

1. Jordan's policy of adopting development plans, which led to increased need for labor.

2. The inability of institutes to adopt vocational training programs at a fast enough pace to fill this need.

3. The foreign contractors from more developed countries that are in charge of Jordanian projects prefer to hire cheap expatriate labor.

Though we are not dealing with the Jordanian economy as a whole, we can at least point out that the first reason given is patently false:

The development plans referred to have not led to any real growth for the country. Rather for over a year now, the regime has been adopting austerity measures. Also the present plan for the period of 1980-85 is threatened with failure according to some economic observers.

The second and third reasons given are only the results of the government's economic policy which entails dependence on the capitalist countries in

implementing any projects, and neglecting the development of indigenous capabilities. The other side of this is the regime's failure to establish viable relations with the socialist countries. Of course, this policy is in line with the Jordanian comprador which works hand in hand with foreign capitalist companies to plunder the country's resources.

Deflecting class and national struggle

The Jordanian General Workers Union has demanded that the government put limits on the import of labor. This led the government to decide quotas whereby Jordanians should be 25% of construction workers and 50% of workers in production. This however was never implemented. Moreover, such quotas obviously do not resolve the essence of the problem. Rather this decision was intended to passify the Jordanian workers in order to avoid exposure of the regime's real intention in hir-

ing expatriate labors at the expense of Jordanians. Still, discontent persists among the Jordanian working class which faces the competition of cheap imported labor. This has led to a drop in wages, which of course pushes more Jordanian workers to emigrate. Further, it led to a real unemployment problem that has hit not only laborers but also professionals. Recent statistics released by the Union of Jordanian Engineers indicate that the number of unemployed engineers has reached 4,200, which is almost half the union's total membership. The union's study also noted that 17,512 persons are now studying to be engineers, in addition to those engineers now doing their military service. By government count, there are 420 foreign engineers in Jordan.

In conclusion, we emphasize that the aim of the Jordanian regime's policies is to disperse and weaken the working class in order to prevent it from playing its role in enacting revolutionary change. The regime moreover hopes that any discontent among native workers can be deflected against expatriate workers rather than focusing on the regime itself. Thus a dual responsibility is thrust on the vanguards of the working class to direct their struggle against the cause of these policies and not be diverted into secondary contradictions from which the regime can profit. The struggle must continue to end the policies of the regime for importing cheap substitute labor. At a minimum, the regime is required to guarantee the right of Jordanian workers and professionals to work within their own country. As is apparent from this study, the regime's policy on importing and exporting labor is a product of its overall political and economic policy. Consequently, the workers' struggle for their right to a job cannot be separated from the overall popular struggle for democratic rights and social change in Jordan. ●

Note: The statistics in this study include the Palestinian refugee population in Jordan who hold Jordanian passports. Obviously a large part of Jordan's labor force which is affected by the regime's policies for exporting labor is Palestinian.

Footnotes:

¹ *Al Rai* (Jordanian daily), May 17, 1984.

² Paper presented by Dr. Mansour Al Attum at the Symposium for Population and Development.

³ *Al Rai*, April 5, 1984.

⁴ *Al Rai*, May 29, 1984.

⁵ *Al Rai*, April 22, 1984.

Jordan Releases Some of the Political Prisoners

The Committees for the Defense of Democratic Freedom in Jordan issued a communique on September 19, 1984, stating that the Jordanian authorities have released a number of political prisoners. Among them are some cadres of both the Palestinian Resistance and the Jordanian National Movements.

The release came as a result of the long struggle of all nationalists, democratic forces and individuals in Jordan. Efforts of mass organizations and trade unions played an important role in the campaign for the release of these political prisoners. In addition the Defense Committees were quite active in initiating and following up the work for the defense of these prisoners.

In spite of the positive step of the release of some of the political prisoners, yet the Defense Committees voice their concern regarding the tens of other remaining prisoners who are daily subjected to repressive measures.

Earlier, the prisoners from the occupied West Bank had requested their release so that they could return there before their Israeli-issued permits expired which would mean de facto expulsion. These prisoners, who were earlier promised deportation to the occupied lands by the Jordanian

authorities, were forced to declare a hunger strike since September 13th after the authorities retreated their position.

The communique also mentioned that the Jordanian authorities have moved 13 prisoners from the Mahatta Central Prison and dispersed them to four prisons. This is an attempt to disunite them and lessen their resistance and political influence.

The Committees for the Defense of Democratic Freedom in Jordan, extend their full support for the demands of all the political prisoners and call on the Jordanian authorities to release the remaining tens of prisoners detained for unjust reasons. The Committees also demand the government to end all measures that aim at dispersing and disuniting political prisoners. The Committees call for the release of the tens of thousands of Jordanian citizens whose passports have been confiscated and are denied employment and basic democratic rights due to their political belief and ideology.

Finally, the Defense Committees extend their appreciations and thanks to all the democratic forces, organizations and individuals for their support and hard efforts. Also the Committees call them to continue their work in solidarity with the Jordanian people and their democratic freedoms, and to demand the release of all the political prisoners.