occupation. Although it has remained a completely clandestine body, with its existence most openly evidenced by the regular publication of its communiqués and leaflets, the UNC soon acquired legitimacy as the main political authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Along with the organisational infrastructure of popular committees that grew up alongside it, the UNC took on the character of an "embryonic state": coordinating activities in civil society, administering the provision of certain basic services, and seeking to control the use of force within the boundaries of its own territory.

Following the spontaneous outbursts of rage and anger in the Gaza Strip, the key elements in maintaining the revolt during the early days were youthful street gangs and certain Islamic activists. It took local political cadres some time to grasp the significance of what was happening. It would appear that a group from Fatah were the first to issue a leaflet under the name of the

UNC, to be followed a few days later by one published by the Democratic Front.[1] Despite such inauspicious beginnings, by early January the basic structure of the UNC in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had been established.

In the West Bank the membership was made up of representatives from each of the four main nationalist organisations — Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestine Communist Party. In the Gaza Strip Islamic Jihad was also represented. All parties, regardless of size, enjoyed the same status within the UNC. During the early weeks of the Intifada, as many as twelve to fifteen people would attend, but within a short while it was established that each party should appoint just one person as its representative. Each of the factions continued to run its own networks, with which their delegate on the UNC liaised, representing the network's views in the discussions of the UNC, and in turn reporting back to the party cadres, explaining and justifying particular decisions and platforms adopted by the UNC. The members of the UNC and its associated popular committees during the first months of the Intifada were predominantly activists who had been schooled in the disciplines of clandestine organisation during the time many of them had spent in Israeli prisons for security-related offences.[2]

Although the unity of the PLO had been proclaimed the previous April in Algiers, the rivalry between the factions represented in the UNC did not disappear overnight. There was an undercurrent of resentment against Fatah who, it was argued, had never invested the same amount of energy in grassroots organising as the other groups, except in its Shabiba (Youth) organisation. Fatah was accused of using its control of material and financial resources to 'muscle in'.[3] There was tension between the Democratic Front and the Communists, insofar as they shared similar political platforms and as such saw themselves competing for the same pool of potential recruits. The PCP also clashed with the PFLP, criticising its representatives for repeatedly seeking to escalate the Uprising beyond a level that the Communists felt the population could withstand.[4] For instance, the PCP opposed the escalation of the violence entailed by the UNC's endorsement of the use of fire bombs in the Uprising and urged a "taming" of the struggle, arguing that energies would be better directed to the strengthening of the social and political infrastructure of popular committees rather than in direct confrontations with the security forces.[5]

Another serious division came to light in March 1988 when at least two versions of Communiqué No. 10 were distributed. The first one called for the resignation of West Bank deputies to the Jordanian parliament. It had been issued by the PFLP, who had long held the slogan: "The road to the liberation of Palestine goes through Amman". The other groupings issued their own leaflet a few days later, again under the banner of the UNC, which omitted a demand that they felt to be premature and unnecessarily antagonistic towards the Jordanian regime at a time when its support might be crucial to the future of the Uprising.[6] Some months later, in May, the PFLP broke

ranks once again with the publication of its own version of Communiqué No. 17. It urged a campaign of total civil disobedience, a demand which the other political groups once again considered premature and refused to endorse. There were also apparent breakdowns in communication between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In Communiqué No. 9, issued on 1 March 1988, the leaders of the Gaza Strip called for a three-day strike on the occasion of George Schultz's visit to the region, whilst the leadership in the West Bank just called for a one day stoppage.

Despite such teething problems, the power of the UNC was revealed by the solidarity of response to its proclamations and instructions to the population. The response of shopkeepers and merchants to the strike calls and the order to restrict their opening hours on non-strike days, despite the efforts of the Israeli military to force them to remain open, was particularly impressive. Their unity and discipline was a forceful affirmation of the power and authority of the UNC. Any shopkeeper who dared to ignore the orders risked having his store firebombed as punishment for placing private interest above the national good.[7]

As part of its attempt to establish itself as the legitimate political authority through the de-legitimisation of the occupying regime, the UNC ordered all those Palestinians working for the civil administration of the occupied territories, the police and members of village and municipal committees appointed by the Israelis, to resign and "stop betraying their people before it is too late". This call went out in the ninth leaflet, and was repeated in ensuing communiqués, each time with an implicit threat as to the consequences of defying the "Palestinian will". Communiqué No. 11, distributed on 21 March 1988, advised that "the people of the Uprising will be harsh with anyone who remains outside the national consensus and refuses to resign immediately", whilst the twelfth warned that the UNC could no longer be responsible for the safety of those mayors and officials who refused to heed the resignation call.

By that time the majority of the police working for the occupying power had resigned, an emphatic statement of where the seat of power within the occupied territories lay. Those who challenged that power by refusing to heed its instructions faced the threat of sanctions. The mayor of El Bireh was assaulted with a knife, whilst the Israeli-appointed council head of Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip only resigned after his car was set alight and his home fire-bombed.[8] As one activist remarked, "It's a matter of getting rid of all the people appointed by Israel and Jordan; they are tools. We are cleaning out our cities. This is the real Intifada".[9]

The Popular Committees

Accompanying this process of "purification" and the assertion of the legitimate authority of the new Palestinian leadership, efforts were also launched to establish an alternative organisational infrastructure to meet people's needs and provide some of the services previously administered by Israel and its appointees. Communiqué No. 11 called for the creation of "popular commit-

tees" in "every city, village, camp and street". The Palestinian Centre for the Study of Non-violence examined the functioning of these alternative institutions that sprang up throughout the occupied territories, and listed eleven different types.[10]

Strike Forces: These acted as the "front-line troops" of the Intifada in confrontations with Israeli troops and settlers. In addition to this "external" function, they also exercised an "internal" control function, enforcing the instructions of the UNC in their area. As such, their activities ranged from ensuring that merchants abide by the appropriate trading hours to the harassing and punishment of collaborators.[11]

Women's Committees: Like the strike forces, the women's committees carried out a wide range of activities. In the early summer of 1989 I visited premises that acted as a women's centre in a small town in the central region of the West Bank. The ground floor was used as a cooperative shop, selling cost price supplies, much of it produced by women in the surrounding villages. The women at the centre held a weekly discussion meeting, where they would discuss topics raised in the books they had set themselves to read. They also ran adult literacy classes. They arranged visits to outlying villages to give health care classes and talk to the women of the village about developments in the Intifada. They performed a public relations function by providing interpreters to accompany visitors who wanted to visit villages in their area. They also arranged visits to sit with the bereaved, the injured, and those newly released from prison — expressions of concern and solidarity, letting people know that they were not alone in their struggles and sacrifices. In some areas the women organised themselves into "snatch squads" to rescue children and youths from the clutches of Israeli soldiers. Here is one woman's account of how things proceed in a Gazan refugee camp:[12]

> Women have been playing an active role in the Uprising, in the confrontations that you see... How? For example, say the army arrives and there's a confrontation between the army and the youth. They'll chase them, there will be attacks with gas, shooting. They'll grab one youth, and so what will be the woman's role? She'll scream and shout. The army is affected by the screaming of women. It attracts their attention. It confuses them and they don't know what to do. She'll scream and follow them, attack them. She'll grab hold of the soldier who has got the boy. She'll do whatever she can. The women's methods sometimes work — the screaming and the attacking of the army. Some girls throw stones as well. So the soldier doesn't know whether to pay attention to the stones or the women screaming or the boys. So the confrontation will involve everybody. Sometimes the methods succeed and then the women just slip away.

Guard Committees: Their task has been to protect property from the security forces, settlers, and common criminals. They were formed to fill the gap left by the resignation of the police. In addition to this "law and

order" function, their most important role has been to act as lookouts, providing advance warning of attacks from soldiers or settlers.

Popular Education Committees: The function of these committees is to organise community and home-based education for the young, as part of the attempt to fill the void created by the Israeli closure of schools in the West Bank.

Food and Supply Committees: Their responsibility is to survey the needs of the people in their area, and arrange the collection and distribution of food and other supplies locally and to neighbouring areas, villages and camps under curfew or closed off by the military.

Medical Committees: These committees are responsible for holding stocks of basic medicines, in addition to providing basic first aid instruction and medical treatment to those injured in confrontations.

Committees for Self-sufficiency: The members of these committees are at the heart of the movement to develop the "home economy", showing people how to achieve greater self-sufficiency through growing their own produce, rearing chickens, rabbits, pigeons and other livestock.

Social Reform Committees: These committees were initiated as a community-based conflict resolution service designed to replace the Israeli courts by mediating in disputes between individuals and families.

Committees to Confront the Tax: The role of these committees is to engage with and expel Israeli tax collectors who invariably accompany the soldiers on their incursions into villages and neighbourhoods.

Merchants' Committees: Their responsibility is to coordinate the efforts of the merchants in the conduct of strikes and other Intifada-related activities.

Information Committees: These were formed to compensate for the restrictions imposed on the work of journalists and other sources of information. Their task is to gather and disseminate information concerning the Uprising.

This list gives a good idea of the range of functions undertaken by the alternative institutions developed by the Palestinians during the Intifada. However, it is an overly schematic framework which implies a degree of consistency and standardisation which has never actually been achieved on the ground. In practice there was an unevenness of development. The available evidence suggests that the alternative institutional network became most highly developed in areas where one or more of the political organisations were active prior to the Intifada, and where there was a pre-existing system of grassroots organisations and associations.

