

## REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN JAPAN

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with  
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### *Abstract*

On the tenth anniversary of the fall of Saigon, we present a picture of the situation of Indochinese refugees in Japan, an analysis of the legal, social and psychological problems in the lives of those who have elected to settle in Japan permanently, and some suggestions for improving their position and helping them to make the most of their new lives.

After a brief overview of the history of Indochinese refugees elsewhere in the world as well as here since 1975, the article offers personal statements by individuals with a close perspective on refugee problems in Japan, then summarizes two professional analyses of culture shock and resettlement needs, and finally suggests areas in which interested persons can help. Also included are a refugee's recollections of his home in Cambodia, and an imprisoned Vietnamese poet's dreams for the future.

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Ten years have passed now since the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the end of the Vietnam War, and our recollections are gradually dimming. More recent world crises have nearly wiped out even our memories of the Pol Pot regime's atrocities in Cambodia (1977-1979), and the countless Africans today tragically starving in Ethiopia, the Sudan and elsewhere have pre-empted world concern formerly claimed by the Indochinese, most of whom are by now, relatively speaking, better off than the Africans.

For many people (such as my mother, who spent a month at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center [PRPC] in Bataan, where I was working before I came to Japan, and then sponsored a Cambodian family in the United States, keeping mother, father and six children in our home in Indiana from July through December, 1982), the immediate problems of resettlement have always been more comprehensible and deserving of attention than the wars that made them necessary. While the PRPC is nothing like the first asylum camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Hong Kong from which the refugees came to our Center for language training and cultural orientation on their way to resettlement ("our" refugees were the lucky ones cleared for entry into the United States, Germany or Norway), even there, there was fear and a disrupted life, illness, the difficulty of learning to cope in a new language and culture, anxiety for family members still in the homelands or first asylum camps, terrible memories of war and treks through danger to asylum, weeks of hunger and thirst and despair on a boat, trauma from rape and robbery in either boat or jungle, and finally, guilt at simply having survived when so many others had died on the way or been left behind.

Most of us learned about these experiences in a theoretical way, at least, during the 1970s, when articles and news commentaries about the war and refugees were frequent, and programs to facilitate resettlement, teach language and provide

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elementary job training were springing up in every corner of the United States, as well as, to a slightly lesser extent, in other countries such as Canada, Australia, China, Great Britain, France and Germany, where there were also large influxes of refugees.

The United States began taking in refugees as soon as the war ended. At that point there was strong popular support for refugee programs, combined with generous government financing. At the beginning there was little logistical support or expertise, but organizations such as the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)<sup>1</sup> began at once to produce dictionaries, teaching materials and information guides, in the refugees' languages as well as in English, and develop orientation programs for both the refugees and the local people working with them. Churches and welfare offices in communities that received refugees joined together to work out ways to cope with the situation. As Kleinmann (1984) mentions in his article on teaching English to refugees in the United States, the United States eventually accepted three-quarters of a million refugees from Indochina alone, and the program is still in operation.

The large number of programs inevitably gave rise to some very interesting materials development and research projects. Refugee programs have claimed a large percentage of the papers and publications on display at recent TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) conferences, and there has even come to be a Special Interest Group on Refugee Concerns as part of the Association.

Later at a TESOL conference, someone pointed out that, in a sense, America was made of and by refugees, having been dealing with refugee problems since the first settlers arrived. We ought, therefore, the speaker suggested, to be accustomed to it by now, and be able to keep the situation in better perspective and avoid reinventing all those wheels each time

a new group of refugees is created by some change in the world situation.

Recently many countries, including the United States, have begun to tighten their qualifications for admission to refugee status and the right to resettlement. This has left large numbers of Indochinese refugees, perhaps as many as 200,000, "marooned in first asylum camps scattered from Malaysia to Japan" (Sauci, 1984:21). With good reason, the countries hosting these camps of first asylum are experiencing a good deal of anxiety about the fate of these refugees, and the difficulties caused by their continuing presence. Thus the development of resettlement opportunities in alternative locations has increased in importance. One of the alternatives is Japan.

### **Background to Resettlement in Japan**

"Boat people" have been arriving in Japan since as early as 1975. The term "boat people" refers to refugees, nearly all Vietnamese, who have escaped from their countries by setting out in small crowded boats hoping to reach a free country such as the Philippines on the other side of the South China Sea, or be picked up by passing ships on the way. The term has come to be used in Japan for any and all refugees, but it is properly used only to refer to those who have escaped in boats. Most Cambodian refugees trekked across their country to the Thai border camps. A few escaped by boat to Malaysia or Thailand, but for the most part, Cambodians are not boat people, nor are all Vietnamese. The boats that I have seen are hardly sea-going vessels. They were wooden fishing boats, the largest about 65 feet (20 meters) long, and were said to have started off with about 65 people aboard. By the time they reached the shore, there were more like 30, and only half of those were still alive, many of them too weak to get out of the boat by themselves.

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No refugee boats actually come to Japan, but survivors are picked up in the South China Sea by Japanese ships or other ships en route to Japan. The international convention is that refugees will be sent for resettlement to the countries of the ships that picked them up, or the countries to which those ships were headed. This has caused situations where ships passed by refugees' boats without picking them up because of the impossibility of accepting them into that country later. The United States has held to a policy of picking up all boat people encountered on the seas, but without agreeing to admit all such refugees into the United States for permanent resettlement. This improves the chances of the boat people for survival; still, many boats never reach shore, and of those that do, many of the passengers have died or been killed on the way, or die soon afterwards of malnutrition and exposure. The trip over the China Sea by refugee boat is not exactly like a cruise on "Love Boat".

