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# CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

# REFUGEE

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October 1990

## REFUGEES AROUND THE GLOBE

Refugees are a global problem. Sometimes, *Refuge* focuses on Canadian resettlement, policy or legal issues. At other times, we focus on regions - Afghanistan for example. A forthcoming *Refuge* will concentrate on the Horn of Africa.

In this issue, we provide a potpourri. The articles range from problems in the backlog to the plight of Somali refugees, Armenians in the Soviet Union and displaced refugees in the Gulf.

Our first article by Edward Opoku-Dapaah provides a critical commentary

on the current system for assessing individuals in the refugee backlog. The criticism is mild compared to the recent salvo of the Canadian Council of Churches which accused the government of perpetuating the worst human rights abuses since the internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II, worse presumably than the arrest of hundreds during the October crisis twenty years ago. Arul Aruliah analyzes the new refugee determination process not only to suggest we are creating a new "frontlog", but to suggest creative

reforms to ensure the process remains both expeditious and fair.

What becomes clear in Helga Kutz-Harder's article is that the First World countries are meeting the challenge of new refugees by trying to raise their drawbridges and manning battle stations. Increasingly restrictive measures are likely to be the order of the day.

Yet areas emerge each day producing new waves of refugees - the Soviet Union, the Gulf. Academics are responding to these problems with more research, more conferences and more information, most of which reinforce positions adopted by those in the non-governmental and international sectors working to advance the cause of refugees. The two conferences at Oxford on Displaced Persons and Nutrition, the Singapore conference on migration, the York conference dealing with Africa and with the Limits to Obligation, all attest to this increased attention.

If only words were deeds.

*Howard Adelman, Editor*

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**LETTERS:**

**ON SPONSORSHIP**

*"... there was a difference in perception when Poles or Ukrainians in Europe advance funds to Canada to facilitate their own sponsorships. Whereas some federal officials viewed this as a corrupt practice totally at odds with the intent of private sponsorship, Eastern Europeans saw this as a guarantee of successful reestablishment at great saving to Canadians."*

*[Refuge, Vol.9 No. 4]*

**Fortune and Fame on the Back of Refugees?**

To the Editor:

You appear to intimate that Ukrainian Immigrant Aid groups are involved in corrupt sponsorship practices and have connected us with questionable procedures used by other groups. This is without basis in fact.

For your information our organization co-ordinates cross-Canada sponsorships and has, over the past 18 years, established a system that successfully eliminates immigration lawyers, immigration consultants or any academics that attempt to make their fortune/fame on the backs of unfortunate refugees.

We request that you retract/delete such statements.

*B. A. Mykytiuk, President, Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society*

*• Editor's Note: There was no intention to suggest that the Ukrainian immigrant or any other immigrant aid group was involved in corrupt sponsorship practices. The statement was merely that such allegations had been made. The reference to "corrupt" did not imply illegal behaviour but alleged practice contrary to the intent of the legislation. In any case, upon reflection, it would have been preferable to delete the phrase from the report.*

**CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES**

**REFUGE**

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**IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD**

STATISTICS PERIOD: JANUARY 1 - JUNE 30, 1990

**INITIAL HEARINGS**

	Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	B.C.	National
Claims initiated	406	3468	5961	285	862	10982
Adjourned/postponed	0	143	449	24	24	642
Withdrawn/Abandoned	0	22	48	9	24	103
Decisions rendered	406	3301	5464	252	814	10237

**OF THESE DECISIONS**

Claims rejected:						
Eligibility	1	3	11	0	2	17
Credible basis	51	96	193	38	33	411
To Full Hearing	354	3202	5260	214	779	9609

**FULL HEARING STAGE**

Claims heard to completion	169	2540	3438	201	519	6867
Decisions rendered	129	2207	2874	173	406	5789
Claims rejected	85	498	416	15	176	1190
Claims upheld	44	1709	2458	158	230	4599
Withdrawn/abandoned	2	26	53	6	26	113
Decisions pending *	44	367	611	30	123	1175
Claims pending **	239	3202	6383	175	785	10784

\* Decisions pending include all claims heard to completion since January 1, 1989 for which no decision had been rendered by the end of the reporting period.

\*\* Claims pending include all claims referred to the CRDD full hearing stage, that have not been finalized (i.e. by a positive or negative decision or by withdrawal or abandonment) as of the end of the reporting period.

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## NEW REFUGEE INTERVIEWS FOR HUMANITARIAN AND COMPASSIONATE CONSIDERATIONS: COSMETICS AND REALITIES

Edward Opoku-Dapaah,  
Department of Sociology, York University

The past decade saw an unprecedented increment in the number of asylum seekers in Canada creating backlogs in the processing of claims. On December 28th, 1988, the Federal Minister of Immigration and Employment, Hon. Barbara McDougall announced there were approximately 85,000 backlog refugee cases; current estimates place the volume at 100,000. In order to handle the immense volume of applications, the Federal government established a new refugee determination system effective from January 1989, under Bill C-55.

Claimants appear before a special two-person panel, composed of an adjudicator and a member of the refugee division of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), who must both agree to reject a claim. If either panel member determines a credible basis for a claim, the applicant will be allowed to apply for permanent residence. Before attending the panel hearings, however, refugee claimants have to attend interviews to have their cases initially assessed by immigration officers, to determine whether there exist any humanitarian and compassionate grounds for accepting their claims.

In the light of a recent Federal Court decision that such refugee interviews were inadequate for the consideration of potential claimants on "humanitarian" and "compassionate" grounds, the Refugee Backlog Clearance Centre has been compelled to arrange new interviews. The importance of such a move cannot be underestimated. Canada is committed to guaranteeing all refugee claimants a fair hearing. Among many other things, the assessment for humanitarian and compassionate grounds ensures that refugee claims which possess these ingredients will be dealt with fast enough to enable the board

to save time and resources for dealing with the tremendous backlog.

However, after interviews with clients who have appeared before this new review process, our impression is that it not only lacks the crucial

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*"... this acceptance record is terribly inappropriate, and a woeful indication of the sorrowful state of the new interviews. The low acceptance rate creates the embarrassing illusion that the cases of these clients are profoundly inadequate for consideration on humanitarian grounds."*

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characteristics which can adequately ensure consideration on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, but also serves as a calculated attempt to dress up the whole process of refugee determination while masking the inherent contradictions.

Of the 2,395 clients who appeared at the new interviews between late March and late May, 1990, only 587 of them were accepted. This might appear acceptable to some commentators. However, to us this acceptance record is terribly inappropriate, and a woeful indication of the sorrowful state of the new interviews. The low acceptance rate creates the embarrassing illusion that the cases of these clients are profoundly inadequate for consideration on humanitarian grounds. In our estimation, it is the very nature and structure of these

interviews which impede the acceptability of clients.

Our focus in this article is the examination of these new interviews in order to bring out the inherent weakness and its unsuitability for consideration of refugee claimants on both humanitarian and compassionate grounds. First, the summons to these interviews state: "Interpreters will not be provided. Should you require language assistance please bring a friend or relative to interpret for you." Implicitly the Refugee Determination Board is declaring that it is not its responsibility to ensure that clients who are not proficient in English will understand the proceedings. Taking into consideration that English is not the first language of an overwhelming majority of such clients, such a practice makes nonsense of the mandate of the whole interview - "consideration of clients on the basis of humanitarian and compassionate grounds". For those clients who do not have friends or relatives who can adequately and appropriately provide translation under satisfactory terms, the only alternative is to sit through the session without grasping the main import of a crucial determination of their fate.

Secondly, the sessions have been hasty, rushed and short-lived. A typical session runs for fifteen minutes. This is too compressed to realistically consider the fate of people on the basis of humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Clients we interviewed for this article stated that since the whole session is so short it is not worth paying over \$500 to solicit services of a lawyer. The structure of the supposedly fair interviews has become a fetter discouraging solicitation of legal representation, a crucial aspect of justice and fairness.

Clients appearing before the board have to submit prepared reasons stating why they should be considered on the two counts. The Immigration Officer reads this and proceeds to question the client about any possible criminal record, whether the client's parents are alive, and issues concerning the person's economic activities. Clients are restrained from stating their reasons for seeking refugee status, since this is not a full hearing session. The Officer closes the interview upon his determination whether the client's case is inadequate and should move to the full hearing.

