POEMS FOR THE KURDISH MOVEMENT

Sarah Glynn

On leaving the Kurdish hunger strikers in Strasbourg

Their bellies are empty, but their hearts are full.
As the kilogrammes fall away, so the morale keeps building,
And the smiles – can we ever forget those smiles?

Eleven men and three women putting their lives on the line
And for each one, nine others happy to be in their place
An ultimate act of will that throws down a challenge of vulnerability
What power is so strong that it can overthrow the most basic instinct for survival?

‘We starve because we love life’ – they tell us
We risk our own lives so our children can enjoy theirs

They are here for Ocalan, far away in a Turkish jail
Ocalan, who must be freed
But for now, a simple demand –
To make Turkey follow their own constitution and end his isolation

A simple demand, but no-one listens
They protest, and no one hears
They march and no one sees
They lobby and no one cares
So the world’s indifference has brought them to this
How many must die for the world to take notice?

And Ocalan?
What man can inspire such devotion?

His portrait looks down from a thousand walls
But this moustached uncle is no Stalin
His philosophy inspires deepest democracy and freedom
He gives us that Kurdish smile
For twenty years he has led the call for peace
Ready for the time when Turkey will respond with sincerity
He holds the key to the Kurdish question
But Turkey still guards the lock

Poems for the Kurdish Movement – Sarah Glynn
I fly home to humdrum reality
And the enormity of what I have seen only gets harder to comprehend
But those fourteen men and women have revived my belief in humanity

Revolutionaries are not just figures in flickering black and white
They are struggling in Turkish prisons and Rojava villages
And in a non-descript community centre among the nineteenth century apartment blocks of Strasbourg

Amsterdam Airport
26 January 2019

Published in Freedom Poems for Öcalan, produced by Peace in Kurdistan on the occasion of Öcalan’s 70th birthday, 4 April 2019
To the hunger strikers

When it ends, as end it must
I hope – believe – believe and trust
That everyone whose hearts you’ve moved
Can hear the message that you’ve proved:
That all who’d better worlds create
Must stand against the fascist state,
And knowing you can do no more
Take up the banner that you bore
For Jin, Jiyan and Azade
For freedom for humanity.

And when it ends, as end it will
I hope my friends are living still.
My friends we need you even more
To build the world you’re dying for!

22 May 2019

Recorded on this album, made by comrades in Wales:
https://imamsisweseeyou.bandcamp.com/album/imam-sis-we-see-you
Fire and Flood – a poem for Afrin and Hasankeyf

Gentle glens of fruit and forest,
paradise that was Afrin
Turkey’s men have scorched the earth – made
desert ‘peace’ where once was green

Golden waves of wheat and barley
harvest-ready in the sun
Flame and smoke of vengeful fire – and
Turkey’s ‘cleansing’ work is done

Ancient city on the Tigris
living homes of history
Hasankeyf – soon drowned in water
Turkish electricity

Kurdish song will ring from under
like Tryweryn’s mythic bell
Winds of change rise through the air – of
Apo’s hope this song will tell!

4 June 2019

(for background see ‘Turkey’s Ilisu Dam is a war on culture and nature’ Sunday National 14 July 2019, www.thenational.scot/news/17769108.turkey-s-ilisu-dam-war-nature-catastrophic-consequences)