

SHARING

Jesuit Refugee Service/Canada

Newsletter Number 1

February, 1990

February 25th, 1990

Dear Friends of JRS/Canada,

1989 was a very challenging year for those of us working with refugees. 1990 does not look very different so far. The refugee crisis continues to worsen. This newsletter is our way of SHARING with you some of the most important events in JRS/Canada's life:

Jan.,1989

Canada's new refugee law comes into effect. We played a strong role in educating the Canadian public on the dangers of this legislation which denies certain refugee claimants the right to a full hearing and removes the right of appeal in all cases.

Feb.,1989

Publication of the first issue of Refugee Update, containing information and analysis on refugee issues, especially the impact of Canada's new refugee law.

March,1989

The transition from Canadian Jesuit Refugee Programme to JRS/CANADA is completed as we become a member of the Jesuit international refugee apostolate.

April,1989

Refugee Rights Day is celebrated in Canada. JRS/CANADA promotes and helps organize activities.

May,1989

The JRS/CANADA Refugee House welcomes a family of four refugee claimants from El Salvador.

June,1989

Dick Howard S.J., Director of JRS/Central America, and Mark Raper S.J., new Director of JRS/International, visit Toronto, Canada.

Oct.,1989

JRS/CANADA places its first volunteer, Stephen Paterson, with JRS/Asia at Site II on the Thai border.

Nov.,1989

JRS/CANADA responds to the renewed outbreak of war in El Salvador and the killing of the six Jesuits and two women staffers. We worked with our Central American counterparts to assist Salvadoran refugees needing protection in Canada.

Dec.,1989

JRS/CANADA releases a new audio visual presentation on refugees entitled *What Are You Doing In My Garden* Garden, and an accompanying educator's guide entitled *Step By Step*.

Christmas

Christmas Mass brings together JRS/CANADA and recently arrived Salvadoran refugees.

We want to express our gratitude to the English Canadian Province and its Superior, Father Bill Addley S.J., for making this work possible. And we want to thank all of you for your ongoing support. There are more details about our work inside SHARING. If you would like to be involved or simply want more information, please get in touch with us!

In solidarity,

Steve Foster and Colin MacAdam

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EDUCATION WORK

JRS/CANADA is primarily an education programme. The goal of our education work is to invite Canadians to make an active commitment toward social justice ...through the refugee issue.

In 1989 this work focused on the production of a new audio visual entitled **What Are You Doing Here In My Garden?** This resource attempts to deepen the viewer's understanding of the refugee issue by posing questions about the nature of Canadian public opinion on refugees, the root causes of the refugee crisis, and the role of Canadians in working in support of refugees and refugee rights in Canada. Many refugees worked with JRS/CANADA in the production of these resources.

Accompanying the audio visual is a guide to education about refugees, entitled **Step by Step**. This manual builds on earlier JRS/CANADA publications such as **Borders and Barriers** and **Forced To Flee**. It promotes a four-step, popular education method designed to facilitate taking action on the refugee issue.

In addition to producing these materials, JRS/CANADA continued to give presentations and workshops on the refugee issue to schools, churches, media and other community groups.

PROTECTION WORK

Central America

Because of its location in the Americas, JRS/CANADA is active in protecting refugees from Central America. Much of our protection work this year has focused on refugees from El Salvador.

This work involves assisting refugees to obtain protection from Canada's embassies abroad or to come directly to Canada's border and apply for refugee status. This latter option can be fraught with difficulties. In May, 1989 we were at the border to greet a Salvadoran family who had been working in a JRS/Central America project and been forced to flee to Canada. Here is a Maria's account of what happened:

...When we were only 10 feet from the Canadian



side, a man with a gun, from the U.S. border patrol stopped the taxi and began to question us. He arrested us and brought us to the immigration office for questioning.

The man wanted us to sign a form which said that we would "voluntarily" go back to El Salvador. We wouldn't sign and he got angrier and angrier. He took us to another office and two other officers were there. They all tried to get us to sign the form.

I was crying and explaining that we could not go back to El Salvador because we would be killed. They said that if we signed the form they would not send us back but would let us continue to Canada. But we didn't want to sign a form saying we would voluntarily go back to El Salvador.

They began to yell and swear at us saying "stupid Latinos" and "son of a bitch" and the first man pounded his fist on the table and kept touching his gun. They said if we didn't sign the form they would deport us to El Salvador that night...that they could deport us whether we signed or not.

They brought us to the Canadian immigration office at around 10:00 that night. But they told us we would have to go back to the U.S. and wait one month before we could have an inquiry in Canada.

The U.S. immigration detained us again. They made us wait in a room for 7 hours. Again we thought we were going to be deported to El Salvador. I was crying again. We were cold and hungry. There was no food or blankets. We had to be on the floor while people walked around us. They treated us like we were animals.