We have several concerns with the whole operation. What specifically forms

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*"Our concern here is that unless the essential reality of a particular client's circumstances is taken into consideration, assessment on the basis of some generalised and preconceived guidelines will unavoidably lead to their unfair treatment."*

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the basis for consideration on humanitarian and compassionate grounds? If the clients are forbidden from stating their motivation for seeking refuge in Canada, what else could form the basis for determining their eligibility or consideration on humanitarian and compassionate grounds? If the assessment places much premium on financial and job security, what will be the fate of those who had to wait for so long for a work permit? If the family is assigned enormous importance, would not it be disadvantageous to those who have not been able to bring their family here? Similarly if the degree of integration to the Canadian social environment is over-stressed, those who have not been in this country long enough will suffer.

We are not trying to trivialize or downplay the importance of these social factors. Where the consideration for compassionate and humanitarian grounds is unclear, officials in control might emphasize certain requirements as against others, or they might use their own discretion leading to the rejection of many applicants. Our concern here is that unless the essential reality of a particular client's circumstances is taken into consideration, assessment on the basis of some generalised and preconceived guidelines will unavoidably lead to their unfair treatment. It appears the whole process dwells too much on drawing implications from very little information, misjudgment and miscalculation. If a client's motive for seeking refuge is not the fundamental basis for establishing his or her eligibility, for consideration on compassionate grounds, then why should not the interview be called off?

On the basis of the above concerns raised here we would like to recommend that drastic changes be made in these humanitarian and compassionate reviews to enable it to befit its title. First, it is only appropriate that adequate measures be taken to ensure that two way communications between clients and officials be established to allow for comprehension of the proceedings. This necessitates the provision of interpreters in required circumstances. Secondly, it is ridiculous that such a process should be rushed through. Sufficient time should be allocated to each case to facilitate a determined search for ingredients and potentialities which will qualify the client for consideration. Lastly, we deem it absolutely necessary that the factors forming the basis of these humanitarian reviews be outlined, explained and justified to enable claimants to know the criteria for judging. In the absence of all the above, the humanitarian and compassionate review has become symptomatic of an act put on to glorify and celebrate a supposedly humanistic refugee determination process, while, in reality, clients are faced with a fast-paced and incomprehensible exercise, merely carried out to satisfy the Federal Court's ruling. □

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE IMMIGRATION MINISTER

Dear Ms. McDougall:

Several members of the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees were at York University on Sunday May 27th 1990 to hear you raise important questions in your speech at the Refugee Policy Conference dinner. The questions you raised are timely and deserve an equally serious response.

### Southeast Asia - Comprehensive Plan of Action

We have supported the government in its efforts to arrive at a negotiated solution to the refugee situation in Southeast Asia. We share your reservations about the adequacy of the determination procedures. The Canadian policy debate has put great emphasis on a good hearing for the initial determination. This view should be shared in Asia to ensure informed independent decision making at the first stage.

### International Solutions

Protecting and providing solutions for the world's refugees are, as you say, beyond the means of any one country. However, it is only fair to point out that if the resources in your costly process for the backlog in Canada were made available to the UNHCR, its financial crisis would be solved in the short term. Thus, while most countries can find some formula to be satisfied with their share of the contributions, the fact remains that all countries need to increase their core contributions to the UNHCR significantly. If the UNHCR does not have the resources to satisfactorily maintain refugees where they are, more refugees will be forced to move on, seeking their own solutions.

### Relative Effort in Political and Humanitarian Areas

The cost of political and humanitarian programs differ in kind and extent. Political initiatives go on all the time. It is more a question of what

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issue to focus on. This is a time to focus on refugee producing situations. Effort should go into resolving those regional conflicts and responding to those international human rights violators which are the source of the major fraction of the world's refugees. Refugee arrivals in Canada provide a crude measure of world problem areas. The Refugee Board's own statistics for the first three months of 1990, rank countries of refugee origin: 1. Sri Lanka, 2. Somalia, 3. China, 4. Iran, 5. El Salvador and 6. Lebanon. These six countries account for about 75% of the first quarter claims in Canada.

Canada's commitment to an international solution in South East Asia is commendable. Canada's noticeably low key delegation to the first international meeting of the follow-up committee of the International Conference on Central American Refugees, CIREFCA, June 27, 28, 1990, was, however, inappropriate. Canada has a special responsibility to respond to, and to be seen to respond to, problems in our own world region.

Political efforts are needed to head off new refugee producing situations. Kenya is a case in point. Kenya has the potential to support human rights and thus the trend towards its becoming a major human rights violator and hence major refugee producer might yet be averted.

Efforts towards an international response to the general problems of internally displaced persons, such as our proposed special rapporteur from the UN Commission on Human Rights, could also do much to avert new refugee flows.

### **The Balance of Refugee Resources Spent In Canada and Overseas**

Comparing money spent on refugees in Canada with money spent on those outside is not simply a question of resources. Some refugee related activities are international legal obligations. The protection of persons in Canada is a treaty obligation Canada has accepted. The ICCR has already made suggestions about how both refugee determination and the backlog process could be made

more just and more cost effective. They nonetheless remain a Canadian responsibility.

Other refugee related activities, such as the assistance and resettlement of refugees, are a moral obligation. The interests of the refugees for protection and some solution must always be uppermost. However, that said, the issue becomes what can be done most cost-effectively by Canada in Canada and what can be done most cost effectively on an international collective basis. The resettlement area is one where the collective international mechanism under the UNHCR is the best approach. UNHCR already seeks solutions for refugees as part of its mandate. It already determines persons as refugees in need of the resettlement solution. It already notes whether there is a rationale such as a link for asking Canada to resettle. The question arises why Canadian officials,

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*"Some refugee related activities are international legal obligations. The protection of persons in Canada is a treaty obligation Canada has accepted."*

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at great cost, should second guess this process.

Present family procedures take significant resources from other immigration programs. Family reunion could be vastly more humane with great savings if family members of persons in Canada were simply allowed to travel here. Presently, they are systematically delayed in coming from several countries because they get neither visitor's visas nor minister's permits. Of course, these family members might stay if their relative in Canada is a refugee. If they did stay, the cost of processing here would be marginal on the processing already underway. Some 80% of asylum seekers are presently allowed to stay in Canada and virtually 100% of their families will

come to Canada anyway. It is hurtful to the family and costly to Canada to spend money delaying the inevitable.

These factors come together. Large increases in asylum seekers in Canada are the direct consequence of the present balance of initiatives and programs. The number of refugees in the world has continued to increase. Monies provided by governments including Canada for UNHCR programs have not kept pace. This pressures refugees to find their own solutions in western countries. The complexity of family programs and the freeze on government resettlement places since 1985 also pressures refugees to abandon this "safety valve", and to seek their own solutions. The suspension of travel loans, the delays and the talk of review will have a dampening effect on private sponsorship. This too will encourage those who can to seek their own solutions. Those most hurt will be the most vulnerable refugees caught in limbo overseas such as the high risk person, the single parent with a family, the large family.

### **Balancing Efforts towards the World's Disadvantaged and Canada**

Everyone in Canada is of particular concern to Canadian churches irrespective of their status as Canadians or tourists or anything else. The issue becomes the relative effort Canadian churches put into empowering different groups or classes of persons in Canada and the help we give our church partners abroad. This is a question as real for churches as it is for government. The answer must be found in political balancing. We have not found church refugee work has detracted from church work among Canadian groups who hurt or from our overseas programs.

We have found the task of reflecting on your thoughtful questions helpful for our work. We hope our thoughts will assist you in yours.

Yours sincerely,  
Helga Kutz-Harder  
Acting Chair,  
Inter-Church Committee for Refugees

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## FINE TUNING THE NEW REFUGEE DETERMINATION PROCESS

Arul S. Aruliah, M.Sc. (Eng.)

The new refugee determination system has been in effect since January 1, 1989. It took nearly two and half years of Parliament, including an emergency recall in the Summer of '87. Three successive cabinet ministers were involved before this bill was enacted.

