

Le Foehn

Mouloud Mammeri, leading Algerian poet-playwright, attended meetings between African and Scandinavian writers in Stockholm, Helsinki and Copenhagen, where the Literary Editor made his acquaintance. Nkosi's rough translation of the prologue to "Le Foehn", his revolutionary play about Algeria, follows:

Here is the sea
 With her full sails,
 There where the sun does not the sky abandon
 Even for a few months
 Without regret.
 Rows of white terrace houses nourished by heat
 Up on that abrupt hill, it is the Casbah.
 Further, the new town
 Heaves against the sky
 Basalt pillars of her skyscrapers.
 Stranger, you are here
 Facing the Whitest of towns...
 White Algiers...
 But
 Poetry should not seduce you in itself:
 In the gleaming whiteness of that town
 In truth,
 Men pursue prosaic lives
 And only die with drama.
 Look at that door:
 It is closed.
 It is there that the hours, the knocks, the misfortunes
 Will enter.
 Behind the screen of that closed door
 The actors wait for the hour to strike
 And their destiny is set.
 Because
 When too much dryness burns their hearts
 When hunger wrings their entrails
 When one suppresses too many tears
 When one stifles too many dreams
 It is as though one piles log upon log on a funeral pyre:
 In the end, it needs only one slave
 In all God's heaven
 And in the hearts of men, to cause
 The most enormous incendiary.
 Listen:
 Against that closed door
 They do not wait for destiny's approval:
 It is yet peaceful...
 Useless for you to decry men's silence:
 Each morning they have the rendezvous with the sun,
 Coffee with milk, a pat of butter, the fresh croissants
 Or a crust of bread and figs.
 Does it matter what!
 These are the coffee, the butter, bread, and the figs
 The men make love, some father babies (of silence
 They calculate the end of months
 Wait for Saturday to go to the stadium
 To play at war
 The war where there are only heroes and no casualties.
 In the bars of that town called the White City
 The town of white islands
 They return each night to rendezvous they've kept
 (for years

They sip white aniseed
 They pick up the same kemias
 From the counters of the same bistros.
 The boys guy the girls
 The girls entice the boys
 And they laugh
 As one laughs in peace
 Because tomorrow they know the same procession
 Will resume (of passive gestures
 And they are the new rendezvous with the sun
 The blue sky
 The mauve sea
 The streets
 Of the whitest of all white cities...
 And still...
 Still it needs only
 A few steps by an aimless walker
 To change the world.
 Because to those few strides some other men
 Born under the same blue skies
 And after an even longer time,
 So long they cannot remember,
 Some other men
 Panting from the gloom of the morning
 Roll toward the crest of the hill
 The hump which they know
 Will deliver them to the plain.
 They divide the days
 They no longer wait for dawn.
 They've found in the quarter all streets impassable;
 They follow other
 To give some semblance of going somewhere.
 You know what that is:
 A man is someone who has somewhere to go.
 When a man has the impression he has nowhere to go
 He dies,
 Or he kills.
 It is so long since the men of this strange city knew
 They were going nowhere.
 They make the rounds, their eyes fixed to the ground,
 Because they fear to look at the sun,
 To be dazzled.
 They stumble in the maze of the same impasses
 And they retrace their steps
 They criss-cross their fruitless paths
 On the same false crossroads
 From whence begin again
 Their hopeless journeys.
 Even words they give themselves are false:
 Their city, from the time it was theirs,
 They called it "The Well-Guarded":
 Oh, what derision! What a joke!
 Their "well-guarded" island has become the boulevard
 Rushing to hopeless horizons (of covetors
 And their city an estranged city in which
 They blunder like strangers.
 It is more than a century since
 That city has thus absurdly lived,
 One half lowering at the other half.
 That can no longer continue.
 The doped happiness of others
 No longer calms the others' disquiet;
 The happy ones of the white town
 Find their joy turned to ashes
 And wish the other would turn
 Would cease to look
 Or, better still, cease to exist.

groups of refugees. Projects vary greatly in size and scope; although the optimum size is regarded by the UNHCR as 1,000 families (4-5,000 persons), one settlement of Sudanese refugees in Uganda has 600, while a Rwandese settlement in Burundi accounts for no less than 25,000.

