



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES REFUGE

Volume 16

Number 2

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

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Vol. 16 • No. 2
June 1997

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Refuge is dedicated to the encouragement of assistance to refugees by providing a forum for sharing information and opinion on Canadian and international issues pertaining to refugees. *Refuge* was founded in 1981.

It is published six times a year by the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Canada. *Refuge* is a non-profit, independent periodical supported by private donations and by subscriptions. It is a forum for discussion, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of its funders or staff.

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Current subscription rates for one year (six issues) are: Canada Cdn.\$50; all other countries U.S. \$60. (Cheques must be drawn on a Canadian or a U.S. bank.) Current volume single issues are available at \$10 per copy.

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ISSN 0229-5113

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. Gunther Plaut

Toronto: York Lanes Press, ISBN 1-55014-239-9; 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 Sociobiology; Community and Individual; Contended Rights: To Leave, Return, Remain;

The Practice; Refugees in Africa; Four Asian Lands; Glimpses 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 Lanes Press.

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