



Indochinese Refugees: The Canadian Response, 1979 and 1980

Never before had Canada been involved in a refugee movement which arose so dramatically or persisted in such large numbers for so long. Never had the distances been so vast, the cultural differences so pronounced. Never had groups of Canadians, motivated by conscience and a determination to relieve mass suffering, become so personally involved; and never before had they joined with their federal and provincial governments in a formal partnership to provide a new homeland for refugees.

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Foreword

In 1979 and 1980, Canadians proudly opened their homes and hearts to 60,000 Indochinese refugees who desperately needed a place to rebuild their lives. When the call came, Canadians from all walks of life responded without hesitation, becoming members of a vast international effort dedicated to finding a safe haven for these unfortunate people.

Without the warm and caring efforts of thousands of Canadians and the leadership, support and co-operation of federal, provincial and municipal governments, as well as Canadian and international refugee agencies, the movement of such large numbers of people under such urgent and difficult circumstances would not have been possible.

Many employees at all levels of government across Canada and at our posts abroad worked long hours and served with unfailing dedication. In particular, I would like to express my appreciation for the efforts of External Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence, Supply and Services Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Health and Welfare Canada, the Quebec Immigration Service, and the provincial manpower, education, social welfare, and health departments, for their outstanding contributions.

I want to add a special note of appreciation to the staff of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, who took a leading role in selecting, moving and resettling the refugees. This dedicated group of professionals worked under difficult conditions in refugee camps, staffed the immigration posts abroad, processed the refugees at reception centres in Canada, kept ongoing contact with sponsors in Canada, and performed in many other capacities. They, together with the specially-appointed Refugee Task Force which coordinated all federal efforts, deserve much credit for a job well done.

On the global scene, various international refugee agencies took active roles, assisting Canada and other resettlement countries during the long, difficult process of helping rebuild lives torn by conflict and disaster. The coordination and leadership of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the technical skills contributed by the Intergovernmental Committee on Migration in arranging for the refugees' movement out of Southeast Asia, were key elements to the success of the operation.

As the report which follows indicates, the most outstanding success was in the large number of refugees sponsored privately by the Canadian people — who through some 7,000 sponsoring groups and organizations donated their time, energy and funds. Thousands of others formed private coordinating organizations to ensure that the sponsoring groups' efforts were supported, or that government-assisted refugees received the personal help they needed to get settled in their new communities.

Canada's ability to respond was enhanced by the vision and dedication of municipal leaders across the country, many of whom acted as catalysts in focusing the concerns of Canadians at the community level.

And, no account of the program would be complete without acknowledging the leadership role provided by the churches of Canada in mobilizing their congregations to welcome and support the refugees.

The generous and compassionate response of Canadians from coast to coast sustained and inspired those in government charged with the responsibility for carrying out various phases of the Indo-chinese refugee operation. When the task in the refugee camps and at our immigration offices seemed overwhelming, I know our officers drew strength from the all-out response of so many fellow Canadians.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lloyd Axworthy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end of the name.

Lloyd Axworthy
Minister of Employment and Immigration

1 Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War, one of every ten newcomers to Canada has been a refugee fleeing persecution, or someone displaced by international or civil strife. Nearly half of these 400,000 new Canadians arrived in the late forties, just after the end of hostilities in Europe. Some 38,000 Hungarians came in 1956 and 1957 after Soviet tanks lumbered into Budapest. Others fled the sudden end of the "Prague Spring" in 1968, or escaped from conflict, expulsion, invasion or upheaval in Uganda, Chile, Lebanon and Tibet.

The 60,000 Indochinese who were welcomed by Canadians in 1979 and 1980 are the latest chapter in the ongoing story of Canada's humanitarian tradition of accepting the displaced and persecuted for permanent resettlement. But the refugees from Southeast Asia were unique, and so was Canada's response.

The movement was unique because of the refugees — their numbers, their desperate circumstances, their *distance from Canada, their cultural and linguistic differences from Canadians* — and because of the unprecedented involvement of private individuals, groups and organizations, and the way they influenced the response of the government. This situation created a kind of partnership between the Canadian people and government at all levels which was sudden, new and different from anything that had happened before — and it worked!

This report, which focuses on the federal role, tells only part of the story. Academics and other interested individuals are examining various other aspects of the operation from different perspectives. The Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) welcomes these studies, articles and books and hopes there will be more — whether they result from the authors' direct involvement with the refugees or not. The more insight we, and future generations, can have about this special time in our history, the better.

The Department of Employment and Immigration is now undertaking two major studies related to the Indochinese resettlement operation. The first is evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the group sponsorship program in assisting the refugees to become self-supporting members of society. The evaluation is also assessing the impact of this influx of refugees on both CEIC field operations and the voluntary sector in Canada. The second is a three-year longitudinal study focusing on the economic and social adaptation

of a representative sample of Indochinese refugees, admitted to Canada during 1979 and 1980. These studies will be published when they are completed.

The report which follows sketches the broad outlines of the movement and looks at the refugees and how Canada helped them. It includes the history of Canada's involvement with Southeast Asian refugee relief; the situation in Indochina and in refugee camps in nearby countries of first asylum; the selection, processing, transportation, reception and settlement of refugees; and the indispensable contribution of the voluntary sector. It follows the refugees from the time they fled their countries until they arrived at their final destinations in new communities in Canada. (Statistical information on the operation is presented in a series of tables at the end of this report.)

