

the Social Democratic Party (CDS) received 24 per cent and 16 per cent respectively of the vote — the same as the last election. The Maoist coalition of General Saraiva de Carvalho who received 16 per cent in the recent presidential elections — received only 3 per cent of the vote this week.

The pattern of election results will make it more difficult for Socialist Premier Mario Soares to carry out the austerity measures demanded by Portugal's creditors. The New York Times, acknowledging this,

called upon Soares to form a coalition with the right-wing PPD to promote "political stability." Soares, however, is not likely to form such a coalition due to the uproar that it would cause within his own party and among working-class and military forces. Just before returning from a trip to Rumania, for example, Revolutionary Council — the governing body of the military — member Admiral Vitor Crespo warned at a press conference in Bucharest Dec. 10 that it is the mission of the Revolutionary Council to guarantee "that there will be no return to a past that the Portuguese people clearly rejected."

MIDDLE EAST

Jordan: Prying the West Bank from King Hussein

Dec. 14 (NSIPS) — A little known but highly significant diplomatic process is underway concerning the desert Kingdom of Jordan, ruled by one of the Middle East's remaining monarchs, King Hussein. The object of this diplomatic intervention into Jordan, including efforts by Britain, India, the Soviet Union, and several Eastern European socialist countries, is to persuade the Jordanians to relinquish their claim to the Israeli-occupied West Bank, taken from Palestine by Jordan in 1950 and subsequently occupied by Israel during the 1967 Six Day War.

Although Jordan officially renounced its claim to the West Bank in November, 1974 at an Arab Summit meeting in Rabat, Morocco, which recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, King Hussein has refused to abandon the Kingdom's hardly legal links with the populous West Bank.

The PLO decision this week to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state on any territory evacuated by Israel is widely taken to mean that the PLO — currently discussing the creation of a government-in-exile — would be willing to set up an independent Palestinian nation on the West Bank and possibly the Gaza strip in Sinai.

Jordan's Development

The key leverage point with which pro-peace outside forces are attempting to negotiate with King Hussein is the promise of agricultural and industrial development of the barren nation. Both the Soviet Union and the British are involved in this process. In doing so, they are appealing to the fledgling Jordanian state-owned industrial sector and various national banking and mining interests who, presumably, are less interested in the West Bank than in economic progress. The British have the advantage of an entire network of agents and sympathizers within the country dating back to colonial and neo-colonial days, when the British ran the country,

especially the military.

"Frankly, the West Bank is a lost cause," an Amman banker told the *Baltimore Sun* last month. "If we got it back, we would be getting back the Palestinian question, and that we do not want." The sources expressed a desire to engage in national economic reconstruction rather than play West Bank politics. In some circle, the leader of this tendency is Jordan's Prince Hassan, the brother of the king.

In early November, 1976, Prince Hassan paid an extended visit to Great Britain. He arrived on Nov. 6, and conferred with top British economics officials. According to the *Jordan Times*, the British agreed to a comprehensive program for rebuilding the Jordanian economy, and promised to "take an active part in Jordan's development effort." A high-level British commercial delegation is to visit Jordan this month to consolidate the wide-ranging accords, which include the development of Jordan's rich phosphate deposits.

Then, in late November, Prince Hassan paid a week-long visit to India, where he held a series of meetings with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and several top ministers. Hassan signed two accords there, one for economic and technical cooperation, and a protocol on science and technology, both to run five years. India, one of the strongest political supporters of the PLO and a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, was thought to have sought assurances that Jordan would stubbornly refuse to go along with the moves toward a Middle East peace.

Even more surprising is the extent of Soviet and East European involvement in Jordanian development. On Nov. 13, a large Soviet team of oil experts arrived in Jordan on a three-week visit to begin exploration for petroleum deposits in eastern Jordan. The Soviet oil group had been preceded on Nov. 2 by a group of Soviet electrification technicians. Economic delegations from Poland, Hungary, and the German Democratic Republic arrived in Jordan during November.

