

# **The Politics of Refugee Immigration: The Pro-Refugee Lobby and the Interned Refugees 1940-1944\***

PAULA JEAN DRAPER

## *Résumé*

Les années 1930 et 1940 constituèrent l'époque marquée par un antisémitisme vigoureux et frappant, non seulement en Europe mais également en Amérique du Nord. Les effets néfastes de l'antisémitisme entraînèrent le refus d'ouvrir les portes de l'immigration au Canada, sauf à une poignée de réfugiés Juifs.

Les gestes posés par Vincent Massey constituèrent un exemple primordial quant à la façon dont d'éminents Canadiens en mesure de contribuer à sauver des Juifs furent malheureusement influencés par les sentiments anti-juifs de Massey qui fit en sorte que peu de Juifs puissent arriver au Canada par le biais de la Grande-Bretagne.

L'histoire du Canada regorge d'exemples manifestes quant à l'antisémitisme qui régna dans ce pays au cours de cette période.

Avec C. Blair la lutte ne fut pas facile. Le C J C dû intercéder plus d'une fois afin d'obtenir gain de cause en regard des réfugiés et en matière d'immigration. le bras droit du Congès fut l'U.J.R.A.

Grâce à des moyens de pression caractéristiques du lobby Juif, les juifs des camps de réfugiés purent connaître des temps meilleurs surtout lorsqu'on considéra en haut lieu que somme toute ils n'étaient pas plus dangereux que d'autres personnes.

Avec l'entière coopération des gouvernements Canadiens et Britannique, l'U.J.R.A. concentra ses efforts en matière d'accès vers les U.S.A. pour la majorité des internés qui étaient susceptibles d'obtenir des visas d'immigration conformément au quota.

L'auteur relate dans son document les luttes menées par l'U.J.R.A. vis-à-vis du gouvernement et des responsables de l'époque. Il (l'auteur) parle également des activités du Comité central qui se consacra à une amélioration énergique de

---

\* Material for this article has been drawn from Paula Jean Draper, "The Accidental Immigrants: Canada and the Interned Refugees", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1983.

© The Author

la vie dans les camps.

Le 13 mai 1941, un précédent eut lieu: la libération d'un Juif italien Vivante fut accordée par le Premier ministre après que ce dernier ait obtenu l'accord de son Cabinet.

Là où S. Hayes semblait avoir échoué, le rabbin Price avait réussi à faire céder Blair. Selon S. Hayes l'hypothèse de la réussite du rabbin Price devant C. Blair résida dans le fait que les deux hommes étaient religieux, pieux, et eurent un point commun qui les firent s'entendre: les valeurs religieuses. Jusqu'en octobre 1945 il n'y eut absolument aucune garantie que les hostilités terminées, l'un quelconque des réfugiés pourrait rester au Canada.

En octobre 1945, le Ministère d'Immigration Canada révisa le statut d'environ 3500 réfugiés résidant au Canada y compris 966 ex-internés. L'immigration au Canada des réfugiés internés, fut le seul succès majeur en temps de guerre du Congrès Juif Canadien.

S. Hayes lutta pour que l'unité des Juifs ne soit jamais trahie face au gouvernement.

Le succès du C.J.C., compte tenu des échecs passés, fut non seulement remarquable mais il lui permit d'établir les assises sur lesquelles il érigea sa nouvelle politique.

---

The 1930's and 1940's were a time of widespread anti-Semitism, not only in Europe, but in North America as well. Canadian Jews felt its effects through social and institutional discrimination. Members of government, responding to anti-Jewish sentiment in Canada, reacted towards the dilemma of Jewish refugees banging on Canada's gates with callous disregard and obstinate indifference. Thus the insidious effect of anti-Semitism was that it translated into the closing of Canada to all but a handful of Jewish refugees.<sup>1</sup>

The activities of Vincent Massey present a prime example of the manner in which anti-Jewish sentiment influenced the actions of prominent Canadians in a position to help save Jewish lives. As Canada's High Commissioner to Great Britain, Massey proved himself an able emissary during the pre-war years. He shared the Canadian government's aversion to Jewish immigration and ensured that few Jewish refugees would find a route to Canada through Great Britain. Indeed, in *None is Too Many*, Troper and Abella have shown how Massey counselled government to resist international cries for rescue of refugees even when the evils of the Holocaust could no longer be denied. However the case of

the interned refugees seems to have caught Massey by surprise. On May 31, 1940 the British Home Office asked Massey to cable Canada with a request that it consider taking a few thousand interned enemy nationals who were thought to be “potentially dangerous” in case of an invasion.<sup>2</sup> Had Massey realized that this innocent request would ultimately result in the addition of almost a thousand Jewish immigrants to Canada he undoubtedly would have counselled against it.

