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CLOUDS IN THE THIRTIES

On Anti-Semitism In Canada 1929 - 1939

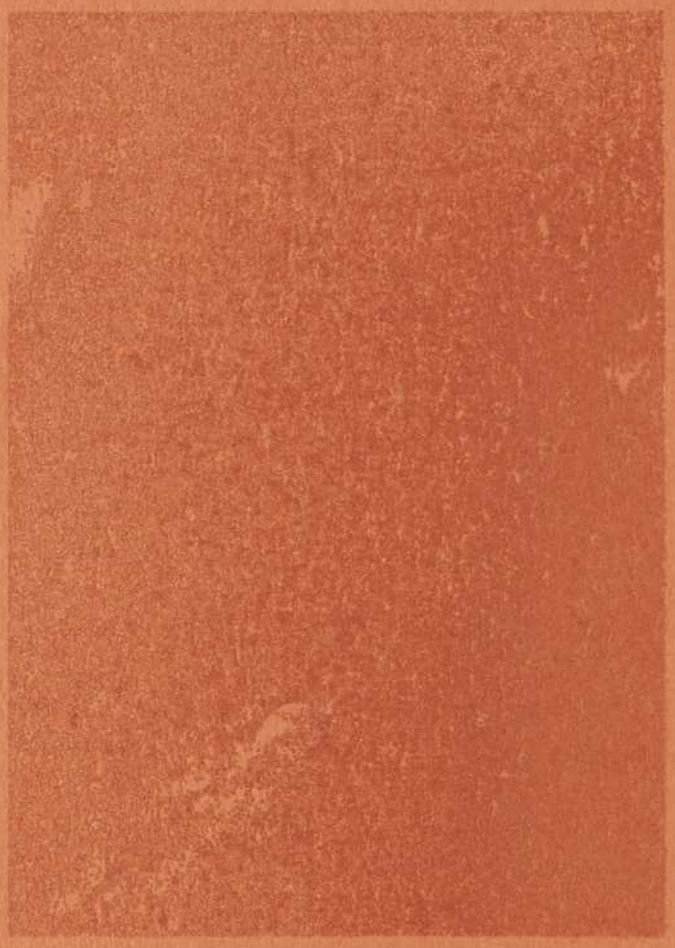
A Chapter on Canadian Jewish History

By
David Rome

Section 12

NATIONAL ARCHIVES
CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

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P81-0030

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DESPAIRING, FLOUNDERING

Canadian Jews never did awaken their fellow-citizens to the anti-Semitic threat, no matter how clearly the Hitler nightmare became known to all.

The crescendo of horror, of desperation and of Canadian resistance to rescue rose continuously through the decade. Each day was a new pitch even as Canada was being bombarded by such telegrams as that from Lord Reading, Rothschild, Chief Rabbi Hertz, Samuel Bearsted and Simon Marks from London,

"Earnestly request Canadian Jewry join fullest extent appeal rescue Austrian Jewry launched here today. Situation demands immediate and generous aid secure co-operation every community. Please remit funds." (Apr.8, 1938)

In spite of so much hostility about them, the Jewish community and its friends kept petitioning for the admission of refugees -- each possibly the last that may get out. The results were sparse. The anti-immigration regulations had built impenetrable walls. Unemployment in the country was tragically high, with few prospects for a return of reasonable prosperity. Sympathy for the uprooted and the threatened was mild. The admission of even economically independent and useful refugees was secured only after titantic efforts.

One of the many false hopes which sparked for an instant during the decade came to the attention of the Polish government office in Ottawa who alerted the Jewish Colonization Association in the spring of 1938.

Mr. Blair had, indeed, informed the railways that Jewish farmer families would be admitted for settlement on the land under certain conditions. (Letter from W.J. Black to Gdynia America Line, Apr. 22 and May 3, 1938)

M.A. Solkin of the JIAS and the Toronto office prepared lists of Jewish candidates who seemed to meet the conditions. (Solkin letter to Belkin, June 1, 1938)

Yet this small movement of Jewish farmer refugees might have been the occasion of a rare kind word addressed by F.C. Blair to Jews.

Saul Hayes liked to recall a meeting about 1941 with Blair and Crerar "when Mr. Blair paid high tribute to the Jewish farmers whom we had brought to Canada from 1938 on. I remember him stating that the department was much impressed with the success of the venture."