Finally, there is a brief account of some of the lessons learned during the course of the movement — lessons of benefit not only for those who are still helping Indochinese refugees to resettle in Canada, but also in the event of another such human calamity in our conflict-battered world.

In preparing this summary, the CEIC is not suggesting that its role in this movement was the only or even the main one. The story of Canada's total response to this enormous human disaster would have to relate, in far more detail than is possible here, how the compassion and concern of many thousands of private citizens, groups and organizations in the private sector, and governments at all levels, were translated into practical and effective action. The full account has yet to be written.

2 Immigration Legislation

Canada's tradition of accepting refugees and displaced persons was given formal recognition in new immigration legislation which came into force in 1978. Among the objectives of the new policy as spelled out in the Act is the following commitment: "to fulfill Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees and to uphold its humanitarian tradition with respect to the displaced and the persecuted".

The Act also introduced three far-reaching provisions. First, refugees who qualify under the United Nations Refugee Convention and Protocol are now a separate class of immigrants who are given top processing priority and exempted from the "points system" of immigrant selection.

Second, the government may from time to time designate certain groups as special humanitarian classes whose admission is in accordance with Canada's concern for the displaced and persecuted. The admission of members of these humanitarian classes is made on grounds similar to those governing the acceptance of individual victims of persecution who qualify as Convention refugees. Indochinese refugees are one such humanitarian class under a special regulation introduced in December 1978.

Third, the legislation provides that private groups and organizations may participate in refugee resettlement through sponsorship agreements with the federal government.

3 Policy Background: 1975-1980

Before 1975, there were few immigrants from Indochina in Canada. After the fall of Saigon in April of that year, Vietnamese and Kampuchians (Cambodians) already in Canada as visitors and students were permitted to apply for permanent residence and were assured that Canada would facilitate their applications to sponsor relatives in Indochina or in refugee camps. In May 1975, Canada agreed to admit up to 3,000 Vietnamese and Kampuchians without relatives in Canada — 2,000 from evacuation camps in the United States, and 1,000 from other countries.

Over the next three years, the phrase "boat people" became familiar as Vietnamese began trying to escape from their homeland — many of them unsuccessfully — aboard small craft. In October 1976, Canada agreed to accept 180 boat people; in August 1977, there was a further commitment for 450. During this time Canada also continued to process applications from Southeast Asians who reached refugee camps and who had sponsoring family members in Canada.

In January 1978, the government adopted a "metered" approach by providing an ongoing Canadian involvement at a set rate, by agreeing to accept 50 boat families per month. This reflected the belief that by demonstrating an ongoing concern, Canada could encourage countries of first asylum to keep their doors open. Meanwhile, many Southeast Asians had begun to escape overland to Thailand. In August of that year, Canada agreed to accept 20 of these families per month, in addition to the 50 boat families.

Public awareness of the plight of the Indochinese refugees heightened in November 1978, when Canada airlifted 604 escapees stranded on the overcrowded freighter *Hai Hong*. Between 1975 and 1978, a total of 9,060 Southeast Asian refugees were resettled in Canada.

In December 1978, Canada's first annual global refugee plan was announced and included the provision for an intake of 5,000 refugees from Southeast Asia during 1979. This number was increased to 8,000 in June 1979, at which time the federal government stated that it expected another 4,000 would be admitted under private sponsorship.

The political impact of the refugees on Southeast Asia began to be serious, as an ever-increasing number of boat people and overland escapees thronged into already crowded temporary camps. Concern for their plight continued to grow and it became obvious that much more would have to be done.

In July 1979, the United Nations Secretary General convened a conference in Geneva on international joint action to tackle the problems in Southeast Asia. Just prior to this conference, Canada announced that up to 50,000 Indochinese refugees would be accepted for resettlement by the end of 1980; this target was subsequently increased by 10,000 on April 2, 1980.

Of the total of 60,000 Indochinese refugees admitted to Canada, roughly 26,000 were government assisted, while some 34,000 were destined to private sponsors and relatives. Included were special groups of unaccompanied minors, tuberculosis victims (accepted in partnership with provincial governments), and other difficult cases helped jointly by the federal government, private groups, and, in some instances, by provincial governments.

To manage this large refugee movement, a special Refugee Task Force was established in the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission in July 1979. It coordinated the overseas and domestic refugee activities of the CEIC, and worked with other federal departments, provincial governments, and with voluntary agencies, and other private groups. The task force became responsible for coordinating all phases of the program, from selection abroad to resettlement and integration in the new community. It was composed of four groups: those responsible for selection and transportation from abroad; reception and settlement in Canada; public affairs; and refugee policy.

4 Overseas Operations

Once the decision to admit up to 50,000 Indo-chinese refugees was made, Canada's selection strategy in Southeast Asia was to act quickly so that the impact of the program would be felt immediately in all Southeast Asian refugee camps.

Speed was important for three reasons: to help large numbers of refugees become resettled in Canada as soon as possible, thereby relieving their distress; to assist the countries of first asylum by moving refugees out quickly so that the camps could continue to shelter the daily flood of new arrivals; and to demonstrate to sponsoring groups in Canada that their initiative and support was needed.

Refugee selection in Southeast Asia was carried out by Canadian teams operating out of Hong Kong (covering Macao), Singapore (covering Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei), Bangkok and Manila.

Teams were composed of immigration officers and officials from Health and Welfare Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). They were often augmented by officials from the Quebec Ministry of Immigration, who selected refugees destined to that province in close co-operation with federal selection teams.