In the panic days which followed the fall of France, Britain had interned thousands of German and Austrian nationals residing in the country. Most were Jewish refugees from Nazism. Their internment was meant to be temporary. As fears of invasion mounted, Churchill’s Cabinet decided to deport prisoners of war and pro-Nazis to the Dominions, and Canada’s acceptance was sought. Certainly Massey’s original requests clearly emphasized the dangerous nature of the deportees. However, by late June, when Massey cabled that three ships were on their way to Canada, he certainly understood that no longer were all the deportees “dangerous”. For during the confusion of the deportations large numbers of male refugees found themselves bunched with prisoners of war and other pro-Nazi Germans on ships bound for Canada and Australia. Thus Canada received these 2250 refugees as dangerous prisoners and placed them in internment camps in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. By August word came from an irritated Massey that not only were these men not dangerous, they were mostly innocents and Britain would like Canada to release them, just as the British were releasing without stigma those who had not been deported. This news was not well received. As Massey well knew, Canada had absolutely no intention of letting Jewish refugees in through the back door. While over half of the men gave up hope of release in Canada and returned to Britain, the remainder lived in internment, some as long as three and a half years.<sup>3</sup>

The story of Canada and the interned refugees provides a stark example of the influence anti-Semitism had on Canadian politics. While the internees suffered through years of incarceration, ostensibly because they were German nationals, inside the camps they were sometimes forced to live with Nazis or otherwise subjected to racial slurs from Canadian defence personnel. They were also expected to behave like soldiers. One Canadian officer reported: “The internees . . . are all Jews . . . and they definitely need severe disciplining . . . They are disposed to be sullen and uncooperative, as well as thoroughly dirty”.<sup>4</sup> In one camp orthodox Jews who protested and demanded release were informed that the only way they would be allowed to settle in Canada was six feet under the ground.<sup>5</sup> The Commandant of the camp with the largest Jewish population, (for among the refugees were Christians of Jewish descent

and political refugees), refused to treat his prisoners as refugees, even though their innocence had been amply proven. "In spite of the fact that a certain percentage may be heartily anti-Nazi" he declared,

it cannot be forgotten that they are German-born Jews. Jews still retain much of the same instincts they had 1940 years ago, and these in particular are apt to try and take advantage of privileges which once given result in demands for more. The combination of this insidious instinct and the well-known characteristic of the German habit of breaking down every pledge ever made is not a particularly easy [one] to handle.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly on the political level anti-Jewish sentiment was not so clearly articulated; it was there nonetheless. In complete control of Canadian immigration policy was F.C. Blair. It was Blair with whom the Canadian Jewish Congress had to deal in its struggle to gain the release and ultimately the immigration of the interned refugees in Canada. It was not an easy battle.

The mouthpiece of the Canadian Jewish community, the Canadian Jewish Congress of the 1940's suffered under two major restraints. It attempted to represent the wishes of a community plagued by deep ethnic and political divisions and was constantly struggling to keep a lid on internal dissent in its attempt to present a united front to government. On the other hand, the representatives of Canadian Jewry, as well as their allies in the refugee cause — the Canadian National Committee for Refugees, headed by Senator Cairine Wilson — were held in low esteem by government. Blair was only the tip of the iceberg. A man of boundless contempt for the Jews, undoubtedly his power was immense. Clearly he retained that power because government wished him to. Before the arrival of the interned refugees Blair had consistently and successfully stymied all attempts by refugee advocates to squeeze open Canada's doors. It seems ironic that the arrival of the interned refugees, which was the only numerically significant group of Jewish refugees to enter Canada during the war, came about purely by accident. Blair had no warning of their arrival. Congress was equally surprised by their presence, and though these refugees were literally on Canada's doorstep, the Canadian Jewish Congress seemed, at least at first, to take little interest in the possibility of obtaining their release as immigrants into Canada. This, in turn, caused deep resentment among the dissatisfied refugees, whose view of events outside the barbed wire was necessarily limited. What they could not possibly understand was the virtual powerlessness of the Canadian Jewish Congress in the face of a government determined to limit Jewish immigration.