The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) members, under the chairmanship of former human rights commissioner, Gordon Fairweather, have brought a degree of respect to the body. Immigration Minister Barbara McDougall, to her credit, effectively nullified the controversial 'safe third country clause' by including no country in that list. Otherwise, it would have had a deleterious effect on the well earned international recognition of Canada as a leader in refugee policy. The presence of a credible basis hearing has virtually eliminated manifestly unfounded claims ever reaching the border, let alone the determination system.

An analysis of data for the year 1989 and the first half of 1990, however, indicates that the new system is in need of some form of fine tuning to be fully effective. There was a total of 24,519 claims before the Board during this period. About 94 percent of the cases were dealt with at the first level credible basis hearing and about 95 percent of those claimants were referred for full hearing. Only 52 percent of total claims, however, have been dealt with so far, and some of the cases are now being scheduled for hearing well into 1991. Besides there is progressive build-up (Frontlog?) of claimants waiting for a credible basis hearing as well. Though the numbers are a far cry from the years of waiting experienced by the claimants in the past or still waiting in the pre-1989 Backlog, this current build-up is bound to damage the effectiveness of the newly installed system. It has the potential for another backlog of claimants. One

alternative is for Ottawa to hire additional personnel to reduce the line-up. But how long would the line-up be two years down the road? Even if it is assumed that money is available (of course it is not), would this be the best course of action?

Let us look at the data again. This is the most independent and least unbiased data bank for *convention refugee determination* in Canada to date and indeed anywhere in the world. The acceptance rates at the credible basis hearing for each of the five leading countries in the system were in the range of 98.0 to 99.8 percent and their corresponding rates at the full hearing were in the range of 88.5 to 97.7 percent in the first year of operation. This subgroup, which constitutes a full two-thirds of the full hearing population, had a 99.2 percent acceptance level at the credible hearing stage and 93.5 percent acceptance as *convention refugees* at the full hearing. A similar trend is evident in the first half year results for the leading source countries

One has immediately to pose the question, therefore, whether the system is employing the most effective mechanism to pick out 65 claimants out of every 1000 claims from this subgroup. In fact every one of them have been found to have a credible basis for their claims, except that they did not fall neatly into the definition of a convention refugee, and in some of these cases the Minister exercised her discretionary powers, to her credit again, to protect them from removal to their country of alleged persecution. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that if this patently expensive method of second screening is allowed to continue, this process is unlikely to contribute to the effectiveness of the system.

A desired level of effectiveness in the system can be achieved by

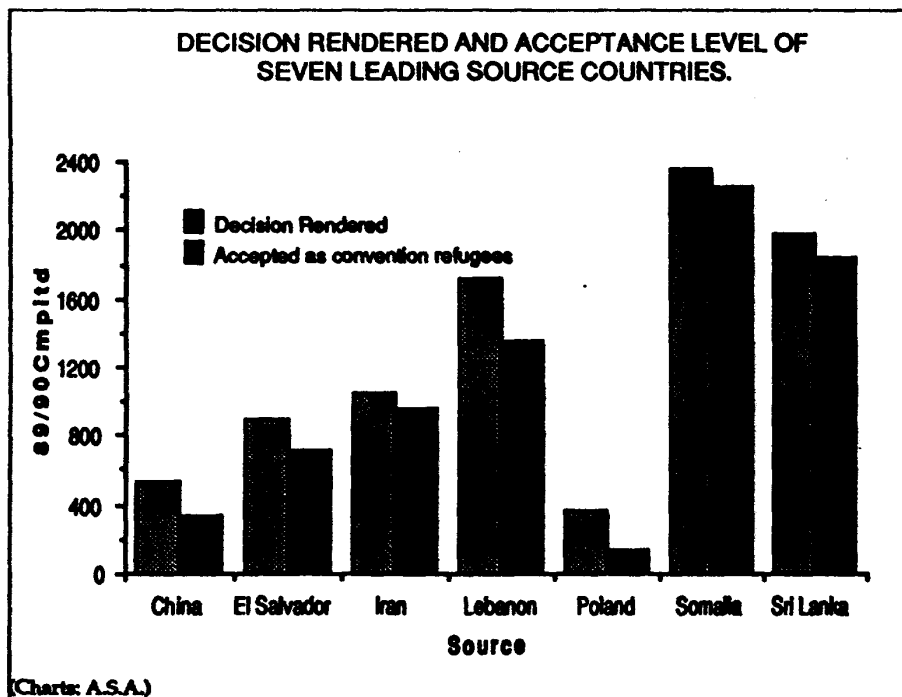
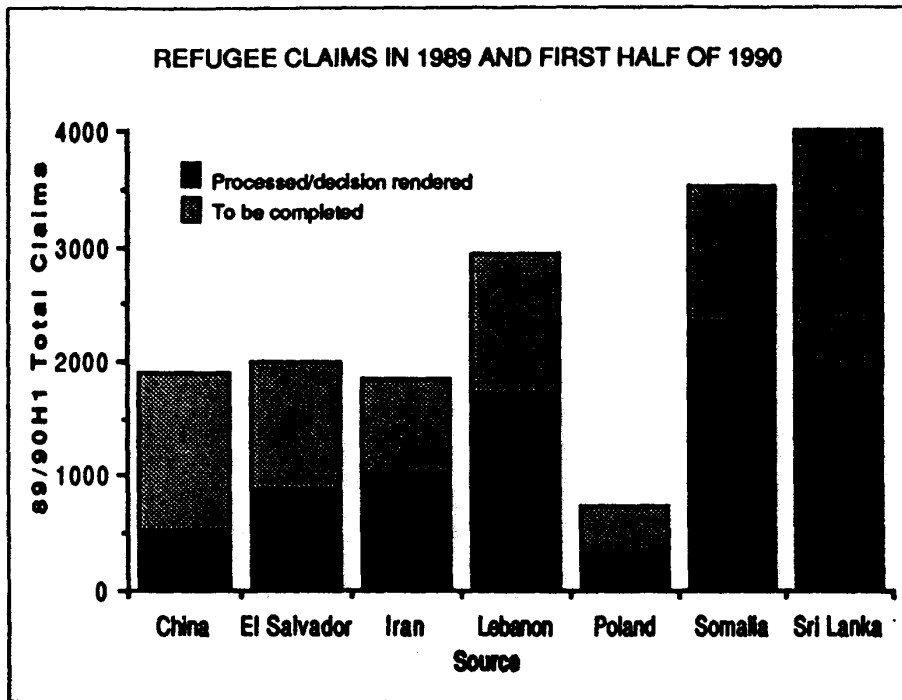
developing a set of bias free *quantitative* criteria to create a Designated Class or an Administrative Program, based entirely on quasi-judicial IRB data bank information. Members of this group can then be dealt with administratively. A similar system was brought in by then Minister of Immigration (State) Mr. Walter McLean in May 1986, known as B1 list, which was in effect till February 1987. It was, however, largely based on *qualitative* assessments of the country's human rights record. There was no mechanism to make any distinction between the *persecuted* and the *persecutor* from a given country. Invariably, both groups of claimants do come from the same country, except in instances where foreign occupation forces are involved. This deficiency has now been addressed by the credible basis hearing for *every one* of the claimants shortly after their arrival. The record indicates that a processing rate at the first level hearing is very satisfactory indeed.

It is imperative that a set of criteria, which defines any designated class, should have automatic self-renewing capabilities so that no country has a permanent place in that list but equally any country can gain access into that group simply based on a *significant* IRB sample size and its *quantitative* assessment at yearly or half-yearly intervals.

