

## Algerian Women in Press and TV\*

This article on the "Image of Woman in the Press and Television" begins by quoting two passages of the Algerian National Charter:

"The press, the radio, the television (...) will have to portray an attractive culture susceptible of satisfying the ideological and esthetic needs of the citizen, as well as raising his (her) intellectual level" (p. 69).

"Actions that will aim first of all to transform the mental and negative juridical environment, should intervene towards the betterment of woman's fate." (p, 72).

### The Image of Woman in the Press

The magazines that are most read in Algeria, says Abdelkader Hammouche, are the French ones. These magazines convey an "absurd" image of women that does not correspond to the reality the majority of women live in. It only corresponds to the reality of women belonging to the privileged classes who are not at all representatives of the feminine condition in Algeria.

These women's magazines, the author adds, do not propose "reality" but "sentimental dreams" and "evasion". They portray woman as a seductress wholly concerned by love, submissive to man, and totally a political.

Moreover, these "foreign" revues do not only aim at making women dream and at distancing them from the "true" problems they confront, but they mainly "clamour" occidental clothes and products. This process is very successful in Algeria, he comments, because many of "our" women make regular trips abroad to renew their wardrobes in order to remain "eternally young and pretty".

Thus the feminine foreign press, he declares, is a "social product" carrying enormous economic interests, because it addresses itself to people to whom it denies simultaneously a "real and autonomous economic and social insertion."

The reasons why the foreign press has a considerable audience in Algeria says Hammouche, is because there is no local feminine press, except for the "El-Djazairia" revue. It is also because this foreign press proposes to woman a way of life that responds to her dreams. The culturally alienated woman, says he, easily and comfortably identifies herself with the "seductress image" whose life is

only concerned with beauty questions on one hand and with the universe of love and passion on the other.

### The Image of Woman in Television

According to the author, the noticeable regression of book-reading, the loss of interest in movie houses and the general climate of insecurity have contributed to make television the most popular past-time in the country.

The question to be asked then, is whether the films shown on television respond rigorously to the imperatives of the Social Revolution as specified by the National Charter.

If we observe Algerian films, says Hammouche, we realize that they generally confine women either to the role of passive wives or to young girls waiting to be married. "It is not the woman as object that is portrayed in the foreign press but the woman as slave, the woman as childbearer".

In addition to local films, which are quite rare, there are the Egyptian serials and the foreign films. Most serials end with marriage. The life of women they portray is a never ending episode of rivalry and struggle to catch a man.

These television serials, says the author, are destined to women at home, making them accept their fate and sharpen their feelings, at the same time as making them dream of a glamorous life.

Exactly like the foreign revues, these films are conducive to amorous evasion. Many women identify themselves with the heroines. The true problems of women such as: professional activity, in political life, etc. are never mentioned.

Moreover, in those films the man does not confront the woman, he is rather her subject says Hammouche. The struggle of the sexes does not exist. The films portray a non-conflictual society in which the woman evolves in a "bourgeois"

\* This is a translated and abridged version of an article written in French by Abdelkader Hammouche a jurist contributing to the Algerian Women's magazine, "Al-Djazairia."

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environment that tends to favor her role as mother-wife-childbearer.

The danger of these Egyptian serials, he concludes, is not only a moral one, but these serials also affect the mind, shaping it with a "bourgeois mould" that further renders inaccessible the equality between men and women.

### Conclusion

One thing is certain says the author: "The written press as well as television in Algeria, do not correspond to the principles stated by the National Charter". The contradiction between the principles and the reality is blatant. On the political level, the Charter states clearly the vital necessity to "act" on the mentality of people in order to reflect the socialist principles that guide the country. Unfortunately, this is not what is happening on the practical level.

On the contrary, the Algerian television prepares people's mentality by deforming it. It does not address its programs to the rural or

working class woman but to the middle-class one, who is "fulfilled" by being submissive and idle. It addresses itself to the apolitical woman and not to the one who would like to participate fully in the political life of her country. In sum, the image of woman in television is a great "mystification".

As for the written press it also neglects women's causes, which explains the extreme slowness in which mentalities are changing towards an "authentic liberation of women".

What should be done, concludes Hammouche, is to encourage the creation of local women's magazines and "control" their content so they will not be swayed into "cultural alienation". Moreover, film producers should use local talents to write scripts and encourage all literary potentialities.

These are in brief some imperatives that should be taken to give a new dimension to Algerian culture in order to "remove" women from the cultural alienation they are subjected to since independence.