

Attack on the Jordanian Writers Association

The Jordanian Writers Association sent the following memorandum to the office of the prime minister, demanding a halt to the illegal measures against the union and its members in Irbid:

1. Some of our union members have been arrested; others beaten and humiliated:

a. Nimr Hijab, president of the Irbid branch of the union, writer and researcher in popular heritage, was called in to the intelligence on six days, kept until midnight, beaten and humiliated.

b. Mahmoud Issa Mousa, member of the union, writer, artist, critic and member of the Pharmacists Union, was treated as above.

c. Dr. Ahmed Zubi, member of the union and short story writer, was called in to the intelligence twice.

d. Dr. Ibrahim Khatib, member of the union and medical specialist, was threatened with having his right to practice withdrawn. He had to be hospitalized due to the violence of the interrogation.

2. The head of the intelligence in Irbid demanded of the above persons that they close down the association, stop going there and stop holding meetings or seminars, etc. If not, they would be arrested and lose their jobs.

3. These measures are illegal and a clear violation of Jordanian writers' constitutional rights. We therefore find it necessary to submit this memorandum in protest of the measures being carried out by the intelligence in Irbid against our members.

trends within the regime itself. One trend represents the liberal commercial bourgeoisie which wants the public sector restricted in favor of the open door policy. This trend opposes the Moslem Brotherhood's influence. The liberal bourgeoisie has been expanding economically since 1970, and now wants political power equal to its economic interests.

The other trend, which has been close to the Brotherhood, is the reactionary bureaucratic bourgeoisie, tied to the intelligence service and the state apparatus generally. While the contradictions between the two trends are secondary and unlikely to explode into an open conflict, the regime's policy must take both into account. They represent the two aspects of the regime: relations with the world market and capitalism, and repression of the masses. Both trends are necessary for the regime's survival and for its chosen course of 'peace' with the Zionist enemy. While the liberal bourgeoisie is the candidate to profit from future joint ventures with 'Israel', the state bureaucracy and intelligence service are needed to keep the masses in line.

Hussein and the Brotherhood

While the official Jordanian media has been silent about the campaign of repression against the progressive nationalist forces, it has played up the measures taken against the Muslim Brotherhood, which in reality have been much milder. In actual fact 20-30 'brothers' have been arrested although press reports have put the number much higher. From the Jordanian airline Alia, 260 were dismissed. A number have been dismissed from public posts, particularly in the Education Ministry which the Brotherhood had virtually controlled, determining school curriculum and having thousands of teachers at schools and universities. Only on the backdrop of the Brotherhood's extensive power can the present restrictive measures be evaluated. The regime itself facilitated the Brotherhood's establishing its influence, as a convenient means of fighting the progressive forces, splitting student and trade union organizations, etc. However, «the realization that fundamentalists 'have infiltrated certain institutions and government departments that weren't easy to infiltrate before,' such as the police and intelligence departments, caused greater high-level consternation, the government official said» (*Washington Post*, December 27, 1985).

The regime also fears that a section of the Brotherhood would launch a campaign against moves to enter negotiations with 'Israel'. In short, the regime seeks not to end the Brotherhood, but to control it in line with the requirements of the current political situation. The other

obvious reason for curtailing the Brotherhood was to meet Syria's conditions for restoring relations with Jordan. King Hussein badly needs relations with Syria to fall back on, if his attempts to negotiate with the Zionist state fail. It is a



«I wrote about repression... Now I'm writing my will.» Drawing by Naji Ali.

timeworn trick of the Jordanian regime to cultivate a 'nationalist' image on the outside, while cracking down on domestic opposition.

Two sides of the regime

There is another factor involved in the monarchy's efforts to set its house in order, and that is friction between two

These are the components of the regime's dilemma. As of now, the main response has been repression to avert a situation where it becomes obvious that King Hussein's intended reconciliation with the Zionist enemy is opposed by the broad masses in Jordan, both Jordanian and Palestinian.