# We Can Do More

Once again the refugees are fleeing. Once again Canada leaps to the forefront and offers to accept 26,000 of those who have fled the fighting in the former state of Yugoslavia. Headlines scream: "Bosnian Strife Could Kill 500,000"; "Muslims Targeted"; "Red Tape Stalls Bosnian Relief Convoy"; "Horrors of Sarajevo Taking Toll on Canadians;" and, most familiar of all, "The Refugees No One Wants." The fighting has produced over 2,000,000 displaced persons and refugees in the heart of Europe.

Refuge continues to be as relevant as ever as long as human beings treat each other in such atrocious ways. Refuge began with the Indochinese boat people crisis of 1979 and the subsequent private sponsorship movement, so it is relevant that we reexamine the institution of private sponsorship and the proposals for reform. Canada has offered 26,000 places for ex-Yugoslavs. But if there are already over 500,000 refugees outside of Yugoslavia, not counting the estimated over 1,500,000 displaced, why is Canada not offering to take the usual rule-of-thumb figure of 10 percent of the refugee population, or 50,000? Why isn't the government again challenging the private sector to sponsor refugees on a one-for-one matching formula? Instead

of patting ourselves on the back for doing so much, why are we not kicking ourselves in our butts for doing too little? Even Germany, where xenophobia is rife (as an article in this issue documents), has already received well over 200,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia, on top of the 500,000 refugees it is already receiving per year.

The fact is we can and should do more, not only for the refugees in Europe but for those in Africa as well. As Ogenga Otunnu suggests, we should be concerned about the refugees there and take proactive initiatives that include a process of resettlement once the refugees arrive in Canada.

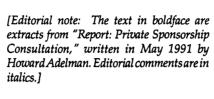This issue of Refuge is a general issue, yet it has one unifying theme: we can do more and we have the tools to do so.

Howard Adelman, Editor

## Contents:

# Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program

## Employment and Immigration Canada

*[Editorial note: The text in boldface are extracts from "Report: Private Sponsorship Consultation," written in May 1991 by Howard Adelman. Editorial comments are in italics.]*

## Purpose

This document examines the issues raised through the review of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program and provides recommendations designed to improve the operational practices of this program and to address the concerns expressed by program partners.

## Program Background

Provisions for the Private Sponsorship Program were introduced as part of the Immigration Act of 1976. It was recognized at that time that in addition to a planned government effort to help refugees, Canada would benefit from a mechanism that would allow private citizens and corporations to become involved in refugee resettlement.
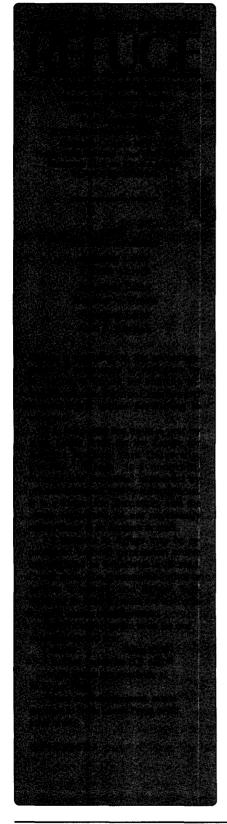
**[What was originally viewed as a very incidental part of the system of refugee intake, if it were ever to be utilized, quickly became the most imaginative innovation in refugee resettlement with the massive intake of Indochinese refugees beginning in 1979 and 1980 in which, during an 18-month period, 32,000 refugees were sponsored by the private sector.]**

The private sponsorship system enables corporations and groups of individuals to assist refugees and members of designated classes to rebuild their lives in Canada. The aim of sponsorship is to let interested groups express their concern for refugees in concrete ways. The sponsors take the responsibility for the persons they sponsor. A guiding principle behind the program is the belief that refugees are assisted in their adaptation to Canadian culture through close association with established residents of Canada.

Voluntarism is a cornerstone of the Private Sponsorship Program, which operates as a joint venture between the government and the voluntary sector. Much of Canada's population is composed of former refugees or their descendants, and many national organizations in this country have a history of dedication to the resettlement and integration of refugees. Such organizations, primarily major national churches and large, well-known, ethnic organizations, were the first to become involved in private sponsorship. In 1979-80, the program was successful in responding to the need to resettle Indochinese refugees. Participation in the program then declined until the mid-1980s when it increased again in popularity. Today, in a climate of economic restraint, the number of applications for private sponsorship are fewer than in the late 1980s; however, this program continues to be instrumental in assisting numerous refugees to become resettled in Canada.

When the private sponsorship of refugees was established, Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) identified, in general terms, the obligations of sponsors. Precise, detailed guidance was, however, never provided. Over the years, as participation in the Private Sponsorship Program expanded and evolved, a wide variety of practices developed across the country. Difficulties developed in the operation of the program because of the absence of clear directions. **[The surge in private sponsorship in one group based on new practices without a precedent, may have been the critical factor which shifted the program so dramatically that strains in other areas, which had developed in the interval, now came to the fore.]**

Some sponsoring groups overestimated the number of refugees they could sponsor and support. With the downturn in the economy these groups found themselves unable to cope with the financial responsibilities of the sponsorships they had submitted. Sponsorship applications had to be cancelled. This resulted in extreme disappointment for refugees as well as generating substantial additional workloads for CICs and visa offices. *[Editorial note: The Discussion Paper stressed financial overextension on the part of the sponsoring groups. The original Report saw the problem as two-sided, with mutual mistrust on both sides.]* **[Instead of a program characterized by an almost loving trust between the government and the private sector, it became a program, as the research report prepared by the Strategic Planning and Research Branch of Immigration Policy stated (p. 5), characterized by "a lot of mistrust."]**

While the program remains viable and well-respected, program partners voiced several concerns which need to be addressed. In an effort to deal with these concerns to improve the sponsorship system, a comprehensive review of the program was undertaken. The review was deliberately designed to further improve communications among all program partners — including private sponsors — involved in refugee resettlement.

## Review Process

The review of the Private Sponsorship Program began with a research project designed to examine the operational practices and to evaluate the performance of the program. A Steering Committee on Private Sponsorship, comprised of representatives from the academic community, private sponsorship groups, NGOs, and the federal government, was established to oversee all stages of this project.

The research was carried out through extensive consultations and in a spirit of partnership. Input was solicited from the three major participants in the program: private sponsors, the government, and refugees themselves. Information was gathered by means of questionnaires and in-person interviews, and the data collected was compiled into a final report of findings.

This report was discussed at a national consultation which brought together sponsoring groups, NGOs, the academic community, and the federal government. The national consultation process provided a forum for additional recommendations to be presented and allowed private sponsors an opportunity to express their views concerning future aims and objectives for the private sponsorship program.

A comprehensive report focusing on the major issues raised through the study process and the national consultation was compiled and made available, for review and comment, to the members of the Steering Committee. The report was then finalized and forwarded to the Minister and to other interested parties.

This paper builds on the material collected through the review of the sponsorship program. It takes into account the comments and recommendations made by all the program partners and will form the basis for new program guidelines.

The observations and concerns that surfaced through the research project are presented herein, and proposals are offered aimed at improving the sponsorship system.

## Summary

Throughout the process of assessing the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, it was evident that the majority of respondents involved in the review were overwhelmingly in favour of retaining the program. It is considered a successful Canadian innovation. Thousands of refugees were provided with an opportunity to resettle in Canada through an able support system. Access to established residents in this country helped introduce these newcomers to the norms and values of Canadian culture, ensuring their understanding of the new environment in which they lived.

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees is delivered through a unique partnership comprised of government and nongovernment personnel. Organizations which have a tradition of dedication to the resettlement and integration of refugees, actively participate in this program and, through their involvement, foster and support a number of other immigration programs and initiatives. The willingness of so many Canadians to give so generously of their time to assist refugees is a visible demonstration of their commitment to continuing Canada's humanitarian tradition. The recommendations contained in this paper will serve to reinforce and augment the operation of this well-respected program — a program accepted and promoted by many in keeping with the heritage of this country.

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## RESEARCH PROJECT RESULTS

## PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES PROGRAM

### Processing of Sponsored Applications

*Issue:*

Long processing times were identified as a major concern for sponsoring groups. There was overwhelming support among program partners to address this matter. In many cases, processing of sponsored applications takes from 18 months to two years.

The lengthy processing times are problematic in that sponsoring groups, intent on assisting refugees, become frustrated; support systems tend to diminish as a result of unreasonable waiting periods.

*Background:*

The time it takes to process sponsored applications is recognized as a significant problem by Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) and the Department of External Affairs (EA). The crux of the problem is the number of visa officers available to respond efficiently to the overall volume of work that must be completed.

Immigration officers in Canada are responsible for distributing and receiving sponsorship applications. Forwarding these forms to visa offices is automatic and is usually carried out within 5 to 10 days after receipt of the sponsorships. Visa officers are responsible for assessing applications and making decisions pertaining to the eligibility and admissibility of each person sponsored.

Processing of refugee applications, while done on a priority basis, still comprises only a small fraction of the total immigration workload abroad. Visa officers are tasked with a variety of immigration activities; processing of applications for permanent residence from all categories of immigrants, issuance of employment and student authorizations, and issuance of visitor visas, to name a few.

Present operational practices within EIC and EA allow for unlimited numbers of immigration applications to be submitted for processing at a time when there is significant interest in immigrating to Canada.

Backlogs have therefore developed not only in the area of private sponsorship applications; processing of all immigration applications is affected. In order to reduce the processing times for refugee applications, it is necessary to examine the overall immigration application processing system. Better planning for anticipated workloads is mandatory.

Conclusion:

It is recommended that:
• EIC and EA improve the management of the immigration processing system to respond appropriately to the anticipated workload;
[Visa officers were viewed as having an extremely heavy workload and a number of suggestions, not mutually exclusive, were made to allow visa officers to keep on top of their responsibilities:
a) Visa officer(s) in each refugee-producing area should be asked to specialize in processing refugee sponsorships;

b) more visa officers should be assigned to handle the workload;
c) there should be a transfer of more resources to visa processing.]
• EIC and EA strive to reduce processing times to an average of six to nine months, and that mechanisms already in place be reviewed to allow for the immediate processing of applications from persons in imminent danger.
• Master Agreement holders (MAHs) and other sponsoring groups be asked to forecast the number of refugees they intend to sponsor, by world area, over the calendar year;
• The number of sponsorships submitted by groups be determined by their ability to support, both morally and financially, the integration and resettlement of those sponsored.
[Editorial note: The Discussion Paper stressed planning and limits. The original Report stressed an open-ended approach with review provisions for rejected applications.]
[1. The number of private sponsorships should remain open-ended, should continue to be part of the overall intake over and above the government intake and should not be restricted by the use of rationing of entry visas.
2. The turnaround time for sponsorships should be 6-8 months.
3. The government should introduce a review process for rejected applications.]

## Selection: Identification of Refugees

Issue:

Prospective refugees come to the attention of MAHs and sponsoring groups through a number of means. Refugees are identified by: their relatives in Canada, international organizations, overseas partners, government personnel, and direct requests from the refugees themselves.

More and more refugees are being identified or "named" through family members and other relatives in Canada. There is a need to determine if this practice of selection is acceptable or if a more broadly-based method of selection is desirable.

Background:

The object of selection is to identify refugees who are in need of protection and are admissible and to match them with sponsors. When the Private Sponsorship Program first began a "matching centre" was established to link needy refugees to sponsoring groups. Today, many of these "former refugees" are actively canvassing sponsoring groups to request assistance for friends and relatives they consider also to be refugees.

Generally, sponsoring groups are involved in refugee sponsorship out of compassion. Consequently, more emphasis is placed on "selecting" those in need regardless of the country of origin or the methods used to identify these individuals. However, there are some understandable reasons for sponsors to concentrate their efforts on relatives of persons who are already in Canada. First, sponsors are in closer contact with "former" refugees and are under pressure to sponsor their families or others from their country. Second, sponsoring groups find it easier to sponsor people from the same cultural group because they are able to transfer the experience and knowledge that they acquire from one sponsorship to another.

Experience indicates that "naming" refugees from within Canada is a legitimate and worthwhile means of accessing persons who are in need of protection. This method of "selecting" refugees, when used in conjunction with other various sources, provides a comprehensive and varied approach to identifying vulnerable individuals throughout the world.

Conclusion:

It is recommended that:
• MAHs and sponsoring groups be allowed to continue to have access to a variety of sources to identify/"name" refugees;
[MAHs retain the right to name refugees in sponsorships. Further, this proviso was important in allowing the private sector to have an input into the selection process based on the

information they received directly from refugee-producing areas.]

• EIC fully explain the eligibility and admissibility criteria for the selection of refugees to sponsoring groups;

*[Editorial note: The Discussion Paper assumes setting eligibility and admissibility criteria to be the sole prerogative of EIC with no input from sponsors; sponsors are assumed to merely implement EIC criteria and plans.]* **[It was suggested that visa officers in a refugee-producing area be asked to draw up a set of criteria that they would expect a sponsored refugee to meet if that individual were to be assessed to be eligible for sponsorship under the program; these criteria would be put forth as** *recommendations* **to an annual consultation on sponsorship where the visa officers would be present to interact with MAHs and Private Sponsors. Hopefully, the criteria and standards for selection, though determined in the end by the government, would be a product of closer interaction and consultation between the government and the private sector.... Visa officers should not view selection as their exclusive responsibility, even if it was their ultimate responsibility.]**

• MAHs make every effort to ensure that persons sponsored are eligible to be selected as refugees; **[Visa officers should welcome any information provided by MAHs that would help to ascertain that the sponsored individual(s) is (are) refugees, but should not use any such information provided as a basis for a negative determination.... MAHs should assume a responsibility for vetting the refugees sponsored to ascertain that they are bona fide refugees under the criteria of the program, but should not feel an obligation to pass the information it receives on to visa officers for their consideration, though it may do so if the information provided is based on first-hand sources and is of good quality.]**

• MAHs and sponsoring groups remain open to receiving names of refugees from a variety of sources including government, UNHCR, and other NGOs and agencies; and

**[MAHs should remain open to receiving names from the Government, UNHCR, Amnesty International, International NGOs and other international agencies, etc., and passing them back to private sponsorship groups for sponsorship.]**

• EIC should encourage identifying refugee cases that require sponsorship through liaison with international organizations and other appropriate means.

## Financial Resources: MAHs and Sponsoring Groups

### Issue:

Some MAHs and sponsoring groups have in the past requested fees, deposits, pledges or administrative costs from refugees, their families or friends. Groups charging money do so for a variety of reasons, the primary purpose being to financially assist refugees by means other than from the resources of their own organizations. In this way, organizations have the capacity to sponsor more refugees than their financial assets would normally permit.

### Background:

When the Private Sponsorship Program was established, it was understood that organizations participating in this initiative would be guided by philanthropic principles.

Indeed, among the first organizations to become involved in the program were some of the major national churches and large, well-known, ethnic associations. Given this context, the solicitation of funds from refugees, their families or friends, was never contemplated.

The issue of requesting funds, deposits, pledges, administrative costs — or anything similar — for sponsorships must be examined in view of the founding principles of this program. The Private Sponsorship Program was designed to be voluntary in nature and humanitarian in intent. Given the roots of this program, charging for sponsorships does not "fit in."

The practice of charging fees began as a means of allowing organizations to finance the sponsorship of more refugees than their resources would permit. The current economic climate has made it difficult for some organizations to provide the intended support to all of those sponsored. Increasing costs associated with resettlement (accommodation, food, clothing and incidentals) confront sponsors on a daily basis. The reality of mounting costs, coupled with the desire to assist the plight of refugees, has encouraged some organizations to try and supplement the funds available to them to carry out their mandate. Most organizations, however, have undertaken to establish more realistic planning with respect to the numbers of refugees they can support rather than request funds from refugees or their acquaintances.

The Immigration Regulations governing the Private Sponsorship Program are clear: corporations or sponsoring groups wishing to facilitate the admission or arrival in Canada of a Convention refugee seeking resettlement must *have* the resources to provide for lodging, care, maintenance, and resettlement assistance for the refugee and his accompanying dependants for a period of one year. The policy of EIC with regard to the financial obligations of sponsoring groups flows from the Regulations. It has always been understood that the costs of the refugees' resettlement would be financed by MAHs or the sponsoring groups. It was never intended that this condition of sponsorship be interpreted to mean that refugees, either through their family members or other associates, "top up" the revenues of organizations to ensure the availability of financial backing for resettlement purposes.

### Conclusion:

It is recommended that:

• A process of planning be adopted by MAHs and sponsoring groups, in conjunction with the Refugee Affairs Branch, to ensure that a planned approach is taken in determining the number of refugees to be sponsored;

• MAHs and sponsoring groups be asked to assure that funds are available within the resources of their organization to cover the costs of all sponsorships submitted; [MAHs should develop a set of guidelines, with consideration given to possible accreditation, for MAHs, such guidelines to be enforced by a self-policing system or the government in order to spot a "renegade" group.]
• In keeping with the original intent of private sponsorship the policy of EIC against charging fees be clearly and categorically enunciated to dispel any misunderstanding; and [Though most MAHs do not charge administrative fees and many if not most expressed a preference that administrative fees *not* be charged, they also agreed that the charging of administrative fees should not be prohibited, but specific guidelines should be established and made part of the Agreement specifying maximum administrative fees chargeable, the sources eligible to pay such fees and the uses to which such fees could be put. The above should not be construed to prevent a MAH from receiving donations, but guidelines should set out that donations should be not be used as a devious method of extracting fees from refugees or their relatives as a *requirement* of the group agreeing to provide a sponsorship. No provision should be made for refugees to pay to enable themselves to be sponsored.]
• The charging of fees be grounds for the cancellation of sponsorship privileges.