The arm of Congress which dealt directly with refugee matters was the United Refugee and War Relief Agencies — the UJRA. Its director was a young Montreal lawyer, Saul Hayes. Hayes received information about the in-

ternees early in the summer of 1940, yet it was not until mid-August that a meeting was held to determine policy regarding their situation. Even then, little was done outside of some cursory visits to local camps. The reasons for this lethargy were manifold. Certainly there were early suspicions among UJRA officials that some of these refugees could possibly be Nazi agents, perhaps masquerading as Jews. However, the delicacy of the situation was the most pressing problem. The UJRA was wary of appearing too friendly to men who were officially designated "enemy aliens". If the public mind might somehow equate Jews with Nazis, however illogical it seemed, any hopes of rescuing Jews in Europe and bringing them to Canada would be eliminated. There was also the not unjustified fear of increasing anti-Semitism in this country. It was with an appreciation of the fragile position of Jews in Canada, the burden of past failures in easing immigration regulations and the community's priority of directing aid to the suffering Jews of Europe, that the UJRA approached the interned refugees.

The fact that all strategies adopted previously on behalf of refugee immigration failed utterly and completely seems to have left little desire for new or innovative approaches to government. Tactics which had repeatedly failed were employed again. At first, emphasis was placed on improving welfare in the camps, ensuring the separation of Nazis from refugees and the granting of refugee status to the internees. The UJRA's approach was cautious and these improvements took almost a year to achieve. Hayes admitted that the internees had reason to feel neglected. "I don't think we did enough at the beginning for these people" he recalled,

because we knew they were safe in Canada and we were trying to rescue people who weren't safe . . . The fact that we couldn't get them out only underlied what I'm saying . . . We paid more attention to those who were still [in Europe] than we did to those who had three square meals a day and who were in a safe position.<sup>7</sup>

Hayes also knew that the Canadian government was resisting British requests for release of internees in Canada, but was willing to facilitate movement of these same men to the United States. With the full cooperation of the Canadian and British governments, the UJRA focused its energies on winning U.S. entry for the majority of internees who held valid quota numbers entitling them to immigration visas. The eventual shift to internee aid came only with a realization that supplying succour to the Jews in Hitler's grasp was futile. The shift towards promoting wholesale release came only when, by June 1941, all attempts to gain American entry had been blocked by a hostile U.S. State Department. The UJRA, along with its ally the CNCR, found the internees had fallen almost completely into their hands. And they were a handful!

Indeed the government itself was at a loss over how to deal with their unwanted and troublesome prisoners. Realization that the men were indeed refugees, and mostly Jews, caused great unease throughout the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, and in Blair's Department of Immigration. Their initial response was to plead ignorance. Yet this strategy wore thin as correspondence from refugees, and their friends, relatives and supporters on two sides of the Atlantic, flooded government offices. Camp Commandants pleaded for instructions on how to deal with their decidedly unmilitary charges while Massey cabled apologies from the British government and the unwelcome information that Britain would prefer to wash her hands of the whole matter. Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, O.D. Skelton, wrote to Massey that the internees were causing "a good deal of embarrassment".<sup>8</sup> But while Skelton and his colleague Norman Robertson felt — as early as August 1940 — that some internees should be permitted legal residence, the Prime Minister did not. Setting the tone of government policy, Mackenzie King commented: "Naturally, we cannot release these men in Canada".<sup>9</sup> However the exigencies of war made return of internees to Britain a limited option at best. As pressures grew, government was forced to turn to voluntary agencies to relieve the strain on its resources. Only then did the UJRA begin its push for release from internment and ultimately immigration status for the refugees.

Allowed closer contact with the internees the UJRA provided welfare services, employed a liaison official who kept in close contact with refugee spokesmen, and funded the activities of other welfare agencies, notably the YMCA and the European Student Relief Fund. Political activities were coordinated with the CNCR — its gentile counterpart. At government's request, the two agencies formed an umbrella organization — the Central Committee for Interned Refugees. From January 1941 the Central Committee became the clearing ground for internee matters. UJRA officials carried on the bulk of the work, compiling individual case files, answering inquiries and apportioning funds. Political manoeuvring, however, was a joint endeavour. For the Central Committee the case for release of refugees seemed clear. Here were men — educated, ambitious and skilled — whose potential value to the war effort could not be denied. Indeed this pragmatic approach won sympathetic hearing in the Departments of Labour and External Affairs. But as opposition to release waned, perhaps due more to its inevitability than to any twinges of humanitarianism in government, one formidable obstruction remained.

