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Refugee Women and Repatriation: Perspectives from Southeast Asia

Kate Halvorsen

Introduction

Repatriation, which has become the main long-term solution of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is reflected in the refugee activities in Southeast Asia. However, as the High Commissioner remarked in 1993: "Relatively little has been documented on the specific issues facing women returning to their homes after years in exile" (Forbes-Martin 1992, viii).

In this paper, I hope to contribute some scattered pieces of documentation in an effort to fill this knowledge gap. The paper is mainly empirical and draws on my eighteen months' work experience with UNHCR in Southeast Asia. It is based primarily on observations of and interviews with refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, and the staff of international agencies, governments, and the UNHCR. Knowledge has also been gained from gender-awareness training seminars in the region and the available secondary literature. While the data have been gathered in the context of my professional activities for UNHCR, the views expressed in this article are entirely my own, and do not necessarily reflect the position of UNHCR.

Contrary to a broad range of evidence, it is still widely assumed in project planning and implementation that refugee assistance reaches everybody equally. Gender is one of the most significant differentiating features in any society or community, and this paper will seek to identify and analyze those aspects of the repatriation process which have or have not taken gender difference and gender relations sufficiently into consideration.

The following issues related to repatriation will be investigated: have demographic data about the refugee population been produced and used for repatriation planning purposes? Does counselling and information about voluntary repatriation reach

CONTENTS:

REFUGE

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men and women equally, and who makes the actual decision to return? Are men or women systematically neglected in information dissemination in the refugee camps and in reintegration assistance during and after return? Is physical abuse by other refugees, government officials, pirates, or bandits during and upon return a gender-specific problem? Does monitoring include investigating the specific needs and concerns of special needs groups,such as female-headed households, elderly women, single minor mothers, and severely traumatized women? Are specific reintegration needs of women being addressed?

Historical and Political Context

Repatriation in the Southeast Asia region (also known as Indochina) is taking place to three countries of origin, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Gradually, as the political and economic situation has changed in all three coun tries of origin, the attitude of the international community with respect to the best durable solution for those remaining in the camps and detention centres in the region has also changed. It is now widely accepted by most players in the international arena, except for the asylum seekers and refugees themselves, that the best solution for the great majority is to return to their home country. The attitude towards going home varies among the three populations. The Cambodians wish to return to their country, provided there is peace. Some of the Laotians are willing to repatriate. The majority of the Vietnamese and the hill tribe Laotians oppose repatriation, although a growing number in both of these groups are signing up for voluntary repatriation as hopes of resettlement fade. The great majority of the Laotians and the Cambodians are in Thailand, while the Vietnamese are scattered in the region, with the majority in Hong Kong.

The Laotians

The number of Laotian refugees peaked in 1979 when 126,500 refugees and asylum seekers flooded into Thailand. As of May 1993, there were ap proximately 40,000 Laotian refugees in two camps along the Thai-Laotian border. A significant number of the households are female-headed. There is an important etlmic division between the so-called "low-landers" and the "hill tribes." Ninety percent of the refugees belong to the hill tribes and the great majority of them to the Hmong tribe. Some of the Hmong groups fought with the Americans during the Viet-nam war while others led the resistance force in Laos. The low-land Lao who are left in the camps today fled mainly for economic reasons and most of them have weak refugee claims. Since the great majority of the refugees are Hmong, the following issues mainly concern this group.

Social, economic, and political life in Hmong society is influenced by a very strong sense of cultural identity and is regulated by customary law. The Hmong are polygamous: most men have two or more wives. Women are responsible for domestic work and child care, and playa significant role in agricultural production and trade in Laos. In the camps, they are largely confined to their homes, and they seldom go to public meetings or gatherings. It is relatively difficult to get access to Hmong women, except through female Hmong-speakers who go on home visits. The women hold no positions in the camp leadership and the decision-making structures. There have been some attempts at establishing women's groups in the Laotian camps, but they have failed. It is uncertain whether this failure is due to the almost impossible task of mobilizing the "shy" women for such activities, or to a lack of awareness among staff. The literacy rate is low in general, but considerably lower for women than men.

Durable Solutions

The most important issue for the people remaining in the camps is to make a decision regarding repatriation to Laos or resettlement in the United States (for those who still have this

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option). A common reason for the inability to make a decision is disagreement between husbands and wives. The male household head makes the official and public decisions for the household. Most often, he follows the decisions of his clan or other male leaders in the community. Customary law dictates that women must obey the husband and his clan. In cases where husbands have left the camp for indefinite periods of time, sometimes as long as several years, the wives still cannot make decisions about their future. Widows are in the same situation—decisions are made for them by the clan of the husband. Husbands leave the camps for various reasons: to be with another wife, to join the resistance in Laos, or to visit relatives or friends for indefinite periods of time. In such instances, some women request a divorce or separation in order to get their refugee status determination case split from their husband's. In split cases, where the wife refuses to follow the clan of the husband (including cases where the husband is dead or missing), the husband's clan retains custody of the children according to customary law.

A woman may wish to divorce for any number of reasons, as the following examples from my research indicate:

- A husband wants to go to the United States but his wife and four children want to return to Laos;
- An Hmong major's wife in one camp is determined to return to Laos while her husband in the other camp is living with another wife and will not let her repatriate;
- A widow with five children wishes to go to the United States, but her dead husband's family pressures her to return to Laos with them and marry her husband's brother;
- A husband returns after four years with the resistance movement in Laos, decides to resettle in the United States and wants his wife and two children to join him, while his wife has already signed up for voluntary repatriation with the two children;
- A husband left his wife and four children two years ago and she does not know what happened to him; she wants to repatriate but her husband's clan will not let her.

From the above examples, one can discern a tension between the voluntariness of repatriation on the one hand, and the principle of family unity on the other. The approaches of the UNHCR staff dealing with these problems vary, but in general they have adopted a non-interventionist, that is, a family-unity approach. Only when the husband has been absent for a substantial length of time does the staff regard the woman as the decision maker. Some have split cases upon request if the husband has been gone for more than one year. Others have been more restrictive and reluctant about splitting cases because it contradicts customary law and intervenes in the personal, and private sphere.

Information and Counselling

Information and counselling is associated with making decisions about repatriation. What kind of information is available and to whom? More specifically, does this information reach all categories of women?

Very few women attend information meetings about the practical procedures of repatriation and the situation in Laos. Attempts have been made both to initiate meetings with women and to visit them in their homes. In general, the poorest and illiterate women are in great need of information about the issues involved. However, there has only been one Hmong woman among the camp staff and very few female Hmong speakers who could go on home visits or organize women into small discussion groups. As well, Hmong women lack time for consultation as their days are filled with household tasks and the production of handicrafts for income. Usually counselling is done with the head of household, with or without the rest of the family present. There have been a few attempts at targeting specific groups, such as widows and teenagers, as well as attempts to recruit more female Hmong-speaking staff to work with the women, but this has proven to be extremely difficult. A video has been planned for Hmong women, which should serve both to increase their level of information and to promote voluntary repatriation.

Identification of Vulnerable Individuals and Monitoring of Reintegration

The Laotian repatriation is relatively small in comparison to the Cambodian operation, ranging between 100-150 and 350–400 individuals returning in groups about every two weeks. They go back either to existing villages or to group settlement sites. Three categories of vulnerability have been identified for special reintegration assistance purposes: those with severe or chronic illnesses, the physically and mentally disabled, and elderly or female heads of households in need of support. However, according to Hmong tradition, these vulnerable individuals are taken care of by the family and community. Little is known about the reintegration of the female heads of households, because few of those registered as especially vulnerable have returned.

The monitoring of returnees has continued, but there is no specific focus on the special concerns of women. At present, there are no female Hmong-speaking staff members in Laos. This should be a priority in the development of more gender-sensitive monitoring. In addition, nongovernmental organizations should be encouraged to report on and assist returnees in their areas of activity with specific focus on the reintegration of women, especially the most vulnerable among them.

The Cambodian Repatriation

The Cambodian repatriation, unique not only in the region but also by UNHCR standards, was one of the most organized and structured large-scale repatriation operations ever undertaken. It began on March 30, 1992 and was completed just over a year later, by which time approximately

380,000 refugees had been repatriated. Fifty percent of the camp population was under the age of fifteen. The gender distribution was relatively even with a slight majority of men. Data from 1990 show that 21 percent of the households were female-headed (Thorn 1991). The majority of women were illiterate, and virtually all the poorest women and most of the female heads of households were illiterate. Little training or education were offered to these women while they were living in the camps.

In the camps, women were responsible for domestic work and child care while men held formal decision-making positions. A much greater percentage of men than women had jobs with the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the camps and participated in training and education. A women's organization, the Khmer Women's Association (KWA), existed in each of the camps and was involved in social work and training related to household and childrearing activities, such as knitting, sewing, crocheting, and child health. Most of these training activities, however, were not useful for income generation upon return.

Planning for the Repatriation of Vulnerable Individuals

A study was commissioned by UNHCR on "the repatriation and reintegration needs of vulnerable female heads of household and other vulnerable individuals living in the Cambodian refugee and displaced persons camps along the Thai-Cambodian border" (Thorn 1991). This study was carried out at the end of 1990.

From those identified in the UNHCR study, a decision was made to focus on the most vulnerable, i.e. those who would not survive during movement and reintegration without special assistance. Thus the category of "Extremely/Especially Vulnerable Individuals" (EVIs) was created. The criteria for selection were consequently very restrictive. All female heads of household in the border camps were interviewed. Those without relatives, family, or friends in the camp with whom they could return or be reunited inside Cambodia, with children under ten years of age, and who were unable to cope with the everyday household chores (feeding dependents, cleaning, washing, carrying heavy loads), were registered.

Less than five percent of the total number of female heads of households were registered as EVIs, thus excluding the large majority who were still potentially vulnerable upon return, such as those who might be abandoned by their support group; those who might not find their family or relatives upon return; and older children who might not help as expected in the household. In other words, of the total number of female heads of household in the border camps, a number of those not identified as EVIs became EVIs upon returning to their country of origin. In addition, some women who were *not* heads of households in the camps were abandoned by their husbands or lost their husbands during the first year in Cambodia.

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A rough estimate, based on my own interviews with more than two hundred returnees and visits to most of the major settlement sites, indicates that 30 to 40 percent of the households were female-headed. This is the same percentage estimated for the general population in Cambodia (Ledgerwood 1992).

The Information Campaign

An information campaign was launched in the border camps in order to better prepare the returnees for the realities of life in Cambodia, and to provide information about the type and duration of the assistance they would receive. The assistance consisted a year of food supplies (rice, oil, salt, and canned fish), household utensils, and either land for cultivation, a house plot with house materials, or cash. Videos were shown, information meetings were held, and cross-border visits of international and local staff took place in order to create links between organizations on both sides of the border.

In preparation for return, the KWA went to Cambodia on a ten-day visit to meet with the Women's Association of Cambodia (WAC). They held formal meetings and went on field trips to visit WAC projects scattered throughout the country; these contacts resulted in a joint political declaration about their common goals and interests as economic and political actors in the future of Cambodia. This declaration was formally submitted to the Supreme National Council (SNC). As a result of a small informal survey among poor female heads of households in the border camps, to investigate the level of information about repatriation and conditions in Cambodia, an educational video about returnee women was made called "Cambodia—Portrait of Returnee Women." The video was meant to provide the necessary information to prepare for a return, and was shown on a mobile unit in the camps so that widows and poor women did not have to move far from their homes in order to see it.

Assessment

As the end of the repatriation phase approached, the reintegration situation of vulnerable returnees was assessed in order to procure additional long-term assistance. Food assistance was provided for four hundred days, meaning that from April 1993 onwards food provisions would end for an increasing number of returnees. Their survival would depend on the degree of self-sufficiency acquired during the first year back in Cambodia.

The majority of the female heads of households were found to be coping adequately. Many joined families and relatives who were earning a living; some had been able to start an income-generating activity; those few who received land engaged in agricultural activity; some had managed to save money or stock up on extra rice; others did small animal husbandry. There were no reports of persecution, but those who had gone to so-called "no-go" areas (defined by UNHCR as unsafe and unsuitable for return) were worried about mines and fighting.

