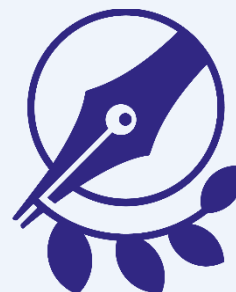


Writers for Peace Committee

Newsletter N°6



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March 2023

THE PILLARS OF OUR FUTURE WORK

With the help of the Advisory Council of the Writers' Committee for Peace we have defined the pillars around which we will structure the work of the Committee in the three-year period 2023-2025.

These pillars are: 1. Total condemnation of war; 2. Rejection of hate speech; 3. Migration; 3. Populism and nationalism; 5. Violence and democracy; and 6. Preservation of historical memory to build peace.

1. Total condemnation of war: 24 February marked the first anniversary of the unacceptable invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army, ordered by Vladimir Putin. This painful date in human history allows us to reiterate our commitment to world peace and the need to express our total condemnation of war, wherever it comes from. The concept of a "just war" is not acceptable, no matter how many rational or historical arguments are put forward. The aggressors must be condemned with absolute clarity so that they fully understand that the physical borders between countries can only be changed by negotiation and dialogue and not by force. Solutions are sought with patience and flexibility and not with military aggression. The role of our committee is to oppose all those who try to create and maintain conflicts by force.

2. Rejection of hate speech: It has been repeated on several occasions that peace is not only the absence of war. One of the greatest threats to world peace is precisely hate speech. Hate speech is generally understood as any form of expression that spreads, incites, promotes or justifies ethnic hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or any other kind of hatred based on intolerance. The concept of hate speech refers to criminal actions that are motivated by prejudice and hostility towards people on the basis of ethnicity or nationality, religious beliefs or ideologies, sexual orientation, gender identity or disabilities. We are grateful to the Finnish PEN Centre for developing a valuable handbook on hate speech.

3. Migration: Migration, which could perfectly be considered a right, is seen as a problem caused by wars between countries, social and economic difficulties affecting poor populations in developing countries (corruption, poverty, hunger, poor education systems, lack of good health systems, ecological disasters, etc.), or in interventions by developed powers seeking to protect their own interests in so-called "third world" countries. Writers can do a lot for migrants, defending their rights and ensuring that they are treated as people with the right to maintain their traditions, their language, their right to freedom of expression, in full respect of national and international rules governing the presence of migrants in host territories.

4. Populism and nationalism: After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the last century, nationalist movements emerged with great force in countries that had been dominated by communist ideology such as in the Balkan countries. And in the first two decades of the 20th century, we witnessed the development of populist movements in countries as varied as the United States, Brazil, El Salvador, India and the Philippines, which challenged the foundations of democracy. The same had been happening over the past four decades in African countries such as Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia. Many of today's populisms are instrumentalising the concept of "freedom of expression" to silence the voices of their own opponents and minorities. These anti-democratic processes must be condemned using a non-ideological perspective based on openness and tolerance.

5. Violence and democracy: Since the end of the Second World War, democracy has been seen in the West as the ideal political system for the realisation of human potential. Despite this, violent conflicts, corruption, political clientelism and the use of political power in favour of the dominant social structures continued to exist. Today we live in times of total discrediting of politics, of the lack of legitimate leadership, of disenchantment with a system that has failed to respond adequately to the needs of citizens. This lack of response to citizens' demands has been the breeding ground for violent demonstrations that have been met with state violence. It is necessary to create conditions for participatory democracy to express itself, and writers have a great role to play in this by promoting participation and dialogue.

6. Preserving historical memory to build peace: For many years after the Second World War, it was thought that fascism and Nazism had been completely eradicated. However, since then, wars between nations or within nations have continued and today we are witnessing the resurgence of these totalitarian ideologies that hide behind a democratic discourse. In this situation it is important to preserve the memory of what happened because this will help to make it more difficult for the grave human rights violations of the past to be repeated. There can be no forgiveness if there is forgetting. And here literature can be very influential as a factor that helps to preserve memory, as a bridge between nations, as a decisive factor that helps understanding between cultures.