As an example, if a claimant has been determined to have a credible basis for his claim, then he should be considered to be an eligible member of the proposed designated class if (a) the country of alleged persecution records an acceptance rate of, say, a minimum of 90 percent at the credible basis stage, and (b) a minimum of, say, 300 claims from that country have been determined at the full hearing stage and there was an acceptance rate of, say, 85 percent during that assessment period. The first

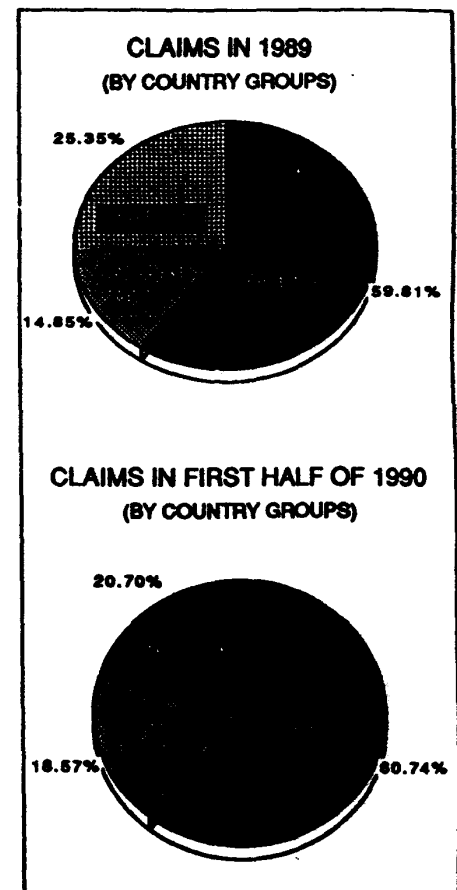
## DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

(IRB Data Period: Jan. 1, 1989 - June 30, 1990)



(Charts: A.S.A.)

criterion would ensure that when the human rights situation improves in a given country, then it will automatically exit from the designated class list at the next assessment period. The second criterion would facilitate a deserving member to gain access to that group.



Implementation of such a *dynamic* and *self-responsive* mechanism to the process will have a very significant reduction in the cost of administering the determination process whilst keeping the integrity of the system intact. It would free up a sizable amount of Board's resources to expedite the processing of other claims. More importantly, it is likely to ensure that there will never be a backlog (or 'frontlog') in the system. □

*Arul S. Aruliah is a consultant on multicultural, immigration and refugee issues.*

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# Report on EUROPEAN CONSULTATION ON REFUGEES AND EXILES (ECRE) MEETING

September 22-23, 1990, Geneva, Switzerland

By Helga Kutz-Harder

The major concerns of ECRE participants this summer related to protecting the human rights of refugee claimants throughout Europe. Three areas of concern permeated the discussions: (i) access to fair determination procedures throughout Europe and the low success rate for most claims (5% in many countries); (ii) long-term second class status for even successful refugee claimants; (iii) dangerous refolement of refugees, notably, but not exclusively, to Sri Lanka. The failure of most European states to facilitate family reunification surfaced as a last minute business item; the brief intense discussion focused on hurt experienced by refugees as a result of long, enforced separations from their families the same kind that Canadians are documenting in the ICCR refugee backlog study.

The tone of the ECRE meetings recalled the frustration of refugee advocates in the many cross-Canada discussions before Bill C55 and C84 were turned into law. The participants were preoccupied with three refugee-related documents which have been signed but not yet ratified by European countries:

1. A Convention on asylum signed in Dublin on June, 1990 without the participation of the European Parliament - this declaration deals with who is responsible for refugee determination;

2. A Convention on the crossing of external borders being discussed in Rome, which does not protect human rights standards and does not conform to international standards of data protection;

3. The Schengen agreement harmonizing refugee procedures in France, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Since all have yet to be ratified by

the respective parliaments, the NGO community throughout Europe is involved in intense lobbying to change the agreements so that refugees and refugee rights will be protected.

Besides being critical of their content, ECRE participants were highly critical of the non-consultative and even secretive process in which these agreements were developed. The general impression was that they will, in effect, severely limit the numbers of African and Asian refugee/asylum seekers/migrants who can seek protection in Europe. All of them reflect a blurring of the distinctiveness and purposes of refugee, immigration, and foreign policy. Consequently real refugees are being denied access to Europe or are being refoled to their country of origin. A long discussion about how to respond to these defective conventions and declarations included the following familiar questions:

- a. Is it better to work to have bad legislation thrown out altogether or work to change what already exists until it is good enough to live with? (*Strong arguments on both sides with no consensus*)

- b. Can the new agreements be challenged in the Hague? (*Feasibility is unclear*)

- c. Can the agreements be publicly condemned without offering an alternative policy? (*Ultimately they decided yes*)

- d. Can ECRE issue a public statement when member agencies have not had time to vet the statement with their constituencies and when a few participants did not agree with the statement? (*ECRE issued a condemnation of the three agreements in the name of the ECRE meeting without mentioning dissenting voices, since the majority agreed.*)

- e. How do NGO's keep up the fight in the face of governments who do what

they want anyhow? (*Collective indignation and strong collegiality*)

The Swedish government has published a background paper in preparation for a future immigration policy which seems to be modelled on Canada's new policy and has the same defects. The other Scandinavian countries are certain that their governments will follow suit. The Swiss government has published a similar background paper which is also being criticized by the NGOs.

The final rich discussion addressed root causes, taking a holistic approach to the refugee question, balancing aid and leadership development, analyzing the fundamental relationship between human rights violations and Third World debt and poverty and natural disasters and ethnic conflict, and suggesting paradigm shifts from control of the world by Europe and North America. The debate made this particular ECRE meeting a unique privilege for me.

A comment by a colleague from the Netherlands focused the response: "If governments are at a loss about where the world is going, we don't have to be."

ECRE spent some time looking at the nature of its organization and how that affects its policy making potential. At the moment ECRE has no constitution and continues to be a flexible consortium of refugee-related agencies. While this causes consternation to governments who might wish to give ECRE delegate status in certain situations, the participants firmly decided to remain with this arrangement. Consequently, policy papers emanating from ECRE become suggestions for positions which member agencies may adapt, change, discard, or ratify as their own. Within this framework, the high degree of unanimity on the important questions of refugee protection was inspiring. □



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# THE GROWING REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE SOVIET UNION – THE PLIGHT OF ARMENIANS

Tanya Basok  
*Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
University of Windsor, Ontario*

and  
Marina Makarova,  
*Journalist, Leningrad,  
U.S.S.R.*

The process of democratization in the Soviet Union provoked the eruption of regional and ethnic conflicts which had hitherto remained dormant. In several Soviet republics nationalist movements emerged demanding regional autonomy. These struggles intensified existing ethnic tensions. The conflict between Azeris and Armenians in Azerbaijan is one such case.

## ...And Then There Was None

"We lived in constant fear hiding our children in the basement", testified Zhanna Tsaturova, a mother of six children from Baku. "Then on December 5, 1988 a bunch of people (real animals) started breaking windows in the houses inhabited by Armenians."

"No one bothered me until June 1989", stated a 59-year-old Arkadii Babayan from Baku, "but in June they started making threats by phone. Then they dropped threatening notes in my mail box telling me to leave; otherwise they threatened to kill or mutilate me."

These statements could have come from any other Armenians forced to leave Azerbaijan. Those who can testify did not suffer the worst fate. Those who cannot, did. They were decapitated, hung, toasted in fire or otherwise brutally murdered. Those who managed to escape bear the burden of memories of the bloody days. But memories are not the only thing which torments them; their present situation is just as disconcerting.

## The First Wave

There have been three waves of Armenian refugees. The first wave was caused by the genocide in Sumgait. In December 1987, Nagorno-Karabakh demanded autonomy from Azerbaijan, claiming that its annexation in 1921 was

illegal, based on falsifications, deceit and threats. It was further argued that Armenians, who made up 30% of the 175,000 population of Nagorno-Karabakh, were deprived of their cultural roots and political rights. The government of Azerbaijan flatly rejected the claim. Tensions mounted and on February 28 Azeris started Armenian pogroms in Sumgait. According to some estimates more than a hundred were brutally massacred. Corpses were often

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*The second wave of Armenian refugees consisted of victims of both human violence and natural disaster. But the earthquake overshadowed pogroms in Azerbaijan by far.*

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burned. Gorbachev sent the troops to pacify the raging mobs. A state of siege was declared.

Some Armenians fled to other cities then but they were not numerous. In fact, no one even noticed them. They demanded no assistance and settled on their own.

Hostilities between Azeris and Armenians culminated once again in November 1988. Cultural and economic ties between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia were growing. Demands for the right to self-determination were getting stronger and presented a real threat to Moscow. According to Igor

Babanov, an active member of the Armenian community in Leningrad and a writer, ethnic violence against Armenians was condoned by Gorbachev's Central Committee. New massacres provoked another wave of refugees.

Shortly afterwards yet another misfortune beset the Armenian people. On December 7, 1988 an earthquake devastated Armenia taking between 35,000 and 50,000 lives. Their houses destroyed, empty-handed people ran to Moscow and Leningrad hoping that the Kremlin was not going to ignore their suffering.

