

Iran through Iranian eyes

by S.J. Hayes

There has been an influx of Iranian students coming to universities in Canada this past year. They are now prohibited from entering the United States because of the taking of the 52 American hostages, so that avenue of study is closed. The reason they leave Iran is simple. There are not enough universities to facilitate all of the students who apply. When they finish high school, they must write an entrance exam to go to university. Only the highest marks obtain a place, while the rest are turned away. Last year, for example, only 27,000 were accepted, while over half a million applied. The only alternative left to these students is to go to another country, usually England or Canada.

In order to better understand their plight, the *Gazette* spoke to some Iranian students at Dalhousie. Only one student would allow his name to be published, while another

for the people of Iran."

The Ayatollah Khomeini is this student's leader. He believes in Khomeini's philosophy which he summed up as, "No matter what you are, or how much money you have, you are a human being—speak up." When he returns to Iran, he will work for his people, he said, to help them and, if necessary, he will die for his country.

The next two students interviewed are in their first year at Dalhousie, but have been in Canada, in Toronto, since January. They spent approximately six months studying English in Toronto before coming to Halifax. They recounted the trouble they had coming from Iran to Toronto. "The Canadian embassy in Iran made us pay fees to a language school in Toronto before leaving Iran. We didn't have a choice of schools and ended up paying \$2,000 to attend an English language school for six months." It took them around seven months to

slave anymore."

"There is a lot of propaganda about Iran that isn't true. We don't believe what is said on television, on ABC, NBC, CBC, and the rest. Nor do we believe what is written in magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*." They also said, "If they (the networks and magazines) told the truth about Iran, people in America would go against their governments."

The last student to be interviewed was Rafi Takand, the only one allowing his name to be published. This is his first year at Dalhousie, but he has been in Canada since September 1978, studying in Toronto. He had no trouble in leaving Iran as the previous students did, but he did have to pass an English exam before leaving. Rafi said, "If you wanted to leave Iran you had to either write an exam or spend two years in the Iranian army. I studied English in high school for about six years so I didn't have any real problems."



wished to remain anonymous. Two others wouldn't allow their names to be published, because they didn't believe their statements would be truthfully recorded, an example of their distrust of the western media.

All of the Iranian students had a nationalistic fervour for their country, but there were points of controversy when it came to the politics and government of Iran.

"I came from Iran six years ago, but have been back to my country since then," said the first student interviewed. "I chose Canada because I have friends here." He plans to return to Iran when he finishes his studies at Dalhousie.

He spoke of the revolution: "It took three times before it succeeded. Under the Shah, disease and poverty abounded, while he lived in luxury. Iran still has to be cleaned up from drugs, alcohol, and prostitution. Until we do that," he said, "we can't be free. The country needs a new system

get a visa.

Before leaving Iran, they had to pass an English exam and prove that their fathers would be able to support them while in Canada. They are still having trouble with the immigration officials here and are frustrated in their attempts to get in touch with Iran where communications with the western world are virtually shut down.

On the situation in Iran, they said, "We don't really think much about the Ayatollah, but more about the people of Iran. He is an honest man who really led the revolution. But he is more of a religious leader." They both hoped the situation would be rectified soon and that everything would end.

They continued, "The present system has to be changed and the people no longer want to be dominated by the superpowers. They want their own culture and nation. They don't want to be in the position of master and

Rafi hasn't been home since 1978, but he has kept in touch. He left about the time the revolution began. "At the beginning," he said, "I supported the Ayatollah Khomeini because he is an honest man. But the clergy around Khomeini won't let him do the best for the people of Iran." Rafi doesn't believe in the revolution anymore. "I disagree with the hostage taking. It was done by a bunch of stupid students who involved the people of Iran."

He spoke of the Shah as having a good relationship with the United States, but the relationship had nothing to do with the Iranian people. He said, "The people want more in their lives. Right now only 30% of Iranian people are educated, and the government does what it wants."

All of the students did agree that Canada was a beautiful country, though they said the costs of attending university are too high.

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