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Refugees in Africa South of the Sahara

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Refugees in Africa South of the Sahara

There are about 3 million refugees in 19 countries of Africa south of the Sahara. Some 2 million are clearly identifiable as refugees; another million or more have been lost among the local population. Although the refugees have evoked little international concern, they present serious regional problems. In addition to creating an immediate need for food and shelter, these large groups of dislocated people contribute to the chronic ethnic and economic turmoil in the region.

Population statistics in Africa are notoriously poor, and refugee data are no exception. The movements of refugees frequently are not recorded, and available figures may be weighted for political purposes. Refugees in camps may be counted, but others who live with relatives or in the bush are lost for statistical purposes. Additional uncertainties stem from the lack of effective controls on movement, both internal and external, in most of the newly independent countries and from the migratory habits of many people in underdeveloped lands. The exact point at which a migrant herder or agriculturist becomes a "refugee" in the true sense of the word is also questionable.

Refugees in Africa south of the Sahara, as elsewhere in the world, have generally been the product of political conflicts that caused them to flee their homes and seek safety in another country. When they reach areas of asylum their plight often is desperate because they have a minimum of personal belongings and need food, shelter, and medical care. These problems are least severe when the host country is able to integrate the new arrivals into the indigenous population. A number of other problems can be reduced or averted altogether if the refugees are settled away from the border of their native country. This prevents the refugee community from harboring rebels who operate in the home country and then flee to safety in the border area of the country of asylum, as has occurred in Burundi and Uganda. Countries that have worked hardest to establish settlements away from the border, with varying degrees of success, are Uganda, the Central African Republic, and Tanzania.

Outside aid is required when the number of refugees coming into a country or moving from one part of a country to another is too great for the economy to absorb. Most of the African countries with refugees have needed assistance and are now cooperating with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and various voluntary relief groups in order to settle the refugees and give them a new life.

The accompanying map and table summarize available information on refugee movements in 29 of the countries of Africa south of the Sahara. The circumstances of refugee movement and the relief efforts that have been made in the 11 countries for which information is available are discussed below.

REFUGEE MOVEMENTS

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa) [Congo (K)] affords asylum to the largest refugee population in Africa. In spite of recurrent internal strife and resultant severe problems since independence, refugees have fled to the Congo (K) from Angola (including

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Cabinda), Sudan, Rwanda, Zambia, and the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) [Congo (B)]. Concentrations of refugees are largest along the Angolan border in the southwest and the Sudanese border in the northeast.

Angolans: Angolans, who constitute the largest refugee group in the Congo (K), started to arrive in the southwest in 1959. Their actual numbers cannot be deduced from the population of the refugee camps, since Angolans consider themselves tribal brothers of the Congolese in western Congo (K) and mix readily with them. The refugee population given in the table and on the map therefore is only an estimate.

An active insurgency against Angola is directed by some Angolan refugees based in southwestern Congo (K). Over 20 Angolan nationalist groups are involved, among the largest of them being the Governo da República Angolana em Exílio (Republican Government of Angola in Exile)—GRAE—and its action arm, the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (National Front for the Liberation of Angola)—FNLA. Although GRAE claims to represent the African population of Angola, the majority of the Angolan refugees in southwestern Congo (K) want nothing to do with insurgency, and GRAE efforts to recruit and otherwise "politicize" refugees have led to considerable disgruntlement. The Congo (K) Government has not gone out of its way to dissuade the nationalist groups from political activity directed against the Portuguese, for fear of detracting from its African nationalist standing.

Some friction is developing between Angolan refugees and the local population among whom they live. In response to a request of the Central Government, village chiefs have parceled out land to the refugees. In return, however, a number of chiefs have demanded up to half of the land's earnings. The refugees resent this landlord-tenant relationship, and the Congolese are jealous of the relatively good return the refugees are extracting from the land. At the present rate of cropping, the land being tilled by the refugees will be exhausted in 2 or 3 years; a greater land problem may then be created.

