

## Ugandan Asians overwhelmed by welcome

# Canadians sacrifice hockey to receive refugees

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MONTREAL — Perhaps the best tribute to the success of the opening day of Canada's Ugandan refugee operation yesterday was that it went on uninterrupted right through the Canada-Russia hockey game.

Despite the clearly unbearable temptations of three television sets bringing the match into the barracks assembly at Longue Pointe, the joint military-civilian team went on doggedly with the job of speeding the first 138 Asians on their way across Canada.

Most of the refugees did not appreciate the sacrifice but they had already gathered that the idea was to make them feel really welcome.

The refugees—the first of 5,000 officially expected by the end of October—were overwhelmed by their reception.

The armed forces and the Department of Manpower and Immigration found a lot of minor faults with their first day in the refugee business but the Ugandans found none.

"Even the Indian food was authentic," one woman said. "It was better than what I can cook at home. They thought of absolutely everything."

The armed forces had, in fact, brought in a Montreal Indian restaurant owner last week to give the military cooks two days of lessons.

"We certainly did not want to offend the refugees right on the first day by giving them food they were not allowed to eat because of their religious beliefs," an armed forces spokesman said.

From a dawn welcome at Dorval airport by Immigration Minister Bryce Mackasey throughout a day of resting, completing customs and immigration formalities and receiving advice on job opportunities, the Ugandans remained bewildered by the efforts made on their behalf.

"I don't know if we'll be able to keep this up over the coming weeks but we will certainly try," one senior officer said.

Because of the difficult and often brutal experiences some Asians had suffered at the hands of Uganda's military, the Canadian servicemen at Longue Pointe had received special briefings telling them not to behave in a military way if they could help it—and it worked, at least for the first day.

The armed forces had been told to expect 35 flights of about 160 refugees each at a rate of roughly one a day.

The friendly welcome and a day of bright sunshine helped but the mood of the first arrivals was one of relief, with much sadness and depression evident in the quieter moments of the day.

The break with Uganda came more easily for some than for others.

A 16-year-old student of a Kampala secondary school, Kaushik Patel, will have one of the quickest transitions to a Canadian life.

He was met at Longue Pointe by his elder brother, Chan, a metals technician at Noranda, who came to Canada four years ago.

Within a couple of days, Kaushik will be a student at Noranda High School, where he is already enrolled.

Many others came with no plan and some were still stunned at leaving both family and possessions behind.

"It's a really amazing feeling," one woman said. "We just walked out of our house, closed the doors and left everything inside as it was. Our relatives had already left for Britain. We just abandoned everything except our clothes and this radio."

Others gave household possessions away to servants. "I gave away a car," one civil servant said. "I couldn't sell it and it would have just been confiscated."

Many were afraid to give their names to the press and one man became terrified when a television cameraman started to film his family. "Many of us did not even tell our friends we were leaving, we were so afraid of being stopped," he said. "If those pictures are seen back in Uganda, it will cause terrible trouble for relatives still there."

One of the biggest losers was Sikander Jatha, who, with his brothers, abandoned a family business that employed 200 people and was founded by his grandfather in 1912.

"We had a beryllium mine about 240 miles from Kampala and a supermarket," he said.

Mr. Jatha was leaving for Vancouver with his young wife, Nargis. "I don't know what I will do, but I have done lots of jobs. I know the mining business and I used to manage a hotel and I've worked at the Toyota dealership in Kampala."

In the party yesterday were

24 families, including 48 children, and 42 single men and women.

When operations shut down at Longue Pointe at 5:15 p.m. yesterday, 90 of the 138 people had been dealt with and most of them left last night for their Canadian destinations. The other 48 should be on their way by this afternoon, a spokesman said.

Of the 90 cleared yesterday, 34 were classified as bread-

winners—single people or heads of families. Of these, there were 14 clerks, six from managerial positions, two engineers, two teachers, eight mechanics and technicians, a barber and a truck driver.

Their destinations were: Sarnia, 1; Montreal, 2; Cornwall, 1; Vancouver, 15; Calgary, 2; Toronto, 4; Winnipeg, 1; Edmonton, 3; Hamilton, 2; Scarborough, 1; London, 1, and Waterloo 1.