In 1975 there was still no legal basis for admitting boat people into Japan as refugees. In consideration of its small size and density of population, Japan for some time preferred not to accept refugees for permanent resettlement. They accepted boat people under the category of "seamen rescued at sea" and kept them in Japan only with a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) guarantee for support and eventual transfer to a third country for resettlement. In 1977 provisions were made for first asylum camps in Japan, but not yet for permanent resettlement. A quota of 500 was established, to include some from the first-asylum boat people already in Japan, for "local integration", and others selected from camps in other countries to be brought to Japan, with the provision that they express a desire to resettle in Japan.

Thus there are in Japan not only Vietnamese boat people, but also a number of Cambodians and Laotians. This means there are two types of refugees in Japan now: a relatively large

number of first asylum cases waiting to be accepted into other countries, and a smaller number of refugees who have been accepted as permanent residents in Japan. Some 7,000 cases of first asylum have passed through Japan and been sent on elsewhere. Right now there are about 1,150 pending cases. As for permanent resident status cases, the government has gradually increased the quota until presently it is up to 5,000. The number of refugees already resettled in this country currently stands officially at 2,388; as of January 31, 1985, the total included 1,136 Vietnamese, 670 Cambodians and 582 Laotians.<sup>2</sup>

Although at first, criteria for acceptance for resident status were very strict, now the Japanese government is said to be ready to accept any refugee who is capable of holding a job, i.e., of taking care of himself, according to UNHCR Public Information Officer Ms. Minja Yang. In this respect, Ms. Yang reported, the Japanese government can be considered one of the most liberal among countries accepting refugees. This does not mean that there are no problems, but it does mean that the situation is better here than in most other places, Ms. Yang believes.

To aid refugees in resettlement, the Japanese government has established three camps. Refugees are kept in the camps for three months for language training. Before they leave the camp, a job is found for them, and then they are on their own. From that point on, the refugees have legal access to exactly the same kinds of social and financial assistance to which Japanese citizens are entitled, including such benefits as welfare, housing allowances and unemployment compensation, if needed and the refugee has qualified. Each person is responsible for getting into a program of medical insurance if his job does not provide it, but this is also true for Japanese citizens. Ms. Yang stressed the fact that the Japanese government has gone to considerable effort to ensure that refugees

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are provided with the best situation possible. It is now up to society to provide for any other needs.

In theory, the situation sounds quite fair. Comparable programs in the United States are much more luxurious, but they have not been without problems, either. On the other hand, whether the programs are fair or not in comparison with what is available to Japanese, the refugees still have many needs which they are not capable of meeting by themselves. The purpose of this article, concerned primarily with the refugees who have decided to opt for permanent residence in Japan, is to look at some of these problems, consider possible alternatives for solving them, and in the end, make a plea for help from anyone who is in a position to give it.

### The Life of a Refugee in Japan

To bring these dry statistics down to a more personal level, three personal statements have been offered by three very different people. Almost the only thing they have in common is their experience with refugees. The first is from Ms. Yoko Lastri, a Japanese woman who has contributed numerous hours to helping refugees develop their skills in Japanese. She is presently giving up Sundays as a volunteer teacher at the Association for Indochinese Refugee Resettlement Assistance — Kansai center in Osaka. She is both a Japanese reacting to the new presence of the Indochinese refugees in her country, and a trained language teacher who sees refugee problems in a professional light. She has observed the refugees making desperate efforts to learn enough language to qualify for resident status, then lose the sense of urgency once they qualify, in spite of the fact that good language proficiency is a major key in solving most of the problems they encounter in work and daily life situations. While she understands the reasons only a few students take advantage of the free courses

offered at the Association, where she now teaches, she wishes more would understand the importance of this opportunity and come to study. Still, she feels the refugees really want to improve their lives, encourages them to work hard and wishes them success and a prosperous future.

**Yoko Lastrri**

## ベトナム難民に日本語を教える機会に恵まれて

まだ3年しか経たないが、彼らが日常生活で直面する問題や彼らの物の考え方が最近少しずつ分ってきたような気がする。

教室では、総体的に彼らは陽気で、受動的で、又勤勉である。そして絶えず楽しい雰囲気なので、教師としては非常に教えやすい。私が最初にベトナム人に日本語を教えた日野ベトナム難民施設に住む難民達は、アメリカやオーストラリアなどへの海外定住を希望して待っていたり、日本の定住センターへの入所の順番待ち、あるいは日野キャンプへ直接定住を希望して待っている人たちであった。

日本語の能力と定職を持つことは、定住権を得るために必要なことであり、難民たちは、はやく定住権を得るために日本語の勉強に必死に取り組み、その意気込みが私にも伝わってくるのだった。だから日野キャンプが1984年12月に閉鎖され、救援の道が閉ざされたのは難民たちにとって不幸なことである。

現在は、大阪にある「インドシナ難民の定住を支える会」でベトナム人に日本語を教えているが、この会は、仕事があり、定住権を持っている、大阪近郊のベトナム難民のみを対象としている。彼らは定住権を得てからは、日本語の学習態度に明らかな差がでてきている。定住権を持っている難民のほとんどは定住センターで最低3ヶ月間勉強し、日本語の基礎を修得している。この基礎があれば、本人の意志さえあれば、上達は早いはずである。しかし実際には、日本語が上手で、仕事及び日常生活に支障がないという人は、ほんの僅かの人達で、これらの人達は、日本語に問題のある人達に比べて一般的に新しい生活によりよくなじんでいるように見える。

