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UNITED STATES COORDINATOR  
FOR REFUGEE AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20520

Document on Refugees

U.S. Department of State's Historical Research Memorandum No. 1400

"REFUGEES FROM COMMUNISM"

June 1983

## REFUGEES FROM COMMUNISM

### Summary

Since 1945 perhaps 20 million persons have emigrated, fled, or been expelled from Communist-controlled countries. Almost 2.5 million have settled in the United States. Less fortunate refugees have remained homeless for years, and at present some 5 million persons driven from Afghanistan, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Ethiopia are without status in their location of residence. Certain Soviet-aligned regimes that have generated refugees are better categorized as Marxist rather than Soviet-controlled or clearly Communist. Also, factors such as famine, poverty, and tribal warfare often have contributed to mass movements across borders to at least the same degree as has political persecution by the Communist governments. Nonetheless, the record demonstrates that the coming to power of a Communist regime almost inevitably creates an immediate large-scale exodus and frequently, a continuing flow of refugees. The ultimate destination for many of these victims has been the United States.

### The Aftermath of World War II in Europe

Between 1945 and 1950 an estimated 5 million people fled from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and East Germany to escape the Communist regimes imposed over the area by the Soviet Union. Since that time, additional millions have fled to the West; many have lost their lives at the Berlin Wall. In 1956 the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolution resulted in the flight of 200,000 persons, 38,000 of whom were admitted to the United States. Similarly, the repression of Czechoslovakia in 1968 produced 100,000 additional political emigres. Emigration to escape persecution in the Soviet Union also has occurred at a significant level, with some 100,000 persons coming to the United States since 1945. In all, some half a million refugees from Soviet oppression in East and Central Europe have made their homes in this country.

### The Establishment of the People's Republic of China

With the collapse of the Nationalist Regime on mainland China in 1949, one million refugees, primarily persons associated with the former government and its army, fled to Taiwan. Other military units escaped to Southeast Asia. In the years since, a steady flow of Chinese have foresaken their homeland, many via Hong Kong. Since 1949, 43,000 Chinese refugees have become residents of the United States.

### Cuban and Nicaragua

With the seizure of power by Castro in 1959, a vast exodus of Cubans to the United States began. According to estimates that we have been able to compile in excess of 1,250,000 have left Cuba since Castro. Some 875,000 had settled in the United States prior to 1980 and this figure swelled as 120-125,000 were permitted or compelled to come to this country in 1980 by Cuban authorities. In addition, approximately 200,000 fled Cuba for Spain, Venezuela, and a number of other countries in South and Central America.

The Nicaraguan desk of the Department of State and the Immigration and Naturalization Service provided very rough estimates on the numbers leaving Nicaragua and entering the United States. Well over 100,000 have left Nicaragua (some 5% of the country's population), since the take-over of the country by the Sandinistas in 1979. Formally we recognize approximately 60,000 as having come to the United States, however, an unrecorded number entered the country during that period when Extended Voluntary Departure had been in effect and it is estimated that a much smaller number left. This assumption is based upon the actions of other groups that have been granted EVD status in the N.S. Additionally there are over 20,000 Nicaraguans in Honduras, 15,000 in Costa Rica and some 10,000 others in various countries in Latin America.

### Southeast Asia

Since the fall of the South East Asian countries to the communists in 1975, over 1.5 million Indochinese have fled to countries of first asylum with almost 650,000 ultimately being resettled in the United States.

With the partition of Vietnam in 1954 an estimated 900,000 people left the Communist north to resettle in the non-Communist south. Throughout the Vietnam War, and particularly in its final stages, large-scale population movements occurred as civilians sought to escape Communist control. In the first year and a half after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, hundreds of thousands of persons fled or were expelled by the new authorities. With the subsequent persecution of the ethnic Chinese and the exodus of the "boat people," a total of approximately one million Vietnamese left their country between 1975 and 1983. The Bureau of Refugee Affairs estimates that 425,000 persons of Vietnamese origin entered the United States.

