

The government's annual report to Parliament on immigration levels was filed at the beginning of November, 1982. Enough time has passed to analyze the government's changes in refugee policy.

What were the changes? Why were they made? This article will deal with the decrease in refugee intake and the redistribution of the allocation of that reduced figure among the refugee producing areas. Other changes, such as special humanitarian programs, alterations in refugee status determination and reductions in the financial assistance to refugee claimants, will be dealt with in future articles.

The Canadian government's planned refugee intake for 1983 has been reduced from 14,000 to 12,000, but funding has only been approved for 10,000 refugees in 1983. This year, the 2,000 contingency reserve is unfunded; cabinet will be required to approve both the number of places allocated from this contingency and the required funding. Thus, although the planned figure has been reduced by 15%, the budgeted figure has been reduced by almost 30%.

Presumably, the cabinet refused to give a blank cheque for the contingency figure in order, through control mechanisms, to effectively reduce the intake figure by more than 2,000 unless the need was absolutely demonstrated. What is the explanation for reducing the planning figure? "With employment and housing shortages, we cannot absorb as many as when the economy is stronger." In 1938 we kept out refugees because of prejudice.<sup>1</sup> Forty-five years later we reduce the intake because of economics.

One must look at the figures closely to understand just how great the reduction has been. In 1980, the actual intake of government-sponsored refugees was 19,000. For 1981, the planned intake was 16,000 (including a 2,500 contingency reserve of which 1,000 was assigned to Eastern Europe and 200 to Africa). The actual intake was almost 25% below the planned intake. If the same pattern follows through in 1983, the actual intake will only be 9,000 government-sponsored refugees, a decline of over 50% from 1980 and of 25% from 1981.

Perhaps there is less need for Canada to admit more, or even as many, refugees as in 1980 or 1981. If demand declines then it is appropriate that we take fewer refugees.

Demand must be understood by region. The 1979 and 1980 allocations for Indochinese were exceptional, but the planned intake was 8,000 for 1981, 4,000 for 1982 and 3,000 for 1983. The planned intake has effectively dropped by 25% from last year and by 62.5% from the year before without any comparison to the peak years of 1979 and 1980. The explanation is reduced resettlement needs of the refugees left in the camps, reduced outflows of "boat people" from the refugee-producing countries, and a very large intake quota of 170,000 for the U.S.<sup>2</sup> In other words, there are fewer coming in to the camps, large numbers continue to leave (for the United States), and the needs of the residual refugees left in the camps have declined. They have the basic necessities of life and their lives are not in danger.

What are the facts? If we compare Nov. 30, 1981 to Nov. 30, 1982 we find the following figures:

	Nov. 30, 1981	Nov. 20, 1982	% Decline
No. of refugees in camps and processing centres	239,657	194,796	18
No. of new arrivals	99,636 (Dec. 20)	47,115	53
No. of departures	168,501 (Dec. 30)	71,641	56

The decline in departures is occurring at a faster rate than the number of arrivals. The effect is that, although the resettlement plans are keeping pace with intake, the rate of reduction in the residual numbers of refugees in the camps is declining. In other words, the refugees in the camps will have longer and longer waiting periods before they are resettled. Since the psychological and, hence, economic costs increase as the refugees become more and more conditioned to camp life, it is both false economy and inhumane to reduce the intake of Indochinese refugees into Canada. As the number of new arrivals declines, we should be emptying the camps much more quickly and not more slowly. Further, given the actual number of departures for all countries, a high American

quota is irrelevant since the American system depends on the work and resources of private agencies combined with government funding to back up their plans.

Further, by doing less and using as an excuse the fact that the physical lives of the Indochinese are not in danger (though their psychological and social lives are), Canada is offering an open invitation to Thailand to carry out its threats. If Canada increasingly sponsors refugees only if their lives are threatened, may we not expect local governments to begin threatening refugees' lives?

The allocation for Eastern Europe has been reduced from a planned intake of 6,000 to 3,000 because fewer Eastern Europeans (primarily Poles) in Western Europe will need permanent resettlement in 1983. But the Eastern European planned intake for 1981 was 4,000 before the crisis in Poland even emerged. The other reason for the total reduction is

that the Soviet Union has clamped down on the numbers of Jews permitted to leave. Finally, there is a well settled Eastern European population in Canada who can and do utilize private sponsorship, family reunification under relaxed criteria and normal family class programs to bring in Eastern Europeans. The reduction in the Eastern European planned intake thus seems reasonable.