This was the same Mr. Blair who tried to teach anti-Semitism to the Polish authorities in Canada at about this time. Mr. Hayes recalled, on the basis of the testimony of Victor Podosky, Polish diplomatic representative in Ottawa, that Blair objected to the number of Jewish refugees whom Mr. Podosky was including on the lists of Polish war victims being brought into Canada by an arrangement between the two now allied governments. Blair felt that the proportion of Jews among these refugees of Polish nationality should accord with their proportion in pre-war Poland's population. Mr. Hayes tried to convince them that it ought to be according to their proportion in the refugee population.

Yet Hayes also liked to recall that, at one moment during those drama-filled months, Blair displayed a particular sensitivity to the Jewish religious concern. This was in the matter of a group of religious students and rabbis, refugees from Poland and Lithuania, who had reached Japan and were seeking the refuge of stabler Canada. (Indeed, those who failed were trapped by Pearl Harbour and spent hazardous war years in Shanghai.)

Blair was as obdurate as he could be for weeks until, in desperation, Hayes expressed his wonderment: he was agnostic, not strictly observant and not particularly learned in the Divine law or inspired by religious faith; yet he cared strongly about the fate of those bearers of the torch of religion; whereas Mr. Blair, a man of religion and of the church, seemed not to care for the fate of men ordained, of men who were so spiritual, so other-worldly, so dedicated to the revealed word. Exasperated Mr. Hayes told him so.

Within a few days Mr. Blair relented and 27 of the 80 reached Canada just before the Japanese entry into the war as Germany's ally.

(Remarkably, Rabbi A.A. Price of Toronto recalls that Mackenzie King responded to a similar appeal from him two years later when the rabbi sought freedom for a number of theological students from refugee internment camps in Canada.)

To return to the pre-war efforts by the Jewish community:

Simon Belkin followed the trail very assiduously through the Gdynia-America Line, through H.M. Levine and the Canadian railways, a trail getting colder and more frustrating with each pace.

Yes, the railways were continuing their search for farmer immigrants. The restrictive regulations are in force: passports from country of origin, farming background; candidates to be settled by the railways. The C.N. has very little land for colonization; land may be available in the Gravelburg area where a Jewish farm settlement had recently disintegrated; the Peace River project in B.C. was chimeric.

"Dr. W.J. Black and J.S. McGowan of the C.N.R. department of Colonization and Agriculture are of the opinion that it would be inadvisable to scatter Jewish farmers who would come under their auspices as they realize that Jewish farmers will not remain on the land for a long period unless they will be settled in groups which would enable them to satisfy their religious needs. For this reason, they communicated early in April with their representatives in Western Canada with a view to finding out whether they could obtain an appreciable number of farms in the close proximity of our Edenbridge Colony. Their representatives have since informed them that while odd quarter sections may be obtained, there is no possibility of obtaining land in the district of the Edenbridge Colony for any appreciable number of settlers...

"When I asked the Canadian National Railways officials whether they contemplate relocating any district for group settlement of Jewish farmers, Mr. McGowan said that there might be a possibility of acquiring farms in the Eastern Townships of the Province of Quebec situated some 125-150 miles southeast of Montreal. The price of land in that district is quite high. On the average, farms can be purchased there for $25.00 an acre. Mr. Black informed me that only a few days ago, they had acquired a farm of 125 acres with all the buildings, seventeen milch cows, all the necessary work horses, machinery and several swine for $4,000.00 However, as the Government is not favourably disposed to admit more than a few Jewish farmers for settlement in the Province of Quebec, the Eastern Townships cannot be seriously con-

sidered. Another district which may be considered is one straight north of Edenbridge and north of the Saskatchewan River which is semi-pioneering country. But as the amount of capital brought out by the farmers is small, Mr. McGowan feels that it might not be advisable to bring in Jewish farmers into that district.

"For the time being, they do not contemplate any appreciable movement of Jewish farmers under their auspices except for odd cases which they hope to dispose of by installing them in close proximity to Edenbridge Colony. They asked me whether we have any land on their line, and I told them that the only vacant farms which we have on the Canadian National line are located close to Eyre and Sibbald (Montefiore Colony). They observed that under no circumstances would they establish new settlers in these districts. They then asked me for any suggestions as to a district wherein a new Jewish Colony might be established. I told them I could not venture a suggestion for the present.

