

The Accidental Immigrants: Canada And The Interned Refugees: Part 1

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Résumé

Dans cet article l'écrivain étudie ce qui c'est passé à un petit groupe d'Allemands et d'Autrichiens dont au moins le 70% descendait d'un de deux grands-parents juifs. Ces hommes se sont trouvés pris entre la destruction et l'exclusion de la société. S'étant réfugiés en Angleterre, ils furent pris, emprisonnés et envoyés au Canada où ils passèrent une grande partie de la deuxième guerre mondiale.

Paula Jean Draper fait remonter le commencement de l'odyssée de ce groupe d'internés à 1930 lorsqu'ils cherchèrent asile en Angleterre. Pendant les premières 10 années, ils purent bénéficier d'une liberté presque absolue. Pourtant, à partir de 1940, ils furent mis dans des camps spéciaux. Après être envoyés d'un camp d'internement à un autre, une partie d'eux fut envoyée en Australie et 4000 internés partirent pour le Canada. Les autorités au Canada s'attendaient à ce que ces internés fussent de catégorie "A", c'est à dire "dangereux", mais il s'agissait surtout de personnes de catégorie "B" et "C", ce qui implique qu'ils avaient le droit à être remis en liberté.

L'écrivain donne d'abord un aperçu de la politique canadienne des années 30 sur l'immigration. Elle décrit l'arrivée et le traitement réservé à ce groupe particulier d'internés. Les recherches faites par l'écrivain prouvent que malgré les pressions de la part du gouvernement anglais et de la part de plusieurs organisations, les personnes de groupe "B" et "C" étaient traitées comme des prisonniers et non pas comme ayant des privilèges bien définis.

Le gouvernement canadien aurait préféré ignorer les plaintes de ces réfugiés mais ceux-ci et leurs amis firent ainsi que le gouvernement dut bientôt changer de politique.

Pour compléter ses recherches l'écrivain a consulté plusieurs articles de journaux, les éditoriaux de cette période et elle a eu plusieurs entrevues

*Out of respect to the privacy of the individuals who were interviewed in the preparation of this paper, the author has refrained from naming them in the footnotes. Those wishing precise documentation may contact the author through the office of the Editor.

avec des personnes dont, par raisons humanitaires, elle préfère cacher le nom.

This is an examination of how a small group of German and Austrian men, at least seventy percent of whom had descended from one or more Jewish grandparents, found themselves caught between destruction and exclusion. Refugees in England, they were suddenly seized, imprisoned and shipped to internment camps in Canada. There they were to spend a good part of the war years. While their story is not unique, it's outcome is peculiar to "the Canadian Way". The treatment these men received at the hands of the Canadian government and military reflects the changing self-image which Canada underwent during the Second World War. Newspaper editorials shed light on the political stances involved in humanitarian issues. The actions of the Director of the Immigration Branch of the Ministry of Mines and Resources further illustrate the prevailing views on what kind of people were desirable as future Canadians. And the attitudes, perseverance and triumph of these refugees illustrate the abilities man possesses to ward off despair.

ENGLAND AND THE INTERNED REFUGEES

Loss of freedom is a shocking experience. It was all the more so for us because we felt ourselves to be allies of Great Britain. We regarded Britain as the country that had rescued us from Nazi tyranny. To be then incarcerated by our friends seemed almost incomprehensible, a kind of betrayal.¹

By the late 1930's England had become the refugee centre of the world. In the summer of 1943, there were 114,400 war refugees in the country. They came from every nation in Western Europe. When war was declared, all people categorized as "enemy aliens" were brought before tribunals to be classified into one of three categories. Class "A" aliens were termed "dangerous enemy aliens" and immediately interned. Class "B" or "friendly enemy aliens" were under suspicion and were given restrictions such as curfews and a five mile travel limit. The third group, and the largest, was category "C", "friendly alien and refugee from Nazi oppression". Apart from general restrictions against driving and using cameras, "C" as well as "B"s were free from internment.

During the "phony war" these refugees were well-treated in England. But the spring of 1940 brought an end to tranquility in England. On April ninth, Denmark fell. Norway was subdued by May. On May tenth, 1940,

the *Blitzkrieg* began. Holland, Luxembourg, and Belgium collapsed. By June twenty-second an armistice had been signed between France and Germany. Britain was now the target of the Nazis. As fear of invasion mounted, the possibility that amongst the refugees in England there could be subversive elements waiting to help overthrow the government became increasingly realistic.

That the fifth column could be a decisive factor in modern warfare emerged from the Spanish Civil War. Although seldom clearly projected, the common image of the fifth column included saboteurs and spies, as well as propagandists who aimed to divide the populace and undermine the government by convincing masses of people of the fruitlessness of resisting the enemy.²

This fear was especially prevalent among the British military. Beginning in mid-May all categories of enemy aliens residing in eastern coastal or so-called "Protected Areas" in England and Scotland were interned by the Home Office. German and Austrian men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, totalling 23,000 and 3,000 women, were interned.³ They were placed in improvised camps and prisons. The government explanation of this round-up was presented by the Under-Secretary of the Home Office, Mr. Peake, on July 10th, 1940:

I wish we knew half as much about many of the neutral aliens and many British subjects as we know about the enemy aliens in this country . . . It was represented to us by the military authorities, on military grounds, that the whole of the coastal belt on the east and south-east coasts of England must be made into a protected area. Not only did they press upon us that enemy aliens, about whom we knew so much, should be turned out, but, they pressed upon us also that neutral aliens should be removed. The military authorities asked for the removal of all aliens from the coastal belt. The only practical method of dealing with the situation was, in fact, to intern the males . . . In my view the most humane thing to do with the aliens at that time, and with public feeling what it was, was to put them into temporary internment.⁴

Thus it was obvious that those refugees, who by accidents of fate were living in the designated protected areas, were deliberately interned. That it was a precautionary measure, which in fact served to remove these early victims of Nazism from possible danger zones, is also clear. No one believed that this was anything more than a temporary measure.⁵

I was working as an apprentice cutter in the large clothing factory

of the Montague Burton Company in Leeds, when, at 12:30 p.m., on May 16, 1940, I was called to the main office. This was so unusual an occurrence as to cause something of a sensation among my fellow workers . . . My knees shaking, I followed the man who had been sent to fetch me, and was taken to the office of the assistant general manager. Two men in rain coats were waiting . . . These gentlemen, he said, were detectives who had come to fetch me. The room began to sway. I could not find my voice. My throat seemed parched. What had I done? Then one of the detectives said that all aliens were being interned for a brief period. But there was nothing to be afraid of . . . It would all be sorted out quickly . . . I would soon be sent back . . . It was likely, he added, that I would be detained for a day or two. Therefore they would drive me home so that I could get some pyjamas and a toothbrush . . . Then I walked out of the office, between two detectives, a kind of prisoner.⁶

The younger the refugee was, the less ominous was the visit by the police.

I sat in the car, I'm sure they must have thought I was crazy, and I laughed and I laughed on the way to the police station. I knew something marvelous had happened to me.⁷

For thousands of those interned in this manner, freedom was not to be regained in one or two days, but in one, or two, or even three years.

Moved about from place to place, the internees found themselves congregated in ever growing numbers. Three of the larger camps were in Huyton, near Liverpool, and in holiday resorts on the Isle of Man.

Vividly I still see the picture as we went through the streets of Ramsey to the Internment Camp in a long marching column, everybody carrying his small luggage. The inhabitants of Ramsey stand in front of their houses. The rumor has spread: we are dangerous parachutists, and so we are looked at gloomily, perhaps one or the other astonished, how we managed to jump down with suitcases and portfolios.⁸

With the exception of those who had been transferred from Kitchener Camp, the Isle of Man was the first place in which many of the refugees were thrown together in large groups. The camps were segregated into those for men and for women. In these camps there was no work to be done and so time was spent in entertainment and discussion. They complained about the food, discussed the war, dwelt on the horrors they had escaped and worried about those they had left behind.⁹ For those who observed *kashrut* there was little to eat other than bread.¹⁰ While the few

who had friends in the kitchens ate well,¹¹ others had, on occasion, only a little bread to last them days.¹² One refugee recalls hearing that in Ramsey the quartermaster was selling nine-tenths of their rations on the black market.¹³ But the Isle of Man was a resort, so the conditions were comfortable and they could go swimming in the Irish Sea. Only for the men recently released from concentration camps was this incarceration difficult.¹⁴ The imminent threat of invasion caused fear in some that the large groupings of refugees on the island would serve as convenient concentration camps for the conquering Germans. Others saw their removal to an area far from the scene of battle as a measure of protection. Nevertheless, there were guards and barbed wire, though guns had to be exchanged at every change of the guard due to their shortage.¹⁵ For about two thousand of the men thus incarcerated, the comfortable stay was soon ended, by way of transfer to a camp in Huyton, and then a ship ride to Canada.

The amount of manpower necessary to administer and guard 26,000 people led to a decision to send internees to Commonwealth countries. Canada and Australia accepted, as a means of aiding the war effort.

