

New Government for Camp David

The formation of a new government in early April is a sure sign that the Jordanian monarchy is serious about entering the imperialist settlement *now*. Politically, the composition of the new government is geared to removing the obstacles to Jordan's entry into Camp David; specifically it aims at forming a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to negotiate with the US, then 'Israel'. This means pressuring Arafat to explicitly recognize Security Council resolution 242, and thereby the right of 'Israel' to exist, and/or relinquish the PLO's right to represent the Palestinians. It also means improving relations with Syria, so as to contain opposition to Jordanian-PLO involvement in the US plans. Moreover, King Hussein is shrewd enough to realize that he may get nothing from imperialism and Zionism in this round. In such case, he would need good relations with Syria in order to survive in the aftermath.

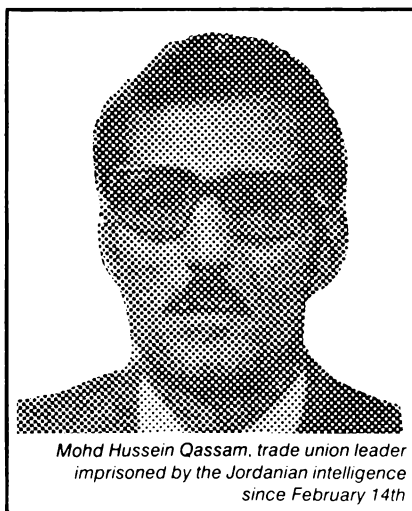
Politicos to the fore

The last two government heads, Obeidat and Badran, rose to political office from the intelligence service; they were thus well suited to preside over the repression on which the monarchy relies so heavily. Yet what Hussein needs now is a political breakthrough, so he chose Zaid Rifai as prime minister and defense minister. Rifai is a skilled politician, educated at a US prestige university, Harvard, and with excellent contacts in the US establishment. Rifai's other advantage is long-standing relations with Syria. He headed three governments between 1973 and 1976, the highpoint of Syrian-Jordanian relations. Unlike his predecessors, he is not suspected of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood against Syria.

Rifai is also known for his tough line on the PLO and the Palestinians generally. When the Rabat Summit recognized the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974, Rifai quarrelled with Arafat. In effect, Rifai told the PLO chairman: Now you took the right to represent the Palestinians, but you will return, asking us to represent you before the US. Thanks to Arafat's right-wing deviation, these

words became a prophesy.

Hussein's quest to control the Palestinians is also seen in the composition of the government as a whole: Eleven of twenty-three ministers are Palestinian, accounting for all the main cities and traditional families of the West Bank. From a class viewpoint, this is the ultimate weapon of the Jordanian regime against the Palestinian people. It has long worked to cultivate a sector of the traditional Palestinian bourgeoisie as a loyal «leadership» to collaborate in controlling the masses whose resistance has thus far blocked Camp David's completion. It is not just history that the Jordanian regime was created by British colonialism in 1921, to absorb the Palestinians soon to be dispossessed by Zionist settler colonialism. In the current phase, the regime carries out rear guard action, in imperialism's service, to complement the Zionist invasion of Lebanon, which caused the Palestinian right-wing to give up the national struggle.



The political economy of Camp David

The former government represented the bureaucratic bourgeoisie who opt for a state role in the economy. Especially in the context of Jordan's economic difficulties and dependence, this has been having bad effects on the private sector. There was pressure on Hussein from the comprador, finance and commercial strata of the

bourgeoisie to give more freedom to the private sector. Rifai represents the king's positive response. His first meeting in office was with the Chamber of Commerce where he promised liberalization of the economy, i.e. less state control. This should prepare Jordan for the economic side of Camp David: even more dependence on imperialism with results as can be clearly seen in Egypt.

In this context, it is interesting to note the article of Jordanian Crown Prince Talal Bin Hassan in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1984-85). After warning of chaos in the region if there is no settlement of the Arab-Zionist conflict, he states the regime's alternative to social revolution: «A comprehensive settlement would release the constructive capacities of both Jordanians and Palestinians to work for socioeconomic development that can consolidate the peace. It could easily turn the region into an advanced workshop and a maintenance center of modern technology. Such a settlement will have to be supported by a Marshall-type plan for the region...»

For this, the Jordanian regime launched the «land for peace» formula, and it is this dream in which the Palestinian right-wing bourgeoisie hopes to find a niche. This is the class basis for Arafat's deviation and the Amman accord. However, a glance at the realities of imperialist and Zionist dominance in the area shows that such dreams are truly illusions, and moreover nightmares for the masses. Zionism, including the Labor Party, is not prepared to enter into an equal exchange; it has only eyed the chance for being accepted in the area, and thus getting a larger share of the exploitation of Arab resources and labor. Increased imperialist dominance will not bring development, but only more dependency and some crumbs for the regimes and bourgeoisie. This reservation can be irrelevant for King Hussein and his ilk, as long as their thrones are secure. Yet for the Palestinian masses, such a «solution» denotes disaster, heralding new, more entrenched forms of partition, domination and exploitation of their land and themselves.