

(Black, 1979:5). The degree of vacillation depended largely on the political forces represented in the councils, but also on the issues involved.

The Israelis on their part did not attempt to create a social stratum to mediate their own rule (labour contractors and war profiteers must be seen as new groups incidental to this scheme). Rather they saw the actual process of economic integration of the newly acquired areas as fulfilling such mediation. In several instances they encouraged pro-Jordanian sentiments and groups as an alternative to PLO influences. This was the case in Gaza with the implicit support for the leadership of the al-Shawwa family (Cohen, 1978:5). In the West Bank the Village Leagues were created, with the active support of the military government, to mobilize clan heads and traditional rural sources of authority as a counterweight to the municipal councils (cf. Chapter 3). It was an attempt, so to speak, to strike the radical nationalist urban centres with the conservative countryside.

Initially, beginning around the mid-seventies, Israeli policy for the West Bank and Gaza was based on political preemption. Anticipating international pressure for withdrawal from the territories, the government formulated its scheme for "administrative self rule" (1977) -- which later became the basis of the autonomy proposal under the Camp David Agreement (1979). Municipal councils and the administrative apparatus of the civil government were to become the effective mediators of Israeli colonial rule, with the presence of the military government gradually thinned out (cf. Wall, 1979:3; Katz, Jerusalem Post, 26.1.1979).

It was at this juncture that the Palestinian national movement entered into the political arena for winning the allegiances of the inhabitants of the occupied territories. The elections for the 1976 municipal