However, a significant number of female heads of households were facing problems that may become serious when their food assistance expires. These included: no jobs; no land for cultivation or for house plots; no cash to invest in income generation; desertion by spouse upon return (who frequently took the remaining food coupons and cash); inability to complete the building of houses because of insufficient materials; the need to borrow money to transport building materials and rice; family problems living in a house shared with siblings, parents, and relatives with many children and mouths to feed; caring responsibilities for the handicapped and elderly; a few severe traffic and land-mine injuries resulting in disability and high medical costs; high funeral costs for deceased husband; a few cases of severe mental illness.

The main problem, however, for many returnees, but most seriously affecting the female heads of households, is lack of income. Most widows who were in need of assistance for income-generating activities had ideas about what to do for a living. Virtually all of them had realistic schemes for starting micro-businesses, such as cake making, grocery stalls, sewing, weaving, small animal husbandry, vegetable farming, or selling flowers. These activities all require capital, and most returnees were given cash (as opposed to those who chose a house plot or land for cultivation), which was meant, among other things, to start an income-generating activity. However, the allotment of cash was often spent on other necessities, such as transporting belongings and rice rations, paying school fees, and buying additional food and clothes.

Monitoring of the vulnerable and EVIs by female Khmer-speaking staff is essential. In addition to the general information gathered about everyone, staff should make inquiries related to the specific situation of female heads of households including when, why, and how their husbands left or died, which belongings and resources they left behind, how women are coping in their absence, how many family members they feed and care for, and any special handicaps or illnesses of family members. Other international agencies should also take responsibility for following up on the vulnerable adults. There are few income-generating projects that focus on the poorest and most needy female heads of households. NGOs and other UN agencies should be encouraged to address the needs of this group of returnees and to locate projects in areas of high returnee concentrations. In some places, small credit or loan schemes are sufficient, while in other places income generation should be included in a broader community development project.

The Vietnamese

The Vietnamese refugees and asylum seekers have undoubtedly received the most publicity and attention in the region from the international community. A total of 87,800 refugees and asylum seekers still remain in camps or detention centres in Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Thailand, with the majority (44,300) in Hong Kong. The demographic profile is much the same throughout the region; around two-thirds of the population is male and one-third is female, most of them between fifteen and forty years of age.

Those now living in refugee camps or detention centres arrived after the deadline for automatic refugee status in 1989, and the majority will not receive refugee status. An increasing number of asylum seekers are consequently facing the decision to return to their country of origin. As in the case of the Laotians, the major issue determining their situation is voluntary repatriation.

The gendered division of labor among the Vietnamese is also characterized by women taking responsibility for domestic work, certain aspects of agricultural production, and trade. Society is centred around the family and men enjoy higher status than women.

Traditionally, women did not take part in formal decision making, although significant changes have occurred in Vietnam following the change of regime in 1971, and economic and political reforms have been implemented in the last twenty years. In the camps, fewer women than men have been involved in skills training and education. Most of the paid jobs available in the camps and detention centres have likewise been occupied by men.

Women's groups have been established in most of the Vietnamese camps and detention centres, with varying success. Community leadership structures differ from camp to camp, but generally women's participation in decision making is very limited throughout the region. Women's groups are involved in social activities, but the little training they do get very seldom involves learning an income-generating skill that they could use upon return. The training has been in such areas as hygiene, cooking, child care, and psychosocial activities. Lately, two needs assessments of women have been undertaken, one in the Philippines and one in Hong Kong, which highlighted their need for job opportunities and income-generating skills.

Voluntary Repatriation Counselling

Information dissemination and counselling for voluntary repatriation varies from country to country and camp to camp, but one common feature is that women participate to a very limited degree in information meetings, video showings, or discussions. Indi-

vidual women and women's groups have expressed the need for more specific information about the situation for women regarding jobs, training, education, child care, education of children, daily life, cultural, political, and economic conditions in Vietnam affecting women, and about projects for women returnees. However, little of this information has been available, and what exists is difficult to access. The use of discussion groups for women, single mothers, non-refugees, and youths has been attempted in a few places, but is not a common practice.

It has also been reported from many places in the region that the proportion of voluntary repatriation candidates is higher for men than for women. When a couple disagrees about voluntary repatriation it is more often the woman who resists return rather than the man. There are several reasons for this: women are often convinced that they will have a better and easier life in a resettlement country, and that they will be freer and more independent. As well, they do not have enough information about recent changes in daily life in Vietnam and the extent to which development assistance will be available to them upon return.

The major social problem in all camps and detention centres is domestic conflict, and this is sometimes the consequence of disagreement about repatriation. Non-intervention and family-unity approaches dominate in the attempts by international staff to solve the problems.

Identifying Vulnerable Groups

The identification of vulnerable adults preparing for return to Vietnam has proceeded on a case-by-case basis except for two categories: unaccompanied minors, and survivors of violence.

The great majority of female survivors of violence have been subjected to severely traumatizing acts of violence (most often including rape or multiple rapes) as a result of one or more piracy attacks during the flight from Vietnam. The victims may feel paralyzed by terror, suffer both physical and emotional pain, feel intense self-disgust, powerlessness, apathy, or denial. The trauma may not be temporary and could be aggravated by insensitive medical and legal procedures or inappropriate follow-up. Most of the survivors have been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); others suffer from depression, grief, anxiety, and some from psychosis. In addition, there are a number of women who have suffered severe sexual or other physical abuse while in camp. Physical protection of women in the Hong Kong detention centres and camps has been a serious and widespread problem.

Monitoring and follow-up are difficult given the extremely sensitive nature of the victims' situation. Sexual assault most often leads to stigmatization because in Vietnamese society, as in many others, blame is placed on the victim, not the offender. The victims are also discouraged by their culture and religion from revealing the assault or openly discussing the experience, and thus are also often unwilling to identify and prosecute the offender. Victims often develop feelings of guilt and self-blame, and prefer to keep the incident a secret, especially when returning to Vietnam. The type of follow-up these women require must be very discreet to avoid mistreatment and stigmatization by their families and communities.

There are two other areas of concern. Many young girls and women who had pregnancies "of convenience" in order to increase their chances of being resettled, and were subsequently denied refugee status, will return to Vietnam single, with one or more children. As well, a significant number of prostitutes from all camps and detention centres, the largest concentration being in Hong Kong, will also be returning. These two groups of women are stigmatized in much the same way as the survivors of violence and may therefore wish to be anonymous upon return. Most do not want to go back to families or places of origin and will need special reintegration assistance to obtain employment, a place to live, and child care.

Conclusion

Two issues emerge as barriers to successfully repatriating and reintegrating women or specific groups of women: information production and dissemination, and the insufficiency and inadequacy of reintegration projects, especially vis-à-vis income generation in the country of return.

Insufficient information dissemination leads to the question of whether it is possible for women refugees to make informed decisions with respect to repatriation. Related to this problem is the fact that these women participate minimally in decision-making structures. One consequence of this is the dependency syndrome, which may be further perpetuated in development projects in the country of return. A related issue is the prevalence of gender relations in the camps that may be more conservative and traditional than in the countries of return. The camps are socially artificial and static, whereas ongoing rapid social change in the home country is significantly affecting gender roles. Both camp staff and population may perpetuate the norms and traditions of the past.

"It is generally assumed that refugee women will be a force for voluntary return if given the opportunity" (Forbes-Martin 1992, 65). I would conclude that in Southeast Asia they are still not given this opportunity, although attempts are being made. Cultural traditions, the rule of customary law, camp administration and organizational structures, illiteracy, inadequate information, inadequate reintegration projects, lack of skills training, and non-participation, are all barriers. Changing the role female refugees and asylum seekers play in the repatriation process is difficult, but some things can be done.

The focus for changing the situation should be on the country of return and the establishment of reintegration programs there. These programs should concentrate on income-generation combined with literacy training. In designing reintegration projects, one must bear in mind that the majority of

female heads of households and vulnerable women are illiterate with no income-generating skills, although they may be skilled as seamstresses, cooks, or midwives. Projects should be based on a participatory approach, and with sensitivity to the changing gender roles and relationships in the country of return. In order to ensure that women are included, a certain percentage of female beneficiaries should be written into all project documents and agreements. ■

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Elderly Mozambican Women Refugees in the Tongogara Refugee Camp in Zimbabwe: A Case Study

Dodo Thandiwe Motsisi

Introduction

In traditional African rural communities, the elderly often provide their wisdom, cultural orientation, and life experiences to the younger generation, and older women, in particular, frequently receive special recognition. However, the dislocation and the difficulties that some elderly persons experience in adjusting to alien social environments may lead to a lowering of their status in the community, when they can no longer perform their usual social responsibilities (Wiest, Mocellin, and Motsisi 1994, 32–33). Traditional extended family support may also disintegrate in refugee situations, as it has adverse effects on the mental and physical health of the elderly and their ability to cope (Popline 1991a, 3). Without sufficient understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural background of elderly refugee women (and, for example, their role as elders), Western planners may overlook their situation when planning assistance strategies.

This paper argues that development assistance interventions by international and domestic non-governmental organizations, as well as by the host governments assisting refugee women in the developing countries, need to be designed and planned from the vantage point of poor women (Sen and Grown 1985, 1). The perspective of poor women provides a unique and powerful vantage point for practical reasons. While development goals generally include improved standards of living, elimination of poverty, access to dignified employment, and a reduction in social inequities, women are often deprived in one or more of these areas; they also make up the majority of the refugee camp population. Their concerns need to be heard.

Elderly rural women who have become refugees constitute a large group among the poor, the unemployed, and the economically disadvantaged in refugee camps. Some of the personnel interviewed for this study, who provide assistance in the refugee camps, have described these women as "having no energy," "a spent force," "with no real productive role," and have suggested that opportunities "need to be provided more for the younger women." Due to such attitudes, elderly women in refugee camps tend to be "pushed aside" (Munyai 1990) and their perspectives on issues are rarely solicited.

In general, women's work tends to be under-remunerated and undervalued, and the attitudes within refugee camps with respect to victims of mass displacement tend to reflect this view. At the same time, however, it is widely acknowledged that elderly women are vital to the continued survival of communities. Much of the labour of food production and processing, and the provision of fuel, water, health care, childrearing, sanitation, and other basic needs, are handled by elderly women in the refugee camps. Consequently, if we are to understand the impact of rural development and refugee assistance strategies upon the meeting of these basic needs, then the viewpoint of elderly women as producers and workers should be an obvious starting point. It has been noted that the vantage point of poor women

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enables us not only "to evaluate the extent to which development strategies benefit or harm the poorest and most oppressed sections of the people, but also to judge their impact on a range of sectors and activities crucial to socio-economic development and human welfare" (Sen and Grown 1985, 17).

I will argue that refugee assistance will improve the livelihood of elderly women only if it builds upon their cultural wisdom and life experiences. To accentuate this point, "learning from the poor" (Harrell-Bond 1986, 25–27, 259–61) should be a central point of departure for any refugee aid program.[1] The research in this paper is based on information derived from policymakers in government (Camp Administrator's Office), the HelpAge Refugee Programme (Harare and Tongogara Office), as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who are key informants about the programs offered to elderly refugees in general, and women in particular. In addition, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered as an instrument to gather information among elderly Mozambican women at Tongogara camp in Zimbabwe in November and December 1992. Three researchers carried out the questionnaire survey. It was important to deploy Mozambican students because they understood not only the national culture, but also spoke the various languages used by the elderly women. Furthermore, they had a firm grasp of the geopolitical background of the Mozambican refugee question in Southern Africa. Also, observation and intense listening were additional forms of data gathering. Elderly women were encouraged to speak out about any issue they felt was important. Listening to their stories was a core aspect of the methodology used.

