



DPFLP WOMEN

NOTES AROUND THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

This article was written by a woman comrade whose name was Nada El-Karmy, a member of the DPFLP militia forces. She was in her last year of college in Amman University, when she was killed last September fighting against the counter-revolutionary forces of King Hussein.

To begin with it is important to admit that the role of women in the developing countries (the Arab countries in particular) in the stage of national liberation is still vague and undefined, and in most cases is governed by traditional and worn-out views or by vague expressions of good will toward women.

It is most often the case that progressive Arabs who deal with the question of women, deal with it in a very superficial manner based on an initial recognition of the fact that women constitute one-half of the Arab society and have the right to work and enjoy the same rights and duties as men, but this basic recognition is met with a series of obstacles when it is time to be transformed into reality. This is because of the shaky ideological ground on which progressive Arabs stand; thus we see this good intention turn into mere slogans and propaganda expressing good wishes toward the future of the Arab women, this without giving her a real chance and opportunity to transform this will into concrete experiences.

The "role of women" is a big and amusing topic for most of the progressive Arabs. They skillfully and elaborately deal with it, but when the Arab women come to "appreciate" their sympathy and deal with the matter seriously by starting to work, our Arab intellectuals fall back saying, "but of course the question of women's liberation, objectively cannot be separated from the surrounding objective conditions and the liberation of women is also tied to the liberation of men."

The developing Arab societies have remained, even with the appearance of the nationalist forces and organizations, subject to a distortion, which has imposed upon the revolutionary work that it be linked to the past laws, culture and traditions of the feudal society, a society in which women had no role at all in any of its programs, culture or life.

But the Arab liberation forces, under the leadership of the petit-bourgeoisie and governed by their class nature and culture, who recognize the right of women to vote and work have failed and been unable to transform this recognition into a reality or take it beyond the state of mere rhetoric. This transformation would have come through the substitution of a new cultural-educational program and the creation of an atmosphere conducive to women's rights. In addition, there has not been an objective transformation of the society economically, socially, or politically in order to put into practice these theoretical decisions concerning women's rights, a move necessary to pull women out of their state of total unproductivity.

This problem is also related to the leadership of the Arab national liberation movement for because of its petit-bourgeois class nature it has failed to bear the task of carrying out other important tasks, tasks which the question of women's liberation is directly tied with and these are the economic development, the development of heavy industry and intensive agriculture, the founding of strong democratic organizations for the people, worker's unions, people's armies, the introduction of new scientific and liberation educations, the establishing revolutionary relations with the international liberation forces and establishing a revolutionary boycott of the world imperialist and reactionary camp.

It is futile to think of a total liberation of women outside of the framework of national liberation and the total liberation of the masses. The petit-bourgeois regimes have introduced a few samples of women, as a sufficient example of their progressiveness and as an expression of their progressive will, but the existence of a woman minister in the government does not mean the liberation of women in the society.

The view of the progressive Arabs towards women has been particularized by two phenomena. The first, an initial recognition of women's rights based on their total equality with men. The second, an undeclared position constituting a reactionary position on all levels toward women, it insists, consciously or unconsciously, on keeping women under the tutelage of men by persisting in the view that women are, practically, unable to carry out new tasks.

Because of that contradiction we found that the masses' organizations, led by the petit-bourgeoisie, were unable to mobilize a broad sector of women within their national liberation struggle, though women are directly concerned by the national liberation struggle.

The masses' organizations revolutionary level, on any stand, is not only their initial declarations but is, to a further extent, their ability to actualize that revolutionary stand. So a "revolutionary political stand" will not be one unless it is tied, dialectically, with its social, economic, and revolutionary effects, if it is not then it is a mere hypocrisy, especially in this period of many leftist hypocritical stands.

At this period of our society, truly genuine revolutionary forces are being formed and are gaining strength through their revolutionary practice and they are requested to discuss the question of women's liberation seriously because it is not difficult to see by examining the practice of the resistance and armed struggle that the question of

women is understood within a petit-bourgeois context. Women's liberation and the women's struggle, in our society, is taking a superficial and individualist role, based on the glorification of the individual woman's heroic acts, which gives the false impression that a level of social liberation has been reached ("though she is a woman, she is a heroine and has participated in hijacking an airplane and she is beautiful, sheik and revolutionary, too"). The liberation of the Palestinian woman through armed struggle dictates a series of basic political directives, if we want a genuine and total liberation of women and if we want a mobilization of the huge reserve of women for the national struggle. We find, for example, because women have a special ability for collecting funds, that collecting funds is a woman's task. The incorrect view is countered by the examples of the role of women carrying the task of their own liberation through the process of national liberation struggles in countries like China, Vietnam, Russia and Cuba where the task of liberation is carried on side by side, in one struggle, with men, and there exists no "devil" between them except the "devil" of imperialism.

In our developing society, the liberation of women is always met with opposition, and every opposition has its new excuses and justifications, so we find with the historical defeat of the old excuse "that the place of women is in the home so they can raise good and healthy children," new lesser excuses, but they rise only to fall in the face of the example of today's Vietnamese women.

