

monarchy's final withdrawal from the West Bank and Palestinian affairs. From the political angle, this regime was originally created by British colonialism to help in controlling the mass movement in the area and protecting the Zionist state-to-be. King Hussein has loyally fulfilled his role in coordination with US imperialism, British colonialism's successor. Over the years, the regime has worked to absorb and oppress the Palestinians who have been expelled from their homeland, covering over their true national identity and preventing their organization and resistance to the Zionist occupation. The most notable example was the 1970-71 massacres where the regime's forces killed thousands of Palestinians and drove the Palestinian resistance out of Jordan.

King Hussein has always posed as a key player in any Middle East settlement on the basis of being crucial in resolving the Palestinian dimension of the conflict. Without this dimension, he would have difficulty being considered an important actor on the regional and international scene. Also in demographic and economic terms, the Jordanian kingdom, without the West Bank and the Palestinian dimension, would not have a much greater status than any other emirate. Economically, the Palestinian question has always been the goose that laid the golden egg. Besides US aid to Jordan for controlling the Palestinians, the monarchy has lived off Arab financial support given on the basis of Jordan being a «confrontation» state, plus money channeled to the Palestinians under occupation.

In fact, the king did leave a legalistic loophole for resuming his role. Since the Jordanian parliament passed the resolution annexing the West Bank in 1950, it remains the body which can constitutionally annul this resolution. Therefore, when the king made the declaration himself, he was leaving the door open for resumption of the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship if this becomes advantageous in the future.

All these facts indicate that the Jordanian move is not a hasty reaction, but a calculated step aiming to extract the kingdom from the dilemma posed by

the uprising, at the same time leaving loopholes for reversing the new tactical position. Some observers have speculated that King Hussein's moves were intended to prod the US and 'Israel' into concrete moves towards a settlement before it is «too late.» However, in view of King Hussein's strategic coordination with US administrations, it seems inconceivable that this step was not coordinated with the US. The US reaction serves to substantiate this; US officials tended to downplay King Hussein's moves, emphasizing that he still has a role to play. Some did concede that this meant the end of the Shultz plan, but this was only acknowledgement of a well-known fact created by the uprising.

THE ISRAELI REACTION

The Jordanian regime's step had a big impact on the Zionist state where the question of how to deal with the uprising in relation to the upcoming elections was already the main subject of debate. The overall reaction was negative as expressed by Yossi Ben Aharon, director-general of the prime ministry: «It is not a positive step...» while the foreign ministry was quick to issue a statement that «Israel won't let the PLO pay the Jordanian salaries» (*International Herald Tribune*, August 5th).

The Jordanian step created a crisis for the Israeli Labor Party since its political platform views Jordan as a partner in any political settlement, and it had made the Jordanian option a focal point in its election campaign. Initially, the Labor Party was caught between two tendencies - whether to adhere to the «Jordanian option» or move towards dealing directly with the Palestinians. On the external level, Labor was caught between another set of conflicting pressures: On the one hand, the party was eager to appear flexible in front of the international community, to counter the PLO's diplomatic offensive; on the other hand, in 'Israel', it had to answer the far right's accusations that it was too «soft» on matters of vital interest to the Zionist state.

The juggling act which Labor engaged in was expressed in Prime Minister Peres' statements in Paris, on his

way to meet US President Reagan and Egyptian Foreign Minister Meguid. He said that if elected, he would meet with «every Palestinian leader who renounces terror and violence» and accepts UN Security Council resolution 242. He even hinted that this didn't exclude PLO leaders, saying: «We are not going to look into his (the Palestinian leader's) past and his biography... We are going to look at his positions» (i.e., meeting the Israeli demands for concessions-editor's note). At the same time, Peres left the door open for a return to the Jordanian option, saying that a Labor government would be willing to negotiate with either a Jordanian or a Palestinian delegation or a combined delegation (*International Herald Tribune*, September 26th).

The Likud's position was more united. All its leaders basically confirmed the coalition's usual policy that the maximum to be offered to the Palestinians is 'autonomy' as specified in the Camp David accords, while ruling out territorial compromise or negotiations with the PLO. Likud took the opportunity to attack the Labor Party for setting its hopes on the Jordanian option, and itself interpreted the king's step as meaning that Jordan has desisted from calling for Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories. The Likud extremists renewed their calls for annexation of the West Bank, while Sharon reiterated his position that there is a Palestinian state and it is Jordan; therefore, there should not be another one. Sharon also proposed closing the bridges to Jordan and cancelling travel permits to prevent Palestinians from «smuggling» PLO money into the territories. Shamir, as head of state and of Likud, opposed the calls for annexation on the formal grounds that this would violate the Camp David accords, and more pertinently on the basis of his often repeated position that «you cannot annex what is already yours.»

The final outcome on these issues will be determined in line with the results of the upcoming Israeli elections. In the meantime, the two Zionist blocs in government, while rivaling each other in proposed solutions, continue to unite in all-out efforts to repress the uprising before the election date.