

REFUGEES IN THE PAST

Throughout history, a great number of people or entire populations all around the world left their homes to escape persecution, armed conflicts and violence.

Exile has always been one of the most dramatic events in human life. Refugees are people like us, people who, before being forced to flee, had a family, a house, a job.

History has given us famous examples of people who during their lifetime have sought refuge away from their country of origin.

Even the most civilized countries, with a well-educated citizens and liberal-minded governments, have gone through times of darkness when some of their people have been forced to leave their homeland to escape persecution, mostly political and/or racial.

Before Unification whoever was against the policy of the government was forced to go abroad, exiled or sent to prison. This happened to famous people such as Dante Alighieri or Niccolò Machiavelli

Dante Alighieri's life is closely linked to the events of Florentine political life. At the time of Dante the Guelph party was divided into two factions: the whites and the blacks. When, in 1295, Dante began his political career, he joined the White Guelphs because they were against of policy of the Blacks who supported Pope Boniface VIII's expansionism. Dante was also the promoter of many laws that hindered the pontiff and for this reason Boniface VIII began to persecute him. When the Blacks took over Florence with the papal support, Dante was attacked with false accusations, and in 1304 he was sentenced to exile. He continued his exile in the Veneto region and then in Lunigiana. As the poet felt he was completely innocent, he refused to accept such humiliation and chose to remain in exile. He spent the last years of his life in Verona and then in Ravenna, where he died. The tomb of Dante is located in Ravenna.

DANTE ALIGHIERI



He is one of the most important figures in the history of Italian literature. He began his political career in the government of the Florentine Republic after the fall of Girolamo Savonarola. Because of his unpopular Republican ideals and friendship with Soderini, the return of the Medici after eighteen years of exile meant for Machiavelli exemption from office, confinement for a year within the area under Medici rule and, in 1513, prison and torture on suspicion of having taken part in a plot against the Medici. It was during his exile that he wrote his most important work: *The Prince*. His intention was to dedicate the work to the holder of power in the Medici family hoping to regain the post of Secretary of the Republic. The main theme of this short work about monarchical rule and survival is man's capacity for determining his own destiny, and Machiavelli argues that one may resort to any means in order to establish and preserve total authority.

In his later years, Niccolò Machiavelli resided in a small village just outside of Florence. He died on June 21, 1527 and his tomb is in the church of Santa Croce in Florence, which, ironically, he was forbidden to enter during the last years of his life.

NICCOLO' MACHIAVELLI