## The Second Wave

The second wave of Armenian refugees consisted of victims of both human violence and natural disaster. But the earthquake overshadowed pogroms in Azerbaijan by far. The sight of lightly dressed people in the middle of the winter touched people's hearts. The public response was truly remarkable. The Armenian community, organized around the Church, cooperated with members of other voluntary groups in creating an ad hoc committee. People donated money, blankets, clothes; they offered their already overcrowded apartments. Many Moscovites and Leningradians took the Armenian tragedy very close to their hearts. One was Tamara Tronova, a young widow with two children. Her phone number was given to all Armenian refugees as a contact number in Leningrad. The young unemployed woman suddenly found herself very busy. Her only reward was the satisfaction from having helped some people in need. Refugees from Baku also benefited from the aid extended to victims of the earthquake.

Armenians were sent to recreation centres just outside Leningrad and Moscow. There they received free food. The earthquake emergency funds were used to aid the refugees. Overall, the presence of the earthquake victims received a sympathetic response. This was not quite the case with the Armenians from Baku.

Zhanna Tseturova and her family from Baku were settled in a recreation centre near Leningrad. A few days later

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### Armenian Refugee

(Photo: Alexander Belenkii)

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50 Armenian families whose houses had been devastated by the earthquake were moved there as well. Then two women came by in a black Volga (an official car) and told her to move out. "They told me and my six children to go back to Baku. Otherwise I would be kicked out. I started crying", writes Zhanna in her testimony.

Zhanna's misfortunes continued. To get to school her children had to walk a long distance through the forest. One day one of her daughters was assaulted on the way there. Fortunately for her, some people passing by scared the offender.

And as if this was not enough, their emergency aid was cut off. Her husband's salary earned in a local collective farm was not sufficient. The family was starving. One of her daughters went to the kitchen to get a piece of bread. She cut off two of her fingers in a bread-slicer. (She had studied piano for three years in a conservatory in Baku.)

### The Third Wave

But the most problematic was the third wave of 300,000 Armenian refugees thrown out of Baku in January, 1990. The refugee flow followed the massacre of 56 Armenians in four days between January 13 and 16.

"Even during the war I was not as scared as I was on January 13, 1990 in Baku. Then I could defend myself with a weapon whereas now I felt entirely helpless", writes a 69-year-old medical doctor, Gaarik Karapetyan in her letter



addressed to the Armenian Assembly of America.

There is one interpretation which puts the blame for violence on "erazi", the name given to Azeri migrants from Armenia. By February 1990, 90,000 Azeris had moved to Baku. The government failed to solve their housing problem. They took the initiative into their own hands and started invading and robbing apartments occupied by Armenians.

But there is also another version. Appeals to violence are traced to the December 1989 issue of "Azadlyk" a newspaper of the People's Front of Azerbaijan (NFA). Massacres followed NFA's meetings and demonstrations held in early January. NFA leaders demanded regional autonomy. Appeals to massacre Armenians were also heard. Although "erazi" attacked Armenians, very few of them actually, got the invaded apartments. Rumours are that NFA sold them or distributed them among themselves. By January 26, not a single Armenian was left in Baku.

### Welcome to Step-Motherland

It would seem logical that all refugees from Azerbaijan would move to Armenia. Why didn't they? First, the earthquake left 500,000 people without shelter. Second, transportation of food, fuel and construction materials was blocked by Azerbaijan thus making reconstruction of the devastated area nearly impossible. Third, there is a language barrier between Russian-speaking Armenians from Baku and Armenian-speaking residents of Erevan. And finally, many refugees blame Armenian nationalists for having provoked the conflict in which Armenians residing in Azerbaijan fell victim.

Consequently some 40,000 - 60,000 Armenian refugees arrived in Moscow and over 3,000 Armenians came to Leningrad in need of shelter, food and work. They were given a token donation of 100 rubles in cash and 200 rubles worth of clothes. A hundred rubles can get one a bachelor apartment for one month! And shelter was not for everyone. For four

months the Armenian consulate in Moscow housed 300 refugees in their mansion. They had to sleep on the floor in one room. Then they were moved to recreation centres and summer camps.

Once again voluntary aid was remarkably generous, much more so than the official help. Refugees were housed in private apartments, people offered donations. In Leningrad the refugee committee, created after the earthquake, obtained a room where refugees could come for information, comfort and financial aid.

But emergency aid is not everlasting. Recreation centres are required by other people for their holidays; summer camps are needed by children. Hence the decree issued by the Council of Ministries on

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*"For the Soviet government to recognize that there are refugees in the country, and not just internal migrants, took some courage and much pressure from people like Grigorii Akopyan, the leader of the Refugee Aid Committee..."*

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April 7 forcing refugees to vacate their shelters by May 15. Hospitality of those who offered space to Armenians in their tiny apartment is not boundless either. Refugees require permanent housing. Yet there are 9.5 million people in the Russian Federation in need of housing, who do not appreciate being pushed down the waiting list.

The government found what seemed to them a reasonable solution. They encouraged refugees to move to agricultural areas in the North. Seven thousand accepted the offer. Others tried but they did not stay. What was wrong? First, local authorities were not prepared to receive large numbers of newcomers: there were no houses and no jobs for them. Second, most Armenians from Leningrad are professionals and technicians. They had no skills for agricultural work.

Third, in some cases only men were offered jobs; women and children had to stay behind.

Even when refugees find themselves private accommodation in Leningrad and Moscow, they cannot get a job, even though there is much demand for their labour. In order to get a job in a particular city a Soviet citizen needs to have this city's permanent residence stamp in the passport. But without a job one does not get such stamp. What is left? Either to work in cooperatives or other casual jobs where no residence stamp is required, or to live off whatever savings they managed to get out of Azerbaijan, if any.

Without the permanent residence stamp in their passport, refugees are deprived of many services, such as free medical aid and daycare centres. Even to buy food or other goods one needs to show a passport indicating one's residency in the city. Similar to wartime, the present day economic crisis imposed strict control over scarce food.

#### **New Pompeii**

Refugees are placing much hope on the refugee bill proposed by the State Labour Committee to the government. This bill will be tabled no sooner than November. For the Soviet government to recognize that there are refugees in the country, and not just internal migrants, took some courage and much pressure from people like Grigorii Akopyan, the leader of the Refugee Aid Committee assisted by some newly elected democratic deputies to the Leningrad City Council. It was important to take this step. But will the proposed refugee status bill be the panacea? Will the government be able to settle refugees under the present housing crisis? Can it solve the housing crisis without drastic economic reforms? Can employment be offered to refugees without solving their housing problems? What will be the response of the Russian population? Whether or not the new government is able to solve the growing refugee problem will be a test of power of the new political actors. □

*(Tanya Basok, a Soviet Jewish emigre, recently returned from a field trip to the USSR)*

## **REFUGEES IN THE GULF**

**J. A. Versteegh**

*Director, Refugee Programs  
Employment and Immigration Canada*

It was estimated that by 1990 Kuwait would have had a non-national workforce of at least one-half million people while Saudi Arabia would have had something on the order of three million. *La Presse*, in August, reported that this could include some 500 Canadians, 900 West Germans, 530 French, 160 Swedes, 10,000 Soviets, 4,000 Poles, 10,000 Yugoslavs, a thousand or so South Koreans, 65,000 Filipinos, as well as 170,000 Indians. Recently the media guessed that there were some 1.72 million Egyptians working in Iraq and Kuwait.

In 1985, the most recent year for which there are reliable figures available, 46% of the Kuwait migrant-worker population were Arabs from other Gulf countries, 45% were south Asian, 6% were Southeast Asians and 3% were from other regions of the world. Saudi Arabia's non-national workforce, with a foreign worker population of 3.5 million, was comprised of 33% foreign Arabs, 32% South Asians, 27% Southeast Asians, and 8% from other areas. South Asians, mainly Indians (22%) and Pakistanis (14%), made up some 43% of the migrant labour force in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The Southeast Asians came primarily from the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand.

Throughout the GCC area, almost 30% of foreign workers are employed in services (financial, personal and community), almost 29% are employed in construction while 14% work in wholesale and retail trades. In Kuwait itself, in 1985, 39% were involved in production and related occupations, 27.5% in service occupations, and 15% in professional and technical occupations.