日本語が上手に話せるということが、難民の生活において多くの困難を克服していく上でもっとも重要な鍵になりそうである。日本語で意志の疎通ができるということが、難民にとって仕事を得る機会が広がり、よりよい給料が手に入れられることを可能にする。これは、難民が日常生活で遭遇するおきまりの出来事の処理において起る誤解をさけるのに役立つ。

「インドシナ難民を支える会」では、こういった人達が少しでも、より良い暮しができる様に、彼らに日本語の授業を無料で受けてもらおうというのが目的の1つである。



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この会の教室はあまり広くないが、我々は今よりもっと多くの生徒を教えることができる。

しかし我々スタッフの予想に反して、この会を利用する人は少なく、現在のところ勉強に熱心な人達を中心とする極く一部の人達だけしか利用していないのは非常に残念である。彼等の大部分は工場で働いており、残業が多く、唯一の休日である日曜日を日本語の授業で費したくないと云う彼等の云い分は分からないでもないが、更に問題はそれだけではなく、幾つかに分かれているグループ間のベトナム人同志の問題も関係している様に思える。

現在を如何に楽しく過すかは、ベトナム人に限らず誰にとっても関心事ではあるが、縁あって日本に定住する事になった以上は、もっと未来にも目を向けて、より良い仕事、生活のために、日本語学習に何とか力を入れる様になってもらいたいと、一日本語教師として、また一日本人として心から願っている。

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The second person is Fr. Joseph De Witte, S.D.B., pastor of Hirano Catholic Church, which is located on the Tanimachi subway line, in an area of Osaka in which many refugees reside. His parish has been receiving groups of refugees since 1980, and serves as a meeting place for refugees from all over the area. Born in Belgium, Fr. De Witte has lived in Japan since 1950, and has gone through the problems of settling in Japan himself. Besides the training that goes with his vocation, he also holds a master's degree in the teaching of English as a second language from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, but the pastoral concern and compassion are what stand out when he is with the refugees.

### Fr. Joseph De Witte

My experience with the Vietnamese boat people started on November 28, 1980. I was attending a meeting of Catholic priests of the Kansai area when a telephone call came from Caritas-Tokyo, asking me to accept immediately 50 people out of a group of 150 refugees who would arrive the next day at Yokohama aboard a tanker which had rescued them somewhere in the South China Sea. As there were no provisions

made by the Japanese Government at this time, the refugees were all taken care of by religious institutions. After some delay in obtaining a "landing permit", on December 2, 69 Vietnamese arrived by chartered bus, which carried them from the boat right to my house. It was a moving moment: elderly people, babies with their mothers and a few fathers, and many youths arriving on a cold, dark, rainy evening. *Futon* (bedding) and blankets had been brought in previously. A warm meal was prepared and ravenously eaten. The refugees' faces were still showing fear and suspicion after their three weeks' ordeal. The next morning the sun was shining and when they realized that there was no reason to fear, their faces became bright, and little by little smiles appeared. It took a few more days to settle down comfortably. Newsmen came around and reported the arrival in the newspapers and on television. In a matter of a couple of days we were inundated by gift parcels from all over Osaka. Everybody had enough clothes to wear and enough to eat.

The following weeks were taken up by officials for interviews and administrative matters. The refugees' landing permit was valid for five days only. A three-month stay was eventually given, and quite rapidly life in this camp became routine. The children were accepted in the nearest primary school, *arubaito* (part-time work) was found for the men, and the women did the kitchen work. In early February, the first group of six was able to leave for Switzerland, and a month later a group left for Australia. At the beginning of May, those who were still here left all together for the Himeji Camp. This was the end of the Hirano Camp, and the end of my first period of experience with the Vietnamese refugees. For myself it was a very rewarding period of being the instrument of channeling so much good will through all kinds of activities in cooperation with Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, PTS's, *chonai-kai* (neighborhood associations), and several other *kumiai* (cooperatives).

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My second period of work with and for the refugees started when some of the first people graduated from the Teiju Center in Himeji and came to settle down in the area around Hirano. This time they were supposed to be on their own, self-supporting through a job they were given through the intercession of the Center upon leaving.

Assisting the settled resident refugees is also a rewarding task, but is at times much more difficult than assisting just-arrived boat people. The material needs, although not completely absent, are less pressing than the psychological needs. The integration into Japanese society brings new problems unforeseen and unexpected by most of the refugees.

Language training has to continue, now on an individual basis, and as most of the refugees have never been accustomed to regular and continuing study, it is almost impossible for us to persuade them to be methodical in their study of the Japanese language. We can already notice differences in adjustment to the social circumstances according to their mastery of the language. This is very clearly to be observed among the Vietnamese with Chinese background, who are able to adjust quite rapidly to reading Japanese.

The overabundance of entertainment possibilities, the strong desire to earn some extra money to buy a stereo, a motorbike or even a car are other impediments to regular study. The refugees have relatives in their home country, and most of them will go to any extreme in order to send their folks home a check, a parcel with clothes, musical equipment and what not. It is all right to be thinking about their relatives, but I tell them repeatedly that they will need the money in the future for themselves. If they do not put away a part of what they earn, sooner or later they will end up on the government's welfare program or relying on outside help from private social organizations.