Using a stratified random sampling procedure, 140 households were selected in which elderly women were the key informants. They were selected from the HelpAge Office, which provided records from sixteen villages at Tongogara camp in Zimbabwe. To be eligible, elderly women had to be at least fifty years old and receiving, or having previously received, assistance from HelpAge in the form of skills training. Finally, they had to consent freely to an interview, either in their homes (which was usually the case), or in a place convenient to them and the interviewer. The women interviewed ranged in age from 50 to 80. The majority, 40.7 percent, were between 61 and 70 years old. Most of the widows were in this age group. The next group, 32.9 percent, were women between 51 and 60 years old, and 1.4 percent were over 71. Thirty-five percent did not know their exact age nor age bracket. The survey was intended to capture the social and economic background of these women before they left Mozambique and during their residence in the camp. It was thought that a comparison of their pre-flight and camp conditions would reveal whether or not they are better off in the camp, and would also illuminate the effectiveness of the assistance programs to which they are exposed.

Household Relations

The institution of polygamy is common in Africa, particularly in the rural areas, and Mozambique is no exception. For the elderly, polygamy has been an integral part of existence. It is inherently patriarchal, partly because it is essentially the man who has the option to have as many wives as he pleases. However, elders argue that polygamous marriages are one of the few remaining African institutions of family organization that "provide mutual support among families." This mutual support, they say, is the foundation of extended family relations. On the other hand, some women who were interviewed noted that polygamous marriages do not work for them "because my husband lives with a second wife and has neglected me." Feelings of abandonment often surface. They are also aware that due to polygamy, in the rural areas and particularly in the camps, girls as young as twelve are often forced into marrying much older men; discontent with this practice was often voiced in interviews. But elderly women in polygamous marriages also said that they tend to "survive better" (than women in non-polygamous marriages), "if the husband has a good heart." Men may enrol several times for food rations for their many wives and children, and are often able "to cheat the system" and acquire more for the family network.

Among the interviewed elderly women, 59.3 percent were widows, 38.6 percent were married, 1.4 percent were separated, and only 0.7 percent were single. Of those who were married, 27.9 percent were still living with their husbands in the camp. Some (4.3 percent) reported that their husbands were living with the second wife in Mozambique or elsewhere in the camp. Some (3.8 percent) mentioned that their husbands were working as migrant labourers in the South African mines and only visited them once a year around Christmas time. In a few cases, some women stated that their husbands were somewhere in Mozambique or had abandoned them.

Fifty-three percent of the women stated that they lived with three to six of their children. In some cases, due to extended family relations, some grandchildren are regarded by the women as their own children. Only 9.7 percent had none of their children living with them. Children and grandchildren provided a form of family support, particularly with regard to food and clothes rationing. Families with more children received more rations, but in any case the food rations were less than adequate (Keen 1992).

When asked about other relatives and their whereabouts, as well as whether or not they provided support for them, the majority of the interviewees (57.8 percent) indicated that they had relatives living elsewhere in the camp. Nine percent said their relatives lived elsewhere in Zimbabwe, either in another camp, or in the nearby town of Chipinge, or as far inland as Harare.

Other relatives have remained in Mozambique (6.4 percent) and a few (2.8 percent) have gone to work in

South Africa. Whenever possible, the working relatives send cash or other items. The presence of other family members in other villages within Tongogara often meant that there was some emotional support for the elderly. In the camp situation, it was clear that:

> Aid is applied in maintaining social institutions. Refugees are expected to cope by being appropriately "social," but they are denied the resources to re-establish the real bases of social life. ... In fact (some) aid workers often feel able to denigrate and devalue the "customs" which might help people to survive with more dignity (Harrell-Bond 1986, 292–93).

Sixteen percent of the refugees interviewed said they have no relatives in the camp or anywhere else. The figure may seem small but the effect is enormous. These women experience great loneliness, suffer from malnourishment more than other refugees, and often state that "we have no one to look after us."

For the most part, the HelpAge refugee workers are trained Social Workers, Project and Rehabilitation Officers, dedicated, equipped with analytic and problem-solving tools, and eager to help the elderly. However, the number of poor refugees is so large that the workers can help only a limited number (less than 50 percent of the elderly women and men in the Tongogara camp) (HelpAge 1992).

Ninety-three percent of the elderly women interviewed reported that they had no serious illness or disability; yet they often looked depressed and some were clearly destitute. Some of the women suffered from various forms of disability (2.1 percent were epileptic, 1.4 percent were partially deaf, another 1.4 percent partially blind, and the rest suffered from iodine deficiency and were thus susceptible to goitre and broken limbs; one had a club foot). They all stated, however, that their disability did not deter them from performing their duties, but that they needed to make an extra effort to survive in the camp environment.

Level of Education and Skills Training

In Mozambique, one of the colonial legacies of Portuguese rule was the denial of the right of black Mozambicans to an education (Hanlon 1984). The socialist regime of the late President Samora Machel promoted adult literacy programs, and the Organization of Mozambican Women (OMM) also played a significant role in establishing a viable educational system, but the sixteen-year war destroyed everything, including adult education programs. Among the elderly women interviewed (who had lived most of their lives under Portuguese rule), 95 percent had no formal education at all. Even the remaining five percent only had some primary school education.

HelpAge is the only agency offering diverse programs to the elderly women in the camp. The role of the elderly women in the selection of projects, and in planning, monitoring, and evaluation of these projects is, however, not clear.

HelpAge stated that needs assessment surveys had been carried out, but the elderly women interviewed said they were simply given opportunities to participate in projects but not design them. According to HelpAge records, all members of the identified group (elderly women, disabled women, and men) participated in the vegetable gardening project, which was meant to provide the elderly and the disabled with fresh green vegetables to supplement the monotonous and dry rations provided by the World Food Program (HelpAge 1992, 3).

One of the problems that arose from a rug-mat making project (besides lack of control and decision making concerning the type of payment in cash or in kind) seemed to be the lack of access to resources and control over production. Many elderly women interviewed by the research team said that they did not receive an adequate explanation regarding the financial resources needed to purchase sewing thread, needles, pieces of cloth, sack material, and the like. Some did not understand that producing a rug-mat is a complex procedure. They had invested an enormous amount of time and labour in creating the final product and they wondered why they only received one rug-mat after producing ten. This was particularly disturbing to them as they had no cash income.

The elderly women felt that they were not in control of the production process. They had the opportunity to participate in the project, which allowed them to acquire the skill entailed in producing rug-mats, but were not familiar with the costs of production, or the cost-benefit analysis that could have been provided to them in a simplified manner. As a result, the rug-mat project did not empower them with access to and control over the entire production spectrum.

Employment

To plan refugee protection and assistance activities efficiently and effectively, refugee aid workers must analyze the social and economic roles of women and men in the refugee community and determine how these roles will affect and be affected by the planned activities (Anderson 1990, 7). In addition, the planned relief and skills training must correspond to the capacities of refugees, who are capable and willing to contribute actively to their own well-being in the camps when resources are available (Chambers 1979, Harrell-Bond 1986, Kibreab 1987, Hall 1988, Berar-Awad 1990, Brazeau 1990, Rogge 1990, Hanson 1992, Moussa 1992, Keen 1992, Bonga 1992, Refugee Studies Programme (Oxford) 1993). This is important with respect to the elderly and disabled in general, but particularly to the elderly women in the camps. They need to be given opportunities to regain control of their lives since their social roles of storytelling, caring for and nurturing the children, producing food by cultivating fields, and educating young girls who are entering womanhood, have been eroded by geographical and material displacement.

Slightly over one-half of the women interviewed said they were unem-

ployed, while the rest described themselves as being "employed" by the HelpAge Refugee Program in the different skills-training projects offered by the agency. Ninety-six percent of the elderly women said they have received some form of skills training, in contrast to 3.6 percent who claimed to have received no training, in spite of appearing in the agency records as former or current trainees.

According to official government policy, camp refugees are not allowed to work (Zimbabwe Government 1983). HelpAge officers did not tell us that the elderly were "employed" by the HelpAge agency. The elderly women, however, reported that they understood themselves to be employed by the agency. They also reported that they were not involved in the decisions made regarding the type and amount of remuneration, but were happy to be given a chance to use their acquired skills, including knitting, gardening, making pottery and rugs, cutting hair, healing, sewing, and raising poultry. The elderly women informed us that "decisions on remuneration for our labour power are completely out of our control." Others reported that there is no standardized form of payment-in-kind. Hence the following comments: "I received a bar of blue soap a month, and whatever else when soap was not available;" "I never received any soap, but I did get a piece of cloth for a wrap-around;" "I received a jar of peanut butter." The elderly women report that this inconsistency of payment-in-kind created "confusion in our minds" and dissatisfaction.

Repatriation

Over 29 percent of the elderly women had been in Tongogara camp for less than one year. Since there was an intense drought at the time we conducted the survey, it is likely that these were refugees who fled to Zimbabwe because of the drought, rather than war-related reasons. Another 12.1 percent of the elderly women had been in the camp for less than two years, while 20 percent had been camp residents for six years or more. The remainder, 38.6 percent, had been in Tongogara for periods ranging between three and five years.

The cross-tabulation of results between "length of residence" and "desire to return" provided some interesting insights. First, it is clear that the longer the elderly women reside in the camp, the stronger their desire to go home. Second, more of the widows are in this category, particularly those who have been in the camps longer. When asked where they would prefer to resettle if safe repatriation took place in the near future, 97.2 percent responded that they would like "to go back to my own village." Only 1.4 percent of the total sample responded that they would prefer to "go to any safe area," and an equal number wished to "remain in Zimbabwe." Third, in spite of lengthy periods of residence (those who had been in the camp for six years and more), the attachment to home is still quite strong and hopes for a "return to Mozambique" are not forgotten. The three major reasons given by the women interviewed for wishing to return home reflect their strong attachment to their land: "it is my home" (65.7 percent), "my property is there" (33.6 percent), and "my ancestors are buried there" (17.9 percent).

In spite of a lengthy stay in the camps for some (their displacement was protracted by the sixteen-year conflict), the elderly women had not developed any roots in the camp, such that they would want to remain in the country. They did not particularly feel at home and, as many stated, "the younger people push us around." Although they complained of some camp staff, they nevertheless made it clear that they had excellent relations with the Camp Administrator, who always responded to their needs and problems as much as possible within the camp environment.

Conclusion

In summary, the most pressing problems in order of priority were: "desire to return," "inadequate clothing," "improper shelter," "insufficient food," "having no bucket," and "lack of salt." Each of these expressed needs relates in one way or another to social relations in the household, in education, and in employment, as described in this paper. Relief assistance to the elderly women in refugee camps should address their needs regarding protection and emergency assistance for the short term (i.e. responding to the practical needs of the elderly women), as well as the rehabilitation and development of their capacities so as to prepare them for possible repatriation in Mozambique. During the latter phase, it is essential for elderly women to have access to and control over the resources that affect their lives.

Many agencies offering assistance to refugees, in spite of their good faith, still find it hard to believe that refugees know what is right for them. Thus they impose their aid through a variety of emergency assistance programs.[2] When assisting rural refugees, it is essential to take note of both the positive and negative impacts such refugees have, particularly on even poorer hosts and communities in developing countries.[3] In addition, refugees must be involved from the very beginning of project planning in the assessment of their own needs, and in translating needs-assessment findings into a project plan (World Council of Churches 1987, 1; Forbes Martin 1992).