Sudanese: Sudanese people comprise the second largest group of refugees in the Congo (K) and have been crossing into the northeastern part of the country since 1961. They have no camps and are widely scattered along the border. Sudan would like to have the refugees moved away from the border, because of the fear that they may include Anya-Nya rebels* who operate against the Sudanese authorities in southern Sudan, but the Congo (K) has not attempted to clear the border areas.

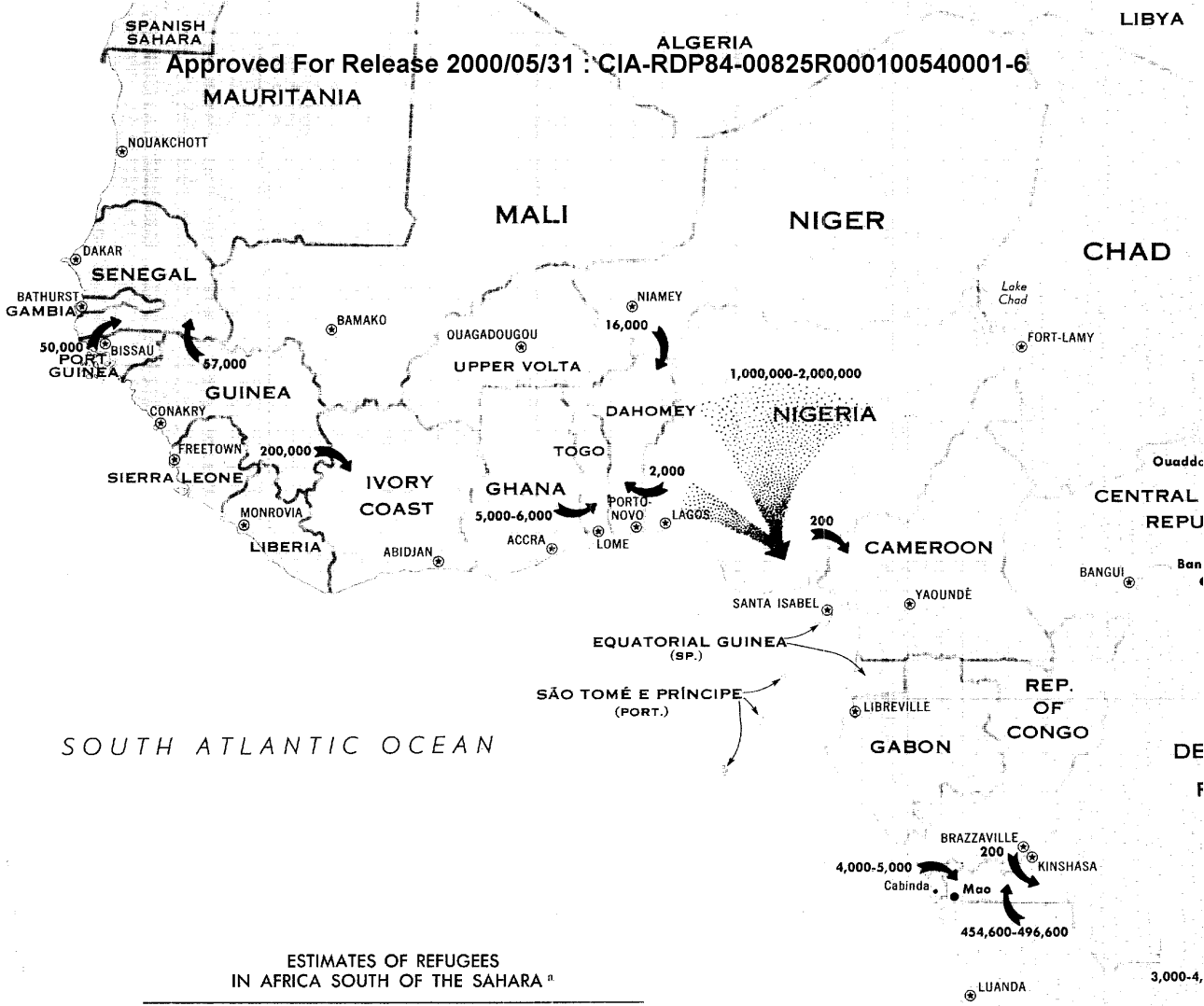
Rwandans: The Rwandans, who began arriving in 1959, were mainly Tutsi tribesmen fleeing from hostile Hutus. Their two original settlements at Bibwe and Ihula have multiplied to at least nine settlements.