Employment and housing are provided as part of the care

of the Center. In most cases this is only a temporary solution. A very high percentage find their working conditions below expectations, either because of the low wages they earn, having too much or not enough overtime, strict regulations concerning starting time and absence without prenotice, or not liking the company-provided lunch. Misunderstandings occur frequently because of imperfect understanding of what they are told to do. Sometimes this may even be because of failure to understand the local dialect or informal Japanese.

This catalogue of problems and difficulties they encounter is most incomplete because each individual is unique in the way he overcomes or is not able to overcome the difficulties he meets.

It is also my impression that some of the companies that agree to hire refugees are doing so to economize on personnel costs. On the other hand, many of the refugees come to Japan without any previous experience in a high-tech society and without qualifications that would allow them to take advantage of jobs offering higher wages. This is one of the reasons I advise as strongly as I can that they make use of all opportunities to learn whatever they can. They could improve their language skills for free by listening attentively to the NHK (*Nihon Hoso Kyokai*, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation) news reports, or to the educational channel on TV. One more way to improve their general adaptation to this society, and at no cost, is to enroll in the evening junior high school provided by the government in the bigger cities. There is no age limit; the only condition is never having had education of an equal degree at the junior high school level. I suspect most of the refugees would qualify, and in fact, three young people willing to study have been accepted in an evening school in the Osaka area. The students work till four or five o'clock and start classes at 5:40. It may be necessary to change residences for this purpose, as a great commuting distance could be too

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much of a burden.

If some refugees have worked at their jobs for more than a year, I advise them to stop working, go on unemployment benefits, and enroll in one of the higher vocational training schools. These are also without cost except for workclothes, books and smaller things. There are plenty of choices among six-month, one-year or two-year courses in all kinds of trades. Upon graduating successfully from this kind of school, they will be equipped with some skill, and through the mediation of the school office, they will be able to find a more rewarding job. I found the teaching staff of these schools extremely cooperative.

The existence of a small Indochinese minority in the midst of the Japanese society has been brought to the public eye through television and newspaper reports, and has impressed many readers and listeners. But when it comes to actual personal contact for a prolonged time, the refugees are mostly left on their own. "If you can help yourself. . . ." Public awareness of the plight of the refugees as individuals has to be stirred up, both through the media and on a person-to-person basis. This is especially important among the lower levels of society, those who are the refugees' companions at their place of employment, where patience and goodwill toward each other is so much needed. It is my hunch that satisfactory relationships between the refugee minorities and Japanese society will grow in time to come.

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The third person is a Vietnamese refugee named Lam Hong Phat. He has lived in Japan for about five years. He came in as a boat person, lived in several camps before being accepted for permanent residence, and married a Vietnamese woman he

met in the Himeji Camp. Phat has held several jobs here, welding in a factory, tiling roofs and repairing tires. Now he is trying to further his plan to enter university. Although he finished high school in Vietnam, he has had to take some high school courses in Japan as well, in order to be in a position to pass the university entrance examination. He has already failed the exam once, but is not giving up on this dream. He has one older brother living in Canada and a younger brother living here with him, but nine family members are still in Vietnam.

Phat speaks from the point of a view of a person who has decided to settle in Japan after going through the difficulties of getting here and getting approved for settlement. He hopes that in the future he will be able to help others, just as many people have helped him here. In his presentation, he speaks of why he had to leave Vietnam, and what he has met in Japan; how helpful many volunteers have been and how much they are appreciated. He suggests that having a place for cultural exchange would help the refugees to get accustomed to Japanese society. In the letter that accompanied his paper, he noted that he has found the Japanese people usually rather conservative, and feels that they do not really understand the refugees' situation and the problems they face because of the differences in language and ways of thinking.

### Lam Hong Phat

南ベトナムは陥落してからまもなく10周年になります。10年間に絶えず難民が国をはなれて平和な自由の国々を求めていきました。

国内では社会主義の下で独尊、非人権、経済低迷、官僚主義など、それに国外では軍事干渉を目的として若者をカンボジアに送り込んでいます。いわゆる「国際共産主義化」による東南アジア地域の平和を脅威と感じている人々は現政府を抵抗できずきびしい現状でよりよい道を選ばなければなりませんので祖国をでていって、社会主義のさまざまな現実を告発しています。

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幸い、私達は自由世界にもとづいたときから私達はかくれずよるこぶ、なるほど、それは真実な民主主義だと痛感しました。日本のみなさんは暖い心で歓迎してくれました。やはり平和な国の中で互いに人類と人類のたすけあいを感じることができました。しかし日本政府は難民問題にはあまり関心を示しませんでした。いろいろな理由があって難民対策をなかなか発表しませんでした。世界各国からの要請があってやっと、1979年4月、日本政府は難民対策をとりいれ、私達は日本に定住することができました。日本に定住希望した者は姫路や大和定住促進センターで3ヶ月の日本教育を受けたあと、定住センター、職安のあっせんで各地中小企業などに就職してきました。

はじめ、何ヶ月ぐらいでうまくやっているとありますが、日本の高度経済社会の中で考え方の違いで人間関係がうまくいかなかったり、言葉のかべや生活諸問題をのりこえられなかったりして、転職を繰り返す傾向がおおかったです。それで民間団体や難民を支える会などのボランティア活動や全国から寄せられましたみなさまの善意、暖かい励ましと多額の寄付金のおかげで、トラン・ゴーランさんやファム・スンさんが大学に入学することができました。とくに今年1月、フン君とリエンさんの心臓病の手術費用をカンパして手術ができました。

