

# WOMEN AND JOURNALISM

Journalism has been during the last seventy years a popular profession among women in Arab countries as well as in the West. Some women journalists have been internationally known. One of them is the French Geneviève Tabouis, a distinguished foreign correspondent who flourished in the second quarter of this century. Another is the Mexican Maria-Eugenia Moreno, president of the World Association of Women Journalists and Writers since 1973. She has worked as a dedicated supporter of women's causes and president of the Social Work service of the Mexican Institute for Social Security. While in that office, she organized a successful campaign against drug addiction among young people.

In the Arab countries, feminine journalism flourished in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria during the early part of the 20th century. About 40 magazines founded and edited by women appeared between 1892 and 1950. These magazines supported women's claims for education and freedom from oppressive tradition.(1) The number of women's magazines in these countries has presently dwindled to less than ten. Yet the number of women journalists who contribute to various papers and magazines has greatly increased. In Lebanon, they form over 22 per cent of the whole body of journalists in this country. Many of them are highly cultured and have distinguished themselves as poets or novelists as well as journalists.

Yet the vast majority of them occupy the positions of reporters, art critics, reviewers, correspondents, fashion

critics. We rarely come across a woman editor or columnist especially in the political field. One reason is that they have been unable to secure supporters among the majority of men who stubbornly believe that women should keep away from politics. Another reason is that women themselves, as a group or as individuals, have not displayed sufficient efforts by way of promotion. At the age when they have to plan their future, highly educated young girls who take journalism or any other work as a career, cannot make sure that their career will not be interrupted by marriage.

Yet the idea that marriage and motherhood should not interfere with a woman's career seems to be gaining ground. According to Miss Denise Ammoun, an eminent journalist who occupies the position of editing secretary at the "Orient-Le Jour" daily paper, Beirut, women have proved to be so efficient in the journalistic field that it will not be long before they gain admission into the upper echelons. Her claims as journalist are the same as those of men, namely, defining the criteria of admission to the journalist's syndicate, and the installation of social security which would encourage women to stick to their work and overcome any inconveniences that might hamper it. (2)

(1) Anis Khuri Makdissi, *Literary trends in the Arab World*, part II, (in Arabic), Beirut, Lebanon, 1952, p.61-64.

(2) *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 23-5-1978.

## Asian Women and Political Repression

A poem by Sugiarti Siswadi(1)

*Freedom has changed the face of the world  
It rules the mind, the heart and the person  
It dispells the mist hanging over the mountains, the valleys,  
the shores, the fields, the factories and the cities, and the  
heads of us, women.*

*Now we are no longer  
just giving birth to worker soldiers.  
We too are worker soldiers.  
No longer just wives of people's heroes  
We too are people's heroes,  
And when the fortresses of obsolete time are smashed  
And worker's power stands proudly in our land  
We shall no longer only tend the graves  
read the prayers and weep for the dead,  
We shall be part of the foremost ranks.*

(1) An Indonesian poet. This poem was published in *Quest*, a feminist quarterly, (Washington D.C.), vol IV, no.2 Winter 1978.