

clock. The collaborators take the targeted youth from the cell into the bathroom where he is tied and his head covered with a sheet. Then he is stripped and gang raped. This is done just before interrogation, so the detainee is under the impression that those raping him are his interrogators. Thus the detainee is already shaken up when taken to interrogation. There he is beaten and humiliated in an attempt to get him to confess to taking part in a demonstration, naming other activists, etc. The interrogators tell the detainee that they know he has been raped by a man, and remind him of the society's attitude toward homosexuality. They threaten to inform his parents and friends of the «deviation», and promise relief only if he confesses. The detainee who refuses to cooperate is returned to the solitary confinement cell, and the same cruel method may be repeated over and over. Several detainees have tried to commit suicide by swallowing sharp objects, to escape this cycle of terror. Others are afflicted by hysteria.

The detainee who confesses is beaten less, but homosexual rape may continue, to corrupt him completely. The interrogator poses as a friend, at times scolding the collaborators for harrasing the detainee and ordering increases in his food rations. At this point, the detainee is transferred to block 2.

## Block 2

Block 2 consists of larger cells with 15-20 prisoners in each. In comparison with block 1, there is some freedom of movement, but the atmosphere is poisoned by the presence of professional collaborators who supervise the prisoners. Trust between the detainees can be difficult after the experience of block 1, and the fact that some confessed under torture, while others resisted. The aim of the Zionists is to create disputes among the prisoners. Reading materials and radios are forbidden. However, the prisoners are allowed two hours in the courtyard daily, as well as biweekly family visits. Lawyers can only meet their client in the courtyard, while Red Cross officials meet the prisoners in a specially prepared room outside the camp.

## Indictment of Israeli torture

Almost since Al Faraa opened, progressive lawyers have been trying to help the youthful detainees. Felicia Langer in particular has filed numerous

protests with the Israeli authorities, based on carefully documented cases of torture. Such efforts culminated in a report released by the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva, in January of this year. This report lists numerous instances of mistreatment ranging from sleep deprivation to beating with an electric cable. It states that the center seems aimed at humiliation and intimidation, rather than obtaining specific information. This report branded

Al Faraa as a center for torture where confessions are manufactured, and as part of Israeli efforts to control the West Bank population. It is this that finally forced the Zionist authorities to open Al Faraa to journalists. Yet what they saw does not correspond to the hell which youthful Palestinians are living in Al Faraa. Therefore, the struggle goes on to defend our youth from this attempt to deprive them of their humanity and national consciousness. ●

## Art From Behind the Bars

In April, there was an exhibition of paintings made by Palestinian prisoners in Zionist jails. On display at the Soviet Cultural Center in Damascus, were works by Mohammed Rekoi, Zuhdi Adawi, Mahmoud Affani, Ali Najjar and Mohammed Abu Kerch. These are a unique achievement in the Palestinian arts movement, produced under difficult conditions and suffering. In this case, the studio is the narrow cells of the Zionist prisons, with severely limited field of vision and body movement. The richness and details of the outside world, so very important in the creative process, are missing.

The effects of these conditions are clearly seen in the paintings. From the narrowness of their internal world, these artists have widened their painted world. The small paintings, made on handkerchieves smuggled to and from the prison, are full of symbols, motifs and details. They convey the impression of a crowded, busy life, which is missing in the sterile confines of the prison. The process of evoking and recording such lively details aims at striking a balance between the external and internal world.

What exists becomes enlivened in the imagination; what is absent is recalled. In the creative process, the prisoners' memory and imagination develop to replace the absent details of the external world. The motives in the paintings are thus the result of returning to the past, as well as envisioning the future based on the prisoners' ideological convictions. Input also comes from the scant reading material available, the prisoners' own comradeship and meetings, and visits from relatives who bring news of their people's struggle and suffering inside and outside occupied Palestine. The paintings also reflect the hardness and aggression experienced in the prison, as well as the happy moments stolen by the prisoners from the slow-moving time.

The paintings exhibit a marked merging between subjective and objective aspects of reality. In the case of long imprisonment, the prisoner is separated from his/her prior daily life. Subjective input is minimal due to the sterility of prison life, being derived instead from memory or visions of the future. At this point, what is personal merges with what is general and objective, and the aims of the struggle for which the prisoners have sacrificed so much occupy a prominent place in their works of art. Most of the paintings depict the gun or other motives showing the continuation of the revolution. Clear, strong symbols express the longing for freedom. The child is used to symbolize the future of the revolution. The woman is important as a symbol for the land, fertility and generosity. In these paintings the woman represents the missing part; the repetition of this symbol provides a balance. Yet the woman does not always appear strictly as a symbol, but also as mother, wife, lover, and fellow struggler. ●