"Without revealing to them any plans which we may have with reference to the Niagara Peninsula or Southern Ontario, I asked the Canadian National Railways officials whether they know of any land offered for sale in that part of the country. They said they believe that they have a list of lands which may be purchased in that district. They further asked if our Association would be prepared to cooperate with them in this movement, by providing additional funds over and above the $1,000.00 which the settlers would bring with them. My answer was that my instructions were to obtain information on their plans and to report to our Head Office.

"At the conclusion of the interview, Dr. Black and Mr. McGowan pointed out that they can bring in farmer settlers not only from Poland but also from Roumania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Northern European Countries.

"I visited Mr. J.N.K. Macalister, Chief Commissioner of the Department of Immigration and Colonization of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Mr. Macalister advised me that while the C.P.R. has a considerable amount of land in Western Canada, they have no large blocks which could be set aside for group settlement of Jewish farmers. He said that he doubted whether he could find twenty-five half section farms of C.P.R. owned land within a radius of twenty-five miles in any particular district. They, however, can obtain so many and more farms in any district as there are privately owned lands in close proximity to C.P.R. owned lands.

"Generally speaking, Mr. Macalister is of the opinion that Eastern European farmers coming for settlement in Canada should be scattered amongst Canadian farmers who would help them not only to become assimilated but would also be of great value in their acquiring Canadian methods of agriculture. The C.P.R. has not yet given thought as to where they would locate Jewish farming settlers who may come under their auspices, nor have they any definite decision as to the question of group settlement."

Mr. Belkin summarized the facts,

"1) It appears that the Polish Government did receive official information from Canadian authorities that Jewish farming families will now be included under the railway scheme.

"2) Neither the Canadian National Railways nor the Canadian Pacific Railway have selected any district for settlement of Jewish farmers.

"3) The railway companies, and more particularly the Canadian National Railways, are doubtful as to the chance of success in installing Jewish farmers with a capital of only $1,000.00

"4) As there are no definite lands selected by the railway companies for Jewish settlement, we cannot proceed with an examination of such lands and with an economic study for the present except to make the above referred to inspection of non-Jewish farmers installed in Manitoba by the Canadian Pacific Railway, which may not have a direct bearing on the subject.

"5) I am under the impression that the railway companies would hesitate to handle an appreciable number of Jewish farmers unless our Association or any other Jewish organization would be prepared to put up additional funds for the installation of farmers who would bring with them no more than $1,000.

"6) There may be a possibility that the railway companies, especially the C.P.R., would ask us to place Jewish farming families brought under their auspices on our vacant lands in the Sonnenfeld and Hirsch Colonies." (Belkin report on Immigration of Farming Families, to Paris Office of J.C.A., May 31, 1938)

A report prepared for Dr. O.D. Skelton, undersecretary of External Affairs, in June 1938, summarizes "the Number and Categories of Refugees Accepted by Canada" and the measure of success and failure of projects on behalf of Jews, White Russians in China and in Turkey, Mennonites, orphans, Armenians and others unclassified: total -- in the estimate of Director of Immigration F.C. Blair--altogether about 10,000 refugees admitted to Canada in twenty years. (Public Archives of Canada, External Affairs. 342-33c June 7, 1938)

This might have been the official Canadian response to pressures from overseas. In London the League of Nations office was redoubling its efforts in its search for refuges. It had just signed an agreement with Australia for 500 homeless annually; adequate guarantees were given by the British committee to aid German Jews.

"A similar guarantee will be given the Canadian government, it was learned today, if the immigration regulations will be relaxed to the extent of permitting entry of 500 annually. The British government is accepting thousands of refugees without guarantee.

"Oxford has awarded two of them major chairs, and other universities are eagerly seeking the services of outstanding scholars and scientists among the refugees." (Winnipeg Free Press, June 7, 1938)

In hostile Warsaw the Gazetta Katolicka asserted that Canada had consented to immigration of Jewish professional farmers.

Immigration officials in Ottawa quickly denied that special arrangement had been made for Jewish farmers.

The nature of the cat-and-mouse game played with the lives of refugees -- and particularly the lives of Jews -- becomes diabolically clear in one sentence. Mr. Vincent Massey, High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain, was recommending to the Secretary of State for External Affairs in Ottawa on November 29, 1938 that Canada generously accept "as many as possible Aryan Sudeten Germans from the 3,000 or so now in Czechoslovakia. On the whole these appear to be more desirable settlers than other refugees, and if we could take a number of them it would put us in a much stronger position in relation to later appeals from, and on behalf of, non-Aryans." (King Papers)

Even as King was facing growing discomfort from that section of Canada's population which spoke his original Canadian Protestant language, in tones of his dedication to Christian humanistic service, he was keeping the ports of the nation closed to the Jewish victims of bare, post-Munich Hitler.

