

united understanding of this subject. So far, our contribution in this field is very little.

The second task is encouraging an increasing number of women to participate in the battle for the liberation of Palestine. If women participate effectively in this process, who can deprive them of their right to equality in a democratic Palestine? This is your responsibility, to apply your ability to fulfill your duties, so as to be able to demand your rights. There is some progress in this field, but we must aim at achieving much more.

Third is the responsibility of the Palestinian organizations. Unfortunately, the PLO is not one political organization; it is not even a united front, though we strive for this. In our efforts to achieve at least unity in a front, let the recruitment of women be a measure for competition between the different organizations. The reality is that there are a number of organizations that compete in terms of number of members, military operations, etc. The organizations' concentration on recruiting women for the liberation battle should also be a criterion, in view of the importance of this subject.

The PFLP can be a little bit proud of having given importance to the women's question. In 1978, the politbureau decided to evaluate our progress in this field, to evaluate the percentage of women in our total membership. In 1979, in Lebanon, 30% of our members in Sidon were women; 28% in Tripoli; and 20% in Beirut. This was connected to the revolution's open presence which enhanced our ability to recruit. In other branches the percentage was not more than 5%. In Jordan, for example, recruiting women is difficult - we are underground.

If we are really concerned about the women's question, this will be seen in the extent to which we lay importance on having women in the PFLP. This concerns not only members; there is the circle of women who are friends of the PFLP. A chief measure of our conviction about the women's question is our enthusiasm about recruiting the broadest sector of women tied to the PFLP. If we understand this scientifically, we can recruit thousands to the PFLP in Syria alone.

Women comrades may find it difficult to adapt to the conditions and duties attached to PFLP membership, because of duties in the home and motherhood. If some are not ready to

participate as members, we are ready to find an organizational form whereby they can participate as friends. There is the framework of a democratic organization which has its own leadership. If each member of the democratic organization feels responsible for its program and future, there will be great enthusiasm. If the members feel they are not important and do not play an active role in shaping the future of this democratic organization, we cannot expect it to grow. This is very basic.

The 27th Congress of the CPSU stands for something new. The reports stressed removing the mistaken hegemony of the party from the economic institutions. Gorbachev hopes that this will increase production greatly. Also we should not understand the supervision of the party as restricting the potential of the democratic organization. It is not important that our woman comrades be the leaders of the democratic organization. If a non-member has the capacity to lead and recruit women, then let her. This understanding of the democratic organization, related to the PFLP, is very fundamental. We want 10 active members to bring in 500, not 120 to bring 30.

Let us not expect there will be large numbers of women able to commit themselves fully to a party; there are many reasons why they may not be able to do so. Even in socialist countries, the number of men and women party members is about 10-15%. What about the rest of the people? They are recruited into unions and other democratic organizations. Broad recruitment into democratic organizations should be a measure of our party organization's leadership role.

On the GUPW

We must specify our policy with respect to the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) - how we can be effective towards the same goal of liberating women. Unfortunately, all the Palestinian unions, not only the GUPW, are experiencing a split. This is a new phenomenon but we should not forget the negative points about these unions before the split. Neither before nor after the split, has there been effective work on the tasks stipulated in the constitution and internal regulations.

What can we do in the light of this reality? We should concentrate on having our women friends play an active role in the GUPW. Do not despair because of the present difficulties in working for a

united GUPW, representing all Palestinian women. Determination and scientific thinking will always result in success.

We took the position that the political differences which occurred between the resistance organizations should not result in splitting the unions. We call for unity in the field, the unity of the Palestinian people. The teachers, students and writers union together total approximately 50,000 members. Why should these be split? Why can't we establish democratic dialogue? Anyone adhering to the national line is confirming the soundness of this line. Why be afraid of democratic dialogue? Those who contracted the Amman accord may be afraid of democratic dialogue, but should those who adhere to the national program be afraid? Some thought that if the unions remained united, they would give legitimacy to Arafat. If we look closely at this question, and if we think of making new unions, a large number of members will be lost; the opposition to the right-wing line will be lost within the unions.

The Cuban delegation which attended the student union's congress two years ago, was pleased that the PFLP and others opposed the right-wing line in the union. We fault anyone who is trying to split the unions. Arafat split the writers' union, ignoring the internal regulations governing the convention of congresses. The fact that we remain part of a union does not mean that we don't see the reality of the split. No matter where we are, on our own or with others, we raise the slogan: Unite the unions.

Even if the unions had remained united, their state of affairs was unsatisfactory. To improve this, we raise three slogans, especially for the GUPW: 1. The unity of the union; 2. genuine democracy embodied in proportional representation; and 3. effective work.

In closing I would like to make a point about the role of women vanguards, in the context of the role of collective leadership. This is the era of collective leadership. We emphasize this on all levels in democratic and party organizations. Yet the importance of collective leadership should not lessen the value of the role of the woman vanguard, which is a historical phenomenon in our revolution. We are waiting for new vanguards to blaze the trail. History will record that they played a major role in the liberation of the Palestinian woman and her participation in the liberation struggle and the establishment of a democratic Palestine. ●