In general, however, each neighbourhood or village created its own local coordinating committee, its composition loosely reflecting the balance of influence enjoyed by the different political organisations within the locality. Beyond and below this basic institution, each locality developed its own particular pattern of sub-committees in response to emergent needs in the area. Thus, villages adjacent to an Israeli settlement gave priority to developing an efficient system of advance warning of attacks. Villages that span routes to settlements tended to develop highly organised strike forces, actively

engaged in the harassment and intimidation of settlers travelling to and from their places of work inside Israel. In a similar manner, quarters of refugee camps facing repeated incursions from the military, and sustained periods of curfew, tended to focus upon the efficient organisation of their guard committees and strike forces, along with an adequate medical relief system for the victims of the confrontations. Villages and neighbourhoods adjacent to such camps, on the other hand, tended to give greater priority to organising the supply of food and provisions to their neighbours, whose degree of suffering was so much greater than their own.

Command, control and communication

The development of the popular committee structure took place in a relatively flexible and uneven manner, according to local circumstances and in response to local needs. It was an organic process, the network taking on its own shape and structure in response to its environment. Much the same can be said about the development of the UNC's own command, control and communication systems.

It took about four months, until the spring of 1988, before the basic organisational pattern was established. By then the composition of the key executive body, the UNC itself, had been reduced to a single representative from each of the four main nationalist parties. Each of these maintained its own organisational infrastructure in the occupied territories, as well as its links with its leadership outside.[13] The role of the UNC members, like party leaders in political systems elsewhere, has been to try to represent the interests of their party members and constituents in the decision making process; and then to explain and justify to these same members the decisions that had actually been taken. Each party maintained its own communications network and distributed its own leaflets and newsletters, in addition to the well-worn method of publicising its own slogans and position through political graffiti.

In this manner the political party system continued to exist alongside, and to permeate through, the embryonic state system established by the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Insofar as they had always needed to operate clandestinely, there was little new about the cellular organisational pattern of these parties. What was new was the compulsion they felt to remain within the "national consensus". There developed amongst Palestinians a real sense that they were laying the basis of a democratic and pluralist political system for the future. One within which people and parties could argue and disagree, each trying to promote their own particular point of view. Thus, at the end of the day, once a decision had been made, it was accepted as binding, even though some might continue to disagree. It was as if the political rivalries that had always existed were still there, but they were being played out according to new rules, and within new parameters that acknowledged a basic unity and common interest underlying the factional differences.

The central decision making arena, of course, remained the UNC itself. Associated with it were a number of sub-committees, each responsible for a

particular function such as finance, health, education, public relations. Included in the membership of these sub-committees were regional representatives to act as links between the national level and regional sub-committees. Below the regional level there were district level sub-committees, made up of representatives from the village and neighbourhood level sub-committees. There thus emerged a radically decentralised system of decision making and control, with its roots firmly embedded in the neighbourhood level committees.

The whole variegated system could be compared to a bunch of grapes rather than a string of worry beads. The removal of one worry bead breaks the thread that holds them all together. In the organic structure of the grapes, the severing of one stem only affects the growth attached to that linkage, leaving unaffected the rest of the cluster.

Running throughout the whole network was a myriad of communication channels, and at their heart was the UNC itself. Its role was to respond to the will of the people as it permeated through the system, and also to provide political leadership and direction. Its task has been one of attempting to guide the Palestinian population through the maelstrom of events, keeping people abreast of developments and trends, trying to maintain unity and morale in the struggle.

The key medium for the performance of this essential leadership function has been the numbered communiqués, issued at regular intervals by the UNC. In the early days of the Uprising the bulk of these were produced centrally at a printers in Issawiya, but following a number of security raids the process was decentralised. Thus, the earlier communiqués were all professionally printed, including one glossy eight-page publication. Later issues were rather more low-tech. If one compared leaflets distributed in different areas, they would share the same wording but would be typed and reproduced on different machinery. However, whilst the technical quality deteriorated, the distribution network continued to operate with remarkable effectiveness. With only rare exceptions, perhaps due to a peculiarly heavy security clampdown in a particular area, the communiqués have been distributed at roughly the same time in every part of the occupied territories. It is difficult to convey the authority with which these came to be imbued by the majority of Palestinians, especially by the young members of the strike forces and popular committees. As one Palestinian expressed it, "They are like the Koran to the people, to the youths. When they arrive in the villages they are studied, discussed ... they are our constitution".

Their continued regular appearance has acted as a tremendous morale booster for the population at large. Here was the physical manifestation of the existence of their own political authority which, like themselves, continued to defy the occupying power. Of course their effect has been more than psychological. The communiqués have performed an absolutely vital coordinating function, informing people of the timetable of actions and events due to take place over the forthcoming period, and thereby giving them the opportunity to plan their own activities accordingly.[14] Local committees also

produced their own leaflets, listing their own timetable of events and actions. In addition, the different political organisations continued to issue their own communiqués and literature as a way of keeping their membership abreast of developments and debates.

The communiqués, leaflets and other literature were not the only means of communication nor the sole channel of political debate. The Palestinians continued to rely upon their "wall newspapers", in the form of the political graffiti covering just about every wall in the occupied territories. Alongside the slogans and symbols of the different political currents, one could also find specific messages and instructions issued by the UNC giving details of strikes and other days of action.

The role of Palestinian "personalities"

The communiqués and leaflets issued by the UNC are read not just by Palestinians. As semi-clandestine documents that enter the public domain once they have been published and distributed, their contents are reported upon by the Israeli press and media around the world. They have been used by the UNC to outline their political position, not just to their own national constituency, but also to the international community in general and to the Israelis in particular. Just prior to the Israeli general elections in November 1988, the UNC issued a leaflet in Arabic, English and Hebrew calling for a twin-state solution to the conflict that was obviously directed at influencing the Israeli voting public.

In the sphere of external affairs and public relations, a particularly significant role has been played by a network of Palestinian "personalities", predominantly based in East Jerusalem. The grouping is made up of academics, intellectuals, journalists, publishers, lawyers, businessmen — many of them drawn from well-established and influential Palestinian families. As residents of East Jerusalem, they have enjoyed a far greater freedom of movement than residents of the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They have also had access to better communication facilities, insofar as the Israelis have never cut the international telephone links with East Jerusalem as they have done for the rest of the occupied territories. All this has facilitated one of their roles, acting as spokespersons for the Intifada at conferences, symposia and seminars around the world, including inside Israel itself. They have regular contacts with diplomats, foreign journalists, visiting dignitaries, statesmen and politicians. They are the people whose command of English makes them excellent sources for interviews and quotes by the media when a "Palestinian perspective" on some current development is needed.

Their relatively public profile, and their range of influential international contacts, has provided them with a certain degree of immunity from arrest and detention by the Israeli security forces. This means that they can be used as spokespersons for the Intifada within the occupied territories and within Israel itself. Thus, on 14 January 1988, a press conference was held in East Jerusalem in which a set of demands were addressed to the Israelis in the name of "Palestinian nationalist institutions and personalities from the West

Bank and Gaza". These fourteen demands became the political programme of the Intifada. They were presented by a group that included Sari Nusseibeh, a professor of philosophy at Bir Zeit University, Gabi Baramki, the president of that university, Mustafa al-Natshah, a former mayor of Hebron, and Mubarak Awad, the director of the Palestinian Centre for the Study of Non-violence. In similar fashion, in April 1989, 83 well-known Palestinians issued a signed public statement rejecting the proposal of Prime Minister Shamir for elections in the occupied territories, denouncing it as an attempt to divide Palestinians and "ignore our political legitimacy and legitimate aspirations". Once again, this was a clear political statement, made on behalf of the UNC, concerning an issue that was causing some confusion within the Palestinian community. The degree of relative autonomy these personalities enjoy means that they can float ideas and hypothetical scenarios. The reaction to such exercises from their fellow Palestinians inside and outside the occupied territories, from Israel and the international community in general, can in turn help the UNC shape their political strategy.

As diplomats of the Intifada, representing the new political authority of the Palestinians to the outside world, these personalities are obviously in very close touch with the leadership of the Uprising. Indeed, insofar as their relative freedom to travel abroad provides them with the opportunity to meet with PLO officials and leaders outside, they have performed an important bridging function between the two sets of leadership within the overall nationalist movement.

Relations with the "outside"

The history of the underground resistance movements in the Second World War reveals that the amount of control that a leadership outside the occupied country is capable of exercising over such movements is very limited. Resisters tend to resent instructions issued by a leadership ensconced in relative safety and comfort, far from the day-to-day dangers and hardships faced by those in the field.[15]

A similar sentiment has been detectable amongst activists in the Uprising. At one level this has manifested itself in a certain resentment of the lifestyle enjoyed by the PLO leadership and its entourage — travelling round the world in comfort and style, staying in luxury hotels, treated as VIPs wherever they go — a far cry from the daily confrontations with the Israeli security forces, the economic hardships, the threats of arrest and injury that face the activists inside the occupied territories. But, beyond this all too understandable indignation, which has not been without its element of self-righteousness, there has been no serious or sustained questioning of the leadership role of "the old man" and his associates in Tunis. The population of the occupied territories is only a third of the total Palestinian population scattered throughout the world. Consequently, the leaders of the Uprising have remained very aware that whilst they might constitute the legitimate political authority within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, they have no remit whatsoever to speak for the Palestinian people as a whole.

Whilst acknowledging the sovereignty of the leadership outside, the Intifada indubitably wrought some profound changes in the style, the dynamics, and in the actual substance of Palestinian politics outside the occupied territories. The style of politics within the occupied territories during the Intifada took on a very participatory quality. It was a form of political practice which was intolerant of any factionalism that threatened the unity of the movement to end the occupation. It was also one which, because of the clandestine method of organising, did not focus upon individual personalities. All this is a far cry from the political style that has characterised the PLO over the years —an alphabet soup of factions serving as vehicles for personal ambition, patronage, and the interests of various Arab regimes, with proud rhetoric masking organisational incompetence and inefficiency. Much of this has changed since 1987 under the influence of the Intifada and the example set by its leadership. If the people on the inside, suffering and facing martyrdom, could sustain a unity of purpose and action, in spite of their political differences, then the least they could demand of their leaders outside was a similar display of national unity and "Palestinian democracy" — such has been the feeling amongst many political activists inside the occupied territories during the Intifada.

