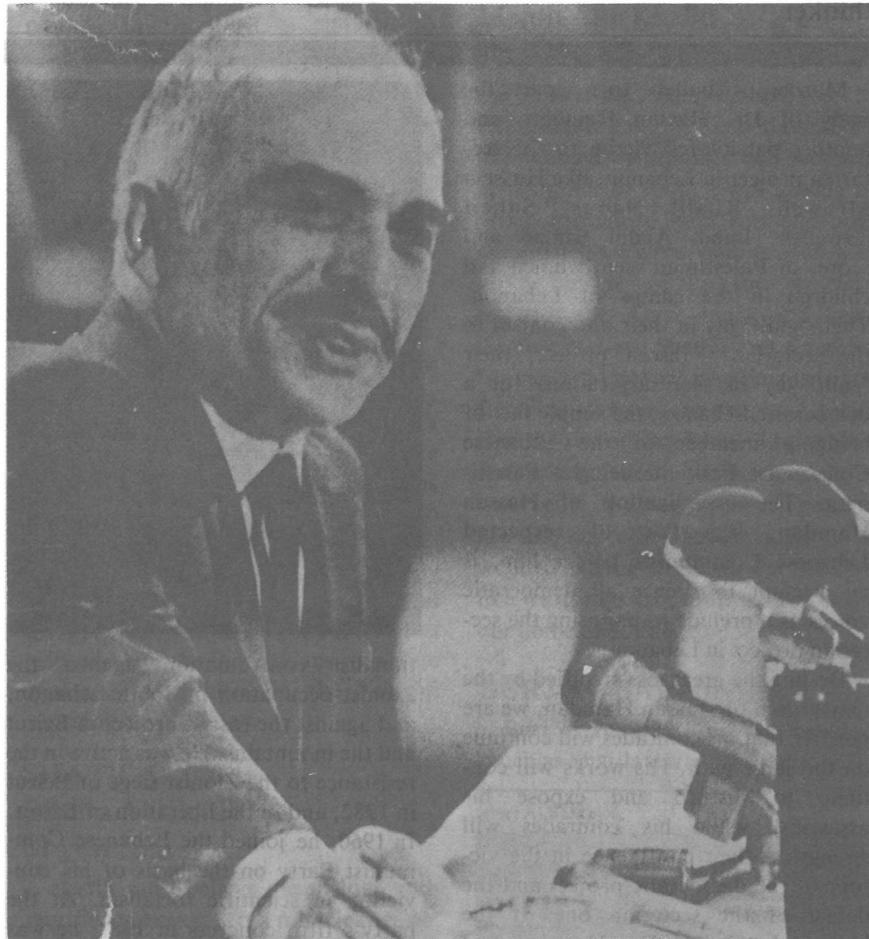


Elections in Jordan

Far from being a move towards democracy, the coming elections in Jordan are part of the regime's plan to usurp the PLO's representation, while marginalizing the internal opposition.



King Hussein reconvenes the parliament in 1984, trying to steal Palestinian representation from the PLO.

In 1974, the Arab summit in Rabat adopted the historical resolution recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The Jordanian regime was thus forced to yield to this undisputed fact, but the bitterness of this defeat never stopped it from attempting to reimpose itself as representative of the Palestinian people.

After the 1974 Rabat Summit decision, the Jordanian regime dissolved the Jordanian Chamber of Deputies (parliament). The chamber, elected in 1967, represented the population of the West Bank and Jordan. Ten years later, in 1984, the regime revived the seventeen-year-old chamber. In suspending the parliament for ten

years, the regime had referred to two reasons: first, the occupation of the West Bank; and second, a legal reason, the Rabat decision. However, ten years later these two reasons are still alive. Neither has the occupation ended, nor has the PLO ceased being the Palestinian people's sole legitimate representative.

Following the Jordanian regime's decision to revive the chamber, byelections were held in 1984 to elect representatives to replace those who had died. In 1986, the regime issued a new election law.

So, what had changed since 1974 to make the regime enact these steps?

The answer to this question lies in the developments that have taken place in

the region in the intervening period: Egypt's peace with 'Israel', Camp David, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the decline in official Arab policies and the Palestinian right wing's betting on US-sponsored solutions, as with the now defunct Amman accord - in short, the increased tilt in the balance of forces in the region in favor of the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary alliance.

This tilt gave the Jordanian regime a suitable chance to exploit new channels for pursuing its capitulationist policy, crystallizing in 'confederal' Palestinian-Jordanian work (encouraged by the rightist trend in the PLO), the plans for joint administration of the 1967 occupied territories with the Zionist state, the 'development' plan for the territories and finally the new election law.

In the new election law of 1986, the regime's aims are obvious. The new law states that both the West Bank and the Palestinian camps in Jordan will be represented in the new chamber as electoral districts. The West Bank deputies will be appointed by Palestinians elected in Jordan. This Jordanian move comes at a time when extensive efforts and contacts are being made by the regime to give momentum to the US solution in the region, which was faltering after the suspension of Jordanian-Palestinian talks in February 1986. The regime's efforts are directed towards two main goals: First, it is seeking to pave the way for direct negotiations with 'Israel' under a suitable international umbrella. Second, it is seeking to create a Palestinian leadership that would cooperate with the joint Israeli-Jordanian administration of the occupied territories.

UNDEMOCRATIC LAW

In addition to the regime's goals in enacting this law, the law itself is a step backwards in comparison with the 1960 election law. The new law not only discriminates between regions in terms of the representation allotted to provinces and camps, it also includes religious and ethnic discrimination. (Nine seats are allotted for Christians and three for ethnic groups.) The province of Amman, for example, contains 41% of Jordan's population, but its representation is limited to 21 seats