Blair turned down every approach on the refugees' behalf with the excuse that he had no jurisdiction in their cases. That he had more power in this matter than he let on fooled few but Blair was endlessly suspicious that international

Jewry had somehow engineered the internee deportations in order to slip Jews into Canada. Privately he accused the British of contriving a "well laid plan" to dump Jewish refugees into the Dominion.<sup>10</sup> Blair advised Cabinet to resist requests for release of refugees, no matter how compassionate the grounds. He feared one favourable decision would set a precedent, and his malleable minister, Thomas Crerar, was prompted to outline these fears before Cabinet. With the agreement of Justice Minister Ernst Lapointe, who expressed Quebec's concern over the admission of so many Jews, Blair forestalled decision on release.<sup>11</sup> Yet pressure mounted, and even Blair realized that sooner or later some concessions had to be made to improve the government's image. Crerar, now badgered by the refugee lobby, was increasingly anxious to find a way to release some of the refugees. As a compromise, Blair agreed that internees with first degree relatives in Canada might be released, as this in no way contravened existing immigration regulations.<sup>12</sup> Thus in February, 1941, this select group of refugees was released. There were only eight.

If Blair believed this concession would suffice, he was mistaken. Public opinion was beginning to cause some concern in government. Despite a ban on publicity, information was leaking out. The Central Committee had cooperated in the ban, fearing that too much publicity, or publicity of the wrong sort, might unleash an anti-Semitic backlash, especially if the Jewishness of the group was emphasized. CNCR members were especially afraid of publicity. The main CNCR worker, Constance Hayward, felt:

A blow-up in the press would not have helped . . . The government didn't want it. It would not have made it any easier for us to work with them and it might well have delayed things . . . If you got the public stirred up it would cause an attitude in which Mr. Blair or Mr. King would pull back — if it was going to cause trouble. They had other worries . . . The country was at war.<sup>13</sup>

However it proved impossible to keep a lid on this news story or to control the tone of media coverage. Information based on reports of returned deportees surfaced in the British press, which did not spare its criticism of Canadian internment policies, much to the evident embarrassment of Vincent Massey. The Canadian press picked up where the British left off. The *Winnipeg Free Press* printed an article entitled "Internment Scandal", while the *Halifax Herald* ran a series with headlines like "Red Tape Entangles Many Hundreds of Useful Aliens — Internees from Britain Held Though London Would Release Them", and "They Fled Hitler But are Prisoners Here".<sup>14</sup>

Certainly the Central Committee's cooperation with government had seen some positive results, but they came slowly. Once publicity broke, Hayes gauged government's reaction and initiated a large scale campaign to mould

public opinion. However in this case the positive aspects of government concessions were emphasized. For the Central Committee, caution and quiet diplomacy remained the keys to their relationship with government. The interned refugees were not the UJRA's sole concern. Hayes knew that alienating men like Blair could only jeopardize other refugee schemes. Yet this shift, from diplomacy to publicity, reflected a new attitude growing in the Central Committee. For, as internment dragged on with no resolution in sight, it became clear that without more definitive action by their supporters, interned refugees might really be left incarcerated for the duration of the war.

By mid-1941 the Central Committee was devoted to an aggressive campaign to improve camp conditions and win release for the internees. Ironically, for all their efforts and public relations campaigning, it was not the pro-refugee lobby's tactics which finally spurred reform and release. The real shift in Canadian policy only came when political will, which had previously been abdicated to the administrative power of middle-level civil servants like Blair, was asserted forcefully by Cabinet. Once the top level of government took an avid, if late interest in the refugees, action resulted. The release of the first eight marked the beginning. Soon releases were approved which set the precedent Blair so dreaded.

The Minister of Munitions and Supply, C.D. Howe, needed skilled labour for his war industries. He found such men in the refugee camps. Howe's interest was admittedly pragmatic. But this made his demands for immediate release of selected internees all the more adamant. The Central Committee saw their chance. In a time of war, they argued, two thousand educated and skilled men could only be a boon to Canada. Soon the question was raised in Parliament. Public opinion was turning on the internees' side. Howe got his men out, although only as temporary residents.<sup>15</sup> Blair was not about to give up easily. A test case was necessary. In it Blair met his match.