The influence of the Intifada on the political style of the PLO reflects the profound change in the balance of power within the organisation that has taken place. For the first time, the "insiders" began to exercise the dominant sway in Palestinian politics. They were no longer spectators, observing their leaders outside decide on their fate. The feeling that the Intifada had achieved more than 20 years of armed struggle in promoting the Palestinian cause, gave the "insiders" an unprecedented degree of self-confidence and assertiveness. After all, it was the Intifada that forced King Hussein to relinquish his claim to the West Bank in August 1988, thereby consolidating the position of the PLO as the undisputed representative of the Palestinian people. Commenting on this mood towards the end of 1988, David Hirst wrote: "they feel themselves to have earned the moral right to call the tune in Palestinian counsels in a way they have never done before".[16]

A major consequence of this shift in the centre of political gravity within the PLO was a strengthening of the mainstream "moderate" trend within the organisation, which culminated in the November 1988 Declaration of Independence and the subsequent unequivocal recognition of the state of Israel. This major step revealed the way in which the leadership of the Intifada had begun to set the political agenda for the PLO.

The cadres of the Uprising are a younger generation than the leaders outside. Their formative influences have been post-1967. They have grown up under Israeli occupation, but with the example of the Israeli social and political system before them. They *know* the Israelis in a way that their leaders outside cannot hope to achieve. With this knowledge has come the recognition of the Israeli state and people as facts of life, and with this recognition has come the reluctant acknowledgement that they cannot be eliminated or wished away. The result has been that right from the early days of the Intifada,

Palestinians have made it clear that the struggle was not aimed at the annihilation of Israel, but at ending the occupation and winning freedom for Palestinians. The political programme of the Uprising has always been for the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside that of Israel.

Following King Hussein's relinquishing of his claim to the West Bank, the pressure from those inside upon their leaders outside increased, with the demand that they come up with a political initiative to fill the vacuum left by Jordan. Early in August 1988 a draft Declaration of Independence was discovered at the offices of Faisal Husseini's Arab Studies Society. This had in fact been written some months previously, and its contents had been the subject of discussion in certain Palestinian circles for some time. A couple of weeks after the "leaking" of the contents of the Husseini document, on 23 August, the UNC issued a communiqué urging the Palestine National Council to "adopt a comprehensive and clear political programme which will gain widespread international support for the national rights of our people and to do all it can to support and develop the Uprising". The UNC leaflet addressed to Israeli voters just prior to the November 1988 Israeli general election proposed a two-state solution to the conflict. Thus, the pressure was sustained right up to the historic 19th meeting of the PNC in November 1988 at Algiers. Representatives from the occupied territories were prevented from attending but their influence remained paramount, with the UNC's communiqués and leaflets being quoted by delegates in defence of their position on the various political differences. The fact that the PLO remained united after what was, in effect, the formal relinquishing of their claim to over half their historic territory, was an even more powerful illustration of the dominant influence of the Intifada over the whole spectrum of Palestinian politics. Thus, whilst the PFLP in particular was critical of the concessions made by Arafat, and copies of Dr George Habash's speeches were distributed in the occupied territories along with political graffiti denouncing Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, none of the main political factions within the PLO were prepared to risk an open confrontation that would threaten the unity underpinning the Uprising.[17]

Their key "front-line" role in the nationalist struggle has given the leading activists in the Uprising a degree of relative autonomy vis-à-vis the leadership outside. In the words of one of them, "We are not employees". When the occasion has seemed to demand it, they have not been afraid to express their criticism of the outside organisation. Such an incident was the hijacking of an Israeli bus in early spring 1988 by a group of guerrillas who had infiltrated from Egypt, which resulted in the death of three Israeli civilians. It was argued that this action seriously undermined the international sympathy earned by the unarmed nature of the Palestinian resistance to Israeli oppression.

Despite their dominant influence, the leading figures within the occupied territories have been careful to emphasise their identification with, and ultimate accountability to, the outside leadership. That this commitment goes beyond tokenism is indicated by the fact that the general political statements

that constitute the first section of the regular leaflets are always cleared with the leadership outside through the liaison committee that the PLO has established, the approved draft being faxed back to the UNC. The communiqués themselves have always been issued in the name of the "PLO/Unified Command of the Uprising". Spokespeople repeatedly inform visiting diplomats, statesmen and others, including Israelis, that "our address is Tunis". Whatever feelings they may entertain in private, they are careful to avoid giving any public hint of differences between the inside and those outside, carefully scanning the Arabic press and listening to Radio Monte Carlo and other sources to obtain signs of the mood and perspective in Tunis. They know that in order to maintain morale during the struggle, unity throughout the movement must be sustained. They are ever aware that the Israelis have proven themselves eager to exploit to the utmost any hint of difference and discord as part of their attempt to promote divisions within the Palestinian community. In particular, Palestinians within the West Bank and Gaza Strip have remained fully aware that a major element in the Israeli counter-strategy has been the attempt to encourage schisms between the Palestinians inside and the PLO leadership outside, in the hopes that a more "accommodating" leadership might emerge with whom they might negotiate an end to the Uprising.

The Israeli response

Intimidation, repression and suppression

In facing up to the existence of a rival political authority within its own domain, the Israelis have sought to undermine its strength in a variety of ways. At the most obvious and visible level, there have been attempts to break the political will of the activists by arrest, detention, deportation, intimidation, and even assassination. The Israelis have also sought to undermine the power of the UNC by imposing sanctions on those who heed its call. Hence, in the early weeks of the Intifada they made vain attempts to break the strike schedule by forcing merchants to remain open, welding shut the entrances of stores that refused to follow their countermands, closing wholesale markets and the like; warning head teachers not to open up their schools when the UNC urged students and staff to return to school and so on.

In addition, the Israeli state has used a variety of administrative measures to impose its control on the Palestinian population, seeking to impress upon them just where the "real power" lay in the land, forcing people to acknowledge the strength of Israeli state power and thereby revealing the futility of attempting to "disengage" from the various state apparatuses in response to the promptings of the UNC. Thus, in May 1988 all adults in the Gaza Strip were required to re-register for new identification cards. The new card was only issued to those who could prove they had paid all their taxes, but a key purpose was to tighten up the control of the inhabitants. In response, the UNC called for a boycott of the ID changes in a supplement to Communiqué No. 15, reminding people that "your national duty compels you not to change

your ID card because this would harm the achievements of the Uprising".[18] The Israelis came out victors in this particular clash of rival powers. They wisely commenced the re-registration scheme in the middle-class residential suburb of Rimal in Gaza City, before proceeding to the hot-beds of resistance in the refugee camps. The UNC, for its part, underestimated the strength of the cord that ties Palestinians in the occupied territories to their ID cards. As one young man explained to a British journalist, "We need ID cards to work in Israel. I support five people, my friend here has twelve mouths to feed. Are the National Leadership going to pay for our families?"[19]

Without a valid ID card, normal travel becomes virtually impossible for Palestinians living under occupation. One can be arrested and detained at any of the innumerable road blocks and checkpoints. One never knows when one might be stopped by the security forces and asked to produce ID. One Palestinian acquaintance wryly confessed that at one stage during the Intifada he had started going to bed with his ID safely lodged in his pyjama pocket, in order to reassure himself when he suffered one of his recurring nightmares — the loss of his identification documents.

The Israeli administration also sought to tighten its control in other ways. In both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank they have insisted that drivers re-license their vehicles. To obtain the new registration plates, people were once again required to prove they had paid their taxes and had "good conduct" clearances from the security forces.

In June 1989 the Israelis commenced their most ambitious scheme to frustrate the UNC's call upon Palestinians to disengage from the Israeli authorities, by requiring all adult Gazan men to carry new computerised identification cards if they wished to travel into Israel for any purpose. Mindful of their relative lack of success the previous year, the local leadership of the Uprising organised the strike forces to confiscate the new cards from their holders before they had a chance to use them. Eventually, however, the UNC had to face the reality of Gazans' economic dependence upon work in Israel and acknowledge the bad feeling that was developing against West Bankers who were allegedly filling the jobs in Israel left vacant by the striking Gazans. They rescinded the instructions to ignore the new regulations. Although this could be seen as a defeat for the UNC, the very fact that it was prepared to acknowledge the mistakes and retreat from untenable positions reinforced its image as an authentic leadership that was willing to respond to the pressures from below.