Approximately 225,000 Khmer have fled Kampuchea and received refuge in Thailand since the fall of Phnom Penh in

1975. Only 45,000 succeeded in fleeing between 1975 and the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in December, 1978, because of the tight controls imposed on the population by the Pol Pot regime. More than 180,000 Khmer have fled since 1978 and entered holding centers inside Thailand. As of May 31, 1983, the United States has resettled 83,000 Khmer and other countries 50,000. The holding centers in Thailand continue to hold 72,000 Khmer. In addition, hundreds of thousands of other Khmer fled to the Thai-Kampuchean border following the Vietnamese invasion. Their numbers peaked at about 500,000 in early 1980 but have since declined to 180-230,000. A further 20-30,000 Khmer fled to Laos and 100,000 to Vietnam, including many ethnic Vietnamese, from 1975 to 1979.

Those who fled immediately after the 1975 Communist victory were predominantly from the educated middle classes or persons associated with the previous non-communist government or its armed forces. Most of those who reached Thailand between late 1975 and mid-1979 were rural people and a relatively few town residents fleeing Pol Pot excesses. After the Vietnamese invasion, surviving members of the urban population and many farmers sought refuge in holding centers inside Thailand. The hundreds of thousands who went to the Thai border included farmers and some townspeople fleeing the famine and dislocations caused by the Vietnamese invasion. Some have since returned to the interior but many remain out of fear of the Vietnamese and the Vietnamese-installed Heng Samrin regime. Refugees continue to flee Kampuchea. They comprise the remnants of the pre-1975 educated class, still suspect in the eyes of the Heng Samrin regime, and ordinary Khmer seeking to avoid the Vietnamese occupation and crackdowns by the Heng Samrin regime against people suspected of supporting the resistance forces.

### Africa

The refugee tragedy in Africa in recent years is partially attributable to the repressive nature of the Marxist regimes of Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Equatorial Guinea. Conditions of warfare, drought, famine, and tribal relationships are probably more fundamental causes. Well over a million people have fled the above-mentioned regimes for one reason or another. No significant number have come to the United States with the exception of an estimated 8,000 Ethiopians.

### Afghanistan

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, over 3 million people have been driven from their homeland. Most refugees are in Pakistan, with over half a million in Iran. Only about 12,000 have come to the United States, but unless some resolution of the present fighting is achieved, the prospect for an ever-increasing flow of uprooted Afghans to the United States is likely.

Refugees from Communist Regimes

1948-1982

	<u>Total Refugees</u>	<u>Refugees Entering the United States</u>
East Europe	2,015,000	406,000
Poland	(700,000)	(176,000)
Romania	( 75,000)	( 36,000)
Bulgaria	(200,000)	( 4,000)
Czechoslovakia	(165,000)	( 34,000)
Hungary	(600,000)	( 71,000)
Yugoslavia	(275,000)	( 85,000)
East Germany	6,500,000	100,000
Soviet Union	400,000	100,000
Baltic Nations	200,000	80,000
China	4,000,000	45,000
Tibet	60,000	5,000
Cuba	1,250,000	1,000,000
Vietnam	1,000,000	425,000
Laos	282,000	135,000
Cambodia	224,000	85,000
Afghanistan	5,500,000	12,000
Nicaragua	100,000	60,000
Ethiopia	1,000,000	8,000
Angola	<u>200,000</u>	<u>120</u>
	20,531,000	2,457,120

MAJOR REFUGEE PRODUCING COUNTRIES SINCE 1973

Dates show installation of Marxist-Leninist governments,  
or Soviet-supported governments.

Ethiopia - 1974

Angola - 1975

Vietnam - 1975

Laos - 1975

Cambodia - April 1975

Afghanistan - December 1979

Nicaragua - July 1979

Poland - December 1981

WORLD REFUGEE POPULATIONS: AS CALCULATED BY THE UNHCR

1972 - 2,497,900  
1973 - Unavailable  
1974 - 2,370,700  
1975 - Unavailable  
1976 - 2,722,000  
1977 - 3,338,700  
1978 - 4,721,900  
1979 - 5,318,400  
1980 - 7,408,300  
1981 - 9,826,000  
June 30, 1982 - 10,212,100

The above estimates comprise a reconciliation of data obtained from the Bureau of Refugee Affairs, Department of State; the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Justice; and from consultation with appropriate country desk officers and officials of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State. They do not constitute official U.S. Government statistics. Published material consulted includes Review of U.S. Refugee Resettlement Programs and Policies, A Report of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 1980; U.S. Committee on Refugees, Refugee Reports; and Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services, Annual Reports; World Refugee Problems: Hearings before a Subcommittee of Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 1961; and Julia Vadala Taft et al, Refugee Resettlement in the U.S.: Time for a New Focus, Washington, New Trans Century Foundation, 1979.

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