

went to the cinema once a week to see a film in Arabic, he loved his snuff . . . All that did not make him a revolutionary.

But maybe he felt at the bottom of his heart that he could only attain dignity and deserve the respect of his children at the price of a certain way of life?

Chaïba was a friend. I'm proud to think that he was a friend, with his skin the colour of dawn . . . a new African dawn. ●

BAKARY DIALLO *Savages all*

WE ARE BEFORE the German troops, on the Marne. It is four o'clock in the morning. It looks as if the day is starting to break. Here and there, everywhere, above all in the East, an uncertain light is spreading. The shadows of the night concentrate on the hills and coagulate into black plots in the gullies and at the foot of the trees with their silent branches. The sky lights up over our heads — a blueish eye which opens to see an evil work being

performed. Rifles, cannon, and other innocent implements that kill their masters, no longer make much noise.

The sections receive their coffee and a substantial breakfast. It has been prepared during the night. Man must eat to have the strength to die.

A German soldier, lost between the lines, has been captured with the coffee he was carrying, by a Senegalese sentry. Seeing himself surrounded by the *tirailleurs*, he trembles with his whole being. Poor fellows, had you not foreseen this movement just as you had counted on the gold of a glorious victory? The blacks whom you considered savages have taken you in this war, but instead of snuffing out your life they kept you as a prisoner. May your fear not prevent you from proclaiming in your land tomorrow, after the battle, the sentiments of justice inspiring them, which will restore their reputation among the races of mankind, savages all.

Force-Bonté (F. Rieder & Cie., Paris, 1926)

One day you will learn . . .

To Marcel Bebey-Eyidi Jr.

*One day you will learn
that you have a black skin and white teeth
and white-palmed hands
and a pink tongue
and hair as curled
as the lianae of the virgin forest.*

*Say nothing.
But if ever you learn
that you have red blood in your veins,
then burst out laughing,
clap your hands
and pretend to be mad with joy
at this unexpected news.
After that moment of feigned exhilaration
take on a serious expression again
and ask them all around:
Red blood in my veins,
is that sufficient proof for you
to take me for a man?
My father's goat, too,
has red blood in its veins.*

*And then tell them you don't give a damn.
For you know they've completely missed the point
of the joke of creation,
which gave red blood to animals and to man
but forgot altogether to give
your father's goat a human head.*

*Live and work.
Then you'll be a man.*

FRANCIS BEBEY

To my husband

*You used to be called Bimbircokak
And all was well then
But you became Victor-Emile-Louis Henri-Joseph
And bought us a dinner service*

*I was your wife
You wanted to make a lady out of me
We used to eat together
You put a table between us*

*Calabash and ladle
Gourd and cous-cous
Disappeared from the oral menu
Which you dictated condescendingly
You drove home the point that we were modern*

*Hot hot hot is the sun
Here in the Tropics
But your tie is forever tied
Around your neck though it may choke you*

*And since you start sulking when I point this out to you
Don't let's talk about it but please
Look at me
How do you find me*

*We eat grapes cornflakes drink pasteurized milk
All imported goods
And eat little
It's not your fault*

*You used to be called Bimbircokak
And all was well then
But you became Victor-Emile-Louis Henri-Joseph
Which
As far as I can see
Does not mean we're related
To Rockefeller
(Excuse my ignorance I don't know anything about finance
Or higher mathematics)
But you see Bimbircokak
It's your fault
If instead of being under-developed
I am now underfed.*

OUOLOGUEM YAMBO

My people when nothing moves

*when nothing moves anywhere
the only motion is the noisy
stillness in me*

*should you then
long for
me*

*look for
me*

*in forbidden songs
searching in the light
beyond petrified hypocrises*

K. WILLIAM KGOSITSILE

Vilanelle on a subject near to all our hearts

Hakuna kazi — motto and refrain;
A symbol like the plague-cross on a door
We pass in fear, and then turn back again*

*And cross ourselves and pray with guilt or pain
"God let it strike the other man," and read once more
"Hakuna kazi" — motto and refrain.*

*Like toadstools sprouting after heavy rain
The hungry men spring up, their pleas waves on a shore
We pass in fear. And then . . . Turn back again,*

*A child is in your path who hopes to gain
A cent or two by some unneeded chore.
"Hakuna kazi" — motto and refrain.*

*To a drowning man the boat will hold no more?
And maxim. How does one explain
We pass in fear — and then turn back again —*

*The leprous beggar. Growing like a stain
A slogan bleeds behind him on a door:
"Hakuna kazi" motto and refrain
We pass in fear, and then turn back again.*

JOHN ROBERTS

Hakuna kazi: No vacancies

had produced a good leader, so that when he was destroyed one blamed the people and praised the leader, was followed by the *Evening News*, who demanded that America re-examine her social and economic system.

Some of the accusations in Ghana were a little more specific. Nkrumah himself queried whether Kennedy's support of racial justice was not a motive for assassination. And that acerbic South African columnist in the *Ghanaian Times*, H. M. Basner, addicted to a conspiracy theory of history, threw scorn on the theory of a left-wing plot and subtly implied that the failure of the security services to prevent the assassination indicated the involvement of the "military-industrial complex." Basner, incidentally, must be credited with the most realistic appraisal of the limitations of Kennedy's actions to occur at that euphoric moment: the Civil Rights bill due to be passed would not, he said, satisfy American Negro aspirations.

It was however in Cairo, where I happened to be some two weeks later, that I read one of the wildest speculations. The *Arab Observer* of December 2, 1963, wrote that ". . . to Arabs the loss was particularly keen since in his last act of political importance, President Kennedy had supported the cause of the Palestinian refugees. Was it possible that in that support lay one motive for his death?" There followed a long justifying article, whose circumstantial evidence included the fact that Dallas was the local headquarters of the Texas Zionists, as well as the frequent mention of "night-club owner Jack Rubinstein" as the murderer of Oswald.

IN THE VACUUM OF DISBELIEF, shock and horror which follow such an incredible event as the assassination of the Head of State of a world power, instinctive reactions are formed and set the terms of subsequent debate. Further discussion is often rationalisation. With 26 volumes of the Warren Commission Report, 42 books directly concerned with the assassination, and millions of words said and written, argument has moved from the terms of Zionists, racists, communists to those of bullet trajectories, types and positions, the numbered frames of films, but the uncertainties remain. The Kennedy legend grows (there are now 250 books alone on his Presidency) — grows because of rather than in spite of Johnson; Robert Kennedy, through a skilful weaving of his own original themes with the phrases of his brother, is attempting to replace almost subliminally that face behind the pointing finger by his own. Whether or not Kennedy succeeds in donning the mantle, and whether he can retain the support of the new radical groups stimulated into life by the vigour and freedom of the JFK years, are important questions for Africa and the world as well as America. There can be no doubt now that November 22, 1963 marked a sharp discontinuity. But was that era from 1960 to 1963, full of idealism and rebirth in America, of independence and groping towards socialism in Africa, of thaw between East and West . . . was it an *interregnum* between decades of sterility and reaction? Or is this time now, of Vietnam, Rhodesia, the overthrow of Nkrumah and Ben Bella, of the crisis of Nigeria, the destruction of revolutionary movements in Latin America, the real pause? It is with another Kennedy's future that some of the answer lies. ●