Only five years later the Canadian government was informing the men in its armed forces that millions of immigrants may be welcomed in Canada soon. ("Millions of Immigrants? -- the Case for Immigration," by Arthur Neal and Morley Callaghan, in Canadian Affairs, vol. 1, no. 21, March 21, 1944. Published by the Wartime Information Board for the Canadian Armed Forces.)

During the decade under discussion the internal Jewish debate on the issues of expression and of decibles was crucial as Jewry divided deeply on ideological and social lines between those who were prepared to act in the spirit of the rules of the diplomatic game, and those who felt that only strong and public expression on various Jewish concerns then urgent can inform the public and can mobilize a requisite pressure deriving from an understanding of the nature of the problem.

Even as Jacobs was on his sick bed, there was unrest in the community. Heaps alone in Ottawa, Canadian Jewish activists in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg were coming to doubt that the legislators were their best representatives in this life or death campaign.

The Jewish crisis was becoming harsher. The results forthcoming from Ottawa ever minimal and less promising.

Within the community the Canadian Jewish Congress was gathering strength, if ever so slowly. Its democratic philosophy called for action and for ultimate responsibility by its own representative mechanism and not by private persons of wealth and position who were not, in the final analysis, responsible to the organized community. When the powerful M.P.'s proved powerless, the trust in them naturally waned.

Within the Congress there was the interplay between the geographic regions.

With the Canadian Jewish Congress rather weak during its first five years, there was not very close nation-wide coordination. The relations between the three divisions would deserve analysis at a more relaxed occasion. It is therefore not surprising that the Ontario division, led by the energetic O.B. Roger, Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath and Oscar Cohen, were in advance of the Quebec division in organizing a special committee on refugees. Its report on "Congress Activities for the Year 5698" notes that "the Central Division Refugee Committee was formed shortly after President Roosevelt issued invitation for an international conference on the Refugee question. The function of the committee at that time was to endeavour to assure Canada's participation in the Evian Conference."

During the summer of 1938 the Toronto office began to face the problems of "those refugees who are at present in Canada or who manage in one way or another to gain entry to this country. There is at present no agency in Toronto to deal with these situations and considerable confusion had resulted as men and women were sent from agency to agency. The executive considered this problem and appointed Mr. Sam Kronick to head a committee charged with various agencies in Toronto interested in the refugee question in order to coordinate all these activities. An inter-agency committee has been set up as a permanent body to consider the various cases which require action. (Congress Bulletin on Activity during the Summer Months. Oct. 7, 1938)

As S.J. Zacks, head of the Ontario committee, put it,

"Few problems aroused the interest and imagination of Canadian Jewry more than did the lot of the refugees. There was a spontaneous demand in the Jewish community that a distinctly Canadian contribution be made towards the solution of the refugee problem. It was a great challenge to Canadian Jewry, and the Canadian Jewish Congress rose to meet that challenge. The Congress was ideally suited to take charge of the refugee situation.

There were involved, first of all, matters of negotiation with the government and of public education. These were spheres of Congress operation. Later there was the question of establishment, which involved the co-ordination of existing welfare agencies with regard to refugee work and the operation of committees in various communities throughout the country. This was also a proper function for Congress. Refugee committees were formed in the smaller communities in Ontario, and a machinery was set up to deal with any problems that might arise."

Ontario was best organized. Its executive secretary, Oscar Cohen, was effective and challenged his Montreal counterpart; indeed, they tended to ignore the national office in Quebec. Toronto was strengthened in particular for having the contacts with Christian society through Rabbi Eisendrath, a condition unthinkable for the national office in the anti-Semitic Catholic environment. In Montreal, the existing solitudes meant that the Catholic francophone was virtually cut off from his Jewish neighbours, when it was not energetically hostile. On the anglophone side effective contacts between Jews and Christians -- when the latter were substantiveley less hostile -- were not very much more frequent. And Anglo-Quebec was not as powerful in Ottawa as was Ontario.

Indeed, out of the Ontario relationship between such spokesmen as Rabbi Eisendrath and their Protestant friends, the Canadian National Committee on Refugees came into being later.

The Jewish community in western Canada was seething with impatient energy, and questioned the east and its constant Ontario-Quebec differences which Winnipeg feared were hurting the cause.

