

Interest in immigration to Canada remained at a high level throughout the world in 1981. Reflecting this interest as well as Canada's own domestic needs and humanitarian concerns, missions abroad issued 127,706 immigrant visas, compared with 136,417 visas in 1980.

Within the context of deteriorating situations in many parts of the world, Canada's commitment to the resettlement of refugees remained an operational priority in 1981. Government-sponsored programs for refugees and self-exiled persons continued in the Asia and Pacific region, Eastern Europe and Latin America, as did several family reunification programs which are operative through private sponsorships. This commitment to assist these unfortunate persons was reinforced by the increasing attention and support of the Canadian public, the latter often through private sponsorships.

The Indochinese Refugee Program remained Canada's single largest resettlement program. In 1981 there was an increasing concentration on the reunification of families. Under the mandate of this successful and highly visible program 9,523 Indochinese refugees were provided with visas for resettlement in Canada. The Family Reunification Program from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, on the other hand, continued, as in 1980, to have serious problems of operational accessibility. In September, the Vietnamese government announced that it would permit the resumption of regular selection visits to Vietnam from the Canadian mission in Thailand. This decision allowed for large-scale processing of family reunification cases in accordance with the guidelines of the program.

In Eastern Europe the worsening state of the Polish economy and developments arising from the growth in importance and size of the trade union movement, Solidarity, resulted in the mass exodus of Poles to Western Europe, primarily through Austria. In response to the requests of the Austrian government and the concerns expressed by Canadian non-governmental organizations, Canada participated in a major international resettlement program for these persons. A special task force was sent to Vienna in September to speed the processing of Polish self-exiles there who wished to resettle in Canada. Other Canadian missions in Western Europe dealt on a priority basis with similar influxes of Poles, as well as other Eastern European nationals. As a result of this concentrated effort 2,544 Polish self-exiles obtained visas under the mandate of the Eastern European Designated Class Program, compared with 467 in 1980. A total of 5,153 visas were issued to Eastern Europeans, compared with 3,940 in 1980; of this number 546 persons received visas through private sponsorships.

In Central America the dramatic escalation of violence in El Salvador and Guatemala forced hundreds of thousands of persons to flee for safety to other countries in the region. While the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) sought local resettlement in the region as a temporary solution to eventual repatriation, the UNHCR did recognize the need in certain cases for resettlement outside the area. To assist Salvadoreans in such circumstances, the government put into force on March 19 the special measures program, which not only facilitated family