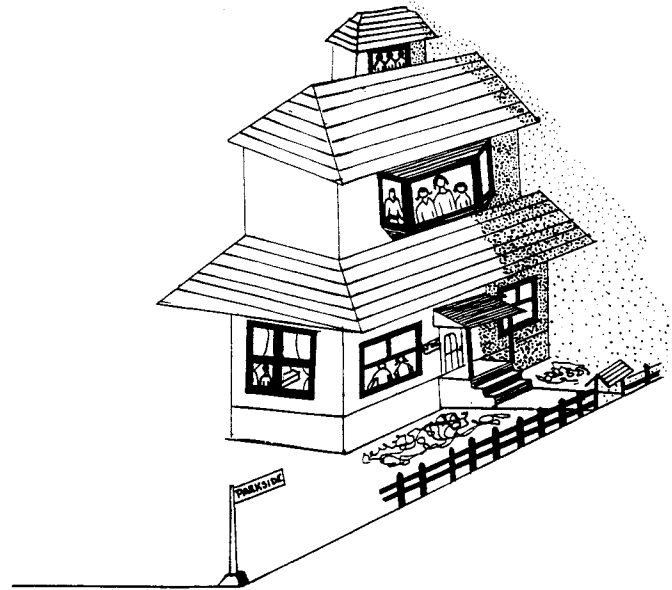
Fortunately, Maria and her family eventually made it past the border and have now been accepted as refugees in Canada. The family has lived in the JRS/Canada refugee house since their arrival.

The Refugee House

In 1989, we initiated a shelter programme for refugees arriving in Toronto. We are especially grateful to the Canadian Jesuit Province for enabling Brother John Masterson, S.J., to assist us in managing this house. Over the year we have welcomed refugees from many countries, including South Africa, Chile and El Salvador. Our longest residents have been Maria's family from El Salvador.

This year we will be working to integrate an educational component into life at the house. Already, we have various refugee groups using space in the house. The Salvadoran Christian Base Community "Martin Baro" meets there regularly.

Thanks to Sister Gwen Smith C.S.J. who has worked closely with us on a number of cases connected to the Refugee House. Thanks to Father J.P. Horrigan and the members of the Christian Life Community who have supported the work at the house.



ADVOCACY WORK

When Canada's new refugee law came into force on January 1st, 1990, refugee advocates knew it was crucial to monitor its implementation. JRS/CANADA was instrumental in rallying support for some of the first refugees threatened with deportation under the new law, in particular, a young Ethiopian refugee named Hussein. Here is how the case was described in the **Refugee Update**:

January 31st, 1989

An 18 year old Ethiopian refugee claimant was "screened out" in Niagara Falls, Ontario. He comes from the Ogaden and says that his father and mother were killed by the army and his brother was tortured and is living in a refugee camp in Somalia. He himself lived in a refugee camp

in Somalia before coming to Canada.

A few days after his arrival, he was "screened out" at his inquiry on the basis that his claim was not credible. He was arrested, detained and threatened with deportation. Canadian church workers found him in the detention centre.

JRS/Canada signed a \$5000 bond to obtain his release from detention and helped rally support for a review of the case. Thanks to the pressure brought to bear by many concerned Canadians, Hussein has been allowed to stay in Canada. Similar efforts have protected other refugees threatened with deportation under the new law.

Out of this work and the need for an ongoing monitoring and information sharing network, came the our publication **Refugee Update**. Recent issues have included articles on the detention of refugees in Canada, the treatment of the refugee "backlog", an assessment of the impact of the new law and testimonies from refugees in Canada.

We are very pleased to report that in November, 1989, JRS/CANADA entered into an agreement to make the **Refugee Update** a joint project of JRS/CANADA and the Canadian Council For Refugees.

The current editorial committee has a number of refugee participants, including the former editor of a social justice magazine in El Salvador, two artists and a human rights lawyer.

We want to note the generous contribution of Sylvia Petrsek, a volunteer, who has taken on the distribution work for the publication.

Networking

JRS/CANADA continues to play an active role in the Inter Church Committee For Refugees (ICCR), the church coalition working on refugee issues. As well, JRS/CANADA has been involved in the working committees on education and refugee protection of the Canadian Council for Refugees.



BASTA!

JRS INTERNATIONAL WORK

Here is an extract from the December 26th, 1989 letter that we received from Steve Patterson, a JRS/CANADA volunteer working with JRS/Asia:

Stephen Patterson
P.O. Box 2
Ta Phraya
Prachinouri
25180
Thailand

Dear Friends of JRS,

I'm finally getting around to writing; thought I'd wait a bit until I had a feel for the place and a chance to reflect on the recent meeting in Bangkok.

The meeting itself focused primarily on the refugee problem in Asia, especially the Vietnamese and Cambodian situation. The continuing influx of Vietnamese refugees received the most attention at the meeting, focusing primarily on the question of repatriation. The consensus was clearly against forced repatriation as is going on in Hong Kong. Emphasis was placed on continued work with the Vietnamese refugees, while attempting to address the root causes (i.e. the desperate need for economic aid to Vietnam to improve the economic situation).

I am now living and working at the border. I am living in a small agricultural town of approx. 3,000 people called Ta Phraya. When I say agricultural, I mean agricultural with chickens, roosters and water buffalo as neighbours.

Ta Phraya is about 25km. from Site 2, the refugee camp where I work. When I arrived you could hear the artillery in the distance, but now things are very quiet and I am quite settled in Ta Phraya.

I have also started teaching in Site 2 at the teachers' training institute. The conditions within the camps are better than I expected and the first impression is one of a small well-organized city with a wide range of services. There are approx. 150,000 refugees at Site 2. The real problems, however, are those which are not visible, with most of the people having suffered and cost entire families during the Pol Pot era (i.e. 1975-79).

I am also studying Khmer (Cambodian) 3 times a week which seems to be going well.

We just had a very enjoyable Christmas with a lot of celebrating going on.

Hope everyone is doing well back in Toronto.

Love
Stephen
P.S. Received my first issue of "Compass" (thanks Ted) and "Borders and Barriers" and "Forced To Flee" kits are big hits among the refugee workers at Ta Phraya.



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