On the basis of these six pillars, I invite you to become builders of peace throughout the world.

Germán Rojas

Chair of the Writers for Peace Committee



PEN International **Writers for Peace Committee**
Comité des écrivains et écrivaines pour la paix du PEN International
Comité de Escritores y Escritoras por la Paz de PEN internacional
Odbor **pisateljev in pisateljic za mir**

55TH INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF WRITERS IN BLEED

By the Slovene PEN and Writers for Peace Committee

We would like to take this opportunity to invite **all PEN members** to the Bled meeting 2023!

The 55th International meeting of writers in Bled will be held between the 16th and 18th of May 2023. Partial online participation will also be available.

Like every year, the focus will be on the PEN International Writers for Peace Committee Meeting, which will sit in three sessions:

- 16th of May – General Assembly of WfPC.
- 17th of May – round tables about the following topics: Imagine all the people... and Literature is (which) truth and justice?
- 18th of May – closing meeting of the WfPC to finalise materials for the PEN Annual Congress.
- 18th of May – afternoon Faces of Peace festival.

If you are interested in attending the 55th International Writers' Meeting at Bled, please send us the completed registration form by the 2nd of April 2023. The participation fee needs to be settled by the 9th of April 2023.

As usual, we will discuss and exchange views during round tables. The **Writers for Peace Committee** chose the topic **Imagine all the people...** When Lennon wrote this song, the third astronaut mission landed on the Moon, the Vietnam war spread to Laos, and the people of Bangladesh were faced with genocide. Like today, there were wars and repression in nearly every corner of the world. The topic of the 4th Bled meeting that year was Why do we write? Maybe the answer lies in the word "imagine". Just imagine a world from Lennon's song could be made possible. What kind of social order would foster peace? Liberal? Capitalist? Controlled? Free? Would it be the same social order in every country and continent? Imagine all the people and challenge the present world burning with wars with prospects for peace.

Slovene PEN would like to discuss **Literature is (which) truth and justice?** PEN international's Democracy of Imagination Manifesto ends with a thought: "Literature crosses all real and imagined frontiers and is always in the realm of the universal." Yet, this is the starting point. Literature is often considered a mirror of society and the individual. In today's world of digital technology and social media when every profile and account is telling its own story, it seems that the object of literature is evasive, virtual, deformed, and even fake. How do media news and their perpetual states of emergency which make the companies earn more money affect writing and creating? How can literature return to the sources and essence of its being? Is it in the roar of digital cries possible to create literature that fosters justice and peace in the world and in every individual? Each war starts with the Man. Justice is not a verse, it is neither an essay nor a novel. Justice is action.

If you **are a PEN member** and you are interested in attending the 55th International meeting of writers in Bled, please send us an email on penwritersforpeace@penslovenia-zdruzenje.si or slopen@guest.arnes.si. We will send you the invitation and the registration form.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION CRIMINALIZED IN NICARAGUA

By PEN Nicaragua

On February 15, 94 Nicaraguan citizens were stripped of their nationality by the regime of Daniel Ortega and his wife Rosario Murillo, in an illegal and unconstitutional act, in violation of international treaties signed by the State of Nicaragua. The penalty also includes the loss of their citizenship rights in perpetuity and the confiscation of their assets, including their Social Security pensions. The list of 94 includes 11 journalists and exiled media directors. On February 9, 222 others - all political prisoners and detainees - were released from prison, banished to the United States and stripped of their Nicaraguan nationality in an act of revenge.

Catholic Church bishop Rolando Alvarez resisted the banishment and was sentenced a day later in a speedy trial to 26 years and four months in prison and remains in a maximum security cell.