Running in tandem with such attempts to intensify their own administrative controls upon Palestinians, the Israelis also pursued a sustained assault on what they considered to be the institutional foundations of the rival political authority: the grassroots organisations and popular committees. The Shabiba "Youth" Movement was banned in March 1988 as a "front organisation of Fatah". The members of this organisation were active in trade unions and student committees. They were also engaged in various community projects, voluntary work schemes, neighbourhood care and youth programmes. However, according to Joel Greenberg of the *Jerusalem Post*, "Security officials

considered it to be in fact a recruiting mechanism for Fatah, through which young Palestinians are mobilised for anti-Israel attacks and nationalist political activity".[20] Trade unions were also among the early targets of the authorities' attempts to suppress Palestinian institutions that could serve as a base for collective organisation. Activists were detained and deported, premises were closed, and the organisations themselves outlawed for "security" reasons.[21]

By the summer of 1988 the attack had been extended to other organisations. In June the largest charitable association in the occupied territories, the Society of In'ash al-Usra (Family Rehabilitation Society) in al-Bireh, was closed for a period of two years on the grounds that materials of an inflammatory nature were kept in the Society. The Arab Studies Society in East Jerusalem, the largest research and resource centre in the occupied territories, was closed at the end of July 1988 on the grounds that it was "controlled and financed by the Fatah organisation and served as the organisation's tool to promote its aims and attain the objectives of the Uprising".[22] Other voluntary associations and organisations were closed down, whilst many were threatened with closure if they persisted in trying to fulfil their normal pre-Intifada roles.[23]

Following King Hussein's announcement of 31 July 1988, the main target for the Israelis became the popular committees, which they correctly considered to be the organisational and ideological backbone of the Uprising. On 17 August Defence Minister Rabin announced that the security forces would use every legal means at their disposal to cope with the committees. They were declared illegal the next day, with membership punishable by up to ten years imprisonment. The *Jerusalem Post* then quoted a security source who promised that "there will be no mass arrests, we do not intend to arrest popular committee members whose only activity is community service like aid to needy families or blood donations".[24] There then followed a massive trawling operation to net in the activists. Deportation orders were served on 25 leading figures, and there were reports of between 200 and 300 members of the committees being placed under administrative detention within a few days of the banning order.[25] In the eyes of one Israeli commentator, this move was tantamount to declaring all Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip illegal. [26]

> Let us do a little arithmetic: the Shabiba movement has been outlawed. All political organisations in the territories have long been illegal. Last week, the popular committees were outlawed, and alongside them their supporters, those who follow their instructions and those who do their work and aid them verbally, materially, actively or by default.
>
> There is a popular committee in every village and municipal district, and all residents accept its authority. We cannot, therefore, escape the pleasant conclusion that we have finally managed to outlaw all the inhabitants of the territories. There is no longer any need to prove that someone was involved in terrorist activity, that he tried to harm people,

> to plant explosives, set a tyre alight or threw a bottle in order to send him to a detention camp, confiscate his property, demolish his house or deport him. All that is required is proof that he is a resident of the territories.

All that happened as a consequence of the Israeli action was that the popular committee structure embedded itself a little deeper into the interstices of Palestinian society. As committee members were arrested, at whatever level of the structure from the UNC down to the local neighbourhood, their place was taken by the next in line. According to one well-informed Palestinian, the personnel of the UNC changed at least four times during the first year of the Uprising, due to arrests and rotation to protect activists at risk. At the provincial level, I was assured by an activist in a small town in the northern area of the West Bank that it took, on average, a period of only two to three weeks to re-establish a local network of committees following its complete dismemberment by the Israeli security forces. All this would seem to support the verdict of an Israeli security source, delivered at the time when the popular committees were outlawed: "the new steps will slow the Intifada but will not stop it. It is too late to stop it now, despite the political echelon's wish. The Intifada will continue whether we want it or not."[27]

Divide and rule

For as long as the civilian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip remain determined to actively resist the Israeli occupation, the Intifada will persist in one form or another. A key factor affecting that commitment to struggle will be the sense of unity within the Palestinian community. A major feature of the Israeli counter-strategy has been to undermine that unity and to try and foment divisions in the Palestinian ranks. In the past the divisions within Palestinian society were such as to require little in the way of external intervention in order to fracture the shallow unity established in the struggle against a common enemy.

In the implementation of their divisive strategy, the Israelis have adopted a range of tactics. A simple method of planting the seeds of distrust in a community is to launch a security raid, arrest a number of suspected activists, and imprison them all — except one, who is released after a few hours' interrogation. The invariable reaction of neighbours and acquaintances is one of suspicion: Why was he released? Is it possible that he has struck a deal with the security forces? Has he promised to trade information for his liberty? Can he be trusted?

The same approach can be adopted with any community, whether it be an isolated village in the West Bank or the community of intellectuals and "personalities" in East Jerusalem. Thus, in May 1989 the Israelis announced that they had unearthed evidence to show that a number of prominent Palestinian spokespersons were, in fact, leaders of the Uprising, involved in drafting leaflets, distributing funds, liaising with PLO representatives in Amman and Paris, and other activities. Amongst those named were Dr Sari Nusseibeh and Radwan Abu Ayyash, the head of the Arab Journalists Asso-

ciation in East Jerusalem. Despite the quite specific charges, these two were left at liberty and were not arrested, thus exposing them to criticism and suspicion in certain Palestinian circles. Why were they not arrested? They were even allowed to travel abroad, while others were imprisoned. Why? What kind of understanding had they reached with the Israelis? Had they agreed to participate in the Israeli attempts to promote an alternative leadership to the PLO within the occupied territories? If the Israelis had not arrested them, maybe this was because of the influence of the United States. Were they tools of the CIA? These were the kinds of rumours and suspicions being whispered through various Palestinian networks during May 1989. As an attempt to counter the damage, a declaration was distributed around East Jerusalem on behalf of "national figures and institutions in the State of Palestine", condemning the reports as fabricated, and denouncing the Israeli media for circulating "lies and deceptions" with the aim of inciting public animosity against well-known Palestinian nationalists, and spreading discord amongst the inhabitants of Palestine.[28]

Another common tactic in the effort to create division has involved the circulation of false and deceptive information. Daoud Kuttab described the misinformation campaign that was launched in the early spring of 1988.[29]

> Forged leaflets were distributed throughout the occupied territories outlining different protest schedules. One praised the policemen who had resigned, but called on those who hadn't resigned to stay in their jobs; another accused well-known Palestinian nationalists of appropriating money intended for the needy. In a forged document distributed in Gaza, Palestinians were told of huge sums that were to be given to striking shopkeepers and resigning tax collectors.... The campaign climaxed with a statement by the Israeli police minister that the authors of the latest Unified Command leaflet had been captured... The demoralisation campaign failed miserably. Palestinians had little trouble uncovering the forged leaflets and the misinformation campaign.

Undeterred, the Israelis launched another exercise in early July 1988. Two rival versions of Communiqué No. 21 were issued, both purportedly by the UNC. Once again, Palestinians knew from the differences in vocabulary and style which of them was a fake, produced by the Shin Bet to give the impression of divisions amongst the leadership, with the aim of spreading confusion and despondency amongst the wider Palestinian public.[30]

Sometimes the same end of sowing discord and internal suspicion can be served merely by facilitating the circulation of dissenting views within the Palestinian community, in the hope that the traditional rivalry between different political factions can thereby be heightened and intensified. Thus, in February 1989 Israel stopped jamming the broadcasts of the *al-Quds* radio station based in Syria and run by the Syrian-backed Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — General Command (PFLP-GC). Its leader, Ahmed Jibril, has been one of the most virulent critics of Arafat's "defeatist" policies. The station devoted much of its rhetoric to condemning the PLO

for recognising Israel and accepting UN Resolution 242, and urging armed struggle to liberate the whole of Palestine, from the river to the sea. The purpose of the Israeli action was clear — to undermine Palestinian unity by the encouragement of sectarian extremists.

Islamic factions

In combating such efforts, Palestinians have before them the example of the 1930s, when the revolt against the British and the Jewish settlers degenerated into bloody feuds and brigandage, fought out between rival groups and factions. It was just such a spectre that began to haunt them with the emergence of what appeared to be a rival to the leadership offered by the UNC, in the guise of the Islamic Resistance Movement, known by its Arabic acronym, Hamas, meaning "zeal".

For most outside observers, the first indication they had of the burgeoning power of this group came when Hamas called a strike throughout the occupied territories on 21 August 1988, to mark the anniversary of the attempt to set fire to the al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969. The UNC had made a mistake in its twenty-third communiqué by merely calling for an intensification of the struggle on that day, thereby creating the opportunity for Hamas to make its move. Although Hamas had successfully organised a series of general strikes in the Gaza Strip, this was the first time it had flexed its organisational muscles in the West Bank. It was only partially successful, but for Palestinians there was the nightmare situation of supporters of rival organisations clashing in public as Hamas activists attempted to force reluctant shopkeepers to close their shops on a day when the UNC had instructed them to remain open.

The relationship between the secular Palestinian nationalist groups and the "true believers" of Islam had always been strained. Islamic fundamentalism was particularly strong in the Gaza Strip, where it was dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, with its roots in Egypt and its base at the Islamic University in Gaza City. It was in Gaza City that the tension with the nationalists reached its peak in 1981, when the Muslim Brotherhood burnt down the Red Crescent library, claiming that it was a "hot-bed of communism".[31] During this period it received encouragement and support from the Israeli military government, who even supplied some of its activists with weapons to protect themselves.[32]

At that time the Muslim Brotherhood believed that the raising of Islamic consciousness was its major task; liberation from occupation and the formation of an Islamic state would occur with Divine assistance once the Palestinians had become true Muslims. Consequently, it clearly served the interests of Israel to promote it as a counter-weight to the PLO.

However, in the mid-1980s a change began to take place, particularly after the November 1985 prisoner exchange when a number of "born-again" Muslims were released from Israeli jails. This new breed of believers accepted the importance of educating Muslims in the true ways of Islam, but also emphasised the need to actively oppose the Israeli occupation, arguing

that the struggle could not wait until all Muslims had become committed believers. This group became known as Islamic Jihad, and largely due to the mediation of Abu Jihad, it eventually forged working links with Fatah, which was far more acceptable as a partner than the non-believing socialists and Marxists of the other main nationalist parties. Since that time, and throughout the Intifada, Islamic Jihad adhered to the "national consensus" and kept close contact with the UNC.

The importance of Islamic Jihad in the nationalist struggle within Gaza became apparent early in October 1987 when seven of its members were killed in ambushes set up by the Israeli security forces. This event helped to fuel the popular discontent that gave birth to the Uprising in Gaza a few weeks later.

