

Testimonials of horror

By Inés Pardal
For the Herald

Una sola muerte numerosa, by Nora Strejilevich. Published by North-South Center, University of Miami, Florida.

Winner of the 1995-96 US *Letras de Oro* Spanish Literary Prize, this autobiographical novel tells of the ordeal of an Argentine woman whose brother went missing during the infamous Dirty War in this country. Herself a prisoner in an "Athletic Club" where torture was a daily routine until she could leave these shores for various destinations till her final residence in Canada, she got a Ph.D. from the University of British Columbia and currently teaches Latin American Literature in Southern Oregon State College.

Shifting from present to a past of horror in the late seventies, and an even remoter past of fond family memories, Nora Strejilevich mixes quotes from Videla and Massera



with CONADEP records and poetic fragments to convey a full picture of a period. And she never sounds complaisant or tries to embellish reality: on page 22 we learn that brother Gerardo favours violence of the downtrodden de abajo to challenge violence of the powerful; she reminds us that Jewish prisoners got a worse treatment from torturers who were self-appointed "Western and Christian" crusaders (remember Jacobo Timerman's testimonial on this); and yet, on pages 124-125 valiantly reminds us that Israel kept

selling arms to the Dirty Warriors; on pages 147-148 she despairs at the fact that many political prisoners applauded General Galtieri for his harebrained invasion of Malvinas (even offering themselves as volunteers). These and many other brave testimonials made her book truly praiseworthy.

What would the author say, though, if she knew that torturers like the "Turco" Julián described in it, are in 1997 regular guests in a popular horror/reality TV show?

Among other horrors, of course — like that of Montonero killer Mario Firmenich and *Junta* state terrorists walking free thanks to a presidential pardon.

DILECT

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