Among those released from prison were 12 people linked to the media, including two drivers of the newspaper La Prensa, whose "crime" was to have transported the reporters who covered the news of the expulsion of the nuns of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, on July 6, 2022.

All of them had been convicted without any evidence for alleged crimes of "conspiracy against national sovereignty", "money laundering", and "propagation of false news", and remained in solitary confinement or under house arrest for up to 600 days.

Among the 317 people stripped of their nationality are political and civic leaders, economists, political analysts, jurists, businessmen, diplomats, academics, scientists, doctors, priests, and social activists. Many of them are essential sources of information for the independent press in a country where for more than 15 years they have prohibited access to public information. As a result of this persecution, there are no longer any independent sources in Nicaragua to whom information, data or an assessment of the facts can be attributed. Everyone, without exception, requests that their identities be protected in order to be able to inform or give their opinion, for fear of official reprisals, including imprisonment.

This double criminalization of press freedom and freedom of expression - to silence journalists, news sources, and freedom of opinion - represents the latest stage in a long process of demolition of the rule of law.

Under the de facto police state, there is no freedom of assembly or mobilization in Nicaragua. The regime persecutes the Catholic Church and prohibits even religious processions. In 2021, it annulled political competition and the holding of free elections, and since 2022 it has increased a relentless persecution against civil society, cancelling more than 3200 non-governmental organizations.

Daniel Ortega's wife, Rosario Murillo, spokesperson of the Government, designed a communication strategy to impose the so-called "uncontaminated information," that is to say, information in "pure state" that would reach the citizens directly through the official media, without passing through the filter of questions or investigations of the independent press, for which they even cancelled press conferences. Daniel Ortega described the independent press as "the enemy", and long before the era of fake news he accused journalists of being the "children of Goebbels", unleashing virulent lynching campaigns in the official media as a response to the denunciations of corruption and abuses of power by his government. In his early years, Ortega promoted intimidation of the independent press, political espionage, blocking access to public information, and created his own private media emporium.

When this model of authoritarian government collapsed under the outbreak of civic protests in April 2018, and the regime saw its power threatened, it responded with a brutal crackdown that left more than 300 murders in impunity, and made the press the enemy to be crushed. The repression against journalists included assassinations and physical assaults, television censorship, physical destruction of media outlets, customs blockade of newspapers, culminating in the closure and confiscation of media outlets, the imposition of repressive laws, and the imprisonment of journalists.

In 2020, the Special Law on Cybercrimes was approved, which punishes with prison sentences of one to five years the alleged crime of propagating "false news" through social networks and media, which cause anxiety, destabilization, and moral damage, although the same law does not define what is "false news." Under this law, more than 20 people have been sentenced to prison terms for the alleged crime of spreading "false news," among them journalists, activists, priests, and a farmer who did not even have social networks.

Journalism inside a dictatorship is an act of resistance as it continues to report accurately and tell the truth. Ortega confiscated Confidencial, the cable channel 100% Noticias and the newspaper La Prensa. The regime has also closed more than 40 local radio and television media outlets, and more than 150 journalists have been forced into exile. However, it has never been able to confiscate journalism, and the confiscated media continue to report from exile.

The collapse of the rule of law in Nicaragua and the consolidation of the dictatorship is a mirror in which the Central American press is being seen today, threatened by authoritarian tendencies. In Guatemala, the government of Alejandro Giammattei has kept José Rubén Zamora, editor of El Periódico, in jail for seven months; and in El Salvador, the regime of Nayib Bukele has already enlisted the independent press as "the enemy".

Central American journalists are united by the conviction of not giving in to intimidation and censorship, nor falling into self-censorship. As the new Central American Network of Journalists created last year in Guatemala proclaims: "**Silence is not an option.**"

The content of this article is taken from a Memorial Lecture given by Nicaraguan journalist Carlos F. Chamorro at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University on 6 March 2023.