異国の地で、みなさまの優しい心や暖かい御支援で、私達の多い困難やニーズを解決でき私達を感激しました。私達は本当にお礼を言いきれない程、心から感謝いたしました。これから文化交流センターのような施設ができればいいと思います。文化交流センターを利用して、まず私達の文化伝統や民族舞踊、音楽を発展させて、各国の人々とつきあって互に文化を交流して難民への理解を深めていただきたいと思ひます。そうすれば、私達は一日も早く日本社会に解け込めるようになると思ひております。

今後共、みなさまの暖かい御援助を得て、あふれる自由、幸福を私達に広げて下さい。最後にみなさまの御健康を祈るとともに、みなさまのボランティア活動で日本政府も動かざるを得ない状況を作るようお願い申し上げます。

### Factors Involved in Successful Integration

#### The Role of Language

In each of these statements, language proficiency is cited as a primary factor in the successful integration of the refugee into society. Even if he speaks the language of his new country, the refugee has plenty of problems, but at least with the language, he has some chance of dealing with the problems. Without language facility, his chances of overcoming the

difficulties are poor indeed. As far back as the 1960s, educators and government officials were studying the reasons behind foreign student "braindrain". To aid developing nations, the United States government was giving scholarships to third-world-country students, with the condition that they return to work in their home countries for a minimum period after their studies were completed. Even after signing their agreement to this condition, many students were not returning home, preferring to remain in the United States. Educators began to realize that good language training was part of their problem. The more successfully the language programs prepared the students for university study in the United States, the more likely the students were to decide to remain in the United States, and the less effective the foreign aid programs would be for third world development. Students who didn't learn so much English were more likely to go home. Clearly fluency in the language was facilitating and encouraging integration into the society.

Language is not, of course, the only factor involved. It is one part of a much larger and more complex problem, one which is not unique to refugees but affects nearly everyone who goes to live in a culture other than his own.

### **Culture Shock**

The phenomenon of culture shock is so prevalent that it has been much analyzed by psychologists and sociologists. Oberg (1979), for example, describes culture shock as "precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. . . . These cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms, are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and



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our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we do not carry on the level of conscious awareness" (p. 43).

Oberg defines four phases of culture shock: the first he calls first impressions, when everything is new and exciting (in the refugees' case, they may feel a deep sense of gratitude toward the new country for accepting them, at this point). The second phase comes when the newness wears off and the difficulties of life in the new environment become more pronounced, even overwhelming, yet seem to be met with indifference on the part of the people of the host country, and hostility develops in the newcomer. The third stage is reached when the newcomer begins to recover his sense of humor and is able to "grin and bear it". Finally, at the fourth stage, the newcomer has picked up a little language and developed some skill in coping, and begins to feel more comfortable, even to enjoy the new country. At this point the person may be said to have adjusted, at least as far as his own attitude is concerned.

The refugees in Japan seem to follow this pattern just as we did, most of us, when we arrived here, or perhaps more strongly in our first overseas situation, if this is not the first experience in a different culture. There is a large difference in degree of suffering, however, between the ordinary traveller, who has come to a place by choice and can in most cases leave at any time, and who has any number of support sources while staying, and the refugee, who never wanted to come in the first place, who has no support from company or embassy, and who cannot ever go home again, because his home no longer exists or his life would be in great danger. It must be partly a matter of the number of cues that are missing in the new life situation, but surely the impossibility of going home again must be a very strong factor. In my own experience as a "world traveller" who has lived and worked in several different countries under a variety of conditions, the fact that

I have a home of over forty years' stability to go back to for vacation and between countries has made an immeasurable difference in my ability to adjust to change and new ways of living.

A refugee friend who spent many years in camps before he was able to settle down in Minnesota has written about his home in Cambodia (Sokhom, 1984), drawing a vivid picture of his home as a protector, almost human, which has been torn from him. Anyone who feels the refugees have left their homes lightly, or only for material gain, will see from this description that such a view is not accurate. The language of this essay was so delightful that I made no attempt to edit it, other than omitting some parts in the interests of brevity.

**Namoch Sokhom on Leaving Home.** Being away from new home at St. Paul, Minnesota, for weeks to come to St. Olaf College is one thing. I know I can always go back and see this home at any time I want. But before this it was different. I've been away from my home at Cambodia for eleven years now. Besides moving from place to place I also know that there is no way I will see my home again. It is a very unfortunate matter for me. However I can still remember things I shared with her and got from her. . . . She stood in the middle of a big lot surrounded by all kind of popular fruit trees that Cambodian people like to eat. . . . At the back of the house, we have three big and very tall bushes of bamboo and one tall palm tree to protect the wind from the east. . . . These made the whole place cool, shady and smelly of different flower at different season. Everything seemed very suitable with each other. . .when I walked to the other side of the village and looked at her, my home. . . . She had red tile roof and surrounded by green trees, and leaves wiggling to and fro with the smooth gently blowing wind like the dancing angels in the cloud. She did made the very beautiful home.

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I remember one day I fell off from her front stair. I almost hated her but I know my home was sorry for what had happened. I was carried to put on a bed under the house and laid there. The rain started to fall down and the storm began to show its power upon the tree leaves scratching my home's roof like a rooster ready to fight. But still what a wonderful thing to have: home! I could feel she embraced me with her only hands and kept me warm away from freezing and wetting.

