
Book Review

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The Unwanted:

*European Refugees in
the Twentieth Century*

Toronto: Oxford University
Press, 1985

Throughout history, mankind has migrated, whether from valley to valley or to a distant continent. At times, these population shifts may have affected only a relatively small portion of human society while on other occasions, particularly during the past century, migration has had an impact upon literally millions of people worldwide.

Human migration occurs for many reasons. One cause apparent in the majority of population movements can be attributed to a desire to acquire a higher standard of living and a more pleasing way of life. Indeed, economic factors have been a significant impetus in both compelling people to leave their traditional places of residence or drawing them towards what they frequently believe to be a "promised land".

As strong as the economic motives behind human migrations may be, widespread population upheavals can also be explained by even more basic factors. To avoid officially condoned persecution and threats to life and property, unexpectedly sizable numbers of persons have too frequently felt the need to flee involuntarily from their homelands. To a large extent, it is that portion of European society that has believed it necessary to escape these latter brutal conditions that is the focus of the recently published work under review.

The objective of this comprehensive study is to describe and examine involuntary population movements in Europe that have occurred primarily in the Twentieth Century. The author seeks in this work to point out the causes behind the many movements and addresses the issue of how attempts were made to cope with the many hundreds of thousands of "unwanted" persons by governments and inter-governmental organizations. In each of the situations or cases described, persons in flight sought an

environment or haven free from man made oppression and horror where a more fulfilling way of life could be at least attempted.

In general, the involuntary population movements in Europe discussed in this study resulted from one or a combination of the following factors; rampant, intolerant nationalism, highly developed forms of persecution, and war or the anticipation of imminent war.

The number of involuntary population movements described by the author in substantial detail is almost overwhelming to the casual reader. The effect of the continuous recounting of so many instances of man's inhumanity to man is almost to numb the reader to the enormous tragedy that repeated itself again and again in Europe just in the years between the turn of the century and the end of World War II. A fragmentary list of the situations described would include Jews in Eastern and Central Europe, numerous eruptions in the Balkans, the plight of the Armenians, escapees from revolutionary Russia, persons uprooted as a result of the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the better known cases involving fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain.

To compile this book, the author carried out exceedingly thorough research in a number of countries using a large selection of archival holdings. This finished product, a monument to diligent and industrious investigation, will be of interest to scholars as well as to informed observers of European affairs in this century.

This seemingly endless chronology of humanity, compelled to be on the move, tends at times to become rather dour and gloomy. On occasion, however, the author provides some welcome relief from the succession of tragedies by describing almost anecdotally the characteristics of some of the persons who were uprooted. The account of a former Russian aristocrat, then in his mid seventies, surrendering his small group of anti-communist supporters to the Western occupying armies in Germany in 1945 is almost delightful.

This ambitious study has other attributes. It throws considerable new

light upon one or two of the attempts that ended successfully in saving at least a few European Jews from the Nazis. Similarly, significant information regarding the forced repatriation of Soviet nationals by Western governments following the end of hostilities in Europe is also provided. Moreover, the obvious frustrations encountered during the mid 1930s by James McDonald, the short lived League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Coming from Germany, are examined and enumerated.

Despite the obvious worth of this ably written book, there are some noteworthy shortcomings. Without wishing to dwell unduly upon the issue of refugee definitions, the fact remains that the author unfortunately uses the term "refugee" to cover virtually all mass population movements examined in this study. While admittedly the present UNHCR definition is certainly somewhat narrow and restrictive, it does at least strive to provide a little precision to the term. The sweeping use of the term refugee used in this work detracts from efforts that are being made to clarify the meaning. The word "unwanted" that is used in the book title is certainly a preferable term in the context of the population movements studied here.

The almost endless series of involuntary population movements discussed in the book have been briefly commented upon earlier. The reader would be significantly assisted in appreciating the importance of these migrations if they were grouped together more effectively in some classificatory scheme. Now, the reader is left with the impression that the primary reason any of the forced movements appears in the book rests with the fact that they took place in Europe in this century. It would be preferable to classify the movements by cause or by the impact felt by the reluctant receiving governments. The absence of such a set of classifications is disappointing, indeed.