In April 1941, the Prime Minister received a letter from a performer he admired greatly — the American actress Ruth Draper. Draper was performing in Canada to raise funds for the Red Cross, and she begged a favour from King. A young Italian Jew, Arturo Vivante, was interned in a Canadian camp. A friend of his family, Draper wished to obtain Vivante's release from internment. King immediately inquired about granting this request and was informed by Robertson that Blair feared setting a precedent which "might result in the release . . . of a large number of refugees who could not be easily absorbed into the community." King was more concerned with keeping Draper happy, whether because of his admiration for her, true humanitarian feelings, or a realization that after all Draper had done for Canada it would be impolitic not to

accede to her request will never be known. King told Crerar he wanted Vivante released.

On May 13, 1941, the Prime Minister gained Cabinet approval for the sympathetic hearing of applications for release of internees in Canada, with reasonable guarantee as to maintenance. The first would be Vivante. Home Office approval was the only formality remaining. A confident King wrote Draper that Vivante would soon be free. Blair was powerless to stop Vivante's release, but determined to ensure that few others would get as sympathetic a hearing. This time the Central Committee was one step ahead of him.

Hayes, Hayward and the British representative, Alexander Paterson, all recognized that the Vivante case was the chance they had been waiting for. They were determined to make the most of it. In response to the Canadian request for Home Office approval, Paterson replied:

that it was difficult to ask for a special release for the protege of an American citizen when other boys in the camps with relatives and friends in Canada provided even more urgent reasons for release in the Dominion. I was reminded that the Canadian Government was considerably indebted to Miss Draper. This stung me to retort that I was unable, in conformity with the principles governing the administration of British justice to cable home to the effect that anxious parents . . . could secure the release of their boys in Canada if they would contribute \$10,000 to the Canadian Red Cross Society. It seemed to me, however, that the Prime Minister's pledge to release one schoolboy might be used to open the door for others.

Paterson informed Skelton that only with a pledge in hand for a large-scale release program for other students, would he forward the Home Office approval necessary for Vivante's release.

Paterson's ploy worked, but slowly. Meanwhile, assuming that the issue had been settled by the Cabinet decision, King was incensed to discover that Vivante was still incarcerated. Directing his venom at Blair, King told Roberston "that he gave his word as Prime Minister that the man should be released, and that Crerar had given him his word that this should be done. 'I want no more nonsense about it' (he concluded). 'I expect this to be done' ". Blair was trapped, and in July he surrendered.<sup>16</sup> The way was now cleared for the release of university-age refugees who could find sponsors to support their education. The Central Committee geared up to begin work on releases, work which would occupy them until the camps were emptied in December, 1943.

The student scheme was the first of three major release schemes which were devised by the Central Committee, and then slowly and methodically pushed past Blair. Eventually almost one thousand refugees were released into Canada as students, skilled and unskilled workers and farm labourers. The process was slow. The Central Committee kept close tabs on developments and analysed

every release which might establish a precedent. It solicited student sponsors, employers and farmers to apply for internees. Refugees were kept up to date on Immigration Department requirements. Yet there were constant delays, mix-ups and even re-internments. Blair reviewed every single request and nothing could either sway or hurry him. Meanwhile Hayes had to deal with the increasing discontent of refugees grown tired of unending incarceration. Hayes recalled:

I had many unpleasant dealings with internees . . . and I don't blame them. What the hell, when you're cooped up like that . . . They know they're innocent. They know they're victims. Try to convince them its got to take time because the people who have the authority don't know what you know.<sup>17</sup>

Some refugees rubbed both Blair and Hayes the wrong way. Bruno Weinberg was arguably the most outspoken of all the interned refugees. A lawyer expert in international law, he had been a professor in Brussels before the war and had once served as counsel to the Belgian government at the League of Nations. He escaped to England with British troops at Dunkirk. Once in Canada, he used his knowledge of international law to vociferously protest the treatment of the interned refugees. He invoked the Geneva Convention so many times that the Commandant of his camp threatened to send Weinberg, who was not enamoured of orthodox Jews, to the only kosher camp. "Eating kosher is the reward for the Geneva Convention" went the camp joke. Weinberg made himself a nuisance. Censors were constantly returning his mail as he persisted in transmitting his criticisms to influential friends. When he was not occupied with protests and arguments against the actions of Government and voluntary agencies alike, he was busy writing articles for publication. He wrote Senator Wilson requesting references for a paper entitled "The Legal Problem of Refugees of Enemy Origin in Time of War". The Commissioner of Refugee Camps, Colonel Fordham, commented that Weinberg was "very troublesome in that he is continually writing letters . . . containing unfair and often scandalous statements about the Canadian authorities, and the Government generally . . . and seems unable to control his pen." Weinberg also disliked voluntary workers, particularly the Jewish ones. He was uncooperative with the Central Committee which he considered to have been formed to the refugees' misfortune, and refused attempts to assist in his release. Nonetheless, a social worker who talked to Weinberg after his release in 1943 was struck by this "rather shy person who is stubborn and proud and would rather spend additional years in an internment camp than yield on a question of pride."