But that was not all. I recalled one day when Papa was very tired from a long day of work. He got out from his car and started to step up on the stair. I could see the expression on his face was gradually changing from tired and boring to delightful and affectionate face, as he saw us sitting around the supper waiting for him in the middle of the room of the sweet home. Each step he passed, it seemed that it reminded him of something that was quite delightful and memorable about our home and our family. He seemed to know that his long day was ended and again free and safe. Home arriving means happiness and security for our family. As our home gained her ageness she had shown more and more of the important role of being part of us and we were part of her. She shared sadness and joy every time with us without complaining why she were there to listen to us.

What about at night; at night she worked even harder than the day time while we slept soundly under her tranquil and experientful guardian. It was always quiet, relaxing and peaceful in my room, but for home herself was not quite that way. She was working on her acquaintance with nature, wind, birds, coldness, and of course the quietness of the night. . . her job never ended, she stretched herself hard against the wet, the wild wind, the wild insect, and the cold air from the sky just to keep us away from freezing, shivering and biting. Oh; my home. . . Oh; my home. . . You are beautiful and full of kind-

ness. Your beauty, kindness, wisdom and guardian are always in my mind. Away from you doesn't mean I forget you but away from you makes me always miss you much!

\* \* \*

### **The Transplantation Process and Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs**

While I was working at the PRPC, a Vietnamese staff member from CAL's Resource Center came to talk to us about refugee resettlement needs. Mr. Pho Ba Long ("Call me Long for short," said this gracious gentleman, who spent something like nineteen hours a day the three days he was in our camp, giving our teachers' seminar, talking with administrators, encouraging refugees and answering their questions, tramping from one end to the other of our seven-kilometer-long camp) was one of the earliest to arrive in the United States, in the days before all the programs were activated. By 1981 he was well settled in the United States with his wife and grown-up children, and could obtain a permit for overseas travel which would allow him to return to the U.S. This enabled him to visit programs overseas as well as in the United States. He is still a part-time member of CAL's staff in Washington.

Using Maslow's well-known Hierarchy of Human Needs (Fig. 1), Long demonstrated how the needs of the refugees changed as the "transplantation process" progressed. When the refugee first arrives, he may be hungry, ill and exhausted. Physiological needs are primary; physical rehabilitation is the first assistance the refugee needs. At this stage, the agents of assistance are dominant over the refugee.

Once the physiological needs are less prominent, the next greatest need is security. This includes not only freedom from physical fear, but also economic independence and the possi-

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bility of taking care of himself rather than always accepting assistance from others. The refugee gradually gains some control over his own life, and learns not simply to submit to the decisions of the welfare groups, but to consider his needs for himself and to choose; sometimes even to say no to something he doesn't really want. Since the refugee is not in a strong position to seek out good jobs, he must learn to compromise and accept jobs at first that are less than preferable, but be ready to work hard and move up. One source of security at this point is the presence of a guide, a teacher, a friend on whom the refugee knows he can depend in case of need. It would seem ideal to have for such a friend a person from the same country who has been in the new country long enough to be able to cope with problems, explain, assist and advise. This is not always possible. For one thing, being refugees

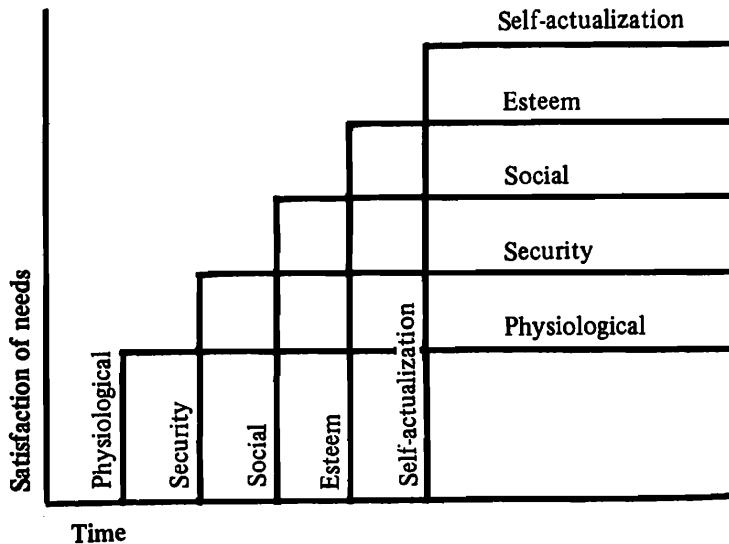


Figure 1. Long's Adaptation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs<sup>3</sup>

together does not necessarily mean that a given two people will be friends. Refugees come from all classes, all occupations, all levels of education, several religions and all age groups. Often people are thrown together who would never have had any social contact at all in their natural social environments. Out of necessity these widely different types of people sit next to each other in class, live together, and help each other, but they cannot always be friends in the sense intended here.

After a degree of security has been achieved, the refugee begins to need broader social contacts. He needs to develop his emotional stability. By this time he is beginning to be integrated, absorbed to some extent into the community, and converted to the new ways he lives among. His next need is for a sense of self-esteem. This should be the result of developing a sense of cultural identity. Until this point the refugee has been dependent on the community he lives in, and has had little opportunity to assert himself as a person in his own right. He is at the mercy of society to acknowledge him as a person of worth. He needs to be able to develop his sense of solidarity with the people of his own culture and country, through a center for getting together, a football team, dance group or other cultural or religious activity. It is even better if there is an opportunity to demonstrate cultural customs before an audience of interested and approving persons outside his own group, especially host country nationals. Because of his need for assistance, he and also his hosts may come to feel, at least subconsciously, that he must somehow be lower, or poorer, or more stupid (since he cannot speak or understand). In fact the refugees come from very old and rich cultures and can make wonderful contributions to the cultural life of their new country. The more contact there is between the host group and the refugees, the more they will begin to understand and accept each other's similarities and differences,

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and to appreciate what each has to offer the other. Furthermore, interest and appreciation are not enough in themselves. The refugees must be allowed and encouraged to maintain their native languages and their cultural heritage. Refugees whose culture is respected by their hosts will be better citizens.