As comprehensive as this work is in the descriptive sense, it suffers at times from less emphasis upon an analysis or explanation of how and why certain events occurred. For example, while the text amply suggests that strenuous diplomatic negotiations surrounded many of the efforts to resolve problems

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facing the uprooted nationals of many countries, seldom is there a satisfactory focus upon what must have been intriguing intergovernmental deliberations. This is particularly the case with respect to population movements in the Balkans and involving Greece and Turkey in the post World War I era. Some more substantial attention to the negotiating postures of the affected governments would have added a valuable dimension to this study.

These and any other remarks of a similar vein that might be made really only skirt the more important problem associated with this book. Without doubt, the major disappointment arises from the absence of an explicit, conceptual or analytical framework in which to arrange and order the mountains of data so painstakingly gathered by the author. While a simple chronological approach to the various movements is adopted, something a little more helpful in terms of arranging information in patterns seems most desirable. One encounters one appalling human tragedy after another with little apparent attempt to delineate or distinguish patterns of causes. Many of the criticisms expressed above would, in fact, disappear if an appropriate conceptual framework or scheme had been chosen. As it is, the book, while demonstrating able research, does lose at least a little of its potential scholarly impact.

It is not the intent of this review to conclude on a negative note. It needs to be pointed out that the epilogue constitutes one of the most readable and effective portions of the entire book. This succinct section traces intergovernmental activity in Europe in the post World War II era aimed at resolving the refugee and displaced persons situations on that continent. The discussion is both clear and cogent, containing just the essential details. While the author must be warmly congratulated for putting together such a comprehensive, detailed picture of involuntary population movements in Europe, the fact remains that the volume is a little less than it otherwise might have been, owing to the reasons set out above.

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The Annual Report to Parliament on Future Immigration Levels was tabled on October 31 by Walter McLean, Minister of State for Immigration. In his statement to the House, the Minister said: "Canada will increase its growth of government-assisted refugees in 1986 by 1,000, from 11,000 to 12,000, at a time when many refugee-receiving nations are becoming more restrictive.

These refugees will be aided by an additional provision of \$3.0 million to the Adjustment Assistance Programme. An additional \$750,000 is being provided to agencies to provide direct aid to refugees and other needy immigrants. In total, the 1986 plan allows for some 20,000-23,000 humanitarian landings, the second largest plan in the world next to the United States."

GOVERNMENT-ASSISTED REFUGEE ALLOCATIONS, 1985-1986			
	1985	1986	Change
Eastern Europe	2,200	3,100	+900
Southeast Asia	3,700	3,200	-500
Latin America	3,000	3,200	+200
Africa	1,000	1,000	-
The Middle East	800	900	+100
Other World Areas	200	300	+100
Funded Management Reserve	100	300	+200
TOTAL	11,000	12,000	+1,000

News Digest

- Olof Rydbeck, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) since 1979, retired on 31 October after a long and distinguished career, and has been replaced by Giorgio Giacomelli of Italy. Giacomelli has been Director-General of the Department of Co-operation and Development in the Italian Foreign Ministry since 1981.

- The Refugee Studies Programme at Queen Elizabeth House began in 1982. It brings together host government officials, scholars and professionals with a wide range of persons with specialized knowledge in relevant fields. Queen Elizabeth House offers access to Oxford University's unique library and archival resources, and has long experience in mounting training courses for overseas personnel in administrative and foreign service, and in providing research facilities for Visiting Fellows. The Refugee Studies Programme emphasizes refugee participation, the strengthening of host country institu-

tions and talents of personnel, the need for independent research and evaluation, training and development. *Refugee Issues*, a quarterly series of working papers, is published in co-operation with the British Refugee Council. Applications and enquiries should be addressed to Dr. B.E. Harrell-Bond, Programme Co-ordinator, Refugee Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St. Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA U.K.

- The annual subscription rate for *Refugee Reports* has been reduced to \$28.00. Multiple orders are available at \$20.00 each. *Refugee Reports* is a 16-page monthly devoted entirely to refugee issues. It covers national and local programmes to meet refugees' needs, international refugee situations, U.S. legislation, regulations, and litigation affecting refugees, research, statistics, and resources. Subscribers also receive the U.S. Committee for Refugees' *World Refugee Survey* and its Issue Papers series. To subscribe, send a cheque with your name, affiliation, if appropriate, and address to: *Refugee Reports* Subscriptions, Sunbelt Fulfillment Services, P.O. Box 41094, Nashville, TN 37204, U.S.A.