At first Fordham blocked Weinberg's release. "One hesitates to think" wrote Fordham, "what scurrilous trash he would write if he were at complete

liberty.” But Fordham was also a lawyer. He changed his opinion about Weinberg and before long this internee was engaged in legal work for the Commissioner. Because he was outspoken and a troublemaker, Weinberg’s file sat on Blair’s desk a long time. He was exactly the type of internee Blair detested. But with the support of Fordham and the Committee, Weinberg was eventually released. Fordham even offered him a government job which Weinberg declined, “stating he could not work in an atmosphere where injustice was tolerated.”<sup>18</sup>

If there were injustices in Canadian release policies, few complaints were heard from the Central Committee. It was of utmost importance to the Committee to keep a unified face to government when pressing for release. The cautious always outvoted the impetuous. Jewish activist members remained in the shadows while the more conservative CNCR took the political limelight. With few political allies except the small CCF parliamentary caucus and their leader M.J. Coldwell, the Central Committee had little political bite. So they worked quietly, behind the scenes. James Gibson, then in the Office of the Prime Minister, explained:

The Canadian Jewish Congress would send in discrete representations every so often. the thing to be said about them is that they did not overplay their hand. They kept at it, but they never overdid it, so to say. It never became exasperating, as it did with some other people. I think government institutionally wanted to be careful that it didn’t appear to cave in to pressure.<sup>19</sup>

There were those among Canadian Jewry who neither agreed with the UJRA’s caution nor abided by its united front. This was particularly true in the case of the orthodox community. They were concerned with the group of sixty rabbinical students interned in Camp I, near Montreal. The Committee did not regard yeshiva education as part of the student release scheme. However, there were those in the community who argued for their release as a group to attend yeshivot in Toronto and Montreal. Rabbi Abraham Price, a Polish rabbi brought to Toronto to oversee its first yeshiva, wrote to the Chief Rabbi in Britain who obtained Home Office approval for release of the group. All that remained was Blair’s signature. Taking matters into his own hands, Price went to Ottawa and met with Blair. Price vividly recalls his meeting:

[I] told him: “They are good boys” . . . And it was better that I did it myself because with this man Blair, nobody could handle him . . . So he says to me, Blair, what guarantee could you give that they are not spies? So I told him: “Listen Mr. Blair, if I would have a million dollar[s] I would deposit this million dollar[s] for a guarantee, but I am a poor man . . . what I have is my head. I give you my head for a guarantee that they are not spies. You could be more a spy than they!” So the Congress wouldn’t do this, what I did there.

And it worked. Whether to be rid of the rabbi or out of a change of heart, Blair agreed to the release of all the boys as long as financial guarantees were pro-

vided. Rabbi Price gave his word that the money would be forthcoming. Then, *fait accompli*, he turned to the UJRA for help.

Hayes and the UJRA were amazed at Price's success. "They have been mad that I didn't approach them" Price recalled, "that is true, but I didn't feel that I had to go through them." But Hayes sensed why Price triumphed where he had so often failed.

Rabbi Price was in the very enviable position with Mr. Blair — in a better position than a layman would have been. As a rabbi he was in better graces . . . because he was known as a religious leader and Blair was a very devout and righteous believer. So that when Rabbi Price was to see him, he had in Blair a receptive person.

Nevertheless, Hayes and others in the UJRA felt strongly that there should be no special bargaining by individuals on behalf of any group. Community unity was essential. Yet the gulf between Price and other community leaders, including the President of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Samuel Bronfman, was in their differing perceptions of the centrality of religious study to Jewish life. "Many people" Hayes explained, "didn't care whether yeshiva students found release in Canada in yeshivas because they didn't believe in the whole method of education." Furthermore, if many in the UJRA objected to Price's go-it-alone tactics, they were incensed that he made commitments which might now bind the larger community. In Ottawa, Price had made guarantees for the financial support of the students, and now he asked the UJRA to supply the funds. Congress Archivist David Rome recalls the bitter exchanges between Bronfman and Rabbi Price.

