

REACTIONS TO RIOT ARE REGISTERED

Serious and significant allegations regarding the conduct of officials of St. Mary's university have been made during the past week, stemming from S.M.U. cancellation of the ill-fated "Palestine Today" presentation. The lecture subsequently moved to Dalhousie and led to the Library riot of 13 September.

One source was suspicious of threats allegedly received by Dr. J. G. Jabbara, S.M.U. Academic Vice President and administrator for International Education Center (I.E.C.), used as justification for the lecture's cancellation there. The source claimed "Jabbara is a member of their (Lebanese Maronite) organization." This claim was substantiated by Ken Persau, Chair of the Coalition of Visible Minorities of Nova Scotia, and one of the presentation's co-ordinators.

The source alleged jabbara was directly ordered by his organization to stop the Canada-Palestine Association (C.P.A.) from showing its film on S.M.U. campus, and fabricated the story of threats to cover his action. The Halifax Police Department received no report of threats from S.M.U. until after the cancellation was ordered. Persan

said "It's not the first time there's

been trouble with the I.E.C. trying to stifle the views of certain groups."

All post-secondary institutes are bound to serve as forums for legally recognized organizations, as a condition of receiving government funding. On this basis, the C.P.A. is considering legal action against S.M.U., but would probably be satisfied with a re-scheduling of the presentation and a reprimand of Dr. Jabbara for his decision.

Dr. Jabbara is on extended leave of absence and has been unavailable for comment.

Persau also directed criticism at S.M.U. President Kenneth Ozmon for his defense of Jabbara's action. Not only did the cancellation constitute a violation of freedom of speech, but Persau believes it may have fueled the fire by boosting the morale of the Maronite protestors. In his words, "Did they feel they had won a victory, and did this help precipitate the violence?"

Persau expects that Ozmon will come under increasing pressure from both inside and outside his institution to take positive steps to prevent a re-occurrence of such an event.

President Ozmon could not be reached for comment on this issue

In the meantime, the status of the Lebanese community organizations is in some doubt, pending the actions of the Multi-Cultural Association of Nova Scotia (M.C.A.N.S.), although Persau freely acknowledges that "the Lebanese people as a whole are very outraged at the event."

The source concurred, offering the opinion that the rioters represented only a radical faction of the Lebanese community. "Because they support the (Lebanese) government, they think they can use bully tactics," he claimed. His main concern is that, having seen it work once, other groups may use "fascist methods" to block freedom of speech on other issues. If for no other reason than this, he believes the C.P.A. will exert every effort to finally make their presentation.

Persau said in conclusion that in order to back up its stand, the M.C.A.N.S. will be briefing various influential concerns on the situation. He expects new developments in this story in the coming days.

The Lebanese Christian community is not releasing any statements regarding the riot at this time.

LEBANON-- A BRIEF BACKGROUND

by David Olie

It is generally assumed that Israel is the focus of the turmoil in the Middle East. The difficulties of that region are hugely complex, however, with a separate conflict for each dead soldier, each displaced refugee, and certainly each government or pseudo-government. A straight Arab/Israeli analysis ignores some of the most bitter issues involved.

Such is the situation in Lebanon. The Lebanese civil war has been going on nearly without break since 1975 and is, essentially, a battle between Christian and Moslem, because political and economic power is set up along religious lines.

Lebanon became independent from France in 1943. It is an Arab state in that nearly all its inhabitants speak Arabic; yet it is deeply divided, because about one million of its 2.5 million people are Christian, while the rest are mainly Suni Moslem. The Christians are of the Maronite sect, affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church since the Crusades.

Since independence, the Maronites have played the leading role in Lebanese affairs, despite their minority status. This has been due in part to the strength of the Phalange, their paramilitary political party-cum-armed force. The movement was

founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel, father of the current president Amin and the late assassinated president Bashir.

The Phalange has been able to keep the Maronites in the driver's seat by maintaining a unique constitutional system. Power is divided on religious lines. The President must be a Maronite, the Prime Minister must be a Sunni, and the Speaker of the Chamber a Shiite Moslem. The bulk of power is, however, concentrated in the President's hands. The 99 seats in Parliament are apportioned on a 6:5 ratio, with Maronites getting the larger share. The civil wars since 1958 have essentially been an effort by the Moslems to take a more equal share of power, politically and economically.

The constitutional arrangement has been greatly complicated since 1948, the year that saw the proclamation of the state of Israel and the intensification of fighting which accompanied that move. Arab inhabitants of the area fled *en mass*, and Lebanon, as a member of the Arab League, took in its share of them. By 1975, these refugees numbered perhaps as many as 800,000. Such a number of Moslems has put the Christian dominance of the country on even shakier ground, since Maronites now account for only about 30% of the total population.

The Phalange feel that the Palestinians have overstayed their welcome, and have formed what

amounts to a separate state within Lebanon, with Syria backing. The PLO has operated against Israel from Lebanon, leading to Israeli invasions in 1979 and 1982. The PLO is also a leftist group, running counter to the conservatism of the Phalange. All this has led to brutal fighting between the two groups' militias, culminating in the Christian-perpetrated massacres at Sabra and Shatila.

What then of the Lebanese community in Halifax? For the most part, here and elsewhere, Lebanese emigres are Christian. Yet, in the words of one observer, "the Lebanese community is badly split." The old guard of the Phalange has always maintained that they could hold a grip on all of Lebanon. But, as the civil war drags on, increasing numbers of Maronites believe the only solution is a partition of the country and the formation of a Christian state. This state would be sponsored by Israel and exclude all Moslems, by force if necessary. It was the advocates of the radical solution who were present at the riot of the 13th. One fact is clear: the Halifax incident is yet another thread in the tangled web of the Middle East.

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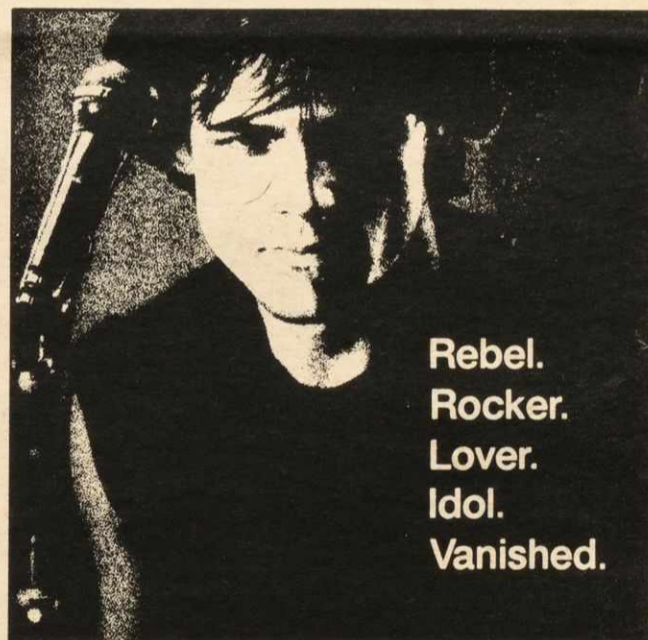
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