On Nov. 28, the Jordanian Cabinet was reshuffled, with the changed ministries entirely those relating to finance and economics, leading informed observers to speculate that the regime intended to signal a shift in priorities. In a speech following the swearing-in of the new Cabinet, King Hussein stated that a priority of the new government would be the "building of a solid national economy."

Kissinger's Confederation

On the other hand, there is no doubt that King Hussein is strongly influenced in the direction of following Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's prompting toward a "Greater Syria" confederation linking Jordan, Syria, and the PLO. The PLO has rejected any federation plan with Jordan. Syrian President Hafez Assad, who recently got agreement on a "Syria-Jordan union" from King Hussein, is the leading advocate of the plan, and the bloody Lebanon civil war was in part an effort to force PLO acquiescence in the scheme.

In recent weeks King Hussein has held a series of meetings with old-time representatives of the West Bank and Gaza, including the mayor of Gaza and the Arab governor of Jerusalem on Nov. 23. In addition, Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij is an active proponent of linking the West Bank and Jordan. It is generally considered highly unlikely that the population of the West Bank would accept a return to Jordanian sovereignty, and it has supported the PLO in a wave of strikes and demonstrations. The mayor of Nablus, a West Bank city, in late November "rejected the Jordanian regime's request to the municipality to send a delegation to Amman to swear allegiance to King Hussein," said a PLO broadcast. However, with Israeli encouragement, the king has quietly resumed paying subsidies to several West Bank villages.

In the end, perhaps the oil-rich Saudi Arabians, who support the bankrupt kingdom financially, will make the difference. A possible signal, or warning, was delivered on Nov. 6 when the Saudis announced the withdrawal of their troops stationed in Jordan.

Palestine Central Council Resolution for Palestine State

Dec. 16 (NSIPS) — In a decision made Dec. 14 in Damascus, the Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization resolved officially to organize for "the construction of the foundations for an independent Palestinian state" in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip territories. The resolution likely to be backed up by a decision to form a Palestinian government-in-exile when the full 250-member Palestine National Council meets next month in Cairo, implies Palestinian readiness to negotiate with a pro-peace government in Israel and removes remaining substantive impediments to a Mideast Geneva Conference early in 1977.

Middle East observers expect that the Damascus decision will immediately alter the map of political relations within the Arab sector as a whole. Political sovereignty for the Palestinian resistance movement will provide a concrete basis for the Palestinian intelligentsia and the Palestinian mass base to assume a leading role in formulating development policies for the entire region, in alliance with urbane layers in Egypt, Iraq, Algeria and other Arab states.

Informed PLO sources report, the Egyptian government has "remained steadfast in its support for an independent Palestinian state, there's no questioning that. The Egyptians see a Palestinian state as an important regional force." Egyptian Foreign Minister

Ismail Fahmy, in the context of a series of negotiations with Soviet, U.S., and Italian representatives this weekend for a conference on the Mideast, met with the PLO representative in Cairo accompanied by leaders from the Gaza Strip, to concretize a joint PLO-Gaza delegation to Geneva.

The governments of Syria and Jordan have continued to insist over the past week that any Palestinian state be incorporated into a Syrian-dominated confederation. The latest Syrian strategy, informed sources in Damascus report, is to try to flood the Palestine National Council with scores of malleable reactionaries from the West Bank to destroy the PNC's effectiveness and to undercut PLO hegemony within the Council. An earlier proposal by the Syrian Al Baath newspaper to "expell" the PLO leadership from the PNC met with intense opposition within the Arab sector, including from the Saudi Arabians.

An editorial in the widely read Arabic-language Al-Kuds newspaper calling for West Bank Palestinian leaders. The moderate mayor of Bethlehem, Elias Freij, attacked an Israeli government proposal to place PLO-West Bank-Gaza delegation at Geneva to Jordanian political control. The West Bank is now the scene of student protests in response to Israeli military actions, including the seizure of Arab-owned land and the imposition of a tax on West Bank merchants.