If refugee participation in decision making and planning does not become central to the design of a project, or if refugees are involved only in the implementation phase, there is a greater risk that the situation will result in "increasing lethargy on the part of refugees, cost increases and a decrease in communication" (Cuny 1986). Cooperation of settlers is essential in order to make projects refugee-oriented and successful.[4]

Refugees should be empowered through these projects and not simply be regarded as passive participants. They must become agents of change who are in control of their situation. Some of the factors that need urgent consideration with respect to the elderly Mozambican refugee women of Tongogara are:

- development of a clear understanding of the socioeconomic and cultural background of the women prior to their flight;
- relating skills-training activities to background information;
- ensuring that skills-training and income-generation projects correspond to the refugees' needs, and to the demands of the local host economy;
- relating skills-training activities to the demands of the local economy in Mozambique, in order to increase the degree of economic integration after repatriation;
- involving elderly women in the entire project cycle from the beginning (identifying, planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating);
- increasing the elderly women's income-earning potential, thus fostering self-sufficiency;
- opening access to and promoting control over the production process (including making mistakes and learning from them) for the elderly women;
- alleviating the oppressive monotony of camp life; and
- providing a measure of self-respect that may have been lost through the years of unproductive exile (ATRCW 1986, 4). ■

Notes

1. An interview with HelpAge Refugee Programme in Zimbabwe former Director (Rhoda Immerman) and former Deputy Director (Meshack Mupinda) on October 8 1992, revealed an important factor about the agency's philosophy in assisting the elderly and disabled refugees in camps:
   "One basic principle and approach that HelpAge has developed working with refugees is that, all projects need to be practical. For instance, we do not just teach sewing, the refugees make women's pants because they would be needed as nobody supplies underwear ... So we are not just doing these things because people need to be occupied, we do that because it makes them do something good with their lives, but also helps their fellow people, and subsequently makes them feel good. It also boosts their self-esteem." (HelpAge)
2. Harrell-Bond (1986) emphasizes the right of refugees to decision making, to human rights, and to self-dignity in spite of the imposition of external aid.
3. An understanding of how refugees can affect poorer hosts in developing countries is essential in order that programs can benefit both refugees and local hosts in the villages surrounding the camps (Chambers 1986).
4. See Rogge (1987) for a discussion of several factors necessary to promote refugee self-sufficiency, including settler cooperation.

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War, Ethnicity, and Violence Against Women

Jadranka Cacic-Kumpes

Although seldom discussed in historical literature, rape is a disturbingly common part of the history of war. "Rape is more than a symptom of war or evidence of its violent excess. Rape in war is a familiar act with a familiar excuse." War rape is "a weapon of terror," "a weapon of revenge," and not uncommonly "the act of a conqueror" (Brownmiller 1991, 32, 35). Experts on rape theory claim that rape "is not for the most part the result of overwhelming sexual desire, but of the ties between sexuality and feelings of power and superiority... A substantial proportion of rapists in fact are only able to become sexually aroused once they have terrorized and degraded the victim. The sexual act itself is less significant than the debasement of the woman" (Giddens 1990, 184). It has also been shown that "in the context of a sexist and violent society, a low level of social integration and social control contributes to a high incidence of rape" (Baron and Murray 1989, 187). Since "rape is clearly related to the association of masculinity with power, dominance and toughness" (Giddens 1990, 184), one could say that war rape is a rough expression of the primitive power of patriarchal warriors over defeated victims. Or, to put it another way, it is a kind of war booty.

The data and statements I have collected from victims and witnesses of rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina[1] reveal the exceptional cruelty of the rapists. Rape is directed not only toward women, but toward the ethnic group to which a particular woman belongs. Ethnic affiliation determines who will be victimized, while gender determines the kind of violence that will be perpetrated. It is important to note that statements made by men who were in (mostly) Serbian run "detention" camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina relay numerous accounts of sexual abuse and torture of men (i.e., forced sexual acts between male detainees, castration, etc.: see Amnesty International 1993; *Globus*, January 21, 1993).

In this paper I shall restrict myself to only one aspect of the suffering of civilians as a result of war: the suffering of raped women and girls, especially Muslim, since they are the majority of the afflicted population in the examined area.[2] The large number of raped Muslim women, and the manner in which they were raped, suggest it is worth examining and correlating war tactics with instances of rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I shall also attempt to establish a correlation between the ethnic background of raped women and their position in a postwar period.

The Sociocultural Context

Data on rape have been collected for the Bosnian-Herzegovinian region, in particular Northern Bosnia and parts of western Bosnia and Highland Herzegovina. Bosnia-Herzegovina was considered one of the less developed republics of the former Yugoslavia. In 1981, 34 percent of the population were urban dwellers (as opposed to the Yugoslav average of 46.5 percent), and in the regions from which data were procured urban population was below the republican average. Illiteracy among those over ten years of age was 14.5 percent in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the illiteracy rate of the total population of the former Yugoslavia was 9.5 percent. Illiteracy rates among Muslims in the former Yugoslavia averaged 17.5 percent, i.e. 6.9 percent among male Muslims, and as high as 28.1 percent among female Muslims. (Eighty-two percent of the nationally-declared Muslims in the former Yugoslavia lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina.) As of 1981, 18.4 percent of the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina was Croatian, 39.5 percent Muslim, and 32 percent Serbian.

Although the position of women throughout the former Yugoslavia was more favourable than it had been before 1945 (in that year women received the right to vote for the first time), the patriarchal pattern of male domination has been slow to change. The main reason for this slow change should be located in the normative (e.g. family legislation and social policy) and the actual sphere (e.g. the economic system), which were discrepant in regard to female-specific issues as well as in regard to other general and particular problems. Regionally-differentiated levels of development in the former Yugoslavia along with diverse traditional cultures have also effected differences in the evolution of the patriarchal system (cf. Katunaric, 1984).

If we connect development indicators—such as small urban populations and high levels of illiteracy—with the specifics of cultural and historical development (a collision of three different traditions—Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Sunni Islam), it becomes obvious why changes in patriarchal patterns have progressed more slowly in Bosnia- Herzegovina than in the more developed and socio-historically more "homogeneous" areas of the former Yugoslavia, such as Slovenia. Some parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina were rapidly urbanized and industrialized after World War II, but patriarchy was nevertheless maintained through male cultural, economic, and social domination over women.

In Muslim families (and communities), this domination was especially pronounced. In Islamic society, men are valued for the way they take care of their families and, in the words of Mohammed, the good husband is "the one who is best to his wife" (Hamidullah 1982, 162).

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Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially in rural areas, has to a great degree preserved traditional values such as "honour," "face," virginity, and feminine chastity. The strength of the community and its men is reflected in the ability to preserve (and protect) the honour and integrity of families and women (see Denich 1974; Erlich 1978). This is the moral code (with all its internal contradictions) with which Muslim men are raised and which all sides in the present conflict understand very well.

Just as men have monopolized most of the institutions of power, so also "war has always been pre-eminently a male activity" (Giddens 1990, 352). Accordingly, women in the Bosnia-Herzegovinian *milieu* have in general been spared direct combat—caring for children has given them the "privilege" of not participating in armed conflicts. Instead, they have become refugees, while men have been deported back to Bosnia-Herzegovina in accordance with an interstate Croatian-Bosnia-Herzegovinian diplomatic agreement. Women who either could or would not flee shared their suffering with the remaining civilian population in the war zone, and many of them have become rape victims.

Rape and War in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Numerous sources have reported rapes committed by Serbian soldiers on women of Muslim nationality. As the war continues, it is not yet possible to completely verify the data, and control of the findings is possible only by comparing information from various sources and by checking the statements of victims and witnesses.[3]

There is no general agreement as to the number of victims. The report of the Coordinating Group of Women's Organizations of Bosnia-Herzegovina estimates that 20,000 to 50,000 women have been raped since the war started. On September 29, 1992, the daily paper *Vecernji list* (Zagreb) reported that the Serbian Orthodox metropolitan of Bosnia, Nikolaj, stated on an independent Belgrade television station that 30,000 Muslim women had become pregnant by rape. According to the EC Investigative mission, however, an estimated 20,000 Muslim women have been raped. (Cf. Cacic-Kumpes 1992a, 4; 1992b, 98.) There is agreement in the above sources concerning several points: 1) the number of rapes has been massive; 2) the rape of young girls between seven and fourteen years of age has been massive; 3) rapes have been committed in the presence of parents/children of the raped persons; 4) generally, the victim is raped by several assailants.

Many witnesses have told of the brutality of the rapes. Men are separated from women and children. Young, educated, and affluent men are practically always killed, and women are then raped. Consecutive raping of girls younger than 15 years of age results in a high death rate or permanent physical damage. For instance, one woman from the village of Kozarac reported: "They take girls younger than thirteen to the camp, and then young women, and then take them to be raped several times." A man from Kozarac stated: "One day they led away five girls of thirteen years of age from M.'s house and the day after they returned them in such a state that the doctor S. P. barely managed to 'sew' two of them while the three others were sent to the Prijedor hospital, where they had been taken away to in the first place."

Daughters are often raped in the presence of their parents, mothers in the presence of their children, and wives in the presence of their husbands. A. L. from Brcko claimed: "That Ranko raped a woman—the mother of two children, and her mother was also present." According to one informant from Doboj: "H. R., Salih's son, hung himself after his wife Ramza had been violated by several Chetniks who raped her before his eyes." Another man from Kozarac gave this testimony: "Through the open window I heard the cries of women from a distance of about twenty metres away. One of them was crying as she said, 'People I was operated only a month ago!'. 'Do you have a mother?,' they asked, and brought before this girl her mother and father. They raped her mother before her father's eyes."

Women victims are led away from camps to trenches on the front lines for the satisfaction of the warriors. Serbian soldiers would threaten the women, saying they would go after their loved ones. More often than not, the women could save neither their relatives nor themselves. Some did not even want to remain alive. In the words of one woman from Miljevina: "They were all our neighbours. And they forced me from my house and took me to the house of that (neighbour) who had been shot and killed. There were four young girls there, young wives, and they led each one of them, one by one, into some room and there was nothing that they did not do to us. They beat us, abused us, raped us, they did anything they wanted. They threatened us that if we would say anything, they would come the next day and slaughter us and the children." A. L. from Brcko testified: "[T]hey raped the two daughters of R. H., who made use of an opportunity. He let the gas out and caused an explosion in which all were burned. R.H. was in the Bosnian Territorial Defense in the village of Rahic."

Furthermore, descriptions given by witnesses and rape victims, as well as the official reports, speak of the existence of a large number of "public houses" into which Muslim and Croat women are brought, of "special areas" in known concentration camps where Serbian soldiers sexually abuse women, and of "specialized" camps in which young girls and women are raped. Often those women who survive and become pregnant are held by Serbian soldiers in the camps until they are close to the end of their term, after which they are replaced by other victims or allowed to escape. According to a EC report, at present there is no proof that rapes were conducted on command, but all the descriptions and reports imply that there were no attempts to prevent them (and that they were perhaps encouraged). Statements have been made by rape victims that suggest the involvement of com-

manding officers. For instance, one victimized Muslim woman states: "This same commander knew what was happening because he was one of them."

By comparing the ethnic picture of Bosnia-Herzegovina with the available data and locations of camps, i.e. information on rapes and "public houses," it is noticeable that massive rapes have occurred either in areas where Serbs are a minority, and Muslims are in relative or absolute majority (Brcko, Rogatica, Foca, Zvornik, Visegrad, Prijedor, Tuzla, Sarajevo, Bihac, Bosanska Krupa, Sanski Most), or in areas where Serbs are in a majority position but where there are significant Muslim and/or Croat minorities (Kalinovik, Kotor Varos, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Nevesinje).

The cruelty of the rapists, and the extremely high incidence of rape, act as a sort of dialogue between male opponents. The woman as rape victim embodies the message that the more powerful opponent has conquered not only human "territory," but also has destroyed the symbolic expression of power of the defeated contestant, i.e. his honour. The aggressor destroys life meticulously, including material goods, cultural goods, and symbols. Thus the defeated party must also "disappear." Raped women are not only "sporadic" victims of violence, they are an integral and essential means of effecting genocide. Defeat of "the enemy" is embedded not only in rape itself, but also in fear of rape.

Refugee and Post-refugee Periods

The biggest problem for the arrested women is staying alive. The report of the *Riyasat* (September 28, 1992) stated: "During the liberation of Zuc from the Chetniks by the armed forces of Bosnia-Herzegovina naked girls and women were discovered, all of them massacred, some without heads. Even in the trenches the bodies of several massacred women and girls were found."