## Pre-Arrival Orientation

*Issue:*

Pre-arrival orientation provided to refugees was considered, in general, to be inadequate. It was felt that refugees should receive instruction in one of the official languages and advanced counselling on Canadian culture, employment opportunities, and basic facts about day-to-day life. More importantly, refugees should be supplied with some information concerning their rights as residents of Canada. MAHs and sponsoring groups

indicated that there was not enough information available to newcomers and that this was an area that required further attention.

*Background:*

Many MAHs and sponsoring groups felt that the process of orientation to Canada should begin prior to arrival in Canada and should continue after arrival. This implies that refugees should be supplied in advance, with basic information on what to expect upon arriving in Canada. It was felt that generally pre-arrival information is delivered inconsistently with many visa officers lacking the informational tools to educate newcomers.

Over the past two years, a number of initiatives were undertaken to respond to this situation. Language training and orientation classes are delivered to refugees overseas in Italy, Athens, Geneva, Hong Kong, and Bangkok, with additional sites being contemplated depending on world conditions.

A variety of orientation material, such as *Canada: A Source Book, Working with Newcomers, Getting Started in Canada,* and *A Newcomer's Guide to Canada* , was published and forwarded to immigrant-serving agencies, CICs, and visa offices. In addition, EIC funded the publication of cultural profiles on Iran, Somalia, El Salvador, and Guatemala. These cultural profiles were designed primarily for volunteers working in organized Host Programs. While many of the recent publications of pre-arrival information have been positively received, it is recognized that additional measures must be undertaken.

*Conclusion:*

It is recommended that:
• The Refugee Affairs Branch determine to what extent program partners, including MAHs, sponsoring groups, visa offices, and CICs are aware of the availability of recently produced orientation material. *[Editorial note: The Discussion Paper places primary responsibility for orientation on EIC. The original Report placed it on the MAHs.]*

[MAHs should be responsible for the training and orientation of private sponsorship groups, but if the Host Program enters this area, the Host Program should not engage in any "turf wars" with MAHs, though MAHs are free to invite the Host Program to assume responsibility for orienting their private sponsors. MAHs, collectively, should consider assuming the responsibility for developing an improved guide for private sponsors.]
• Where it is found that MAHs and other program partners have not received copies of the resettlement orientation publications that this material be provided; and
• Ongoing communication be maintained with visa offices, CICs, MAHs, and sponsoring groups to identify supplementary requirements in the field of informational tools needed to meet the operational requirements of the Private Sponsorship Program. *[Editorial note: The Discussion Paper focuses on pre-arrival orientation of sponsors. The Report focused on pre-arrival orientation for refugees.]*
[The government should provide enhanced language training and orientation to refugees prior to their departure for Canada.]

## Co-Sponsorship

*Issue:*

Some MAHs and sponsoring groups are utilizing informal co-sponsorship arrangements to bring refugees to Canada. There is no provision for the practice of co-sponsorship in immigration legislation.

*Background:*

Co-sponsorship occurs when an individual or group works jointly but informally with the sponsoring group to sponsor refugees. The implicit understanding in the arrangement is that the needs of the refugee (accommodation, food, clothing, moral support, etc.) will be looked after by others; the sponsoring group considers itself to be freed from any financial or moral

responsibilities. Often, sponsoring groups ask that waivers be signed absolving them from resettlement responsibilities, including financial obligations.

The practice of co-sponsorship, as it currently operates, is contrary to the original intent of private sponsorship. It contravenes the provisions that apply to sponsoring groups as defined in the Immigration Regulations.

It is understood that families may contribute to the resettlement of other refugee family members; however, these contributions must not replace the condition that sponsoring groups are ultimately responsible for providing material assistance, general orientation, and moral support to refugees.

Under the current practice, some refugees have been left unattended since there is no way of enforcing this arrangement.

The practice of co-sponsorship is a recent development in the sponsorship program and the majority of sponsoring groups do not involve themselves in co-sponsorship arrangements.

## Conclusion:

It is recommended that:
• Co-sponsorship arrangements as described be discontinued as they have no legal basis; and
• Clear guidelines be provided clarifying the responsibilities inherent in sponsorship applications.
**[If a PS is working in cooperation with relatives of the refugee, the PS should consider making the relatives part of the sponsorship group, and/or signing a co-sponsorship agreement with the relatives to clarify the division of responsibilities.]**

## Communication

### Issue:

Program partners were in general agreement that there was a need to improve the quantity and quality of communication between the government and the sponsoring community.

### Background:

It is recognized that the communication links between government and the sponsoring groups concerning the Private Sponsorship Program have been inadequate. Since the beginning of the program, very little has been provided to participants in the way of guidelines or directives defining appropriate channels of communication. This has fostered the development of informal communication networks which do not necessarily achieve the desired results. To improve the overall operation of the program and to dispel some misunderstanding, clearer instructions concerning information sharing must be produced.

The primary point of contact for MAHs and sponsors is the CIC. In most smaller offices, the relationship with the sponsoring community is quite good and communication remains open and friendly. However, problems have been encountered with many of the larger CICs where it is often difficult to obtain accurate program information and to develop good working relationships due to frequent staff rotation. Also, there was universal agreement among sponsoring groups that too often there was insufficient notification of the arrival date of refugees. Appropriate preparations were unable to be carried out by sponsoring groups as a result of "last minute" requests to meet refugees at the airport.

MAHs and sponsoring groups have very little contact or communication with visa offices. This contributed to a general misunderstanding of one another's role. Slow processing times and insufficient information concerning cases that were refused resulted in sponsors experiencing frustration with the overseas processing system.

In addition, sponsors felt that their efforts to communicate relevant background information concerning refugees were not given due consideration during the processing of an application. This resulted in a general feeling of discontent with the "arbitrary" attitude and decision-making of visa officers.

Similarly, visa officers registered dissatisfaction with the sponsoring community, which they felt had little appreciation of the constraints under which they worked and did not know what was involved in making a selection decision. It was felt that more care should be taken by sponsoring groups when pre-screening requests for sponsorship to ensure appropriateness of a referral prior to forwarding these requests overseas. Visa officers indicated they would welcome feedback from sponsoring groups concerning the resettlement and integration of refugees selected through the Private Sponsorship Program.

Despite the calls for improvement in the area of communication, several organizations had developed good, informal contacts with government partners and vice versa. However, there was a strong acceptance on the part of all program partners that improved mechanisms of communication were necessary and would benefit the overall operation of the program.

### Conclusion:

[*Editorial note: The Discussion Paper adopts a public relations rather than a partnership model for communicating. The original Report was problem-oriented and stressed the need for refugees and sponsors to communicate.*]
It is recommended that:
• The Refugee Affairs Branch design procedures to improve communication among visa offices, CICs, and sponsoring groups, particularly throughout the processing of sponsored applications;
• Visa officers immediately inform CICs in all instances where an application for sponsorship has been refused, indicating the reason for refusal (i.e., admissibility or eligibility) and that CICs give priority to advising sponsoring groups;
• The process for notifying sponsoring groups of the arrival of a refugee be reviewed to identify and resolve shortcomings;
• CICs ensure staff involved in the delivery of the Private Sponsorship Program are adequately trained to perform this role; and

• Additional ongoing communication channels be developed and maintained between government and sponsoring groups (e.g., newsletter, meetings/conferences).

[Consideration should be given to providing MAHs with special RED ALERT sponsorship forms, perhaps in some ratio based on the number of cases processed by the MAHs and the degree that a MAH is involved with serious protection cases. These Red Alerts would be fast-tracked through the system, and, without removing the ultimate responsibility that the visa officers have for determining whether the individuals sponsored are refugees, would allow the visa officer to give a *benefit of doubt* to the sponsored refugee…. Visa officers should request refugees to sign a waiver (whether it should be absolute or a limited waiver was not discussed) on releasing information to the sponsors in order to facilitate better communication with the sponsors.]

## Length of Sponsorship

### Issue:

[Editorial note: Nothing in original Report.]
Sponsoring groups offer financial, emotional, psychological, and social help to refugees for a period of one year. The emphasis on selecting those refugees in need of immediate protection could result in these newcomers requiring more time to adjust to a new and stable environment. There is a need to examine the present duration of sponsorship to ensure it is adequate for the resettlement and integration of all refugees admitted to Canada through this program.

### Background:

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program was designed to complement the government-assisted program. The type of support to be offered to refugees admitted to Canada through these programs is generally uniform; the same selection criteria are employed by visa officers when determining eligibility;

and the length of support is normally for one year.

With respect to the period of assistance provided to refugees, there was a general consensus among program partners that, as with the government-assisted program, one year was usually sufficient. Experience had shown that the majority of refugees sponsored through these two programs were capable of fending for themselves after a year.

Sponsoring groups agreed, however, that there were instances when refugees would have benefited from extended financial and oral support. Understandably, refugees escaping from turbulent and war-torn situations suffered from the trauma of their experiences. Their readjustment to Canada's environment, though peaceful, was more difficult. To be able to respond to the greater needs of some refugees, consideration should be given to extending the period of support for longer than one year.

### Conclusion:

It is recommended that:
• Provisions be made in the Immigration Regulations governing private sponsorship to allow for an extension of a sponsorship beyond one year;
• A recommendation to lengthen a sponsorship be taken only after a number of influencing factors have been considered, including the refugee's background and his/her capacity to cope with change and adjustment to an alien environment; and
• The decision to extend a sponsorship beyond the one-year time frame only be taken with the concurrence of the sponsoring group.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Issue:
In some instances, program partners indicated that their roles and responsibilities, vis-à-vis the Private Sponsorship Program, were unclear. Much of this uncertainty can be attributed to a lack of precise guidelines defining the responsibilities of the four

main program partners involved in the delivery of the program.

### Background:

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program operates as a collaborative partnership between the government and the private sector. It is a complex process in that it requires a number of players to work cooperatively and harmoniously with one another. While general guidelines outlining the responsibilities of program partners were issued at the outset of the program, communication mechanisms necessary to ensure ongoing clarity were not maintained. Understandably, over several years of operation, responsibilities became blurred, often resulting in misgivings as certain expectations were not met.

Specific operational procedures, forwarded to all CICs and visa offices on implementation of this program, are now dated. As a consequence, staff delivering the program in government offices have developed informal procedures to meet their needs. To standardize the operation of this program, national guidelines must be updated and redistributed.

MAHs are provided with information concerning their obligations, and those of the groups operating under their umbrella agreement, primarily through the contractual agreement signed with the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

However, this document, while a useful tool, contains only basic information. Supplementary details are necessary to strengthen and clarify several important aspects of the program.

### Conclusion:

It is recommended that:
• Operational procedures required to ensure the effective and smooth functioning of this program be updated and distributed to CICs, visa offices, and the sponsoring community;
• A new contractual (master) agreement clearly identifying program respon-

sibilities and obligations of both government and nongovernmental organizations be produced;
• All corporations meeting the criteria of the program, who would like to participate in the private sponsorship of refugees, undertake to sign the revised contractual agreement; and
• Ongoing communication mechanisms be employed to enhance and reinforce a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of program partners.

*[Editorial note: The emphasis in the Discussion Paper is on control and management on the part of government, fiscal responsibility of the private sector, and the contract between the parties, with stress placed on the MAHs. The original Report continued to place primary emphasis on the initiative and responsibility of the private sponsors.]*

**[1. The Private Sponsorship group has the primary responsibility for naming the refugee(s) they wish to sponsor, the numbers they wish to sponsor, the area of the world from which they wish to sponsor refugees, whether they wish to sponsor within a special program (e.g., women at risk), to determine what support is available for refugees in their area, but private sponsors should operate within guidelines established by their MAH or the government.**
**2. The PS should utilize a MAH, if available, for communicating with the government, not counting the local CIC office.**
**3. Nothing said herein should be construed or interpreted to mean that private sponsors be *required* to sponsor through the auspices of a Master Agreement Holder.**
**4. The PS has primary responsibility for meeting the refugees, arranging temporary accommodation, providing initial orientation to government services (including registration for SIN and Health Insurance cards) and community services (shopping, health care, transportation, etc.), registering the refugees in language courses and making an assessment whether the refugees should be enrolled in a skills upgrading program.]**

## Operational Systems

### Issue:

The current systems in place to support and monitor the daily operations of this program were found to be inadequate. Present operational policies and procedures require clarification and updating in order to respond to the needs of program partners. Efforts must be made to guarantee that information necessary to ensure the efficient and effective operation of this program is made available to assist program partners.

### Background:

The initial operational mechanisms established for the Private Sponsorship Program were designed to accommodate the early needs of this unique and focused undertaking. The systems, while minimal, were sound and functioned well for the limited number of national churches and ethnic organizations committed to the success of this operation.

As the number of program partners grew and diversified, the operational systems supporting this program became insufficient and obsolete. Sponsoring groups and government personnel indicated there was a need to address several current operational concerns: better planning strategies were required to sustain the daily operations of this program; improved data collecting and monitoring were essential to ensure continued effectiveness; and ongoing evaluating mechanisms were needed to protect and safeguard the integrity of the private sponsorship system. Program partners were universal in their agreement that policies and operational guidelines for private sponsorship be revised to reflect the current demands of this program.

### Conclusion:

It is recommended that:
• Operational procedures designed to provide guidance and directions to program participants be drafted and disseminated as required;

• Monitoring strategies and appropriate data gathering be developed to support the operation of this program;
• Modifications to fundamental policy issues be clearly articulated and forwarded to government and non-governmental personnel involved in the administration of this program; and
• Ongoing consultations be initiated with program partners to ensure operational systems remain effective and respond to the program requirements.

## Transportation Loan Program

### Issue:

Information provided by MAHs suggested a lack of understanding of the operational aspects of the Transportation Loan Program. Past practices, for the most part, supported transportation loan approval for all persons under private sponsorship, regardless of the person's need for a loan or the ability of the person to repay the loan.

### Background:

The Transportation Loan Program operates on the basis of a revolving fund; that is, all repayments on established loan accounts are returned to the transportation loan fund to finance new loans.

In April 1990, the program's loan reserve was dangerously close to depletion because of the increased refugee admissions between 1986 and 1989. During this period, the number of refugees admitted under the government's annual refugee plan increased from 11,930 to 13,800; however, the number of privately-sponsored Convention refugees and designated class members rose dramatically from 5,086 landings in 1986 to 21,017 landings in 1989.

The increase in the number of government-assisted refugees was a managed increase. The increase in the number of privately-sponsored refugees was dramatic and unplanned. In 1989 alone, transportation loan approvals for persons under private sponsorship totalled $8 million over and above the

expected loan approval level. The rate of loan repayment could no longer keep pace with the rate at which dollars were being loaned. In April 1990, temporary measures were introduced to limit loan approval to government-assisted refugees and those persons who were in life-threatening situations. The special measures remained in effect until October 1990, when a $10 million increase to the program "ceiling" and the implementation of sound program management principles enabled the program to return to normal operations.

## Conclusion:

It is recommended that:
• Sponsors indicate whether the person under sponsorship, and/or the sponsor is able and/or willing to cover the transportation and related costs;
[Travel loans should be equally available to private and government-sponsored refugees, and the ability or inability to pay for travel should not be a consideration in accepting or rejecting an application.]
• Sponsors counsel refugees under their sponsorship on the responsibility to repay their loans;
[Though a PS should encourage refugees to pay their transportation loans, they should not be asked to nor agree to encourage relatives and refugees to *prepay* such loans.]
• The responsibilities of sponsoring groups vis-à-vis the Transportation Loan Program be clearly defined;
• EIC develop multilingual program information brochures for use by sponsoring groups and persons seeking resettlement in Canada explaining the responsibilities inherent in the Transportation Loan Program.

[*Editorial note: Aims and objectives were omitted.*]

[The following was considered as an appropriate statement of the goals of the program. The program is intended:
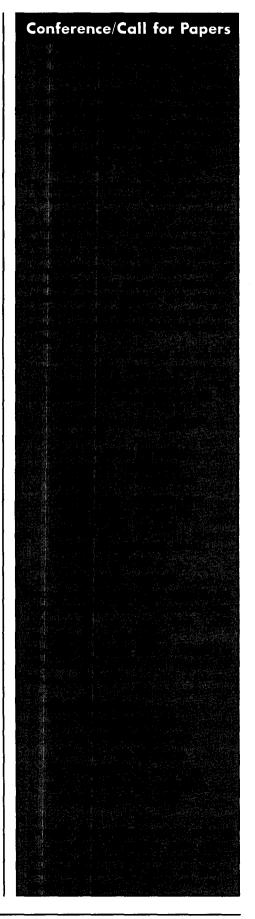
## A. A Form of Advocacy

1. To provide an opportunity for individuals and groups in the private sector to involve themselves in direct action to influence refugee policy.
2. To allow Canadians and landed immigrants, through the initiative of the private sector, to be responsive to a refugee crisis.
3. To allow the private sector to bring in refugees over and above the government sponsorship target figure.
4. To foster better understanding and improvement between the government and private sectors.
5. To allow the private sector to develop different priorities in refugee sponsorship than the government sector.