In his inimitable manner, which he never had any desire to change, and speaking in Yiddish, which Mr. Bronfman understood very well . . . Rabbi Price announced the good news, that he had secured the release of some sixty yeshiva bocherim . . . and all that remained was the small matter of the obligation of several million dollars which he had been wise enough to make to Ottawa and which he expected the Congress and Mr. Bronfman to take off his shoulders. I seem to recall that Mr. Bronfman just about exploded when he heard this and he wasn't very polite or reverend to the great Talmudic Scholar . . . Very calmly Rabbi Price told him that Mr. Bronfman ought to be more grateful because he had given Canada the cream of world Jewry . . . and he very patiently explained to Mr. Bronfman while the entire meeting sat and learned but with mouths agape.

Rabbi Price continued:

Look Sam, I will tell you something. You are a millionaire. I don't know how many millions you have, I have only when I go home a streetcar ticket. But I'm telling you — if you want, if you don't want, the boys will come here . . . They will have everything such a boy has to have.

Rome recalled "how Mr. Bronfman sputtered, or did more, if I'm not mistaken he was led out of the room in confusion". The meeting adjourned. For the time

being, not millions, but five thousand dollars, was apportioned to Price. He was told to raise the rest of the funding on his own.<sup>20</sup> This was a small victory, but a victory nonetheless. As much as Congress leadership was appalled at Price's aggressive methods, they had to respect his results.

Gaining release was not the final hurdle for the Central Committee. Blair made sure that internees were only granted temporary residence permits. They were told not to marry, not to plan their futures, not to accumulate baggage in excess of one hundred and fifty pounds. Indeed, until October 1945, there was absolutely no guarantee that at the cessation of hostilities any of the released refugees would be allowed to stay in Canada. Clearly Blair felt that dangling the carrot of permanent status, but not granting it, would keep the refugees in line. However, even Blair could see that deporting the lot would prove impolitic. Upon his retirement in 1943, Blair lamented: "I expect it is just another of these cases in which people who are not entitled to stay here will manage to do so by hook or by crook."<sup>21</sup> He was soon proved correct. Cabinet noted that the restrictions on refugees released from internment were "a constant source of complaint and seem to have a good deal to do with the agitation of humanitarian agencies and the press for further action by the Canadian government to assist refugees".<sup>22</sup> It was time to decide.

In October 1945, with the hostilities in Europe at an end, the Immigration Department reviewed the status of approximately 3,500 refugees resident in Canada, including 966 ex-internees. There were clearly many reasons for this long-awaited change in policy. All were self-serving. Evidence of the contributions refugees were making to Canadian industry and trade were plentiful and beyond dispute. Just as important, though seldom admitted, was the growing need to stem criticism of Canada's unbending immigration regulations. To allow the legal admission of 3,500 refugees already partially integrated in Canada might, some argued, forestall pressure to take more from Europe. Certainly mass deportations would have caused an outcry. Thus, on October 25, 1945, ex-internees became eligible to apply for citizenship.<sup>23</sup> Five years in limbo were finally over.

The immigration to Canada of the interned refugees was the only major war-time success of the Canadian Jewish Congress. However the internees were dropped into Congress's lap unexpectedly, and they were at first unsure how to handle the problem. Like government, they hoped the United States would absorb the refugees and when all American immigration schemes failed they had to scramble for solutions. A combination of luck, stubbornness and quiet diplomacy pushed the door open. It was slow, it was painstaking and it left the UJRA open to criticism that it was doing little or nothing for the internees. The road

was strewn with obstacles, and other factors certainly aided their success. For all his power, Blair could not destroy the spirit of refugees like Bruno Weinberg who were willing to give up months or years of freedom in order to score a moral victory. Hayes himself walked a fine line — never able to completely satisfy the refugees, Blair or the Canadian Jewish community which he served. Yet in the constant guessing game Blair forced Hayes to play, Hayes was remarkably successful. This success — despite the fractiousness of the Jewish community, exemplified by Rabbi Price and his supporters — was in itself a great achievement. Canadian Jews were experiencing their most insecure period in a country where discrimination against Jews was still commonplace. Hayes made sure that Jewish unity in the face of government was never betrayed. However, the degree to which the UJRA's lobbying was key to winning release and naturalization for the internees may never be known. For clearly the Canadian Jewish community had little power. The help provided by the CNCR did little to alter that fact. Yet the Canadian Jewish Congress persevered and can take some credit for the success of the release programs — success certainly due more to the pragmatic economic realism of C.D. Howe and the political calculations of Mackenzie King than to any twinges of humanitarianism in government. The Canadian Jewish Congress's success was not only remarkable in the light of past failures, but became foundations upon which it might build. In the struggle to open Canada to the immigration of displaced persons which followed the war, techniques devised during the internee episode were utilized with increasing success.

