



# CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES REFUGE

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## SPECIAL ISSUE ON CHILD REFUGEES

### The Children in Exile: Struggle in Assisting Persecuted Children

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During the last decade, UNICEF reports in "The State of the World's Children 1996," war and political upheaval in the world have killed approximately two million children, disabled four to five million children, left twelve million children homeless and an estimated additional ten million children psychologically traumatized.<sup>1</sup> Few of the surviving children ever make it to a safe country like Canada and even then they are not beyond trauma.

It was the Dutch psychoanalyst Hans Keilson who introduced the idea of sequential traumatization to the field of mental health and provided us with a new way to conceptualize resettlement policies and their influences on the wellbeing of child survivors. In a follow-up study of Jewish war orphans in the Netherlands, he not only documented the impact of massive trauma due to political persecution but he also took an interest in the postwar lives of the surviving children and examined the consequences of decisions that were made for them and the influences of different recovery environ-

ments on their development. For this purpose, Keilson distinguished three traumatic sequences: first, the occupation of the Netherlands, the beginning of the terror waged on the Jewish population, and the onslaughts on the social and mental integrity of Jewish families; secondly, the period of direct persecution—deportation of parents

and children, separation of mother and child, going into hiding, detention in concentration camps; and thirdly, the postwar period during which the main issue was that of appointing guardians.

Keilson showed that "not only the period during which the actual disaster takes place (second traumatic

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