## B. Refugees and Refugee Communities

6. To help refugees most in need, with a special reference to those who need protection.
7. To enable a community to help its members, with MAHs assuming a special responsibility for refugees who have no or very few members of their community in Canada.
8. To allow and facilitate the entry of refugees into Canada who have a Canadian connection.
9. To improve the adaptation process.
10. To ensure equal treatment for both government and privately-sponsored refugees through government services, such as transportation loans, language training, etc.

## C. Canadians

11. To allow Canadians to have a first-hand experience and learn how to deal with a pluralistic Canada that is now integral to the Canadian social fabric.

12. To allow Canadians to understand and live responsibly in a global system.]

# Flight to Canada:
## Young Survivors of War and Violent Oppression
### Susan Beattie

Immigrants who have lived through war, violent oppression or flight because of fear of persecution before coming to Canada, have had experiences in common that cut across the lines of nationality, culture, ethnicity or gender. Within this group, adolescents are at a unique vantage point from which to review their experiences. They are close enough to childhood to see recent traumatic events in sharp contrast to an earlier and probably more settled past, and old enough to have an understanding of the very real peril that they have lived through. For many the journey or escape from danger or persecution becomes the focal point and central event of their lives. Their stories add detail and a perspective not frequently encountered to the history of immigration to Canada.

This paper is based on oral interviews conducted with about twenty-five young men and women, aged fourteen to nineteen, from twelve countries in East and South Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Central Europe and Latin America. The experiences and cultures of these young people are diverse, but they have all had to leave or escape from potentially life-threatening situations, and they all now live in Ontario. The names of the individuals have been changed, and usually their region of origin rather than their country is given. Stories have not been combined and no details have been added.

Teenagers who travelled with others, whether parents, surrogate parents, casual companions or hired travel agents, did not necessarily have an easier time before or during their journey than those who travelled alone, but the

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presence of family members or others gave support and strategies that helped them survive during their ordeal. Mari, a young teenager, and her family had a precipitous departure from Kuwait at the end of 1990, just prior to the onset of the Gulf War. When Iraqi army trucks pulled up outside her house, her father simply gave over the house and car keys to the commanding officer who was "very polite." Her father asked for and was allowed to keep enough money to travel to the end of the bus line, and from there the family — parents, Mari, and her brother and sister — walked across the desert to Jordan. The journey took them three days. Eventually their water ran

*A number of young teenagers travelled to Canada in the care of surrogate parents or hired companions. They had been sent away to escape civil war or the brutality of insurgent armies, often after others in their families had been killed or coerced into service.*

out, but they were able to reach a refugee camp before they became dangerously dehydrated. Although they were threatened, they were physically unharmed, but they lost their possessions accumulated over thirty years. They arrived in Jordan with only the clothes they wore. They considered themselves lucky not to have suffered physical assault or worse. They reached Canada within three weeks of leaving their home.

Other families were relatively less fortunate. For some, harassment turned into violent assault when the police could or would no longer provide protection. When Ramon, a fifteen-year-old Latin American, and his family were threatened and harassed, they began to fear for their safety. One night their house was broken into and Ramon's father was beaten severely and left for dead. The rest of the family was unharmed but terrified. Ramon's father was unable to travel for

many weeks because of the severity of his injuries, and Ramon and his mother, believing the assailants to be off-duty police, were afraid to report the incident. They brought a doctor to the house to stitch the father's wounds and then concealed and tended him until he could travel. They left their home in the night and made their way to a safe country. There Ramon supported the family for three years by working as a short-order cook. His mother and father were unable to work steadily during this period, and his sister was too young.

Some families made the decision to leave or send away one of their children only after several months or years of trouble rather than as the result of one terrifying or brutal incident. Alicia and her family left their home and grocery store in a Caribbean country after a prolonged period of harassment. She was eleven when harassment escalated into a series of violent incidents that led to her family's eventual decision to leave. "It was September, I think it was a holiday. We made good money that day. There were three men that came in the store, and my dad tried to defend himself. He was cut on his cheek; he got twenty-four stitches for it; he got his head split open." Alicia ran to a neighbour's house for help, but when two men started running after her, she hid behind the house until they left. A few months later "Christmas day or the eve before Christmas, we were sleeping, and around two in the morning we heard a bang. We thought it sounded like a gunshot. Then when I jumped out of my bed somebody banged my door and it

opened, and there was a man with a gun by my throat." Alicia's parents were violently assaulted and robbed. Alicia hid under her brother's bed. The children could do nothing to defend their parents, and the police could not be called because her parents feared they "had a hand in it." Alicia, her parents and younger brothers were able to get travel documents, including passports, and they sold their business and possessions to buy round-trip tickets to Toronto. Three years after their trouble began, they left their home with two suitcases and the clothes they were wearing.

These young people and their families benefitted from the considerable social and often material support they gave one another. A number of young teenagers travelled to Canada in the care of surrogate parents or hired companions. They had been sent away to escape civil war or the brutality of insurgent armies, often after others in their families had been killed or coerced into service. For some of them the journey turned into a kind of adventure, perhaps because they had not suffered directly, were still very young, or bore no responsibility for making decisions. Their adult companions carried their documents and talked to immigration officials.

Hassan's family sent him away from his Middle-Eastern home in 1988 when he was twelve years old. His country was involved in a seemingly unending war, and his parents feared he was in danger of being forced to join the army or of being removed from home to live in a training camp, as had happened to other boys in his village. He travelled with a guide over mountains by night, hiding in the day. Silence was necessary at all times because the terrain was patrolled by soldiers. Upon arrival in a safe country, Hassan's guide left him with a furniture-

and-rug dealer with whom he stayed for over a year, earning his keep by running errands and sweeping up. He slept in a corner of the store. From there he was eventually collected by a "family friend" and taken to Toronto. When they arrived at the airport, the friend and Hassan's documents vanished. Hassan, by then fourteen years old, spent a month in detention and was then taken into care by the Children's Aid Society and placed in a foster home. Though separated from his family and in danger during his journey over the mountains, Hassan was never directly threatened, nor did he have to make travel arrangements or crucial decisions on his own or find food and shelter. Perhaps these reasons explain in part why he looks back on his experience of flight and travel with what might almost be described as a sense of adventure.

Rajuh's experience was similar but briefer. Rajuh was fifteen at the time of his departure from South Asia. He travelled to Canada on a round-the-world ticket with an "aunt" who had been hired by the travel agent who arranged his trip. Rajuh's parents sent him away because renegade soldiers were making door-to-door searches of all the houses in his village and forcing boys to join their army. The hired aunt kept his travel documents and did all the talking to officials at stopovers along the way. When Rajuh arrived in Toronto, his aunt and his travel documents disappeared. He did not spend time in detention, however, because he was met at the airport by a relative who had lived in Canada for three years and who immediately claimed refugee status for him.

The majority of adolescents described in this paper made their way to Canada alone. For them the journey was sometimes almost as harrowing as the

events leading up to it. It often followed a period of acute suffering resulting from an injury or family loss. Some young travellers were still in poor health at the time of their departure or were afraid to admit any knowledge of English after their arrival. They feared immediate deportation, particularly if they carried false documents or had destroyed them during the flight. Others were able to find companions along the way, people from whom they gained information and confidence. For most, fear was a constant companion.

A few of the survivors of war or violence who arrived alone were young women who were on their way to join a relative or who were sent away by their families for their own safety. Muna fled to Canada from Somalia when she was eighteen. Her large family was being broken up by the continuous fighting, and her parents reasoned that it would be better to send one of their children to safety than none. They were able to put together enough money to buy the necessary travel documents, and they chose to send Muna because she was the oldest and the healthiest of the children. She was never in danger of deportation, but she destroyed her documents before landing as a precaution.

Whether male or female, all these youths' lives were touched by luck and danger. For Zhang, the route through which he escaped from China resulted in a journey that was complicated and dangerous. Zhang was sixteen at the time of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. He participated in activities in the square and took pictures of some of the events and people. His mother, a doctor, was in Canada on a fellowship, and his father was in the United States. Zhang decided he had to leave China because he believed he was being watched and was in danger of being arrested or worse. He left Beijing and travelled south toward Hong Kong, carrying the undeveloped film. When he reached Taishan, where he spoke the local dialect, he managed to give the film to a pilot who was leaving the country. Then he hid in the bottom of a boat going to Macao, and from there he was able to contact his mother and fly to Canada.

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Some of the youths were in poor health at the time of their departure and the pressures of the journey were often too much for them. Sometimes, though, luck turned in their favour. Param was sixteen when he left his home in South Asia. He had not fully recovered from serious wounds inflicted by assassins who killed his father and brother. Not only was he mourning their loss, but he knew that next time the bullets would not miss him. He obtained a false passport and a round-the-world ticket with a stop in Toronto. Param got only as far as the first stop on his journey, a city in Malaysia. Frightened and alone, and with documents that were obviously phoney, he broke down and confessed this to the airport immigration officer who questioned him. "He knew right away my papers were false. I couldn't lie. I told him what had happened — everything." The officer stamped his passport and allowed him to continue his journey.

Hari, also from South Asia, was seventeen when he fled from his home, having miraculously and unexpectedly survived brutal treatment by a terrorist group. His extended trip, arranged by "a clever travel agent," took him to the United States by way of Japan. Once airborne after leaving Tokyo he flushed his passport. When he arrived in Los Angeles without documents and afraid to reveal his knowledge of English, he was taken in handcuffs and leg-irons to detention. By then bewildered, afraid of being deported, and thinking he was going to prison, he broke down. "I was bawling," he said. Eventually a relative in Canada secured his release and he was allowed to travel to Ontario where he claimed refugee status.

Some youths managed to join other travellers for temporary companionship or mutual support at different times during their travels. As a result they reached Canada safely when they otherwise might not have, and they probably suffered less emotional trauma during the journey than those who were alone. Ahmal was one such youth. He left his town in a central African country in 1988 when he was fourteen, following the death of his mother and grandmother: "There was no one looking around after me because after my mom died, I was living with my grandma. She died in July and I had a problem there in the town, eating and all that." Sometimes neighbours gave him food, or he helped a local mechanic, "like if he wants a spanner or something," who gave him a little money to buy bread and milk, but when rebel troops came out of the forest, he decided to leave. "It happened that they wanted to capture me, but luckily I got a chance to get out from that place and I went to another house. I didn't even know whose house it was, but I climbed up on the roof and I hid myself about eight hours until they

*Param was sixteen when he left his home in South Asia. He had not fully recovered from serious wounds inflicted by assassins who killed his father and brother. Not only was he mourning their loss, but he knew that next time the bullets would not miss him.*

were gone from the place.... I saw them coming. I saw them catching some other people."

Ahmal then left his town and made his way to the main road, where he helped two truck drivers fix a flat tire, and in turn got a lift to within a few kilometres of the border. There the truckers stopped for food, "and the drivers told me, 'Now what are you going to do? You can't cross without any documents?' I told them, 'No problem. I'll just stay here for a couple of hours and then I'll cross through the bush, through the forest.' That's what I did." For Ahmal, walking through the forest was as frightening as other parts of his journey. "It was dangerous because of the wild animals. I was afraid to cross by myself till I saw some other people crossing too. And right there at the border there was a fight. People have been slaughtered by the rebels; people were running across the border." He and his small group crossed at a different place.

Once in a safe country, Ahmal made his way to the capital city, asking for food and shelter in mosques along the way. It was then that he had the idea of leaving Africa. "Then it came to me that I want to

go out of Africa, like going somewhere far away from Africa where there is peace. Now I started thinking, where could it be? And I thought of Canada. I think it'll be the best place for me because I have never heard of anything about Canada like bombing and all this stuff. In the U.S. I know we used to see cinemas and fighting and things on the streets." By now it was late August 1988. Ahmal had been sleeping outdoors at night and was wholly dependent on others for food. He had no money of his own. "Money was the problem, and I had no document to travel with. So I decided to raise some money for myself. Every day after every prayer — because we pray five times — I used to have my small carpet for praying and they throw money on that after every prayer.... Some help and some don't. So that is the way I raised my money."

By November Ahmal had enough money and street information to buy a passport and an airplane ticket to Toronto. He found a travelling companion, an eighteen-year-old who "also did the same thing as what I did. He was on the same flight I was on. I collected his passport and I sat with him. It was a seventeen-hour flight. I needed someone to talk to." Upon his arrival in Toronto, Ahmal was held overnight in detention and released the next morning as a ward of the Children's Aid Society. Because he was under sixteen he was placed in a foster home. Ahmal's ability to make contact with groups and individuals throughout his journey partially explains its successful outcome, but luck also played a significant part throughout his complex and remarkable odyssey.

The young people whose stories are told in this paper have been in Canada for fewer than four years and, in some cases, only for a month or two. While it is
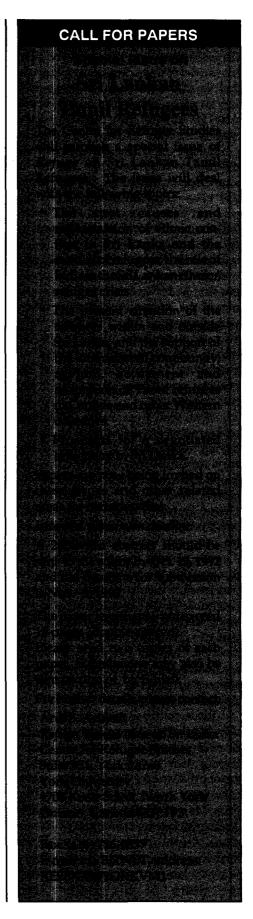
too early to comment on how their past experiences have affected their present lives, it is nevertheless interesting to note what has become of them, particularly in relation to school attendance, something each of them considered important.

Mari is still in high school. Her parents have no plans to return to Kuwait, but whether or not they will receive compensation for their losses is not known. Ramon was granted several high school credits for his years of work, reducing the time he needed to earn a diploma. As a result he was able to graduate from high school recently. He did not continue his education, but hopes to do so one day. For now he wants to work to help support his family. His mother is also working. Hassan and Rajuh are learning English and progressing through high school. Hassan has been granted landed-immigrant status. Rajuh's case is still pending, but it seems unlikely that he will be deported. Alicia and Zhang will both graduate in June. Alicia's parents have found steady work, making it possible for Alicia to devote herself full time to her studies. Earlier in the year she tried to work the night shift at a factory to help out, but quit when her marks began to suffer. She hopes to go to college. Zhang and his mother applied for landed-immigrant status after his safe arrival in Canada, something his mother had been afraid to do while he was still in China. Zhang plans to attend university next year.

Muna, Param, Hari and Ahmal were unable to continue their studies. Muna could not afford to leave her job as a night cook or risk losing it by shortening her hours. Having made contact with one of her brothers and learned that several others in the family were safe, she considered her first obligation to help them by sending money when she could. Param's health remained fragile. After three operations and an attack of malaria, which required several weeks of hospitalization, he decided he could not continue in school. He lives with a group of young men from his home country, all of whom are working, and he is largely responsible for his own care. Hari, now eighteen, has not yet received permission

from immigration to attend school. Because of his intense desire to study, it is likely that he will do so once his claim is resolved. Ahmal left school when he turned sixteen. While in foster homes, he so missed the companionship and culture of others who speak his own language that he moved in with a group of older refugee claimants from his country of origin who were living together in Toronto. In doing so he lost his benefits and was obliged to go to work.

These young men and women, at the threshold of their adult lives, have endured situations that most adults in Canada will never encounter. As varied as their experiences were, they had in common persecution or assault of such severity that they fled from their home countries to save their lives. Their journeys varied in duration and intensity, but they shared and eventually achieved one common goal: to reach Canada. The evidence from their stories suggests that those who travelled with others — whether family, surrogate parents, a hired travel agent or a chance companion — fared better during their journey than those who were alone. It also suggests that those who had an adult or family to live with after they arrived were more likely to stay in school and to graduate. A partial explanation might be found in the simple support and encouragement a family-like relationship can provide, and in the attention it can give to the needs and routines of daily life: enough to eat, regular meals, help with getting up and out in the morning, the expectation of homework, a place to study and the conviction that doing so has value and, last but not least, sociability.

In many ways the experiences of these young men and women reflect the struggle and uncertainty of other young immigrants who have for generations journeyed to Canada, but in addition they have had to live with the unceasing presence of the violent oppression that drove them from their homeland. Alicia, for whom night is often still frightening, spoke for all of them without intentional irony when she said, "You do have your memories." ▨

# An Insurmountable Past?
# Xenophobia in Germany Today

## Ronald Webster

To a certain degree I am qualified to comment on the emergence of a deep hostility to foreigners in today's Germany. Until 1983 I spent almost twenty years of my life in former West Germany, and although apparently shielded from such experiences by being married to a German, even I experienced milder forms of xenophobia (*Ausländerfeindlichkeit*) towards the end of my stay there.