External Affairs Canada provided both the Refugee Task Force and the selection teams with invaluable support and advice, and with office space and equipment and secretarial and clerical services.

The special "humanitarian class" designation accorded the Indochinese refugees enabled selection teams to give provisional acceptance on the spot. Advance sponsorships were unnecessary, although the knowledge that large numbers of sponsoring groups were being organized in Canada enabled the teams to take a flexible approach based on compassion.

Simplified processing and documentation procedures were needed for quick action. The use of standard documents was temporarily suspended and a special combined travel document and visa, which could be completed in the field, was introduced to help selection teams speed up the processing of large numbers of refugees.

Once accepted provisionally, refugees were given a complete physical examination, including chest x-ray, urinalysis, blood test, and tests for intestinal parasites. Those with health problems which posed a threat to

public health in Canada were deferred until the problems could be cleared up, or until treatment could be arranged with provincial medical authorities. In the absence of delays for medical reasons, most refugees were brought to Canada about eight to ten weeks after the date of their first contact with the Canadian team.

Bangkok

Each of the four main Canadian immigration posts in Southeast Asia operated under different conditions. The Bangkok office had been set up in November 1978; the others had been in operation longer and could, therefore, draw on established systems and experienced local staff. Refugees in Thailand came from all three nations of Indochina — Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea — and represented many ethnic groups. Most were ethnic Khmer, Lao and Vietnamese, but there were others, among them people from the hill tribes of Laos — Hmong, Yao, Thin and Khmu. Ethnic Chinese, speaking several dialects, also made up a significant portion of the refugees in Thailand.

Refugee camps in Thailand were quite far from Bangkok, along the country's eastern border, resulting in arduous travel and logistical problems in transporting refugees. A rapid increase in departures from Thailand after July 1979 severely strained processing facilities operated by the Thai government and by international agencies. The most serious problems were in the extremely overcrowded Bangkok transit centres.

The Bangkok office also handled the family reunification program for Vietnamese still in Vietnam. It included the flow of sponsorship applications from family members already in Canada.

Singapore

The Singapore post dealt with a relatively homogeneous group of ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese who had lived in South Vietnam. From late 1978 to 1981, there was a shift in the ethnic composition of the cases handled by this office. Chinese driven from Vietnam were largely displaced by Vietnamese who were motivated to an increasing extent by a desire for economic betterment.

Severe logistical problems were encountered since the post acted as an "area office" responsible for four first-asylum countries — Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. Successive waves of boat people arrived and were temporarily settled in camps along the beaches of the Malay peninsula, on the island of Borneo and throughout the far-flung

Indonesian archipelago. Many of these camps were only accessible to Canadian officers after long, hazardous boat trips or helicopter flights. The tides often required Canadians to sleep on their desks in the camps.

Canadian officials also dealt with disparate national policies among the first-asylum countries. Canadian immigration staff dealt with Malaysian authorities from nearby Singapore. Regular visits to the Kuala Lumpur transit centre, the Convent Camp, ensured the interests of Canada-bound transitees. As for refugees selected in Indonesia, the Singapore office arranged for their transit via Singapore to their destinations. In Singapore itself, the office selected refugees with close family ties in Canada who had entered the Republic after rescue at sea by foreign commercial or "rescue" vessels. On a similar basis, a small number of refugees were processed in Brunei.

Hong Kong

During the early phase of Canada's expanded resettlement commitment in the summer of 1979, the capacity of the Hong Kong office and the role it assumed was of special importance.

At Hong Kong, where Canada had a well established immigration facility, there were large numbers of refugees readily accessible for immediate resettlement. This post was, therefore, able to process large numbers of refugees on short notice. With two weeks' warning, the Canadian team at Hong Kong selected and processed enough refugees to fill 11 charter flights provided by the Department of National Defence (DND). This resulted in an increased flow of refugees to Canada within weeks of the government's decision to admit 50,000, and gave Bangkok and Singapore time to select and process refugees throughout their far-flung areas in time to fill subsequent charter flights.

Ethnic Chinese from North and South Vietnam amounted to over 80 per cent of Hong Kong's refugee population. This was a direct result of the Vietnamese government's policy of attempting to rid itself of its ethnic Chinese population, a policy which came to a climax as a result of the border war with China early in 1979. These refugees naturally had close affinities with the population of Hong Kong, but were too numerous to be resettled locally. Similar conditions were found in Macao, where many ethnic Chinese from Vietnam also found temporary refuge.

Manila

The Canadian Embassy in Manila had a lesser role, mainly because the Philippines had the smallest

number of Vietnamese refugees in the region. Early in 1979, Manila accepted a considerable number of the refugees from the large ship *Tung An*. When Canada's program was expanded in July 1979, Manila was given a share of the regional quota, and it concentrated on cases in which Canada had an interest.

The "Pagoda People"

The Canadian Embassy in Paris had a special role in resettling an unusual group of refugees. These were Kampuchean who had fled to Vietnam in 1975 and 1976 after the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge. They lived in the pagodas on the outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon); they had no official status and were surviving with great difficulty.

After discussion with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Canada decided to accept some of this "pagoda group". The UNHCR accordingly provided dossiers on about 100 families that it considered suitable for resettlement in Canada. Since it was impossible to interview these families (some 467 people) in Vietnam, the UNHCR arranged to have them transported to Vienna. Complications arose at the last moment and it was decided to bring them to Paris instead. These people arrived in France in June 1980; by September the entire group, by then numbering 473, was in Canada, thanks to the special efforts made by the UNHCR, by the French voluntary agency Terre d'Asile, and by Canadian and Quebec immigration officers.