In 1964, tribal unrest in the eastern Congo (K) prompted the Government to issue an order expelling all aliens from that region. About half of the refugees from Rwanda and many Congolese nationals fled to Uganda. The expulsion order was lifted when the disturbance died down, and many of these people have since returned to the Congo (K).

* The Anya-Nya rebels are Christian and pagan tribesmen from the three southern provinces of Sudan who oppose the Moslem-Arab government of Sudan and consider themselves patriots in the tradition of Jomo Kenyatta. Some expound pro-Christian, pro-white views. The Sudanese authorities have had little success in suppressing them.

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ESTIMATES OF REFUGEES
IN AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA ^a

Country of Asylum	Refugees	Country of Origin
Angola (including Cabinda)	2,000	Zambia
Botswana	3,500	South-West Africa
	200	Angola
	200	Rhodesia
	200	South Africa
Burundi	50,000-60,000	Rwanda
	25,000	Congo (K)
Cameroon	200	Nigeria
Central African Republic	27,000-28,000	Sudan
Congo (K)	More than 16,000	Congo (K)
	469,000-513,000	Angola (including Cabinda)
	30,000-40,000	Sudan
	24,000-25,000	Rwanda
	19,000	Zambia
	200	Congo (B)
Dahomey	16,000	Niger
	2,000	Nigeria
Ethiopia	20,000	Sudan
Ivory Coast	200,000 ^b	Guinea
Malawi	18,000-20,000	Mozambique
Rwanda	2,600	Burundi
Senegal	57,000	Guinea
	50,000	Portuguese Guinea
Somalia	2,000-3,000	Ethiopia
	5,000	Kenya
Sudan	24,000	Ethiopia
Tanzania	13,000	Mozambique
	12,000-13,000	Rwanda
	9,000	Congo (K)
Togo	5,000-6,000	Ghana
Uganda	68,000-70,000	Rwanda
	64,500	Sudan
	34,000-35,000	Congo (K)
Zambia	3,000-5,000	Angola
	2,000-3,000	Mozambique
	2,000	Congo (K)

^a Nigeria has 1 to 2 million internal refugees, mainly people of the Ibo tribe who fled from the north and west into the eastern part of Nigeria that is now known as Biafra.

^b This figure includes an undetermined number of transient workers

left in the north, although some 30,000 remain in Lagos. Intensification of the civil war has displaced large numbers of people, and several hundred thousand persons in eastern Nigeria are now refugees or displaced persons. About 1,000 Biafran children have been airlifted to Gabon, and some have been flown to São Tomé. More may go to the Ivory Coast.

REFUGEE RELIEF

The most active relief agency in Africa south of the Sahara is the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In addition to providing direct aid to refugees, this office coordinates the efforts of numerous privately funded national and international relief organizations. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, host countries provided basic relief to destitute refugees, but as the number of refugees increased, local resources were strained and the host countries became unable to cope with the problem. Aid in the form of materiel and coordination was first requested of the United Nations by the Congo (K) in 1961.

Refugee relief programs vary considerably from country to country. Some countries prefer a UNHCR relief operation and resettlement program supported by local agencies. Other countries prefer to operate through local agencies with support from UNHCR and other outside organizations. In countries that have no coordinated program the UNHCR and other groups work out their programs as best they can. Of first priority in refugee relief programs are basic food and shelter. When it becomes clear that people cannot return to their homes, attempts are made to facilitate permanent settlement in the host country.

