

No wish to fight

To the Editor:

During the past two weeks members of the Lebanese Community in the Halifax-Dartmouth area have become increasingly concerned about the general public's view of what is happening in our native country.

Part of this concern stems from a situation that occurred on Sept. 13, 1983, at Dal. KLM where a member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization was scheduled to speak. A scuffle occurred and the speaking engagement did not take place.

We had wanted to take that opportunity to ensure that the Lebanese side of the story was explained to those present.

The dreadful fighting which is now underway in Lebanon has touched almost every member of the

10,000 people who now call Nova Scotia and Canada their home. It is an extremely emotional issue because many of us still have families in Lebanon and there is much anguish as one waits to hear on the condition of those who live near the fighting.

Lebanon became an independent democratic state some 40 years ago when France gave up its colonial ties. Our birth place is the cradle of many neighboring Arab Countries which rule without democratic governments. It is true we have problems within our country but they are problems which the people of Lebanon can solve themselves without interference from foreign countries ... countries such as Syria who claims there is no Lebanon, and groups (terrorists) like the P.L.O. The government of Lebanon was elected by Christians and Moslems alike. Our army is 40% Moslem. The President, Mr. Amin Gemayel, was elected by almost 80% of the 99 members of Parliament. These members were themselves elected by the Moslem and Christian population.

We do not wish to fight ... negotiation is the answer. But negotiations are a difficult and long process with people like the Syrians who do not even recognize the existence of Lebanon as a democratic and independent state.

I realize it is difficult for people who have never experienced or been touched by situations such as that in Lebanon to completely understand. To allow the Syrians and the P.L.O. to take over our country can mean only *annihilation* of our people and the democratic state we cherish so much.

All we ask is that people wishing to understand more about the happening in Lebanon and any comments please write us.

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Latin American Poetry within the Anti-fascist movement

by Elias Letelier-Ruz

Art is the keystone of any democratic system. It is through art that philosophical theories and doctrines are studied, formulated or destroyed. This characteristic of homo sapiens is the link that makes man a free being resisting any form of slavery. And this is why Latin-American Fascist dictators have banned art, by controlling all lines of communication, clipping the wings of the media, and, to avoid conflict, attempting to silence the poets first with rewards and then with threats.

The sound of cannons, the stutter of machine guns, the sight of caravans of trucks passing the window loaded with corpses of dead workers make the poet a transgressor, a criminal who knows too much.

*"He sleeps with one eye open
He sleeps and doesn't want to
be involved
He sleeps and fears an unjust
murder."*

At this stage the poet sets himself the goal of finding a path which may one day lead to the light. In facing the problem, the poet only manages to document past events without suggesting any way that could lead to a solution. His disorientation is complete, even to the extent that he is incapable of invoking God as such an action implies a path leading to the light.

The importance of poetry therefore lies in its value as an inventory; an accurate tally of destruction becomes a photograph of reality, a heroic tale, an epic poem, both inconclusive and visually badly styled.

*"Opening one eye is just
enough for the whole night to
flourish."*

After a long evolutionary process, the poet suggests a way that incites the rearguard to action. The artist has discovered the way or, at least, a way. He devotes himself to using up all sources of information in order to reach perfection and wisdom, and to disseminate his knowledge. In this way he attempts to lead the people who find themselves cut off from the rest of the national reality, the people who from the time of the military coup have been living from day-to-day in an

almost vegetable-like state.

The poet's role is that of mediator between the forces of resistance and the people. He must carry the message from clandestine organizations, showing the way in which young men and women must stand up in the front line of the struggle against the dictatorship. He must pass on the guideline of the anti-fascist committees since the poet is an example of the struggle.

The second stage, of the struggle, from a start as philosophic epistemology becomes an obsession turning into psychological epistemology, where not only the poet points out possible solutions, but ordinary individuals begin to brandish about theories suggesting different means of attaining democracy.

OCCUPIED CITY excerpt
You know they are coming—

*Screams
convulse the fragile calm of
the houses
Sleepers tremble in sleep
Birds waver in flight
while young love remains
absorbed
gazing at ceilings
The children's eyes dilate,
take root
and they walk like the blind
or appear as though cripples*

When the houses burn

*flames reveal uniforms
the colour of excrement
and these places continue
empty forever*

It's morning

*what's happened?
The locals like sleep-walkers
believing, and yet not
believing—
dreaming that they must have
been dreaming.*

OMAR LARA

The second stage becomes the anarchist period. It is the period of involvement in which everyone believes they have the formula for liberation. With the resistance movement, internal conflicts emerge seeming to sap its strength, but which in reality are a normal process which helps to strengthen the movement.

No movement which attempts to fight and overthrow a dictatorship can act as a dictator in its own heart. The movement has to be democratic on the inside, and on the outside must present a position free of all contradiction. This maxim is understood and shared throughout all the different groups which emerge in the development of social freedom.

Poetry is similar in that it becomes a double-edged sword: the people's thoughts are expressed through a lyrical speaker, and the poetry must be printed in clandestine workshops and circulated as a manifesto.

While doing this, the poet has to keep himself above criticism of the movement. It must be clearly understood that the poet is not a critic, however, since to be a critic means to judge, and a judge usually favours power. Judges, not poets, determine the indictment of another human being from the shadows.

A critic is usually the dialectic aim of established power; he is the judge, the inquisitor, the person who interprets the meaning and the letter of the law. The poet has nothing to do with these actions. He is the right arm of the people, a loudspeaker for their misery, a communication link who, through the use of poetical form, turns readers into minstrels. Poetry puts forward suggestions that come from the people; poetry is not criticism, and cannot be so long as criticism is destructive to the early development of the antifascist liberation movement.

Come

*"Dense sky—Come
Like the southern sea
Come..."*

*Rise in the air Revolutionary
Come and fall,
caught in my embrace—
Free, on my torn chest
Come..."*

Article translated by E.V. Aderkas.
"Come" translated from Spanish
by Roger Prentice and John M.
Kirk.

A Desperate Song

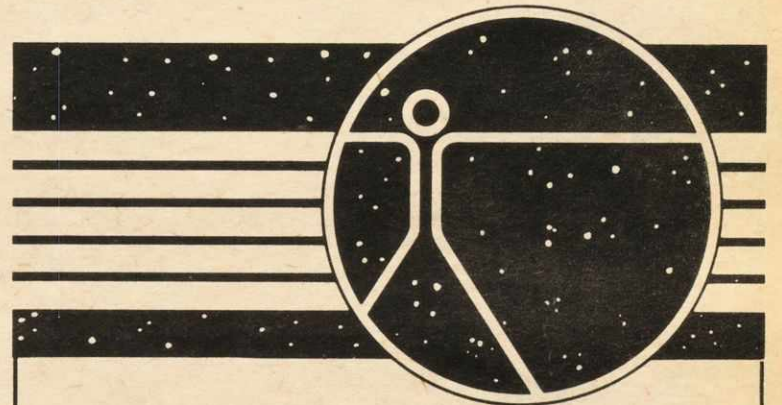
Down the walls, coiled
like stunned spiders,
drip down on the doorframe,
children's brains --

*While my exiled voice, trembling,
is ripped to shreds
like a violet flag;
While poets, stretched out beneath the sun,
changing every ray,
carve outdated theories.*

Meanwhile,
children looking like a pendulum,
run through with scimitars
look at me from their anthill.

Elias Letelier-Ruz

Translation from Spanish: Dr. John M. Kirk,
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