It is known, though exact figures are not available, that the non-national populations of the Gulf States include many people from the horn of Africa: Ethiopians/Eritreans, Somalis and Sudanese. They may form a residual population of individuals who cannot, due to a well-founded fear of persecution, return to their home countries. □

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## Book Review:

# A LENS ON THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

## The Northern Route: An Ethnography of Refugee Experience

Lisa Gilad

*Institute of Social and Economic Research,  
Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, (1990)*

In 1990, Canada will likely receive about 30,000 asylum seekers. The overwhelming number of these refugee claimants will arrive by plane at Pearson Airport in Toronto, Dorval in Montreal or by car at the Windsor, Fort Erie or Niagara Falls land routes. But there are other routes to Canada as the arrival by sea of 155 Tamils off the coast of Newfoundland in 1986 and 174 Sikhs off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1987 dramatized. It was these obscure entry points that became a worldwide story and led to the summer recall of Parliament for only the second time in this century to introduce new legislation to control and even deter the intake of refugees into Canada.

This review is being written the day after a Boeing 727 with 16 Peruvian crew members flew off course and missed its refuelling stop at Gander airport in Newfoundland, Canada. It disappeared into the dark waters of the North Atlantic. All aboard are presumed lost.

For years, Gander has been a lifeline for planes en route to North America which need to stop for refuelling. But Gander has also been a lifeline for those fleeing totalitarian regimes. It has been dubbed the "Northern Route" by refugees. Gilad begins her book like a movie. We see Gander through the eyes of a sweaty, nervous asylum seeker lining up for his Pepsi and looking for an authority figure to whom s/he can run and blurt out, "I want political asylum." In 1988, 203 individuals arrived in Canada via that route. In 1989, there were 499. A number of others jump ship when boats stop in St. John's for fuel and supplies. The book uses Newfoundland as a window to explore the experience of the refugee as s/he goes through various stages in seeking to remain in Canada. These experiences are compared to those

who come as humanitarian refugees selected abroad by the Canadian government. Approximately 80 a year are sent by Ottawa to Torbay Airport in St. John's for resettlement in that maritime province.

Though Newfoundland - the name is so appropriate - is the ultimate destination for those seeking refuge, the experience begins in Poland, in Czechoslovakia, in Iran, in Cuba, in Vietnam and even in El Salvador. And the asylum seekers pass through many lands - Italy, Austria, Pakistan, Thailand,

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*Why would refugees go to  
an island in the  
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unemployment rates  
receive these people with  
such hospitality?*

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Malaysia, Indonesia, Mexico, the United States. Thus an island in the North Atlantic is used as a lens through which the reader is taken into the experience of refugees worldwide.

There are a number of books about the experiences of a particular group of refugees. There are others about the policies of government who admit or limit the admission of refugee claims. There are none that I am aware of that explore the interface between the experience and self-perception of the refugees and the experiences of those who receive them - the settlement workers, the language teachers, the volunteers and the gatekeepers, those

who implement the policies of states who view refugees as both an uncontrollable threat to proper management as well as people with humanitarian needs. Perhaps this book, looking at the world from such a personal perspective, could only be written in a province of only slightly more than half a million people with an unemployment rate that is the highest in Canada and often exceeds 20%. Why would refugees go to an island in the windswept north Atlantic? Why would people with the lowest incomes and the highest unemployment rates receive these people with such hospitality? Though 80% of the arrivals will undertake a secondary migration to other parts of Canada, nevertheless, the unique angle of vision not only gives us a view of the world, but serves as a comment for those wealthy cities like Toronto which serve as reception centres for 25% of the arrivals in Canada and powerful cities like Ottawa where the decisions on refugee policy are made.

Bills C-55 and C-84 were passed in an environment of emergency, catalyzed by the arrival of a few hundred refugees on the maritime coast, and set the foundation for Canadian policy in the 90's. They also directly impacted on local opinion and the refugees' self-perception. The period chosen for the study thus is as unique as the angle of vision.

Lisa Gilad became personally involved with everyone involved in the process in Newfoundland. Those parts of the book, propelled by a combination of compassion and analytic skill, make for the most compelling reading. They are in Part II. Part I begins with an imaginative reenactment of the refugees' experience in his/her country of origin and continues en route based on Gilad's interviews but without Gilad's personality and involvement.

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Refuge, Vol. 10, No. 1 (October 1990)

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Following an introduction centred on a discussion of methodology, Chapter 2 focuses on the motives of the refugees fleeing - both those who were victims of active and direct persecution and those who were victims of more generalized oppression by the state. Though not overtly intended to test the thesis, widely believed by policy makers and controllers, that generous refugee policies are an inducement to flight, the chapter provides overwhelming personal evidence to refute the belief. There is not one shred of personal testimony to indicate that generous refugee policies have any role in determining the decision to leave. For a

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*The richest (and most moving) part of the book emerges in the interviews with refugees and settlement officers describing the Newfoundland experience...*

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Cuban suffering from general state oppression, "About the decision to leave, you begin to think that you cannot live like this forever." Persecution, a general atmosphere of fear and deception, government hypocrisy, religious intolerance, lack of economic fairness rooted in merit, each may contribute to motivating flight. The conditions in the state from which a refugee flees, not the policies of receptor states for processing the refugee claims, determine the decision to flee.

Safety, Gilad concludes in Chapter 3, is the prime factor in determining the first destination. Geo-political considerations, exit control mechanisms and economic resources of the refugees are other factors dictating the escape route. The available transportation may be another important factor which Gilad does not explore. Generous refugee policies have a significant role in determining the route to be taken in the

flight after arrival at the first destination, but not the flight itself.

In the period of waiting, explored in Chapter 4, the refugees are not passive. They form deep and special, if only temporary, special friendships. It also an excellent opportunity which the refugees use to acquire skills - language skills, for example - that the refugees will need for resettlement. There is relatively little effort made by resettlement countries to take advantage of this opportunity of waiting to provide the refugees with skills and knowledge about the culture, history and politics of the country where the refugee hopes to resettle.

Gilad's repetition of old criticisms about the bias in favour of refugees fleeing communist regimes in Eastern Europe in chapter 5 is somewhat obsolete since 1989 - *annus mirabilis* - the year in which Eastern European communism imploded and September of 1990 when the Minister, Barbara McDougall, announced the elimination of the self-exiled designated class for Eastern Europeans fleeing communism, thus ending provision and the automatic preference for those fleeing eastern Europe. Further, in interpreting Hathaway, Gilad concludes (p. 126) that refugee determination under the Refugee Status Advisory Committee (RSAC), prior to the introduction of the new legislation and the processing by the Refugee Board, had a much higher threshold for assessing persecution and, therefore, a far less generous admissions practice. It only becomes clear in reading the footnotes (fn. 57) that this was probably only true of those who were not part of the oral hearing pilot project and the subsequent general practice of required oral hearings (following a Supreme Court ruling). The generalized judgement is, I believe, unwarranted, though the issue requires further research and analysis. Gilad's claim certainly runs contrary to a widespread and equally unwarranted expectation and even belief among some refugee support groups that because the new refugee legislation was intended to deter spontaneous arrivals, the new refugee determination process subjected arrivals to harsher criteria of judgement by the Refugee Board.

Gilad makes another claim - that refugee determination in Canada (as distinct from refugee selection abroad) reflects our national priorities (p. 127). This judgement seems to run counter to her own claim that a lower threshold for determining persecution is used by the Refugee Board. Given the evidence presented, Gilad probably meant to say that access via visas, etc. to arrival in Canada in order to make a claim (not the processing of the claim itself) reflects our national priorities as does the selection of refugees abroad. In this judgement, Gilad is more concerned with assessing this basis as discriminatory from the perspective of some universal standard rather than in explicating and analyzing the role of national interests in refugee selection.