15 June 1940. Arrival in Douglas, Isle of Man. Hygienical conditions excellent. We sleep in beds again. Food is not enough, though. We are allowed to bathe in the sea, and are taken for walks. We live fairly peacefully and undisturbed for some ten days, when it is announced that all unmarried men between the ages of 16 and 40 are going to be moved. There are rumours to Canada, but we do not know.¹⁶

Two thousand internees of all categories were sent to Australia in the summer of 1940. More than four thousand internees were shipped to Canada. They were sent on three ships: the *Arandora Star*, the *S.S. Et-trick*, and the *S.S. Sobieski*. Canada had expected that her offer to take internees was restricted to those in class "A", dangerous enemy aliens, but she instead received approximately 2250 "B"s and "C"s. It was generally believed among the interned refugees that there had been a mistake in orders and that the refugees had not been officially designated for removal to the Dominions. There is no indication in the available documents that such was the case.

The fact that England was shipping these refugees to Canada came to a tragic light when the *Arandora Star* was torpedoed on June 30th, 1940. Four hundred lives were lost, all of them internees.¹⁷ Cables from Vincent Massey, the High Commissioner for Canada in England, indicate that at

least fifty of the internees aboard were in category "B".¹⁸ An additional 532 were stated to be German internees, category "A". The resultant exposure caused by this tragedy led to public outcries in Britain, and to many questions about the treatment of the refugees. On July 9th, Mr. Cross, the Minister of Shipping, in answer to a question in Parliament said: "The Germans on board were Nazi sympathizers and none came to this country as refugees."¹⁹ The next day he repeated the above statement and then went on to contradict it. "Having arrived at the names of the missing . . . the Home Office . . . (will) transmit them to the refugee organizations because it is only the refugee organizations who will be able to get in touch with the relatives."²⁰ In the following weeks and months the British government was forced to justify its actions. On July 23rd, the Home Secretary, Sir John Anderson, spoke in the House of Commons and explained that:

The recent restrictions for the internment of Germans and Austrians who had been placed in the "C" category provided for the exemption of those falling within certain specified descriptions . . . There have been cases of mistaken interpreting instructions which necessarily had to be carried out under a great deal of urgency.²¹

This explanation did not stand up to the further scrutiny of an Inquiry. In his report on the *Arandora Star*, Lord Snell stated:

The Canadian government agreed to take four thousand, and it was estimated that this number would absorb all the more dangerous characters. While the underlying idea was, in the first stage at any rate, to send out of the country those aliens who were proved or known to be dangerous characters, it would not be right to say that the orders issued ever laid down that only aliens who could be described as dangerous characters were sent overseas.²²

Thus while the original intentions of those who ordered internment were for temporary detention, the pressures of the time caused indiscriminate actions. We do not know which agencies were responsible for the sending of refugees to the Dominions. But there can be no doubt that the government was well aware of what was happening. That public sentiment was not behind this policy was clearly illustrated. In the following eight months five debates were forced in the Commons regarding the internments.²³ By the end of July opportunities for release were made available for "C" internees. Those eligible for release included: students under eighteen, those with work permits, workers in agriculture, scientists and academics for whom there was war work, doctors and dentists

authorized to practice or study, those engaged in refugee organizations, those with sons in the British armed forces, religious ministers with congregations, and people "about to embark on emigration overseas."²⁴ These regulations were duly transmitted to the Canadian authorities. By the end of July the transferal of interned refugees was halted and those in British internment camps were being processed for release. Only two ships had brought refugees to Canada. How the Canadian government reacted to the knowledge of who the prisoners were, and the manner in which she treated them clearly illustrates the immigration policies and practices of the time.

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY IN THE 1930's

Workers in Jewish agencies in the 1930's were familiar with the often repeated stories of how recent Jewish immigrants had received their visas to Canada. Claiming to be farmers in order to pass the regulations, Jews were told to show the immigration officers their hands. It was not the texture of the hands these men were interested in. It was the money they held.²⁵ Many Jews lied about their religion, aware as they were that Canada did not want Jews. A large group of Czechoslovakian farmers, who were allowed into Canada in 1938, contained many Jews who only made themselves known to the Jewish community after they became citizens. The internees were well aware of the difficulty involved in Canadian immigration.

So began what was to be an internment lasting more than a year and a half. It was to take me to Canada, a country that I barely knew by name and that was only a large red stretch on the school maps we had used in Vienna in our geography lessons. It was a silent, mysterious land for me, known by all refugees as the country whose doors were most tightly shut. Virtually no one could get in.²⁶

When Auschwitz became an extermination centre, all the belongings of the victims were stored in a huge complex which was referred to by the inmates as "Canada". In concentration camp slang "Canada" meant "an abundance of everything", which was off limits and closely guarded.²⁷ This was an unfortunately apt description of Canadian immigration policies in the 1930's and early 1940's.

The anti-immigration policies of the 1930's were based on simple prejudices as well as elaborately constructed economic and social theories. The restrictionist legislation of 1931 was predominantly a result of economic recession. The standard of living began to fall in 1929 and con-

tinued its downward trend every year until 1933.²⁸ By 1933 twenty-nine percent of the labour force was unemployed,²⁹ and over a million of Canada's population of ten million were on direct relief.³⁰ Admitting more job-seekers was a political impossibility. Coupled with this crisis were the effects of the imposition of a quota system in the United States. Canada's open door system of immigration had depended heavily on the outward flow of new arrivals to the south. This had long been criticized by opponents of free immigration, such as the Canadian historian R.M. Lower.

Wholesale immigration, productive as it is of wholesale emigration, turns our country into a training ground for American citizens. Meanwhile we in Canada have brought in another batch of raw material which out of the goodness of our hearts we proceed to prepare for our American friends.³¹

The change in American policy meant that only Canadian citizens were free to resettle in the United States. Fear grew that the departing native Canadians would be replaced by undesirable immigrant groups. Academics therefore devised a theory which would show that these immigrants were unnecessary altogether. Lower, writing in 1930,³² contended that the present natural surplus of births over deaths (1½%) was sufficient population increase due to the limited expansion of the economy. The end of the land boom meant that new settlers would only displace the native born. Thus immigration would cause emigration and "cheap men will drive out dear ones".³³ But as the 1930's progressed, the economic argument became less tenable. During that decade emigration exceeded immigration by over 100,000 and the standard of living rose every year but 1938.³⁴ By 1939 the economy had recovered to its 1928 peak, and after 1940 there was full employment.³⁵ Thus in the mid-thirties less tangible arguments took precedence in the restrictionist mind.

Those who opposed immigration on social grounds maintained, as did W. Burton Hurd, that an "appeal" to religious prejudices is patently un-British."³⁶ Their main concern was that the British character of Canada was seriously threatened by the massive influx of Central and Eastern Europeans, as well as by the importation of Oriental labour. Besides ignorance of English, these groups displayed an alarming propensity towards high birth rates and continued illiteracy.³⁷ They also seemed to defy assimilation, especially the Orientals, Negroes and Hebrews.³⁸ Hurd claimed that these new immigrants were significantly crime-prone and that this tendency persisted to the third and fourth generation.³⁹ He came

to these conclusions on the basis of children in reformatories. By some inverted reasoning Hurd then concluded that:

No claim is made for the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon and French races nor for the British culture. Nor is any blame attached to individuals or groups for circumstances beyond their control which make their assimilation in Canada difficult.⁴⁰

The racialism which surfaces from under the guise of social self-interest in these arguments was even more thinly disguised by W.A. Carothers in 1929.⁴¹ While complaining that the cheap labour of immigrants was destroying the economic chances of the Anglo-Canadians, he inferred that their low standard of living was a racial trait.⁴² Though he was mainly concerned with the threat of yellow, black and brown immigration,⁴³ he was willing to admit that "from the biological point of view their (central, south and eastern Europeans) assimilation would not necessarily lead to race deterioration."⁴⁴

The problem is not so much of racial inferiority, as of controlling numbers to ensure that they have the opportunity of understanding our social ideals and institutions.⁴⁵

Would-be citizens should be judged by "Canadian standards of life, justice, integrity, fair play, and morality, both public and private."⁴⁶ Thus, in social terms, the ideal non-British or non-French immigrant would be white, Christian, and a believer in democracy.

Politics, in fact, were a dominant theme of the social supporters of restrictionism. The fact that large homogenous groups of Eastern and Central Europeans had settled *en masse* in the prairie provinces, and to a smaller extent in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg, gave rise to fears of a different sort. Communism, not fascism, was the primary evil which clouded the vision of the western world. The growing voting power of the unassimilated groups in Western Canada, and in the larger cities, combined with the massive unemployment in these areas to create anti-democratic movements. In capitalist Canada the threat of communism was perceived to far outweigh that presented by the little known ideals of fascism. In the 1930's the Communist Party actually gained very little support in Canada. By 1937 the total membership in the country was estimated to be less than fifteen thousand.⁴⁷ One example of the fears aroused by socialist ideas occurred in Ontario. The Oshawa strike of 1937 resulted in a political swing to the far right by Premier Mitchell Hepburn. Industrial unionism became branded as Bolshevism. Subsequently, Premier Hepburn demoted his two most progressive cabinet ministers.⁴⁸

One was a Jew. Allied with the government, the Toronto *Globe and Mail* editorialized that:

Although it cannot be said that a majority of Jews are Communists, the indications are that a large percentage, and probably a majority of Communists are Jews.⁴⁹

In reality only about four hundred and fifty members of the Communist Party of Canada were Jewish.⁵⁰ Thus the real, though unsubstantiated, fear of communism was directly linked to the Jewish people. This was utilized by the growing, and vociferous, fascist movement in Canada. With the help of Nazi propaganda the Canadian fascists were able to add an additional terrifying note to the spectre of Jewish communism - the Jewish world conspiracy. The pamphlet, *The Key of Mystery*, which consisted of forged and distorted texts proposing Jewish domination of the world, was published in Montreal by Adrien Arcand.⁵¹ This leader of the Canadian fascists found widespread support for his anti-Semitic propaganda, especially in Duplessis Quebec. The pervasiveness of these ideas was eloquently attested to as late as 1944 when a French Canadian member of the Federal Parliament was able to make the following statement without rebuke.