A confidential letter from Heaps to M.A. Gray reflected some of the unrest,

"It strikes me that certain individuals in the East are more anxious to have their names advertised, even if they don't accomplish anything. I'm fed up with that type in the East here. Then I suppose some would like to go out on a campaign to raise money when there is no necessity for same, and use the refugees as a good pretext. I have been in close touch with Montreal, and Factor has kept Toronto informed. I have worked pretty hard on the project here in Ottawa, and still working hard, and if there is any of this back handed work as implied in Caiserman's letter of the 2nd, I'll throw up my hands and others can step in, or in the alternative we can work from the West and for the West ourselves.

"I may say that I am doing practically all the work here in the matter myself. Jacobs is quite unwell, and Factor is here three days and less per week. I saw Laz. Phillips, Mr. Jacobs' partner, last week here and gave him the latest situation, and in fact partially arranged for another meeting in Montreal, but I'm disgusted with their peanut politics even with the refugee question." (June 13, 1938)

Montreal was indeed the weakest link in the chain, but it had the tradition of leadership. Its Jacobs was the senior Jewish M.P. Under the circumstances even Toronto and Manitoba were hesitant in taking any steps that might even remotely hamper the efforts of the three Jewish men elected to Ottawa, not having the slightest confidence that they could do better.

So Sheps had occasion to write Caiserman on Nov. 6, 1938, "I regret deeply that you believe that Toronto and I would lessen the worth or even destroy the national office. I cannot imagine how you gained such an impression. When I was in Toronto I arranged with Oscar Cohen to send copies of their minutes directly to us, being aware of your limited funds and resources. I can see no act of revolt in this.

"There may be something amiss between you; I would be very anxious to eliminate anything of the sort and contribute to ameliorate conditions.

"We have a good committee on refugees here which could attain results. But we believe that this is a task of national scope, and should be carried out systematically, directed by a responsible national committee. Our committee is impatient to act; and the refugee problem is so agonizing that no delay can be tolerated. We need to know what we are expected to do and we must report to our conference next Sunday. The League against Fascism are climbing walls, screeching that we are doing nothing."

To which Caiserman responded, "I hope we do not enter into a competition with the leftists who are mostly concerned with propaganda, whereas our concern is results.

"I agree that the national office should be the centre of our activities. But during the past six months we are isolated from the Ontario region which puts the national office in a delicate position. They have adequate funds, but have remitted nothing of their commitment to the head office.

"We have had no monies to pay for the literature we procure from the Jewish institutions in New York, Paris and London. But after this campaign in Ontario the Toronto office communicated with these organizations, purchased this literature and created the impression that it is Toronto which is the head office. I need not tell you how this affects morale in the head office. There the office subsidized a leftist mass meeting with $500 and assists other external groups; here the staff is unpaid. This is called autonomy; it is irresponsibility.

"So when we read of your direct exchange of minutes with Toronto I felt it deeply. It could never have happened in the days of Nathan Gordon and Lyon Cohen.

"I am convinced we must rebuild the authority of the head office, whether in Montreal, Toronto or Winnipeg, so that we may be able to carry out our functions."

There may be a little significance in a later decision, on March 12, 1939, when the Jewish refugee work was structured after Bronfman's election. It was agreed that a director would be appointed -- in the event it was to be Saul Hayes; in the meantime, "Oscar Cohen's duties are confined to public relations and educational work, and that S. Belkin will handle the correspondence with the entire continent as regards all other matters." (Caiserman letter to Sheps, March 14, 1939)

S. Belkin was no paranoiac, but he wrote his associate Louis Rosenberg on Dec. 16, 1938,

"The Central Division of the Congress is determined to steal a march on the other divisions, and particularly on Montreal, and is rushing with the preparation of a memorandum which may be used by the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution formed by the League of Nations Society. Mr. Oscar Cohen ignored all those in Montreal who know something about immigration and who have experience in the work of receiving and establishing refugees upon their arrival. He went out of his way to get a memorandum from Max Warburg in New York as to the type of refugees suitable for Canada and did not write to anyone in Montreal. As you will note from the enclosed copy of Mr. Warburg's memorandum, he proposes that 400 families should be settled on the land in Canada."

Cohen sent the memorandum to Louis Rosenberg, the Canadian authority on land settlement. As Rosenberg told Belkin (Dec. 22, 1938), from Regina,

"In replying to the request of the Central Division that I submit a memorandum on German Jewish refugees I acted in ordinary common courtesy in the same manner as I reply to letters from all Congress Divisions, and as usual sent a copy of my reply to the National Office and each of the Divisions.