The first issue that has to be dealt with is that of persuading the refugees to accept the notion of settlement at all; in some cases this is not difficult, and small batches of refugees will often integrate themselves successfully into existing rural communities -- normally in areas which are ethnically and economically similar to the areas abandoned by the refugees. However, this process carries with it the disadvantage that the government of the host country is less easily able to maintain proper surveillance of the refugees, and, consequently, it has been discouraged. Whether the action of some governments, e.g. Burundi, in forbidding refugees to settle in areas other than those selected for them adds anything more than a further dimension to the refugee problem must be regarded as doubtful.

Generally speaking, however, the ease with which refugees can be persuaded to settle is in inverse proportion to the possibility of achieving a political solution to the problem they are fleeing. Thus, observers in Uganda report a significant decline in enthusiasm for settlement on the part of Sudanese refugees while round-table negotiations were taking place in the middle of 1965. Similarly, it is considerably easier to arrange for resettlement once refugees undertake a self-denying ordinance on political activity.

It is undoubtedly true that one of the greatest fears entertained by African governments giving asylum is that large numbers of refugees who continue to harbour political ambitions will cause disturbance and instability, and will thus constitute a security problem. This has often resulted in the establishment of resettlement schemes in remote areas, where agricultural projects aimed at developing an underdeveloped region have contributed little to the economy of the country.

Education: A substantial proportion of refugees of all sorts are in need of education, and the proportion of children of school age is frequently greater than a quarter of the total. Where the population has been resettled in an agricultural development project, this problem is not so great -- at least to the extent that the demand of refugee children for education is no greater than, and the need is not met to any greater degree than, that of the indigenous population. Difficulties tend to arise where refugees have already undergone some education and desire to go further. The demand becomes even more acute where one of the reasons for leaving the country of origin was inadequate access to proper education (as is the case with South and South West Africans, and refugees from the urban parts of the Portuguese colonies). Most countries of asylum are hard-pressed to provide adequate places to meet the demands of their own nationals for secondary, university and technical education. Pressure on places from refugees causes local resentment as well as political difficulty for

governments. As a result, only a small proportion of such refugees are accommodated by the governments concerned. The remainder are either assisted by UN agencies, foreign governments and voluntary organisations, or continue dissatisfied with conditions in their countries of asylum.

One lesson is that there is a need for a clear policy on African refugees on the part of the members of the OAU; that this should be followed by the establishment of a convention on refugees, and the establishment of adequate machinery for screening and accrediting refugees, as well as providing them with adequate travel facilities and documents where required.

The endemic character of refugee problems in contemporary Africa must be accepted, together with the fact that refugee situations are capable of long-range solutions, with adequate economic provision (based, if necessary, on foreign aid, either directly or through inter-governmental agencies).

Finally, inter-governmental agencies (such as either the UNHCR or the OAU) must be used to confront and overcome diplomatic and political problems arising from the existence of refugees, rather than ignoring them, avoiding them through inactivity, or eliminating them through collusive dealing with the governments of origin.

But the others... (contd from p 48
The others know much, much too late
The forbidden paradise begins at Bresson Square,
That one incursion into rue d'Isly is a raid into
enemy territory
Who are vowed to cover up their misery in the swarming
crowds of all the miserable ones of the
Casbah.
They have intervals of lucidity
Or of despair
Or some mad elations,
A mad wish to kill
To die
And with all their heart, all their blood, they wish
The other would cease to look
Or merely cease to exist...
The evening promenade of the young wolves dies at
the side of the Cafe Sourbiron,
At Tantonville, it stops and retraces itself:
It has struck against a wall.
The wanderings of the famished young jackals
Faulters on the invisible bulwark
Under the pressure of others
And the shoving of others
The curtain begins to crack...
It has cracked!
And on the asphalt of the same streets
The young jackals and the young wolves
No longer come to blows at night,
Nor is the day for bravado.
Also
That folding screen,
The frail folding screen of that door yields,
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