Mr. Liguori Lacombe (Laval-Two Mountains) . . . It would be criminal to listen to the advocates of immigration who are all in the pay of international finance and who frequently receive favours from communists and proponents of world revolution . . . Will the government understand where lie the interests most dear to our people, or will it give in to national and international conspiracies hatched in secrecy and all of them detrimental to Canada?⁵²

In the 1930's the largest pressures exerted on the government were on the behalf of refugees from Hitler's Germany. And who were these refugees? Communists, leftists and Jews. Thus a genuine fear of communist immigration combined with the slightly less fashionable reality of anti-Semitism under the guise of political and social restrictionism. The economic problems of the decade provided a convenient excuse for an anti-immigration government.

Newspaper editorials which followed upon the events of November 1938 in Germany, indicate that government policy was generally supported by public opinion. Those who supported the admission of refugees de-emphasized their Jewishness or else praised their stereotyped qualities, (shrewdness, industriousness, and thriftiness).⁵³ Other supporters stressed the need to populate Canada's vast lands in order that she might protect

herself from conquerors. Those opposed were either vociferously anti-Semitic, as in Quebec, or else valiantly British. By warning against the loss of the British character of Canada, these loyalists were outdoing the British themselves, who had accepted over a hundred thousand refugees. Many advocated the granting of money to send refugees to other lands. The wilds of British Guiana and Tanganyika were two popular choices. Most editorials took the moderate view which combined these various aspects to allow for admitting people on humanitarian grounds. Thus they felt that the "White Man's Burden" should be borne, in part, by Canada.⁵⁴ The *Toronto Globe and Mail's* views were typical.

It is necessary because of indifference in the past, to regulate immigration to keep this a British nation and this will be no small task.

But Canada can relax immigration regulations sufficiently to admit a moderate number of German and Austrian refugees on a selective basis who will take up land as farmers and avoid intensifying the unemployment problem in urban communities.⁵⁵

That anti-Semitism played a significant role is illustrated by a public opinion poll taken in 1946,⁵⁶ after the atrocities of the Final Solution were well known. Asked "If Canada allows more immigration, are there any of these nationalities which you would like to keep out?"

(more than 100% because many gave more than one answer)

Japanese	60%	Middle European	16%
Jewish	49	Ukrainian	15
German	34	Polish	14
Russian	33	Others	3
Negro	31	nine	18
Italian	25	no answer	7
Chinese	24		

Economic condition, nationalism, fear of communism and anti-Semitism thus combined to create a climate hostile to increased immigration, especially of refugees.

The government's actions fit the demands of public opinion. Dr. Manion wooed the French voters by outspoken opposition to increased immigration. The C.C.F. favoured admission according to absorptive capacity, which in a time of economic depression was equivalent to the Conservative stand. The Liberal government of Mackenzie King maintained a low level of immigration and the ratio of Jews given visas was not altered. Various attempts by Jewish organizations to change the attitude

of the Prime Minister failed. Three Jewish members of Parliament (S.W. Jacobs, A.A. Heaps, and Sam Factor) pleaded in the House for an easing of restrictions. In 1938 King was pushed into setting up a committee of the Cabinet to deal with the refugee problem. These ministers: T.A. Crerar, Ernest Lapointe, Ian Mackenzie, J.L. Isley and F. Rinfret, made no recommendations to ease the situation. Meanwhile, Jews were being excluded in every conceivable manner. On November 9, 1938, Heaps wrote to King: "the existing regulations are probably the most stringent to be found anywhere in the whole world. If refugees have no money, they barred because they are poor, and if they have fairly substantial sums they are often refused admittance on the most flimsy pretext."⁵⁷ On the other hand petitions against refugees were flowing in from Quebec. The petition of the Saint Jean de Baptiste Society was presented to the Commons with 127,364 signatures in protest "against immigration of any kind whatsoever, and especially Jewish immigrants."⁵⁸ Caught in the middle of this argument the government remained content to avoid any policy regarding refugees. The answer to why King did not allow himself to act was that, in his attitudes, he was a typical Canadian.

His thinking was embarrassingly simplistic, and he could refer to a Jew as "a credit to his race", to a "darky" servant or to the "masses" in his private musings in his diary. There was prejudice in him, but no more than was commonplace in men of his class, age and upbringing.⁵⁹

As Jews continued to comprise about 5.4%⁶⁰ of the total immigration, and that number consistently dropped during the 1930's, Canada indeed became an impossible dream for refugees. While in 1931 4,164⁶¹ of 27,530⁶² immigrants were Jews, by 1938 there were only 584 Jews out of a total of 17, 17,244. Between 1933-1939 a total of 3,834⁶³ Jews were allowed into Canada, from all sources, including the United States. The reasons were summarized by the *Report of Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* in 1970.

In the late 1930's some of those arriving in Canada were refugees, but economic recovery was slow and the Canadian government was reluctant to admit even the victims of Nazi Germany. The tendency to give economic considerations priority over humanitarian ones was probably buttressed by the anti-Semitism expressed by small but noisy and even violent minorities in various parts of Canada in the 1930's.⁶⁴

CANADA AT WAR

Canada entered the war in September 1939. She declared war only because Britain had declared war, and for no other reason. "It was not a war for Poland; it was not a war against anti-Semitism; it was not even a war against Nazism."⁶⁵ There were no ideological or humanitarian motives involved in Canada's actions. Defence of the Empire was her sole concern. In Canada there were large numbers of enemy aliens, particularly in the West, who had settled in Canada early in the century. Refugees made up only a small proportion of the overall "enemy" population. It was clearly impossible that all these people should be interned. The urgency involved in Britain was not necessary in a country far removed from the threat of invasion. Yet the police had been monitoring the activities of foreign-controlled organizations in Canada.⁶⁶ As a direct result the *Defence of Canada Regulations*,⁶⁷ which had been drafted on July 6th, 1939 and which became law as P.C. 2483 on September 3rd, laid down provisions that "All enemy aliens in Canada, so long as they peacefully pursue their ordinary avocations shall be allowed to continue to enjoy the protection of the law and shall be accorded the respect and consideration due to peaceful and law abiding citizens." Article twenty-five created Registrars of Enemy Aliens (R.C.M.P. officers). Every enemy alien was required to report for identification purposes to a Registrar. Of a total of 16,643 registered by May 23rd, 1940, 4,322 had been given exemption certificates on the grounds that they were "people from Czechoslovakia and other similar refugees."⁶⁸ Appeals against internment were provided for in Article twenty-six and they were to be prompt and thorough. Thus a mechanism for release was in operation in Canada, as well as an awareness of the difference between a refugee and an enemy when the interned refugees arrived.

CANADA AND THE INTERNED REFUGEES: WHY THEY CAME

The S.S. Ettrick and the S.S. Sobieski landed in Canada in July of 1940. The possibility that they had brought a large number of refugee immigrants to Canada could not have been further from the minds of the authorities involved. Yet there had been ample indications that these internees were not the dangerous enemy aliens that the government had agreed to accept.

The earliest indication that Canada might be willing to take men interned in England came in February of 1940. A former member of the King's African Rifles wrote from Vancouver to the Minister of National Defence, suggesting that it would be "a very valuable addition to Canada's

war effort if arrangements were made for all German prisoners of war to be held in Canada for the duration.”⁶⁹ He further suggested that veterans of the “Great War” could be used as guards. The Under Secretary of State, E.H. Coleman, agreed with this idea, while envisioning problems of world criticism.

From the physical point of view, I have no doubt in my mind that we could in Canada set up an additional number of internment camps but it seems to me the suggestion raises an important question of policy. There is no doubt in my mind that a transfer of a considerable number of German prisoners to Canada by the government of the United Kingdom would be represented to the world as an act of barbarity. . . It would be represented that the prisoners were interned in Canada in Arctic wastes.⁷⁰

Yet he did conclude that there was no doubt that if the United Kingdom asked, Canada would accept. In May, the request came. Massey cabled that there were nine thousand Austrians and Germans already interned in England.

