

# The Palestinian Stone

## in the Hands of a Greek Painter

The following was submitted to us by Vesna Masharifa, a Yugoslavian friend who in the past contributed several short stories to *Democratic Palestine*, based on her experience in the Palestinian camps near Damascus. She now lives in Athens, and sent us this story after visiting an art exhibition there.

For thirty years, Genovefa Tsatsou has been exhibiting her art in the galleries of Athens. At her most recent exhibition on January 25th, the public was pleasantly surprised by her large collection of painted stones, exhibited together with her paintings, wood carvings and sculptures. The natural beauty of the stones - their rich contours, hollows and grooves - had been skillfully used by Genovefa as the background for paintings. Here, we will focus on the artist's experience with this new technique.

Genovefa Tsatsou began painting on stones four years ago. What was new was her idea of «discovering in the relief of the stone itself a sketch or starting point and helping it to become visible.» The idea occurred to her after visiting the Ioanis cave where she was fascinated by the artistic perfection achieved by nature. From that day, she began collecting stones from riverbeds, roads, mountains and beaches. She chose stones whose contours provided a dynamic relief, discarding the flat ones. After observing the stones under a strong light in her studio, she began to trace their lines and grooves. What the stone didn't offer, the painter had in her fantasy, and this is how the paintings were created. Genovefa never changes the basic color or shape of the stone. She says, «I must admit that it was very difficult to paint on an already formed, colored and grooved stone. My freedom of expression was so limited that at one point I thought that the stone had already created its painting, and I was only there to make it clear.»

Actually, it was not like that. In the

beginning, Mrs. Tsatsou painted portraits, happy children, animals and nature. Then, last year, her inspiration was drawn towards other issues - human suffering, people without a homeland, their dreams and wishes. I asked her why she changed the themes of her paintings, and she replied, «Everything happened so quickly. After a television program about the uprising in the occupied Palestinian territories, I was thinking about the Palestinian children who fight the

Israeli occupation with stones. In my mind, these stones were part of a huge historical mosaic, made in honor of the Palestinian people and their struggle. All of a sudden, I related those stones to my work. I started to feel a stronger need to paint about the common problems of people all over the world, who live under occupation and in exile. As the concept of nostalgia is very close to me, I started to paint people without a homeland and their nostalgia.

### NOSTALGIA FOR HOME

Mrs. Tsatsou was born in Macedonia, in a small town called Naussa. At 18, she came to Athens to study art and has lived here since. Even though she occasionally visits Naussa, she lives with nostalgia which can be seen in her paintings which always convey memories of her hometown. «Although I have lived in Athens for 30 years, Naussa is always in my thoughts. I paint the houses, flowers and people from my town with deep nostalgia. My

