

glitter, or to reject them totally, retreating further into backwardness as a refuge. These two reactions are equally harmful in our society. The Palestinian woman is not immune to this for she is part of the Arab society, especially in view of our dispersion throughout the Arab world.

## Women in confrontation

The exception to this is women living under Zionist occupation which does not leave much room for anything other than resistance. In Palestine, women play a more advanced role than women in exile. They are totally absorbed in the everyday resistance to the Zionist occupation, if not directly, then indirectly. They may have sons in prison or outside the country, either to work for a better salary or unable to return due to Israeli repression. This situation minimizes the negative influence of the West on women. Their daily life is devoted to ending the occupation through the channels open to them: seminars, social and medical work, nurseries, bazaars and exhibitions, production workshops, etc. The activity of women in occupied Palestine is in direct proportion to the number involved in the struggle. There the woman has only to see what havoc and destruction Zionism is wreaking to be motivated to resist. Every day renews her determination to challenge the occupation, and her effectiveness increases.

Another example is in Lebanon where the confrontation has caused women to be more active and tied to the struggle than Palestinian women in the Gulf countries or even in Syria. With the occupation of Lebanon in 1982, the women's confrontation developed even more, because an entirely new situation developed. All of a sudden, everyone was involved. Every Palestinian was a target, even those who had not been involved in the struggle due to their class status. A face to face confrontation with the enemy evolved. Thus every Palestinian woman, regardless of class status, was targeted. Her son could be arrested and harassed simply for being Palestinian. Every Palestinian family in Lebanon was motivated to rid themselves of this oppression, especially when the Lebanese Army started treating them the same way the Israeli occupiers did. Lebanon became the second hot spot after occupied Palestine.

Although some Palestinian women in exile may on the surface lead a normal life, they are still affected by the fact that part of their family remains under occupation. This can motivate women for struggle. The level of activity is much lower, but there are other ways of raising women's consciousness such as showing patriotic films, political seminars, etc. This keeps alive their adherence to our cause and country. However, this task is very difficult due to the dispersion of Palestinian women all over the world.

## Social effects of backwardness

Women are not the only victims of social backwardness. Both men and women still contain the seeds of this. The degree of backwardness varies from one person to another in proportion to his/her consciousness. Men are more enlightened, even if not educated, because the society permits them to leave home to get an education, earn a living, etc. This gave men a chance to develop that women were not given. The result was a gap between the consciousness of the two sexes.

Yet the man too remains tied to his family and the society. Overstepping the boundaries of social traditions means risking being branded as different or a social outcast. This would naturally affect the rest of the family as well. While the family and society gave the men certain privileges, they expect them

to follow in their path, and not make waves due to acquired knowledge or worldliness. If the man is not ideologically aware, he cannot be liberated. No matter how many progressive ideas he may convey, he remains a prisoner of the society he lives in. He can only apply his ideological convictions with great difficulty because this goes against the majority.

## Women and the revolution

In any case, what takes priority on our agenda is the liberation of our country. We, men and women, are so engrossed in our cause, and the rapidly changing developments, that not enough attention is focused on the question of women's liberation. There is, of course, some progress, but it is not up to the standard to which we aspire. However, it is a step forward in women's liberation and men's as well. However, the men's consciousness must be reflected in the smallest unit of the society - the family. If not, our revolution will not succeed.

It is my evaluation that the PFLP represents an advanced model on the women's question. The fourth congress in 1981 posed the question of women. This means that despite all our problems as a revolution, we can attend to the women's question and evaluate it highly enough to be a subject considered at our congress. There was a decision to draw up an internal personal statute (behavior code) to be adopted at the fifth congress. I believe that we will succeed in this, and set an example to be emulated by others. We consider ourselves to be the first building block. We have not reached the point where we have the authority to impose our ideas on the Palestinian revolution as a whole.

Previously, the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) was to propose such a personal code to be implemented by the PLO. This was before the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. However, as always, events which we do not control were ahead of us, and the plan was put aside.

## Organized women's work

In the occupied territories, there are the Union of Palestinian Womens Committees, the Womens Work Committees, the Working Womens Committees and the Womens Social Work Committees. The last is very broad, encompassing many sectors of women, but is not as organized as the first three which have adopted progressive ideology.

The Working Womens Committees initiated activities among women, and the Palestinian Womens Committees and Womens Work Committees followed soon after. These three have already convened congresses and held elections. They are very active and have programs which are close to being comprehensive. The first congress of the Union of Palestinian Womens Committees was held in 1983, the second in 1984. There is coordination between all four of these organizations. In addition there are numerous societies of a social nature, formed by women patriots, such as the Society for the Preservation of the Family, the Society for Orphans, the Society of Al Bireh, etc.

The framework that should interlink all these committees and societies is the GUPW. However, their work is being conducted more or less independently. We in the PFLP formerly suggested that all these committees and societies be represented in the GUPW, and that all of them should meet and form a representative body in order to complement each other. It goes without saying that organized efforts give better results for women, especially in the occupied territories, because our cause is one and the situation in which women live is one.

Outside occupied Palestine, there are a number of