The custody of so many potentially dangerous persons in area which may be the scene of active operations presents a very difficult problem . . . Consideration thus being given to the possibility of easing these difficulties by sending certain internees out of the U.K. . . . The U.K. government would be glad to learn whether the principle of receiving alien internees from this country is acceptable to the Canadian government.⁷¹

Meanwhile fears that there were already too many enemies among Canadians were spreading. The Minister of Justice, Ernest Lapointe, tried to allay these fears. In a speech to the House on June 3rd, 1940, he warned:

It is a great disservice to Canada and the allied cause to spread stories that Canada is filled with enemy sympathizers . . . But let us be careful not to mistake for pro-Germans persons who have German names and German descent. Most of them came to Canada to escape the Prussian yoke. The overwhelming majority are passionately anti-Nazi.⁷²

The government therefore recognized that there were many Germans who were not sympathetic to the Third Reich. At the same time she unsuspectingly prepared to receive a whole new batch of them.

On June 7th, Massey again cabled, with the information that there were now 12,000 internees of whom 2,500 were pro-Nazi and “therefore dangerous in the event of parachute landings or invasion.”⁷³ He urged that

accommodation be made quickly for the transfer of these "dangerous type" internees, and added that all costs in transportation and maintenance would be borne by the British. The Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Dr. O.D. Skelton, replied on June 10th that: "Under the circumstances the Canadian government are prepared to accept up to 4,000 internees as proposed, and also up to 3,000 prisoners of war."⁷⁴ Simple arithmetic proves that Canada, while implying she wanted only dangerous internees, invited the possibility that as many as 1,500 refugees could be sent over. It seems probable that the request for 4,000 internees was based on accommodation capacities rather than on a careful reading of Massey's cable. The next day, June 11th, a Member of Parliament brought the plight of the interned refugees to the attention of the House. Quoting an article in the *London Spectator*, Mr. Hanson informed the House of the reasons for the mass internments in England.

The safety of the country demands that no half-measures should be taken to guard against it here even if hardship is imposed on many innocent people . . . This drastic treatment of foreigners, the majority of whom are perfectly loyal to the allies is regrettable, but there is no alternative. It is promised that the measures will be mitigated when circumstances permit.⁷⁵

The fact that there were large numbers of friendly aliens interned in England was not connected with the problem of bringing internees to Canada.

The War Cabinet Committee meeting on June 14th covered the subject of locating the new camps.

The general view was that the majority should be located in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario, rather than in the Western provinces. . . .

The Minister of Finance referred to the "political" problems connected with the locating of internees and prisoners of war . . . It had been felt that to locate large numbers in Saskatchewan might be unwise because of the German populations there; on the other hand, to send some to Alberta and not to Saskatchewan might appear to be a reflection on the loyalty of the other province.⁷⁶

As a result of these fears the internment camps were located far away from the German settlements of the west. For the refugees this was to be a great advantage, as they were thereby placed in close proximity to the largest Jewish communities in Canada.

While arrangements for the prisoners of war and internees were being

made, the government expressed a willingness to accept larger numbers of civilians from the United Kingdom.⁷⁷ To begin with, ten thousand British children would be accepted. Vestiges of colonialism remained in Canada before and during the Second World War. This offer to accept tens of thousands of British refugees reflects the extent to which this mentality still pervaded the government. As in her immigration policy, in her humanitarian policies Britain came first, often to the exclusion of all others. But, while Canada did not want other species of refugees, she got them. The first flight of internees sailed on June 21st, carrying 530 prisoners of war, and 2160 internees.⁷⁸ Internees were placed, on arrival, in Camp "F", Fort Henry and camp "R" at Red Rock (near Fort William) Ontario. Prisoners of war and 347 internees were put in Camp "T" in Trois Rivières. Information available shows that thirty-six of the internees at Camp "R" were Jews.⁷⁹ It is not known whether there were any more than this on the first flight. The second flight was to be the *Arandora Star*. Massey's cable of June 29th, stated clearly that 50 "B" internees would be on the *Arandora Star*, as well as 858 on the *Ettrick*. On July 4th, he informed the authorities that 982 category "B" and "C" internees would sail on the *Sobieski*. The two ships sailed, without incident, (the Germans were informed that prisoners of war were on the ships), on the third and fourth of July. The cable of July 6th, corrected the information earlier sent, changing the number of internees on the *Ettrick* to 1,308 "B" and "C" aliens. Thus the government was informed that 2290 refugees were en route to Canada.

The interned refugees were placed on ships with Nazis and prisoners of war. While the prisoners of war travelled first class, under the Geneva Convention, the internees were quartered in steerage and surrounded with barbed wire and machine guns. The voyage was rather unpleasant for most. They had to sleep on hammocks or on the floor. Seasickness and salmonella (gastrointestinal diarrhea) plagued a large number and food ran out the last few days. One internee remembers a British colonel who hit people who did not follow his orders fast enough.⁸⁰ For many, knowledge of their destination was uncertain until their ship entered the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. There was little communication with the prisoners of war, and fortunately they were separated from the refugees. The British obviously were aware of the antagonism between the two groups.

Our stay on the Isle of Man is only short. Again we go on board of a ship. In Glasgow we embark on a transoceanic liner and after

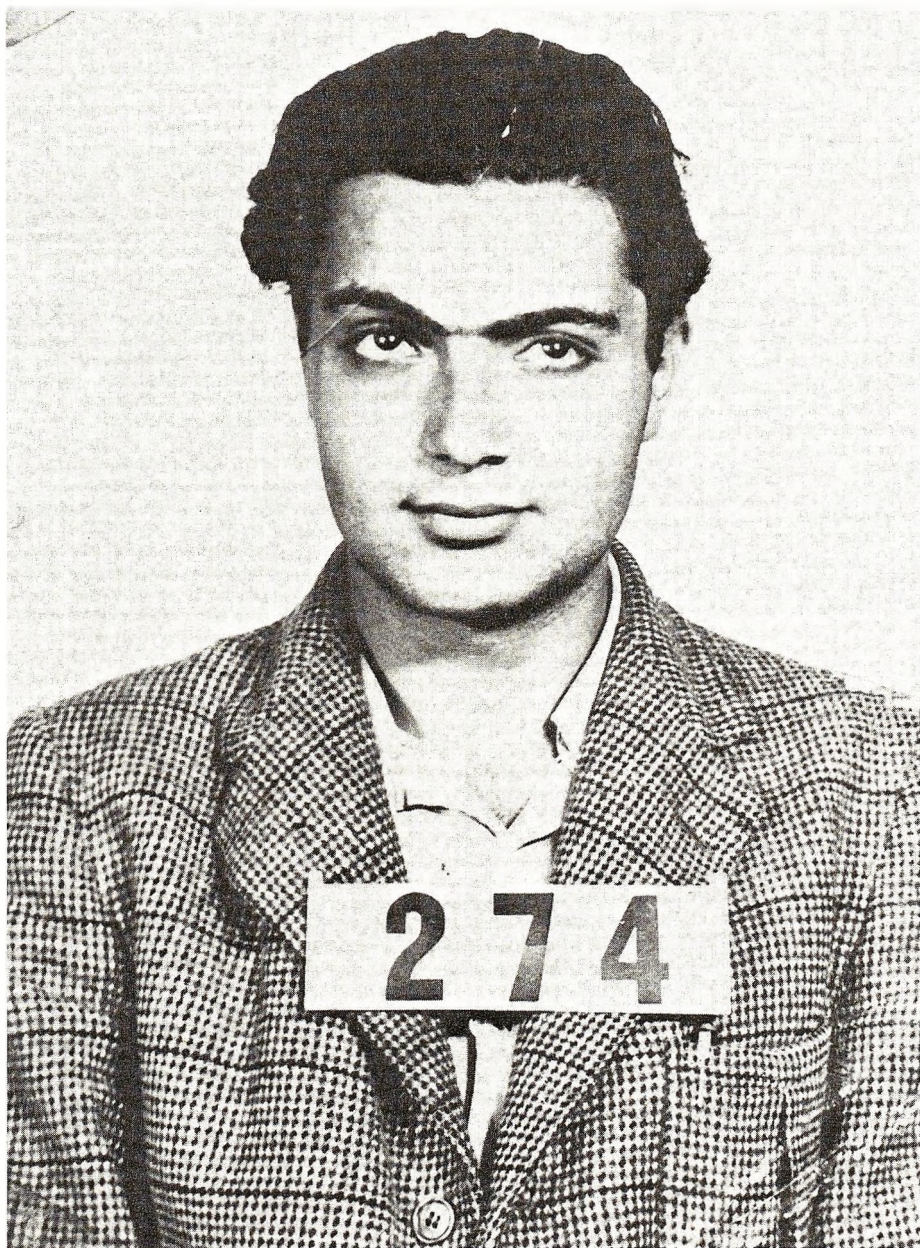


Figure 1
Marcell Seidler, interned refugee, (Official photo)
Mr. Seidler took all the photographs reproduced here
with an illegally constructed cardboard camera.