5 Transportation

Chartered aircraft had to be used to move most of the 60,000 refugees to Canada because seats were not available on scheduled commercial flights. An early proposal to charter a large passenger ship had to be abandoned, not only because of the cost, but also because suitable ships were not available.

Charter flights were first used late in 1978 and 1979 in Malaysia and the Philippines to transport refugees from the ships *Hai Hong* and *Tung An*. More charters from Malaysia and Thailand followed. In addition, for part of 1979, 80 seats for refugees in Malaysia were reserved each month on CP Air flights from Hong Kong to Vancouver. The first charter carrier was Ontario World Air; it was joined later by CP Air and Air Canada, and by Wardair, which carried the largest number of refugees in 1980. Supply and Services Canada issued the contracts as the agent of the CEIC.

At first there were great difficulties because not enough aircraft were available. This shortage in the summer and fall of 1979 was caused, in part, by the grounding of DC-10 planes for safety inspections in mid-1979, which led to a heavier than usual demand for other types of aircraft during the peak summer travel season.

As a result, the CEIC had to accept charters when airplanes were available. This meant that the pace of selection and reception had to be accelerated to respond to charter scheduling, which verged, at times, on the chaotic. The problem was overcome only by the emergency allocation of 11 DND flights from Hong Kong. Over 2,000 refugees were flown to Canada between July 27 and August 26, 1979.

The number of charter flights from each post between July 1, 1979 and December 3, 1980, was as follows:

| Post | 1979 | 1980 | Total |
|--------------|---------------------------|------|-------|
| Bangkok | 22 | 30 | 52 |
| Hong Kong | 23 | 22 | 45 |
| | (incl. 11 DND flights) | | |
| Kuala Lumpur | 31 | 25 | 56 |
| Singapore | 7 | 21 | 28 |
| Total | 83 | 98 | 181 |

Because of the co-operative spirit and expertise of the commercial carriers, few problems were encountered, aside from the occasional birth en route. Flight personnel made special efforts to comfort these special travellers, most of whom had never flown before.

Refugees were given interest-free loans to cover transportation costs to their final destinations in Canada. During a time of rapidly escalating fares, costs were set at \$750 per adult, \$375 per child and \$75 per infant; additional transportation costs were paid by the CEIC. Transportation loans are repaid over time, once refugees become self-sufficient.

6 International Co-operation

Co-operation with international and voluntary agencies and with host governments and immigration teams from other resettlement countries was essential to maintain the refugee flow from the camps to

Canada. The office of the UNHCR was responsible for registering refugees on arrival at the camps from Indochina, and for arranging through voluntary agencies that they were fed, housed and clothed while awaiting resettlement or repatriation. UNHCR officials also helped by referring appropriate refugees to Canadian immigration officers.

The Intergovernmental Committee on Migration (ICM) helped to solve medical and transportation problems in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. ICM doctors carried out medical examinations and forwarded the results to representatives of Health and Welfare Canada, who determined if the refugees met immigration health requirements. Treatment and follow-up, when needed, were also provided by ICM. Arrangements for exit documentation, transportation from transit centres to airports, as well as boarding help, were among other ICM contributions.

The International Committee of the Red Cross helped establish a tracing system to assist Kampuchean refugees in Thailand locate their relatives abroad. It also provided travel documents when needed.

The Mennonite Central Committee was one of many Canadian voluntary agencies which provided valuable overseas support. Representatives of this committee, and of the Christian Reformed Church, accompanied Canadian teams to the camps to observe the selection process and to help match refugees to Canadian sponsors.

Other countries — most notably the United States, France and Australia — were also active in resettling large numbers of Indochinese refugees, and Canada worked with their representatives to avoid duplication. Co-operation was important in camps where the UNHCR was unable to register all the refugees, so that, whenever possible, those who had family or other ties in one country were not resettled in another.

7 The Matching System

The need for a fast and efficient system of matching arriving refugees with their private sponsors became obvious soon after the Indochinese program was expanded in July 1979. A manual system, introduced in May that year, was first expanded and improved, and then replaced by a computerized system.

Matching refugees with sponsors was first carried out in the following way: posts abroad sent lists of

refugees to the matching centre in Ottawa, which found suitable sponsors through CEIC offices across Canada. The centre then telexed the matches to the posts overseas; only then were medical examinations and documentation carried out, and flight bookings arranged.

This "pre-matching" system had serious drawbacks; there was no control over the arrival dates of the refugees at the reception centres and at final destinations in Canada. Many confirmed matches had to be cancelled when the selected refugees did not come forward for medical or other reasons. Sponsors became understandably concerned when "their" families were delayed or resettled in other countries. At the same time, more and more refugees were escaping by boat or overland, adding to the pressure created by burgeoning sponsorship offers.

A computer-supported system was clearly needed, and was introduced in late September 1979. It was faster and more efficient because refugees were not proposed to sponsors until they were ready to travel to Canada. Lists of passengers for each flight were telexed from posts in Southeast Asia to the matching centre about ten days before flights were scheduled to arrive in Canada. From these lists, and from the continually-updated register of sponsoring groups, tentative matches were telephoned to local Canada Immigration Centres (CICs) through regional offices of the CEIC.