#### NOTES

1. See Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many*. (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1983).
2. Massey to Department of External Affairs (DEA), May 31, 1940, RG 25 vol. 824 f. 713. Public Archives of Canada (PAC).
3. See Paula J. Draper, "The Accidental Immigrants: Canada and the Interned Refugees", *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal*. vol. 2, nos. 1&2, 1978.
4. Report on Inspection, Camp N, October 21, 1940, RG 24 vol. 11253 f. 11-2-41, PAC.
5. Harry Loewy, "Days Behind Barbed Wire", (unpublished manuscript), p. 153, Canadian Jewish Congress Archives, Montreal (CJC/M).
6. Ellwood entry, February 22, 1941, RG 24 C17 vol. 15,399 no. 42 (War Diary, Camp N) folder 1, PAC.
7. Interview with Saul Hayes, Montreal, September 11, 1978; St. Adele, July 18, 1979.
8. Skelton to Massey, August 28, 1940, Central Registry Files (CRF) 621-A40C part 1, DEA Archives.
9. King to McFadyean draft letter c. September 1940, RG 5 D1 vol. 824 f. 713, PAC.
10. Blair memorandum for file, September 24, 1940, RG 76, vol. 454 f. 694381 (Internees) part 1, PAC.
11. Minutes, Cabinet War Committee Meeting, November 7, 1940, RG 2 7C reel 1, PAC.
12. Blair to Crerar, January 2, 1941, RG 76, Internees part 1, PAC.

13. Interview with Constance Hayward, Toronto, June 13, 14, 1978.
14. *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 4, April 8, 1942; *Halifax Herald*, January 2,4,5, 1941.
15. Minutes, Cabinet War Committee Meeting, January 29, 1941, RG 2 7C, reel 1, PAC.
16. Report on Civilian Internees Sent from the United Kingdom to Canada During the Unusually Fine Summer of 1940 (Paterson Report), Dominions Office 35/996/PW19/1/82, Public Records Office, Great Britain; *The Letters of Ruth Draper*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979): Draper to King, April 29, 1941, pp. 256870-71, Robertson Memorandum for the Prime Minister, May 7, 1941, pp. 256357-58, King to Crerar, May 7, 1941, pp. 256355-56, King to Draper, May 10, 1941, p.256872, MG 26 J1 vol. 303, PAC; Minutes, Cabinet War Committee Meeting, May 13, 1941, RG 2 7C reel 1, PAC; Crerar to King, May 23, 1941, p. 256360, MG 26 J1 vol. 303, PAC; Robertson to Blair, June 26, 1941, RG 76, Internees, part 1, PAC; King to Draper, July 16, 1941, p. 256879, MG 26 J1 vol. 303, PAC.
17. Interview with Hayes.
18. See B. Weinberg files, MG 28 V43 vol. 6 f. 5, PAC and CJC/M, CJC/Toronto.
19. Interview with James Gibson, Toronto, October 16, 1979.
20. Interview with Rabbi Abraham Price, Toronto, March 14, 1979; Interview with Hayes; CCIR Memorandum, February 15, 1942, General Files, CJC/M; Memorandum for the Information of Saul Hayes, by David Rome, June 19, 1979, CJC/M; UJRA, Hayes Memorandum November 26, 1941, Yeshiva Students file, CJC/T; Minutes, UJRA Executive Meeting, February 14, 15, 1942, General Files, CJC/M.
21. Blair to Fordham, May 5, 1943, RG 76, Internees, part 6, PAC.
22. DEA Memorandum, August 30, 1943 quoted in Jolliffe Memorandum, September 10, 1943, RG 76, Internees, part 7, PAC.
23. Jolliffe to Glen, October 11, 1945, RG 76, Internees, part 7, PAC; Abella and Troper, p. 202; Gerald Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), p. 124.