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UPROOTING AND CONSEQUENCES

Introduction

Ogenga Otunnu

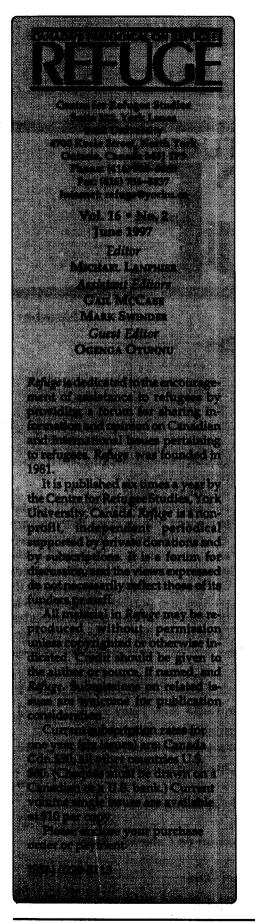
In the last few years, millions of victims of political violence have been uprooted from their homes. Many of these people perished while seeking asylum. Those who survived, continue to languish without basic human needs and human rights. As this river of human blood, tears and trauma claims more victims, the international community adopts numerous resolutions, passively screams "never again!", tightens refugee deterrence policies and withdraws basic assistance to asylum seekers.

This issue of *Refuge* discusses the plights of those who have been violently uprooted from their homes. The first article, by Professor Asha Hans, chronicles how rape is used as an instrument of war and humiliation against Sri Lankan Tamil women in the ensuing violent crisis in Sri Lanka. The status, identities of crossing borders, trauma and resilience of Sri Lankan Tamil women in India are also examined (see also, "Special Issue on Sri Lanka," *Refuge* 13.3, June 1993). The next article, by Steven Weine and Dolores Vojvoda, discusses the traumatic effects of ethnic cleansing on two Bosnian refugee women who fled with their families to the United States. The evolving experiences of the refugee women in both the private and public domains are carefully highlighted. Like Asha Hans, the two medical doctors focus on identity and status of the women in the country of asylum. The next article, by Jennifer Hyndman, examines the culture, practices and policies of dominant humanitarian organizations in providing assistance to refugees. The article, which is based on an extensive field research in Kenya and interviews with UNHCR officials in Geneva, shows some of the contradictions inherent in the ambiguously articulated efforts of "turning" a refugee camp into a community. A rigorous analysis of the implications of the policies and practices on gender relations in the camps is then provided. Once more, the tensions within and

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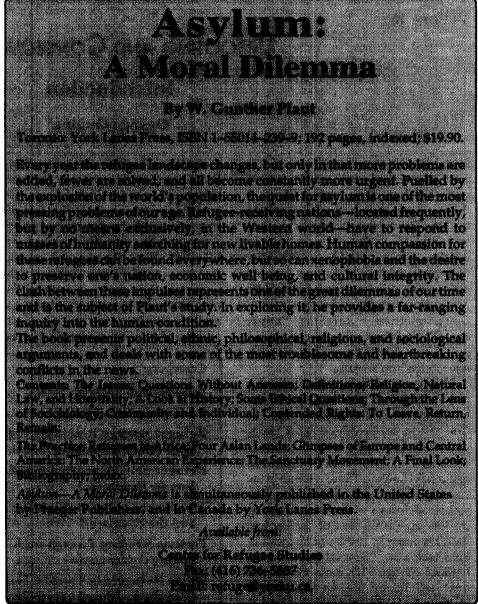
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between policies and practice is shown. This is followed by Veronica Nmoma's article on the violent conflict and mass displacement in Sierra Leone. Here, some of the causes of the conflict and attempts to resolve them through negotiated settlements are described. The article also highlights one of the myths of asylum in Africa: while at least a million Sierra Leoneans were internally displaced and hundreds of thousands became refugees in the neighboring countries, including Liberia, tens of thousands of Liberian refugees sought asylum in Sierra Leone. Since the article was written, the Foday Sonkoh's Revolutionary

United Front signed the Abidjan Peace Agreement in November 1996. However, the relative stability that followed the agreement in the war torn country was rudely shattered by Major Johnny Paul Karoma's coup on May 25, 1997. As in the past, many people were killed and many more have been uprooted. The last article, by Edward Opoku-Dapaah, suggests how Canada might improve its responses to the growing refugee crisis.

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