If they survive the camps and rapes and become refugees, new problems arise for the women. Family members are often killed, and husbands, if they are alive, are usually involved in the fighting. Alone and traumatized, these women and girls confront the daily refugee problems with internal turmoil: feelings of degradation and shame, as well as numerous prejudices derived from their patriarchal upbringing. For some refugee Muslim women, contact with a man other than her husband is seen as a sin (as is physical contact and possibly abortion). Many of them are not only disgusted by the prospect of possible future contact with men, they are also afraid that, even if desired, such contact would not be possible since their honour has been tarnished. As J.P. said: "Serb soldiers killed my entire family. Yes, I saw them as they killed my father, they cut his throat with a knife, then they shot my mother ... they took me to some room where about ten of them, consecutively, raped me for three days. It was terrible. I don't wish to remember it. I will never again be a normal woman" (*Globus*, September 25, 1992).

Experience shows that it is difficult to help women victims of war rape. They find it difficult to talk about rape, and are further traumatized by the reaction of their community.[4] Despite attempts by society to negate stereotypes about rape (by emphasizing the high incidence of rape and the impossibility of victims to protect themselves), women feel stigmatized. Women's post-rape identity will affect not only their re-socialization, but also the children born as a result of the rape, the family, and the community itself. At the International Conference on Human Rights, representatives of Islamic countries urged pregnant raped women to give birth and raise their children in the spirit of Islam. They also advised Muslims to take such women as wives (*Vecernji list*, September 20, 1992). But it should be remembered that in Bangladesh, for example, "rape, abduction and forcible prostitution during the nine-month war proved to be only the first round of humiliation for the Bengali women. Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman's declaration that victims of rape were national heroines was the opening shot of an ill-starred campaign to reintegrate them into society - by smoothing the way for a return to their reluctant husbands or by finding bridegrooms for the unmarried ones ... Imaginative in concept, for a country in which female chastity and purdah isolation are cardinal principles, the 'marry them off' campaign never got off the ground" (Brownmiller 1991, 83).

The fate of these women and their children depends on the countries and communities where they find refuge (i.e. attitudes toward abortion, sensitivity to the preservation of the "Bosnian-Muslim" identity of the refugees, etc.), as well as on the refugee policies of the host countries (including the possibility of rape victims' self-help engagement through, for example, different women's groups). Above all, their fate is dependent upon circumstances related to the resolution of the war.

The desire to return home on the part of the refugees (mostly women and children, many of whom have lost loved ones and are homeless) will also depend on refugee policies and circumstances after the war. Since a great number of women have seen terrible crimes, and many have themselves been victimized, they will face the difficult issue of renewed coexistence in their home regions. The very crime continuously perpetrated against women and female children is sufficient that the remnants of the behumbled males (often themselves tortured and sexually abused), in as much as they survive the war as victors, spend the rest of their lives in revengeful activity (as noted by E. Fromm, the "thirst for revenge," which occurs after the damage has been committed, is of strong intensity, often cruel and insatiable).

In conclusion, one must remember that war limits accessibility to data that would make possible a thorough analysis of the correlation between ethnicity, war, and rape. The purpose of this study is to indicate the problems in question and to initiate further studies of this distressing phenomenon. ■

Notes

1. In this paper, I attempt to explain the characteristics of rape (primarily) on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina after the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia. The paper is based on earlier investigations (CacicKumpes, 1992a and 1992b) as well as more recent sources.
2. The majority of sources (such as Amnesty International, EC Investigative mission) speak of rape committed by Serbian soldiers (or paramilitary forces) toward nonSerbian civilians, mostly Muslim women. Croatian women are also victims of Serbian aggression but are fewer in number due to the demographics of the war-afflicted region. According to some sources (Amnesty International, newspapers), Serbian women were also raped by Muslim and Croatian armed forces "although on a much lesser scale" (Amnesty International 1993:6).
3. In this paper, I have used the following sources: information from the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina as presented in the mass media; specific reports (i.e. from the Direction for Humanitarian Aid of the Office of Bosnia-Herzegovina in Croatia, the Coordinating Group of Women's Organizations of the Bosnia-Herzegovinian government, the *Riyasat* of the Islamic Community, the EC Investigative mission into the trea tment of Muslim women in the former Yugoslavia, 29 January 1993, Amnesty International, 1993; statements of witnesses and rape victims in the archives of the Office of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the archives of the Croatian Information Centre, the Department for collecting documentation and processing data on the liberation war; collected statements in Ibrahim Kajan's book *Muslimallski danak* 11 *krvi;* and reports and articles in the daily and weekly press.
4. In Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia where chastity is held to be the highest virtue, there was" enormous cui tural pressure not to reveal rape ... Husbands have left their wives after learning the wife was raped" *(Boston Globe,* June 8,1986).

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I

Books receveived for review in Refuge

No More: The Battle Against Human Rights Violations

by David Matas

ISBN 1-55002-221-0; 224 pp; $19.99. Published by: Dundurn Press Ltd., 2181 Queen St. E., Suite 301, Toronto ON M4E 1E5.

What leads to human rights violations and what can be done to stop them? What can be done to remedy them? The author attemts to answer these questions in *No More.*

David Matas practices law in Winnipeg specializing in refugee, immigration, and human rights, and is the author of *Closing the Door: The Failure of Refugee Protection.*

Constructing a Productive Other: Discourse Theory and the Convention Refugee Hearing *by Robert F. Barsky, Inter-University Celllre for Discourse Analysis and Text Sociocriticism, McGill University.*

ISBN 1-55619-279-5; he, 274 pp; $64. Published by: John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsteldijik 44, P. O.Box 75577, 1070 An Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Contents: Introduction: the construction of the Other; the chronotope for the Convention refugee hearing; interpreting and transcribing the Other; the discursive paradigm; life story; the un-dialogic Other; the explicit and implicit criteria for rendering the decision: the women as witness and the appeal case; and the destruction of the Self.

The Global Refugee Crisis: A Reference Handbook *by Gil Loescher (Professor of IlliIemational Relations. University of Notre Dame) and Ann Dull Loescher (teacher)* ISBN 0-87436-753-0; he, 261 pp; $39.50.

Published by: ABC-CLIO, P. O. Box 1911, Santa Barbara, CA, 93116-1911, *US.A.*

This book provides hard-to-locate facts, and statistics; Excerpts from major international and regional legal documents; directories of international organizations and *US.* resettlement agencies; selected print and non-print resources; and a glossary.

Women's Groups in the Former Yugoslavia: Working with Refugees

Maja Korac

The horrors of the war in the Former Yugoslavia and the suffering of more than four million refugees and internally displaced persons, mostly women and children, have already been well-documented (UNHCR 1993). The new states of ex-Yugoslavia have taken the brunt of the refugee burden. According to the UNHCR, as of July 1993 the estimated total of asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia in European countries was 750,000, whereas 3,380,000 were displaced persons and refugees within the region of the former Yugoslavia itself.

Local governments, NGOs, as well as international humanitarian organizations, are providing aid and helping refugees. Although the humanitarian aid is financially significant, this article will attempt to question a problematic assumption in refugee policy—that refugees are "taken care of" as long they are free from the immediate dangers that forced them to flee. The pitfalls of such a policy, especially as applied to refugees fleeing from ethnic conflict, become immediately apparent when the policy is contrasted with the political context of the Yugoslav conflicts, as well as the experiences, needs, and problems of refugees themselves.

The ultimate search for ethnic-national "oneness" and the creation of a hated "other" led to the violent disintegration of the Former Yugoslavia. Millions of refugees and internally displaced persons now face the problem of reconciling their own notion of belonging and identity with the new realities of their lives. Many refugees have close relatives whose ethnic background differs from their own, or are themselves in ethnically-mixed marriages. As refugees, they live in ethnically-mixed refugee camps in the newly-recognized states in the region that was Yugoslavia, where their ethnic group differs from the majority of the population. As such, they are frequently perceived as "enemies." Additionally, as a result of war, the economic crisis worsened,[1] transforming all refugees, regardless of their ethnicity, into "others" perceived as a heavy, unbearable burden to the host governments. Refugees from minority ethnic groups became even more stigmatized.

In a political context in which almost all regional host governments[2] are involved, war and the psychological, political, or economic violence against civilians who became refugees, continue. Refugees are being used and manipulated by the host governments according to current political objectives.

Early in the crisis, women's groups[3] began to direct their energies into opposing chauvinism, militarism, and manipulation of refugees for political purposes. They also made an effort to raise awareness among citizens of their states that refugees are victims of the political regimes, and that citizens should prevent their governments from further victimization of the innocent. In Serbia, for example, women's groups distributed a petition to citizens entitled *Let Us Make the Lives of the Refugees Visible*,[4] which stated:

> Refugees are here, in Serbia. The government has placed them in the camps, far away from villages and cities. Women, children and elderly live there according to the rules unknown to the majority of the citizens of Serbia ... The lives of the refugees, true victims of this war remain invisible. They are remitted to the soulless bureaucracy of the camps, condemned to endless victimization. Citizens of Serbia, refugees are not responsible for our miserable lives. The regime of Slobodan Milosevic is guilty for their and our misery. Let us demonstrate our solidarity with refugees. Let us visit them at the camps. Let us denunciate violation of their human rights. Let us demand that the international humanitarian aid reaches them. Let us ask them how they are!

These relatively small but energetic groups of women[5] (whose activities are based on an *inclusive* politics which cuts across ethnic boundaries) have defined their approach to refugees as, first and foremost, to work *with* them, rather than *for* them. In this way, these groups are making a significant effort to overcome the paternalistic undertones of official refugee policy and projects ensuing from it. Such an effort stems from the belief that refugees should not be encouraged to reconcile themselves to the roles of victims and passive recipients of humanitarian aid. Moreover, since a vast majority of refugees in the Former Yugoslavia are women and children[6] (whose experience with the conflicts, militarization, and violence in war is specific to their position in the social structure), these groups approach women refugees with a strong sense of women's solidarity and an insight into their specific needs and problems.

The women's centres' activists[7] search for women refugees, who are survivors of war rape, in the medical institutions where the women come for abortions or to give birth. The activists organize to meet the women survivors' needs through counselling by trained volunteers or through the provision of financial aid.[8] In a few cases, they have tried to provide for the basic needs of the women war rape survivors by paying for their passage to foreign countries, paying their rent, or taking care of their babies. The activists act as mediators between the survivors of war rape, institutions, and families. Further, the centres provide individual (and occasionally group) counselling to refugee women who are housed in the camps or hosted by individual families.[9] The activists provide

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placement and legal services for women refugees. They have also provided a number of refugee women with theatre tickets, organized group shopping trips and, in some cases, paid for extra medical needs such as glasses or dental work. Additionally, they have organized various projects with women refugees to produce handicrafts and art objects, both to restore the refugee women's cultural heritage, and to provide them with some financial support.[10] The "I Remember" project creates an alternative women's history that aims to encourage an exchange of experiences among refugee women, and between refugee and activist women. In it, women remember not only the horrors of the war but pre-war times as well, so as to establish defensive mechanisms against the hatred and misery around them.

A number of refugee women have joined the women's groups. Mira,[11] a Bosnian Serb refugee from Mostar, now a coordinator of the refugee program in the Women in Black group in Belgrade, related how she learned of Women in Black and their silent weekly anti-war protests from a woman journalist who interviewed her upon her arrival in Belgrade.

> And I went that Wednesday [to attend an anti-war protest] and since then I didn't go maybe twice ... I remember that meeting when I told them [Women in Black]: none of us refugees want you to give us something, we want to earn it, to get our self-respect back. The initial idea for me was an episode in front of the Serbian Red Cross office. It was a cold wind, we were in a long line-up outside the office. A girl who was working there turned the heater towards her, every ten minutes she lit a cigarette and didn't do anything in the meantime, a really horrible situation. Then a woman in a red coat said after the tenth cigarette: "Could you please hurry it up a bit, it's really cold outside and I have a small child I left alone at home." The girl working there said angrily to all of us in the line-up: "Because of that woman in red no one is going to get anything today." The worst of it was that no one in the line-up took the side of the woman in red, as if we had never been human, as if we had never had dignity. They said to her [the woman in red]: "Get out, we won't get anything because of you." To me, the worst of it was that all of us in the line-up had totally lost our human dignity. And I somehow linked it to the fact that we were now reduced to receivers of aid. Because we are just receiving the aid you start to see it as a charity, that's why most of the refugees feel the way they do. Only if we'll have a chance to earn something, we'll get our self-confidence back and in fact that process of returning us to normal trends, as normal as it gets, can help. Also, I felt very bad because I couldn't work, besides the huge amount of time you have during a day, you have too much time to think about some events in the war and before the war that hurt, when everything that hurts, hurts all day. You also have the need to work and earn. That's the only way you can decide about your life .... After some talks, when I told them [Women in Black] all that, and talked with Jadranka [another refugee activist in Women in Black], we came up with the idea that we should try to do something which will allow women to earn something, no matter how little, and help them pass the time. That is how we've started the handicraft project ... So, I joined this group actively and from the first moment when I got here [in Belgrade] the only place where I didn't feel like a refugee was the Women in Black, so Jadranka and I are among the refugees who became activists here.

