



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGEE

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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 or-

ganizations 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

CONTENTS:

Introduction <i>Ogenga Otunnu</i>	1
Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee Women in India <i>Asha Hans</i>	3
Refugee Women Resettling in the United States at Mid-Life after Ethnic Cleansing <i>Stevan M. Weine and Dolores Vojvoda</i>	10
Refugee Self-Management and the Question of Governance <i>Jennifer Hyndman</i>	16
The Sierra Leone Conflict: The Plight of Refugees and the Displaced <i>Veronica Nmoma</i>	23
Persons Needing Protection: A Reflection on Canada's Role <i>Edward Opoku-Dapaah</i>	29
Polish Refugees in Canada: Statistical Data <i>Compiled by Edward Opoku-Dapaah</i>	32

REFUGEE

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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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Asylum: A Moral Dilemma

By W. Guntler Plaut

Toronto: York Lakes Press, ISBN 1-55014-339-2, 192 pages, indexed; \$19.90.

Every year the refugee landscape changes, but only in that more problems are added, fewer are solved, and all become constantly more urgent. Fuelled by the explosion of the world's population, the quest for asylum is one of the most pressing problems of our age. Refugee-receiving nations—located frequently, but by no means exclusively, in the Western world—have to respond to masses of humanity searching for new livable homes. Human compassion for these refugees can be found everywhere, but so can xenophobia and the desire to preserve one's nation, economic well being, and cultural integrity. The clash between these impulses represents one of the great dilemmas of our time and is the subject of Plaut's study. In exploring it, he provides a far-ranging inquiry into the human condition.

The book presents political, ethnic, philosophical, religious, and sociological arguments, and deals with some of the most troublesome and heartbreaking conflicts in the news.

Contents: The Issues; Questions Without Answers; Definitions; Religion, Natural Law, and Hospitality; A Look at History; Some Ethical Questions Through the Lens of Sociology; Community and Individual; Contested Rights: To Leave, Return, Remain.

The Practice: Refugees in Africa; Four Asian Lands; Gypsies of Europe and Central America; The North American Experience; The Sanctuary Movement; A Final Look; Bibliography; Index.

Asylum—A Moral Dilemma is simultaneously published in the United States by Praeger Publishers, and in Canada by York Lakes Press.

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