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# Refugee and exile publishing in Western Europe

By Michael W. Albin

*Chief, Order Division  
Library of Congress*

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This paper summarizes the results of field work on refugee and exile publishing in certain Western European countries. Using the opportunity provided by a grant from ACRL's Western European Studies Section, with funds from the Martinus Nijhoff Company of The Hague, I attempted to make two modest contributions to the study of an off-the-beaten-track aspect of library acquisitions from Europe. First, I wanted to form some generalizations about acquisitions in U.S. libraries of this kind of fugitive publishing (I use the double meaning intentionally). Second, I wanted to ground these generalizations on field work in Western Europe. The remarks that follow are based on that field survey, completed in March 1988. I studied Surinamese publishing in the Netherlands and Afghan and Iranian refugee publishing in West Berlin and Switzerland. I also called on various international organizations in Geneva.<sup>1</sup>

There is a type of European publication so obscure that its presence is barely detectable in American research libraries, even though its sponsorship and subject matter are of utmost contemporary concern. I refer to the literature of Third World migrants to Western Europe. This body of publishing is difficult to identify in bibliographic sources, unstable and impermanent in organization and duration, extremely difficult for libraries to acquire, and troublesome to preserve because it comes in cheap and insubstantial format. Yet these works contain the raw material for the study of population movements on a grand scale. In some cases migrations can be termed reverse colonization, that is, large-scale movements of peoples from former colonies to the metropole; in others, migration to European countries appears to occur more randomly. In either case migration has momentous human rights, cultural, political, legal, economic, and even military dimensions. It became clear to me that a problem existed while I was working on techniques for improving acquisitions from Africa and the Middle East at my library. I became aware of a category of publishing existing outside the traditional geographic guidelines for selection used by research libraries.

The phenomenon of Third World migrant publishing in Europe as a whole could not be covered

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<sup>1</sup>I wish to acknowledge the help of several colleagues in providing access to special collections and giving other extraordinary assistance: Agnes Peterson and Edward Jajko of the Hoover Institution, Carol Armbruster and Robert Schaaf of the Library of Congress, and Ruth Baache of the Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C. Views expressed in this report are solely my own.

within the scope of a short research grant. It was impossible to cover groups which had been in Europe for decades or guestworkers, who make up the most numerous category of migrants. I limited consideration to refugees in the strict definition established in the 1951 *Convention* and the 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. According to this definition, a refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

Refugee publications have been ignored by American academic libraries for several reasons. First is the difficulty of access to lists, bibliographies, catalogs, etc. Second is the unwillingness of most European booksellers to bother with this material. Third is the unwillingness of most area studies libraries in the U.S. to pay attention to this difficult field at the expense of accomplishing their other duties. Finally, the publishers themselves are often unaware that American research libraries may be interested in their publications and therefore make no effort to promote them beyond the narrow confines of the migrant community for whom they are published.

## Goals

With this as background I proposed to undertake the following tasks while in Europe to study refugee publishing. I had been in touch with numerous area studies specialists in the U.S. regarding the size of the research task and had compiled a long list of refugee organizations and refugee support organizations to canvass. After discussion with colleagues and a review of the meager literature on the subject I set out to accomplish the following objectives.

1. To make a beginning at documentation and description of refugee publishing in Western Europe in order to form estimates of the size of the publishing phenomenon, the types of material being published, distribution patterns, and to recommend improvements for bringing this material to American research libraries.
2. To discover booksellers and other vendors willing and able to supply materials to American libraries.
3. To discover what institutions exist among refugee groups themselves for purposes of research and documentation and which are likely to supply information concerning refugee publishing to American librarians.
4. To discover what refugee support groups exist

whose function is to collect, preserve, and disseminate information about refugees.

## Methods

1. Because refugees to Western Europe come from all areas of the Third World and are found in every Western European country it was clearly impossible for me to cover all ethnic groups in each country. I proposed to visit the offices of selected refugee organizations to learn of their publishing activities and distribution methods and to discuss ways to bring their publications to libraries in this country. Specifically I intended to concentrate on the Surinamese in the Netherlands, the Iranian and Afghan refugees in West Berlin, and international organizations in Switzerland.

2. In each host country there are several institutions with an interest in refugee affairs. In some cases these institutions may include research libraries which receive refugee newsletters, pamphlets, books, etc. There are international agencies as well as private organizations working with refugees. I visited as many of these institutions as possible to determine their perspectives on the acquisition of this material.

