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however, the points he makes sometimes seem less substantial. At the end he devotes more than sixty pages to tables and appendices listing large numbers of alleged errors or doubtful readings. As these are often the automatic consequence of applying a single idea to a mass of different people, however questionable, the reader is left wondering just how much it all adds up. Gammack has shown that more research is certainly needed in due course, but his book is a valuable analysis of international conferences and two published volumes patiently devoted to the issue. It is difficult to see when, if ever, the matter will be fully answered.

Some sympathy should perhaps be extended to the writers of the small bibliographical notes, and special studies of the uniform volume which but which are in danger of being swamped by John Kidd's article. For some time this has been known as the "Kidd issue."  

Clive Hart

Interdisciplinary Studies

Journal of Refugee Studies 15/1 per year. Subscriptions Department, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP.

Few of the world's tens of millions of refugees and displaced people will ever see the journal of Refugee Studies. But they are quite likely to feel the effects of the debates that occur over the proper role of the institutions that are charged with bringing them assistance. The morally charged nature of these institutions mandates vigorous resistance of institutions, self-help groups, government departments, UN agencies – and the great diversity of refugee communities makes the field of refugee studies a rough and ready one.

This is reflected in the interdisciplinarity of the journal and the variety of the contents and the publishing.

The journal, now in its second year, is published out of the Refugee Studies Centre of Oxford, and a recent issue contains a post-initiative symposium held at last year on Palestinian camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Such issues concentrate, like this one, on a single theme – there is one forthcoming on food aid. More often the papers run the gauntlet of disciplines that impinge on the well-being of refugees: international law, political science, medicine, demography, social anthropology. There are some trenchant book reviews and a couple of book notes, in which refugees describe the experience of displacement and exile.

Volume 2 contains a useful contribution by Claudia Skran to the history of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the peculiar contributing factor in the lives of victims of forced migration. Her article describes, inter alia, the sartorial habits of Frolof Nann, the Norwegian Arctic explorer who was the first High Commissioner, appointed by the League of Nations in 1921 to cope with Russian refugees in Europe in the aftermath of the First World War. Nann never accepted a salary and always travelled class three on trains. His attitude to the job was stark contrast to that of the most recent High Commission, Jean Pierre Hocke, who resigned last month over allegations concerning misuse of funds by himself and his wife for first-class intercontinental air travel.

Other papers published in the Journal of Refugee Studies over the past two years are a number of outstanding articles by social anthropologists working in North-east Africa, currently the world's most overcrowded region. These articles (by Tim Allen, Alexander de Waal and Sidney Waldron) show how the dominant understanding of refugees and the groups of migrants can be employed to reveal the frequently disastrous effects of government or agency policy. These they are supposed to be both helpful and also suggest appropriate alternatives. The practical critique of the conduct of the institutions involved in the refugee business is certainly an area where a journal such as this can do good service.

John Bale

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