The richest (and most moving) part of the book emerges in the interviews with refugees and settlement officers

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*The social, ethnic, religious and other networks so vital to the resettlement process are depicted in all their variations*

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describing the Newfoundland experience in Part II. The sense of excitement, improvisation and initiative of bureaucrats, usually viewed as staid and rule bound, comes across. So does the initiative, integrity and ambitions of the refugees and the support of the citizens of Newfoundland. It was a delight to read that the lady from Marystown, Newfoundland, who had phoned me long distance in late June of 1979 and who I "appointed" on the phone as the Operation Lifeline coordinator in her area, set the precedent for the 20 other sponsorship groups around the province who helped 355 "Boat People" settle in Newfoundland; five years later, 85 were still there. There were of course the usual communication and program problems over language training and the exclusion of women refugees at the time from

training and language programs unless they were heads of households. As well, there were the usual complaints of committed church workers that the government was trying to dump its responsibilities onto the private sector.

What is remarkable is not how atypical but how typical Newfoundland was, in spite of many variations. It was even typical in thrusting up its own version of a one-person settlement agency, in the Newfoundland case, Fred Gibbons who alone was responsible for assisting forty or fifty people. Reading of Fred's role is an inspiration in itself and well worth the cost of the book.

Gilad documents the changes the refugee arrivals brought to the process for resettling refugees and the mistakes made in providing "segregated" housing, the frustrations the refugees had with language (if they did not know English) and their social sense of isolation. The social, ethnic, religious and other networks so vital to the resettlement process are depicted in all their variations but where age is the one constant that crosses all ethnic groups. The older you are, the harder to resettle.

The motives and dilemmas of defining proper settlement for instead of by the refugees are made very clear as are the "improvisational" responses of the refugees through fiddling, etc. Gilad also depicts the very different situation of refugee claimants whose future is uncertain and whose support is rooted in the provincial welfare system rather than the refugee assistance programs of Canada Employment and Immigration. Gilad makes a good case for supporting refugee claimants on the same basis as sponsored refugees. But, of course, that would not be consistent with the principle of humane deterrence.

The Northern Route is a valuable addition to the body of refugee literature, useful both as an introductory text to the refugee experience in Canada as well as an exemplification of the general experience without belying the varied experiences of different groups arriving through different gateways. □

*Reviewed by Howard Adelman*

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## THE DILEMMA OF SOMALI REFUGEES

Bishara H. Ali, M.A., M.S.W.

President, The Ottawa-Carleton Somali Community

The first Somali refugee family arrived in the capital in the fall of 1986. Since then, the Somali community in the Ottawa-Carleton region has grown to 3,500 members. Although the agony of the Somali refugees has, continued for a decade, only recently has their plight come to the attention of the International and Canadian media after they have crashed on our doors and those of Western Europe.

Somalia is a country of 6.5 million people. Located unfortunately in the Horn of Africa with traditional enemies as neighbours - Ethiopia and Kenya, it is one of the poorest nations in the world. It is run by a tyrannical dictator - Gen. Mohamed Siad Barre and his family that participated in the mass murder, imprisonment, arrest and subsequent disappearance of thousands of political opponents since 1977. Less than one per cent of the population owns 54 per cent of the national wealth; eighty per cent of the gross national product goes to the five per cent of the population who hold power. The average income in Somalia is \$10 per month; 87 per cent of the population are unemployed waiting for things to happen.

Life expectancy is 40 years, there is a high death rate due to malnutrition, tuberculosis, food poisoning, aided by political and tribal terrorism of the secret police. Ninety per cent of the Heads of Families are women who are left with maintenance and support of their families since men are either in prison, at war, or have become refugees in such places as Canada.

Political violence and genocide against the opponents of the president have been the norm since 1977. The president's son and wife alone are responsible for the deaths of over 38,000 political and religious dissidents. They have hired and recruited special brigades (Red Berets) from their own clans in order

to keep the power and security of the nation in a firm hand.

This and other national crises in Somalia has created mass migration out of the country to Europe and North America. Lately, this migration has been so great that it is viewed as one of the tragic phenomena in the history of Somalia. An estimated one-fifth of the population has left the country as refugees to Europe, Africa (Ethiopia and Kenya), U.S.A. and Canada.

The experience of Somali refugees in Canada and the Ottawa-Carleton region has not been easy. They have cultural, educational, language and

physical barriers. They lack the organizational skills, and political experience and support of other immigrants who have come here before them.

The Ottawa-Carleton Somali Community is calling on concerned organizations and government agencies to help and open their hearts to the plight of the Somali refugees among us as well as help them in their struggle to restore democracy, peace and justice within their homeland by recognizing the liberation movements of the United Somali Congress and the Somali National Movements. □

### CANADA'S AFRICAN PROGRAM

The African program was instituted in 1978/79 after the Arusha conference which established that, as a matter of policy, African refugee situations should be solved in Africa.

Our program was designed to provide an option for the UN in exceptional cases where the individual concerned could not be adequately protected elsewhere in Africa. The program has worked well overall; since 1983, 10,117 Africans, including those determined in this country to be refugees, have been settled in Canada under our humanitarian and refugee programs. Private sponsorships of Africans have increased over the years.

Year	Government Sponsorship	Private Sponsorship	Total
1983	649	168	817
1984	848	175	1,023
1985	792	165	957
1986	844	319	1,163
1987	813	478	1,291
1988	1,106	874	1,980
1989	1,036	1,556	2,592
Total	6,088	3,735	9,823

Most of the private-sponsorship applicants are relatives of Ethiopians now in Canada. □

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## Book Reviews

### CLOSING THE DOORS: THE FAILURE OF REFUGEE PROTECTION

David Matas, Toronto, Summerhill Press, 1989.

*Reviewed By Sheikh Azaad.*

Closing the Doors is an attempt by David Matas to look at the world refugee crisis and how Western nations are responding, or not responding as is his contention, to the human dilemma which involves some twelve million people.

An accomplished lawyer by profession, Matas states that his desire was to answer the question, "why are people who faced possible death or torture back home, if their claim was rejected in Canada, given fewer procedural protections than someone questioning ... a parking ticket?"

Though he begins in the first of his five parts by looking at Canada's immigration history, which he claims has changed from structural to systematic discrimination, he goes on to look at Canada's refugee determination system. By first examining the previous system

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*(He looks at) ... the conditions which are created and fostered by Western governments that discriminate against refugee claimants once they are in countries of asylum.*

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prior to the passage of Bills C-55 and C-84, and the system that replaced it, he points out the inadequacies and shortcomings that necessitated the creation of a new system. The previous system led to an influx of "bogus" refugees which swamped the system, thereby creating a backlog which in the end favoured "bogus" refugees and penalized "real" refugees.

However, Matas not only examines Canada's refugee policy, but that of Western European nations and the United States as well. He looks at policies that not only prevented asylum seekers from landing on Western soil, but also at the conditions which are created and fostered by Western governments that

discriminate against refugee claimants once they are in countries of asylum. For example, he notes that in many Western states refugees are prevented from seeking employment, and enrolling in schools. In some states, refugee claimants are held in detention centres until their status is resolved. In fact, he points out that "refugees are made to lead such miserable lives in the country of asylum that they are deterred even from seeking protection... refugee claimants are made to suffer, not just by circumstance, but by design." [Matas 1989:p 63-64]. Consequently, due to these types of conditions in some asylum countries, refugees are forced to leave in search of a new asylum country, hence explaining the landing of Tamils and later Sikhs off of Canada's east coast in 1986 and 1987 respectively. This he points out creates an uneven burden on states with a less restrictive policy.

Closing the Doors also provides a brief history of the evolution of refugee protection and the creation of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). In this way he attempts to show how the West has used refugee protection policy, on the one hand, to embarrass communist regimes, while on the other, refusing to recognize legitimate refugees from countries that have dismal human rights records because of their anti-communist/pro-western stance. This he maintains, points to the fact that refugee policy in Western Europe, the United States and Canada are lopsided. Consequently, legitimate refugees suffer.

In concluding, therefore, it must be noted that Closing the Doors is an important addition to the literature on refugee studies. Matas has not only examined the West's refugee policy, but has been able to point out the hypocrisy that exists; what states preach (in terms of refugee protection) and what they actually do are very different. □

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## REFUGEES IN EUROPE

By Dr. Daniele Joly (CREE, University of Warwick) with additional material by Clive Nettleton (formerly Head of Information, Refugee Council). Published on 1 October 1990.

