

leveled at Zaid Rifai three days earlier in the Salt district.

The most dramatic of the pre-emptive measures was the arbitrary arrest of 12 political activists on October 4th and 5th - ten days before the beginning of the election campaign. They were accused of membership in the PFLP, and of providing aid to the PFLP's attack on Israeli targets across the Jordanian borders. It is worth mentioning that none of the twelve detainees are military cadre; all of them had only recently been released from detention. Needless to say, these arrests aimed at depriving them of participating in the election campaign.

Another political activist was arrested on November 1st - one week before the election. Another was arrested on November 6th, as he was returning home from an election rally in Amman. As of yet, no charges have been pressed against them. On November 8th, the day of the election, four people were arrested in Al Baqa'a camp with no charges, and the interior minister denied knowledge of their arrest. There are reports of many others who are still sought by the intelligence. Their homes and their families were ordered to hand them over to the authorities.

The Campaign

Political parties have been banned in Jordan since 1957; accordingly, paragraph E of article 18 of the election law prohibits citizens affiliated to political parties from running for parliament. However, on October 17th, the government announced that it would not enforce the ban for this election, as part of the regime's attempt to give the election a democratic facade. Despite intentions, this contributed to increasing the masses' enthusiasm to get as many as possible of their true representative into the parliament. Out of 662 applicants, 652 candidates were accepted; seven were rejected for legal reasons and three withdrew later. The parliament has 80 seats, and they are allotted by sect. Out of 652, there were

574 Muslims competing for 68 seats, 63 Christians competing for nine seats, and 15 Circassians competing for three seats. Among them were 12 women, who gained the right to run in a nation-wide election in 1974 but were exercising this for the first time, since no elections have been held since 1967.

On the other hand, for the first time since 1950, citizens of the West Bank neither voted, nor had candidates in the Jordanian elections.

A broad range of candidates demanded an end to martial law, legalization of political parties, amendment of the election law, and greater democratic freedoms: freedom of the press, and of movement and to form trade unions. On the economic level, many called for developing an independent national economy, fighting unemployment, and prosecuting officials responsible for the drop in the dinar's value and the price hikes that eventually led to the April revolt. On the international level, some candidates demanded confronting the imperialist schemes in the area, and not submitting to the conditions of the IMF and other world capitalist centers; they called for more cooperation with the socialist countries. Support for the Palestinian uprising was unanimously voiced by all candidates.

The Islamic movement, headed by the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, was well organized and highly motivated in this election. In addition to the slogans above, they raised others such as «Islam is the solution», as well as their infamous antagonism towards socialism and women. As a solution to unemployment, the Muslim Brotherhood called for barring women from the work force.

The dispute between the Islamic movement and the women candidates and other pro-women's rights candidates was highlighted when the former filed a court case against Toujan Faisal, one of the 12 women running for offices, charging her with apostasy. Later the court dismissed the charge.

The above-mentioned measures

taken by the regime make it clear that this election could not have marked a radical departure from the prevailing system, regardless of who won seats in the parliament. However, even within these confines, the election campaign gave an unprecedented occasion for public debate. The results give a relatively representative gage of public opinion to be carefully studied by all those forces aspiring to mobilize the masses for genuine national democratic change. This is the case because the elections themselves actually proceeded in a democratic manner. The surprise was that although 16,000 security men were deployed throughout the country, they did not interfere with the citizens' voting; nor was there falsification of ballots.

Results

Fundamentalist Islamic forces, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood, won 32 seats - almost half the parliament. Leftist and nationalist candidates won 16 seats. Nine former ministers and MPs won seats in this parliament. Of the remaining seats, the majority were won by the young educated elite which is replacing the traditional figures of the past. Most of them can be assumed to be loyal to the regime, although there are also a number of independents whose positions are as yet unclear.

Though the outcome is disappointing for the national democratic forces, it is far from a surprise. Besides being the largest single organized group in Jordan, the Muslim Brotherhood is the only organized force that has been allowed to operate all these years. It has built up a mass base chiefly via the religious institutions, spreading its thinking through the mosques, etc. Moreover, it is a cohesive, internally united force. In these elections, it fielded more candidates and conducted a more high-powered campaign than any other force.

In contrast, the leftist and nationalist forces have been the main target of the regime's repression over the years,