The CIC then proposed the refugee to a local sponsor, whose decision was relayed quickly to the matching centre. The reception centres, established to receive refugees on arrival in Canada, were informed of approved matches at least one day before each flight arrived. The resettlement of refugees for whom private sponsors could not be found became the responsibility of the government.

At the peak of its activity, the matching centre was handling the passenger lists for up to six flights at one time. This was done with a staff of seven "matchers" and one computer-terminal operator, and the actual lead time between receipt of the passenger list and the arrival of the flight was not always the ten days set out when the system was redesigned. In the early months it was often as little as 36 hours. Despite these difficulties, over 80 per cent of the refugees available for matching were placed with private sponsors.

When the federal government announced its decision in April 1980 to increase the Canadian commitment by accepting an additional 10,000 government-assisted refugees, the matching system's network was

instrumental in determining the resettlement locations of this additional number. Whenever possible, they were sent to secondary population centres where the sponsorship program had already resulted in the resettlement of small groups of Indochinese refugees. Settlement needs of the newcomers were thus met effectively, and groups of refugees in small centres were augmented. This enhanced the likelihood that permanent Southeast Asian communities would take root outside major metropolitan areas.

No description of the matching system could be complete without acknowledging the extraordinary response by the members of many sponsoring groups who agreed to welcome their refugees on such short notice during the fall of 1979.

8 Reception

All refugee flights landed either in Montreal or (until August 1980) in Edmonton, where special reception centres were established at nearby Canadian Forces bases (Longue Pointe, Quebec, and the Griesbach facility in Alberta). Men and women of the Canadian Forces at both bases provided transportation, meals, housekeeping, medical services, and other welfare, technical, and administrative help.

As is the case with all other immigrants, the refugees were given permanent resident status on arrival in Canada. They were also given a final medical check, including a test for hepatitis B, and issued clothing appropriate to the season. (Additional items of clothing were available from used-clothing depots, stocked and staffed by volunteers.) All refugees received a general orientation to Canada and appropriate counselling, depending on whether they were privately sponsored or government assisted. After a few days' rest at the reception centre, refugees were provided with transportation to their final destinations in Canada.

At Longue Pointe, the reception centre was staffed by officials of the CEIC's Quebec Region, the Department of National Defence, Agriculture Canada, Canada Customs, and the Government of Quebec; Air Canada also provided an officer to arrange onward transportation.

On arrival, refugees were received in a large hall; they were seated in family groups while names were checked and barracks assigned. Customs and Agriculture officers circulated through the barracks as the

refugees rested. Medical checks were then carried out. Formal completion of landing documents, assignment of destinations, and counselling took place the next day.

At Griesbach, reception arrangements were slightly different. Core staff there consisted of CEIC officers from the four western provinces and Ontario. Immigration officers and employment counsellors, working as teams, were assigned to certain families or groups as they deplaned. Each team escorted a group of refugees through customs and agriculture checks and documentation and counselling sessions, staying in close contact until its group left Griesbach.

A special orientation program for unaccompanied minors was also provided at Griesbach. It involved special counselling about Canada and Canadian family life. The Government of Ontario assigned a social worker to help the minors until they left for their new homes.

9 Settlement

Federal responsibility for the integration of refugees into Canadian society is shared by the CEIC and the Department of the Secretary of State. The CEIC provides financial help to cover basic needs until self-sufficiency is achieved. In addition to job counselling and placement, and language and occupational training for those destined to the labour market, it also provides a number of settlement services, such as reception at points of destination, information, interpretation, and counselling. These services are supplied both by Canada Employment Centres (CECs) and by voluntary organizations under contract to the CEIC.

The Department of the Secretary of State helps refugees integrate into Canadian society over the longer term through language training and citizenship preparation courses, and through grants to voluntary organizations offering immigrant and refugee support and services. The role of provincial governments varies, but it includes health care and educational services in all provinces.

10 Government-Assisted Refugees

Government-assisted refugees were met at their final destinations by counsellors from local CECs; they helped the new arrivals find lodgings and gave

advice on life in the community. Funds were provided through the adjustment assistance program for lodging, food, clothes, furniture, and other basic household needs. Tools or other job-related equipment needed by the refugees were also supplied.

Training in French or English was arranged with provincial institutions, and occupational training for eligible workers was financed by the CEIC. Both language and occupational trainees received living allowances during training periods.

Employment counselling and job placement services were provided for both "job-ready" refugees and for those who became ready after training. Direct help from the CEC was thus arranged to meet the refugees' economic needs.

Other services to facilitate economic, social and cultural adaptation to Canada were provided by non-profit community organizations under fee-for-service contracts with the CEIC, and funded by the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program.

In many communities, new and existing voluntary organizations helped the integration of government-assisted refugees into Canadian society and life. Over 60 of these groups from across Canada were funded by the CEIC under the Indochinese Refugee Settlement Grants Program, established for the fiscal years 1979-1980 and 1980-1981. Among the most successful of these initiatives were the "friendship family" or "host family" programs, under which Canadian families outside the formal sponsorship program gave help, advice, and social and emotional support.

11 Privately Sponsored Refugees

The immigration legislation which came into effect in 1978 provides for the sponsorship of refugees by the private sector. The private sponsorship program was intended to encourage the participation of as many different types of Canadian groups as possible.

Further, any group of five or more adults who are citizens or residents of Canada may sponsor refugees as long as the group has the needed resources and an acceptable plan. Many religious denominations signed special agreements with the Minister of Employment and Immigration, enabling them to underwrite sponsorship undertakings entered into by local parishes and congregations.