Fundamentally, as all social scientists know, xenophobia is caused by a deeply ingrained group and individual instinct of mistrust and hostility towards those who are "foreigners." These tribal instincts, some would argue, are passed on from generation to generation. Inherited or otherwise, there is no doubt that the herd instinct manifests itself in hostility towards visibly different "intruders," as exemplified in Germany today.

At the same time, it must be said that these current hostilities are not peculiar to the Germans, but due to their past dealings with foreigners and those they have defined as "foreign." The Germans have understandably aroused more international attention and censure than other nations. Moreover, as a further extenuating circumstance, it should be pointed out that more foreigners either reside or seek asylum in Germany today than in any other Western European country. According to the highly respected German weekly, *Die Zeit*, there are no less than 5.7 million foreigners living in Germany today.[1] Germany's renowned news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, in its inimical polemical style, puts matters more bluntly by pointing out that Germany's population now exceeds "the current population of the former

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colonial states of France and Great Britain,"[2] with the highest percentage of foreigners in Europe and, with 46 percent of the European total, Germany has received the most persons seeking political asylum among all industrialized countries.

Consistent with its more dramatic view of the situation, *Der Spiegel* emphasizes what it perceives to be the all-too liberal aspects of German asylum laws, in which it quotes German experts who call the laws "extremely generous," making them a "magnet" for persons applying for asylum. In raw statistics, *Der Spiegel* states that 193,000 aspiring refugees came to Germany in 1990, with less densely populated France a distant second, taking 56,000. The news magazine also projects that these figures will rise.[3]

Indeed, the current turmoil in Germany centres mainly around visible

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minorities seeking asylum, rather than all non-Germans living in their midst, although, as stated at the outset, the "nonvisible" minorities have also felt the effects of this recent hostility.

To turn to the central issues at hand, the native Germans' dislike of foreigners is accentuated these days, especially in former East Germany, with its peculiar combination of adjustment trauma and a decided tendency to seek non-German scapegoats for the economic woes these "new" Germans are now enduring. Although recent antiforeign eruptions have taken place in almost all corners of the enlarged Federal Republic, the main focus of demonstrations and acts of

violence by skinheads and neo-Nazis has been in the East.

More rational Germans argue that these events are not surprising, given the years of pent-up frustration East Germans endured under the Communists and, of course, given present unemployment levels ranging over 20 percent of the Eastern workforce. Moreover, and most relevant here, under the Communist regime East Germans were not permitted to demonstrate publicly against the presence of Africans and Asians studying in significant numbers at their universities, while many young East Germans could not study at all due to active religious involvement or other alleged offences they had perpetrated against the dominant Communist ideology. Such perceived governmental favouritism, formerly opposed more or less in silence by suppressed "natives," is now allowed to vent itself more openly, for better or worse.

Several other fundamental aspects of the problem for all of Germany also need to be addressed. Firstly, as a result of extended phases of political isolation in their history and then of Nazi extermination policies, the Germans really had very little everyday contact with foreigners. Thus, to be labelled an *Ausländer* in German-speaking areas, beyond the word's hostile connotations, was and to some degree still is tinged even with exotic qualities. For example, I recall an American acquaintance from my student days in Germany recounting a trip he took with an international group

of students into the backwaters of Austria in the early 1970s. In the group was a Chinese student. The villagers showed a great deal of curiosity towards these exotic Asians, a curiosity that

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bordered in this case on the impolite. Indeed at the time my fellow student learned that the people of these particular hinterland villages had never seen an Asian before. And, it must be added, the backwaters in Germany and Austria are much the same today.

Secondly, the Germans themselves have been constantly subjected to cultural, linguistic and ethnic pressures from their more powerful and often ethnically more consolidated neighbours. As a group of *Die Zeit* journalists wrote recently,[4] perhaps no European people has been more exposed to ethnic intermingling than the Germans. From the East and Southeast came the Slavs, the Huns and the Tartars, from the West the Celts, from the North the Vikings, and from the South the Romans and other Mediterranean peoples. The city of Cologne traces its origins to Roman times and one of Cologne's most cherished Christian customs, the pre-Lenten carnival rites, go back to aspects of the Egyptian Isis cult.[5] Germany's venerable thinker and poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, had a Turkish ancestor. Frederick the Great spoke French, and he claimed he only used German with his coachman. Right into the Bismarck period after 1870, Germans were wont to accuse their fellows of aping foreigners, of an excessive desire to emulate their ways. No wonder Hitler's fantastic brand of Aryan ideology, unscientific as it was, gained such popular credence.

Thirdly, the Cold War has had a particular impact on the Germans' sense of nationality, which inevitably influenced recent events. In the East before 1989 the Communists downplayed the nation and nationalism, since Communist ideology and propaganda laid claimed to an overriding sense of the brotherhood of the toiling classes. It was therefore common practice before 1989 for the East German regime to try culturally and politically — even linguistically — to erect a symbolic national wall to match the physical one dividing East and West Germans. This left a scar in both parts of Germany, which was manifested by a continuing identity crisis in the East in the form of uncertainties about themselves as Germans and desperate if often clandestine attempts to identify with their vastly richer and apparently more ethnically and socially integrated Western counterparts.

In West Germany Communism heightened insecurities about national identity too. After 1945, in order to demonstrate to the rest of the world that Germany was still a cohesive nation, one especially deserving of Western sympathy, political respect and military protection, West Germans struggled to knit together the bonds of Germanness that were then being severed by the regime in the East in the name of a higher Communist nationality. Until the concrete barrier to immigration was erected in 1961, there was also the question of integrating some eleven million ethnic Germans from such distant areas as the Volga, Siberia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Moreover, the Russian and Polish-German refugees often carried with them the additional burden of having only the vaguest contacts with the German language and culture due to understandable anti-German feelings in these lands, especially after 1933.[6]

As a historian I would be inclined to argue that Germans have been for a long time very ethnically unsure of themselves, an uncertainty that has heightened their suspicions of foreigners. Their relatively recent and first stab at unification in 1870, their

determination to purge the language and culture of foreign influences thereafter, right down to the grotesque and pernicious antiforeign propaganda and experiments of the Nazi era and their postwar problems, are all symptoms of a deeply rooted sense of ethnic insecurity. Centuries of foreign intervention, already alluded to here, merely reinforce this tendency.

Nevertheless, after 1945, after the termination of all Hitlerian experimentation, despite a still extant xenophobia, in a series of major agreements the West Germans allowed Portuguese, Spaniards, Turks, Yugoslavs, Greeks and North Africans into the workforce. There are 1.6 million Turks in Germany today.[7] These so-called "guest workers" (*Gastarbeiter*) have always been regarded as only temporary residents and, for the most part, did not and do not enjoy German civil rights. Indeed even vaunted strict German school attendance laws have been occasionally waived for such foreigners. I know of one instance in Southwest Germany, in

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which school-aged children of Greek and Turkish workers were not obliged to attend German schools at all. Among them was a sixteen-year-old illiterate Greek girl who resided with her family in Germany throughout the 1970s. To my knowledge the parents of these children were never officially instructed to observe German educational laws.[8] It need hardly be added that waiving such rules had nothing to do with a concession to the foreign worker and his family, but served the less laudable goal of excluding them from using public facilities and, perhaps, to uphold an unwritten code of

segregation. Thus today for a variety of reasons Germany has a large foreign, nonintegrated population that is really viewed as temporary help. Compounding the foreign workers' problems has been the flood of persons seeking asylum from Asia, the Near East and Africa: Vietnamese boat people, Tamils, Iranians, Afghans, refugees from dictatorial African regimes, all of whom have sought refuge in Germany because the West German political asylum laws are still among the most generous in the world; also because of the rightly vaunted German social network and extremely high standard of living.

However, for the overwhelming majority of those seeking refuge in Germany today, there can be no question of their even being classified as "guest workers," of enjoying the perks of Germany's social and health insurance systems beyond the shortest possible term. Thus these young men and women are assigned inadequate emergency housing and condemned to an idle existence. While their backlog of claims for asylum are being considered, these refugees cannot work, and are therefore at the mercy of the public, while allegedly hard-working and unemployed Germans view the refugees' apparent idleness with deep suspicion. The fact that these foreigners happen to be black or brown merely intensifies the hostilities and prejudices shared by the indigenous population.

But much of what has been said here could be said of Canadians and Americans, who live in far more multicultural settings than do the insular Germans, and this point must be kept in mind. What makes the German case so blatant is the burden of the Nazi past, also because the current Conservative-led coalition government is fanning the flames of xenophobia to a certain degree. With the greatest political difficulty, while being very much in the public eye, Chancellor Kohl's Christian Democrat-Free Democrat coalition government is currently attempting to draft a bill in the German parliament that would severely limit the right to seek political asylum in Germany. Because of the difficulties the political parties are having in finding a

common denominator on this subject, even President Richard von Weizäcker has been forced to take the unprecedented step, and without prior parliamentary sanction, of intervening in the debate to admonish the parties to get their acts together and to come up with a comprehensive and fair bill on asylum.[9]

Indeed the whole *Ausländer* debate is now being exacerbated by a further issue — what high-placed German

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### ...Chancellor Kohl's Christian Democrat-Free Democrat coalition government is currently attempting to draft a bill in the German parliament that would severely limit the right to seek political asylum in Germany.

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officials are now negatively labelling as the policy of "inserting" incompatible foreign elements. What they mean is that foreigners are allowed personal and collective equality in the host country, but are in fact merely "inserted" unassimilated into the society, creating a multicultural and heterogeneous mosaic. Such Germans fear that this policy will result in a multiplicity of cultures and, interestingly enough, they expressly use the negative Canadian experience to illustrate why such a policy is in their words "illusory."[10]

Both the critics and supporters of the acrimonious debates swirling around the proposed asylum bill understand that these disputes provide gratuitous encouragement to the radical bands involved in the torchings and vandalism in and around shelters for those seeking asylum. If, for example, the politicians believe that the refugees are getting into the country too easily, how can one blame the unemployed skinhead from smashing a few windows, or beating up a few blacks who may venture into some "pure" German pub or discotheque?

Alas, there appears to be a general consensus that Hoyerswerda, the Saxon town that for five days last fall was the

centre of officially unhindered violence against foreign refugees, is a symptom that there is a real problem that must be addressed. This was especially true when the news of this five-day spree of animosity to refugees spread to all parts of Germany, making the slogan "Hoyerswerda is everywhere" a self-fulfilling prophecy. Moreover, it demonstrated that public and private attitudes reflected a regrettable sense of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit*. Thus, the xenophobic perception of the culture under siege from an uncontrollable foreign horde seems indeed to be weighing heavily on the Germans these days, just when their most cherished dream of reunification has now become a reality, just when the cement of togetherness seems to be in the process of repairing the bonds rent in the past by the phobias cultivated by two world wars and the burden of Germany's deeper past. ▣

### Notes:

1. "Das Deutsche und das Fremde," *Die Zeit*, International Edition, 45, November 8, 1991: 7.

2. "Lieber sterben als nach Sachsen," *Der Spiegel*, September 30, 1991: 32-33.

3. *Der Spiegel*, September 30, 1991: 33.

4. "Das Deutsche und das Fremde," *Die Zeit*, November 8, 1991.

5. *Die Zeit*, November 8, 1991: 7.

6. For an example of problems faced by ethnic Germans from Russia, see "Die unvergessene Republik," *Die Zeit*, October 25, 1991: 5-6.

7. "Ali im Wonderland," *Die Zeit*, November 8, 1991: 13.

8. I have to admit that it was my own German father-in-law who rented such primitive accommodations to some of these people, from whom I thus learned of their widespread illiteracy.

9. *Die Zeit* of November 29, 1991, has an in-depth analysis of Weizäcker's unprecedented and constitutionally questionable step: Robert Leicht, "Es ist etwas faul im Staate Deutschland."

10. Dr. Eckart Schiffer, *Chefdenker* in the current German Ministry of the Interior [*Innenministerium*]; "Der Koran ist nicht Gesetz," *Der Spiegel*, September 30, 1991: 59.

# Too Many, Too Long:
## African Refugee Crisis Revisited

### Ogenga Otunnu

Africa is being annihilated by wars, gross violations of human rights, economic ruin and ecological disasters. Events in Somalia, Liberia, Mozambique, Angola, Zaire, Uganda, the Sudan, Chad, Algeria, South Africa, Malawi and Kenya demonstrate the enormity of this tragedy. Indeed, many African states are disintegrating in the wake of these problems, thus exacerbating the refugee crisis on the continent. What factors are responsible for uprooting millions of refugees and internally displaced persons from their communities? Why does the African refugee crisis persist? Why have the traditional permanent/durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement in third countries failed to address the plights of too many refugees for too long?

## The Colonial Factor

Refugees are a result of conflict and dislocation in society. They are also a result of indifference to violations of human rights. In precolonial Africa refugees were generated by political, religious and economic conflict, as well as by slave raids, the slave trade and ecological disasters. This situation was exacerbated by the European partition and occupation of the continent. Boundaries were artificially and arbitrarily drawn and redrawn with no regard to human settlements and physical geography. The aspirations, wishes and needs of the African peoples were disregarded. The boundaries sometimes divided an ethnic group into two or more countries. For example, the Somali ended up in Kenya, Ethiopia and

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Somalia; the Tulani and Bariba in Ghana and Ivory Coast; the Masai in Tanzania and Kenya; the Ntribus and Ewes in Togo and Ghana; the Manjaks in Senegal and Guinea Bisau; and the Tuarag in Mali, Niger and Algeria.[1] The creation of colonial boundaries, therefore, led to population displacement and fragmentation of social and ethnic structures. It also led to border claims and border wars. For example, the border disputes between Somalia and Ethiopia, and Kenya and Somalia are a product of the colonial experience. The conquest and subsequent colonization of the continent were carried out through wars, manipulations and coercion. Colonial labour, land and taxation policies also led to migration, conflict and flight.[2] As the struggle for political independence gained momentum in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the crisis of colonialism generated hundreds of thousands of refugees across the continent. A few examples will illustrate the point. The Algerian war of independence/liberation caused the flight of some 200,000 Algerians to Morocco and Tunisia between 1954 and 1962. Similarly, the wars of liberation against Portuguese ultracolonialism in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique sent hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing to Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia. The liberation war in Zimbabwe displaced an estimated half a million people.[3] Apartheid and the strategy of destabilization of southern Africa led to gross violations of human rights, internal displacement and flight.[4]

## Neo-Colonial Factors: Politics

In many African countries, independence was immediately accompanied by ethnic rivalries and violence, militarism, coup d'etats,

dictatorship, corruption and gross violations of human rights. Ethnic and religious conflicts between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi, conflicts between the Khartoum government and Southern Sudanese led to large-scale refugee movements. In retrospect, Mekuria Belcha concludes:

Many of today's refugee flows in Africa have their root causes in the colonial period. Colonialism has drastically altered the basic parameters for the future development of many African societies. It has stunted socio-economic development. For a century or more, most Africans were ruled by aliens who used systems and structures that few among the indigenous populations understood or were supposed to understand. When the colonialists left, there was an institutional vacuum. The economic and political systems instituted by colonialism were not adaptable to the new situation either due to lack of people who could make them work or simply because the systems were incompatible with the conditions that evolved after independence. Because colonial rule was essentially authoritarian and oppressive, the colonial legacy to African political development was undemocratic practices and intolerance of dissident views. In other words, there were no viable political institutions that allowed democratic participation by the majority. Consequently, political and economic crises are common features of most of the postcolonial societies in Africa.[5]

Political repression is certainly one of the major factors generating refugees in Africa. However, as the state delegitimizes itself under the crisis and the state's international support withers, the struggle for democracy and justice continues to gain momentum on the continent. African states under military, one-party, all-party or no-party rule are

coming under enormous popular pressure. Across the continent African peoples are agitating for political pluralism, accountability and respect for human rights. It is common knowledge that most African rulers do not want to relinquish power. It is, however, important to point out that transition to multiparty democracy is already taking place in some parts of Africa. In Zambia, the transition to multiparty democracy was generally smooth. Kenya and Tanzania have joined the growing list of states preparing for democratic pluralism. This critical period of transition to multiparty democracy must be properly managed to avoid more conflicts on the continent. Surely, democratic pluralism will not necessarily provide shelter, put more food on the mat/table, cure disease or ensure higher prices for Africa's primary commodities; nonetheless, it is a major step in addressing the root causes of the refugee crisis.

