

Ohannes Pilikian
Human Morphology Dept.

الجامعة اللبنانية في بيروت

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
BEIRUT, LEBANON



THE ZORYAN INSTITUTE

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87 Cedar Lane

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THE ZORYAN INSTITUTE

الجامعة الأمريكية في بيروت

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
BEIRUT, LEBANESE REPUBLIC

June 22, 1976

CABLE ADDRESS: AMUNOB, BEIRUT

Dear Friends:

Dr. and Mrs. Kuri,

The carnage in Lebanon still continues inspite of the fact that the first contingent of joint Arab peace-making force arrived here yesterday. Day in and day out we have hoped this useless factional fighting will come to an end, and here after 15 months of destruction, killing and looting it seems the evil spirits continue demanding more sacrifices. There have been so many forces and factors involved in this terrible fighting that it became almost impossible for our "wise" leaders to find a way out of this hell and save Lebanon from complete destruction and disintegration. Here it is appropriate to quote the few lines of a poem by W.B. Yeats.

"Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,

and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

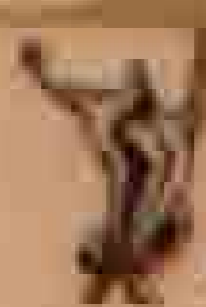
Are full of passionate intensity."

As I am writing this letter I hear the explosions and the thunder of heavy artillery from different parts of the city. Rockets of different forms and varieties have also been brought in to supplement the mortars and artillery. However, we continue to hope for better days for our troubled Lebanon. Out of the dark night that covers us there will be a dawn and brighter days will follow. We thank God for the everlasting hope He put in our heart.

We are sure you all have been thinking and worrying about us during these past months. Some managed to write us and we are glad receiving your letters (though delayed for many months), some others wrote probably and the letters were lost, as mail service stopped to exist long ago. In the past we mailed a few letters from Damascus, Syria, or with friends leaving the country to John and our immediate relatives. To-day Beirut Airport and the route to Damascus is closed and impossible to send letters any more out. In spite of this fact I decided to write this letter and will try to mail it as soon as there is a chance to do so.

This letter will be a proof that God saved us to this day and we are alive and unharmed. We thank God for His mercy and protection. Our quarter in Verdun street was one of the safe regions. We are quite far from the fighting zones. Some rockets fell in the neighbourhood and some of the super-markets near our were plundered of course and we were obliged to venture further for our shopping. And as we walked down the streets to Hamra for shopping we heard almost always interrupted shootings and the rek-rek of machine-guns.

It has become impossible visiting friends in the different parts of the city. The only way to communicate is the telephone. And very often the telephone is mute and electric current is cut. We hear so many stories from friends of their experiences, some very tragic and shocking, and some about daring acts and great sacrifices to reach and give help to isolated and helpless families. After heavy fighting with mortars and rockets one night around the fashionable grand hotels near the seashore, as usual I went to Hamra for shopping and near Royal Garden Hotel I saw three different houses hit by rockets during the night and the street was full with broken glasses. The next day we had a telephone call and were told that some rockets fell also near the Public Garden and hit a friend's house. Three



members of the family got minor wounds and Mrs. Shammassian when she saw husband and two sons wounded all suddenly fainted and she never awoke. She had a heart attack it seems and passed away peacefully. Emily tells me that Mrs. Shammassian was a great help as secretary of our Church Ladies Association. A.U.B. buildings also received some rockets. We had a few students wounded. I visited them several times at the A.U.B. Hospitals. They were operated and recovered from wounds received. This section of Beirut was not affected until the last few months.

Our experience during these months was of a different nature. After spending the summer months up on the mountains in Anjar, Emily came down about the end of October to water the plants and put the house in shape to move down. I was going to follow her soon after finishing some work to be done in the vineyard and in the house in Anjar. But the ceasefire did not hold very long and a new wave of fighting spread making all the main roads entering Beirut very unsafe again. For two months isolated in Anjar I was taken care of by relatives, and Emily in Beirut by our good neighbours. We talked on the telephone regularly every Wednesday and Sunday. About the end of December Emily called again and told me that arrangement is made with our neighbour to bring me to Beirut if I come to Chtaura, 10 minutes drive from Anjar. Our next door neighbours, Rayes family are Druze and come from Aley, a fashionable summer resort on the hill 20 minutes drive from Beirut. Mrs. Rayes told Emily that her brother Ziad, a technical adviser to a canning factory in Chtaura makes the trip in his own car everyday from Aley to Chtaura and back home, and if I meet him in Chtaura he will bring me to Aley, and from here Mrs. Rayes' son Majid will drive me home by tortuous secondary routes which are supposed to be safe, because the region is inhabited and controlled by Druzes. Arriving in Aley I was told the road down the hill is safe, but the seashore road near the Airport will be risky during late afternoon hours. So I was obliged to stay overnight with Ziad's family. We all had a very pleasant night together. The following morning Majid brought me home safely. This was my odyssey...!!! when fighting was raging in Beirut and impossible to enter the city. Many friends wondered how I dared make the trip home from Anjar. It is months now no telephone communications with Anjar and the route is closed to Anjar and Damascus.

In a way I was glad that Emily came down in good time, because she received several oversea telephone calls from our folks, all worrying about us and the situation in Lebanon. John called several times and asked us to leave and join them in Chicago. My brother did the same from Los Angeles, also Emily's brother from Los Angeles. Then Emily's mother from Athens and relatives from Montreal all asking us to leave and join them. Emily and I had no intention to run away and leave our relatives and friends behind us during this hopeless times. We thought our staying here amongst relatives, neighbours, and old friends is a moral duty. We made telephone calls, visited and helped some friends in our small ways, friends some old, some sick, and some in despair. Thank God we are alive and we still can be of help in our own little ways. My isolation in Anjar also turned to be good, from here I went twice to Damascus to mail letters to John, my brother, mother-in-law in Greece and other relatives abroad. In Beirut there was no mail service. On the 24th of April after weeks of hesitation Emily and I went to Greece for one month to visit mother-in-law in her old age and prove her that we are alive and unharmed, and make her happy. It was quite a good change and relaxation after the nerve breaking experiences in Beirut. We had a very pleasant time. Mother would not let us to return to Beirut as long as the fighting continued. But we had to come back and take care of our house. We had heard that many furnished houses in Ras-Beirut the owners abroad were occupied at gun point by armed youngmen to bring in Palestinian refugees who fled from the camps under canon fire and rockets. So on May 23 we left Greece and returned home safely, and found everything in good shape. Our good neighbours took care of the plants in our absence. We are alive and waiting for better days. Our love and best wishes to you all.

Charles & Emily Zoryan