Despite their scarce financial resources, some women's groups in Zagreb and Belgrade have found ways to hire some refugee women to work part-time in the women's centres. In such cases, preference is given to women of diverse ethnic backgrounds or women survivors of sexual violence and abuse in war, since those women live under particular pressure in both Croatia and Serbia.

According to the policy of these women's groups, all women who work at the centres share the identity of "woman," so the differences in their experience do not make "walls" between them.

Amina, a Bosnian Muslim refugee from Sarajevo, told me that she had met volunteers from the Belgrade Women's Centre when they came to visit her refugee camp. They brought presents for all the women and children, spoke with them, played with the children, and encouraged women not to wait for another visit, but to come to the Centre themselves. Subsequently, Amina had decided to go and visit them since she was getting more and more depressed and disoriented in her difficult life of caring for two children, while her husband and all her family were still in Sarajevo. She felt that she might find someone friendly among these women to speak with about her problems. Now Amina works part-time at the Autonomous Women's Centre; she explained what the experience means to her:

> I know that they think the way I do, and that they are pacifists ... But not just that. When I fled to Belgrade I was very frightened. I wondered how I would be received. But everything went normally, no one asked me anything ... I have never declared my nationality officially, I haven't written it down, but naturally, my first name and my father's name show that I am Muslim. I was given the refugee status without difficulties. But inside, I can't describe this terrible fear, precisely because I'm in an environment [the center for refugee women and children with special needs, where the vast majority of women are Serbs] where the women are traumatized, they have lost their husbands, children—their husbands are at the front. They take sides, they are nationally oriented, committed ... It took me a long time, but they've accepted me finally. I think, I might be wrong, but since I've started working here at the Centre, they treat me differently, because they've seen that other women respect me ... Now I'm trying to go to Sweden or the U.S. through the UNHCR. And that's my only chance of leaving and getting together with my husband again. I'm the one making the decisions now. It took me a long time to understand that I wasn't both father and mother to the children, just their mother. I kept thinking: what would he say? But working at the Centre, these women have

given me self-confidence. I've realized that I'm a mother, and that I have to make the decisions. That I am the one who must decide what's good and what isn't.

As I have argued elsewhere (Korac, in press), due to the political action of local women's groups (as well as the support and action of women's groups worldwide), rape in war has become a global human rights issue in the wake of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, the attempt to protect women's human rights and to pressure international institutions to prosecute rape as a war crime has been manipulated by local governments, politicians, and nationalists, as well as by local and international media. Local nationalist propaganda gives incomplete, one-sided information about the rape of women in the Yugoslav wars. Reports focus almost exclusively on the crimes of the "other" side, creating the context for public debates on whether "our" women at an advanced stage of pregnancy should be allowed to have an abortion so that they do not carry "the enemy's seed in their wombs." This manipulation focuses on the ethnic membership of the rapist and the fetus as the central issue, rather than on the raped women themselves or the actual crime. In such a context, women's right to abortion takes the form of an almost military intervention and becomes, as Zajovic (1994, 75–76) remarked, an important component in the military strategy of territorial "cleansing."[12]

Unfortunately, the attempt to protect women's human rights and to pressure international institutions to prosecute rape as a war crime has been manipulated by local governments, politicians, and nationalists, as well as by local and international media.

Women's and peace groups from different parts of the former Yugoslavia have protested against the manipulation of sexually abused and tortured women in order to intensify ethnic hatred and war propaganda. At the international conference "Women in Eastern Europe," held in Prague in October 1992, the following agreement was reached concerning this matter (Zajovic 1993, 98):

> We support the demand of the feminist group from Zagreb that rape be recognized as a war crime and prosecuted in accordance with the Geneva Convention, as well as the demand that asylum for raped women be granted in all war-torn areas.

This agreement was signed by women activists from Zagreb, Croatia (Women's Help Now, AZKD), from Ljubljana, Slovenia (S.O.S., Women Against War), from Belgrade, Serbia (S.O.S., Women in Black, Women's Lobby), and from Prishtine, Province of Kosovo (activists from the women's section of the Kosova Democratic League).

Despite the unfavourable political circumstances, women's groups keep protesting against the war, governmental manipulation of refugees' rights, and manipulation of rights of refugee women in particular.[13] They also keep records of refugee women's testimonies about violations of their rights, and their sufferings. As stated in a *Report of the Centre for Women War Victims* (Belic, 13),[14] since the military conflicts between Bosnian Muslims and Croats in Central Bosnia started, Croatian politicians and government representatives have on several occasions made public statements threatening Bosnian refugee women and children. This, combined with the heated mass media, has induced enormous fear among refugees and added to the atmosphere of insecurity in Croatia. In July, the situation was aggravated when the Croatian police surrounded many camps, entered them abruptly, and claimed to be searching for arms, war deserters, and criminals. They also invaded women's and children's rooms and searched their private property. The Special UN Reporter, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, told a press conference that between 200 and 500 people were taken from camps to an unknown destination in Herzegovina. Amongst them were women and unaccompanied boys under 15 years of age. Belic and Kesic have stated in their report (p. 13) that

> [i]n that period, although we did alarm all the national and international human rights and refugee protection organizations, all we could really do for our women was to go to the camps and support and comfort them.

In Serbia, refugee rights have been similarly violated, and refugees have been manipulated by political elites. From January to April 1994, when it became clear that the so-called "Serbian territories" in Bosnia and Herzegovina could not be "defended" without adequate military personnel, ethnic Serb refugees who fled from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina were forcibly taken to the front (Zajovic 1994). This forced mobilization was carried out with the tacit consent and cooperation of the Serbian government. The action was mainly targeted at refugees living in refugee camps. Women's groups protested this violation of refugee rights on the streets of Belgrade; they also petitioned the government against the forced mobilization of refugees, appealed to the citizens of Belgrade and Serbia for support, and alerted UNHCR officials in Belgrade. However, the UNHCR and women's groups were only able to advise refugees to evade a call for mobilization and to hide somewhere (Aleksov 1994).

One of the purposes of this brief overview of the work of women's groups with refugees, and refugee women in particular, in the former Yugoslavia is to urge a wide international recognition and practical support of their efforts. However, I also wish to emphasize the need for a balanced and differentiated approach to a policy of refugee protection. In the context of ethnic and political turmoil, an effort to find solutions to the problems that force refugees to flee, and ways to

protect them, means to support strongly *local autonomous groups with clear anti-war and anti-nationalist politics*. Such groups, including the women's groups mentioned in this paper, work energetically and often without regard for their personal safety to make possible the psychological, social, political, and economic reintegration of refugees from the war-torn regions. Without such support, humanitarian agencies and NGOs (which follow conventional refugee policies that were created to address refugee problems resulting from a different, i.e. post-Second World War, political context) will be increasingly unable to provide protection to those who need it. ■

Notes

1. The economic crisis began in the former Yugoslavia in late 1980s as a result of the cumulative effect of hidden inadequacies in the system. Incompetent radical economic reforms resulted in a drastic fall of the GNP in 1989, a full three years prior to the beginning of the war at an average yearly rate of 18.7 percent. [Note: the data presented are taken from a study done by Posarac, Bogosavljevic, and Kovacevic of the Economic Institute in Belgrade. The study was requested and financed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (*Vreme*, November, 1994).]
2. Exceptions are the governments of Slovenia and of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The vast majority of the refugees and displaced persons within the region are in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia. For exact figures, see *Human Rights Worldwide*, 1, Vol. 4, March 1994.
3. The Anti-War Campaign Croatia was launched in July 1991 as a coalition of environmental, women's, and civil rights groups to promote non-violence, neutrality, and civic initiatives. In October 1991, the Women in Black Organization was established in Belgrade. Modelled on a group which emerged during the occupation of Palestine, this group meets every Wednesday afternoon for one hour on a street in the centre of Belgrade, silently protesting against the war. Together with the Centre for Anti-War Action of Belgrade, they have held candle vigils in front of the Serbian Parliament for five months in solidarity with all victims in the war. Women's groups, with the support of European and North American peace and feminist organizations, also initiated and established centres to help and work with women refugees and women who are victims of sexual violence in the war. Women have organized themselves locally in an attempt to give trained counselling and assistance to women who are victims of sexual violence in the war. For more information on anti-war activities of women's groups, see the collection of documents and essays *Women for Peace* (Zajovic, 1993).
4. Unpublished, distributed through the women's group network in Belgrade.
5. The discussion of the activities of women's groups stems from my field work (June-August 1994) in Belgrade, where I interviewed women activists as well as women refugees. The information on the activities of women's groups in Zagreb was gathered from reports distributed through their networks and meetings during the past year.
6. In Serbia, for example, 83 percent of the adult refugee population are women, and 65 percent of refugee families are headed by women (Milosavljevic 1993).
7. Some of the women's centres which have established a network of cooperation in the former Yugoslavia are: in Belgrade, Serbia — S.O.S. Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence, Autonomous Women's Centre, Centre for Girls, Women in Black; in Novi Sad, Serbia — S.O.S. Hotline for Prevention of Violence; in Pancevo, Serbia — Women's Centre "Isidora;" in Nis, Serbia — S.O.S. Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence; in Zagreb, Croatia — Centre for Women Victims of Violence in War, Women's Info-centre; in Pula, Croatia — Autonomous Women's Centre; in Ljubljana, Slovenija — S.O.S. Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence; in Celje, Slovenija — Autonomous Women's Centre; in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Women's Lobby; Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Centre for Victims of Violence in War; in Skopje, Macedonia — Women of Skopje.
8. All financial help and almost all the moral support for these groups come as a result of solidarity and networking between women's groups worldwide.
9. In Serbia, for example, a vast majority of refugees, 95 percent are placed in host families (Milosavljevic, 1993).
10. The products are being sold through women's groups' networks in Europe and North America; the proceeds go to refugee women.
11. All names of the refugees have been changed for their protection.
13. "Cleansing" is a common lay term for abortion in Serbo-Croatian. Pavicevic, a prominent Belgrade playwright and a member of the Belgrade Circle of Independent Intellectuals (a citizens' alliance founded in 1991), published an article in the Belgrade independent weekly magazine *Vreme* (January, 1993), entitled "Cleansing." In discussing "cleansing the territories" and "ethnic cleansing" as a newly-conceptualized military strategy in the war in the former Yugoslavia, she mentioned that women will easily understand the painful meaning of the term since "cleansing," a term for abortion, is a part of women's experience.
14. Whenever women's groups in the former Yugoslavia have protested against the war, or have tried to initiate a dialogue or political action intended to maintain solidarity across ethnic boundaries, they have been publicly accused of betraying their ethnic collective. As an example, five Croatian feminists (prominent writers and journalists) were attacked in the Croatian media for publicly demanding an end to the use of female victims of rape by the nationalist propaganda machine. (Images and words of the women who had been raped were used to whip up ethnic hatred.) In the influential Croatian newspaper *Globus*, in an article entitled "Croatia's Feminists Rape Croatia!," the five feminists were accused of "turning against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina" because they were "concealing Serbian raping of Muslim and Croatian women." The article stated that "it is not the women who have been raped, it is the Croatian and Muslim women who have been raped." Calling them "witches," the article stressed their "communist background" and choice of Serbian partners: "Almost without exception, they were little girls of communism! The girls from the families of the informers, policemen, guards in prisons, diplomats, high Party and political functionaries. The few who, in spite of their theoretical position and physical appearance did succeed to find a partner for marriage, chose someone according to the official Yugoslav standards: a Serb from Belgrade by Rada Ivekovic, a Serb (two times) from Croatia by Slavenka Drakulic and a Serb from Croatia by Jelena Lovric. It would be immoral to mention these facts were it not, when one looks at it now, a matter of systematic political choice rather than the accidental love choice!" (*Globus*, December 10, 1992, unsigned, translated by feminists from Zagreb, distributed through the feminist network in Europe).

