



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGEE

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Convention and Humanitarian Refugees

This issue focuses on the two fundamental aspects of Canadian refugee policy — the refugee determination system dealing with claimants who arrive in Canada and claim to be Convention refugees, and the designated classes and special measures focused on humanitarian refugees whom we select abroad under relaxed immigration criteria.

In the interview with Gordon Fairweather, Chairman of the Immigration and Refugee Board, and in the one with Lorne Waldman, a prominent refugee lawyer in Toronto, we have two very contrasting views of the current refugee determination system. From one perspective, the system is somewhat short of perfection, but in the process of evolving in that direction. From the critical perspective, the system is about to implode on itself.

In the pieces dealing with humanitarian refugees, the central concern is the self-exiled class, those who fled communist regimes in Eastern Europe (excepting Yugoslavia) and were granted refugee status on humanitarian grounds. With glasnost in the

Soviet Union and the sudden and radical transformation of authoritarian communist regimes in that area into societies in transition to democracy, the application of the self-exiled category as a rubric for receiving refugees from Eastern Europe becomes suspect and brings the whole meaning and rationale for special refugee measures into disrepute.

The articles deal with those issues. This editorial, however, is not concerned with the crisis *within* either the regime dealing with Convention refugees or the one dealing with humanitarian refugees but the emerging one *between* Convention and humanitarian refugees.

In the late 70s Canada received 200 to 400 spontaneous arrivals claiming refugee status. Between 1982 and 1986, RSAC, the Refugee Status Advisory Committee then vested with the prime responsibility of dealing with Convention refugee claimants, began receiving 2,500 to 4,000 claims per year, a tenfold increase. As we enter the 90s, the Immigration and Refugee Board, whether efficient or inefficient, whether approaching ideal standards of fairness or failing any fairness test, will be receiving between 20,000 and, some estimate, up to 40,000 refugee claims per year, another tenfold

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