3. One of the barriers to acquisition is that few if any mainstream booksellers are willing to supply refugee publications on a regular basis. I called on vendors and exporters to learn how this situation could be improved. I called on less well-known vendors to determine whether they might be interested in providing acquisitions service.

4. The questions I asked during calls on the organizations mentioned above revolved around the following points.

a. *History and present scope of publishing.* Are there lists of current titles or retrospective bibliographies and lists?

b. *Identification of publications.* How does one find out what a given group or association is publishing?

c. *Nature of publishing activity.* Is it native language publication only? Are certain titles issued for the benefit of host country readers? Is publishing popular, scholarly, political, intended for refugee children?

d. *Distribution.* What are the distribution channels: gift, subscription, membership in the organization?

e. *Recommendations.* How is it possible for American libraries to improve their coverage? What costs are involved?

## Preliminary observations

Because the field work covered such a small sample of groups in a limited number of countries I am chary of making even tentative generalizations on the points listed immediately above. Instead, I prefer to use the term "observations" in referring to the preliminary results of the study.

1. *Names and numbers.* There are many ways of studying the phenomenon of expatriate communities, of which the refugee community is a subset. There are as many names for the migration of peoples as there are studies. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development calls this mass movement North-South migration and includes in it guestworkers, asylum seekers, and other categories of expatriate. As fraught with occasion for misinterpretation as the nomenclature is, statistics can be even more confusing. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is most conspicuous in collecting facts and figures pertaining to the world's refugees. The UNHCR *Fact Sheets* published for the past two years attempt to keep track of the size of refugee populations in each country of the world. This is not an easy task because statistics are subject to change with the changing international political environment. The annual figures issued by the UNHCR do not show subdivisions by country of origin. Rather, figures are available only for the number of refugees, undifferentiated by nationality, for each country. Estimates for the number of refugees in some European countries for 1988 are:

France (179,300)  
West Germany (146,100)  
Sweden (130,000)  
United Kingdom (100,000)  
Switzerland (30,200)  
Denmark (30,000)  
Netherlands (24,000)  
Norway (15,000)  
Italy (10,600)<sup>2</sup>

2. *Literature vs. Publishing.* In surveying the groups of Surinamese, Iranians, and Afghans in the three countries I visited I found almost no reference to a stable community of writers in exile. Perhaps my sample was too small or too poorly timed to reveal such trends. Certainly in the past major Iranian authors in exile have contributed importantly to Persian literature. Examples that come immediately to mind are Buzug 'Alavi (1904- ) writing in East Germany and Sadeq Hedayat (1903-1951) writing in France and Switzerland. Nor should we neglect to mention the influential Kaviani Press established in Berlin in 1922. Other exile groups, notably the Palestinians and South Africans, have had a major impact on their respective literatures, and in some cases have attained international stature. In the Netherlands one can point to a couple of success stories among the Surinamese, namely the feminist author Astrid Roemer and Edgar Cairo the novelist. Nonetheless, the contemporary groups have not in general made a literary name for themselves.

3. *Political Groups.* Relative to the foregoing point is the fact that exile writing among the groups

<sup>2</sup>Source: UNHCR "1988 World Map Figures in Alphabetical Order," typescript provided by the UNHCR office in Washington, D.C.

I have studied has been confined in large part to political pamphleteering. It is in the nature of political tracts that they are produced on the spur of the moment and are aimed at specific audiences in the context of specific issues. As pertains to the Surinamese this was confirmed to me by the staff of the Dutch Social Science Information and Documentation Center where I learned that the spate of political publications issued by Ronnie Brunswijk's opposition party in exile dried up when elections were called at home in November 1987. A few additional examples collected recently in Europe and the U.S. underline the point:

- *Iran Liberation*, issued by the People's Mojahedin, an anti-Khomeini group. This periodical is issued in numerous languages and distributed worldwide.
- *Enqilab-i Islami*, issued in Paris by Abu Hasan Bani Sadr, former president of Iran.
- *Afghan Jihad News*, issued in Washington, D.C., by Jamiat-i Islami, one of the principal groups opposing the regime in Kabul.
- *Afghanistan Tribune*, a bimonthly issued by the Federation of Afghan Students (FAS), a Communist organization based in Aachen, West Germany. This is not, strictly speaking, a refugee publication. It is issued by FAS to counter refugee propaganda in Europe.
- *Afghanistan: Passato e Presente*, published six times per year in Florence by a group supporting humanitarian assistance to refugees.