"I regret to hear from you that there is not the co-operation between the various divisions in the matter of representations to the government in favor of Jewish refugees that we in the West have taken for granted.

"From the reports and copies of minutes received from the Central Division we understood that negotiations with the League of Nations Society and other non-Jewish organizations were being carried on by the Canadian Jewish Congress as a whole, and that Montreal would also be represented.

"For the welfare of the Congress generally, and particularly in view of the coming Conference and the need for co-ordinated activity at the present time, I sincerely hope that the Eastern and Central Divisions will be able to get together and sink their differences."

Rosenberg criticized the Warburg memorandum in terms of its possible usefulness in securing permission for the entry of German refugees,

"Its statement about German Jews being retrained for agricultural pursuits would not be of assistance in securing the admission of German Jewish refugees to Canada. In fact it might be a hindrance, for it would leave the

impression that the proposed immigrants are not skilled craftsmen or technicians, but persons with little experience in their present occupations, who have received a short-term superficial training. One of our strongest arguments is the fact that there are a considerable number of German and Austrian Jews trained and with special aptitudes, who would not deprive Canadians of their work but would introduce new industries to this country. The arguments put forward in the first section of the memorandum would not strengthen our case materially...

"The information it contains on professional and skilled people available among the refugees is both valuable and interesting, but greater detail is necessary insofar as the number and individual qualifications of the chemists, engineers, leather goods manufacturers, skilled workers in the paper industry, etc. The listing of Jewish plumbers, watchmakers, opticians, furriers, modistes, bakers, etc. would not make the proposal more attractive to the Canadian government, as Canada has more than sufficient workers in these categories at the present time. The items, '5,000 trained young people,' and '3,500 industrialists' are too vague. Trained in what occupations, and what kind of 'industrialists?'

"It would appear that Mr. Warburg's knowledge of the economic problems connected with farm settlement in Canada and America generally must be very limited. First of all any scheme of such magnitude for settlement would have to be referred to the Jewish Colonization Association, as it is that organization which is best fitted by past experience to make the necessary plans and decide upon their practicability. I would point out that I am intimately acquainted with the work of the J.C.A. Insofar as the settlement of German Jewish families on farms in South America is concerned and the number of such families actually settled upon farms in the Argentine and Brazil during the past few years, is very much smaller than 1,700 souls.

"Farm settlement, by its very nature, is the most expensive and hazardous form of settlement. The settlement of 400 families on farms in Western Canada would cost at least $2,400,000 for land, buildings and equipment alone, on the basis of the average farm cost in Western Canada. Even on the basis of intensive farming on small plots of land, settlement of 400 families would involve an immediate expenditure of more than $1,000,000.

"I would also draw your attention to the fact that, in spite of all uninformed comment to the contrary, it is a well-recognized fact that there are no large tracts of unoccupied agricultural land available for settling in close proximity to railways or markets, and no free homestead lands whatsoever.

"In spite of the statement frequently made in justification of the government policy of restricting immigration of Jews, on the ground that only agricultural immigrants are required, it is nevertheless true that the Provincial Ministers of Agriculture in the three prairie provinces and prominent agricultural economists have expressed strong opposition during the past few years to any farm immigration on the grounds that Canada's agricultural production already exceeds the domestic and export requirements.

"It is therefore evident that a scheme for Jewish farm settlement in Canada of the magnitude suggested by Mr. Warburg is not likely, under present circumstances, to meet with more approval from the western provinces at least than any scheme for any other type of settlement.

"Farm schools for the training of young people from the ages of 14 to 20 for farm work have been tried in Canada and found unsatisfactory. Several farm schools established by the province of Alberta have been closed.

The best farm training for young people has been found to be not in institutions but on actual farms. The only real farm training school for young people actually operating at present in Canada, as far as I am aware, is the Fairbridge Farm Training School in British Columbia for children sent out from Great Britain. Excluding penal and corrective institutions for young offenders, which are not really farm training schools although they are sometimes called Industrial and Farm Training Schools, there are not more than 100 young people in Farm training schools in the whole of Canada at the present time.

"In the United States, where the National Farm School has been in operation for many years, even that school could not absorb a tenth of the number proposed. To establish a Jewish farm school or several farm schools in Canada with accommodation for 700 as proposed by Mr. Warburg would be very expensive and it would take years before such institutions,even if established,could absorb that number."

