

Refugees and Development in Africa, Peter Nobel (ed), Seminar Proceedings No 19, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1987 (121pp, SEK110-).

This volume is the twelfth book on refugees published by the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies. It marks the end of a research project under the title of *Refugees and Development in Africa*, funded by the Swedish Agency for Research Co-operation with Developing Countries (SAREC), during the period 1982 to 1985. This project aimed to produce studies on the legal, economic and social aspects of the situation of refugees in Africa, and these were presented at an international seminar on the subject in Uppsala in 1985 and are the subject matter of this work. This edited book includes the work of three main authors, Peter Nobel, Mekuriar Bulcha and Gaim Kibreab, all of whom have written widely on the subject of refugees in Africa. There is also a further section on the right to development, with contributions from the editor and from Adama Dieng.

Of particular interest in this book is the fact that it introduces a discussion of the concept of people's rights, reflecting on the adoption, on the part of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, in June 1981. This Charter, often referred to as the Banjul Charter, following a meeting by Heads of State in the capital of Gambia, was later endorsed by the UN General Assembly. It emphasises people's rights to development as well as other civil and political rights. In the Charter the term 'people' is used in a loose and flexible way and is not seen as synonymous with the concept of a sovereign state. Nobel points out, in his well-discussed chapter on the subject, that this is in harmony with Africa's historical tradition, where multi-ethnic and multi-cultural 'states' are the norm. The implication is that people should not be denied their rights simply because they do not represent the entire population of a single state, and that states therefore have a responsibility for all those who find themselves within their borders. The Banjul Charter is reproduced in full in an appendix to this volume.

In further chapters Bulcha and Kibreab offer studies on selected refugee issues which relate to Ethiopia and Sudan respectively. Bulcha presents an analysis of the causes of refugee flows in Africa, which he traces, firstly, to the ending of the colonial era with its process of 'nation-building', its enormous conflicts and changes; and then, secondly, to the conflict between the super-powers for areas of influence in the Third World. However he does not only blame Africa's refugee problem on outside factors, but points out that Africa has also contributed to its creation. He is extremely critical of unnamed African leaders whom he identifies as some of the chief culprits in the creation of the refugee problem, particularly regarding the cult of 'boundary fetishism' (p 21) and an intolerance towards dissident opinion. Ethiopia is presented as an example of these causative factors, where regional conflicts related to conquest and colonisation (eg Tigray and Eritrea), political persecution, war, poverty, military conscription, forced labour and involuntary resettlement, all contributed to the creation of a vast refugee problem in the region. Bulcha, in a later chapter, studies the degree to which Ethiopian refugees have become integrated in the Sudan. His rather pessimistic conclusions indicate that there is in fact very little interaction between the refugees and local people due to a variety of factors, including language, religious differences, inter-personal and inter-group conflicts.

Kibreab offers a study of the dynamics of flight, using as a case study rural Eritrean

refugees in the Sudan. His interest lies in the refugees' stated reasons for flight, as he points out that fleeing a country is likely to be only one alternative among many available to them. His study identifies, firstly, that flight is a decreasing function of geographic distance — ie those nearer a possible country of asylum are more likely to leave; secondly, the more sedentary peasants are and the more attached they are to their villages and land, the less likely they are to break their ties and leave; thirdly, populations with relatively adequate economic, social and political opportunities are characterised by a stronger inertia which countervails mass exodus. While these conclusions may seem obvious to the reader, Kibreab's conclusions indicate that substantive and 'reinforcing' factors (p89) are probably more likely to influence the decision to flee, rather than certain dramatic or single factor events. In a further study on the ambitious settlement programme adopted by Sudan for its vast refugee population, Kibreab welcomes the initiative, but points to several serious problems inhibiting its successful realisation. These include the dire straits of Sudan's economy, the perception that refugees are transitory, and a lack of effective participation by refugees in their own development.