Concerned by its loss of support to Islamic Jihad, the Muslim Brotherhood decided to adopt a more activist stance against the occupation, and created the Islamic Resistance Movement as its "fighting arm" shortly after the commencement of the Uprising. Up to that time it had been Islamic Jihad that had attracted the attentions of the security forces, and in many ways the emergence of Hamas as the dominant Islamic grouping in the Intifada can be attributed to the vacuum created by the arrest of so many members of Islamic Jihad, which Hamas was only too eager to fill, with the tacit support of the Israelis, who seemed remarkably reluctant to detain Hamas activists.

The publication of its charter in August 1988 must have given fresh hope to the Israelis that the unity of the Palestinian Uprising was about to be riven asunder. In it Hamas expressed its opposition to PLO proposals for an international conference, and any settlement involving the partition of the land and a twin-state solution. Such initiatives, it was argued, "run counter to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement, since giving up part of Palestine is like giving up part of our religion". A Hamas sympathiser was quoted as saying, "There can be no compromise about Islamic claims to Palestine; the Koran and history show that Jews are untrustworthy; and the PLO is a secular organisation full of communists and atheists".[33]

Such pronouncements created a marvellous opportunity for the Israelis to taint the Uprising with the stain of "Islamic Fundamentalism", setting off alarm bells in the international community about Khomeini-style intolerance and "extremism" within the Palestinian community. The fact that there was a strong element of anti-semitism in the charter, and that Hamas looked forward to the establishment of an Islamic state between the river and the sea, was an added bonus for the Israeli authorities. Such a threat would help to seal over the divisions that had emerged within Israeli society concerning the suppression of the Intifada and the possibilities of a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians. It could also serve to weaken the commitment to the Intifada of the Christians amongst the Palestinians, for whom the prospect of an Islamic state was a less than reassuring prospect.

Palestinian suspicion of Israeli connivance in the growth of Hamas was reinforced on 9 September 1988, when members of the Israeli security forces stood by as Hamas activists forced shopkeepers to close their premises,

contrary to the orders of the UNC which had called for a general strike the previous day.[34] In spite of such occurrences, the UNC did all in its power to avoid the catastrophe of a split in the resistance movement. In Communiqué No. 25, issued on 6 September 1988, it criticised the use of force by Hamas to impose its strike orders and warned of the "free service to the enemy" that Hamas was providing by its divisive stance. However, the hand of solidarity was extended:

> We have stretched our arms in the past and we are extending them to every force that wants to contribute to the national effort. We do not exclude Hamas from our efforts to unify our positions ... we call for strengthening the national unity and for not breaking the national consensus by coordination with the unified leadership. We call on preachers at mosques to speak on unity, in order to guarantee the Uprising and assure its continuity.

In the succeeding months a series of intense meetings were held, inside and outside the occupied territories, in order to effect some kind of rapprochement. By January 1989 these negotiations appeared to have borne fruit. Hamas was beginning to observe the same strike days as the UNC, and whilst relationships could not be described as cordial, there was a mutual commitment that both sides should try to coordinate their activities in pursuit of their common goal of ending the occupation, accepting that their visions of the nature of the Palestinian state to which they ultimately aspired were markedly different. Subsequent cases of conflicting instructions being issued by Hamas and the UNC as regards strike days were often due to the inevitable problems of coordination between the leadership of two organisations, both operating clandestinely in the context of a military occupation, with all the problems of arranging and keeping meetings that such a situation entails. This was not always the case, however. On occasion, Hamas persisted in enforcing its own strike days in defiance of the UNC.

In May 1989, the Israeli authorities finally seemed to realise that they had helped to create a monster they could no longer control. They arrested over 250 Hamas activists in the West Bank and Gaza, including their unofficial leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin. Four months later they finally outlawed the movement. Informed sources suggested, however, that the reason for such a reversal in policy was related to Israel's proposal of elections in the occupied territories, and the consequent desire to promote a "moderate" and pliant Palestinian leadership that would cooperate in such a scheme. Hamas clearly did not fit in with such a scenario.[35] Whatever the aims of Israel's policy, the simple fact is that during the first three years of the Intifada the influence of the Islamic movements grew, not just in their heartland of the Gaza Strip but throughout the occupied territories and indeed within Israel itself. One sign of their burgeoning presence was the political graffiti, with more and more walls covered with slogans like "Through Jihad the country will be recovered!", "Yes to resistance! No to political hagg-

ling!", "Hamas is the true representative of our armed people!", "The Koran is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people!"[36]

Promoting an alternative leadership

A key constituent of Israel's policy towards the Palestinians has been the refusal to recognise the PLO and hence a refusal to consider the organisation as a possible negotiating partner. Before the Intifada Israel could always produce internationally acceptable reasons for such a stance — after all you cannot be expected to negotiate with terrorists. You do not negotiate with those who want to destroy the state of Israel and drive its people into the sea.

After the PLO's historic concessions of late 1988 and early 1989 when, for the first time, it unequivocally recognised the state of Israel and accepted a two-state solution, and also renounced the use of lethal violence against civilian targets, the Israeli rationale for refusing to recognise the PLO was seriously weakened. Even its patron, the United States, began a formal dialogue with PLO officials. Israel came under considerable diplomatic pressure to follow suit, particularly since King Hussein had made it clear that he was no longer laying claim to represent the Palestinians.

In an attempt to escape from his predicament Prime Minister Shamir proposed that elections be held in the occupied territories, excluding East Jerusalem, in order that the Palestinians might choose who to represent them in negotiations with Israel over the terms of some Camp David-style autonomy for the future. This was Shamir's peace initiative, launched in the spring of 1989.

As far as the Palestinians were concerned, this was only the latest ploy in the familiar Israeli strategy of trying to drive a wedge between their leaders inside and those outside the occupied territories. In Communiqué No. 38, issued on 10 April 1989, the UNC rejected the proposal out of hand, dismissing it as an attempt at "undermining the Uprising" and "finding an alternative leadership to the PLO". In a further attempt to close ranks and counter reports from Israeli sources of local Palestinian interest in elections, a declaration affirming their rejection of Shamir's proposal was issued on behalf of 83 leading Palestinians. In case anyone still felt tempted to step outside the parameters established by the UNC, then more forceful means were at hand. A group of prominent personalities in Nablus were visited by local strike forces and warned in no uncertain terms to stop meeting with Israeli officials. Some time later one of them had his store premises firebombed.

Undeterred by such attempts to maintain a united front in opposition to their proposals, the Israelis continued to "invite" Palestinians to meet with them. One exercise that caused considerable amusement in Palestinian circles was when the Military Governor of Tulkarm summoned the barbers and some other shopkeepers of the town to meet with the Military Adviser for Arab Affairs. Asked about their opinion concerning elections, they replied "This is the authority of the responsible people of the PLO. We have nothing to do

with political affairs".[37] "Is this what is intended by the search for an alternative leadership?" my Palestinian translator chortled.

In general, however, the Israelis have issued their invitations to representatives of the traditional, pro-Jordanian establishment: businessmen and political figures who could be considered to have most to lose by the continuation of the Intifada. Aware that they could not prevent such meetings taking place, the UNC declared that the contents of such meetings should be made public by those who were required to participate in them, in order to prevent the Israelis exploiting them for their own purposes. Thus, in July 1989 it emerged that Prime Minister Shamir had held meetings with some Palestinians, when one of their number, Jamil al-Tarifi, the ex-deputy mayor of al-Bireh, held a press conference in which he gave details of the encounter. Faisal Husseini later explained the thinking behind this new approach to the problem.[38]

> It is obvious that these meetings more often than not are a sort of monologue rather than a dialogue. What happens in such meetings is that Shamir tries to explain his plan and listens to some comments from the other party, nothing more than that. Shamir, at the same time, tries to make these meetings secret to convey the impression that there is something going on behind the curtain. This is meant to be a message to the West not to press Israel to talk to the PLO because there is something cooking which may lead to results. Shamir, however, knows very well that his attempt to create a new leadership will never be successful, so in fact what Shamir is after is to gain more time in his war against the Intifada and an excuse to cover his operations against it. Given that these meetings cannot be avoided, the Palestinian leadership should know about them before and after they take place, in order to avoid their negative effects.

Underlying the determination to defeat the Israeli attempts to create an alternative leadership has been a genuine and persistent concern at the level of unease experienced by some representatives of the established pre-Intifada order in the occupied territories. As one Palestinian observed to me: "There is a new mood, and a new style of leadership. There is a profoundly democratic social process taking place that is very threatening to the bourgeois leadership in Tunis and within Palestine."

As the Intifada moved into its third year the temptation to risk a political initiative increased, especially amongst those Palestinians who felt their status and influence to be under threat. The reasoning was along the following lines: "Everyone is suffering during the Uprising. The existing leadership, and the PLO in Tunis, are failing to make any political headway towards bringing the suffering to an end. No one would dispute that the elections proposals leave a lot to be desired, but maybe it is the best offer we can get. At least if we go along with it, we will have made some progress in the peace process, we will have started talking to each other..."

It was an indication of the strength and resilience of the political system

established during the Intifada, that people were not afraid to discuss and argue such points of view within their own circles. However, what kept such people within the bounds of the national consensus was the unity of Palestinian society during the Uprising, and the political solidarity behind the UNC. Only the followers of Hamas would publicly question the political authority of the UNC in its role as leader of the struggle against the Israeli occupation. In the words of one Palestinian, interviewed in 1989:[39]

> You sense that the leadership is not separate from the Palestinian people, but that it is present everywhere... You feel a unity and an amazing solidarity which differs from anything else we've felt in the 20 or 21 years since the PLO was formed. One has never felt this unity between the Palestinian people and its leadership that one has felt during the Uprising. One feels about the Unified National Leadership, which is frankly the PLO inside, that its decisions and policies were issued in accordance with a sensitivity to the problems and suffering of the Palestinians people and to the directions of the legitimate leadership of the PLO outside. We feel one with them.