Belkin cautioned Rosenberg,

"There appears to be a tendency in Toronto not only to sidetrack the other Congress divisions but also to sidetrack the J.I.A.S. and the J.C.A. I, therefore, feel that I have to advise you to be very cautious in the future with Mr. Cohen with regard to matters appertaining to colonization" (Dec. 16, 1938)

So it was that Sheps wrote Caiserman on June 17, 1938,

"Under no circumstances are we for the present at least, to interfere with the work already commenced and followed up by the three M.P.'s. In other words, it is felt that the Congress should not do anything to discourage the wonderful work they have already accomplished up to now. Certain work has been done here, in a confidential way, at the request of Mr. Heaps, securing the aid of a number of influential non-Jewish representatives in all walks of life, who have petitioned the Premier with reference to same.

"The Executive felt that, if a Congress special committee is necessary to hold a watching brief, and later take a more active part in the negotiations, the West should be represented by three members, the same as the Eastern and Central Divisions, as we expect the West will likely have to assume a greater responsibility, in view of the opposition and the situation in Eastern Canada to this proposal.

"From your letter of June 2nd, in reply to our wire of the 1st, the Committee sensed a certain misunderstanding or disagreement on policy between the Dominion Executive and the action taken by Mr. Heaps and other Members of Parliament. It was suggested that we have an emergency conference immediately of one or two from your and the Toronto divisions, and we are prepared to send a representative from here, together with Mr. Heaps and the other M.P.'s if available, and see what action can be taken. At the Conference, we perhaps could give you a report on certain confidential useful and constructive work done here, which cannot be given to you at the present time, even under confidential cover.

"The matter, in the opinion of the Committee, is too serious, and we should not take any chance to create the slightest friction and injure the cause."

Indeed, the Ontario-Montreal problem did not begin to find resolution until the end of the year when, upon motion of Lazarus Phillips and Abe Bronfman, the executive of the Canadian Committee for Jewish Refugees consisting of Montreal members decided to invite the Toronto Refugee Committee to Montreal for the purpose of constituting the National Committee for Jewish Refugees. (Minutes of meeting of Dec. 26, 1938)

Heaps entertained the same idea as Sheps about a special committee with a watching function. He wrote to Caiserman on June 25, 1938,

"I suggested to Mr. Lazarus Phillips that a small committee of three or four persons from Toronto and Montreal be appointed so that they could keep in continual touch with the Jewish members at Ottawa and be informed of all the latest developments. I feel that this should be done because I am here alone most of the time in Ottawa and would like to have someone to discuss the problems with as they arise.

"As the House is likely to finish its deliberations at the end of next week, I will be glad if you will take immediate action in reference to the suggestion I have made in respect to a small committee, as it may be desirable for us to meet before then, as afterwards it is hard to get the interested parties together."

NEW LEADERSHIP FOR THE DECADES

At this point a personal change occurred which did not bring about any substantive change but did alter the landscape of the Canadian and Jewish society.

In August 1938 S.W. Jacobs passed away. He had been the legislative and organizational leader of the Jewish community and the classic exemplar of a style of political intercourse, of a tone of courtly, even gentlemanly, approach of the man of probity to the men in power.

His passing left a void. It also forced a replacement by younger men of greater vigour, of a style of action harmonious with current situations -- in short, by a younger leadership that has grown out of the day's community. It was a leadership that was to mark Jewry and Canada for a third of a century.

The day in mid-September, 1938 that Samuel and Allan Bronfman were coopted to the Congress Refugee Committee, together with Sidney Pierce, Lazarus Phillips, Louis Fitch and Marcus Sperber, is important in the annals of Canadian Jewish leadership, for it marked the advent of Samuel Bronfman and the team he was about to form to shape the nation-wide organization.

Mr. Bronfman's advent as the spokesman for all of Canadian Jewry at this difficult time did not come about without complex developments.

The rise of the Bronfmans as a family and of Samuel Bronfman as the leader among the brothers opens a great chapter in the history of the community -- least because of their great wealth.

Samuel was indeed a mythic figure which emerges from the record untouched by the repressed inevitable jealousies and even resentments his powerful figure evoked during his lifetime and by the scandal-mongering journalism that became marketable after his passing. For there was a certain greatness about the man's character and his traits and a humanized Jewish and democratic dedication that gave force, sweep and direction to his energies on behalf of his community.

