

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 "multicultural 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

funding government megaprojects, they are supporting “grassroots” development by non-governmental organizations. But in Kenya, which Barnet visited, people were pessimistic. Outsiders, they say, “do not, really cannot, comprehend the centrality of tribal politics, which affects almost every intervention into the economy.”

Now, says Barnet, many people on both the Right and the Left (of which he is a prominent member) pin their hopes on

what the conservative Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto calls the “informal sector”—the poor mechanics, furniture-makers, and others who elude government regulation, corruption, and harassment. Ultimately, the hope is that they will become politicized, creating a wellspring of “democratic energy,” as in Eastern Europe. Barnet concedes this is very uncertain, but none of it will come to pass if the West turns its back on Africa.

At the Mao Museum

A less-than-reverent visit to Mao Zedong’s birthplace is described by journalist Murray Sayle in the Australian magazine, *Quadrant* (Jan–Feb. 1990).

[The house] stands on the side of a small valley running up into pine-clad mountains from the main square of Shaoshan village, a walk of no more than 20 minutes. There is a car and a bus-park nearby, empty when we were there, and the last hundred meters is a foot-path lined with what the French call bondieuserie: stalls selling Mao medallions, Mao tiepins, Mao thermometers (in glass cases with a picture of the Great Helmsman pasted inside), Mao singlets, Mao rulers in inches and centimeters, Mao pencils, and—clearly diversification to save floundering business—postcards of Chinese pop stars and movie actresses . . .

When [photographer René] Burri and I asked for the Little Red Book we were met only with embarrassed smiles and giggles, and offered, instead, a rare collector’s item, a set of Mao Zedong cuff-links. René, a snappy dresser, snapped them up.

The Birthplace is well worth a visit for what it tells us about the future Chairman and his family. The present farmhouse is a replica, the origi-

nal having been burned down by the Japanese . . . during their first attempt to build a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, but the replacement, we are told, repeats the original plan.

It stands opposite the tranquil duck pond in which, we are told, the infant Mao learnt to swim, acquiring the form with which he later dazzled the world while allegedly crossing the Yangtze at Wuhan. The house is by far the biggest in the neighborhood in which no less than 17 other families, all named Mao and distant relatives, continue to live, manure their exquisite rice-paddies, and flourish. None of them, however, has the colonnaded courtyard with lily pool, the summer and winter kitchens, the separate bedrooms and grain store of the Mao residence. Young Mao was, in short, the richest kid in the village. When we further learnt that his father was exactly the kind of hard, tight-fisted, clever-with-money and upwardly mobile type

of capitalist entrepreneur so admired by Margaret Thatcher and Robert Hawke, and we hear that this boorish domestic tyrant abused Mao’s sensitive mother and her studiously-inclined eldest son, we do not need the help of Austrian doctors to explain to us the psycho-dynamics of much recent Chinese history.