There are many gaps in information on relief activities in Africa south of the Sahara, particularly on activities of privately sponsored European and African organizations. The following is a summary of available information.

In the Congo (K) there is no overall administration of refugee relief. Most relief work is carried out by UNHCR, which provides financial assistance, and by various voluntary agencies. Angolan refugees are assisted by a number of religious missions and other voluntary agencies such as the Catholic Relief Services and the International Rescue Committee. Sudanese refugees benefit from a program administered by the Congo Protestant Relief Agency, with food provided by the Church World Service and the Catholic Relief Services; the American Baptist Relief also aids Sudanese refugees. Rwandese refugees are receiving aid from the Integration and Zonal Development Project of the International Labor Organization (ILO); the Catholic Relief Services are donating food, clothing, and medicines.

The government of Uganda has taken responsibility for the settlement of refugees and has implemented refugee programs through the Ministry of Culture and Community Development. It has received considerable financial assistance from UNHCR. The Seventh-Day Adventist Welfare Service, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and World Neighbors are also active in Uganda.

The government of Senegal, through its Red Cross and with the cooperation of the French and Swiss Red Cross societies, administers the health aspects of refugee relief. Financial assistance has been provided by UNHCR, and medical supplies have been contributed by the French and British Governments, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), and the African Institute of New York.

The Burundi relief program is carried out by the Government through the International Association for Rural Development Overseas. In addition to UNHCR, the following agencies participate: the World Food Program, ILO, French Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération (Aid and Cooperation Fund), OXFAM, American Baptist Relief, and Church World Service.

The government of the Central African Republic administers local relief programs, the League of Red Cross Societies coordinates international aid, and UNHCR contributes financial aid. The World Food Program, OXFAM, World Council of Churches, Catholic Relief Services, and other Protestant and Catholic missionary groups work among the refugees and coordinate their efforts with the Government, the Red Cross, and UNHCR.

In Tanzania, refugee relief programs are carried out under agreement between the government of Tanzania, Lutheran World Service, Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service, and UNHCR. The Catholic Relief Services, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), British Red Cross, OXFAM, Swedish Churches, World Council of Churches, and World Food Program also are, or have been, active in refugee relief in Tanzania.

Although Ethiopia has refused to permit UNHCR to aid Sudanese refugees, the Presbyterian missions in Ethiopia are permitted to work among them and to provide food, clothing, and medical supplies. The Sudanese Government resents Presbyterian aid and is pressuring Ethiopia to stop it, because the Presbyterians are suspected of educating leaders of the Anya-Nya rebels and of otherwise encouraging the rebels.

Malawi has not requested UNHCR aid, but it has asked the Church World Service, under the general auspices of the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Christian Conference, to design a refugee relief program. The program involves village improvement, grants for medical aid, and establishment of mobile medical facilities and of agricultural development projects.

The refugee relief program in Zambia is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Lutheran World Federation is coordinating the program, and UNHCR is providing financial assistance.

In 1966 Rwanda requested UNHCR aid for the Hutu refugees from Burundi. UNHCR responded, as did the Catholic Relief Services, with clothing, food, and medical supplies. The few refugees who have not returned to Burundi apparently have settled among the indigenous population and are no longer in need of aid.

UNHCR does not operate in Nigeria, because refugees must cross international boundaries to qualify for UNHCR aid, and disagreement and distrust between leaders of Nigeria and Biafra are preventing the free flow of private relief aid. Apparently, church groups and other voluntary agencies are still active in the area, but their efforts are hampered by the animosity of the Nigerian military. Among these private groups are the Assemblies of God Foreign Service Committee, Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, World Neighbors, and Menonite Central Committee. The aid effort is being coordinated by the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC).

An official of ICRC believes that as many as 4 million refugees and natives in Biafra are in need. Malnutrition and disease are causing many deaths in the camps, especially among children, and many more will die of starvation before relief is distributed to them.