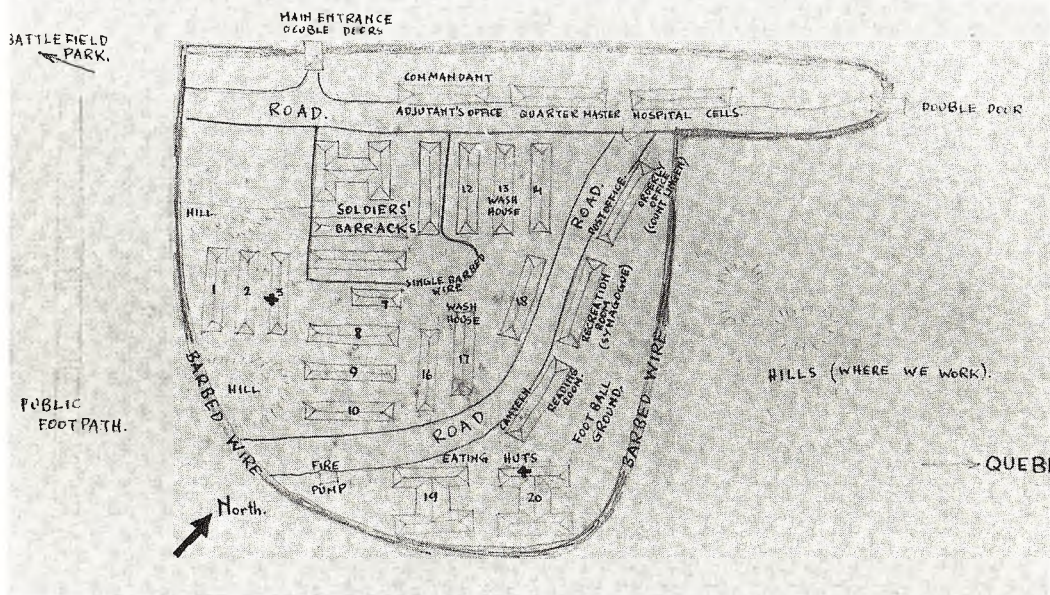


Figure 2
Sketch of Camp "L", from the
diary of Harry Seidler.

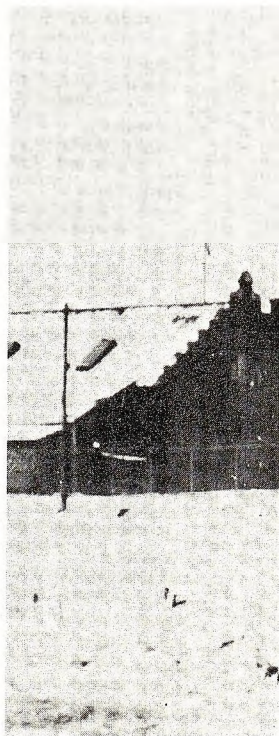


Figure 3 & 4
Camp "N" Sherbrooke, P.Q.
(photos by Marcell Seidler)

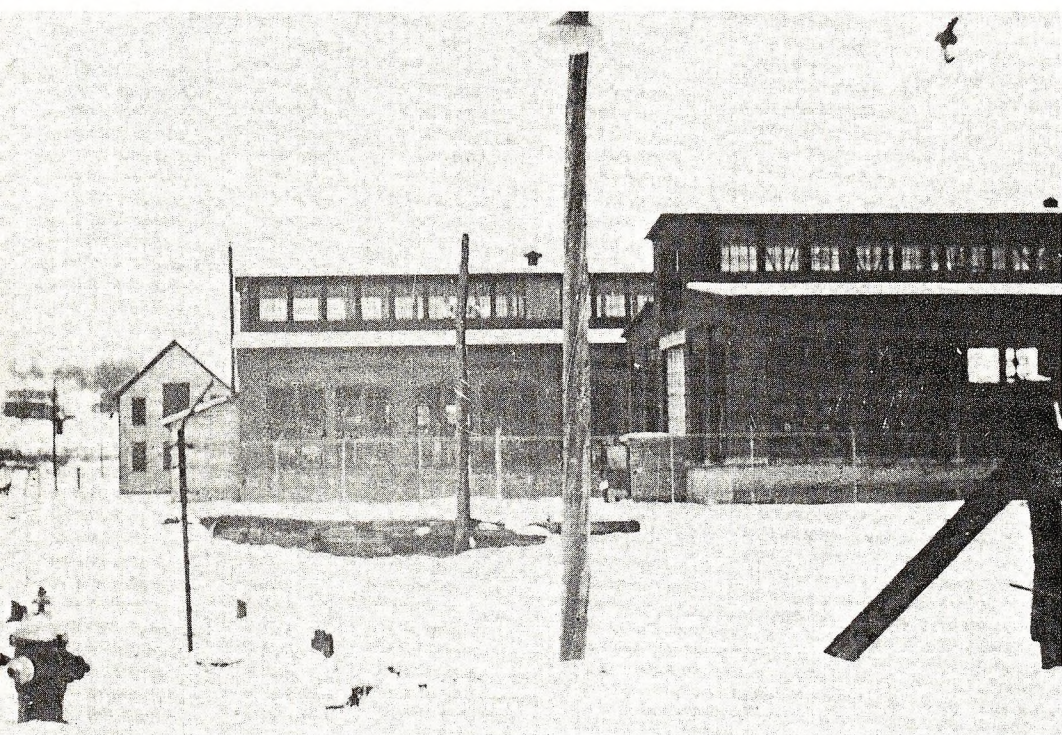
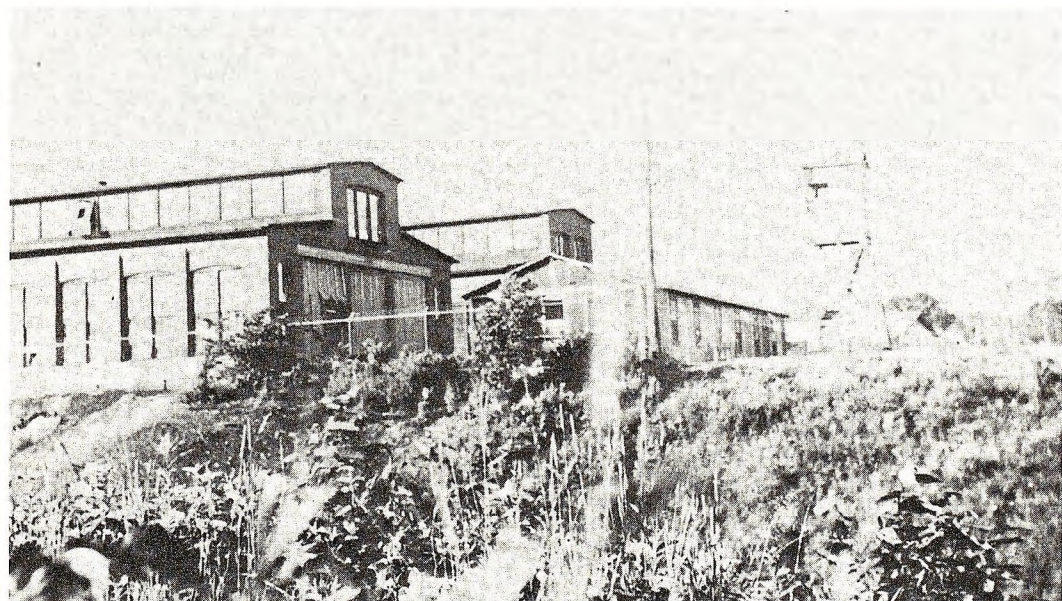
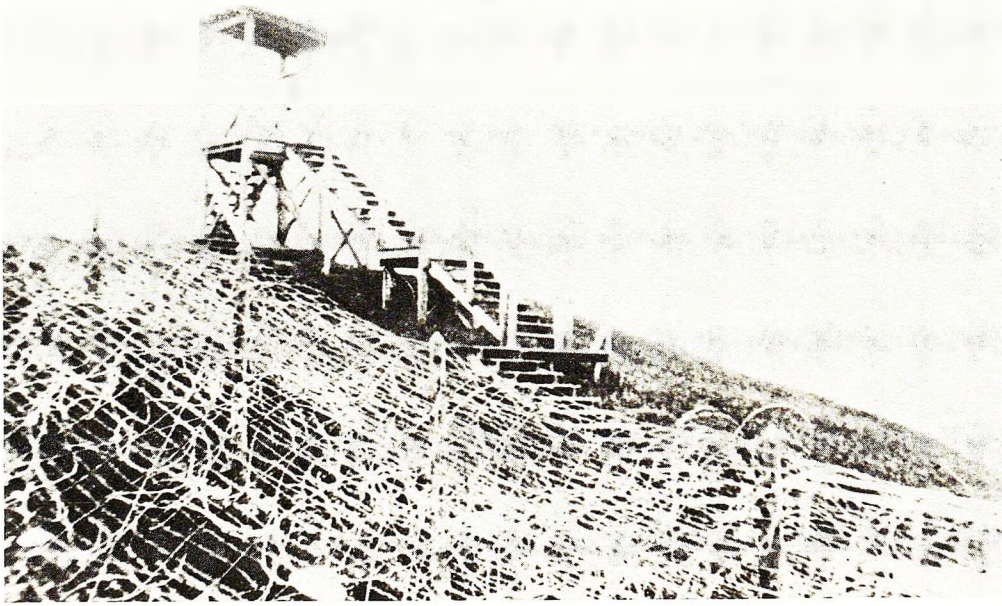


Figure 5
Camp "L", Quebec City.
The man playing with
the cat is pianist John
Newmark. (Photo by
Marcell Seidler).