4. *Collecting Refugee Publications.* Since by format and content political tracts usually fall outside the scope of the collecting canons of research libraries, it is unlikely that researchers will find them in these collections. For instance, my research has shown that the Staatsbibliothek Pruessischer Kulturbesitz in West Berlin has turned away from its once lively interest in Iranian exile (especially Kurdish) publishing. The Library of Congress has recently drafted a policy statement recognizing the existence of this sort of material under the draft policy for collecting foreign ethnic publications. According to the draft policy, ephemera, including refugee publications, should be acquired selectively for temporary use or for possible microfilming as a collection. In Geneva, a city I might call the refugee capital of the world, libraries such as those of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UNHCR have little interest in materials published by refugees themselves. My visit to Geneva revealed that the libraries of such private and intergovernmental organizations serve as reference centers for statistics and documents as well as performing the function of institutional archives.

Collecting then becomes the responsibility of individuals or libraries with special interests. Acquisition of refugee and exile newsletters, pamphlets, tracts, broadsides, posters, cassettes, and videos is difficult in the extreme. Recognizing this, most library administrators hesitate to commit their re-

sources. Undoubtedly the task requires an expert knowledge of language and area studies combined with a strong personal or institutional willingness to identify, correspond with, and purchase from an unstable group of publishers. Outstanding collections are few. Hoover Institution is making a name for itself in collecting Iranian exile publications, thanks to the acquisition of the Hitzelberger collection now in the Institution's archives. The University of Texas at Austin has also made an effort to build a strong collection of Iranian exile publications.<sup>3</sup> In Europe one can point to the excellent collection of Afghan materials at Stiftung Bibliotheca Afghanica in Liestal, Switzerland. To refine access to this enormous library of Afghanica, director Paul Bucherer-Dietschi has cooperated with the University of Nebraska at Omaha in preparing a subject thesaurus or "Key to the Systematic Classification of the Subject Catalog of the Bibliotheca Islamica."

5. *Taxonomy.* A full description of the kinds of material I identified or collected on my trip would be too long to recapitulate in this report. In addition to the political titles cited above, I should like to give a few examples of other groups I found in Europe and the U.S.

• Foundation for Iranian Studies, Bethesda, Maryland. Publishes *Irannameh*, a scholarly-literary journal.

• UNHCR. In 1985 it published the *International Bibliography of Refugee Literature (Working Edition)*. This, and other UNHCR bibliographies, concentrates on works *about* refugees rather than works *by* them.

• Comité Afghan d'Aide Humanitaire. This is one of several Afghan refugee or refugee-support groups operating in Europe and the U.S. to provide medical and other help to Afghan refugees, most of whom are in Pakistan. Publishes an annual report.

• *Afghanistan Forum.* This individual initiative offers an important source of political, cultural, and social information on Afghanistan and the status of refugee groups. It is published six times per year in New York City.

• *Kitab-i Sal-Iranian* (Iranian Yellow Pages) is issued in the U.S., but with international coverage of business, political, and social organizations.

• U.S. Committee for Refugees. *Issue Papers* published irregularly since 1982 review the condition of certain large groups of refugees. To date the papers have covered Poles, Cambodians, Afghans, Vietnamese, and Iranians. Other countries have similar organizations, such as the British Refugee Council which publishes an accessions list of documents received in its library. The librarian, Warwick Harris, informed me that his collection contains books, reports, periodicals and newspaper

clippings as well as a small collection of photos and other audio-visual material. Also in Britain is the Queen Elizabeth House at Oxford University. Its ambitious programs are listed in detail in its *Annual Report*.

6. *Considerations for Collections Development.* The few libraries collecting this material do not have to be told of its importance to research. A body of scholarship using refugee publications as primary source documentation is slowly developing.<sup>4</sup> However, most librarians, even area studies specialists, are unaware of the existence of refugee groups and the value of their publications to researchers. Who would not have been a better political scientist had he had access to the tapes and other materials Khomeini smuggled into Iran from exile in France? Anyone who does not refer to the political program (and propaganda) of groups as disparate as the People's Mojahedin or the Afghan Communist fronts in discussion of current politics is shallow and uninformed.

I wonder if library administrators may be forgiven their indifference to refugee publishing. Al-

<sup>4</sup>Recent scholarly articles and books have relied heavily on this "ephemeral" material. A few examples include Hanna Herzog, *Contest of Symbols: The Sociology of Election Campaigns through Israeli Ephemera*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Library, 1987); Valerie Hoffman-Ladd, "Polemics on the Modesty and Segregation of Women in Contemporary Egypt," in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 19, no.1 (February 1987); and Nozar Alaolmulk, "The New Iranian Left," in the *Middle East Journal*, vol. 41, no.2 (Spring 1987).