CROSSING IN PEACE

By Philippe Pujas (PEN Club France)

The PEN centres are a large Peace Committee. Let's not forget that it was an aspiration for peace that started the movement at the end of the First World War. We know what quickly followed: Nazism casted its macabre shadow all over Europe. We had to take a stand: how far can we go for peace? Munich provided the answer. PEN centres had to add the fight for freedom of thought and democracy and also the fight against the imminent and upcoming war. It was then necessary to enter the conflict. The French PEN Club took its part in this history. From the refusal to exclude German writers at the creation of the movement to keeping the Mussolinian Marinetti in its ranks on the eve of the Second World War. It ended with the entry of some of its members into the Resistance and the death of its secretary general Benjamin Crémieux, who died in deportation.

The Peace Committee was born much later, in a context of the Cold War, with the aim of building bridges and promoting dialogue between enemy parties. But we are what we are: neither rulers nor decision-makers of anything. Our margin of action lies between the goodwill of both camps, between writers of both sides. We have been able to do this, with uneven results, but always with this small lifeline, this small stream that, through dialogue, maintains hope.

When war returns, when it asserts itself in its brutality, with its share of crimes, what will we have? Words, pens. Motions and press releases, of course. By being alongside Ukrainian artists, but also by those Russian artists who courageously oppose the war. We have to be there to temporarily accommodate those who wish to, to help spread their work. But we must also use our own skills as writers: our commitment for peace should be clear in our writings, individually and collectively speaking.

We also need to participate in global tensions. Among these are: migrations, their causes, conditions and consequences. May we have a peace of mind when we see the spectacle that the tragic paths of exile offer us? Filmmakers have denounced the scandal of the detention camps in Libya, the deadly crossings, the living conditions of migrants on European soil upon their arrival. Could we not agree to work together with those of us who have concerns on this issue? Write, testify, act. Write with our own sensitivity and our own style to create a deeply personal text. Testify and even more collect testimonies. Act to bring dignity and peace to the movements of human beings on our planet. We bring together, within our movement, countries of departure and countries of arrival of migration. We unite, within our movement, the countries of departure and the countries of arrival of migrants.

LINGUA TERTII IMPERII OR LINGUA QUATRII IMPERIIS

By Tanja Tuma (PEN Slovenia)

One of the strategic priorities of the Writers for Peace Committee is hate speech. In 2021, then president of Finnish PEN Veera Tyhtila created a very useful handbook of practical advice for people who are being harassed online – [The Hate Speech Toolkit](#).

In the years after we learnt about the meaning of alternative facts (i.e. lies), and as hate speech became one of the most prominent topics in democratic countries, the sales of dystopian novels like Orwell's 1984 renewed and grew. In his dark futuristic depiction of a totalitarian regime, the author and his protagonist Winston Smith lose all hope for humanity. Winston ends up loving Big Brother even though the latter has deprived him of everything that makes him human, particularly his free will. Almost seventy years after first publication, the reader shivers at the scenery of this pure evil.

After the Covid 19 pandemic, we are no longer surprised by any of the measures described in dystopian novels, and certainly we are not amused by the trend the world is taking. We've seen it all: hate speech erupting into wars, overall digital control evolving into rating the citizens, censorship, and self-censorship, basic human rights on sale in the name of economic development, women's rights turned back in the name of religion. Such sad set-backs don't happen only in totalitarian regimes but also in democracies. Corruption produces new wider gaps between the poor who pay taxes, and the rich who evade paying taxes. Journalists and writers are targeted by politics and political businesses which would prefer not to be controlled by anybody and free to take from the public pots as much as they can. In many countries, the journalists and writers are threatened, locked up or simply killed.

Still, history is full of hope for the future if we care to observe it.

Victor Klemperer, a German Jew, a survivor of the Holocaust, a literature professor and a writer never lost hope. He has dedicated his work to his brave German wife, thanks to whom he survived the slaughter. His message was one of life and love. In his brilliant analysis of the Nazi's abuse of the language, he conveys a valuable lesson that we should understand today – war starts with words not weapons.