Zambians: The most recent influx of refugees into the Congo (K) has come from members of the Lumpa, or Lenshina, Church who fled the harsh Zambian suppression of their cult in mid-1965. The cult had preached against obedience to the Zambian Government and had fought with its nonbelieving neighbors. Repeatedly Zambia has attempted to woo the Lumpas back into Zambia, and occasionally the Congo (K) has tried to convince them to leave, but they have stubbornly refused to return to their homeland and were still filtering into the Congo as of mid-1968.

Uganda

Uganda has received refugees from Rwanda, Sudan, and the Congo (K). Most of those from Rwanda came during the Hutu-Tutsi wars in Rwanda; another wave came after they were expelled from the Congo (K) in 1964. The Rwandans have little hope of going home and have settled in camps established for them.

The Sudanese, fleeing from the civil war in southern Sudan, began entering Uganda in 1962 and 1963 and settled along the border. In mid-1966, in an effort to resettle them away from the border, Uganda moved several thousand Sudanese from the area of Koboko, near the Uganda-Sudan-Congo (K) boundary, to a new refugee camp in north-central Uganda 18 miles southwest of the town of Patango. This movement did not clear the border area of all refugees, since many were living with relatives and others took to the bush. Because of the ease of movement in the border area, Uganda probably will never be able to remove all of the refugees.

Congolese migration has constantly fluctuated, with large numbers of refugees fleeing into Uganda during times of strife and most of them going home after the fighting ended. The Congolese prefer to settle along the border in anticipation of someday returning to the Congo (K). Attempts to resettle them away from the border have not been entirely successful.

Senegal

Most of the refugees in Senegal entered the country between January 1960 and December 1965 and settled among the local people near the southern border. The refugees are about equally divided between nationals from Guinea and from Portuguese Guinea; little information is available, however, on those from Guinea. The movement from Portuguese Guinea began in 1960, but most refugees came in waves which totaled 30,000 from May to July 1964 and about 20,000 from April to June 1965.

Burundi

Burundi, which is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa, shelters some 75,000 to 85,000 refugees from the Congo (K) and Rwanda. Congolese began entering Burundi in the spring and summer of 1964. Subsequent crossing and recrossing of the border have occurred with the changing political stability of the Congo (K). Most Congolese refugees live in temporary shelters in the Ruzizi Valley near Chibitoke Mission and the city of Bujumbura. Few, if any, have been placed in permanent refugee settlements.

Rwandese Tutsi refugees began entering northern Burundi in 1959 in an effort to escape the Hutu, who had revolted against them. Until then the Tutsi had been the ruling tribe in Rwanda. By 1961, when Rwanda received its independence, there was a wholesale exodus of Tutsi to Burundi. In early 1962 it was apparent that the Tutsi could not return to Rwanda, so the Burundi Government and the League of Red Cross

Societies placed them in three eastern settlements—Muramba, Kayongozi, and Kigamba.

Other Rwandans entered Burundi from the Congo (K). In the summer of 1964, when trouble broke out in eastern Congo (K), thousands of Rwandans who had settled there between 1959 and 1962 fled into Burundi. To care for those who wished to remain in Burundi, the refugee settlement of Mugeru was established near the Burundi-Tanzania border.

As of early 1967 the Muramba, Kayongozi, and Kigamba refugee camps contained approximately 19,000 Rwandan refugees; the Mugeru camp sheltered 27,300; and the remaining Rwandans resided among the general population.

The majority of Rwandan refugees are not politically motivated. Burundi, however, is concerned lest the refugees shelter rebels operating in Rwanda. The Burundi Government has announced that it will not permit rebels who attack Rwanda to withdraw back into Burundi.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic (CAR) shelters large numbers of refugees from the Congo (K) and Sudan. Both groups began coming into the CAR about 1964.

The influx of Congolese refugees began in August 1964 when 3,000 people of the Azande tribe crossed the border into the areas of Bangassou and Mobaye. The number continued to increase, and as of July 1967 about 16,000 Congolese had settled in these areas. A band of Simbas* began attacks along the Congo (K)-CAR border during August 1967 and soon controlled 100 miles of border territory. This started another exodus from the Congo (K), and an undetermined number of Congolese have since come into the CAR.