Figure 6
Camp "L", Quebec
City. Note the guard
tower and barbed
wire fence. (Photo by
Marcell Seidler).



scarcely eleven days of voyage we get ashore in Canada. On the vessel were real prisoners of war, too. Some comrades of ours sleep together with them on the same deck. One evening the prisoners of war sing "Wir fahren gegen Engeland". (i.e.: We go against England) whereupon one of us strikingly remarks: "Then, gentlemen, you must change! Because you are going in the wrong direction."⁸¹

Among the refugees on the S.S. Ettrick was Count Frederick von Lingen, prince of Prussia and grandson of the Kaiser. To the amazement of his companions, who shared the baggage compartment with him, he organized toilet fatigues to clean up the refuse resulting from widespread illness. After ten days of discomfort, the ships reached their destination: Quebec City.

On arrival they were treated as if they were prisoners of war. For reasons unknown, the authorities had chosen to disregard the information relayed by Massey. For the refugees it was a rude shock. The British Liaison officer whom the U.K. had sent to handle the treatment of these men had been saved from the Arandora Star. He was not to arrive until later. Thus this odd collection of male refugees was given an enemy's welcome in Quebec.

Some people probably, it will never get out of their minds. We received a reception as German spies. On the boat where we were we had I don't know how many German navy and Luftwaffe officers and a couple thousand Italian civilians. When our boat docked in Quebec the first . . . allowed to get off the boat were the German officers. We watched how the Canadian soldiers were carrying the suitcases of the German officers. The German officers walked down the plank just with their coats over their arms. They were treated like supermen which made us feel already rotten. Then when we were let down the plank we were put into army lorries and in all the corners, and in front of us and behind us were motorbikes with loaded machine guns. And we were herded in like cattle into the trucks. It doesn't give us a good feeling.⁸²

It was unforgettable . . . We arrived and as we came from the boat and there were soldiers in shorts and brown and tanned knees at the gangplank and had their guns sort of pointing at us and we thought it was wonderful. And we went . . . and we were searched all the time and everything was taken from us . . .⁸³

We got mixed reception. After we disembarked there were some

"Heil Hitler's" and some waved their fists at us "You bloody . . ." ⁸⁴ When we arrived for example in Quebec - it was usually just arrival time were the worst things - because when we arrived in Quebec I remember a soldier saying: "These people seem to speak English very well" so the other guy said: "Oh, those are the most dangerous ones." But we just laughed about that one because it meant that they didn't have the slightest conception of the difference between fifth columnists and Jewish refugees. ⁸⁵

People lined the streets and kept threatening us, even spitting on us because we were German prisoners. ⁸⁶

The first evening of their stay in Canada the internees were relieved of their remaining riches.

On the night of our arrival the Canadian troops detailed to search us robbed us of everything except our virtue. The searches were conducted in two shifts. During the first all our valuables were taken away and receipts issued. During the second search they just took the receipt. ⁸⁷

Watches and typewriters were about the most costly of the articles confiscated. These men had nothing else worth stealing. (After the internment some of the internees recouped their losses through the waging of successful court cases against the Canadian Provost Corps.) Such was the reception of the interned refugees.

THE PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS

These refugees, who had begun their collective journey from the Isle of Man, were separated on their arrival into four groups. Of those who had journeyed on the Ettrick, 500 were placed in trains and sent to Camp "Q" in Monteith Ontario (near Timmins). Ninety-five percent of these men were Jews. ⁸⁸ Another 808 refugees were taken to Cove Fields in Quebec City, Camp "L", which already quartered prisoners of war. From the Sobieski 722 refugees went to Camp "T" at Trois Rivieres and 260 went to a new camp, Camp "I" on the Ile aux Noix, near Montreal. In Camps "T" and "L" refugees were for the first time thrown together with Nazis and prisoners of war. The military detachments were dumbfounded when violent confrontations ensued as a result. The two groups were quickly partitioned. Despite the ardent protests of the refugees, the commandants of the internment camps refused to treat them any differently than prisoners. They had not received any orders to do so. The prisoners were German and Germany was the enemy. The persecution of the Jews of

Germany and the problem of political refugees were subjects about which they neither knew nor cared. Their job was to defend Canada by guarding her enemies and no amount of protest was going to dissillusion them about the importance of their job.

Why the government either did not realize, or did not want to realize that these people were not enemies has not been sufficiently explained. But their treatment could have been worse. A lady in Winnipeg wrote the government about her scheme for German prisoners. She proposed they be sent to:

Some of the rock grit uninhabited islands of the South Pacific . . . Give to each group the regulation medicines and medical kit, the necessary clothing, food for four or five months and enough seed grain and vegetable seeds for each group to plant in order to grow food to maintain themselves for the remainder of the war . . . (Books should be sent stressing) the worth of freedom, liberty, truth and righteousness . . . One small vessel equipped with a good radio and manned by a small crew should be able to guard all the prisoners . . . Only when the war was over would they again be permitted to mingle with the rest of the world.⁸

Fortunately the refugees were not interned on desert isles. Rather they found themselves only miles away from their long-awaited goal, the United States.

CANADA AND THE INTERNED REFUGEES: POLICY, JULY TO OCTOBER 1940

By the end of July the Canadian government could no longer ignore the problem. On July 26th a Member brought to the attention of the House a letter he had received from a refugee organization in England.

Mr. Coldwell . . . They implore me to press for discrimination as between the Nazi prisoners and quite a different kind of refugee of Sudetan, Czech, Austrian and German anti-Nazi sentiments. Will the government give immediate attention to this matter?

Hon. P.F. Casgrain (Secretary of State) . . . amongst the people who came here from England recently there would appear to be some people in the category of which my honourable friend has spoken . . . I am given to believe that some liason officer of the British government will be coming soon to Canada and the matter will be submitted to him upon arrival.⁹⁰

As early as July 16th Skelton had cabled Massey regarding petitions he

had received from the refugees. At Camp "R", as elsewhere, men had written their autobiographies and had submitted them to the authorities. Skelton sent eight such statements as well as one from the British officer who had made the journey with them. Skelton concluded that: "It would appear from the statements and from Captain Bierne's letter that an injustice might have been done to these men in sending them to Canada."⁹¹ Camp commandants flooded the Defence Ministry with queries about their unusual prisoners. Finally, on August 3rd, the Liason officer arrived from Britain. Major G.A.I. Dury was immediately questioned by the Director of Internment Operations, E. de B. Panet.

Attention is drawn to the fact that, while Canada agreed to accept prisoners of war and dangerous enemy alien internees requiring close scrutiny there has been sent to this country a very large number of Jewish and other refugees, Norwegian, Dutch, and Spanish citizens, also a large number of refugees who had applied for permission to enter the United States and whose names were on the various quota lists . . . Approximately 2250, including 401 Italian internees whose cases have never been reviewed or examined by the Tribunals, are of the refugee type and include a large number of school boys, college undergraduates, priests, rabbis, etc. The Canadian arrangements are such that these 2250 persons cannot be suitably accommodated or administered under existing conditions and it is very questionable whether it is desirable to set up special arrangements for enemy aliens in Canada. It is considered that those people should not have been sent out to Canada and that it would be much better if they were replaced by a similar number of prisoners of war or dangerous enemy alien internees.⁹²

In other words, Canada wanted these people shipped back to England. Refugees were not her responsibility. Dury agreed. Meanwhile conditions in the Camps were not improving.

Aware that their incarceration was to be lengthy, the interned refugees adopted positive attitudes which were to preserve their sanity. For those who had been incarcerated in Germany and Austria it was the most difficult. But for the young, the situation was more frustrating than anything else.

Many were very enraged. We wanted to participate in the war effort and we couldn't. Others, like myself, took it as an unbelievable adventure. I mean its foolish.⁹³

There were those, though, who found the irony of their dilemma too much to handle. The Medical Officer in Camp "L" was amazed to find that

some of these supposedly tough prisoners of war were suffering from emotional disturbances.⁹⁴

I think a lot of boys had (psychological difficulties). For instance, everybody would grab food as if it was the last time . . . Because we had been hungry so many times and we never knew when we would (be again) . . . With some people I don't know if it was willful, or if they just lost their guts to live . . . You have to keep your morale up, this is the main thing I figured. And some people would be terribly sloppy. They wouldn't wash, they would let everything go. And the group that I associated with, we made sure that we dressed neatly - our clothing was always clean . . . We would never let ourselves go . . . Anything that would be demoralizing I would just stay away from . . . You didn't want to talk about unpleasant things. You try to keep your morale up, to talk about the future and the pleasant things and you try to keep as busy as possible.⁹⁵

The first few months in Canada were the most difficult psychologically. The majority found that activity - mental as well as physical - was the key to survival.

It was up to each individual . . . If he didn't organize himself and brooded that he had to stay behind barbed wire . . . If he was bothering himself constantly with this kind of question, he was making himself sick, and more miserable. But if he was active! . . . As long as I was active I got a little bit tired . . . I was occupied . . . When I was tired I could sleep. When I wasn't tired the night was long.⁹⁶

As the internment became longer and more permanent these depressions lessened. Apart from the incidence of sexual problems, one interned doctor was able to note that there were remarkably few people seriously disturbed in the camps he was in.⁹⁷ Certainly the internment itself was one of the lesser worries of most of these men, but it was the major obstacle in their lives. They therefore focused all their energies towards overcoming it, emotionally and physically.