In the Germany of 1930s, the NSDAP rose with slogans of hatred and defamation. The main culprits for the economic crisis were the Jews (accused of propagating a world Jewish conspiracy – Weltjudenverschwörung), the Social Democrats and the Communists (save for the brief Hitler-Stalin "love affair"), and the colonial imperialistic forces of England, France, and America. All Subhuman races - Untermenschen, which were in principle all but the pure Aryan/German race like the Slavs, should make space, disappear or simply die. The main modus operandi of the Nazis were hatred, demagoguery and rabble-rousing – Volksverhetzung.

Do we need another paragraph to recognize the mirror image of the present-day populists?

Let's have a look at a few more words, brilliantly presented by Klemperer, which changed the connotation according to the moment. The first is fanatic. Since the Enlightenment, the adjective fanatic was used for people or acts that shut off Reason, the only basic principle for a functioning society. In the Nazi-Speak, it is used in a positive way – our fanatically fighting troops, Hitler's speech initiated a fanatical joy of the people, and in 1944, the war can be won only with fanatic beliefs in Hitler. Aren't we reminded of the terrorists, who in the name of their fanatical religious beliefs, murder and cause havoc among innocent civilians? Or, maybe such odd statements reflect the Russian propaganda against the West and the Ukrainians to justify their war crimes of targeting civilians, historical and cultural sites to raping girls and women? Our societies have abandoned the safe ground of reason to embrace a world of hallucinations that can be offered either by individual potentates or by religions, the main principle of which is exclusion. There is another Nazi adjective, which should make our hair rise – great, or gross. We've had many great states since 1945's Germany, i.e. Great Serbia, the idea of which was ended in a cruel war in the Balkans during the 1990s. We will certainly witness the fall of the idea of the great Soviet Union revived; the nations who embraced democracy cannot move backwards to slavery, for sure.

The *Lingua Tertii Imperii* is also rich with evil euphemisms, such as evacuation – actually deportation to the concentration camps, which for some reason were called concert camps – *Konzertlager*. Nothing to do with music. If you were under special treatment – *Sonderbehandlung*, it meant you were about to be murdered. Certain prefixes meant murder as such: *ent-juden* meant to de-jew, which was followed by persecution and murder in the Final Solution – *Endlösung*. The hateful Nazi view of the world – *Weltanschauung* – continues to live in the present in the heads of blood hungry politicians who can stay in power only by kindling endless conflicts and wars. Klemperer's adjective under observation would be eternal – *ewig*.

Thus, we may think that WWII is over and that the Holocaust, the murder of six million Jews and close to 60 million casualties is a matter of the past, however, we should closely listen to the language used by the politicians and the media. Hate speech, defamation, exclusion. The same arsenal of hatreds we can observe today.

Wars start with words, not weapons.

Therefore, the power of PEN to document and condemn wars, is important.

(Victor Klemperer, Language of the Third Reich: LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, first published in German, 1947)

INDOORS WARS

By Maria João Gehl Costa (PEN Portugal)

There are big wars and minor wars. There are wars that destroy cities and countries and in which many lives are unfairly lost. We can see the ruins of what was once a palace or a residential neighborhood. And, we rarely see the bodies of those who died. It's terrible. And, how we wish humanity had learned something, with millennia of history behind it ...

But there are still other wars. The minor ones. The ones that take place in peaceful countries behind the closed doors of some family homes... On the 6th, of May 2014 my best friend from the University, the lawyer Natália de Sousa, was violently murdered in her office by the husband of a client that she was sponsoring in a litigious divorce process.