When we move to Canada's admission policy with respect to refugees from Latin and Central America, the problem is not one of planned intake, but rather, of actual numbers admitted. In 1981, the planned intake was 1,000, but only 132 government-sponsored refugees arrived. In 1982 the planned intake remained the same (1,000) but it has been doubled for

1983 to 2,000. This reflects Canada's leading role (prompted by the Canadian churches) in refugee protection in Central America, and the fact that "Canada is at present the only resettlement country actually engaged in resettling Central American refugees." The Canadian government's intentions for the area must be applauded, although final audits must await the assessment of actual intake figures.

Planned intakes for Africa and the Middle East have been doubled from 500 to 1,000 and 400 to 800 respectively. The African quota reflects increasing recognition that, for selected refugees among the millions in Africa, local solutions are not feasible if the lives of the refugees in countries of first asylum are endangered.

The same explanation for the increased allocation to the Middle East has been offered, with the Baha'is in Iran cited specifically for their endangered position. But the explanation is peculiar since; (1) the Baha'is who have come have been sponsored at no cost to the government by private sponsors in the Canadian Baha'i community and, (2) the Baha'is who are sponsored are ones stranded abroad, for the Baha'is truly in danger cannot get out of Iran.<sup>3</sup> The Other groups specifically noted are Christian minorities and the Lebanese victims of civil war and invasion. In the latter case, the primary victims have not been Lebanese but Muslim Palestinians.

However, no concerted program has been launched to assist in the resettlement of homeless Palestinians in Lebanon who have been refugees for decades and for whom permanent settlement with citizenship seems as remote as ever.

Our tentative report card on the policy and numbers is as follows: The reductions in the East European allocation seem reasonable; the increases for Latin and Central America and for Africa are commendable although we await to see if the actual number of landings are consistent with the plans. The Middle East allocations seem inadequate, even though doubled; and the background explanation given for the targeted group is quite inadequate, suggesting policy on Middle Eastern refugees is confused. The continuing reduction in the government sponsorship of Indochinese refugees seems premature. We would be far better to sponsor more at an early stage investing more monies in proper language and training schemes until the economy improves. This not only provides employment for Canadians now, but prevents more money being spent later on the psychological support services that may well be needed.

*The total allocation should not have been reduced. The planned number of Indochinese refugees should have remained at the 4,000 level. A greater increase should have been provided for*

*the Middle East, with particular attention to the Muslim Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.*

<sup>1</sup>cf. *None is Too Many*, H. Troper and I. Abella. Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd. Toronto. 1982.

<sup>2</sup>The year is not cited. Presumably the U.S. quota refers to 1983. In fact, the 1983 U.S. intake quota for Indochinese refugees is 64,000. The total U.S. refugee intake quota for 1983 is 90,000. (Figures obtained from the Statistical Analysis Branch of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.)

<sup>3</sup>cf. *Refugee*, Vol. 2, No. 2, December 1983.

**From a Speech Delivered  
by Lloyd Axworthy,  
Canada's Minister of  
Employment and  
Immigration to the Standing  
Committee on Labour,  
Manpower and Immigration,  
December 2, 1982**

"The combined sponsorship of the government and the private sponsors of this country have brought out some 5,000 refugees from that camp (Traiskirchen) alone, which amounts to a total of 10,000 Polish nationals who have been given the right to come to Canada to become citizens. On a per capita basis, we have accepted more Poles than any other country in the world during the past year."

"I have also given an incentive to the private sector to sponsor more refugees. I recently announced measures which will make training allowances available to group-sponsored refugees on language or skill courses sponsored by the CEIC. This will provide an average of 20 weeks allowance per refugee family, easing the burden on sponsoring groups who would otherwise have to pay maintenance and lodging during this time."

"It now costs an average of \$2,633 per refugee to provide the necessary services, an increase of \$646 over the original budget forecast — an increase of \$646 for every refugee receiving assistance through AAP (Adjustment Assistance Program)."

**Indochinese Refugees Arrivals Decline:  
Departures Decline Even More**

According to United Nations sources, there was a significant decline during 1982 in numbers of Indochinese refugees arriving in Southeast Asia over 1981 figures. As of Nov. 30, 1982, there has been a 30% decline in arrivals by boat and a 78% decline in overland arrivals in Thailand. The reasons cited for the reduced numbers included changing conditions in countries of origin, dif-

ficulties in organizing departures, fear of attacks by pirates and the imposition of stricter asylum conditions.

But the rate of resettlement has fallen off even more sharply — a 56% drop from 1981 totals. As a result, approximately 195,000 Indochinese refugees were still confined at the end of 1982.

UNHCR December, 1982