

appointed to the council as representatives of Teddy Kolleck, the Israeli mayor of Jerusalem.

Forced to supply settlements

In 1969, the JDEC was obliged to supply electric current to the rapidly rising settlements which fell within the boundaries of its concession. This new demand for increased amounts of electricity constituted a burden on the old, diesel-operated generators. Repeated applications to purchase new generators were, however, refused by the Zionist authorities. This rejection was obviously intended to dishearten the JDEC management and force it to give up the company to the IREC. Not wishing to supply the Israelis with an easy pretext for take-over, the JDEC pursued a policy of rationing electricity, but this sparked off much discontent and provided Zionist settlers with an excuse to launch a campaign against the company. This left the JDEC with two alternatives: (1) to sell out to the IREC; or (2) to preserve its independence as a Palestinian national institution and buy additional current from the IREC. With the rapid spread of settlements in the Jerusalem district, the company found itself drawing up to 90% of its electricity from the IREC to supply its 100,000 consumers, 30,000 of which were Israelis.

Israeli harassment, delays, debts and losses spell out the factors which led to the JDEC's current dilemma. The JDEC is obliged by the occupation authorities to sell electricity at a 7% profit margin, although at least a 50% profit margin is needed to balance the budget. The company supplies street lighting for all Zionist settlements and public places free of charge, which contributes to a 17% monthly operational loss. Although the Zionist authorities officially consider the Jerusalem district as a part of the Zionist entity, which entitles the JDEC to subsidies which would cover deficits, the company receives nothing. On the other hand, subsidies cover the deficit of the IREC.

Israeli harassment takes other forms as well. There are deliberate delays in supplying the oil needed for operating the generators which require 300 kilograms of oil daily. There have been repeated transgressions in the areas of the JDEC's concession, as when hundreds of electricity poles were bulldozed in the Shu'fat area on the pretext of paving new roads. There are constant incidents of vandalism by Zionists against JDEC property. Exorbitant fees

and taxes must be paid to the occupation authorities. Once the IREC even attempted to collect payments due the JDEC, by distributing a court memorandum to a number of hotels and institutions in Jerusalem.

Royal Hashemite responsibility

As of March 1986, the company's total debt ran into \$ 15 million. The JDEC's concession expires in late 1987. If the company does not come up with the money soon, it will pass into court-appointed receivership which is as good as passing it into Zionist hands. Many a delegation has gone to meet the Jordanian-Palestinian Joint Committee, to put the case of the JDEC forward and attain funds from this committee which was formed explicitly for the purpose of supporting national institutions in the occupied territories. The last JDEC delegation, however, was not only unable to obtain funds, but was also prohibited from even meeting the joint committee. Instead, Jordanian government officials met the JDEC delegation and presented a list of conditions to be met prior to any financial support.

The Hashemite court has so far been very generous with crocodile tears and verbal denunciations of the Zionist measures to sabotage the national institutions of our people under occupation. Yet the Palestinians under occupation have seen almost nothing of the millions of dollars being poured into the treasury of the Jordanian-Palestinian Joint Committee. They have the right-wing leadership of Arafat to thank for so generously placing them at the mercy of their Jordanian 'godfather'. The Jordanian regime instructed the JDEC to meet the following conditions if they want to be bailed out:

1. cancellation of the JDEC's employees' benefits;
2. reduction of staff by 200, to be replaced by new employees who go through the royal Jordanian sieve for approval;
3. 40% reduction of wages;
4. registration of the JDEC's debts in the Jerusalem Waqf which is historically affiliated to the Jordanian Waqf;
5. reduction of the price of electric current purchased from the IREC, which the JDEC was unable to achieve in the past.
6. renewal of the JDEC's concessions, which depends on the Zionist authorities' whim.

Publicly, King Hussein justifies his hesitancy to support the JDEC with

claims that the company is «unable to implement efficiency programs, trim itself down and save money.» The truth remains, however, that Hussein is not about to release \$ 15 million, which is rightfully the company's, to keep the JDEC operating under the control of Palestinians who have always challenged and rebuffed both Zionist and reactionary attempts to dominate it. Other factors which play into this are the break in coordination between Hussein and Arafat, and the new rift in the Palestinian rightist ranks, which leaves the Jordanian-Palestinian Joint Committee more at the mercy of the monarchy than ever.

Workers' role

Abed Abu Diab, leader of the JDEC workers' union, challenged the Jordanian conditions. Along with other unionists, he rejected them, saying that the JDEC employees «have paid their dues by merely remaining steadfast in the troubled company and in occupied Jerusalem.» The austerity measures demanded by the Jordanian regime would furthermore save only 20,000 Jordanian dinars monthly, leaving a monthly deficit of 180,000 dinars. The conditions are clearly designed more to pressure the JDEC to buckle under to Jordanian dominance, than to bail the company out. Moreover, they are not very different from the designs of the Zionist authorities.

The employees of the JDEC have always risen to meet threats to the company. They have always believed in it as a symbol of national identity, rather than just a source of pay. On more than one occasion of crisis, they have worked overtime or on holidays without pay. They previously rejected the Energy Minister's attempt to appoint Zionist employees. They follow up on all decisions concerning the company, realizing full well the political implications behind the vicious campaign against it. In short, they have foiled many a plot in the course of their struggle.

In contrast, the deviationist PLO leadership is held directly responsible for allowing the funds of the Jordanian-Palestinian Joint Committee, intended to support our people's steadfastness, to be redirected into the pockets of those who collaborate with Jordan. It is the responsibility of all concerned with the Palestinian national cause to act now to save the largest remaining national economic institution in the occupied territories. ●