Under the sponsorship agreement, groups committed themselves legally to maintain the refugees for one year or until they were self-sufficient, whichever was first. Sponsors agreed to provide furnished lodgings and household effects, food, clothing, and incidental expenses; arrange for registration in provincial medical and hospital insurance plans; pay health insurance premiums and other health care costs; and provide reception, orientation, counselling, transportation, and employment help.

The federal government provided additional assistance through CECs, where employment counselling, job placement, and language and vocational training were available. The Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program funded some services provided by community agencies. In addition, the temporary Indochinese Refugee Settlement Grants Program helped cover the administrative costs of new community organizations, which emerged to provide coordination and backup services for various local groups sponsoring refugees.

The energy and resourcefulness of private sponsors demonstrated the strong commitment of Canadian people to welcome and help the Indochinese refugees. Among the important lessons learned from this experience was the superior effectiveness of co-operation between private and public sectors, particularly in providing social and emotional support in local communities.

The successful resettlement of over 34,000 refugees was an outstanding achievement for the some 7,000 sponsoring groups, who demonstrated their compassion and concern in this practical way. As was noted in the Introduction, a detailed report of this very important part of the Indochinese operation will be published in the near future.

12 Refugees With Special Needs

Special arrangements had to be made for refugees with special needs — those with tuberculosis or physical handicaps, and unaccompanied adolescents who often made their way to the Southeast Asian camps.

Handicapped and Tubercular Refugees

At the time of the sudden escalation in the refugee movement (July 1979), there was already a program for handicapped refugees likely to need medical treatment after arrival in Canada. Prior federal-provincial

consultation on each person was necessary, since the provinces have the responsibility of providing health services.

Although refugees with tuberculosis had been settled in Canada prior to the special Indochinese program, there had never been such a large number of them. The system was adjusted so that resettlement could be coordinated in such a way that all provinces could absorb these newcomers at a manageable rate. In 1979 and 1980, some 432 such refugees and their families had been admitted and a further 530 were awaiting notification that treatment would be available. These people had already been treated before arrival to ensure that the disease was not contagious. In addition, provincial health department officials examined them on arrival, and prescribed and supervised any necessary follow-up. In the first six months of 1981, an additional 224 people were admitted under this program.

Disadvantaged Refugees

Other special needs refugees were accepted under the Joint Assistance Program, introduced in January 1980, under which groups signed master agreements with the CEIC. It enabled them to help in admission and resettlement of those who had some prospect for eventual economic self-sufficiency but who were ineligible for admission through government assistance or private sponsorship.

These "umbrella" organizations accepted the responsibility for giving special help over and above that provided through regular federal programs, usually for one year after the disadvantaged refugees arrived in their new Canadian communities. By the end of 1980, 129 of these refugees were admitted under the Joint Assistance Program. From January to June 1981, an additional 40 refugees in this disadvantaged category entered Canada.

While the number who came under this arrangement was small, these refugees would not likely have been accepted by any resettlement country, had the voluntary groups and government not banded together to provide special settlement help.

Unaccompanied Adolescents

These young people came to Canada under a unique federal-provincial program which enabled private sponsors, for the first time in a refugee movement involving Canada, to care for and maintain them until they reached the age of majority.

To accomplish this, it was necessary to change the Immigration Regulations, design a model program, and use it as a basis for discussions with provincial governments to develop — on the run — programs which met the requirements of each province's child welfare system.

Five provinces — Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia — responded to the enormous public concern for these adolescents by agreeing to participate. By the end of 1980, 388 young refugees had been admitted under this special program; an additional 30 entered Canada during the first six months of 1981.

Most unaccompanied minors were eventually placed in private homes. In these instances, provincial child welfare authorities or recognized private child-placement agencies provided counselling during the adaptation period, and visited the young refugees and their sponsoring families to determine how all were adjusting to the new situation.

One arrangement was slightly different. In fact, it became a model for meeting the special needs of older unaccompanied minors. Many of these young people tended to settle more successfully and cope more easily with the emotional adjustment in a group home (a form of "halfway house"), rather than in private homes. The initiative came from the Mother Superior of the Institut Jeanne d'Arc, who provided a residence for the resettlement of 15 adolescent refugee girls in Hull, Quebec. This arrangement had been made possible through a special agreement with the federal government under the Joint Assistance Program. Two similar programs were established subsequently; they tended to confirm the effectiveness of the approach.

13 The Canadian Foundation for Refugees

When the federal government announced on July 18, 1979, that up to 50,000 Indochinese refugees would be accepted, it also indicated that a Canadian Foundation for Refugees would be established. Its purpose was to receive contributions from Canadians who wished to help relieve the plight of Southeast Asian refugees, but who were unable to participate in a sponsoring group.

The Foundation began its operations in September 1979. Its first co-chairmen were His Excellency Roland Michener, former Governor General of

Canada, and His Eminence Paul-Emile, Cardinal Léger. The Foundation is now a permanent agency whose activities embrace refugees from all source countries. As of January 1981, \$174,757 had been given for 21 projects across Canada.

14 Provincial Initiatives

All provinces were quick to respond to the task of resettling the refugees, as were the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, which received 75 and 53 refugees respectively. It is worthwhile to mention some provincial initiatives.