Towards an organic state

If, by the term "state", one refers to a set of institutional structures that command obedience from the inhabitants of a certain geographical territory, then the Palestinians have succeeded during the Uprising in establishing their own state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the UNC and the network of popular committees they created a body that commanded the loyalty and obedience of the vast majority of the population, and which fundamentally challenged the Israeli administration as the locus of power and authority in the occupied territories. The degree to which the Israelis lost whatever legitimacy their rule might once have enjoyed has been evidenced by the extent to which they have been forced to rely on coercion and other forms of domination in order to command obedience from the civilian population.

By contrast with the Israeli administration, the embryonic Palestinian state structure was not seen as an imposed alien entity, but rather as an organic extension of civil society. A genuine sense of identification emerged between the population of the occupied territories and the UNC and its associated institutions. As one informant described this relationship: "Our leadership express our ambitions and aspirations. They embody our ambitions, and respond to our aspirations".

Such a close sense of identity between the state and civil society is a rare phenomenon. For most socialists, states appear as alienated social power, serving, in the final analysis, the interests of a minority in the name of the common good. The newly formed Palestinian "semi-state", on the other hand, has appeared as a natural expression of the political will of the population as a whole. Such an unusual phenomenon can be attributed to a number of factors: the nature of Palestinian society in the occupied territories

during the Intifada, the form of organisational infrastructure developed, and the qualities of the leadership group itself.

For Marxists, the state, as a set of institutional structures serving the interest of the few in the name of society as a whole, will persist for as long as the society is riven by class divisions. A major characteristic of Palestinian society during the Uprising has been that, whilst class differences and social divisions have undoubtedly persisted, they have been overshadowed to a significant degree by a shared sense of purpose, and a common experience of oppression and suffering at the hands of the Israeli state. This was most vividly expressed to me during a conversation I had with the occupant of a refugee camp in the central area of the West Bank in 1989.

> Everyone helps each other... all the people have the same way now, the same struggle against the occupation — from the children to the old men, all the same, they want to get rid of the occupation. One soul through many bodies, through many voices.
>
> It is not organised by the PLO, as they say. The PLO and the Palestinian people are the same. The PLO represents the aspirations, the ambitions for the future, of the Palestinian people. ... The PLO is an output of the Palestinian people. The PLO without the Palestinian people means nothing...
>
> The oppression is not against part of our society, it is against all of society. Every family in our society has suffered very much. People have come to feel that they are connected more together ... all the people are suffering, all segments suffer from the occupation.

The shared experience of oppression and suffering resulted in a narrowing of social divisions, with a corresponding increase in the level of reciprocity and mutual aid amongst all sectors of society. Underpinning this there emerged a common commitment to a body of values and beliefs, centred on the need to maintain the struggle in order to end the occupation. Such characteristics constitute some of the defining features of a "community".[40] Indeed, there is a sense in which Palestinian society at the height of the Intifada could be likened to a "community of communities", a phenomenon to which the UNC and the popular committees gave organisational expression.

Another characteristic of communities is their relatively small size — sufficiently small for most members to know each other. Socially, as well as geographically, the West Bank and Gaza Strip are small-scale societies. Particularly during the Intifada, with all the attendant problems of travel and communication, people have tended to stay in their own neighbourhoods, quarters and villages. This has meant that the popular committees at the base of the political system constituted *neighbourhood* committees. The members were friends, relatives, and neighbours — in addition to being local political leaders. As such, they have never constituted any kind of separate political stratum, apart from civil society. Moreover, with the constant rotation and replacement of members due to the security situation, the level of political

specialisation remained remarkably low. The division of political labour was not fixed and permanent, rather it was in a constant process of flux. This all worked to obstruct the emergence of any permanent political elite with interests separate from the rest of society. At every level of the organisational infrastructure, right up to the UNC itself, the occupants of political positions shared with the rest of the population the experience of oppression, the risk of arrest and injury, and consequently the likelihood of being replaced at some stage in the struggle by someone else.

Insofar as the political system that the Palestinians created was a radically decentralised one, with the devolution of powers to the local level, the role of the UNC became primarily one of establishing general political guide-lines and coordinating activities throughout the occupied territories. Thus, whilst it has continued to issue authoritative instructions and commands, in a manner reminiscent of hierarchically organised state systems, the UNC has had to be responsive to the promptings from below in order to sustain the commitment and unity essential to the struggle. A close observer of the Intifada commented on this aspect of the UNC's functioning during the first year of the Uprising.[41]

> The policy of the leadership to give authority and power to local committees, its willingness to listen and many times change or even reverse its own decisions, shows how close to the average person the leadership is. ... This quality meant that the command was seen as a communicator of ideas and suggestions of the population, rather than a leadership trying to impose its predetermined ideas.

On one of my research trips to the occupied territories in 1989 I was given a lift by a young man who was in the final year of his "underground" university degree course. As we drove through the West Bank he related to me how his original suspicions of the shadowy entity that called itself the UNC were dispelled. He had discovered that one of its members had been a fellow-student of his at university. He knew him to be honest, modest and, moreover, he was not from one of the well-known and established Palestinian families. He was not an opportunist politician, he was "one of us!" More than anything else this episode came to symbolise for me the organic relationship between the "state" and civil society that came into existence in Palestine during the Uprising.

The symbiotic nature of this relationship meant that the unity of the leadership acted as an example to the rest of society, whilst the sense of solidarity amongst all sections of the population augmented the political alliance at the heart of the UNC and the embryonic state structures that grew up around it. Conversely, when stresses and tensions emerged within the wider society, they were reflected within the UNC itself. It was in the summer of 1989 that signs of such a "negative" process began to emerge in the occupied territories. Its most obvious manifestation was in the mounting difficulty that the UNC encountered in maintaining "law and order" — the core function of any state power. By the spring of 1990 more Palestinians

were being killed by their fellow citizens than by the Israeli security forces. Most of the killings were of alleged collaborators. Tracing this thread of the collaborators and the treatment meted out to them through the wider fabric of the Intifada as a whole can throw some light on the process of erosion in the "state power" of the UNC.

Collaborators

When Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 it also captured the secret files containing the details of all the informers upon whom the Jordanian internal security forces had relied. Israel took over the management of many of these people to act as the eyes and the ears of the occupier. Their numbers were further augmented by means of blackmail, bribery and other forms of coercion and inducement.

Whilst the number of people who knowingly passed on information about their fellow citizens to the Israelis could be counted in their thousands, as "collaborators" they fell into different categories. At a relatively innocuous level there were people like the traditional village leaders who acted as "go-betweens" through whom fellow community members went to obtain licenses, permits and other necessary documentation from the occupying power. Such people provided a much-valued service. They were in a position to intervene with the authorities on behalf of their "clients". As "brokers" they obtained services from their patrons, the Israelis, in return for information. However, their fellow citizens were generally well aware that the information that was passed on to the Israelis was of a fairly low-grade order. At the other extreme there were the out-and-out informers, the active collaborators who sought out sensitive information related to "security matters" and passed it on to the Shin Bet. On their shoulders lay the responsibility for the imprisonment of many Palestinians. They were readily identifiable in their local communities, not least because they carried Israeli-issued firearms for self-protection.

At the outbreak of the Intifada, the call went out for all informers to turn over a new leaf and re-enter the "Palestinian house". In Communiqué No. 11, 29 March 1988 was named the "Day of Repentance", when collaborators had the chance to confess their treachery and "return to the national consensus on pain of the punishment due to them". Whether through social pressures, genuine repentance, or fear of injury and death, many erstwhile informers responded to the call. Throughout the occupied territories those who had spied on their fellows attended special gatherings in their local mosques, where they publicly relinquished their weapons and vowed never again to work for the Israelis. They had before them the example of a collaborator from Qabatiya, who was killed by his fellow villagers on 26 February 1988. Just ten days later the corpse of a Jericho policeman was discovered. According to some accounts, his fate had been sealed after an electronic listening device was discovered on his person as he was confessing the error of his past ways in the local mosque.

For those who had sunk too deep into the swamp of treachery to free

themselves, life became increasingly difficult. In the most highly organised communities they faced a graduated scale of sanctions. They were treated as outcasts; people refused to have any social contact with them except to hurl verbal abuse. Their houses would be attacked with stones. They risked being beaten up and physically assaulted by the local strike forces. If these measures proved ineffective, then the next stage might be a fire-bomb attack on their house and premises. If the collaborator still refused to repent and give up his old ways, or failed to flee, then the death sentence would be passed, in consultation with the leadership outside, and would be carried out by special hit squads.

The apparent reluctance with which the leadership of the Uprising resorted to the ultimate sanction of the death penalty was due to a number of factors. At one level they were responding to the genuine sense of national solidarity that permeated the Palestinian community during the Uprising. There was a real desire to provide the collaborators with every reasonable opportunity to forsake their treachery and join the national struggle. The leadership were also keen to avoid damaging the image of the Intifada in the international community: that of a unified people pursuing an unarmed struggle against a brutal army of occupation. They were aware of the propaganda capital that the Israelis could make out of the killings, portraying them as part of a politically coordinated terror campaign orchestrated by the PLO to intimidate the inhabitants of the occupied territories. Behind such concerns lay the nightmare example of the revolt of the 1930s, which degenerated into a series of internecine conflicts between feuding families, clans and political groupings, when false charges of collaboration were levelled against rivals as a means of exacting vengeance and the pursuit of private ends.