### Europe's Hidden Human Rights Abuse

At a time when the human rights record of most European states is improving, little attention is paid to the plight of the growing number of asylum-seekers who flee to Europe to seek refuge from torture and persecution. In 1972 there were 13,000 asylum-seekers; by 1988 the numbers had risen to 232,000.

New restrictions attempted to keep the refugees out. Visas are imposed, airlines are fined, asylum-seekers are detained - in prison, on ships, in tent cities akin to shanty towns - or forcibly deported. Even the 'lucky' ones must wait months or years for a decision on their status.

Refugees in Europe, a major new report from the London-based Minority Rights Group, exposes the conditions awaiting asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe - the hidden side of the human rights agenda. Minority Rights Group is calling for a fundamental review of Europe's policies and practices on refugees.

Refugees in Europe has been released to coincide with the meeting in Geneva of the UNHCR Executive Committee from 1 October, 1990. WRG presented each member of the Executive Committee with a copy of the report.

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### CIDA provides \$2.5 Millions in Aid for Jordan

Canada provided \$2.5 million in emergency assistance for displaced persons from Iraq and Kuwait in Jordan.

The funds were distributed to International Organization for Migration (IOM), League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (LCRS), and to UNICEF.

Canada was the first country to commit \$1 million to IOM to assist the transportation and evacuation of the displaced persons. □



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All proposals must be accompanied by an abstract of 150 - 120 words. A final call for papers will be issued in December 1990.

Please send all abstracts, enquiries and suggestions to Ogenga Otunnu or Prof. Howard Adelman, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, 4700 Keele St., North York, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3

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2. Theories and concepts of migration in the literature.
3. Overview and evaluation of methodological issues in migration research.
4. Types and patterns of migration: voluntary migration, forced migration, internal migration, return migration and illegal migration.
5. Migration policy: theoretical, moral, practical and legal issues.
6. Country reports (Asean, SE Asia, East Asia).
7. Settlement and adaptation of immigrants.

Papers are invited on any of these themes. The Organizing Committee regrets that it is unable to provide financial assistance to paper writers. Abstracts of papers should be submitted by September 30, 1990 and completed papers by December 31, 1990 to:

**Dr. Chew Soon Beng  
Chairman, Organizing Committee  
Centre for Advanced Studies  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
National University of Singapore  
10 Kent Ridge Crescent  
Singapore 0511, Republic of Singapore**

The Conference will comprise plenary sessions and simultaneous workshops. The Organizing Committee will allocate conference papers into plenary session or workshop for presentation at its discretion. All enquiries are welcome.

Registration fee per person is S\$250.

Hotel accommodation at RELC (Singapore) is S\$110/net per guestroom (single/twin) per day.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

**International Research and Advisory Panel  
on  
REFUGEES AND OTHER DISPLACED PERSONS  
Second Annual Meeting • Oxford, U.K.  
2 - 5 January 1991**

In January 1990, the Refugee Studies Programme, University of Oxford, convened the first meeting of its International Research and Advisory Panel. This meeting recommended that an independent body be established to provide a forum for the discussion and identification of issues related to research on refugees. It was agreed to meet annually for three full days in the first week of January. Five governments - Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK, funded their own national representative and one other from a developing country.

The report of this meeting and terms of reference for the IRAP are available on request from the RSP.

The meeting is scheduled for 1991 with arrival from lunchtime, 2 January, and departure after breakfast on the 6th, requiring participants to spend four nights in Oxford. The venue for this meeting is Lady Margaret Hall, an Oxford college situated on the Cherwell River. Rooms are en-suite and the cost of full board for the period is 200 pounds.

The deadline for registration is 1 October, 1990. A non-refundable deposit of 50 pounds is required with the completed registration form. Participation will be limited to sixty persons.

## INVITATION AND CALL FOR PAPERS

**International Symposium  
RESPONDING TO THE NUTRITIONAL  
CRISIS OF REFUGEES:  
THE NEED FOR NEW APPROACHES**

**17th - 20th March 1991**

*Please contact:*  
The Symposium Coordinator  
Refugee studies Programme  
Queen Elizabeth House  
University of Oxford  
21, St. Giles  
Oxford, OX1 3LA  
U.K.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**Public Policy and  
Indochinese Refugees**  
*by Robert Wayne Eisenhart*  
U.M.I. Dissertation Information  
Service - University Microfilms  
International, Ann Arbor,  
Michigan, 1990

**The Northern Route:  
An Ethnography of Refugee  
Experience**  
*by Lisa Gilad*  
Institute of Social and Economic  
Research, Memorial University  
of Newfoundland, 1990.  
ISBN 0-919666-68-X

## *Synergy*

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## VINCENT KELLY AWARD

The Vincent Kelly Award is presented each year by the Centre for the Studies of York University to Canadians for outstanding work on behalf of refugees.

The captain, officers and crew of the HMCS Provider not only rescued Vietnamese boat people, not only aided all Canadians of over a decade of commitment to resettling the Boat People in Canada (which helped the Vietnamese people win the Nansen Medal), but they performed their humanitarian rescue with grace, courage and a true generosity of spirit. The Centre of Refugee Studies of York University, on behalf of all Canadians, wishes to announce at this year's annual dinner this Winter, the Vincent Kelly Award will be presented to Captain Kenneth Scotten and all of the officers and crew of the HMCS Provider.

## ANNOUNCEMENT ANNUAL DINNER

The Centre for Refugee Studies' annual dinner will be held on March 7, 7:00 p.m. at the International Centre, 421-429 Dundas St. West, Toronto and will feature a 10-course dinner.

Former Premier Bob Rae has been invited to present the Vincent Kelly Award to Captain Kenneth Scotten on behalf of the officers and crew of the HMCS Provider.

The captain, officers and crew of the HMCS Provider rescued Vietnamese boat people in the Spring of 1990.

Tickets: \$60

Please contact the Centre for Refugee Studies for more information.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE CRISIS

*Edited by Howard Adelman*

Centre for Refugee Studies, York University,  
North York, Ontario, July 1990.

The price is \$10 in Canada or U.S.\$15 overseas. (postage included)

The publication summarizes the project sessions of the multi-disciplinary exchange. Key issues, concepts, policy development and cooperation are explored and synthesized.

### Satisfaction with Social Conditions in Canada: A Longitudinal Study of Latin Americans and Three Immigrant Groups (1969-74)

*By Fernando G Mata*

Doctoral thesis (1987) on immigrant working and living conditions in Canada.

The price is \$25 in Canada and U.S.\$30 overseas. (postage included)

Both publications are available from:

Centre for Refugee Studies  
York University  
Administrative Studies Building, Suite 234  
4700 Keele Street  
North York, Ontario,  
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## UNHCR CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS CREATION

Toronto - October 2, 1990

Canadian events marking the 40th anniversary of the creation of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees kick off at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 2, in Toronto.

"Over the past 40 years, the UNHCR has helped find solutions for more than 26 million refugees," said Stephen Lewis, former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations. "We have something both to commemorate and continue which requires the efforts of the entire international community. This event will help to highlight the achievements and the needs".

Roy Thomson Hall will be the site of a concert of classical music and song, featuring world-renowned opera singers Barbara Hendricks and Gino Quilico, accompanied by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Steven Mercurio, of the New York Metropolitan Opera, will conduct the Toronto Symphony. Ms. Hendricks, Mr. Quilico and Mr. Mercurio are donating their services for the occasion, which not only celebrates UNHCR's work for refugees over 40 years, but also Canada's role in helping refugees, as

acknowledged by the award of the Nansen Medal in 1986, to the people of Canada.

At the same time, the concert will celebrate the contributions refugees have made to this country. An exhibit in the lobby of Roy Thomson Hall will feature artistic works by Canadians who came to the country as refugees.

The UNHCR was created by the United Nations General Assembly and began its operations on January 1, 1951. Its purposes are to offer legal protection for refugees and to seek durable solutions for them. UNHCR is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, is represented in more than 80 countries and has a staff of nearly 2,000 assisting over 14 million refugees worldwide.

Tickets are available from Roy Thomson Hall Box Office at prices ranging from \$15-\$45. A special \$100 ticket includes a reception with the artists. Any profits will go to UNCHR programmes overseas.

For \$100 tickets and information about sponsorship opportunities, please call Mrs. James Robertson (Peggy) at 967-2797 or Mrs. William Forbes (Sybil) 485-2198.