Newfoundland

Of the 60,000 Indochinese refugees admitted to Canada, 321 went to Newfoundland. Perhaps the most interesting initiative developed by the provincial government was a group home program for unaccompanied adolescent refugees, in close co-operation with community groups, particularly the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador and the Friends of Refugees.

Beginning in February 1980, young refugees were placed together for a time in group homes where they were introduced to local social and cultural customs. To help them integrate into education classes or employment, they had an opportunity to learn the English language through a special education program. Some were later placed with families through the provincial foster-care system.

Prince Edward Island

Following a public meeting on the role Prince Edward Island should play in the refugee program, three provincial government departments (Health, Education, and Social Services) became active in refugee resettlement. Interpreters were supplied to schools where refugee numbers warranted and English-language schools were organized with the co-operation of the Department of Labour. The Canadian Foundation for Refugees funded a language school for women whose work would be primarily in their homes. All of the 139 newly-arrived immigrants were given medical examinations within 24 hours of arrival.

Nova Scotia

Language training was the principal focus of activity in Nova Scotia, with up to 24 special classes in session at one time. Some of the 996 refugees who came to this province were enrolled in regular classes

for immigrants in English as a second language; others took courses leading to high school equivalency certificates. Following these classes, some found employment quickly, among them a silversmith who carried on his craft in a shopping mall.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick received 801 refugees in 1979 and 1980 and indicated its intention to participate in the unaccompanied minors program. In addition, the province made arrangements to accept 12 refugees with inactive tuberculosis. Refugees requiring medical care and language training were provided with these services.

Quebec

Eight special settlement officers from Quebec were assigned to meet all 10,000 government-assisted refugees destined to that province. Quebec accepted 314 refugees with tuberculosis, and, through the efforts of four private international adoption groups, 264 unaccompanied minors. Classes for adults needing the French language to be employed were given by ten orientation centres and 24 school boards. Almost 40 private community groups, which organized their activities at two general and many individual meetings, focused on performing community settlement tasks for the 13,069 Indochinese refugees who made their homes in this province.

Ontario

In January 1980, an inter-ministerial committee was established to help coordinate provincial government activity. The Ontario government expanded its regular multilingual activities at Ontario Welcome House in Toronto to include reception and orientation services in Vietnamese and in three Chinese dialects for the 22,249 Indochinese refugees who came to Ontario. Services to collect, classify, and distribute information to the refugees and their sponsors, office space and materials for refugee organizations, and volunteer teacher training for classes in English and French were made available. Ontario accepted 287 refugees with tuberculosis and 108 unaccompanied minors.

Other initiatives included hiring a former Vietnamese school principal to work with refugee youth, their families, and the school system; providing free hospital and medical insurance for six months; hiring a coordinator for the unaccompanied minors' program; and installing a toll-free information line for anyone in Canada needing information on refugee resettlement.

Manitoba

Among Manitoba's initiatives was an employment-related survey of over 300 refugees using questionnaires in English, French, Cantonese, Mandarin, Lao and Vietnamese. The Manitoba government also helped the Westman Multicultural Council of Brandon to establish a community orientation program for non-working refugees, including pre-school children. This program, funded by the Canadian Foundation for Refugees, offered informal orientation to Canadian culture and society, and information on shopping, money, banking, transportation, schools, and food, in addition to basic language training and citizenship education.

Manitoba, which received a total of 4,022 refugees, also admitted 72 refugees with tuberculosis. Among other special provincial services were the translation of consumer information into Vietnamese, and a grant for a one-year pilot project which provided English language training to pre-school children in a day-care setting. Their parents received similar language training and citizenship classes.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan made a direct grant to the International Red Cross appeal for Indochinese refugees in 1979, and expanded its annual settlement service funding to community agencies. The province accepted about 3,200 refugees in 1979-1980, or just under five per cent of the total Canadian intake.

Classes in English as a second language were provided through the continuing education facilities at provincial community colleges. The provincial government made a special effort to assist refugee families to be aware of community health facilities. They were also eligible for provincial hospital insurance immediately upon their arrival in Saskatchewan. The provincial health department provided ongoing care to refugees needing medical follow-up.

Alberta

Alberta increased its grants to various immigrant settlement groups and helped an expanded number of agencies. To determine refugee needs and available services and to hire interpreters, the province provided grants to local committees through community colleges. All privately sponsored refugees had their health care premiums paid for one year. The 7,770 Alberta-destined refugees were given multilingual information at the Griesbach reception centre (and, after it closed, at Longue Pointe); they were also enrolled in the provincial health plan. Those needing medical care were identified and treated.

British Columbia

The British Columbia legislature passed unanimously a Refugee Settlement Act in July 1979, under which refugees were given free medical insurance coverage, hospital care, and pharmacare for up to one year. British Columbia, where 7,361 Indochinese refugees settled, also participated in the special programs for refugees with tuberculosis and for unaccompanied minors. The provincial government awarded a special grant to the Canadian University Service Overseas in support of its camp for Kampuchians in Thailand.

15 Community Preparation

Providing services for refugees is only half of a two-way effort. Efforts are also needed to prepare the citizens in the communities where the refugees settle, so that they accept newcomers and help them integrate into a new land with a different climate and, often, an unfamiliar language and social structure.

Federal efforts to prepare the recipient communities varied. Canada Immigration Centres advised the public on refugee sponsorship applications, processed them and helped sponsoring groups prepare for refugee arrivals. Canada Employment Centres gave sponsoring groups and community organizations information and advice on language and job training, employment counselling, job placement and local settlement services.

