

being served by the union activity. We must judge if the activity of the union is supporting or halting the development of the Palestinian revolution.

Based on these considerations, the women of the PFLP boycotted the GUPW congress held in Tunis in the spring of 1985, because we could see what the intentions of this congress were. We asked the general secretariat in Tunis to postpone the congress until a time when there were better conditions for resolving the internal crisis in the PLO. However, they refused. They had instructions from the rightist leadership to convene the congress even if that meant finding substitutes for those women who boycotted the congress. Their justification was that the congress had not been held for a long time (4 years). Looking back, however, the first congress was held in 1965, and the second in 1974. This gap was due to the difficult situation for the Palestinian revolution at that time. There was the Jordanian regime's attack on the resistance in 1970, and its aftermath, which made it difficult to hold the congress.

Today, there are problems more serious than any encountered before; they are more important than when the congress is held, especially considering the turmoil this creates in the ranks of the union. We need to convene something that will bring all forces together on solid common ground.

However, the right wing wanted a congress with leaders that would approve the rightist trend. For this reason, we worked for postponement of the congress, meanwhile continuing to work together, but they refused. Then we suggested that it be held in Democratic Yemen which was ready to receive all delegates to the congress. Of course, as a progressive country, Democratic Yemen would have wanted assurance that the congress would make progressive decisions, denouncing the Amman accord, and that all forces would participate, to avoid a split. This was also refused, for those in Tunis wanted the congress held there, close to the rightist leadership which could dominate the proceedings. We sent a memorandum explaining our boycott of the congress, because we considered that a political fault had been committed. This does not

additional embroidered dress, Jalazon camp near Ramallah, occupied West Bank



mean that we boycott the GUPW as such. We deal with all the union branches and take part in elections on the basis of denouncing the Amman accord and the Cairo statement (on restricting armed struggle).

Anyway, they held the congress in Tunis. DFLP and PCP participated, allowing the Tunis leadership to claim support from the left. However, no representative from the socialist countries or the WIDF participated. They had asked beforehand who was participating and who was not. The suspended general secretary of the union sent a letter of explanation, and on that basis, they boycotted the congress. Until now, there have been no relations between the GUPW and the international unions. The WIDF invited the GUPW to attend its conference in Prague in November, but a full delegation was not sent. GUPW vice-president Isam Abdel Hadi attended. We do not know how relations will develop in the future. Actually, we do not expect the socialist countries to be bound by our position. That is their affair. Their view will determine how they deal with this issue.

Although we did not attend the congress in Tunis, the new GUPW general secretariat informed us that they would continue to invite us to their activities in our capacity as progressive Palestinian women, not a group that has split off. We are not represented in the general secretariat and administrative council formed at Tunis, but we consider ourselves members of the union because we were greatly involved in its establishment. We will participate in elections in any branch even if we lose. We will try to counter the right's policy of only bringing in those it can count on to support its line, for this is not a union.

We are optimistic about the elections in some branches. Especially in Lebanon and Syria, there will be democratic elections giving everyone an opportunity to participate. We will not repeat the mistakes of the right. There are fifteen legitimate branches in which elections will be held; some makeshift branches were set up by the rightists for election purposes only, but they did not maintain the required membership of 50. This is a real difficulty when the right wing uses people simply to have a show of hands supporting their policy.

To be frank we do not blame only the right for this situation. This has been their policy in the union work since it began, and parallels their policy in the PNC. We also blame the progressive forces who have not presented a united alternative to counter the right and prevent it from continuing like this. We consider the DFLP, the PCP and Isam Abdel Hadi, who are all still working in the union, to be progressive. They should put a halt to these things and not be restricted by the union's ceiling. Their role is to bring in the progressive forces to tip the balance against the right.

I will give a concrete example of the problems facing the left in this respect. Recently, there were elections in the GUPW's branch in Qatar. The PFLP women wanted to run on the basis of denouncing the Amman accord and the Cairo statement. However, the DFLP had a different position. The DFLP's policy is to remain in the framework of the union no matter what the political cost. Under no conditions will they leave any form of the union work. To us, the political aspect determines our union participation. In my opinion, if the DFLP, PCP and Isam Abdel Hadi would declare a united position of withdrawing from the leadership bodies, they would be able to impose a whole new situation to the advantage of the progressive forces. I am not talking about a split, but a new situation. As it is, the right holds two-thirds of the leading posts. As a minority, the left forces can at most register opposition.