

seems to think that works advocated by the second variety of critic can be admitted to the museum. For many years, curators

have unthinkingly applied politicized definitions of the masterpiece, he suggests. Now it is time to apply them thoughtfully.

OTHER NATIONS

Debt and Democracy

"Democracy and Economic Crisis: The Latin American Experience" by Karen L. Remmer, in *World Politics* (April 1990), 17 Ivy Lane, Princeton, N.J. 08544.

Nobody ever seems to say anything about Latin America's new democracies without attaching warning words like "fragile," "fledgling," or "struggling." The assumption among academics and journalists appears to be that the newly elected leaders of Brazil, Chile, and other nations will find it much harder to deal with economic adversity, especially the debt crisis, than did their authoritarian predecessors. Ultimately, the theory goes, the need to placate various constituencies will handicap elected leaders to such an extent that democracy itself may fail.

All of this strikes Remmer, a political scientist at the University of New Mexico, as very curious. Since the debt crisis began in 1982, she notes, not a single South American democracy has fallen, but six authoritarian regimes (notably, in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile) have. The story is much the same in Central America and the Caribbean. "It might be more appropriate to emphasize the fragility of 'old' authoritarianism rather than the weakness of 'new' democracy," Remmer says.

Going one step farther, she set out to compare the economic performance of 10 Latin nations between 1982 and 1988. Two (Colombia and Venezuela) were "old" de-

mocracies; Chile and Paraguay were authoritarian during the whole period; six others underwent a transition to democracy. Using such gauges as unemployment, real wages, and inflation, she found no statistically significant differences between democratic and authoritarian regimes. Overall, however, the two "old" democracies were the best performers. They did not get as deeply into debt in the first place as did their authoritarian counterparts.

People who are surprised by the success of the Latin democracies, Remmer says, forget several things. Since 1982, democrats and dictators alike have been forced to rely on aid from organizations like the World Bank, which has limited their freedom of choice. But there are also many varieties of democracy, from Peruvian populism to Ecuadorian conservatism, which produce different approaches to economics—and different results. And finally, few popularly-elected leaders in Latin America feel free—or obliged—to buy popularity. Remmer says that they "are aware that the rise and fall of democracy in Latin America have corresponded less to the whims of the voting majority than to the concerted opposition of business and military elites."

A Beur's-Eye View of France

"The 'Beurs,' Children of North-African Immigrants in France: The Issue of Integration" by Azouz Begag, in *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* (Spring 1990), Western Wash. Univ., Bellingham, Wash. 98225.

Two centuries after the Revolution, France is facing a challenge that the partisans of *liberté, égalité, et fraternité* could hardly have imagined: the integration of some three million people of North Afri-

can extraction into French society.

Until the 1980s, France was able to maintain the fiction that the Tunisian, Moroccan, and Algerian immigrants who began arriving during the 1950s were only

temporary visitors. Then, writes Begag, a researcher at the University of Lyon and himself an example of the phenomenon he describes, a second generation, largely born in France, appeared on the scene. These young "Beurs"—the word *rebeu* (Arab) rendered in a slang called *verlan*—obviously are not going to return to North Africa. (Youngsters born of Algerian parents after 1963 even hold French citizenship.) Nor are they well prepared to make a place for themselves in France's highly stratified society. Many are poorly educated; unemployment is high, as is the incidence of crime and poverty.

Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right National Front is only the ugliest manifestation of racial politics in France. After the National Front recently won a parliamentary election in the city of Dreux with 62 percent of the vote, a chastened President François Mitterrand seemed to adapt the racist code-words of the Right when he spoke of such matters as the "too-heavy geographical concentration of immigrants." His performance has not been a profile in courage. Immigrants constitute 30 percent of Dreux's population, but they cannot vote because Mitterrand has not delivered on his 1981 promise to grant them the right to do so in municipal contests. "French public opinion is not ready to accept it," he ex-

plains.

The Beurs themselves are uncertain about their political and cultural identity. Many even reject the term *Beur*. In Lyon, Begag reports, they refer to themselves as "Khokhos" and speak ironically of the "Beur . . . geoisie Parisienne." Many Beurs cling to Islam yet reject their parents' norms. On the other hand, many young men seem to favor stricter supervision of their sisters than their fathers do. "Controlling the mobility of females appears to be, in the males' minds, a means of preserving identity." As a result, Begag says, French-Arab girls, or *Beurettes*, are excelling in school to escape family control.

The question for the Beurs is whether to pursue integration as individuals—symbolized by the likes of actress Isabelle Adjani and tennis star Yannick Noah—or as a political group. In March 1989, the limited efforts of a group called France-Plus helped 390 of the 572 Beurs running for municipal offices under various party flags win election. More promising, in Begag's view, was the victory of two *Beurettes* in the June 1989 elections to the European Parliament. Ultimately, he says, the Beurs will have to look to the European Community and a vision of a "multi-cultural European space," not to France, for answers to their grievances.

O, Africa!

"But What About Africa?" by Richard J. Barnet, in *Harper's* (May 1990), 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012.

Gloom hangs over Western Africa specialists. "Feeling the burden of the Hippocratic oath—First, do no harm!"—writes Barnet, of Washington's Institute for Policy Studies, "these disillusioned aid givers wonder whether it is not time to cut back, scale down, go home."

The reasons for their loss of heart are painfully obvious. Of the continent's 650 million people, at least 280 million are poor, and most of the most wretchedly poor live in sub-Saharan Africa. "Corruption, mismanagement, and the persistence of tribal politics all conspire to direct well-meant subsidies into the wrong pockets,"

Barnet says. The region has the fastest growing population in the world, but a total gross domestic product only about the size of Belgium's! The entire continent accounts for only three percent of world trade. "Marginalization," not exploitation, is now its chief peril, Barnet says, especially now that erstwhile Cold Warriors can ignore the Marxist regimes in Ethiopia and Mozambique and "doctors of development" are turning their attention to the economies of Eastern Europe.

In Africa, these "doctors"—from the World Bank and other institutions—have learned from past mistakes. Instead of