### Library design award for Annenberg Research Institute

The Philadelphia architecture firm of Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham (GBQC) has been granted an Award of Excellence for Library Architecture from the American Institute of Architects. The winning library design is the Annenberg Research Institute in Philadelphia.

George Qualls, architect of the design, stated that his goals were to "provide the director and his staff with the most convenient arrangement of space for their work, to express this organization in a manner that reflects the scholarly importance of their pursuits, and to place the structure comfortably into its historic Philadelphia setting."

The architectural firm is currently at work on the Futures Center Addition to the Franklin Institute Science Museum. Recent projects include Trexler Library of Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and the new wing of the J. B. Speed Museum of Art in Louisville, Kentucky.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Abazar Sepehri, "Contemporary Non-Serial Persian Publishing in Exile," *Middle East Librarians Association Notes*, no. 45 (Fall 1988): 6-22.

though the study of immigration to Europe has captured the attention of political scientists, sociologists, cultural historians, human rights groups, social workers, and politicians such that a large corpus of literature has grown up on the subject, we librarians have done next to nothing to weigh in

with our particular expertise. We have not identified, collected, or made available through bibliographies these fugitive publications of fugitives. We owe a word of thanks to our colleagues who have chosen not to ignore this literature. ■■

## Unfriendly takeover attempted

Unfriendly takeovers are not a new story. Lately, however, frequent targets are scholarly journals issued by nonprofit publishers, most often university presses. Typically, these journals are underpriced when compared to similar publications by commercial houses. The potential income from increased subscription rates makes these journals attractive takeover candidates for large publishers.

Over the last few years Wayne State University Press has fought off several attempts to take over *Human Biology*, which the press has published for thirty-five years. Science-related journals issued by commercial presses often command high subscription rates. Wayne State charges institutions a modest \$80 per year; the commercial publisher expected to increase the rate to \$300 within three years.

With the full support of WSU, press administrators Robert A. Mandel and Alice M. Nigoghosian fought the attempted takeover. They viewed the actions of the commercial publisher not only as a

threat to *Human Biology*, but ultimately to other journals published by university presses as well.

Libraries, of course, bear the cost in increased rates. In recent years librarians have witnessed skyrocketing rates for serials and they have found themselves making painful choices about renewals. They have been forced to cancel subscriptions to exorbitantly priced publications. The ultimate losers in this financial crunch are researchers, scholars, faculty, and students.

Resolved to do what was necessary to save *Human Biology*, Mandel and Nigoghosian have worked almost a year to fend off the imminent threat. Devoting long hours to develop their strategies, they compiled data and projections to insure the viability of the journal at WSUP. They even prepared documentation in the event that a legal suit might occur. Their efforts met with success—the commercial publisher retreated and decided to begin a competing journal. ■■

## Call for manuscripts

*Library Administration and Management*, as a matter of association policy, is a theme-driven periodical. Themes are selected far enough in advance to allow for the solicitation of appropriate articles. In addition, the editor accepts articles unrelated to specific themes, but of general interest to the readership of *LA&M*. Unsolicited manuscripts are submitted to the refereeing process and, if accepted for publication, are included in a section "Editor's Selection."

Following are the themes for the remaining issues of 1989 *Library Administration and Management*:

- Tinker, Tailor, Librarian, Archivist—Summer 1989 (discusses the variety of professions in libraries and people who work in libraries but who are not librarians, e.g., archivists, business managers, conservators, systems analysts, PR experts, etc.).

- Crunching Numbers Creatively—Fall 1989 (addresses use of quantitative techniques of management to develop decision support and management information systems, including practical application of statistics, data gathering, and potential innovations in MIS/DSS using computers).

In 1990 for the first time *Library Administration and Management* will have an annual theme—Compassionate/Humanistic Management—which will be woven into the themes for the individual issues. This experiment, using an over-arching theme, should provide continuity for the year's work. The themes for the individual 1990 issues of *LA&M* are as follows:

- Team Development and Management—Winter 1990 (discusses the appropriate applications of the use of the "team" approach to improve operations, services, and productivity).

- Buildings and equipment—Spring 1990 (discusses anew the issues related to space and facility planning and use, and the recent innovations in equipment for both staff and patron use).

- Automation and the Workplace—Summer 1990 (discusses the ways in which automation has transformed library training, work, and services, albeit not library organizations).

- Reward Systems, Carrots or Sticks—Fall 1990 (explores the methods for improving individual and staff performance by explicit intervention and the use of management systems aimed at changing the work environment). ■■