That same year, on August 2014, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence came into force. This Convention, known as the Istanbul Convention, recognizes the existence of a socially constructed gender category that constrains women and men into specific or expected roles and behaviors, and that some of these stereotypes and prejudices can contribute to socially legitimize violence against women and girls. Violence against women and domestic violence is a serious violation of human rights and a form of discrimination with an impact not only on victims, but also on society as a whole. Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, and its promotion is a fundamental task of the State. The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) is the national body responsible for promoting and defending this principle. And these are the CIG's numbers about the reported situations and voluntary homicide in the context of domestic violence: In 2020, 27619 situations were reported to police and 32 people were murdered, of which 27 were women and 2 were children. In 2021, 26511 situations were reported to police and 23 people were killed, of which 16 were women, and 2 (again!) were children. Last year, 2022, 30389 situations were reported to police and 28 people were killed, of which 24 were women, and 4 were children! It's hard to face these numbers and not think about how a woman feels, heading home where also lives someone who might want to kill her. The enemy is inside. And she is alone in the face of this terrible threat. It's hard not to think about my beautiful friend Natália. For a real peace to exist, these situations must no longer be possible. We will have to fight for the end of all wars. The big wars and the indoors wars.

1 February 2022, Lisbon

CRY FOR LOVE

By Maximillia Muninzwa (PEN Kenya)

Can you remember a time when peace was more a mirage than now? We have a great deal to worry about. We have been disturbed enough by war drums and gunshots that destroy lives, by increasing crime and corruption in governments and society, and by quarrels and fights that spoil relationships, resulting in major divisions. Just when we are thinking that hatred along racial lines is a thing of the past, we get a shocker at how prone the world is to racial hatred.

I write this with tears flooding my eyes, prompted by a distressing video that has been doing the rounds on social media this week. Outside the Thomas Kynvett School gate, a fifteen-year-old student is viciously gang-beaten and seriously injured by three sisters. Worse still, the crowd around does not seem perturbed by the harrowing occurrence. I have found it difficult to imagine violence and hatred of this magnitude in Britain. I am angry about what happened to the teenage victim and more appalled by the fact that the young perpetrators were being cheered on by their mother, an adult who should be teaching her children about respect and love for those who are different from them. What is more disturbing is that the victim is Black while the perpetrators are White. So, naturally, thoughts of it being racially aggravated creep in.

That kind of violence not only increases the number of those who suffer, but it is also one of the most painful wounds in the world. A wound that oozes pus without ever healing completely. The resultant feuding disrupts peace and unity, causing a negative whirlpool effect of racist bigotry.

Was this an isolated case? Obviously not. Was there any need for this family to pick hot bricks, whatever the reason? Well, I will not condemn them for I am not privy to what they may be going through in life. All I can urge is that when we are “caught between a rock and a hard place” it is better to appeal for love and unity with powerful emotional arguments than resort to what clearly comes out as racial revulsion. The human ethos of “do to others what we would like them to do to us” couldn’t be truer today. Well within our grasp are the obstacles that we must overcome.

At this point, I find it prudent to add that the true happiness that the Kynvett School culprit family and the rest of us may be looking for is found not in hate and violence, but in the shared pleasures of respect and friendship; in appreciation, not intolerance; in striving to make racial diversities a source of unity, not toxic differences. And this is absolutely possible if we look beyond the melanin, and love one another.

Let us weep together, join hands and promptly condemn violence. There is no doubt that when another person's dignity is trampled on, our own dignity is trampled on too.

Writing for Peace

By Vera Botterbusch (PEN Germany)

How can we write for peace in a world filled with aggressive, unpeaceful and inhuman turbulence. How can we write for peace while thinking about the aggressors, despots, dictators all over the world, knowing that peace is often and again and again a dream far from reality.

Still, this dream needs to be nurtured, it needs to be cherished so that it does not lose its fundamental value, so that it remains an eternal flower that does not fade. The privilege of literature to be able to reflect on a reality that seems utopia and whose concrete realization we desire, remains. Writing about peace is also writing about freedom. Being aware of a humanity that constantly risks not seeing the basic needs of an acceptable life for each individual. This means first of all: every human being has the same rights to be accepted and respected. The human history gave us the duty not to think ourselves superior to others, for example by our culture and religion. And also, by our money, by our economic interests. The great global catastrophes resulted from the desire to conquer others. They are linked to this so-called superiority. The great crimes of humanity are due to colonization, to racism, to antisemitism. The great everlasting problem remains the acceptance of other cultures, which means: accepting another reality of life, of existence.