In Liberia, the dictatorial regime of President Samuel Doe, which had enjoyed strong U.S. support for much of the decade, finally collapsed with Doe's death in early September 1990. On the eve of the total demise of the Doe regime, thousands of Liberians fled to Monrovia, thinking that the U.S. Marines stationed on ships off the coast of Liberia would protect them. The refugees were bitterly disappointed—the U.S. Marines were there to protect and evacuate only Americans and nationals of Western countries.[6] Similarly, those who expected the United Nations and the international community to intervene and stop the destruction of human lives were disappointed. Other than the Red Cross and the Belgian medical relief group, Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF), it was only the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that in August deployed a peace-keeping force, the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), in Monrovia. Although the mission was extremely expensive and controversial for the West African states, the presence of ECOMOG had some positive effects on the crisis. However, as the *World Refugee Survey* (1991) notes:

Liberia produced 1990's largest new outflow of refugees. More than 730,000 Liberians are now living as refugees in neighbouring countries, primarily in Guinea (325,000), Cote d'Ivoire (270,000), and Sierra Leone (125,000), with smaller numbers in Ghana (8,000), Nigeria (1,700), and other countries. At least 500,000 other Liberians are thought to be displaced within Liberia, bringing the total number of civilians uprooted by the civil war to 1.26 million, more than half the total population of Liberia. [7] Violations of human rights continue, especially against the Krahns (Doe's ethnic group) as it was previously done against the Manos and the Gios.[8]

In Somalia the autocratic regime of Mohammed Siad Barre, which had ruled

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the country for twenty-one years, crumbled in 1991. However, as in Liberia, violations of human rights and the refugee crisis continue unabated. In his work, *Somalia: At War with Itself*, R. Omaar observes that:

Nineteen ninety-one is the year Somalia died. Since full-scale civil war broke out on November 17, at least 14,000 people have been killed and 27,000 wounded in the capital city of Mogadishu. Most of the casualties are civilians. Rivalry between the forces of two ruthless men—interim President Mohammed Ali Mahdi and General Mohammed Farrah Aidid, both of whom belong to the same clan and the same movement, the United Somali Congress (USC)—has made Mogadishu an exceptionally dangerous place. In addition to troops loyal to both men, hundreds of armed "freelance" soldiers and looters contribute to the violence. . . . Lack of adequate medical care is another reason for

the numerous casualties. Both factions have been extraordinarily callous, attacking hospitals and periodically interfering with the work of doctors, nurses, and aides. Hospitals do not have minimal nursing support, suffer shortages of medical supplies, and are swollen to three times their capacity. . . . In March 1992, the International Committee of the Red Cross said that "horrifying levels of 90 percent moderate and severe malnutrition" had been found in the area surrounding Belet Huen in central Somalia and in the camps of displaced people around Merca, south of Mogadishu. It estimates that 1.5 million people in and around Mogadishu may be affected by famine, and puts at 4.5 million the number throughout the country who are threatened by starvation.[9]

By way of relevant digression, it should be borne in mind that despite the human rights disaster in Somalia and the starvation that millions of people face, the UN and Western governments have been reluctant to intervene and save human lives. The UN has belatedly managed to send some unarmed observers to the country. The organization, however, is still waiting for every warlord in the country to "allow" the UN troops to get into the country before millions of lives can be saved. Ironically, the UN, Western governments and the international media have responded quite differently to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia and the rest of Eastern Europe. A question may be posed: do the starving and dying Somalis or Liberians have rights to life?

## Economic Factors

The escalating indebtedness, the high rate of mortality, malnutrition, famine and rapidly declining productivity are clear signs of the continuous economic and political marginalization of the continent. The economic crisis in Africa exacerbates violations of human rights, political instability and refugee problems. The economic crisis has both internal and external causes. To be precise, corruption, embezzlement of public funds, militarism, inefficiency and the onerous debt-service burden are some of the main contributing factors. On the question of debt crisis, the UN

African Recovery Program *Briefing Paper* notes that: "Debt and debt-service ratios have risen faster for Africa than for any other group of countries. Relative to GNP, the debt ratio for Sub-Saharan Africa is nearly twice as large as that for the world's highly-indebted countries.... Thirty-one countries are now officially classified as 'debt-distressed'."[10] Similarly, in their discussion of the politics of reform in Sub-Saharan Africa, Y. Bangura and P. Gibbon point out that:

> *The great majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have adopted—more or less involuntarily—programmes of economic reform designed by the international financial institutions. These "structural adjustment programmes" have included producer price reforms, removal of subsidies, liberalization of internal and external trade, new foreign exchange regimes usually involving severe devaluations, the introduction of "cost sharing" for state-supplied services, privatisation, restructuring of government institutions and more recently, legal reforms aimed at supplying an "enabling environment." Structural adjustment has been devised by the international financial institutions on the assumption that economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa will only be resumed through a contraction of state activity and the development of liberalised markets.[11]*

Structural adjustment as a new aid and development paradigm is being vigorously promoted by most Western aid donors. The assumption the Canadian government and other donors make is that respect for human rights is linked to the adoption of free-market economic policies.[12] According to R. Carver, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd stated that: "Countries tending towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights, and market principles should be encouraged. Governments who persist with repressive policies, with corrupt management, or with wasteful and discredited economic systems should not expect us to support their folly with scarce aid resources."[13] However, countries like Kenya, Uganda and Malawi—which do not practise political pluralism, spend heavily on

militarism and have poor human rights records—continue to receive international development assistance because of the World Bank-approved structural adjustment programs.

Structural adjustment programs have led to violations of human rights and socio-economic and political repression, instability and flights in most African countries. In Ghana, the military government has resorted to overt repression to enforce reduction in government spending in areas such as health care, education, food subsidies and public sector wages. In Zambia the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank conditions provoked popular hostility that was met with

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**... *it is difficult to draw a firm line between those refugees who are victims of environmental disasters and those who are victims of human-made political and economic oppression.***

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severe repression in June 1990. A total of twenty-four demonstrators in Lusaka and the Copperbelt were shot to death by the police and antirobbery squad. However, opposition to structural adjustment, which was closely connected to opposition to one-party rule, finally led to the demise of the one-party system in the country. Similarly, in February 1990 when the Ivorian government introduced substantial tax increases for both primary sector and public workers, peaceful protests against the World Bank and IMF measures were met with massive repression. As it happened in Zambia, opposition to structural adjustment became linked to opposition against the one-party system that had been in place since independence in 1960. In October 1990 the first multiparty elections were held. In Gobon and Benin, popular opposition to structural adjustment measures resulted in opposition to repressive and undemocratic political systems. In

Zimbabwe strikes by teachers and other workers opposed to the program were banned under the emergency law. In May 1989 there were mass protests in a number of Nigerian cities against the structural programs. The protests were prompted by food shortages and rising prices; they led to the death of twenty-two people, according to government figures. In Uganda the structural adjustment programs led to cuts in education and prompted a series of strikes by students and the academic staff at Makerere University in Kampala. In December 1990 the police killed striking students of Makerere University. The list is interminable.[14]

In a similar vein, *Africa Forum* argues that the politics of economic reforms are incompatible with respect for human rights and the democratization of African states:

> *The West, the IMF and the World Bank, have agreed that along with dialogue with autocrats, the way to support democracy in Africa is through structural adjustment programmes, which supposedly promote democracy by strengthening the market and civil society against the state. This is a dangerous illusion. In Africa's present circumstances, democratization and structural adjustment are not really compatible. The SAPs which are foisted on Africa are so traumatic, so painful and tragic in their effects that they generate passionate opposition which has to be overcome by force. SAPs have immensely inflated the coercive authoritarianism of African political systems and have generally led to the breakdown of the social consensus which sustains democracy.[15]*

R. Carver goes on to observe the World Bank lending policies as they relate to respect for human rights in Africa:

> *Under its articles of agreement, the World Bank takes only "economic considerations" into account when deciding on lending. This is interpreted to mean that the Bank cannot consider respect for human rights as a criterion for lending. This can lead to decisions which are not only morally offensive, but also make no economic sense, such as the $70 million loan to Somalia in 1989, at a time when government counter-insurgency policies*

*were tearing the country apart—with a particularly disruptive effect on the principal export commodity, livestock. The loan was for agricultural development.... But if the World Bank has been reluctant to consider human rights, it has become increasingly concerned by what it calls "good governance, "notably in its 1989 report on Africa, "From Crisis to Sustainable Growth " In his foreword to the report, World Bank President Barber B. Conable talked of "An administration that is accountable to its public" and "a better balance between ... the government and the governed." But is it good governance for a government to close the universities, detain trade union leaders, and fill the mortuaries with the corpses of those who oppose its structural adjustment program? And if not, when has the Bank raised its voice in criticism?[16]*

## "Natural Disasters"

The continent has experienced periods of severe drought since the 1970s. The droughts have not only initiated new environmental and land quality problems, but have also exposed the weaknesses of the economic and agricultural systems in the region. As a result of the droughts, high population growth rates and subsequent famines, millions have perished and many more have become internally displaced. Those who managed to cross national borders became environmental refugees.[17] The impact of the disasters differs depending on class, gender, age group and location; that is, pastoralists, peasants, disabled persons, poor women, children and the elderly suffer the most. The promotion of cash crops at the expense of food crops; changes in land tenure (which leave much of agriculturally suitable land in the hands of a few individuals); the creation of large game parks in areas where the majority of the population is landless; wars that disrupt agriculture, environmental degradation; the greenhouse effect and its deterioration of the ozone layer; deforestation, poor communication infrastructure and high population growth add up to a human-made disaster that may seem "natural." It should be noted that environmental degradation adds to the pressure from which socio-economic and political

conflicts emerge. Thus, it is difficult to draw a firm line between those refugees who are victims of environmental disasters and those who are victims of human-made political and economic oppression. Yet victims of "natural disasters" who cross national borders are often considered nonpolitical refugees or bogus refugees.

## Costs and Benefits to Host Countries

More often than not, the impact of refugees on host countries are presented only in terms of burdens. Yet refugees may also contribute to the socio-economic development of host countries. On the question of costs, it is generally agreed that the influx of refugees overwhelm the capacity of host countries to respond with adequate

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assistance. While it is difficult to offer specific verifiable data on the costs refugees impose on host countries, the basic outlines of the costs are quite visible. First, as pointed out earlier, the majority of African states are exceedingly poor. The decline in trade, the rapid decrease in per capita gross domestic product, the debt crisis and the impact of structural adjustment programs have reduced the capacity of host governments to meet employment, health care, education, shelter and food needs of their nationals. Finally, there is a very high ratio of registered and unregistered refugees to nationals. Indeed, the magnitude of additional pressure that refugees exert on resources varies within and between host countries, depending on a number of

factors: the nature and magnitude of existing socio-economic and political crises in the host country, the policies of the host government towards refugees, land policies and availability of arable land, the size of the refugee population, and the ratio of refugees to nationals of the host country. The negative impact of refugees may include additional pressure on economic and social infrastructures and aggravate deforestation.

On the other hand, in some African countries (or at least parts of them), refugees have contributed to social and economic development. As R.F. Gorman has noted:

> ... in Tanzania, where most of the refugee population of about 170,000 has been present for a decade or more, refugees have become productive contributors to the national economy. Most of them live in settlements which have been handed over by government administration. Many of these villages were developed in virgin lands, and thus represent a net increase in cultivated acreage for Tanzania. Nevertheless, some settlements have been more successful than others. Refugees in Katumba constitute about 35-40 percent of the population but produce 90 percent of the area's crops.... They even pay taxes to the Tanzanian government.[18]

The positive contribution refugees made was the result of a number of related factors: the refugees' resourcefulness, the government's positive refugee policies, and the assistance provided during the initial stages of the projects by the international community. Similarly, Ugandan refugees who were settled on virgin lands in Haut, Zaire also made a positive contribution to the socio-economic development of the region.[19]

## Durable Solutions?

Eliminating conditions that generate refugees is the only durable solution to the refugee crisis on the continent. In retrospect, the three widely discussed but poorly implemented durable solutions—voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement in third countries of asylum—are, at best,

curative rather than preventive. Put succinctly, the ideal solutions only treat the symptoms and do little to remove the root causes of flights. Implementing these three solutions constitutes an integral element of the UNHCR's mandate:

> The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), acting under the authority of the General Assembly, shall assume the function of providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions of refugees by assisting Governments and, subject to the approval of the Government concerned, private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new communities.[20]

## Voluntary Repatriation

In theory, voluntary repatriation applies when a refugee makes the decision to voluntarily return to his/her country of origin. It is assumed that the decision to return is based on a refugee's well-informed perception of freedom from any form of persecution and a radically improved situation that is more secure. In its support for voluntary repatriation as the most satisfactory solution to African refugee problems, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has appealed to refugee-producing countries to encourage refugees to return home by: 1) redressing the situations that motivated refugees to leave their countries; 2) assuring refugees that they would be welcomed back to resume normal and useful lives without fear of persecution or punishment for having left their country; 3) assisting returning refugees to resume lives in their countries of origin; and 4) granting a general amnesty and welcoming and reintegrating returning refugees into their own society, with full rights and privileges restored.[21] In that respect, the essential character of repatriation is that it is voluntary. This is in keeping with the principle of nonrefoulement, which states that under no circumstances shall a refugee be expelled or returned "to the

frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."[21] In practice, however, host governments, UNHCR officials and other organizations assisting refugees exert various pressures on refugees to repatriate. Also, contrary to the principle of nonrefoulement, some refugees have been expelled to their countries of origin. At times, refugees are compelled to repatriate due to enormous hardships in countries of asylum. More often than not, refugees do not know their rights under international covenants and are not provided with accurate and adequate information on which to make the decision to repatriate or not to repatriate. Even if refugees knew their rights, a large number of refugees in Africa are not registered with the UNHCR. In that respect, refugee rights are not applicable to the de facto refugees.

Repatriation has taken place in Africa under different circumstances.

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**... as long as the root causes of deprivation and persecution are not resolved, and protection and assistance not provided to those already uprooted, the African refugee crisis will continue to escalate.**

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For example, many refugees returned home at the end of colonial rule in Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. However, in Mozambique and Angola the "durable solution" did not endure the postliberation crisis. Changes of regimes in Uganda, for example, have led to both repatriation and flights. Repeated declarations of amnesty by various regimes in Africa have also led to repatriations. However, as such declarations have proven to be quite empty, more flights follow repatriations. The point is, repatriation cannot be a

viable option as long as the root causes of flights are not eliminated.

## Local Integration

Among other things, two factors make local integration the only major durable solution to the refugee problem. They are the persistence of the causes of refugee flows in most countries of origin and the fact that most African refugees are not considered candidates for resettlement in third countries. The definition of integration itself is problematic. For example, the UNHCR defines integration as "the process by which the refugee is assimilated into the social process and economic life of a new community."[23] B.E. Harrell-Bond posits:

> Although the objective of assistance to refugees is said to be their integration into the host community, the term "integration" has not been satisfactorily defined. For the aid community, those refugees who are not assisted, have not only settled "spontaneously," but have also achieved "spontaneous integration," and are thus not in need of assistance. Their success is attributed to the belief that as colonial boundaries intersected established communities, people who fled across a border are welcomed by their kith and kin with whom they share common origins, language and culture. These are important but not sufficient conditions for integration. The most important one is the availability of resources. . . . A very simple definition of integration would be a situation in which host and refugee communities are able to co-exist, sharing the same resources—both economic and social—with no greater mutual conflict than that which exists within the host community. Such a definition will not stand up to detailed analysis. . . . The present lack of agreement on the meaning of the term "integration" and its general association with "assimilation" and "permanence," have created a resistance on the part of both host countries and refugees to any policy which appears to be promoting the absorption of the refugee community into the country of asylum. The fact that is overlooked in these debates is that only a minority of African refugees are presently objects of aid programmes. Most are surviving by dint of their capacity to co-exist with locals under extremely difficult conditions.[24]

If the various competing or supplementary definitions are tested, it becomes obvious that local integration and self-sufficiency are illusory. First, refugees lack security and protection. Second, most African refugees do not receive any form of aid programs. Finally, the majority of African refugees live in extremely poor African countries. The economic crisis in these countries are compounded by "natural disasters," widespread famine, massive unemployment and a collapse of social services. In retrospect, S. Pitterman maintains that: "we cannot expect refugees to become economically self-sufficient in a vacuum . . . refugee settlements can prosper and refugees can contribute to the welfare of the host population only in so far as broader economic integration is fostered."[25]

## Resettlement

Resettlement in third countries of asylum is considered another "durable solution" to the refugee problem. However, most African refugees are not considered candidates for resettlement in third countries of asylum. This "solution," which involves an extremely tiny fraction of African refugees, does very little to address the problem of refugees on the continent. Therefore, it is clear that as long as the root causes of deprivation and persecution are not resolved, and protection and assistance not provided to those already uprooted, the African refugee crisis will continue to escalate.

## The Case of Kenya: Background to the Internal Crisis

At the turn of the century, several million acres of high-altitude fertile land in Kenya was allocated to European settlers by the British colonial power. Since the territory had to pay the bill for colonization and the settlers were determined to enjoy a high standard of living, the African population was subordinated, controlled and exploited through land, labour, taxation and administrative policies.[26] As a result of these policies, the settlers established

monopoly over land, labour, access to transport, marketing facilities and technical information. The allocation of land and the way the country was incorporated into the international economic system, therefore, had enormous disruptive impact on the Africans. The majority of Africans became landless squatters and labourers. It was therefore not surprising that the question of land and other critical agricultural resources were at the centre of the struggle for independence.

The Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) were the two political parties that competed for the

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political domination of the country. Both parties were formed in 1960 when national political parties were legalized for the first time since the declaration of the Emergency in 1952.[27] KANU was essentially a party of the Kikuyu, the Luo and the Kamba. KADU, on the other hand, was predominantly a party of the Kalenjin, the Luhya, the Masai and various peoples of the Coast.[28] The critical differences between the parties had to do with the question of how and by whom should the land be controlled. The composition of the parties was therefore largely determined by ethnic rivalries over land claims.