Ideally, the refugee finally reaches the point of self-actualization. He has achieved a degree of harmony with his community, his family and himself. He is ready to participate in the life of his community as a responsible citizen. It should be thought of, Long suggests, as the transplantation of a new organ into a body. The organ relies on the body for life, and the body needs the organ and must do what is needed to protect it and keep it well. Each enriches the other.

Thus, as shown in the diagram in Figure 1, the refugees' needs totally reverse in order of importance with their progress through these phases. What was high in importance at the earliest stages is now less important or not a problem at all, while the needs that came far down the list at the beginning of the process have increased in importance. This aspect of the process is not always realized by the general public, which seems rarely to get beyond the level of collecting blankets and old clothing. Personal friendship and moral support are vital to the well-being of the refugee, particularly at this point. The longer he stays in his new country, and the better his material situation becomes, the more chance he has to reflect on what has happened to him, and the more real it becomes that he will probably never be able to return home, that the horrors he has gone through have actually happened to him. It is easy for him to fall into great depression.

As Fr. De Witte has also noted, the refugees themselves do not always understand what their real needs are during this process. The material needs at the beginning are obvious, but the psychological and social needs later are more subtle. The refugees must learn, for example, where to draw the

line for material "needs," and to use some restraint in amassing material possessions after a first plateau of security is reached. Rather, they must devote themselves to understanding their new situations and creating a niche for themselves in their new environment.

### The Case in Japan

From the point of view of refugee resettlement, Japan poses a confusing set of contrasts. It is the country of both the traditional, insular, closed society and the Naruhodo the World syndrome. It is a place of high technical development and, at least superficially, many aspects of a Western orientation, while at the same time it retains many of its traditional Asian values. It is a country with a low level of welfare support, but a country which, in response to a brief news item about a Vietnamese young man who was able to get accepted by a Japanese university but lacked the money for tuition, sent in excess of ¥5,000,000 to help him through school. It imposes such social pressure to conform that at this year's Vietnamese New Year's/Tet festival the only woman wearing native Vietnamese dress was a Norwegian woman who had worked in the PRPC and was visiting in Japan on holiday. The Vietnamese women were all in western clothing like their Japanese guests. At such parties in America most Vietnamese women are in native dress. Japan is a country where there are large numbers of public concern groups who offer resettlement assistance in one way or another — every day in the newspapers there are stories of the sums of money or clothes or food collected for some needy group — but as Fr. De Witte observed, there are few Japanese who are willing to really make friends with a refugee, spend extensive time with him, and allow him to enter their personal lives.

I am convinced that at this point in Japan's development,



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this is at least partly the result of lack of in-depth awareness of the needs. If the newspaper stories mentioned that the refugees needed befriending, most likely there would be appropriate responses. But of course this is not the only reason. The centuries-old tradition of exclusiveness in Japanese society, and the privacy most Japanese people preserve around their personal lives holds them back from such openness. Giving money, food or clothing is rather an impersonal act, if you consider the fact. Quite possibly many Japanese respond to the plight of the refugee not with sympathy but with some resentment that these strangers are allowed to settle here, with all the implications that involves. A few have even been heard to suggest that a refugee who says he loves his country and feels pain at having to leave it should have stayed there and fought from there to make it free, if he cares so much about it. Such a narrow point of view is understandable in the context of Japan.

Still, I believe that it is worth making some suggestions for steps that might be taken to alleviate the problems for both refugees and host nationals. Where there is basically a lot of good will, anything is possible.

### Steps the Japanese Government Might Consider

The government of Japan has responded to needs by providing for the refugees the same kind of assistance that is made available to Japanese citizens, but would it not be possible to go a bit farther and set up some system of sponsorship such as exists in the United States? This could be completely voluntary on the part of the sponsors, and would go a long way toward overcoming the difficulties of language and cultural differences. Perhaps the government might allocate some funding for refugee self-help projects, such as the cultural centers that Phat suggests. Refugees often feel a keen

sense of responsibility for helping their own people, but lack of funding poses such a barrier that no projects come to fruition. At least the salary of an administrator or coordinator could be made available so that there would be someone to provide stable and continuing direction or advice.

These days there is considerable discussion on the part of the government of the plan to increase Japan's role in training foreign students, and to provide better training in Japanese for foreigners, and better and more training for teachers to work in such programs. Surely there is some way that refugee language programs might be made a priority part of this plan.

Another very important area in which the government might at least be the initiator so that the full weight of its support would be behind the program is job development. There already exists such a program for handicapped Japanese citizens. Perhaps its parameters might be extended to include refugees.