To stimulate the mobilization of community services and to provide a link among local groups, the CEIC established a special corps of refugee liaison officers to identify refugee needs in the community, to work with local groups to provide for those needs, and to help with public information and education. Some 55 of these officers, operating from CEIC local and regional offices, worked closely with federal, provincial, municipal, and private agencies, with immigrant and refugee organizations, with private sponsors, and with the refugees themselves.

The CEIC also established a special public information program. Facts and advice were made available through press releases, newsletters, audio-visual presentations, public meetings, speakers' kits, and responses to mail and telephone enquiries.

The most effective source of community preparation was perhaps the private sector. Leadership came from existing voluntary organizations, religious insti-

tutions, and refugee advocacy groups; many new organizations were also formed. Some were established on the initiative of provincial or local governments; others were founded by private citizens.

The tasks these new and existing groups took on were varied. Some were devoted to the formation, coordination and support of sponsoring groups; others helped government-assisted refugees, developed local services, published newsletters and produced TV programs and audio-visual materials. Still others organized workshops to enhance understanding between host communities and newcomers.

Among the initiatives of community-based groups were Theatre Lifeline, a troupe which toured Ontario presenting a play which depicted the refugees' plight in Southeast Asia and their resettlement in Canada; a comic book for children produced by Operation Lifeline, a voluntary organization of Ontario sponsors; and a 22-hour course on refugee issues for secondary school students prepared by a Saskatchewan consultant in co-operation with the Alberta Department of Education.

Further help came from many other sources. A chartered bank, for example, opened a \$10 bank account for each refugee family, and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation made its public housing in a number of centres available to refugees at the carrying cost.

16 Conclusions

At the outset of the special Indochinese refugee program, the innovative refugee provisions in the new immigration legislation were in place, but they had hardly been tested in practice. It is worthwhile to review them in the light of experience.

First, one of the objectives of Canadian immigration policy, as spelled out in section 3 of the Immigration Act, is "to fulfil Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees and to uphold its humanitarian tradition with respect to the displaced and the persecuted". This objective gave legal force to what had been simply a tradition under the former legislation, and removed any doubts about the appropriateness of the Canadian response.

Second, the provision for identifying designated classes of refugees made possible the clear definition of the target group in the Regulation which created the Indochinese designated class.

Third, the extremely flexible selection criteria for refugees allowed Canadian teams to accept a broad cross-section of the refugee population. Flexibility was crucial as the breadth and depth of public concern became apparent, and enabled officials to respond quickly as specific Canadian groups made known their wishes to help particular groups of refugees.

Fourth, the provision for private sponsorship was almost without precedent in Canada — certainly for such large numbers of both sponsors and refugees. By the spring of 1979 there had been fewer than 100 such sponsorships. The experience gained during the special Indochinese movement demonstrated that private sponsorship is a superior way of resettling refugees. It is both an efficient method of providing for material needs and, even more importantly, it is an effective method of meeting psychological and emotional needs. Refugees understandably sometimes feel a profound sense of isolation, loss and despair; the personal sense of caring by private sponsors does much to overcome that distress.

Apart from the lessons learned about the refugee provisions in the Immigration Act, there were others related to the resettling of refugees. Owing to the success of the matching system, it is expected that comparable approaches will eventually be brought into use for all refugees, both government-assisted and privately sponsored, to ensure that they are directed to communities where they have the best chance to become established quickly and to integrate into Canadian society.

Much was also learned through the decision to resettle refugees with special needs. Canada's chief international role was to accept large numbers of Indochinese, both to relieve as much misery as possible, and to lighten the tremendous pressures on the Southeast Asian countries of first asylum. The resources needed for this mass movement had, however, to be balanced against those needed for unaccompanied minors, refugees with tuberculosis or physical handicaps, and people with serious emotional and psychological problems. Special needs refugees could be brought to Canada only after intense efforts by people throughout the system, from posts abroad to community groups in Canada.

Although the system is now working effectively for certain well-defined subgroups, such as unaccompanied minors and persons with tuberculosis or physical disabilities, there are others for whom more work must be done; in particular, families which include someone with emotional problems or severe physical handicaps which require specialized, expensive and long-term help. A well-rounded Canadian resettlement program must include provision for accepting refugees with serious disadvantages, and it will require further initiatives by all levels of government and by the voluntary sector.

The gathering and dissemination of accurate information was also of enormous importance, particularly that which touched on the general situation in Southeast Asia, Canadian refugee processing procedures, and individual refugee families. The provision of accurate information was a key factor in the success of an operation which counted on the co-operation and coordinated efforts of thousands of Canadians.

The information program was also helpful in responding to concerns about refugee health. The chief requirement was to provide information about the medical needs of individual refugees in order to mobilize the Canadian medical care system, while, at the same time, keeping the general public informed about ways of dealing with health concerns.

In retrospect, then, the legislative provisions and the resettlement and information systems in place proved to be broad and flexible enough to respond — with some modifications — to any future large-scale refugee resettlement program. But while government can and must provide the tools and the leadership, society itself must provide the milieu in which refugees can rebuild their lives.

The main lesson of the Indochinese program is that voluntary sponsorship works — and that it works exceedingly well. It provides a better and more personal base for refugee resettlement, self-sufficiency and integration. It also provides a clear signal to all levels of government that individual Canadians care deeply about mass human suffering, and that they are willing to invest their resources, their time, and their compassion to do something about it.