There were basic factors that shaped the choice of whether to ally with the Kikuyu and their claims to the White Highlands or with the Kalenjin in opposition to Kikuyu. Two groups proved pivotal in the manoeuvering: the Abaluhya and the Luo. The Abaluhya claimed Trans Nzoia, where Kikuyu had

worked as farm labourers and therefore claimed land; the Luo possessed no land claims that conflicted with those of the Kikuyu. The Luo did, however, possess claims conflicting with those of the Abaluhya, as in the area of Maseno, and with the Kalenjin, in the areas bordering the Kipsigis and Nandi Hills. In the search for partners in the competition for political power in Kenya, the Luo therefore allied with the Kikuyu; they joined KANU. The other groups combined into KADU and sought to forestall efforts by their rivals to secure a political majority. Both parties sought allies from groups that did not live directly adjacent to the Highlands: persons in the semiarid zones of the East and North and people along the Coast.[29]

Following KANU victories in preindependence elections and the release of some militant nationalists, including Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya obtained independence in December 1963 and Kenyatta became president. Although KADU became a minority party, it was successful in its struggle for *majimbo* (regionalism). As a matter of fact, the party "secured a federal structure of government, in which power devolved upon a series of regional assemblies—assemblies whose most important duty was the administration of land rights."[30] According to C. Leys, the colonial government, which was very sympathetic towards KADU, supported the demand for *majimbo*. Consequently, in 1962 the government urged the leaders of KANU to accept it as the price of getting a date fixed for a fresh election leading to political independence.[31] Through a series of political manoeuvres, which included offering material incentives to some prominent elites in KADU, the ruling party reached a political compromise with the opposition party. Consequently, KADU disbanded in November 1964 and Daniel Toiritich arap Moi (the current president of Kenya) and his colleagues joined KANU. With the demise of KADU, regional assemblies were discarded in December 1964. Contrary to the KANU's 1963 election manifesto, which promised land for the landless, the distribution of land was largely left to market forces.

The collapse of KADU also deprived the radical wing of KANU (whose leadership included Vice-President Oginga Odinga) of its strategies in exploiting the conflicts between KADU and the majority conservative wing of KANU. The radicals who had advocated for growth with equity in the country withdrew from KANU and formed Kenya People's Union (KPU). However, the new party was short-lived. Its members were constantly harassed and intimidated with impunity by the government. In the final analysis, the party was banned and Kenya became a de facto one-party state.

Under Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya remained more stable than the neighbouring states of Uganda, the Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. This period, however, was also characterized by nepotism, corruption, political oppression, violations of human rights and adverse poverty for the majority of Kenyans. In his attempt to promote the Kikuyu ascendency, Kenyatta also established the dominance of his own Kiambu clan. "His clannishness not only fed tribalism but exacerbated tensions among Kikuyu. Instead of converting the ruling party...into a truly national party, he allowed it to decline into a moribund movement. He increasingly governed the country through a small coterie made up mainly of Kikuyu "old guards" and members of his family."[32]

Kenya's first postindependence era ended with the death of Kenyatta on August 22, 1978.[33] During his inauguration as Kenya's second president on October 10, 1978, Daniel arap Moi indicated that he would run an open government, fight ethnicity, stamp out the widespread corruption and flagrant breaches of law that had characterized Kenyatta's rule. He immediately released political detainees. He also attempted to remove the suspicion the Kenyatta regime had about Luos—especially after the violent scenes in Kisumu during Kenyatta's last visit in 1969. Soon, however, it became apparent that Moi had to devote much of his time attending to immediate threats to his presidency. To be sure, opposition to Moi dates back to 1976 when some prominent

politicians wanted to change the Constitution so that Vice-President Moi would be barred from becoming president upon Kenyatta's death. As soon as Moi assumed power, then Attorney General Charles Njonjo told both parliament and the nation that an attempt to assassinate Moi and some politicians had been preempted by the government. The alleged ringleaders of the abortive plot, Njonjo pointed out, included ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Njoroge Mungai, and a senior police officer, Joseph Mungai.[34] Moi's sense of insecurity was heightened by a series of student unrests, the activities of an opposition group (Mwakenya) and the 1982 abortive coup.

Since the 1982 abortive coup, Moi has shown signs of increasing

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*It is equally true that the UNHCR office in Nairobi has contributed to the crisis due to incompetence, disorganization and indifference to refugees' plights.*

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suspiciousness about plots against him. He is especially suspicious of the Luo and Kikuyu. Having purged the military, the cabinet and public service of his immediate "enemies," one might assume that he would feel more confident of his position. However, since 1982 Moi appears to be more restless and ruthless. The president, ministers and party officials demand absolute and unquestioning loyalty to themselves. In many instances, ministers and party officials have enthusiastically castigated people who questioned the president's policies. As H. Burkhalter and R. Omaar point out, "power has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the president and a few close advisers, most of them from his own Kalenjin ethnic group."[35] Religious organizations, academic institutions, the Law Society, trade unions, local and international human rights organizations have

attacked the government's poor human rights record.

Under enormous internal and external pressure, the government has legalized multiparty politics and is preparing to hold multiparty elections. Multiparty politics, however, have been characterized by intimidation, ethnic violence and lawlessness. The country's relative stability is slowly becoming an illusion. Since December 1990, violent ethnic clashes continue to ravage the entire country. The ethnic violence has left several hundred people dead, tens of thousands internally displaced and food granaries destroyed. At the centre of the violence is the struggle for control over the scarce resources and land. The instability caused by ethnic and political clashes have compounded the food crisis in the country. The country has been facing severe droughts for the past two years. As President Moi indicated on June 9, 1992, it is estimated that over one million Kenyans face starvation unless immediate corrective measures are taken. In his appeal to foreign donors for food aid, the president pointed out that of the affected population, a total of 680,000 in twenty districts have been in need of urgent assistance since the end of April.[36] It should be added that the problem of food security is made worse by the country's extremely high population growth rates. In fact, the country has one of the highest population growth rates in the world (about 4.1 percent a year in the 1980s). In September 1985 President Moi drew attention to the dangers of the high population growth rate:

> Unless we slow down the rate of our population growth, we shall have decades of dependence on imports and decades of malnutrition, and even possible starvation ... starvation is being threatened by low food production, periodic drought and rapid population growth. Every year in Kenya, we have to produce enough food to feed an additional one million people. If the population growth continues at the same rate, the country will require as much food in the year 2000. We have no choice; neither do we have the time to make this choice. We must therefore reduce our population growth rate.[37]

It is therefore clear that Kenya, which is located in a turbulent region, is sliding into major chaos. Indeed, more countries could potentially be exposed to the same fate unless efforts are made to reverse the trend. The crisis also makes life increasingly difficult for the refugees in the country.

## Refugee Crisis in Kenya

Since independence in 1963, Kenya has provided asylum to thousands of refugees from the turbulent countries of Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, the Sudan and South Africa. Compared with her neighbours, Kenya hosted relatively fewer refugees until 1991. For example, in December 1985 there were 8,574 recognized asylum seekers and an estimated 8,000 to 16,000 de facto refugees. In 1990 and 1991 there were subsequently 14,400 and 80,000 UNHCR-recognized refugees. At the end of May 1992, the UNHCR released the figures listed in Table 1.

At about the time the UNHCR was releasing its figures, over 20,000 Sudanese refugees—12,000 of them unaccompanied minors—arrived on June 5, 1992 in Lokichoggio, Kenya after trekking over approximately 800 km of rugged terrain.

According to various organizations that were assisting refugees in Kenya, the UNHCR figures are extremely low for that particular period. In his statement of June 9, 1992, President Moi indicated that:

> To date, there are more than 460,000 refugees in the country, while they continue to increase daily, hence further depleting our meagre resources. At the moment, there are over 287,000 people seeking asylum from the three neighbouring countries of Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. In addition, there are over 150,000 unprocessed refugees in various parts of the country, especially at border towns of Dobley, Bulla, Hawa, Sufu and Kapeta while others cross the border on a daily basis.[38]

The dramatic increase of refugees is a direct result of the crisis in the region. In the Sudan, the Islamic government in Khartoum has continued its war of extermination and domination of the predominantly non-Muslim and non-Arab Southerners. The Khartoum government, now heavily supported by Libya, Iraq and Iran, is scoring victory after victory against the Sudan People's Liberation Army, led Dr. John Garang. The capture of strategic areas in the South by the Khartoum government and the escalation of war have led to new waves of refugees.[39] It is ironic that the international community has done practically nothing to stop the genocide in the Sudan. In Somalia, various political and military factions are engaged in fierce and bloody fighting for control of

### Table 1: Refugees in Kenya

Assisted in camps:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Liboi | 64,000 | Somalis |
| Walda | 36,799 | Ethiopians |
| Ifo | 30,000 | Somalis |
| Dagahaley | 25,500 | Somalis |
| Thika | 3,800 | Mixed |
| Mombasa | | |
| Utange camp | 9,500 | Somalis |
| Outside camp | 8,169 | Somalis |
| Baravanese | 7,000 | Somalis |
| Magengo | 1,300 | Somalis |
| **Subtotal** | **186,068** | |

Assisted in border sites:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mandera | 40,000 | Somalis |
| Banissa | 10,000 | Ethiopians |
| Habasweini | 2,400 | Ethiopians |
| Gurar | 2,500 | Ethiopians |
| **Subtotal** | **54,900** | |
| **Assisted refugees** | | |
| **Grand Total: 240,968** | | |

Nonassisted refugees in areas of Nairobi/Mombasa
20,000 (estimate)
**Total assisted and nonassisted refugees          260,968**

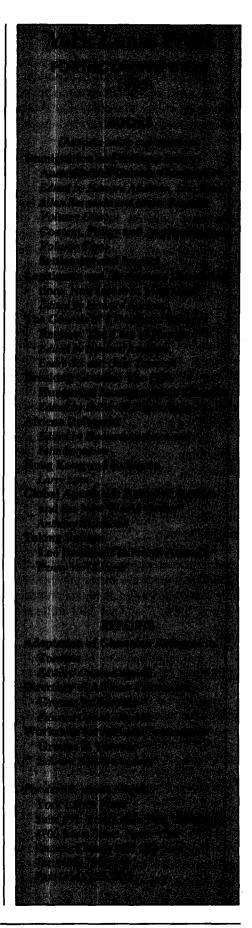Source: UNHCR, Information Bulletin No. 8 (May 29, 1992):3

(The estimated number of Somali refugees in Kenya has risen to 600,000 as of early September 1992.)

sections of the disintegrating country. The chronic violence and lawlessness that followed the overthrow of dictator Siad Barre and the continuing drought have claimed tens of thousands of lives and forced many more people to flee. Almost the entire population of Somalia is internally displaced and face severe starvation. As in the case of the Sudan, the UN and the international community have been reluctant to intervene and save the innocent victims. Since the overthrow of dictator Mengistu, large numbers of ex-soldiers and tens of thousands of civilians from Ethiopia have fled to Kenya. The escalating interclan violence between Boranas and other clans in southern Ethiopia, as well as the severe drought also continue to force refugees to flee to Kenya.[40] Early repatriation is not an option to be considered at this stage. This means that the refugees will stay in Kenya for a long time.

With the current refugee crisis in the country, Kenya's refugee policies have increasingly come under serious scrutiny. Although Kenya is signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention, its policies are largely inconsistent with its regional and international obligations. Kenya's refugee policies fluctuate depending on internal and regional politics. Many refugees have been denied asylum, left in "asylum limbo," forcefully repatriated, detained and harassed. In keeping with its hidden policy of deterrence, the government seems determined to make life extremely hard for refugees. It also hopes that the hardships will lead to early repatriation. In a nutshell, the rights of refugees are grossly violated. Therefore, the refugee crisis in Kenya is partly the result of Kenyan refugee policy and lack of international assistance for the refugees. It is equally true that the UNHCR office in Nairobi has contributed to the crisis due to incompetence, disorganization and indifference to refugees' plights. Some refugee bodies, including the defunct Joint Refugee Services of Kenya (JRSK), have also been blamed for incompetence and corruption. □

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# NOTES

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# Barriers to Educational Pursuits of Refugee Claimants in Canada: The Case of Ghanaians

Edward Opoku-Dapaah

This paper examines the barriers that Ghanaian refugee claimants in Canada face in their determination to obtain formal education and makes certain recommendations. "Schooling," in this context, means more than initial language and basic skills training offered to refugees. Studying, however, means utilizing an established academic setting to acquire knowledge and skills essential to a career in Canada. This includes upgrading and pursuing graduate studies in universities to meet the standards expected in Canada. In short, for refugees with or without prior academic attainment, formal education entails furthering their studies, or enrolling in academic institutions to pursue careers.

Information for this paper is derived from the author's observation and participation[1] within the Ghanaian refugee community between 1986-90. The paper is also based on interviews with eighty Ghanaian refugees in Toronto. Between October and December 1990, fifty men and thirty women were interviewed. This ratio reflects the gender make-up of Ghanaian refugees in Canada. The eighty respondents were randomly selected from Ghanaian refugees located in North York, Rexdale, Etobicoke and Brampton, all in metropolitan Toronto. Forty-eight or 60 percent of these respondents arrived in Canada as refugees in 1986. The remaining 32 or 40 percent came in 1987. The refugees have been in Canada relatively long enough to become familiar with the Canadian setting.

The main goal in our interviews was to ascertain which factors affected the determination of these refugees to seek further education in Canada. The small size of our sample does not allow

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definitive conclusions. Nonetheless, the information received provides a rich insight about the problems that confront Ghanaians (and possibly other refugees) in their determination to study in Canada.

The flight of Ghanaian refugees to Canada is a new phenomenon. The main forces behind their influx has been the suppression of the opposition, political persecution and massive arrests by the current military regime—the Provisional National Defence Committee. The intolerance and swift "revolutionary" measures taken against professional groups, traders, religious sects and students have all played a part. Ghanaian refugees have also gone to neighbouring African nations and destinations in Western Europe. The late 1980s however witnessed an unprecedented influx of these people into Canada. As shown in Table 1, Ghanaian refugee claims rose from twenty in 1984-85 to 2,233 in 1986-88.

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada maintains there have been over 8,000 Ghanaian applicants since 1986, two-thirds of whom are caught up within the huge refugee backlog awaiting a final decision.[2]

Based on a four-tier classification scheme, the educational background of Ghanaian refugees looks like this: Category A: None - 6 (2 percent); Category B: Secondary School or Less - 115 (38 percent); Category C: Nonuniversity Certificate or Diploma - 148 (48 percent); Category D: Advanced Diploma, University and Postgraduate - 38 (12 percent).[3] Sixty percent possess a qualification beyond the secondary school level. Not only do males form an overwhelming majority of Ghanaian refugees in Canada, they are also overrepresented in the higher echelons of educational attainment. Prior educational experience of our 80

respondents reflects the general record of Ghanaian refugees in Canada as a whole. Three hold a university degree, fifty-two have finished college or secondary school, twenty-two are elementary graduates and three have had no schooling at all. In spite of this impressive record, a detailed analysis of the academic achievements of Ghanaian refugees suggests inadequacies that affect their suitability for the Canadian job market.

Firstly, Ghanaian education is academically focused, meaning much emphasis is placed on cultivating theoretical intellectual values and ideals. Schools are unable to equip students with adequate skills, even when those skills are essential elements of the curriculum. A respondent with a bachelor's degree in computer science, for example, indicated that a lack of computers has ensured that students internalize computer theory without acquiring any practical knowledge about how to operate one. This implies that even the educated Ghanaian refugee is

## Table 1
### Ghanaian Refugee Claims in Canada*

| Period | Total |
| --- | --- |
| April 1984 - March 1985 | 20 |
| April 1985 - March 1986 | 597 |
| May 1986 - March 1987 | 1,072 |
| April 1987 - Feb. 1988 | 1,161 |
| Total claims | 2,850 |

*Claims received by the Refugee Status Advisory Committee 1981-88.

Note: Not all time periods are 12 months in duration.

Source: Refugee Status Advisory Committee

often not equipped with adequate skills to function in this high-tech society.

Secondly, there is very little occupational specialization within Ghanaian education. There is no functional relation between education and the employment market. Ten college graduates we interviewed did not study with the objective of achieving any specific career, nor could they determine where they could utilize their knowledge.

Thirdly, the sociocultural arrangements in Ghana supports education of men over education for women.[4] Approximately 4 percent of Ghanaian female refugees in Canada finished an advanced degree or diploma, 26 percent finished secondary school or college, 55 percent finished elementary school, and 14 percent have no schooling. On the other hand, approximately 8 percent of male refugees possess a university degree or advanced diploma, 65 percent finished secondary and college education, 23 percent finished elementary, and 4 percent have no education. A female respondent commented that the enormous stigma attached to being an illiterate male ensures that families will spend more on education for men than on education for women.

