

The Trauma of the "Boat People"

Sixty-four Vietnamese Chinese refugees were asked to report "What happened during the flight?" as part of a survey conducted by Lawrence Lam of York University. The chart lists the events most frequently experienced by these "boat people."

We now have hard data to tell us what the Indochinese refugees have gone through — and continue to go through!

These figures should awaken us to the fact that these refugees are still in need of assistance. Given that such a high proportion of the refugees witnessed or experienced traumatic events such as suicide, death, loss of family members, rape and lack of drinking water and food, we should also become more sensitive to the adaptation problems of Indochinese refugees.

Chart reprinted from Lawrence Lam's Ph.D. thesis entitled "The Settlement of the Vietnamese Chinese Refugees in Montreal," 1983.

Events During Flight	Number of Refugees Experiencing "Events"	% of Survey Group
Lack of Drinking Water	55	85.9
Suicide Attempts	49	76.6
Refused Landing	39	60.9
Towed Away to Sea Again	35	54.7
Piracy	35	54.7
Lack of Food	34	53.1
Deaths	1	48.4
Quarrels and Fightings	30	46.9
Passing Vessels Without Giving Help	28	43.8
Bad Weather or Storms	27	42.2
Boat's Engine Broke Down	27	42.2
Lack of Fuel	25	39.1
Loss of Other Passengers	22	34.4
Loss of Direction	19	29.7
Loss of Family Members	14	21.9
Witnessing Rapes and Abductions	11	17.2
Experienced Rapes	8	12.5

Books Received

The Hai Hong: Profit, Tears and Joy by Rene Pappone. Published by Employment and Immigration Canada. 1982. This book tells the story of the Canadian government's involvement in the 1978 Indochinese refugee crisis. The author, Rene Pappone, was at that time employed by Employment and Immigration Canada as a media relations officer.

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Les Réfugiés Originaires de l'Asie du Sud-Est: arrière plan historique et culturel; les motivations de départ. Rapport au Président de la République by Georges Condominas and Richard Potter. La Documentation Française. Paris. 1982.

Refugee Documentation Project

The Refugee Documentation Project at York University is concerned with acquiring and preserving archival materials pertaining to refugees in and from all parts of the world. (The Project's library is open between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays.) Donations of documents, papers, reports or other library materials are encouraged.

If you have worked with refugees or have conducted research on refugees or refugee-related issues, please write and tell us about your work. A function of the Project is to create an index of Canadian individuals and organizations concerned with refugees in order to establish a referral network among people needing information on refugees.

Another mandate of the Project is to carry out crisis field research.

Further information may be obtained by writing to C. Stephens, Refugee Documentation Project, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario M3J 2R6. Telephone (416) 667-3639.

A Query

Is it an appropriate time to propose an international conference to compare the studies of the various forms of Indochinese refugee resettlement utilized in different countries? For there will inevitably be a "next time." The lessons of the past may be very appropriate.