This was the spectre that returned to haunt the leadership of the Palestinians during the latter half of 1989. Up until April 1989 the number of Palestinians killed for alleged collaboration was put in the region of 60 by the military authorities. At that time it was hard to find a Palestinian who did not believe that the collaborators had received their proper desserts, and that their sentence had been arrived at through a just process in which they had been given every opportunity to repent. However, as spring turned into summer there was a dramatic increase in the number of slayings. It became clear that the fate of suspected collaborators was no longer being referred up to the leadership, and that local strike forces were increasingly taking matters into their own hands as judges and executioners.

This development was a cause of great concern to the leadership, both inside and outside the territories. The UNC began to urge restraint, repeatedly reminding people that the utmost care should be taken when considering the evidence held against a suspect, that other forms of punishment should be considered apart from the death penalty, and demanding that no executions should be carried out without the approval of the Palestinian leadership. They were well aware that such killings would only serve to engender an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust amongst the Palestinian community, which could be readily exploited by the Israeli security forces.

In October 1989 Arafat himself issued a special appeal calling for a halt to the slayings — seemingly to little effect. It became increasingly apparent that many of the so-called collaborators were in fact victims of old feuds and factional fighting. In a continuing effort to control the killings the UNC established reconciliation committees to mediate between the conflicting parties. Once again these had only a limited impact on the problem of intra-communal violence, and by the spring of 1990 there was the awful statistic that more Palestinians were being slain by their fellow citizens than by the occupying forces. How had such a state of affairs come about?

The embryonic state — the threat of a miscarriage?

In the autumn of 1989 I travelled to Nablus to visit an old friend and his family. It had become a custom on such trips to spend a morning wandering through the old city or casbah, ending up at our favourite *kanafeh* store.[42] On this occasion, however, my friend dismissed the suggestion of a stroll. He confessed that he could not guarantee my safety. People might think I was an Israeli and, moreover, they might think he was a collaborator. If I needed a reminder of how tense the situation in Nablus had become after two years of the Intifada, this was it. My visit coincided with a period when two groups of armed young Nabulsis known as the Black Panthers and the Red Eagles had become the *de facto* power in the streets of the old city, executing those they suspected of collaboration or immoral behaviour such as prostitution and drug use. Although these two gangs caught the headlines, even posing for the media beside the body of one of their victims, they were in some ways merely the most public manifestation of a wider phenomenon — the erosion of the power of the UNC and its transfer to the young activists of the strike forces.

To understand this process one has to take account of a number of inter-related developments. Throughout the latter months of 1989 and on through the spring of 1990 the PLO was engaged in laborious and protracted political manoeuverings around the Egyptian and American proposals concerning the modalities of a proposed Israeli-Palestinian meeting in Cairo to discuss the holding of elections in the occupied territories. It was a period of President Mubarak's "ten points" and US Secretary of State James Baker's "five points", and Prime Minister Shamir's stubborn refusal to be pressured by anyone except members of his own political party. For the Palestinians it was a time of growing frustration at the lack of political progress and mounting resentment against those suspected of collaboration with the Israeli authorities.

They had lived through the excitement of the declaration of an independent state of Palestine. They had invested hope in the US-PLO dialogue. They had waited for international censure to shame Israel to the negotiating table. Meantime they had spent nearly three years protesting, struggling and suffering. For what? The world seemed to have lost interest in the Intifada. The peace process had been still-born. In June 1990 the United States had broken off its dialogue with the PLO — and an extreme right-wing government had been formed in Israel. Understandably tired after so many months of resist-

ance, and increasingly frustrated by the lack of any significant breakthrough at the political and diplomatic level, the feeling grew amongst significant sections of the Palestinian community that what was necessary was an increase in the level of violence sufficient to shock the states of the world into action.

Within all political factions there was debate about whether or not the armed struggle should be resumed through an escalation in the level of violence. This went along with a growing concern that Arafat was prepared to concede far too much in exchange for far too little as part and parcel of his pragmatic diplomacy. The PFLP was loudest in its condemnation of the path of compromise and concession and there were a number of clashes between its supporters and members of Fatah, and with those activists of the DFLP who continued to align themselves with the mainstream of the nationalist camp, despite serious differences within their own ranks.[43] Indeed, at one stage during the spring of 1990 a *rapprochement* seemed to be emerging between the Marxist PFLP and the Islamic factions of Hamas and Islamic Jihad based on their shared opposition to Fatah's apparent readiness to accept James Baker's proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.[44] A further manifestation of the growing political disarray within the occupied territories was a relative decline in the grass-roots activity of the popular committees as more of their functions were taken over by committees representing the different factions. These tensions and divisions within the occupied territories reflected the growing strains within the PLO outside, where radical factions were becoming increasingly strident in their criticisms of Arafat's failure to produce political results.

The depth of resentment and frustration within the occupied territories was further evidenced by the widespread and passionate support voiced by Palestinians for Saddam Hussein after his invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Here at last was an Arab capable of making the world take notice. The reaction of the United States and its allies only highlighted the hypocrisy of those states who were prepared to extend their sympathy to the Palestinians in their suffering, but were unprepared to act in any meaningful manner to force the Israelis to withdraw from the lands they had invaded and occupied in 1967.

However cynical and opportunistic Saddam's efforts to link the issue of Kuwait to the question of Palestine, the majority of people in the occupied territories were so desperate that they were prepared to invest their hopes in any source that promised them relief from oppression. In the process, of course, they reversed the whole trend towards self-reliance in their struggle against Israeli occupation that had been the hallmark of the Intifada. Once again they were placing their faith in the rhetoric of an Arab leader. Few amongst their leaders had the political and physical courage to sound a discordant note about the fundamental inconsistency involved in a dispossessed people pledging their support for someone intent on annexing a people and their territory by means of force.

An unsought for consequence of this burgeoning faith in an external

saviour was that the Palestinians left untended the infrastructure of popular committees that had become the organisational backbone of the Uprising. This process of deterioration was in turn compounded by a number of other factors which contributed to a crisis of morale and discipline within the occupied territories. By the late summer of 1990, for the first time since the Uprising had begun, there were signs of a serious undermining of the authority of the UNC. Whilst seeking to replace the Israeli state as the locus of political authority within the occupied territories, the UNC was finding it increasingly difficult to perform that most fundamental of state functions — the maintenance of law and order. The unauthorised slaying of alleged collaborators continued unabated, family and clan feuds persisted, and theft and other forms of criminal activity increased.

A major reason why the UNC found it so difficult to counteract these forces of disorder was the simple fact that it could no longer rely on middle level cadres of experienced activists to control the young hot-heads of the streets. The Israeli policy of mass arrests had netted so many of them that many areas had been left in the hands of young leaders with little experience, political education or discipline. As one Palestinian remarked:[45]

> Today there is no obedience any more. Every young thug organises a group of six or seven youths in his neighbourhood and gets them to throw stones or petrol bombs at Israeli cars. They are not connected with any central organisation; they do whatever they want ... The real problem is that as new activists join the struggle, and as more activists are jailed, the level of street leadership deteriorates rapidly. Add this to the economic and other pressures applied by the Israelis, and you'll find there is a feeling of despair among many of us, who ask ourselves: where is all this leading to?

The underlying fear of such people was that the Intifada would continue to degenerate into a cycle of escalating violence, not just between Israelis and Palestinians, but within the Palestinian community itself, a cycle borne of frustration and suffering.

In the weeks following the end of the Gulf War it seemed as if the worst fears about the deterioration of the Uprising were beginning to materialise. On a research trip to the region in April 1991 I was struck by the depths of depression displayed by once-confident friends and acquaintances. It was as if they were still in a state of shock following the total defeat of Iraq. One Palestinian friend told of how he was unable to summon the will even to step outside his house for two days following the Iraqi surrender. He, and others like him, had been shocked into immobility. Their hopes had been dashed, and what was left was a deep anger and disgust at what was perceived as the depths of hypocrisy displayed by the United States and its allies, so eager to pursue justice in the case of oil-rich Kuwait but so reluctant to exercise the slightest sanction against Israel.

This shattering of self-confidence and morale was painful to witness. Equally disturbing was the sense of desperation and frustration which led

people whom I counted amongst my dearest friends to admit to me that they were now prepared to countenance the extension of the liberation struggle along a new front — that of violence. If nothing else, this impressed upon me that the Gulf War had marked a watershed in the history of the Intifada.

My research trip took place during the period of Secretary of State James Baker's series of visits to the region, in his efforts to capitalise on American post-Gulf War prestige and initiate some form of peace process involving Israel, the Arab states and the Palestinians. Opinion within the occupied territories as to the appropriate response to Baker was polarised, and this division was reflected within the UNC itself. One view was that the United States could never be trusted, that the real purpose of Baker's attempts to meet with Palestinians from the occupied territories was to marginalise even further the PLO leadership in Tunis. Hence, it was argued that the Palestinians should have nothing to do with the United States brokered peace initiative. As one informant expressed his version of this perspective:

> Maybe we can do nothing, and maybe we should do nothing. The Palestinian people exist. The PLO exists. It is a reality, and they will have to deal with it someday. We still exist and we have the power to wreck any peace settlement that denies us our fundamental rights. Maybe the Gulf Crisis will prove a blessing for the Palestinians, it will make us more realistic, rid us of the naive hopes we had, help us realise that civilian resistance on its own cannot bring independence ... Moreover, how long do you think the Arab regimes that supported America are going to survive?

This man was someone I had always considered to be a moderate, someone from the mainstream of Fatah. Yet, in his analysis and prescriptions he was aligning himself with the more radical factions of the PFLP and the Communists. They urged that Baker be shunned, in the expectation that the balance of forces in the Arab world would eventually shift in favour of the Palestinians, and meantime the resistance to occupation should be intensified.