Lastly, Ghana's educational institutions, based on the British colonial system, still remain excessively structured. The institutions are still committed to training people for jobs within the government bureaucracy, as opposed to imparting entrepreneurial skills. Greater emphasis is placed on disciplines in the liberal arts than on the sciences, technology and professional disciplines, such as banking, marketing, business administration and so on.

This situation has not enabled an educated Ghanaian refugee in Canada to gain employment based on previous academic training. Well-educated Ghanaians often become factory workers or taxi drivers. Three people with bachelor's degrees in computer science, geography and political science are now engaged in taxi driving, packaging and a courier service respectively. Several college and elementary graduates are engaged in activities ranging from taxi driving, flyer distribution and factory work to cleaning services. Even in situations where their academic knowledge qualifies them for better positions, superfluous obstacles have been placed in their way. For example, prospective employers have been unwilling to recognize their qualifications because they were obtained in Africa. The implication is that their prior educational attainments have not been an asset in their quest for desirable jobs. Immigration officials and social workers have been quick to point out the impressive educational backgrounds of Ghanaian refugees, but have conveniently ignored their futile attempts to gain employment on the basis of that education.

For the Ghanaian refugee in Canada, the probability of pursuing any career depends on embarking on an educational program in Canada. From the outset, these refugees are at a disadvantage psychologically and materially after being displaced from a developing society with its traditionalism and particular values, into this industrialized setting. Consequently, the importance of education cannot be overemphasized.

The refugees themselves realize the importance of education in assisting their upward mobility. An overwhelming number of those we interviewed indicated that education is their first priority, and that they want to pursue academic careers. They realize that they can never have any comfortable future in Canada if they remain in their current socioeconomic situation. Their inability to get jobs based on their past educational attainment has also motivated them to pursue an education in Canada. They also declared that back home in Ghana most college and elementary school graduates usually further their education by obtaining a university degree or an advanced diploma.

Unfortunately, their determination to seek education has been plagued by prominent barriers at both the institutional and sociocultural levels. The most outstanding problem concerns their uncertain immigration status. The sheer number of refugee applications and the complicated process for handling them has created a huge backlog of over 90,000[5] as of 1991. The determination of refugee status takes between a year to three years. In spite of the fact that the people in our sample have been here for three to four years, only twenty-one of them have completed the refugee application process, while fifty-nine are still caught in the refugee backlog. For most of this waiting period, which could range from one to two years, refugees are deprived of work permits as well as the necessary authorization to embark on studies.[6] Even when permission to study is obtained while waiting for the outcome of a refugee claim, the uncertainty of their status in Canada poses a barrier to undertaking an academic program.

Effects of the slow processing of claims on embarking on an educational program was evident from responses received. Thirty-one males and seventeen females in our sample were caught in the anxiety and uncertainty of waiting for the outcome of their refugee hearing before undertaking an academic program. On the other hand, three males, whose applications for refugee status have been approved, were finalizing their enrollment at York University, George Brown College and Humber College, all in Toronto.

The second problem mitigating the quest for education by Ghanaian refugees has been the "tendency of immigration officials and social workers to treat education as a luxury compared to other areas of assistance."[7] Throughout the waiting period in the backlog, whatever counselling is available deals only with rent and emergency relief; further education is deemed unattainable by the refugee over the short term. The wisdom of prioritizing food and shelter in the early days of arrival in Canada is self-evident. However, postponing educational counselling only serves to make it a much larger problem in the long term. One example is the case of a student who stopped school due to displacement. Initial counselling and assistance should facilitate the continuation of school before knowledge

is lost or a whole academic career is jeopardized.

The third problem deals with the initial orientation services provided to refugees. Realistically this discourages long-term educational pursuits. Through employment centres, the federal government provides language courses and basic skills orientation for those intending to enter the labour force. According to the 1989 immigration manual, *Sponsoring Refugees*, such language training is beneficial since "fluency in English or French will help counter feelings of alienation, loneliness and dependence."[8] On the contrary, in our estimation, such a policy, which links language and basic skills to employment, is too short-sighted and fails to recognize that only when a holistic educational assistance program is adopted can the social, economic and psychological problems of refugees be realistically addressed. Also, such extremely basic training prepares refugees only for low-level jobs. This carries the unfortunate consequence of channelling people who are already in a vulnerable position into the weakest sectors of the economy, with little reward or incentive to pursue higher education. Many refugees and Third World immigrants who entered the job market without any particular skills have been unable to make any headway socio-economically,[9] nor have they been able to embark on any career advancement through education.

Ghanaian refugees, like other displaced persons in Canada, suffer from a fundamental flaw in Canadian immigration policy—"the lack of a definite or precise policy on refugee education."[10] There is no policy or specification on how and when a refugee claimant can go to school in Canada, even though refugees have been arriving in this country for years. Since refugee claimants are not visitors or foreign students, they do not qualify for student authorization, which would enable them to study. On the other hand, since refugees in the backlog are neither Canadian citizens nor landed immigrants, they are ineligible to enrol in schools on their own volition. Woefully, Canadian immigration policy is silent on this issue. The law does not confer any educational rights on refugees. The 1986 *Immigration Manual*, IE 8.22, Section 1 on "Refugee Claimants and Their Dependants Attending School," states that "there is no legal way to authorize such persons [that is, refugees and their dependants] to attend school. The law simply does not cover their situation."[11]

In the absence of a definite policy, Section 3–4 of the 1986 *Immigration Manual* characteristically gives immigration officers the right to grant to refugee claimants, when necessary, a "no objection" letter to enable them to enrol in schools.[12] Such a situation is chaotic. Not only has the Immigration Act failed to provide a clear way out of this ambiguity, but it has also left it to the whims and caprices of immigration officials. By what criteria are these officials supposed to grant permission when necessary? How do we ascertain whether such decisions are justifiable or not? How do we ensure that such a ruling, which has consequences for a refugee's future, will be made in the interest of a refugee? How competent are these officials when it comes to ruling on issues pertinent to education? By failing to adopt a definite policy on such a crucial issue, the federal government has disregarded the importance of refugee education. Potential students who have been denied "no objection" letters have no place to go to seek redress or to pursue their ambition.

There are formidable financial barriers to Ghanaian refugees' access to education. An overwhelming majority of these people are employed at the lowest level of the economic strata where income level is around the poverty line. Caught in a situation where annual income can hardly cover daily living expenses, tuition and other academic-related costs become impossible to bear. This situation is made worse by the fact that unless they have the necessary approval from immigration officials, refugees are charged foreign students fees, which are three times higher than the domestic rate.

A survey conducted by *Refuge*[13] in 1982 to find out what financial assistance was available for postsecondary education for refugee students with landed immigrant status uncovered a series of preconditions that placed such assistance beyond their reach. Amazingly, such preconditions still exist today. The survey established that, in almost all the provinces, even after residency status has been granted, the former refugee must work a year or two in the labour force before qualifying to apply for financial assistance.[14] In reality, a Ghanaian refugee who has waited for a year in the backlog without a work permit, even if he or she is granted status

Table 2
Educational Background of
Convention Refugees from Ghana (1983-91)

| Categories | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. No formal educ. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| B. Secondary or less | 1 | 7 | 18 | 8 | 3 | 17 | 32 | 24 | 6 | 116 |
| C. Nonuniversity/certificate diploma | 0 | 12 | 11 | 17 | 14 | 20 | 21 | 12 | 9 | 116 |
| D. Advanced diploma/university & postgrad. | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 13 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 38 |
| Total | 2 | 22 | 33 | 28 | 25 | 51 | 58 | 41 | 16 | 276 |

Notes:
- *Statistics here show the prior educational background of only those Ghanaians whose refugee claims were approved between 1984–91. Details about those whose claims are pending are not released to the public.*
- *1991's data is for January to April.*

Source: *Statistical Dept., Employment and Immigration Canada, 04/06/91.*

in the second year, will have to work for a year before qualifying for financial assistance in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and New Brunswick. In Ontario and British Columbia, the person qualifies for assistance a year after receiving permanent status. In the latter situation, if the person waited in the backlog for two years, he or she must wait one more year before being eligible for financial assistance. Such a complex and problematic arrangement surrounding funding may create frustrations and loss of interest in education.

For a refugee in this country, access to educational facilities depends largely on access to information. This is woefully lacking. Only twelve out of the eighty respondents received any information or counselling about educational opportunities from their social workers. Two respondents remarked that, even though they have consistently consulted their social workers for a year, they have never been given any counselling concerning education. An ambitious student who contacted social services about going to school was referred to the immigration department. He went there, only to be referred back to social services. Still no adequate educational counselling was provided. The sources of educational counselling available to the refugees in our sample were social services (twelve people), schools and universities (nineteen), and informal sources (twenty-three). The rest received no counselling at all. Those who received information from schools indicated the highest level of satisfaction with the information received.

For some refugees, the lack of documents to establish their academic attainments created confusion as to where to place them within the Canadian education system.[15] When reassessment resulted in their being placed at levels beneath them, it created disillusionment and frustration, leading to withdrawals.

Social cultural forces have also impeded the motivation of Ghanaian refugees to study. Female refugees have been the major victims. Besides their occupations outside the home, women are also expected by their husbands to do domestic duties. Wives in our sample indicated that, even after they and their husbands have both worked for eight hours in their regular jobs outside the home, it is still the women's sole responsibility to prepare dinner.

This combination of jobs and housework gives them very little time to pursue even part-time studies. For women with children, the situation is worse. Two out of every three Ghanaian refugee women have had a child since coming to Canada. Care giving is permanently perceived to be women's responsibility. In the absence of help from the extended family, as in Ghana, refugee women spend more time performing maternal and domestic duties than their male partners. Female

*Wives in our sample indicated that, even after they and their husbands have both worked for eight hours in their regular jobs outside the home, it is still the women's sole responsibility to prepare dinner.*

refugees' education is more likely to be affected by the absence of affordable child-care facilities than that of their male counterparts. Clashes between class schedules, the picking up and dropping off of children, and other responsibilities, deters most women from pursuing academic careers.[16]

Ghanaian female refugees' career plans are also held in check by socio-cultural practices that make the wife subordinate to the husband. Within the refugee family, the husband normally earns more income than the woman, due to inequalities in the economic system. The husbands have also been instrumental in bringing their wives over to Canada. A combination of these give husbands greater control over the affairs of their wives.

Wives' career plans in particular require the approval of their husbands, which is not always forthcoming. Husbands may insist that their wives work full-time to enable them to raise money for investments or other plans. Information received from some husbands in our sample indicated that because it costs so much to bring their wives over here, husbands believe that wives should work to settle incurred debts and/or raise capital for the future.

Almost all the husbands believe that, although wives do not earn enough, if they stopped working to study, it will affect total family income and livelihood. The husbands would rather pursue studies first.

Of the thirty women interviewed for the project, only one has pursued studies since coming to Canada in 1987. That woman took a six-month course in health care. None of the others had undertaken any studies. Twenty-one of them intended to go to school, but did not know when.

Ghanaian refugee women are already comparatively less educated earn less income, and possess less opportunity for schooling. The feminization of illiteracy and poverty is worsened by inequities within marriages.

The educational plans of some Ghanaian refugees have also been affected by their preoccupation with helping their relatives back home. Since most of the refugees were the breadwinners before their flight abroad, they send money to parents, children, spouses and even extended relatives in Ghana. Realizing the dire economic problems back home, Ghanaian refugees have deemed it socially appropriate, if not obligatory, to cover expenses such as medical costs, home maintenance and domestic needs of their families.

There are some who are interested in the economic opportunities available in Toronto and do not see education as a priority. To those in this last category, resettlement in Canada means striving to amass as much wealth as one can to afford a relatively comfortable life, compared to the deprivation and hardships that characterized their lives back home.

A combination of some of the above problems have served as barriers making education an impossible dream for Ghanaian refugees. Yet education's unquestionable benefits to refugees and

society as a whole, as well as its humanistic significance, does not warrant its abandonment. For people displaced from their homeland into a new environment, education can lead to further opportunities. Education can be a key factor in providing the orientation needed for integration and adjustment into Canadian society. The respondents in our sample work as an unskilled labour force in factories and service occupations. The only way to promote occupational mobility is through education. Having lost their traditional ties and web of social networks, education can boost morale and meet other psychological needs of African refugees in Canada.

In light of the need for and the significance of refugee education, the following recommendations are suggested. First and foremost is the need for a national policy on refugee education. This should specifically address issues pertinent to when refugees can apply to go to school, so that their status will not serve as a barrier. Pegging such a time at six months after the arrival of the refugee in Canada would be adequate, since needs for shelter, food and jobs would have already been dealt with.

Such a policy should also identify one organization (such as the immigration department or social services) that would be responsible for providing information and educational counselling. Counselling should be provided early, not later, because education can help individuals to cope with the trauma of exile. Such counselling should emphasize academic opportunities and future prospects. The role of educators will be essential in advising on course content and immersion courses and evaluating previous academic qualifications to determine appropriate levels of placement within the Canadian education system. There should also be interdepartmental cooperation between the Department of Social Services and Immigration on education. This will ensure proper coordination and remove the frustration of going from one agency to the other.

Another recommendation concerns funding. We recommend that barriers be removed and that refugees be granted access to funding as early as possible. As well as being a disadvantaged group, refugees are also not socially and economically established. Making financial assistance contingent on a job or the length of stay, etc., will lead to frustration. The federal government is currently spending $179 million to process the huge refugee backlog.[17] Part of this could be allocated to assist in refugee education and resettlement in general.

Meeting the educational needs of Ghanaian refugees is not a subject that can be adequately determined by bureaucrats in national headquarters. A consultation with community-based groups such as the Canadian Newcomer Assistance Centre (CANACT), which deals with African refugees daily, can produce vital information to assist in planning strategies.

Ghanaian refugees in Toronto have a host of recreational and ethnic associations, notably the Canadian Ghanaian Organization, the High Society, Ghana Refugee Group, etc. These associations are extremely informal. They bring together people with shared backgrounds and interests, and facilitate networking in the search for jobs, accommodation, immediate financial assistance and entertainment. In dealing with the sociocultural factors affecting refugee education in Canada, these associations can be used as a medium for assessing the nature of the problem. They can be used as reliable channels for explaining to refugees the need for changes in social cultural practices. These associations can also assist in involving the refugees themselves in resolving these problems.

We hope that consultation between the three groups—state bureaucrats, community-based organizations and representatives of refugee associations—can produce a working agenda to assist in shaping an effective policy towards refugees' educational needs. It will also ensure that the key players in this issue are involved in the resolution. Without cooperative consultation, education will remain an impossible dream for Ghanaian refugees in Canada. ▓

## Notes

1. J. Lofland and L.H. Lofland, *Analyzing Social Setting: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1984):12-13. The authors outline the merits of combining informal interviews with observation—the approach was adopted in this work. This was facilitated by the author's Ghanaian background and community involvement.

2. Employment and Immigration Canada, *Estimates*, 1990.

3. Employment and Immigration Board, *Statistical Data*, 1991.

4. Rhoda Howard, *Human Rights in Commonwealth Africa* (Rowan and Littlefield, 1986):184-202.

5. Bernard Valcourt, Minister of Employment and Immigration, *Refugee Backlog Clearance Programme* news release (October 4, 1991).

6. Employment and Immigration Canada, *Immigration Manual* IE 8.0, paragraphs 8.14-8.24.

7. World University Service, *Refugee Education: A Case for Internal Action* (1987):7.

8. Employment and Immigration Canada, *Sponsoring Refugees: Facts For Canadian Groups and Organizations* (1989):10.

9. Anthony H. Richmond, "Comparative Perspectives on Immigration and Ethnicity" (September 1991):7. Unpublished paper presented at the Urban Institute in June 1991.

10. Employment and Immigration Canada, *Refugee Claimants and Their Dependants Attending School — Immigration Manual, IE 8.22* (Ottawa: Employment and Immigration Canada, December 1986):17.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, *Financial Assistance Available in Canada to Post-Secondary Refugee Students*. Survey conducted by *Refuge* in 1982.

14. Centre for Refugee Studies, op. cit.

15. Kathryn McDade, *Barriers to Recognition of Credentials of Immigrants in Canada* Discussion Paper 88.B.1 (Ottawa: Studies of Social Policy, Institute for Research on Public Policy).

16. Ontario Women's Directorate, *Report on the 1987 Community Workshops with Visible Minority and Immigrant Women* (Ontario: Ministry of Citizenship, 1987):35.

17. Valcourt, news release, October 4, 1991.

# Refugees From Revolution: U.S. Policy and Third-World Migration

## Peter H. Koehn

*Published by Westview Press, 1991.*

## Reviewed by John Sorenson

This is an ambitious and useful book. Peter Koehn's goal in *Refugees From Revolution* is to link social-structural and individual levels of analysis in understanding large-scale population movements from the Third World. The book provides a comparative study of those refugees who have fled to the United States from revolutionary situations in Cuba, Ethiopia, Iran and Vietnam, and discusses the links between U.S. foreign and immigration policies. It is well researched and argued, and will be a valuable addition to the library on refugee issues.

Working in the broad context of class and dependency theories, Koehn's framework for analysis links national politics, external intervention and individual motivation. He provides background information on each of the revolutionary situations that have created these refugee movements and argues that American intervention and support for authoritarian regimes have been significant in all cases. He suggests that these large-scale refugee movements are the unplanned consequence of international relations in the context of the Cold War and the United States' obsession with crushing leftist movements around the world.

