

then will the returning refugee have not only a minimum of security in his personal life, but also some means to develop an economic activity. And this implies of course, socio-economic reforms in the country. It also implies that the country must achieve peace to allow reconstruction to take place.

Alex Zisman: Canada has implemented a visa system to screen potential refugees from countries such as El Salvador. What could be the implications of such measures?

Rubén Zamora: I do not believe in the effectiveness of such measures. The United States also has this visa system and it is fairly restrictive. Nevertheless the flow of illegal immigrants into the United States continues. Sometimes these systems only lead to corruption at the embassies of the country implementing them, since economic interests are also at stake. In this respect I believe that a much more flexible policy is not only more humanitarian for a country such as El Salvador which evidently is in a state of war, but could even prevent a series of social evils such as extortion and deceit, sometimes experienced by our citizens who have to leave for other countries precisely because of the legal restrictions imposed upon them.

Alex Zisman: What options do you see for the Salvadorean refugees all over the world? How should they face the present situation?

Rubén Zamora: First of all I believe that refugees should try to maintain their cultural identity. I do not think the correct thing to do is to accept that the situation of temporary exile should be turned into one of permanent resettlement. On the contrary, we must always hold high the ideal of return to our own country. Hence the need to maintain a cultural identity as much as possible through community centres and refugee organizations as well as through traditions, information and analysis of what is taking place in El Salvador. But, at the same time, I also believe that as Salvadorean refugees we must understand that we cannot -- and that it should not be our intention to -- become merely a burden to the country where we arrive. On the contrary, as useful human beings, we should be able to develop a constructive, productive attitude to the country granting us refuge. In this regard I believe that exile, or the fact of being a refugee, in spite of all the sadness and the difficulties it entails, can also become an asset, the asset of being able to contribute some of the richness of our culture to those countries receiving us. We can enrich their culture while trying at the same time to learn and to receive some of the cultural and productive richness of these countries, so as to be able to contribute more to our own country when we return.

Political Refugees from Peru: Interview with César Elejalde Estenssoro



César Elejalde Estenssoro: "I imagine that those [Peruvian citizens] claiming refugee status because of political persecution are doing so in order to have a reason to justify their illegal presence in foreign countries."

Since 1980 a ruthless guerrilla movement -- the Maoist-inspired Sendero Luminoso or Shining Path -- has been frantically trying to undermine Peru's democratic foundations amid a vicious escalation of subversion and state repression. The conflict, pitting the secretive and well-organized Sendero extremists against elements from the armed forces, has claimed thousands of dead and disappeared. Numerous victims were civilians hopelessly and unwillingly caught in the middle of a dirty confrontation. Several Peruvians, allegedly threatened by the political implications of this violent conflict, have become refugee claimants in Canada. César Elejalde Estenssoro, Ombudsman and President of the National Council of the Magistracy of Peru, spoke to *Refuge* about some aspects of his country's present situation during a brief stopover at Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport.

Alex Zisman: Over the last few years a small but nonetheless significant number of Peruvian citizens, fearing political persecution in their country of origin, have requested refugee status in Canada. Do you have any reason to doubt the validity of these claims?

César Elejalde Estenssoro: We have not received in Lima any accusations at the Human Rights Office of the Public Ministry concerning refugees. I imagine that those claiming refugee status because of political persecution are doing so in order to have a reason to justify their illegal presence in foreign countries. From an economic

perspective the situation in Peru is very difficult, and many people want to leave the country.

Alex Zisman: Yet various observers claim that persistent human rights violations both by Sendero Luminoso and the armed forces give ample reason for many people, including those caught in the middle of the conflict, to seek refugee status. What do you have to say about Peru's human rights record?

César Elejalde Estenssoro: In Peru we are experiencing an authentic democracy. The Peruvian Constitution establishes in its first article that the object of the State and the Nation is to ensure that individuals have all the pertinent guarantees. The aim of the whole Constitution is to respect human rights. The first article refers to the fundamental rights of a person, an unusual thing within the structure of Peru's previous constitutions, which always started by declaring that Peru was a republican country, etc. One has access to adequate legal appeals such as the right of protection and habeas corpus, which protect the rights of individuals with extremely expedient legal procedures. There are no political prisoners in Peru. The prisoners who call themselves political prisoners are the terrorists. They become common delinquents because they are not accused for their ideas but for their deeds, attacks against human lives, against both private and state property. There is no persecution of any sort in Peru with the exception of those who are sought by justice for deeds typified in the penal code. Nobody is condemned without an adequate trial. I very much doubt the truth behind the statements of those who flee Peru claiming that they are being politically persecuted.

Book Review

Glen L. Hendricks, Bruce T. Downing, Amos S. Deinard, editors

The Hmong in Transition
Staten Island: New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1986

by John Van Esterik

This collection of papers on Hmong refugees is the product of a conference held at the University of Minnesota in 1983. Despite international contributions, Hmong refugees are viewed largely from an American perspective. Canadian readers, however, can learn a great deal about Hmong society in terms of language training, health care, and adaptation.

The first of four parts is prefaced by an introduction on the meaning of culture and tradition. Culture is always undergoing dynamic change and Hmong culture is no exception. The first three papers take into account the nature of the dynamics of culture in adaptation, economic factors in refugee exodus, and processes of identity maintenance. This section concludes with a revealing and useful

discussion of geomancy among the Hmong and its place in Hmong interethnic relations.

Part two addresses the adaptation of the Hmong refugees to the United States. This part includes five individual papers plus a section on a symposium that reports on an Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) study of Hmong adaptation in the United States.

Included is a report on training programmes in Minnesota for Hmong women that seek to place women in entry level menial sewing and cleaning jobs, a practice that will inevitably create a disadvantaged group of women. Another discussion of the resolution of a case of sexual assault in one Hmong community is ethnographically rich and sensitive. A paper on patrons and clients in a Hmong needlework cooperative does not give reference to the growing literature on patron-client patterns among Southeast Asian refugees.

A summary overview of an ORR study reports that the population is growing, Hmong students are experiencing difficulties in schools, welfare dependency is high, and employment projects have not had great success.

Part three concentrates on Hmong linguistics and this population's acquisition of English.

Part four, on health-care issues, emphasizes that professionals in this field should be aware of differing cultural attitudes among refugee groups to health care and to western medical practices. Included is an excellent discussion of Hmong shamanism as a form of psychotherapy. Guidelines for the mental-health professional dealing with Hmong refugees follow. Hmong terminology, beliefs, traditional healers, symptomatic descriptions that may be provided by Hmong patients, and various cross-cultural problems are outlined. This is an essential compendium for any health-care worker among Hmong in North America.

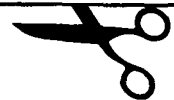
Research on the sudden death syndrome among Hmong and other Southeast Asians and papers on maternal-child links and undue lead absorption among Hmong children are included in this section.

This important if somewhat dated (1983) reader can be used by scholars, service providers, health care workers, and other interested individuals to learn about Hmong culture, adaptation, language, and health-care beliefs and problems.

John Van Esterik teaches Social Science and Anthropology at York University.

CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES
REFUGE

c/o Refugee Documentation Project, York University
4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario M3J 1P3



I wish to become a friend of the Refugee Documentation Project for the 1986-1987 academic year. I understand that all friends receive *Refuge* as well as information on the research activities of the RDP. My cheque for \$20 (or) made payable to the Refugee Documentation Project is enclosed.

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ Province or State _____

Country _____ Postal Code _____