Opposed to this standpoint was the mainstream of Fatah and the members of the DFLP who had aligned alongside them. From their perspective, the Gulf War had seriously undermined the substantial achievements of the Intifada. The suffering of the Palestinians during and since the war had reached new levels. People were in a parlous state, forced to concentrate on economic survival and without the will or the reserves to intensify the struggle. Furthermore, the influx of Soviet Jews to Israel presaged an acceleration of settlement activity in the occupied territories. So, dreams of an intensification of the resistance struggle were misdirected, and any delay of a peace settlement would allow the Israelis to create more and more "facts" on the land of Palestine. What was needed was a strategy of transition. The Palestinians should participate in the peace process, however gloomy the prospects, in the hope that out of it might emerge some form of home rule for the inhabitants of the occupied territories. This could then create the space necessary to rebuild the crippled economic and institutional infrastruc-

ture of Palestinian society, upon which could be based a new stage of the struggle for independence.

The advocates of such a politics of transition felt particularly vulnerable. They saw themselves treading a sensitive path, caught between an outside leadership that appeared to be out of touch with the realities in the occupied territories, and the street youths who were increasingly running out of control. Since the slaughter at the al-Aqsa Mosque of October 1990 there had been an increase in the number of stabbings and lethal knife attacks upon Israelis. Moreover, the execution of alleged informers and collaborators had continued unabated. Despite all efforts of the UNC to curtail the actions of these vigilantes, by April 1991 it was estimated that somewhere in the region of 350 Palestinians had been killed by their fellow countrymen in the occupied territories.[46] Such was the concern that well-informed Palestinians were beginning to express their fears for the lives of people like Faisal Husseini who persisted in leading delegations to meet with James Baker, thereby incurring the wrath of a sizeable proportion of his compatriots.

By mid-1991 a situation had arisen where the hot-heads dominated the streets whilst the political factions were split as to the best strategy to pursue in the post-Gulf War world. It was clear that the old days of political unity were disappearing. It seemed to more than a few observers that the political factions were once again manoeuvering and jockeying for political advantage, rather than seeking the basis for a new national consensus.

Despite the differences and rivalries, all factions were agreed that the Gulf Crisis and subsequent war heralded a new phase in the Palestinian struggle, and serious thought had to be devoted to the direction to be pursued. There was a growing awareness that many of the routine forms of resistance during the Intifada, such as general strike days and commercial strikes, constituted an additional burden upon an already pauperised population. Through such forms of resistance Palestinians were hurting themselves more than they were hurting the Israelis. From such a realisation two possible paths emerge. If one accepts that the Palestinian economy is far too weak to sustain any mass form of civil disobedience for any meaningful length of time, then it follows that either one pursues a different form of resistance ("vertical escalation" in the direction of violence), or one adopts a strategy of creating the necessary base to sustain the "horizontal escalation" of the struggle in the direction of mass disengagement from the Israeli economy upon which so many Palestinians remain dependent. This would require some form of breathing space, a period during which economic growth and institutional development could be undertaken. This might be possible within the context of some form of home rule and is the kind of process envisaged by those who advocate a strategy of transition.

The underlying fear of those who advocate such a strategy is that if they lose the debate that is underway about the future direction of the struggle, then the Intifada will continue to degenerate into a cycle of escalating violence — not just between Israelis and Palestinians, but within the Palestinian community itself. A cycle borne of frustration, suffering and desperation. If

this were to happen it would mark a dreadful degeneration of the struggle. Far from being a *people's* movement of resistance, involving the mass of the inhabitants of the occupied territories in the struggle for their own national and human rights, it would be transformed into that old pattern of resistance in which the wielders of lethal weapons become the heroes, leaving the bulk of the Palestinian population as supporting actors in the drama.

This in turn could have a profound impact on the nature and quality of political life, particularly with regard to the relationship between state and civil society in the occupied territories. Relegated to the role of auxiliaries while the professionals, the men of violence and the diplomats, resume their trades wielding their guns and their olive branches, the mass of people will become increasingly marginal to the main decision-making centres of the resistance. After all, what can an amateur contribute to the strategic planning of an armed struggle? What can ordinary people contribute to the work of globe-trotting diplomats? They can supply material and ideological support, they can be loyal, they can follow instructions. Once again the flow of commands will be downwards and the mechanisms through which Palestinians during the Intifada have joined in *dialogue* with their political leadership would fall into disuse as the division of labour between expert and amateur, hero and auxiliary, leader and led is re-established.

It is one of the paradoxes of the embryonic state structure that has developed in the occupied territories during the Intifada that, because of the "organic" relationship between state and civil society, no-one can predict the future direction of the Uprising. For the very reason that it is a *popular* Uprising, the leadership cannot dictate the direction it should take — even if that direction should lead to the forfeiture of its unique popular quality along the path of armed struggle. The UNC has lacked the sovereign control of the instruments of violence and domination necessary to impose its will upon the people of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It can only advise and attempt to guide people, its authority resting on its acceptance by the people as the political expression of their collective will within the occupied territories. The danger is that the authority of the UNC will be increasingly eroded by the re-emergence of the worst aspects of factionalism within the Palestinian political domain. If such were to happen, it would constitute a victory for its rival — that alien entity, the Israeli occupying power.

Notes

1. See Z Schiff and E Ya'ari, op. cit., p 195.
2. In 1985 Israel had exchanged some 1000 political prisoners for six Israeli soldiers captured during the Lebanon War and held by Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.
3. See Joe Stork, "The significance of the stones", *Middle East Report*, Sept-Oct 1988, p 7.
4. See Schiff and Ya'ari, op. cit., p 199.
5. D Kuttab, *MEI*, 19 March 1988, p 9.
6. See Lamis Andoni, *MEI*, 19 March 1988, pp 9-10.

7. As early as 18 January 1988 a money changer's shop was burned down in East Jerusalem for continuing to trade on strike days.

8. *I*, 14 July, 1988.

9. Quoted in *Christian Science Monitor (CSM)*, May 2-8, 1988.

10. *Intifada: Palestinian Nonviolent Protest, part II*, Palestinian Centre for the Study of Nonviolence, East Jerusalem, May 1989.

11. See below, pp 45-51

12. Transcript of interview carried out by Marwan Darweish for the film *Voices From Gaza (VFG)*, directed by Antonia Caccia, 1989.

13. In the early days of the Uprising the leadership of the PCP was with people within the occupied territories. This gave them a greater degree of autonomy than that enjoyed by the other main groupings. See Schiff and Ya'ari, op. cit., p 198.

14. This has also involved an important educational function, insofar as every special day of action is invariably called to commemorate some important event in Palestinian history.

15. See M R D Foot, *Resistance: An Analysis of European Resistance to Nazism 1940-45*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1976, p 8.

16. David Hirst, *G*, 12 November 1988.

17. See Muin Rabbani, "The PLO and the Intifada — a complex relationship", *MEI*, 31 March 1989, p 20.

18. Quoted in *Al-Fajr (English) (AF)*, 15 May 1988, p 4.

19. Quoted in *I*, 12 May, 1988.

20. *JP*, 20 March 1988.

21. See *Punishing a Nation: Human Rights Violations During the Palestinian Uprising, December 1987 - December 1988*, Ramallah: Al Haq/ Law in the Service of Man, 1988 (*PAN*) chapter 9, for details.

22. Quoted in *PAN*, ibid., p 320. In the summer of 1990 it was closed for the third consecutive year.

23. The Economic Development Group, a Palestinian development organisation in East Jerusalem, and the Palestinian Association for the Study of International Affairs are just two of the organisations that were prevented from operating normally following warnings from the Israeli authorities. ibid., p 321.

24. *Jerusalem Post (JP)*, 21 August, 1988.

25. Benny Morris, *G*, 20 August 1988.

26. B Michael, *Ha'aretz*, 21 August 1988.

27. *JP*, 21 August, 1988.

28. J Greenberg, "Salon activists feeling the heat", *JP*, 12 May 1989.

29. D Kuttab, *MEI*, 2 April 1988, p 4.

30. *G*, 7 July 1988.

31. D Kuttab, *MEI*, 24 October 1987.

32. M Sela, *JP*, 26 May 1989, p 9.

33. Quoted by Charles Richards, *I*, 26 September 1988.

34. Personal observation, 9 September 1988, East Jerusalem.

35. See M Seva, *JP*, 26 May 1989.

36. A particularly provocative display of their power was in April 1990 when Islamic Jihad enforced a general strike in the predominantly Christian area of Bethlehem to mark the signing of the Camp David Accords. The UNC had instructed stores to remain open that day in preparation for Ramadan. *Jerusalem Post International Edition (JPIE)*, 14 April 1990, p 2.

37. *An Nahar* (Arabic), 26 May 1989.

38. Faisal Husseini, *AF*, 31 July 1989, p 16.

39. *VFG*

40. See M Taylor, *Community, Anarchy and Liberty*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, especially chapter 1, for an elaboration of these ideas.

41. D Kuttab, *Washington Post*, 4 September 1988.

42. *Kanafeh* is a sweet common throughout the Middle East, but Nablus prides itself on being the home of the best *kanafeh* in the Arab world.

43. See P Lalor, "DFLP differences reflect the debate within the PLO", *MEI*, 27 April 1990, pp 17-19.

44. In September 1990 an agreement was reached between Fatah and Hamas to regulate their relations as the basis for future cooperation and coordination of activities. See *AF*, 24 September 1990, p 3.

45. Quoted by Y Litani, *JPIE*, 16 September 1989, p 8.

46. *JP*, 9 April 1991