This framework supports his concluding arguments on the inadequacies of refugee policies that treat only symptoms while overlooking the fundamental causes of refugee movements. Koehn sensibly urges that the United States should avoid involvement with brutal and coercive regimes that create refugees, and adopt policies to prevent mass movements of people and exert its influence for peace. He further suggests that effective refugee policies should entail a greater commitment to protecting human rights and advocates a more proactive approach to refugee problems, one that would not merely provide assistance to refugees after they flee, but which would deal more directly with the factors that forced them to flee in the first place. This would require an upgrading of UNHCR's role to include assistance to internally-displaced people who are not recognized as refugees. While the humanitarian rationale for such recommendations is clear, Koehn also points out that concerns for effective refugee policies have a basis in self-interest as well, since large-scale migration from the Third World will become a growing threat to the status quo.

Koehn also provides sketches of the various refugee communities in the United States. The focus is on refugees from Iran and Ethiopia, with less detail on the Cuban and Vietnamese cases. Readers of the special issue of *Refuge* (April 1991) on refugees from Ethiopia will be familiar with Koehn's work in this area and impressed by the studies he has undertaken concerning Ethiopian refugees who have migrated to Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles. The issue of identity was central in the three decades of warfare between Eritrea and Ethiopia and has played a significant role among these refugees as well. Adopting the self-identification used by his respondents, Koehn discusses Eritreans as distinct from Ethiopians and notes some interesting differences in responses from the two groups.

For all of the groups concerned, however, Koehn notes that mixed motives underlie the decision to become a refugee—ideological commitments seem to be very important, while pull factors (such as economic benefits) seem to be secondary and, for some groups, virtually nonexistent. However, this fact raises some interesting questions in relation to Koehn's other findings. For example, despite the importance of ideological commitment and a strong association with the country of origin, he finds that less than a quarter of the immigrants in his sample supported an exile political organization.

The book addresses strategies of migration and patterns of movement and Koehn considers the notions of vintages, steps and waves with regard to these refugee groups. *Refugees From Revolution* also contains some very interesting and useful material on economic and social adjustment and adaptation to life in the United States. Not surprisingly, higher levels of integration are correlated to longer periods of residence in the U.S. and higher education levels. Nevertheless, downward occupational mobility seems to be one of the dominant trends among refugees; professionals often find it difficult to obtain satisfying and materially rewarding work in their own fields. There may be differences by nationality as well, and Koehn touches upon the importance of status and roles for Ethiopian refugees. He further suggests that African refugees in particular suffer from racism as well as the absence of kin groups and sizeable communities in the U.S.

Many of the refugees lack commitment to living permanently in the U.S. and have strong dissatisfaction with life in exile. As Koehn points out, repatriation may remain a goal for many of these refugees, but it entails difficulties. Not only does the experience of exile affect the refugees themselves, but their reception by compatriots who did not flee may vary widely from one situation to another. Many of Koehn's most interesting comments refer to the experiences of Eritreans and Ethiopians concerning shifts in community attitudes towards the return of refugees to their homeland.

*Refugees From Revolution* went to press just as momentous changes were happening in the Horn of Africa, with the defeat of the Mengistu regime and Eritrea poised for independence. Hopefully, Koehn will follow this excellent book with a further investigation of how these changes will affect repatriation to the region. ▪

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# Special issue of Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1990)

Edited by Chan Kwok Bun

Reviewed by Lawrence Lam

The mass movement of Vietnamese refugees by boat—"boat people," as they were commonly known in 1978-79 and throughout the 1980s—has appeared to come to an end in the 1990s. The International Conference on Indochinese Refugees, which was held in Geneva in June 1989, has resulted in the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) to solve this continuing saga. The CPA is a response to the growing unease among resettlement countries about their commitment to resettle all refugees whose reasons for leaving have been increasingly perceived and interpreted as seeking better economic opportunities rather than fleeing persecution. The key elements of the CPA include deterring clandestine departure, promoting and revitalizing the orderly departure program, implementing a screening and determination process in the region— Hong Kong and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries—and repatriating screened-out nonrefugees. This Special Issue has made a significant and timely contribution for scholars and other interested parties to critically reflect upon the questions of the *root causes of and solutions to* this massive refugees movement.

The Special Issue begins with an article by the editor, Chan Kwok Bun. It poses a set of cogent questions that comprehensively capture the themes emerging from and analysed by the ten articles selected for this Special Issue. The first set of questions, such as why refugees continue to leave and how and why they have been viewed and treated by countries of first asylum and countries of resettlement, have clearly demonstrated the complicated interplay of various political, economic, ethnic and social forces in the international, regional and domestic arena. It argues that within the past five to seven years, the international community's imputed motives, intentions, perception and interpretation have resulted in categorically labelling the boat people as bogus refugees. Hence, measures of "humane deterrence, restrictionism, detention, determination and repatriation (forcibly if necessary)" are rationalized as appropriate and viable, and have been collectivized into an international consensus as the final solution to the seemingly unending burden no one wants to inherit.

Another set of questions deals with the paucity of reliable and valid information regarding conditions of life in camps and their impact on the asylum seekers' everyday life, in particular, under the prevailing circumstances that are characterized, if not exacerbated, by the increasing globalization of humane deterrence and restrictionism. Clearly, the perception of the camps' temporariness and transitoriness, and of the refugee phenomenon as largely a sporadic and nonrecurring one, has resulted in a very limited knowledge of refugee camp life. More importantly, Chan Kwok Bun has accurately identified that the first asylum countries' vehement efforts to deny researchers access to camps for fear of bad press have effectively restricted them from systematically and comprehensively collecting pertinent information.

The third set of questions concerns the theoretical constructs and approaches through which refugees in camps are viewed. Should they be viewed as victims of prison-like regimes, people whose experiences are ones of helplessness, meaninglessness and alienation? Or should they be viewed as copers, survivors or even warriors, who create "culture" in adapting to the physical, interpersonal and social environment, and who actively organize themselves to cope with the stress of forced relocation and displacement, and resist repression and victimization by institutions and social forces? Researchers, policymakers and non-governmental organizations, as well as relief workers, should note the methodological and practical implications of these questions. It is imperative to understand how refugees go about doing things together and how they make sense of and gain control over their everyday lives in order to accumulate reliable and comprehensive knowledge about refugees, and to formulate policies and design programs to alleviate and solve refugee problems effectively.

Ten articles are organized into four groups. The first group deals with conceptual issues, in particular, the pitfalls of the simplistic distinction between free and forced migration. The second section consists of five articles that examine and analyse the various policy responses of Canada, Thailand, Singapore and Hong Kong to the Indochinese refugees. While Canada, Thailand and Hong Kong have been directly affected by the boat people crisis, Singapore has been the one least affected. While other countries' policy responses have changed over the years, Singapore's policy towards the Indochinese refugees has been consistently negative, irrespective of sensitivity to potential sources of conflict in neighbouring states and phenomenal economic growth. Singapore has justified its policy by its limited land and space and its desire to maintain racial harmony by striking a balanced ethnic mix. Singapore believes the exodus is a deliberate attempt by the Vietnamese regime to destabilize the region. Unless resettlement is guaranteed and expenses are underwritten by non-Singapore sources, no refugee boat or refugees rescued at sea would be allowed to enter Singapore waters and given asylum. The author concludes that it is highly unlikely Singapore will ever change and relax its policy of admitting refugees into the republic.

Canada's policy responses to this refugee crisis have been characterized by a steady decline in selecting and accepting these refugees for resettlement. The combined effect of several factors, such as a rise in nascent racism, the emerging distinction between political refugees and economic migrants, a growing scepticism towards

refugee claims, compassion fatigue (as witnessed by the decline of private sponsorship programs) and minimal media coverage of the current refugee crisis in Southeast Asia, have contributed to the decline. However, Graeme Hugo and Chan Kwok Bun's article argues that a long-term solution to the refugee problem in Southeast Asia depends on a cooperative approach to relieve the refugee burden on first countries and enhance economic development. As Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, it is not obligated to provide protection to refugees and to observe the principle of *nonrefoulement*. However, over the years Thailand has given temporary refuge to Indochinese refugees for humanitarian reasons.

Thailand's policy has been marked by occasional open-door policies, followed by periods of heavy restrictions. The magnitude of the influx, national security considerations and dynamics of repatriation programs are crucial factors underlying Thailand's policy responses to the Indochinese refugees. As the political and economic conditions in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have not significantly changed, Chantavanich and Rabe's article predicts that the future of the Indochinese refugees in Thai camps is fraught with uncertainty and Thailand's policy responses will therefore be determined accordingly.

Two articles in this group examine Hong Kong's policy responses to the arrival of the boat people. Chan's article documents the interplay of external and internal factors—Hong Kong's political relations with Britain and China, and the complex interactions between public opinion, the mass media, the Hong Kong government and the Vietnamese refugees. These factors underscore the evolution of Hong Kong's policy, which is distinctly marked by an initial surge of humanitarian sympathy, an interim stage of strong ambivalence, and then the current stance of outright hostility demonstrated by the forced repatriation of fifty-one Vietnamese back to Hanoi in December 1989. The underpinnings of humane deterrence and restrictionism

have clearly been translated into determining how these refugees should be treated in camps. The dehumanizing and degrading camp conditions are indeed sobering experiences that are rationalized as necessary means to deter other Vietnamese asylum seekers from imposing a burden on Hong Kong people who feel that they are caught between their own uncertain future with China and the Vietnamese refugees entering Hong Kong.

Following up on Chan's article, Hitchcox questions if the growing acceptability of repatriation is a solution or expedient to the Vietnamese asylum seekers in Hong Kong. She wonders if the screening process is objective and independent of the prevailing geopolitical climate in assessing Vietnamese asylum seekers' refugee claims. The

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*To many refugees, depersonalization of life in the camps represents a hopefully temporary sojourn before being accepted for resettlement in a third country.*

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author raises doubts that the mandatory screening policy may have been implemented as an effective and efficient means (smokescreen!) to justify voluntary and/or forced repatriation. She concludes convincingly that the meaningful solution to the Indochinese refugee problem hinges exclusively on the international community's commitment and measures to lift economic sanctions and assist in reconstructing a hopeful, developing future in Vietnam. Failure to tackle the exodus at source will prolong the crisis.

The third group of papers consists of two pieces focusing on the impact of camp administration policies, the social structure and social organization of refugee camps, and the state, camp officials and relief workers on camp residents. These two papers have amplified the third theme delineated by Chan in his introductory article regarding the perception of refugees as "victims characterized as one of helplessness and meaninglessness" or as "copers/survivors actively organizing

themselves to cope with the stress and forced relocation." Ample evidence has been presented to support the latter claim. Mollica's paper examines the mental health crisis in Khmer border camps and concludes that a comprehensive mental health program that is sensitive to existing political conditions and culturally appropriate to Khmer traditions and values will be administratively practical and cost-effective, and provide Khmer displaced persons with the technical skills and knowledge necessary to rebuild a Khmer mental health system in camps, and ultimately in Cambodia when repatriation becomes a reality.

Knudsen's paper delineates Vietnamese refugees' strategies of coping with life stress in camps. To many refugees, depersonalization of life in the camps represents a hopefully temporary sojourn before being accepted for resettlement in a third country. Knudsen has observed and documented how creatively and resourcefully these refugee/camp dwellers resist the possible negative implications of a relief program's therapeutic intervention (because a diagnosis may be seen and interpreted as a threat to their chances of being selected) and deal with the stress from the discontinuities in their lives. The Vietnamese refugees realize how important their self-presentation is, so they use strategies learned in Vietnam to maintain a continuous balance between anonymity and exposure in order to be recognized as resourceful rather than problematic people. Knudsen concludes that signs of successful camp adaptation may in fact be evidence of coping with the relief workers rather than with problems related to the refugees' lives.

The last unit of the Special Issue consists of two papers that give an overview of the refugees' resettlement in Japan and Australia. In spite of the lingering myth of cultural homogeneity and consensual models of social solidarity, the increasing internal and external pressure and censure have forced Japan to sign international agreements on the status of refugees, leading Japan to accept Indochinese refugees for resettlement. Observations

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indicate that there are social and cultural obstacles facing Indochinese refugees in Japan, especially learning the Japanese language.

Using data from the 1986 census, Hugo assesses Vietnamese settlers' adjustment and well-being after almost a decade of resettlement in Australia. Evidence indicates that they are in many ways similar to other groups of immigrants from Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and the Middle East during their initial years of settlement. Although there appears to be a stable and thriving community established shortly after Vietnamese refugees settled in Australia, unemployment and under-employment among them are higher when compared with other Australians. The lack of recognition of their quali-fications, an inability to speak English, the current economic recession, a declining demand for blue-collar workers (especially in the unskilled sectors), and an undercurrent of racism, are factors contributing to the dis-advantaged and marginalized position of Vietnamese in Australia.

Issues—such as the necessity of disentangling the complexities of root causes; policy responses of first countries of asylum; the effect of deterrence, detention and the determination process on asylum seekers in camps; and the subsequent resettlement process—will certainly be debated and examined by scholars in refugee studies. This Special Issue lends theoretical and empirical insights for further investigations. For example, in a time of globalization and burden sharing, how and why should the consistency of Singapore's refugee policy be objectively assessed? What valuable lessons have been learned and are applicable to the international community in their concerted effort to provide protection to asylum seekers? What kinds of relief programs would provide appropriate and adequate assistance to asylum seekers? This Special Issue is essential reading for those interested in the boat people phenomenon, as well as the wider scope of refugee studies. ■

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# IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD STATISTICS[1]

## Table 1: Regional Summary (January – June 1992)

**INITIAL HEARING STAGE (Credible Basis)**

|  | Atlantic | Que. | Ont. | Prairies | B.C. | National |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Claims concluded | 279 | 6,381 | 9,545 | 346 | 878 | 17,429 |
| Withdrawn/abandoned | 1 | 32 | 86 | 20 | 7 | 146 |
| Decisions rendered | 278 | 6,349 | 9,459 | 326 | 871 | 17,283 |

**Of these decisions**
Claims rejected:

|  | Atlantic | Que. | Ont. | Prairies | B.C. | National |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Eligibility | 0 | 20 | 19 | 14 | 8 | 61 |
| Credible basis | 9 | 147 | 479 | 58 | 44 | 737 |
| To full hearing | 269 | 6,182 | 8,961 | 254 | 819 | 16,485 |

**FULL HEARING STAGE**

|  | Atlantic | Que. | Ont. | Prairies | B.C. | National |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Claims heard to completion (include 1989-92 cases) | 256 | 5,543 | 8,424 | 277 | 779 | 15,279 |
| Decisions rendered | 255 | 5,397 | 8,445 | 287 | 751 | 15,135 |
| Claims rejected | 111 | 1,858 | 2,845 | 87 | 524 | 5,425 |
| Claims upheld | 144 | 3,539 | 5,600 | 200 | 227 | 9,710 |
| Withdrawn/abandoned | 26 | 340 | 404 | 9 | 74 | 853 |
| Decisions pending* | 46 | 733 | 1,269 | 19 | 211 | 2,278 |
| Claims pending** | 219 | 5,028 | 7,210 | 139 | 1,007 | 13,603 |

\* *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.*

## Table 2
### Acceptance Rates* for Refugee Claimants from Top-ten Source Countries
(IRB Statistics Period: Jan. – June, 1992)

| Country | Credible Basis Level Processing Processed | Yes | No | Rate% | Full Hearing Level Processing Processed | Wdwn | Yes | No | Rate% | Overall Accept.% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sri Lanka | 3,164 | 3,155 | 9 | 99.7 | 2,779 | 35 | 2,650 | 102 | 96.3 | 96.0 |
| Somalia | 1,929 | 1,924 | 5 | 99.7 | 2,056 | 45 | 1,910 | 200 | 90.5 | 90.3 |
| USSR | 776 | 749 | 22 | 97.1 | 748 | 70 | 422 | 313 | 57.4 | 55.7 |
| China | 761 | 718 | 36 | 95.0 | 777 | 19 | 167 | 710 | 19.0 | 18.3 |
| Iran | 718 | 711 | 2 | 99.3 | 666 | 38 | 554 | 109 | 83.6 | 82.9 |
| Pakistan | 705 | 682 | 18 | 97.4 | 470 | 23 | 278 | 188 | 59.7 | 57.4 |
| El Salvador | 671 | 634 | 29 | 95.5 | 670 | 57 | 234 | 356 | 39.7 | 37.7 |
| Lebanon | 579 | 573 | 2 | 99.1 | 476 | 27 | 233 | 194 | 54.6 | 53.9 |
| Yugoslavia | 531 | 504 | 20 | 95.5 | 300 | 20 | 149 | 88 | 62.9 | 57.1 |
| Ghana | 421 | 374 | 39 | 90.6 | 493 | 59 | 157 | 377 | 29.4 | 27.4 |

(*Acceptance rates for individual countries are based on adjudicated claims only; withdrawn [Wdwn] claims are not included.)
Charts: ASA

[1] Immigration and Refugee Board news release dated August 20, 1992.

**CONFERENCE**