INTERMENT OPERATIONS AND GOVERNMENT POLICY TO JULY 1941

Despite the information available to them, the administrators of Internment Operations refused to make any concessions to the refugees. During the first few months these internees had no one to represent them. When the Swiss consul, who represented Germany, called upon them on August 6th, in Camp "T", as in the other Camps, the refugees refused to have

anything to do with him.⁹⁸ Thus they were stateless men, and not covered by the Geneva Convention. The Jewish community was informed of their presence in mid-July. Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath of Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto, received a letter from a Jew in Camp "R" which was forwarded to Saul Hayes, President of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Inquiries began immediately. Bloomsbury House, the Jewish refugee organization in London, sent the information they had to the Canadian Jewish Congress. The government refused to recognize the validity of Jewish representation for the internees. On August 23rd, a representation was made by sixty young members of the Hechalutz (pioneer) Movement that visitors from Jewish organizations be allowed into Camp "B". (Camp "B" was located in Little River, New Brunswick, near Fredericton. The refugees from Camp "T" had been relocated there on August 12th.) The reply from Colonel Stethem, the new Director of Internment Operations, was emphatically negative "because the number of persons permitted to visit these camps must be restricted."⁹⁹ Stethem stood fast in his view of the refugees.

They were transferred to Canada as interned enemy aliens, and until such time as discussions now under way between the governments concerned are concluded, they will continue to be treated as such while being afforded as kindly treatment as circumstances permit.¹⁰⁰

Hayes persisted in a polite manner. "It is only because of our convictions that the Jewish internees of classes "B" and "C" really have a clean bill of health that our intervention has at any time been made" (August 29th).¹⁰¹ While Jewish organizations were barred from the camps, Christian ones were not. On August 28th the International Red Cross, and on September 9th, three men from the Y.M.C.A. were permitted to visit the camps. While there was no doubt among the authorities, notably Panet and Stethem, that these were Jewish refugees, they persistently refused to recognize Jewish interests. A letter from the spokesman at Camp "B" to the Prime Minister was not delivered because, according to Panet.

These internees have not the right or privilege to communicate with the P.M. They have not passed the necessary immigration requirements for entry into Canada and it is not desirable that there should be any mass immigration of enemy aliens to Canada, category C or otherwise, under present conditions, nor is there any reason why these persons should be given a temporary refuge in Canada, which is not available to the hundred to British subjects in England.¹⁰²

The mentality which pervaded the newspapers was the same one that

determined the actions of the government and the military. While the facts of Nazi persecutions were pressed upon these authorities by the internees and the Canadian Jewish Congress, they were not to be moved. Saul Hayes interprets the stance of Colonel Stethem to be the result of the exigencies of war.

Col. Stethem was so close to the picture and so intoxicated by the fear of imminent Nazi uprisings it would not be fair to attribute his attitudes to an inhumane point of view but rather to the ignorance of the military mind.¹⁰³

These attitudes were transmitted to the camp authorities.

On July 16th, just three days after his arrival in Camp "L", Ernst Scheinberg was "shot by sentry on guard duty while attempting to escape from the guard room."¹⁰⁴ For some unknown reason he had tried to go outside his hut one evening, after the curfew. The treatment which had marked the reception of these refugees in Canada was particularly disturbing for many, especially those who had experienced the concentration camps. Scheinberg died because his captors were zealous soldiers under the command of men whose instincts refused to allow them to realize that these boys in short pants, and men with long beards who refused to eat meat, were not dangerous enemies. On July 23rd, a military inspector reported to Internment Headquarters the following information about the inmates of Camp "T".¹⁰⁵

Refugees: racial 610, religious 11, political 54, others who won't return to Germany 41.

Jews: 515 (124 Orthodox)

Catholics: 66, Protestants: 106, others: 29

Dutch: 1 others: 11 stateless: 15

Imprisoned by the Nazis: 231

British Naturalization applied for: 74

Registered with Refugee Committees: 610

16-18 years old: 280

19-20 years old: 145

Students: 220

Visas to U.S.A. or neutral countries: 317

Relatives in Allied Forces: 198 (including 109 U.K.)

Artisans: 179, Farmers: 171, Professionals: 236

British Education: 175

Holders of U.K. labour permits: 373

Resident in the U.K. to 1 year: 180

Resident in the U.K. to 2 years: 385

Resident in the U.K. to 3 years: 34

Resident in the U.K. to 4 years: 33

Resident in the U.K. to 5 years: 26

Resident in the U.K. to more than 6 years: 41

With this information available to him Colonel H.N. Watson visited the camp for inspection on August 3rd. He commented on the physical plan of the camp in a spirit which indicates that he was unable to believe that such enemies of the Nazis could be on his side of the war.

It will thus be seen that it would be possible to seize the Commandant and all his staff . . . and confine them in their office building.¹⁰⁶ This same inspector had previously visited Camp "L" on July 22nd, where he had found the most illustrious of the internees - Prince Frederick of Prussia. His greatest fear was to be exchanged to Germany for prisoners of war.

Count Lingen, a nephew of one in high places (the Governor-General) is acting as the representative of the prisoners, and is apparently given a considerable amount of authority, and is treated with a certain amount of deference by the staff of the camp, which he himself is being careful not to take advantage of, but a situation, like this, is not very good for the general discipline of the camp.¹⁰⁷ Further problems at Camp "L" were being caused by Captain G.S. Barrass, a British officer who had been with the refugees since Kitchener Camp. Inspectors complained that he had gained too much authority over the Commandant who was "rather handicapped by the fact that he has a non-descript group of refugees, practically all of whom are Jews, and he is not exactly sure how to treat them."¹⁰⁸ The British officer insisted that they were anti-Nazi refugees and "undoubtedly influenced the officers and staff of the Camp to think along the same lines."¹⁰⁹ Watson's other criticisms were mainly in regards to the lack of respect the internees showed to officers. Cleanliness was another major issue. Of Camp "T", Watson reported:

The question of kosher meat was also an acute one in this camp, but it is being dealt with by feeding the Orthodox fish or letting them go without. This type of Jew seem to be people of very unclean habits, and are difficult to discipline and deal with. They have no idea of cleanliness within their kitchens, and the Commandant is experiencing difficulty in dealing with them.¹¹⁰

In such a large group of single men the effects of years of persecution

and flight, separation from wives, children and parents, thousands of miles away, and the anxiety and fears about friends and relatives caught in the Nazi web, left few untouched. The behaviour of disciplined prisoners was far beyond the ken of men who rightly felt their situation to be unjust. Having fled the Nazis because they were considered less than human, they had been incarcerated by those who claimed to be fighting the same ideals from which they had escaped. That most were Jews made the problems twice as complex. Not only did they need to overcome the ironies of their flight from one type of persecution to another, the inbred anti-Semitism of the Canadian mentality created a situation in which they could not present themselves as ordinary men. They were not men who were arrogant, or disrespectful or unclean. They were arrogant, disrespectful and unclean Jews.

Changes pressed by public opinion in the United Kingdom were the only influence strong enough to alter the treatment of the refugee internees. On August 6th it was announced in the British Commons that: Arrangements will be made to bring back to this country any person whose release is authorized unless the Dominion government concerned is prepared to allow him to be at large in the Dominion and he himself desires to stay there.¹¹¹

On September 26th, the Canadian government received copies of the White Paper regarding the release of interned aliens,¹¹² category "C". The directions involved the same stipulations as for those in English camps, with some major exceptions. All of these dealt with release in Canada. The British expected that invalids and the ill should be treated outside the camps, and that those eligible for release to join auxiliary military corps (for example, a labour battalion) should be allowed to do so in the Canadian Forces. Most significant was the stipulation that some internees should be allowed to be released for residence in Canada, especially to do war work or to pursue studies. All category "B" aliens would have to have their cases reviewed by the Home Office before release would be authorized. Appended to this notice was the comment: "It is clear on the face of it that they ("B" and "C" internees) should be treated on a different basis."¹¹³ With all of this information the Canadian government remained unconvinced. As long as there was the slightest chance that even one of these men was an enemy sympathizer, the government would use it as an excuse to keep her doors shut. The Secretary of State replied to Britain:

While it is understood that "B" and "C" category internees should

not generally be considered anti-Nazi in views, it appears . . . that this cannot be said to apply to all the internees in these categories . . . As far as the Canadian government knows there may still be a substantial minority of "B" and "C" internees who are not refugees from Nazi oppression. . .

The Canadian authorities, therefore, do not consider that any action can be taken to apply "a system of less rigid custodial treatment" . . . solely on the basis of the present categories . . . The Canadian government do not feel in a position to take the responsibility of relaxing custodial restrictions without the definite participation and direction of some authorized representative of the United Kingdom.¹¹⁴

The possibility that Canada might release some of these men for residence was not touched upon. Enemy alien registration of Canadian residents had shown that only a very small percentage were not trustworthy. The Minister of Justice had clearly stated that "there were many, who while technically enemy aliens . . . did not adhere in sympathy to the cause of the enemy."¹¹⁵ Either the government did not believe its own rhetoric or else the Jewish, leftist and numerical aspects of the refugee problem played an overwhelming role.