Refugees from southern Sudan began entering the CAR in 1964 and settled in the general area of Bambouti, in the extreme southeast. A few hundred settled at Obo, 60 miles from the border. During 1965, a wave of 17,000 to 18,000 additional Sudanese sought refuge near Bambouti and Obo. Since 1965 the number of refugees has risen to 27,000 or 28,000, and the migration will probably go on as long as the fighting continues. Reception and settlement of the Sudanese in the CAR have been greatly facilitated by the fact that most of them are of the Azande tribe and speak the same language as the Central Africans of the Bambouti and Obo areas.

The presence of Sudanese refugees along the border is causing friction between the CAR and Sudan. The CAR, under Sudanese pressure, agreed to move the refugees away from the Bambouti section of the border by January 1967. Plans to resettle them in the area of Mboki, on the Obo-Zemio road, were approved but were not effected until early 1967, after a Sudanese commando unit had entered the CAR and shot several refugees for alleged support of Anya-Nya rebels. By the end of July 1967, 10,000 refugees had been moved to the Mboki area, another 10,000 had gone into the Congo (K) to the vicinity of Doruma, and about 6,000 were hiding in the bush near Bambouti waiting to harvest their crops. Most of the refugees who fled to the Congo (K) have now returned and are resettled near Bambouti; 2,000 have also returned from the camp at Mboki. The situation is quiet, but the CAR is anxiously attempting, without much success, to relocate the refugees away from the border. The CAR Army was to enforce movements away from the border areas in 1968 after crops had been harvested.

* The term "Simba" generally refers to renegade bands of boys 12 to 14 years of age who roam the countryside looting and killing. Although poorly organized, they can operate because the area has no reliable security forces.

Tanzania

Tanzania has received refugees from Mozambique, Rwanda, and the Congo (K).

Mozambicans: In October 1964, refugees from the Makonde tribe of northern Mozambique began arriving in Tanzania. The tribe has traditionally resisted Portuguese authority and in recent years has cooperated with anti-Portuguese rebels operating out of Tanzania. By the end of 1964 the refugees numbered 10,000 and had been moved 85 miles north of the border to the vicinity of Rutamba.

Early in 1966, approximately 3,000 members of the Wanyanja tribe, fleeing from fighting between anti-Portuguese rebels and the Portuguese military, entered Tanzania and settled among members of the Tanzania branch of their own tribe on the shores of Lake Nyasa. Tanzanian authorities have moved them away from the border to two camps near the shores of Lake Nyasa—Lundo and Ndecha—and to a camp near Rutamba.

Rwandans: Refugees from Rwanda began to arrive in Tanzania in 1959. They were members of the Tutsi tribe forced from Rwanda by the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. These refugees are sheltered in two main reception centers—one at Muyenzi and one at Karagwe, near the northern portion of the Rwanda-Tanzania border. Others are in the Ngara camp near the Burundi border and in the Mwesi camp near Lake Tanganyika.

Congolese (K): The first 2,000 Congolese (K) refugees arrived in Tanzania in 1964-65 during the uprising in the eastern part of the Congo (K). In 1965 Tanzania gave them a choice of settling on land 200 miles from the border or of returning to the Congo (K), and about 1,500 returned home. Since 1965, however, many refugees have filtered across the border into Tanzania, swelling the number of Congolese refugees in Tanzania to about 9,000.

Ethiopia

A disagreement between Sudan and Ethiopia over refugees from the Sudan is an exception to the general spirit of cooperation among African nations in refugee matters. Some 20,000 members of the Sudanese Nuer and Annak tribes who are encamped near Gambela, Ethiopia, are the subject of the dispute. Ethiopia has refused to recognize them as refugees, claiming that they are Ethiopian citizens and as such are Ethiopia's internal problem. In fact, the nationality of many of these people is difficult to determine, as they are mainly nomadic and have traditionally crossed and recrossed the Sudan-Ethiopian border freely.