Continued on page 25 / Women's Groups

The Latin American Exile Experience from a Gender Perspective: A Psychodynamic Assessment

Marlinda Freire

Introduction

Organized violence against individuals leads to a breaking point in their lives. Among other traumas, it results from exposure to death fears, an inability to use culturally acquired coping and grief reactions, a loss of meaning (loss of individuality in the face of annihilation), numbed and constricted personalities, fixation on an unfinished past, and severed bonds with common heritage (Dasberg 1986).

In the last two decades, Latin Americans have experienced organized violence brought about by dictatorship and civil war. As a result, a large segment of the Latin American population has been forced into exile. Life outside the homeland is typically preceded by life-threatening experiences involving the individual, the immediate family, the group of reference, and society at large. The individual goes into exile with a core sense of culture and linguistic identity, as well as a background of personal experiences. These will be retained through a series of extreme traumatic experiences and through asylum-seeking and resettlement, with all the massive and non-anticipated violent losses this entails. The abrupt uprooting is often followed by an alienating encounter with an unknown culture and new language (Freire 1989; 1993).

In exile, the individual faces tasks which offer possibilities of continuity versus discontinuity, similarities versus differences, acceptance versus rejection, resistance versus adaptability, and integration versus lack of integration. Given the abrupt, violent, and forced nature of refugee experiences and the short period of time in which these experiences are encountered, the individual needs to make drastic intra-psychic accommodations. As a mechanism for coping and survival, the individual initially attempts to transfer, duplicate, or rescue any aspect of the old life and the old self that may permit a continuity of self-identity, thereby reinforcing his/her cultural and linguistic core self (Freire 1990a, 1990b, 1991). In order to move toward a new self, incorporating elements of the new language and culture, the individual needs to find new and meaningful life commitments in an environment that is perceived as being receptive and appreciative of what s/he has to offer, while also providing new opportunities for the newcomer. An individual will constantly compare the old self (who s/he was, what s/he had, what s/he knew) with the new self (who s/he is, what s/he has, what s/he knows). For a healthy integration with the least possible conflict, the individual needs to be left with a positive balance when making this comparison (Freire 1993a; 1993b).

The sum of the refugee experiences acts to disassemble the individual's intra-psychic structure, leading to a state of psycho-emotional disorganization that tests the sense of identity to its utmost. Ideally, individuals will, with time, find some partial resolution for their experiences at personal and collective levels. Those who manage particularly well achieve the restructuring of a core sense of identity, with some degree of healthy resolution, through a balanced, bicultural, and bilingual "new self" constructed from the remains of a traumatized monocultural/monolingual self (Freire 1989; 1991; 1993; 1993a; 1993b).

From a psychodynamic perspective and based on longitudinal developmental observation of the Latin American refugee community in Toronto, as well as clinical and research work performed in this community during the last two decades, I have identified gender-differentiated patterns of responses and outcomes of Latin Americans living in exile.

Though this work is based specifically on experience with the Latin American refugee population in Toronto, consultation with colleagues working with Latin Americans exiled in other cities in Canada and in other parts of the world suggests that these findings and observations are not unique to Toronto, nor to Canada (Carli 1991). Psychiatric services that I offered to refugees of other ethnic groups in Toronto also seem to indicate a similarity of findings and insights when comparing the experiences of women and men. However, this is a qualitative study that needs to be validated in a hypothesis-testing investigation.

The thesis of this study is that, from a psychodynamic perspective, given comparable time in a new country and similar post-resettlement experiences, gender seems to protect women better than men. Latin American refugee women, in general, tend to respond better than their male counterparts to the prolonged identity crisis and other crises inherent in the process of exile, from the following perspectives: a) continuity of meaningful vital tasks; b) securing new meaningful vital tasks; c) coping mechanisms and adjustment strategies; and d) restructuring of a new bicultural/bilingual self, thereby facilitating adaptation to and integration in the new country.

Latin American Refugee Women and Exile

Latin American women have filled the traditional role assigned to women in many societies—they have been largely confined to the microsystems

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of the family and immersed in the endless tasks of childrearing, housekeeping, and caring for their husbands. Women working outside the home are in low-status, low-paying jobs. Women with higher levels of education are almost always in positions subordinate to men. Work only adds an additional, secondary role to their core identity as mothers and wives. The indigenous societies of Latin America were traditionally patriarchal. Introduction of Roman Catholicism by the Europeans only served to reinforce and legitimize women's positions of subservience, humility, sacrifice, and asexuality by giving this position religious meaning (Valenzuela 1987). Though differences in social class, level of education, and other subcultural aspects are reflected in the lives of Latin Americans, most women, even today, share a core sense of self based on motherhood and their roles as wives. Latin American women, even the most progressive and liberated among them, have as a vital agenda to secure the well-being of their children and husbands, and to preserve the family unit.

In experiencing the repressive regimes that trigger every step of the refugee process and those of exile, Latin American women respond with a set of coping, survival, and adaptive mechanisms. These have been imprinted upon them by the processes of cultural socialization and religious indoctrination, and have geared them toward providing for and protecting their loved ones, and ensuring that they remain together. When they are not themselves tortured, missing, or killed, women generally risk their own lives to search for their loved ones, to get them out of concentration camps and to seek asylum for them, or to focus international attention on their plight. Women usually survive on their own emotionally and financially (as their support system frequently collapses) throughout the ordeal preceding resettlement. In cases where men go into exile first, it is not unusual for women to provide their male partners with some financial assistance during the transition period in the new country. Once the men have fled, women work tirelessly to reunite their families, while simultaneously attempting to maintain some sense of family stability in highly anomalous circumstances.

In identifying their sources of strength, women invariably focus on their moral obligation towards their family. Sixty percent of those women in my care have left their countries to keep their families intact and to prevent their children from losing their fathers (Freire 1992).

> Testimony: "I was able to do whatever needed to be done because my husband's and children's lives were at stake. I have always felt that if they hadn't been there, I wouldn't have had any reason to continue on living and fighting".

Once reunited with their husbands in the country of asylum, women appear to readily find meaningful tasks again, exercising coping and adaptive mechanisms that are more effective than the ones exercised by their male partners. Women are usually the ones who secure the basic survival of the family. While the domestic tasks are traditionally assigned to them, it is also fairly common for women to initially accept any menial work to provide the family with immediate income, a role which may be new to them. The responsibilities, both old and new, with which women are faced are thus quite significant. This is compounded by the fact that, most frequently, women do not qualify for government-sponsored English as a Second Language (ESL) or other job-oriented training. Since they are not considered by Canadian policies as "head of family," and as they frequently have lower levels of education than their partners, women support their partners as the men learn the new language, try to recover their working qualifications, and continue their political work to improve conditions in the native country. Moreover, women allow their partners the personal space they need to start recovering the old self and restructuring or "reinventing" the new self while women themselves, in general, do without that kind of support.

Under normal circumstances, and within the socioeconomic status to which they belong in their home country, Latin American women are accustomed to having fewer opportunities than men, to assuming that they must be able to cope with whatever situation arises, to drawing something positive out of the most taxing experiences, and to being thankful for whatever assistance, if any, they receive from others. This is the basis for the coping mechanisms of women, their tremendous resources for survival, and their heightened resilience in facing crises as compared with their male counterparts. Women's reproductive functions, with all the organic losses (menstruation, pregnancies, breastfeeding) they entail, may also give women additional biological resilience. The psycho-emotional survival and adapting mechanisms to situations of oppression and abuse, inherent in women's positions in society, give them additional psycho-emotional resources and strengths (Freire 1992). Some of the documented characteristics include their capacity to continue their daily activities under the most adverse life circumstances and when affected by serious emotional and physical symptoms (Brown and Harris 1978, 283).

> Testimony: "I was so sad and afraid when we just came. I felt I couldn't stop crying but I soon realized no one was going to do my job. I realized that if I couldn't pull myself together for my own sake, I had to do it for my children and my husband. The children had to go to school and somebody had to do the cleaning and cooking. My husband spent most of his time going to English classes and he joined other comrades working for Chile. A lady asked me to take care of her two little children and I didn't understand that she was going to pay me until she gave me some money. At the beginning I didn't understand the mother or the children, but slowly we were able to communicate a little. I don't really remember when I started to be less sad and scared."

The important point is that in facing exile and initial resettlement, women do not need to find new meaningful tasks or ones that offer continuity to their sense of existence. They have a task that was not lost throughout the ordeal preceding resettling: the care of their husbands and children. Even in cases where women are separated temporarily from their husbands or children, there is always someone for whom women are providing, which leaves them protected and untouched in their maternal role. There are indications that when refugee women, for whatever reason, are unable to fulfil their maternal role, they become depressed and "go crazy" (Reynell 1989, 157–58). Women usually feel that adapting to the demands of the new society does not involve much risk in terms of personal threats (in areas of self-development) or pressures to perform. They usually feel they have little to prove to themselves or others. Their primary domain was and continues to be, at least initially, the domestic one, and with a strengthening of their basic coping and survival mechanisms, they manage to accomplish all the basic tasks that secure the continuity and survival of the family. Women also seem to reach the stage of psychological arrival (Tyhurst 1951)—the recognition and acceptance that exile is going to be a prolonged situation—sooner than men. This may again be the result of women's experiences of having to face the realities of everyday life, which translates at a functional level into starting to build a new "nest" for the family under whatever circumstances are present.

The women, in general, are the ones who keep an open communication with their children, and who keep the native language alive at home, since they usually spend more time with their children and talk more with them. It is also typical for women to become mediators between children and fathers in their negotiation of the two cultures. And women adopt the role of cultural mediators as a way of preserving the family and protecting their children against what they perceive as the alienation of the new culture. Women do all of this intuitively as a reaction to perceived threats to ethnic and cultural identity. These defences also contribute to inter- and intra-generational family integrity and continuity.

Thus, women shift from the more restricted experiences of home and family to a broader range of new experiences including the wage economy, the learning of a second language, the search for a new support system, and the attempt to find some balance between the old and the new life for the sake of their families. Success in accomplishing all the initial tasks that secure a basic functioning of the family, though variable, soothes women's massive losses, changes, and disruptions and gives them some sense of competence and control over the new environment. Their performance in the new situation reinforces their self-esteem while bolstering their core identity as mothers and wives. A study of 36 Latin American women subjected to torture in their homelands indicated that all the women were working, studying, and/or performing housework one year after their initial evaluation (Fornazzari and Freire 1990). Unfortunately, it is not possible to compare these figures against those of their male counterparts as no similar study with men has been carried out. However, in my experience, nine out of the twelve refugee Latin American patients, who have been unable to recover anything but an extremely marginal functioning in long-term follow-up, are males.

As time in the adoptive country passes, many refugee women find more opportunities than the ones they would have had prior to exile. Paid work, educational opportunities, birth control, health services, day care, and other social services may offer support to women's visions of more complete and fulfilling lives. With time and new experiences, women become increasingly aware of their potential for self-development and feel less threatened in exploring new opportunities, because they have little to lose and much to gain. As part of an overall process of self-development, women begin demanding greater participation from their male partners in housework and childrearing. They also demand greater personal space and freedom; realize that they are not the sexual property of their partners, and that they have the right to refuse their partners' sexual demands while learning to explore and enjoy their own sexuality. Once they learn that it is possible for them to achieve some financial freedom, upgrade academically, and gain recognized work skills, they become more aware of situations of oppression, abuse, and devaluation in the marriage and in society at large. Women realize that they can and should stop physical abuse of themselves and their children, situations to which they seem to be more susceptible during the initial resettlement period (Freire 1992; 1993a; 1993b).