Dieng, in his contribution, discusses the role of law and lawyers in development. He recommends that initiatives be undertaken for individual legal experts and human rights activists to work closely with local populations, perhaps through the assistance of NGO's. He quotes an initiative in Senegal, as an example of this solidarity, where lawyers and NGO personnel set up a legal service for the benefit of peasants. Dieng also examines the debate surrounding the 'right to development', and although endorsing the principle, sounds a warning with the following quotation: "Development, how many crimes have been committed and are being committed in thy name?" (p57).

A useful and imaginative addition to this volume are the seminar discussions, placed at the end of each chapter grouping. I found this very useful as the chapters raise many important questions, which in many cases are left unanswered by the authors. The seminar discussions allow for some reflection on the topics discussed, and provide continuity between each segment of the book. On a critical note, the book should have been more carefully proof-read before publication, as there are many spelling and typographical errors throughout.

The final section, entitled 'Views in Common', allows the three main authors to summarise key points and respond to various refugee issues, including voluntary repatriation, the pressure on the host country and problems of dependency. It is worthwhile, in my view, to reproduce the three pre-conditions which they identify as needing to be fulfilled in order to guarantee that the repatriation of refugees is voluntary, and that it succeeds in offering a 'durable solution'. These are:

- A. The political conditions — a secure political settlement is required in order to end insecurity for refugees on their return home and to ensure their physical safety.
- B. The legal conditions — refugees should be guaranteed freedom from arbitrary arrest or persecution through clearly defined legal decree or ordinances, which precisely define the status of refugees on their return home. An amnesty is an example of such a decree permitting free return.
- C. The socio-economic conditions — assistance is required to enable refugees to have a realistic chance to resettle and earn a livelihood once more.

The authors also recommend that much more respect should be paid to the rights, safety and dignity of all Africans and that refugees should be accorded much the same treatment as nationals wherever possible. On a practical level they recommend the production of handbooks detailing basic information regarding refugee rights and obligations, which at limited cost could add stability and confidence to their lives.

A final point that is stressed throughout the book is that, in the interests of equity in development, the local population must be involved in the development initiative, as indeed refugees themselves should. Development is seen as consisting of three essential factors: direct, practical assistance, the participation of people at every stage, and finally guarantees for their safety and dignity. In general, we are informed that a genuine respect for human, or people's, rights is essential if 'development' is to be worthwhile, either for local people or refugees. It is difficult to be at odds with such worthy sentiments.

Although a short volume (123 pp including appendices), I consider that this book is a very useful addition to the literature on the African refugee problem. Its contribution is also timely in reminding us that there is indeed an African Charter on Human and People's Rights which deserves more careful scrutiny than perhaps we have given it to date.

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State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, Philip Frankel, Noam Pines and Mark Swilling (eds), Croom Helm, London, 1988 (325pp, £30 hbk)

In recent years, the dialectics of popular protest and state repression in South Africa have spawned a plethora of conventional literature seeking to analyse the cause(s) and to predict possible outcomes of the apartheid quagmire. For the most part the resulting literature has remained within the confines of liberal skepticism, failing to foresee possibilities for paradigmatic political change in South Africa.

The authors of *State, Resistance and Change in South Africa* are liberal skeptics in that, while seemingly recognising the magnitude of the apartheid problem, they nevertheless see no meaningful political development beyond the apartheid state.

The authors postulate a dual thesis which sees South Africa in the grips of a Gramsci type of an interregnum consisting of a social stalemate where 'the old' is dying and the new cannot be born'. The old is dying because the apartheid state does not have the requisite ideological and political resources required to re-establish its racial dominance without recourse to more and more coercion. On the other hand, the new cannot be born because the various organisations and movements that represent the interests of the oppressed majority do not possess the organisational capacity and political power or coercive strength to overthrow the state and bring about meaningful political change.

According to one of the authors, Mark Swilling (p 16), the capacity of black resistance organisations to oppose state policy directly affects the relationship between the reformist and repressive apparatus: the more opposition there is, the more repression is used, which in turn destabilises conditions for reform; whereas when opposition diminishes, repression becomes increasingly functional to reform, and so the resulting greater unity of purpose within the state reinforces the chance of success of reformist strategies; although the former possibility is more probable.