The war in Ukraine reminded me of my stay in Ljiv/Lwow/Lemberg 31 years ago. I was making a 60-minute film on Alfred Döblin's "Journey to Poland". The first programs in Berlin inspired him to go to Poland to find true Jewish culture. But also, with the goal of getting to know Polish society with its many ethnic minorities. A year after this two-month trip, Döblin published his story in order to give an account of his impressions and above all to reflect on the danger of inhumanity and aggressiveness summarised in this Schiller's sentence that Döblin placed in the beginning of his book: "Denn eine Grenze hat Tyrannenmacht. Allen Staaten gesagt und dem Staat überhaupt. The tyrant's power has limits. This must be said to all States, to the State in general".

A very important chapter is dedicated to his stay in Lemberg and he notes, "Die heutigen Staaten sind das Grab der Völker. The States of today are the tomb of the peoples ". In 1924 Ukraine was a part of Poland, a mixture of Ukrainian, Russian, Polish and Austrian people. Döblin speaks of a constant fight between these nations and of this everlasting possibility of attack, of aggressiveness for either cultural, religious and political reasons. Those reasons are constantly preventing a peaceful life where one accepts man as he is and where power is not the engine of life. And yes, I agree with Döblin. The historical memories of the peoples about their victories and their losses risk starting over and over again, preventing peace.

POETRY CORNER

By Isabel Pereira Rosa (PEN Portugal), Gioconda Belli (PEN Nicaragua), Tarık Günersel (PEN Türkiye)

ISABEL PEREIRA ROSA - PEACE

Peace descends on the fields
and the animals. Everything undresses
in twilight silence, except
those who wear the uniform of hypocrisy.
It stuck to their skin.

Isabel Pereira Rosa

PEN Portugal

Translated from Portuguese by the author



GIOCONDA BELLI - NICARAGUA

So often I have tried to forget you
as if you were one of those cruel lovers who slams
the door in your face
or one of those who the more you love them
the more they ignore you
but nothing I do makes a difference
lush green, rain, and wind come
papers swirling down the street
the oak showering its flowers like silken hulls on sidewalks
the young boy who carries a cleaning rag
and a smile that breaks and transcends poverty
the dusk that settles over the volcano's pointed outline in the distance
the clouds that spill red and purple paint into the sky
I hear people's lively, playful, open manner of speaking
and all my cursing and complaining about you falls apart
and love wells up inside me like horses galloping in my chest
and I contemplate you covered in kapoks and Cortez trees
madrone, mahogany, and palm trees
and I love you homeland of my dreams and my sorrows
and I take you with me to secretly wash away your stains
to whisper hope to you
and promise you remedies and charms to protect you.
I defer to words because they are my life's mortar
and it is through words that I imagine you again and again reborn
magnificent, stripped of all the worms that eat away at your essence.
From your hair I pluck out those who sell, steal, and abuse you
I tell you stories at the edge of my pillow
I shelter you and cover your eyes
so you won't see the tyrants coming to chop off your head.

Home
Land
I will perish
My anguish will cease
but you will remain
rooted in place
sheltering my memories
and my bones



TARIK GÜNERSEL - BOMBS!

They're killing

children, too.

Bombing schools, hospitals...

Stop! We shout.

Destroying museums...

Burning books...

Rape in libraries!..

Hybrid war. Aggression.

Reality is tough.

Stop! We shout. In vain.

How can we counterattack and win?

Soft power is not enough.

Let ethical force begin:

Unsupported wishing is out,

hybrid resistance is in.

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