In time, many women in abusive relationships experience a "turning point" or acquire a key insight—that the abusive situation will persist and that the only viable alternative is to leave the relationship (Pilowski 1993, 143). Women may end abusive relationships, though in contrast to previous decisions, their motives are based on personal well-being as well as that of their children. The realization that they have a choice about remaining in a dysfunctional marital situation or terminating it, without the stigma attached to separation and divorce in the country of origin, is described as very liberating.

> Testimony: "My husband is attending college to become a draughtsman. He was studying to be an architect in our country. He pays the rent with the cheque we receive from the government and the rest of the money he spends on himself. He says that he needs the money to buy his lunch at school. He is ashamed of the lunches I prepare for him. He is also drinking a lot of beer. I manage to get second hand clothing for everybody and get the food at Kensington Market. There is a woman there who has a store and I go there with my daughter (while the other children are at

school) to clean her house, do the laundry and cooking. I also help her around the store if necessary. She pays me a little money but gives me plenty of food. My husband doesn't help me with the grocery bags because he is ashamed of carrying bags. The few times I asked him, he took a taxi and I had to pay for it. He also used to push me around a lot until one day I called the police. He tells me that if I am going to behave like a Canadian woman he will leave me as soon as he finishes school. He might, but I have thought that he may be doing me and the children a favour by leaving. I left him once and I only came back because he begged me so much and I felt sorry for him. If I ever leave him again, I am not coming back."

The awareness of the option to leave an unsatisfactory relationship is reflected in another study that I am currently reviewing. The data collected seem to indicate that, most frequently, separations of exiled couples have been initiated by women. The range of new alternatives is reflected in the marital status 88 Latin American refugees who were my patients within a calendar year. Of the 29 males, 21 were married (7 were remarried), 4 separated, 3 single, and one widowed. Of the 59 females, 31 were married (10 were remarried), 10 separated, 13 single, 3 widowed, and 2 had missing husbands (Freire 1992). In the traditional societies of Latin America, this wide variety would be unusual.

Latin American Men in Exile

Latin American men have generally led more (emotionally) sheltered, more rewarding, more gratifying, and more self-centred lives than women in similar socioeconomic situations and life circumstances. This is a result of life in a society in which male status confers superior privileges and rights. Men's core identity is work-related, supported by a number of traditional socioculturally established roles as "authority figure," "provider," and "protector" within the family and community. Besides being considered the "head of the family," men are more often the ones who arrive in the new country with a professional, technical, or semi-technical degree, which is an additional asset in making them better candidates for ESL. or any other work-related training. In exile, men experience all situations as more punitive, more depriving, more humiliating, and more degrading. For men with good verbal skills, high levels of education, and positions of political leadership and public life in the native country, life in the new country is devastating. Unable to provide financially for their families and feeling very inadequate in their parental and spousal roles, their sense of vulnerability is probably greater than that experienced by their wives. The new situation entails drastic losses in all the aspects that previously defined the identities of these men. Latin American men find themselves unable to work in their area of expertise, unable to communicate effectively in the new language at the level of public life to which they were accustomed, and without a political agenda that can be directly exercised, except through solidarity work. Through these experiences, the Latin American men's acute state of psychoemotional disorganization, brought about by the trauma and massive losses preceding resettlement, is further compounded by additional losses including drastic lowering of status experienced in the country of asylum.

These men encounter an enduring situation in which they cannot exercise a great deal of their previous self-development. Even under conditions in which they can apply certain skills or abilities, these do not reflect real gains or acquisition of new skills, but rather the recovery of something lost (e.g. a driver's license or a bank account). Most do not recover their previous employment credentials, though in time they may find work related to their field of expertise; physicians and engineers become technicians, architects become draughtsmen, and teachers become translators. Latin American refugee men with lower levels of education become factory workers, truck drivers, cleaners, or remain unemployed. Their core sense of masculinity and power is at risk, and they have tremendous difficulties in finding experiences that may counteract their losses and grief. Unlike women, they have been unable to retain a basic task or meaning in their lives throughout the ordeal; every aspect of their functioning and their identity has been disrupted. Equipped with a repertoire of coping mechanisms geared to function well under normal, predictable, and crisis-free circumstances, the men cope less well than the women in dealing with adverse conditions. In situations of crisis, the men generally tend to avoid, deny, or minimize reality. They may have difficulty verbalizing their emotions, particularly the negative ones, such as fear, anxiety, and anger. They become painfully aware of the severe losses in occupational status, effective parental role, their role as financial providers, and their use of the language of the receiving society. Their political projects, agendas, and sources of power are non-existent or meaningless in the new country.

When Latin American men realize that it will take longer than expected to recover their occupational status, invariably, they often redirect their energy into political and solidarity activities as a way of maintaining meaning in their lives, and in the hope of "going home" within a short time. Unfortunately, over a period involvement in political and solidarity activities within the community tends to decrease or disappear altogether (Freire 1989; 1993a). In a sample of 107 Latin American refugees, in which males were over-represented, 42 percent had suffered prolonged unemployment (longer than six months), 65 percent had suffered severe loss of occupational status, the number of factory workers had doubled at the expense of professionals, and active political participation had decreased from 70 to 35 percent (Freire and Berdichevsky 1984).

As time passes, men's initial expectations, hopes, and fantasies for rebuilding a life and a new self have to undergo substantial accommodations. Once again, the accommodations are

rarely successful. In trying to assert a hurting, devalued self and a fragile sense of masculinity, men often resort to violence against themselves (suicide attempts); violence against others (wives and children) (Freire 1989; 1992; 1993; 1993a); increased alcoholic intake; and sexual promiscuity. They also seem to devalue the receiving society for longer periods than do the women. In contrast to women, they resist seeking professional services, they do not attempt to create or use existing support systems, and even reliance on friends tends to be minimal or non-existent.

> Testimony: "I was the vice-president of a big company. I am sure that when I go back to my country I could recover my job. I don't need to learn English, I only would like to speak it to be able to let these people [Canadians] know of the political situations in our countries. These people don't know anything about politics. They don't have anything to teach us. I could offer a lot but I can't because I don't have the Canadian experience. I don't want to have Canadian experience. We have been waiting already 12 years, then it wouldn't take 1 or 2 more years now for a change in government. I really don't mind working as a school caretaker for the time being. My wife thinks I haven't tried hard enough to do something else, but I really don't mind. I really don't care any more."

More often than not, the dynamics that evolve in the marital dyad are conflictive and difficult to negotiate or non-negotiable. Men generally feel extremely threatened by women who, over time, become more independent and acquire interests and goals beyond providing for their partners and children. The development of new aspects of women's identity is even more disturbing to men in the context of their own increased vulnerability and "loss" of some of their rights, privileges, and territory which, pre-exile, were taken for granted. Strife ensues because most men are unable to accept a more complete woman beside them.

Women set increasing limits on meeting their husband's demands, while simultaneously making demands of their own. The changes within the marital dynamics are very difficult for men to comprehend because of their own sociocultural intrapsychic/emotional constructs. The possibility that women may leave them may be the ultimate and harshest threat to a man's fragile sense of new self and, in the experience of this author, has precipitated a number of suicidal crises and homicidal threats and actions from Latin American men (Freire 1992).

> Testimony: "I don't understand why my wife gets so upset because I don't help around the house. It is true that we both work but men's work is always harder and heavier than women's work. Housework is women's work anyway. She doesn't like that I go out on weekends to play soccer and hang out with the guys. She wants me to take her and the children to the games. She never complained about any of these things before we came to Canada. Now she doesn't even want to sleep with me if we have a disagreement. I really don't get it and I get very angry. Since she has been working she has been getting all kinds of weird ideas about her rights to go out or having an affair if I do so. She forgets that what makes the difference is that I am a man and she is a woman." ■

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Continued from page 19/ Women's Groups

In the Fall of 1993, Women in Black recorded the reactions of passersby to their weekly anti-war protests on Belgrade street (Zajovic, 1994). As they have noted (ibid.,15-16), men are generally more aggressive than women, especially in their gestures. They often approach women protesters in groups. Some of the recorded reactions were: "Go to Alija Izetbegovic [President of Bosnia- Herzegovina]. No one in Serbia wants war. You are converters to Islam;" "Are you the enemy representatives?;" "Go to Zagreb, to Tudjman" [President of Croatia];" "Go to the American or the German Embassy' Go to Vatican!

They are responsible for this. Ask Clinton and the Pope what they have done';" "You are wearing excellent clothes. Who pays you?;" "Do you remember the Ustasa concentration camp Jasenovac?" [concentration camp in Croatia where hundreds of thousands of Jews and Serbs were exterminated during the Second World War].

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Centre for Refugee Studies
York University
Research Fellowships and Awards, 1995–96

A. Kathleen Ptolemy Research Fellowship

The annual Cdn. $15,000 Kathleen Ptolemy Research Fellowship is awarded to permit a visiting scholar from a developing country to undertake research on refugees. Priority will be given to female scholars interested in the study of refugee women who are in need of protection, and who demonstrate commitment to refugee rights advocacy or service to the disfranchised.

B. Naomi Harder Refugee Award

The annual Cdn. $15,000 Naomi Harder Refugee Award is given to a York graduate student undertaking research on refugees. The award may not be held in conjunction with an external scholarship or any other teaching or research assistance. Preference will be given to doctoral candidates.

C. Visiting Research Scholars

CRS invites applications from scholars who hold or who have held a full-time academic appointment or an equivalent teaching and/or research position. A Visiting Research Scholar will have an established or emerging reputation as a scholar of refugee studies. S/he will be expected to provide significant input to Centre's ongoing research and graduate education programme. The maximum stipend will be $1,875 per month of residency, including expenses, to a maximum of one academic year (eight months), with no possibility of renewal.

D. Post-Doctoral Researchers

CRS invites the application of scholars who have completed a Ph.D. or equivalent degree in refugee studies or a closely related field. While at CRS, a Post-Doctoral Researcher will pursue a clearly defined program of research in an area which coincides with and will contribute to an aspect of Centre's ongoing research. The maximum stipend will be $1,250 per month of residency, including expenses, for a maximum of one academic year (eight months), with the possibility of renewal for up to an additional eight months.

Applications must be received by **April 12, 1995.** Candidates should submit a curriculum vitae, a statement of intent, academic records, two letters of reference and a sample of research or publications to the Centre for Refugee Studies.

For further information, please contact:

Associate Director, Education
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DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR REFUGEE STUDIES

Applications are invited for the position of Director of the Centre for Refugee Studies for an initial term of no fewer than three years and no more than five years, beginning on or before 1 July 1996. Established as an official University-based research unit in 1988, the Centre was named as a CIDA Centre of Excellence in 1991. The Director reports to the Associate Vice-President (Research).

The Director is responsible, in collaboration with others, for the research programme, education programme, finance and administration of the Centre. The Director is expected to fulfil the CIDA Centre of Excellence mandate, to provide leadership in the further development of the Centre, and to develop additional funding sources. The Centre is expected to operate on a cost-recovery basis; experience in budget management and in negotiation of research contracts would be an asset.

The Director would also be appointed to a department in the Faculty of Arts at York University and must have a distinguished record of scholarship, strong research interests in refugee studies and be a good teacher. The rank of the appointment is open and, if appropriate, could carry tenure at the outset. This appointment is subject to budgetary approval by the University. Preference will be given to applicants who would be appointed to the Philosophy or Political Science or Sociology Departments, but other departments will be considered.

York University is implementing a policy of employment equity, including affirmative action for women faculty.

In accordance with Canadian immigration requirements, this advertisement is directed to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

Applications (including Curriculum Vitae and suggested references) should be sent by 3 April, 1995 to:

Secretary of the Search Committee (CRS)
Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts
S930 Ross Building, York University
4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario
Canada M3J 1P3

UNIVERSITÉ YORK UNIVERSITY

For further information, please contact the Secretary of the Search Committee at telephone (416) 736-5260, or fax (416) 736-5641.