### **The Role of the "Ordinary Citizen"**

As with most social programs, refugee assistance will only succeed to the degree that public support encourages and contributes to it. There are innumerable areas that need the help of Japanese citizens to make them work. With only a small demand to be made on any one person, there could be volunteer centers through which a housewife, for example, might donate a morning a week to accompanying a refugee on some errand for which the refugee simply lacks the knowledge to carry out what is required of him. This might include applying for welfare, going to the doctor or dentist, visiting schools, getting driver's licenses. Many of the refugees have acquired a basic knowledge of Japanese, or have picked up English or French one place or another. While they are able

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to communicate with individuals in an informal situation, they are not able to handle business or other formal situations. A small amount of time contributed to these necessary errands would make an enormous difference to the well-being and peace of mind of the refugee.

Part of the problem here is knowing how to make contact with someone who has such a need for help, but I am told that the Japanese newspapers offer even more of this kind of information than the English language papers. In some cases churches or temples can help make contacts. Fr. De Witte informs me that 90% of the organizations that provide refugee assistance in Japan are Catholic Church-related. The Caritas organization coordinates most of these activities, and has offices in most big cities. In Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe, at least, perhaps elsewhere as well, there are refugee groups that send teams of folkdancers or singers to international festivals, where they also offer native foods to be sampled. A few minutes talking with the refugees at the festivals would surely lead to contacts, as well as contribute to the sense of self-esteem mentioned above as so necessary to refugee intergration. The dancing and singing groups themselves can be invited to parties or fairs, a step that would benefit both refugee and local community.

### What About JALT?

The very organization that is sponsoring the publication of these pages has a great deal to offer in the way of assistance to refugees. For one thing, the foundation for every other type of assistance is language. Where better to seek good language training than in the ranks of the membership of Japan's Association of Language Teachers? Anyone who offers any kind of personal assistance to the refugees will find it a learning experience, a broadening of horizons and a deepening of

understanding. For a language teacher, who is by the nature of his work deeply involved in other cultures, as well as in any area where language is involved in a problem, this is a special opportunity not to be missed. It is probably also a basic responsibility, if I might go so far.

A special need that might appeal to a special person is the translating into Japanese of the many folksongs and poems collected set to music, arranged, published and performed by a renowned Vietnamese musician named Pham Duy (see Nguyen and Duy, 1982), who recently visited Japan.<sup>4</sup> He is well-known to all Vietnamese, although there are many who do not know that he is still alive. He escaped to America, where he has made it his life work to preserve the music of Vietnam and make it known both to Vietnamese themselves as well as to the rest of us. He has collected hundreds of songs of all kinds, some old, some new. One of his volumes is entitled *Prison Songs*. Its contents are songs Duy himself composed for the poems of another Vietnamese, Nguyen Chi Thien, who spent twenty of the past thirty years in prison for opposing the regime in North Vietnam. He composed hundreds of poems in his head while in prison, and when finally released in 1978, had to rent out his room to prostitutes to earn enough money to buy pen and ink to write down his compositions. To get his poems published in spite of government censorship, Nguyen ran into the British Embassy in Hanoi and tossed the manuscript on a desk with a letter begging that they be published, at least in the West. Moments later he was re-arrested and no one knows whether he is now alive or dead.

In his poems he prefers to look forward with hope rather than back in anger, and to recall the signs of man's humanity rather than his inhumanity to his fellow man. Perhaps this hopeful call for humaneness and peace would be a suitable closing.

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### *The Day Will Come*

*The day will come  
When man  
Will cast away his gun  
His chains  
His party  
Reclaim his mourning turban  
Break the vicious circle of unjust misfortune  
Return to the temples  
To the tombs of his ancestors  
Neglected for so many years*

*Oppression will be forgotten  
Hatred dissolve in the rising smoke of incense  
And the last survivors will come home in peace  
Some repenting  
Others bearing flower wreaths  
Kneel solemnly on their ancestors' grave  
Ushering in the new era  
When the white of babies' napkins  
Will outshine the red of flags*

*Then young shepherds in their fields will sing  
The simple joys of life in the home village  
And the singing of the Internationale  
Will be stifled  
By the humming of kites  
In the twilight skies  
In the vast blue skies*

(Nguyen and Duy, 1982:49)

**Note:** As this article goes to press, it has been learned that Nguyen Chi Thien is alive and still in prison in Vietnam, his twenty-third year in prison, at the age of 53. Amnesty International has made him one of their April 1985 Prisoners of the Month. Interested persons can send "courteous letters appealing for his release" to: His Excellency Pham van Dong, Prime Minister / Chu tich van dong Bo truong / Hanoi / Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C., for several years National Clearinghouse for Indochinese Refugee Affairs, later expanded to the National Clearinghouse for Refugee Affairs until the Clearinghouse closed in 1982. CAL still maintains, among its various activities, the Language and Orientation Resource Center, and provides professional support to all-nationality refugee programs throughout the United States and in the camps and training programs in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, Pakistan, the Sudan and several countries in Europe where the U.S. Dept. of State is operating language and cultural orientation training programs. CAL can be contacted at 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007, for further information.

<sup>2</sup>Statistics, and program and legal information were obtained through personal telephone communication with Ms. Minja Yang, Public Information Officer, UNHCR, Tokyo, March, 1985.

<sup>3</sup>Maslow's Hierarchical Model as modified by Pho Ba Long, Center for Applied Linguistics, for presentations on dealing with refugee resettlement needs, Philippine Refugee Processing Center, Morong, Bataan, the Philippines, September, 1981. See also Maslow, 1954, below.

<sup>4</sup>Duy is looking for someone with whom to produce translations of the songs into Japanese. They are already available in English and French as well as Vietnamese. Many of the songs are also recorded on tape.

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