The obdurate attitude of the Ethiopian Government is based on several factors of self-interest: (1) Ethiopia wants the tribesmen to settle and develop the Gambela district, (2) some income is derived by Ethiopian taxes on the large herds of cattle brought in by the Nuers, (3) the presence of Christian and Pagan people swells the number of non-Moslems in Ethiopia, and (4) the Sudanese refugees can be used to goad Sudan in the same manner that some 24,000 Ethiopian refugees now near Kassala, Sudan, are being used to support Eritrean aspirations for independence. The question of the refugees remains a delicate issue with both governments.

Malawi

Malawi provides asylum for an estimated 18,000 to 20,000 refugees from Mozambique, most of whom belong to the following four tribal groups that traditionally live in areas straddling the border: (1) the Nyanja tribe, whose refugees have moved from the Mozambique shore of Lake Nyasa to Likoma and Chisumulu islands, (2) the Lomwe tribe, which has settled along the southwestern border of Malawi, (3) the Ngoni tribe, whose refu-

gees live among their tribal brothers in southwestern Malawi, and (4) the Yao tribe, which has settled at the southern end of Lake Nyasa around the town of Fort Johnston.

Zambia

Zambia has received refugees from Angola, Mozambique, the Congo (K), South Africa, South-West Africa, Malawi, and Rhodesia. The Angolan refugees began entering Zambia in December 1967, in an attempt to escape fighting between the Portuguese Army and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Refugees arriving from Mozambique in about 1966 were also fleeing from fighting between insurgent forces and the Portuguese Army in Mozambique. The Congolese refugees entered Zambia during June and July 1967, from the vicinity of Pweto, at the northern end of Lake Mweru. They were fleeing persecution by the Congolese Army resulting from their tribe's opposition to General Mobutu and refusal to support him in the 1967 referendum. A few have since returned to the Congo (K). Refugees from South Africa, South-West Africa, Malawi, and Rhodesia are few and are mostly students seeking a better education; they are not included in the table and on the map.

Many refugees are living in camps established by the Zambian Government. Most of the Angolan refugees are found in two refugee camps—the Lwatambo camp near the city of Balovale and the Mayukwayukwa camp in the southwest. Mozambique refugees are accommodated mostly in the Nyimba camp, 20 to 25 miles north of the Mozambique-Zambia border; a few are living in villages or in the bush. Congolese refugees have settled in a camp at Chipungu and in nearby villages.

Rwanda

Rwanda has a small permanent refugee population of 2,600 Hutu from Burundi. The Hutu fled Burundi in early 1966 after government harassment of them because of their political allegiance. As many as 25,000 may have gone to Rwanda, but most of them have since returned to Burundi.

In late summer of 1967, during the occupation of Bukavu, Congo (K), by mercenaries and the consequent fighting, 25,000 to 40,000 Congolese fled to Rwanda and camped along the Rwanda-Congo (K) border. Most of them returned to the Congo (K) immediately after the fighting ceased, probably in early 1968.

Nigeria

Nigeria's internal refugees are predominantly Ibo people who have returned from northern and western Nigeria to their homeland in the east. The better educated Ibos, while living in the north and west, occupied many positions in industry, commerce, and government and were strongly resented by the Moslem Hausa/Fulani people. The murder of leading Hausa/Fulani religious and political figures by a group of primarily Ibo army officers in January 1966 and the subsequent establishment of an Ibo-dominated military government triggered a retaliatory counter-coup by northern Hausa army officers in July 1966. In the following September and October, 7,000 to 10,000 Ibos were massacred in northern Nigeria. Surviving Ibos swarmed out of the north and west in fear of their lives. Eastern Nigeria declared itself the independent Republic of Biafra in May 1967, and in July the Nigerian federal government mounted military operations to halt the secession.

More than 1 million people have entered Biafra in the last 24 months. A reliable count is elusive, since the number of Ibos living outside Biafra before September 1966 has never been established. Few Ibos are