Foreword

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A DECADE and a half after its original publication, *The Unwanted* remains the most comprehensive account of a central tragedy of twentieth-century European history. In the balanced, scholarly manner he has maintained throughout his distinguished career, even as he dealt with hyper-sensitive subjects such as Vichy France's collaboration in carrying out the "final solution," Michael Marrus provides a wide-ranging synthetic history of the causes and consequences of forced displacements involving many millions over the tumultuous half century stretching from World War I to the 1970s.

Since the book's original publication, new works have covered parts of the subject in greater detail, notably Claudena Skran's study of pre–World War II international organizations, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime* (Oxford, 1995); Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox's *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National, and Local Perspectives During the 20th Century* (London, 1999), which deals exclusively with British responses; Cecilia Ruthstrom-Ruim, *Beyond Europe: The Globalization of Refugee Aid* (Lund, Sweden, 1993), which elaborates developments referred to briefly in Marrus's last chapter; and *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Generation of Refugees in the Developing World*, co-authored

by Astri Suhrke, Sergio Aguayo, and myself (New York, 1989). In the intervening period, the unfortunate re-emergence of refugee flows within Europe in the 1990s has fostered a revival of historical interest in the subject more generally as well, so that more works are in the making.

Nevertheless, *The Unwanted* stands as a peerless stimulus to more general reflection on the dynamics that produce forced population movements, not only because of its comprehensiveness, but because it resonates well with social scientific approaches to the subject. Although Marrus firmly maintains an historian's stance throughout and firmly shuns reductionisms of any kind, the work constitutes in effect a series of "case studies" that lend themselves particularly well to theoretical explorations of ethnic and political conflicts and their consequences.

With regard to the causes of refugee flows, it can be seen in retrospect that the European refugee movements with which Marrus is concerned fall into two broad categories: those involving the persecution of national, ethnic, or religious minorities, usually arising from what is broadly termed state- and nation-formation—a subject I first explored in "The Formation of New States as a Refugee-Generating Process" (*Annals, American Academy of Political and Social Science* 467 [May 1983], 24–38); and those of a more purely political sort, usually triggered by an abrupt change of regime, involving a conflict between ideological camps, and commonly class-based, but not exclusively so.

With regard to the first, although Marrus appropriately devotes considerable attention to the Jews, who constituted the single most victimized group in Europe's troubled century, he also covers lesser known movements in the Balkans. As he points out, these are particularly important for understanding contemporary developments: what was termed at the time the "unmixing of peoples" presaged subsequent outbursts in the emerging Third World, notably the huge displacements that followed the partition of India and of Palestine in the aftermath of World War II, as well as more recent "ethnic cleansings" in Rwanda and, unexpectedly, again in the Balkans itself. It should be noted that a common feature of all these cases is the fact that the aggressive majority and the targeted minority are interspersed within the territory in question, so that a "clean" partition is impossible; should the leaders of the two

camps agree to separate, large population groups are left in what has become for them the "wrong country."

Although he introduces his account with a brief review of outbursts in the nineteenth century that constitute a "prelude" to the mass movements of the twentieth century, the underlying process can be traced to the earliest period of European state-formation. This involved the transformation of fragments of ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous empires into states that aspired to a more distinctive identity, founded on an imagined common ancestry, that rulers sought to turn into contemporary reality by achieving linguistic and religious homogeneity. From the very outset, their efforts entailed recognizable episodes of "ethnic cleansing," notably the repeated expulsion of the Jews from France and England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and Spain's attempt to demonstrate its qualification for membership in the European state system by requiring the conversion or expulsion of Jews and Muslims in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the wake of the Protestant Reformation, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the striving for homogeneity prompted protracted attempts to sort out Catholics and Protestants in accordance with the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio.* The legacy of this "religious cleansing" is still visible today, notably in the incidence of names with a French resonance in Britain, Sweden, or Germany, as well as others of Irish origin in various parts of the former Spanish Empire.

The contribution of changes of political regime to the generation of refugees is illustrated, in Marrus's account, by the defeated Whites of the Russian Revolution and the leftist victims of a variety of inter-war fascist regimes, including the losing Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. In this instance as well, the roots of the pattern are discernible much earlier, as far back as the comings and goings that accompanied factional struggles in the city-states of late medieval Italy, but especially in the "age of revolution" of the late eighteenth century. The most notorious instance is the stream of aristocratic *émigrés* spawned by the French Revolution. However, much less noted—except, of course, in Canada—is that the American Revolution in fact generated a much larger flow of exiles in proportion to population than its French counterpart. The British government implanted many of these refugees along the U.S. border of what are now Ontario and Quebec as a loyal reserve for

future military operations. The Tories, who were the original *contras,* illustrate a highly problematic consequence of the refugee phenomenon, which Suhrke, Aguayo, and I dubbed the formation of "refugee-warriors."

Marrus also provides a very useful introduction to the historical analysis of responses to ethnic and political persecution, notably the failure of international organization and the severe shortcomings of Western democracies on both sides of the Atlantic in the inter-war period, and the somewhat more adequate policies and organizations that emerged in the post–World War II era. His account reveals quite clearly that state action in this sphere reflects the fundamental tension that underlies all international relations, between idealism and realism: accordingly, states are generally at their most generous toward refugees when these are the victims of an antagonistic state, and least generous when they are the victims of an ally. Although circumstances have changed considerably, the problem remains whole, and therefore once again, *The Unwanted* constitutes an invaluable introduction to the understanding of our own dilemmas and obligations.