

JEC's concession on the basis that the company was no longer able to meet its obligations. On October 20, 1978, Teddy Kolleck publicly called on the government to withdraw the JEC's concession on the basis that the company was providing electricity to only 50 out of 130 villages in its area of concession. He also claimed that the JEC was squandering liquid fuel, whereas the IREC was using coal instead.

The JEC suffered a deep financial crisis in 1978, approaching bankruptcy in 1979. This pushed the company's administrative board and its acting head, Elias Freij, to contact several Arab countries, including Jordan, asking them to finance the company in order to save it from bankruptcy. The administrative board also took many other measures to minimize the company's expenditures, such as cutting the employees' pay. This decision aggravated the employees who had for years been suffering from the rise in the cost of living due to the inflation. The JEC workers' union organized a huge strike in the administration's headquarters on July 11, 1979. The strike lasted until the end of the month, when a popular conference was held in support of workers and employees of the company. The demands of the strikers were a salary increase and a cost of living increment paid in Jordanian dinars.

The conference adopted a number of decisions in support of the workers:

1. unconditional support of the workers' demands.
2. demanding that the municipal councils of the West Bank take a strong position against the administrative board's neglect of the workers' demands.
3. condemning the relinquishing of any part of the company's concession and protecting its Palestinian identity.

The last point refers to the administration's decision to sell the part of the company's concession that provides electricity to the Israeli settlements and quarters in the West Jerusalem area, in an attempt to relieve the company's financial burden. This decision was taken with the approval of the representatives of a number of independent shareholders, such as Mayors Karim Khalaf (Ramallah) and Ibrahim

Al Tawil (Al Bireh). However, Khalaf and Tawil later worked along with other nationalist personalities to narrow the gap between the administration and the workers' union. As a result of these efforts, a meeting was held on July 28, 1979, and an agreement was reached to: (1) pay the cost of living increment in Jordanian dinars; (2) allow employees 250 kilowatts free; and (3) give bonuses to qualified, efficient employees and workers.

The agreement settled this aspect of the company's crisis, but early in 1980, problems started again when the Israeli government issued its decision to confiscate the company's concession. This decision was overruled by the Israeli Supreme Court after the employees' protest.

In 1982, the Israeli Ministry of Energy forbade the JEC from operating its five new generators. This forced the Palestinian company to depend on the Israeli company for 90% of its energy, since the JEC's old generators could only provide 10% of consumer needs. Dependence on the Israeli company had led to even more rapid accumulation of debts (\$20 million) that the company is unable to pay.

The absence of Arab support to the JEC is glaring, especially since the

Jordanian government has ceased payments from the Steadfastness Fund to the West Bank. In 1985, the Jordanian regime proposed that it supply the West Bank with electricity, reflecting King Hussein's design to share this territory with the occupation authorities. However, the Israeli energy minister replied that this should be discussed as part of the Jordanian-Israeli dialogue. This means the JEC will be used in the Zionists' game of blackmail to draw King Hussein into direct negotiations that would impose joint administration to Israeli advantage.

Clearly, the latest Israeli move against the JEC is part of the long-standing Zionist policy to undermine all independent Palestinian institutions. It is especially dangerous in this period of increasing Israeli-Jordanian collaboration to impose joint administration on the West Bank. The JEC, like the West Bank as such, is caught between the hammer of Israeli occupation and the anvil of King Hussein's plans to absorb the Palestinian national identity. The conflict over the company has shown that the real protectors of the Palestinian national identity are the JEC workers, the patriotic masses under occupation and their nationalist leadership.

## Al Jamaheer Closed

Once again the Zionist occupation authorities were disturbed by a Palestinian newspaper. This time it was *Al Jamaheer* (*The Masses*), the patriotic newspaper that has been published in Nazareth for the last two years. On August 9th, the occupation authorities ordered *Al Jamaheer* closed. The charge was the same old one, that it was financed by a Palestinian organization abroad and expressed the political views of this organization. A similar pretext was previously used to close down other publications such as *Al Mithaq* and *Al Ahd* last year, and to expel Palestinian journalists such as Akram Hanieh. However, such charges are only excuses for gagging any voice that opposes the Zionist state. Such actions are not new to a state that was established by force and aggression. The policy of trying to eliminate the

Palestinian identity dates back to 1948. It has taken the form of massacres and forcible expulsion of Palestinians, and the confiscation of their land. It continues today with the Zionist iron fist.

The closure of *Al Jamaheer* stands as a new proof that even freedom of expression is considered a threat by the Israeli authorities. It also confirms that words are an effective weapon in the Palestinian liberation struggle. With words, as with bullets, the Palestinian revolution confronts the Zionist occupation and paves the way to a better future for the masses. With words, we condemn the closure of *Al Jamaheer* and other Palestinian newspapers, and call on Arab and international public opinion to join in this condemnation. At the same time, we salute *Al Jamaheer* and express confidence that the Palestinian masses will continue their struggle against occupation, finding new ways to make their voice heard.