The bourgeoisie have molded the liberation of women into a particular feminine form "in order to save her beauty and femininity" and "liberate" her from the house and "harem" right into the offices of big companies, where she becomes a secretary or typist because she is different from man, physically and psychologically, and she must remain "feminine" for "they" don't want a "masculine" woman.

But science tells us otherwise, and day after day women are proving they can do all the things than men can. Who "likes it hot" and who is worried about a "masculine" woman, and who is worried about the softness of her skin, and who prefers a woman as a beautiful plaything? We can see that women in China and Cuba remain women, but they are no longer playthings and their human value lies in their productivity. Their true value lies in the fact they have been freed from slavery and from waiting all their lives for their "prince" to come along. Women in China and Cuba are not soft and lazy for they are not victims of bourgeois exploitation or private property, as is the case with our contemporary Arab women.

The true liberation of women in the revolutionary societies is not a false liberation in the capitalist society, bourgeois liberation is the total exploitation of an "unproclaimed prostitution." Bourgeois liberation is a struggle and battle over needs and desires, protected by a capitalist consumer society. It is a liberation which provides women with, but a huge propaganda machine aiming at directing her dreams and aspirations toward selecting the "right" future husband, home and modern life. Bourgeois liberation is but a new kind of slavery for women; love, marriage and relationships based on class and class interests, compromises and polite commercial deals in the name of love and marriage.

What about the liberation of women in our educational institutions, particularly in the university (schools and private institutions require a separate study). We can say that the relations among the students (between male and female) reflect a clear picture of the Jordanian society, especially the male-female aspect of it, because these relations reflect traditional values of the prevailing culture.

Some would assume that these relations would be better because of the academic atmosphere, but an objective reality exists and that is that sorry feudal relations exist between men and women, covered up with a superficial daily interaction which is imposed by the daily work among students.

It is painful to ascertain the truth about the hostility, proclaimed and unproclaimed, which exists. It is a primitive hostility and metaphysically based on historic myth concerning relations between the two sexes and reinforced by the society's culture and prevailing ideology.

This hostile relationship is based on a double-edged fear of the other sex. Our people have been educated by their parents not to trust women because they are unstable, have little brains and are of an inferior level, they have been told that men are more capable than women and women are taught that men are selfish.

There is also the feeling of fear of open sexual relationships and the "dangerous consequences," which are confirmed by the reactionary culture (even on university levels) with its historical extension of backwardness and colonialist slavery.

In this manner, we are able to see that any relations which exist among the university students have been surrounded and clouded with cultural and social fear, based on bitter experience resulting from the distortion and misunderstanding of relations between the sexes, rather than being based on an objective and scientific understanding of them.

What strengthens these incorrect relations is the absence of university organizations of a nature which would establish a scientific and objective understanding of such matters, in addition what is missing is student unions, organizations or political parties, all of which are needed for playing a role in breaking down the hostility between the sexes.

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The relations between university men and women have been dictated by and through the dominating values and culture of its dominating forces. That is because of the absence of vanguard forces who would consider it their task to form relations based on common struggle among the students at this stage.

What about the question of women's liberation in the Jordanian university? It has been observed that the female students in their understanding of the question of women's liberation have not surpassed, objective or practically, their bourgeois concept of liberation. A concept of subjective or superficial liberation, based on superficial rejection of their parental or social tutelage, this thus leads to submission to bourgeois values. The vague rebellion without theoretical objectives, and in the absence of any revolutionary understanding, bursts like a soap bubble with no lasting effect.

A political liberation based on the superficial participation of the students in patriotic work, with total submission to prevailing social conditions, is an attempt at liberation based on good will and enthusiasm for the national struggle without truly surpassing a "bourgeoisization" process.

The anticipated liberation of women lies in their emotional, political, cultural, and social liberation, through the national struggle and through the basic transformation of the masses' culture and the structure of class society.

The liberation of women is through their realization, and the realization of the society, of their human value as a "productive force." Work alone is the determinant factor of their value in the society, not their class, tribal, or family relation, not the prevailing culture and morals, and not their position as private property of men.

There exists different kinds of unequal relationships between university men and women, as shown by the establishment of warped relationships instead of direct relationships based on cooperation in the struggle. The duty of the masses' organizations is to initiate and create broader avenues for the Palestinian-Jordanian women to work in, plus confronting the reactionary legacy of the "mystic" relation between the two sexes whose negative effects appear at this time in an atmosphere filled with distortions and rumors concerning every relation between male and female.

It is necessary to eliminate all the illusions related to the "incapability" of women and it is necessary to develop the subjective conditions of women in order to push them to work with confidence. Furthermore, it is necessary to end the phenomena of "bourgeoisization" which now exists among the ranks of women and to eliminate their negative attitude and petit-bourgeois concepts of liberation which manifest themselves through individual adventurism and heroism. For the liberation of women cannot be achieved except through mass consciousness on the part of women to combat the concept of individual heroism and strengthen the concept of mass struggle.

We would really be deluded if we believed that our cultural liberation could determine the question as a whole. The question of women's liberation, and with it her gaining of human rights of equality with men is tied to the national struggle, and by consolidating the gains of our national and democratic struggle we solidify the role of women and create many opportunities for ourselves.

At this stage, it is the duty of revolutionaries to initiate mass action around this matter and spread revolutionary concepts toward the question of the liberation of women.