Nevertheless the authorities did find it necessary to create two new camps, in addition to Camp "I", which were just to house refugee internees. As they prepared to move to new locations in mid-October, the refugees believed their request for better treatment had been met. But in the pamphlet that the inmates of Camp "L" published for themselves, this belief was put in question.

We have been repeatedly promised that our cases - one humble word for the misery and tragedy of our present situation - would be reconsidered. We have been promised this and that, but now the only thing that happens is one more move from camp to camp. We have waited patiently for some concessions, some alterations with regard to our positions as persons interned without even knowing why. A convict gets an idea of why he has to serve his sentence. The murderer knows why he is not free, but we do not know. What will be our fate? . . . Once again we are told that we have to move to another camp. It is not a move towards liberty, not even supervised freedom; it is just a new prison, and barbed wire will be around us as before.¹¹⁶

For some there was an ominous note, as non-Jews were told they would be

divided from the others. For the Jews this was an upsetting reminder of their immediate pasts.

Our community will be dissolved and probably split up again in different camps. There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the camp desires to be separated from Nazi sympathizers. The Jewish and "Gentile" racial and political refugees decline to be separated according to Hitler's racial laws and wish to be transferred as a body to the new camp. We know each other by now, we have lived, suffered, laughed and worked together. We have built up a sound and efficient community. This moral asset should by no means be destroyed.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, division along religious lines did take place. The new organization of camps was as follows: Six hundred Jews remained in Camp "B". At Farnham, Quebec, Camp "A", there were 58 Jews among 211 Protestants, 111 Roman Catholics, 18 Anglicans and 10 unaffiliated.¹¹⁸ In Camp "N" at Sherbrooke, all but 75 of the 721 men there were Jews.¹¹⁹ To Camp "I" went all those who required kosher food and they joined the 273 men already there.¹²⁰ When they arrived in the new camps the internees expected to find vastly better conditions. Things they had especially resented: wearing prisoner of war clothing and the barbed wire, were still to be their lot. They also found that nothing was ready for them. In Camp "A" the beds had not arrived. Those who had spent months beautifying Camp "L" with gardens, and making it livable had to leave their handiwork behind for Nazis to enjoy. Instead, on their arrival at Sherbrooke all they found were railway repair shops in which the vestiges of recently departed trains were in filthy evidence. There were only a few toilets and little cooking or washing facilities for the 721 men.

In the beginning the toilet facilities were such that when you finished doing what you had to do, you lined up again.¹²¹

Car pits were not even boarded over. For two nights they had to sleep on the greasy floors.

When we got there it was just like if the crew who used to repair locomotives had just moved out and we moved in. It was quite an experience. I slept on a plank, it was leaned against the wall . . . I didn't want to sleep on the concrete floor so I slept on that plank. I don't know how I slept that whole night. I didn't fall off . . . In no time one of the halls contained eight hundred people. It was one bedroom with eight hundred people.¹²²

If the refugees had been prisoners of war, Canada would have been open

to prosecution under the Geneva Convention.

The refugees immediately went on a hunger strike in protest.

The only time was when we were shipped from Quebec City to Sherbrooke and we decided that we have just not been told the truth all along as far as our camp is concerned, and we decided to go on a hunger strike. We went on the strike for two days or three days, then some of the boys became rather sick and the authorities stepped in then . . . We were being pushed around, we had no law on our side, and the conditions were absolutely horrible.¹²³

Since the hunger strike had little tangible effect, the “camp boys”, as they still call themselves, focused in on more disruptive tactics.

The Sergeant-Major, Mr. MacIntosh, called us together one time and said: “Well boys, this is where you’re going to live. This will be your home for many years. The war is going to last a long time . . . The first thing you have to do is sleep on the concrete floors until we get the beds and the mattresses. . .” And this created a tremendous amount of ill-feeling in camp and we had all kinds of meetings and it was decided that we should go on - like a slowdown. In other words, whatever requests are being made of us we should take at least ten times as long to carry it out as you normally would. When the mattresses finally did arrive, for instance, and my group was ordered to go outside and bring the mattresses in, it would have been easy for one man to carry six to ten mattresses, but he collapsed under the weight of one . . . And the Sergeant-Major was very much annoyed with our behaviour. But these things got eventually straightened out.¹²⁴

The government officials decided to find out just what was going on in Camp “N”. Less than a week later, another inspector came to report on the situation. He became known by the internees there as Major “Balls”. As the first official representative of the Canadian government who had spoken to the refugees, he made quite an impression. All of the internees interviewed recall his speech to them. Climbing onto a table in the middle of the courtyard he asked:

“Most of you are Jews, aren’t you?”

We said yes.

“Nevertheless, you have to keep clean.”¹²⁵

The circumstances of where the dirt had come from had been clearly noted in his inspection report.¹²⁶ But his attitude was obvious.

The internees in this camp are all Jews, and they definitely need

severe disciplining. They are disposed to be sullen and uncooperative, as well as thoroughly dirty.¹²⁷

This visit was a depressing one for the refugees.

If I ever saw an anti-Semite, that guy was it . . . Canada wasn't going to put out the red carpet for us, and why should they, there was a war on. We understood all this. But we wanted our dignity . . . it was not too much to ask.¹²⁸

That evening the two rabbis in camp were called in to see Major "Balls": because he'd been told - some kind of primitive notion - that clergymen, even if they're Jewish, you can talk to them.¹⁹

The rabbis explained their situation to him, noting that many had been in concentration camps, and stating that their main complaint was not about the food, or the accommodations, but about their treatment as prisoners. Major "Balls" replied:

"You've been in camp before? Then you know how to behave in the presence of an officer. Kindly stand at attention!"¹³⁰

This inspector's final recommendation to the internees earned him his nickname. Thus, the representative of the Canadian government offered this solution to the refugees.

"If you play ball with us, we'll play ball with you."¹³¹

While the interned refugees had little initial success in convincing the authorities that they should be released, there was one group with whom they found it easy to deal - their guards. The following story illustrates the degree of friendliness which characterized some of the prisoner-guard relationships.

In January of 1941 it was discovered by the authorities that a guard, Barney Henson, who had been with the refugees since Camp "L", was involved in illicit mail dealings in Camp "N".¹³² His daughter, Winnifred, was corresponding with three internees in the camp and he was transmitting the letters. A careful examination of correspondence found:

Miss Hensen, it would appear, is the daughter of _____ who is referred to in the letter as "Dad", and also presumably as "Barney" . . . She is referred in the correspondence as "Winkie".¹³³

It had all begun when Hensen had given a photograph to an artist internee in order to receive a sketch of his daughter. Then three internees began writing her. They included requests that she write their friends, relatives and girlfriends in the United States, as well as internees in the other camps. (Internees could receive unlimited amounts of mail, but could only write two, censored, letters a week). A military investigation of this inci-

dent reviewed the diary of one of the guilty internees.

We also got very friendly with a few soldiers, especially with Barney Hensen, our corporal, who often brought us food from his kitchen. He was a special pal of ours . . . and did a lot for us. So once he brought us a bottle of Rum, once a few bottles of beer.¹³⁴

As a result the authorities intercepted all mail to the Hensens, and decided to arrest Winkie. To their surprise they discovered she was only sixteen years old. Using Winkie as a witness they then proceeded to prosecute her father. He had violated the *Defence of Canada Regulations* prohibiting the "illicit transmission of messages into or out of Internment Camps". Unfortunately, the results of this case are not available. This incident reflects the fact that the military brass had not altered their perceptions of the interned refugees one iota, while the authorities in daily contact with them had.

For the interned refugees activity meant sanity and freedom from worry, and they knew it. That their plight was a difficult one to bear was known to all but the authorities. Another example of this was the censorship of a Christmas letter sent by Senator Carine Wilson and Constance Hayward, both representing the National Committee on Refugees. This committee had been created in December 1938 by representatives of the Presbyterian Church, the United Church, the Church of England, the Catholic Women's League, the National Council of Women and the Y.M. and Y.W.C.A.s. The letter stated:

We would like them to know that our thoughts go out to all those who are making great sacrifices for the cause of freedom. We would like them to know that we understand how the exigencies of war have required of them, in particular, an unusual form of sacrifice. We pray that right will triumph and that all who are maligned will be vindicated.¹³⁵

This passage was deleted from the letter by Colonel Stethem, who angrily retorted that:

The majority of persons in the camps will go to have no interest in the present life and death struggle in which we are engaged. They are self-centred and would not turn a hand to help along a British victory, and the claim that they are refugees from Nazi oppression has, they feel, placed them in a position where they can do or demand anything. Encouraging this feeling is extremely harmful to them as it prevents them from trying to help themselves. This does not of course, apply to all, but it does to the majority.¹³⁶

Thus, with little moral reinforcement, the refugees were kept in an isolated position for their first year in Canada.

Canada would have preferred to ignore the refugees. But they, and their friends, made trouble. This minor appeasement of moving them into four easily monitored camps was not to work for long. Blaming the British government could no longer hold up once it became clear that it was Canada that was standing in the way of release. For a year the government was able to play this game, but for no longer.

FOOTNOTES

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9. Interview.
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