The genealogy of eastern European Canadian Jews is virtually unknown. Every family begins anew in Canada. The father Yechiel appears on our prairies as a remarkable Rumanian; distinctly middle class, he nevertheless brought with him from Europe a Hebrew teacher for his children; possibly he was unique in this mode of insuring continuity of Jewish dedication, if only by the example of sacrifice and of Jewish and civic priorities.

The memoirs of the first years are heroic. The background is poverty, isolation on a hungry, empty, continental plain, with but one vast resource: character of the father, unwavering loyalty within the family, adherence to the ethics of the Jewish Baale Boss, scope of vision and almost religious confidence that step by humble step not even the sky is the limit to achievement. From barefoot toiler in the fields and forests the Bronfman men jumped no steps as they climbed the ladder of material success and community participation. They crisscrossed the economic areas and worked on the soil, in the horse trade, in hotels, real estate -- whatever offered opportunity and/or a rung leading upward for this Balebatishe family.

Among the endless varieties of their efforts, the beverage trade became illegal. The Bronfmans were on the profitable and safe fringes of the industry, which gave, or failed to give, ground for much scandalous telling. But the trade gave the brothers a vast opportunity for enrichment on a scale that made dealing across the Canada-U.S. border appear picayune. By the time the brothers moved east from Winnipeg to Montreal in the late 1920's they were wealthy citizens and known to be committed to the welfare institutions of Jewry.

They quickly became leaders in the central institution of the community, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. By 1934 the leadership of Allan Bronfman was triumphantly manifested in the dedication of "his" Jewish General Hospital, a moment in the social history of the community whose significance far transcended its services to medicine and well being. The event was but a harbinger of how the generations of Yechiel would serve the broadest dimensions of Judaism.

The coming together of the Congress and of Samuel Bronfman was a complex phenomenon; not the simple choice by a nominating committee bestowing an honour.

In the first place we need to recall the nature of the Congress as it was then -- a minor, virtually powerless and ineffective institution dreamed up by ideologists whose major asset was the very conception of the Congress as it might be and ought to be: a democratic body to deal with the totality of Jewish concerns, an institution largely with a very limited constituency from the revolutionary down town, invented long ago by the Poale Zion and assigned to the dreamer-lover of Yiddish poetry, H.M. Caiserman; attached to it several outside sympathizers (F.I. Spielman, Rabbi H.J. Stern, etc.) attracted solidly by its merits as they perceived it. Certainly not a cause or institution to which ambitious power people would rush to lead, let alone to invest energy and money and time.

S.W. Jacobs had given his name to the Congress but not constant leadership, and even here all was not well. He could subscribe to its intentions, but its ideology was alien to him and was bitterly antagonistic to his friends in the American Jewish Committee. The Congress mode of action was often distasteful to him. He was on the verge of resigning.

On the other side was the leadership of the Congress, the men who had brought it together and were nurturing it and guiding it, the Poale Zion. The great responsibility for replacing the late Mr. Jacobs was, in the final analysis, theirs.

It was there that one of their leading, statesman-like figures, Moishe Dickstein, came up, characteristically, with the strangest name of a candidate, unproven, non-ideological, non-Zionist millionaire Samuel Bronfman. Less remarkable suggestions by Dickstein were always opposed by equally dedicated and capable leaders of the movement such as Simon Belkin and Leib Zuker, each of them as creative, dedicated and imaginative as Moishe.

The debate in committee was as surprising as it was far-sighted. Dickstein's argument was only an instinctive analysis of a man who was not his intimate. From the very little that he saw of Bronfman (where?) he came to feel that the ambitions of the liquor magnate outran his class affiliation and his associates in community welfare work. Moishe was convinced, on no grounds of fact, that this man could be fired with the democratic ideal and with the vision of Zion restored; that he could be entrusted with the fateful power of leading an institution dear to the Zionist socialists.

It required much searching of the heart among the populist and democratic downtown founders of the Canadian Jewish Congress to entrust the leadership and the shaping of the unique institution to a millionaire representative from the west end. But Mr. Dickstein and H.M. Caiserman were convinced Bronfman was a profoundly democratic Jew who would appreciate the trust of the entire community, and most of all the poorer element. He was capable of the tour de force that was required, and he was able to appraise the privilege that went beyond his own class. Never did he betray this confidence or this perception of leadership in the years that followed.

As with all such political processes, there were probably other levels, too, where the matter was decided. His friend and solicitor Lazarus Phillips was probably consulted. One way or another, Bronfman came to see the possibilities for himself and for the Jewish cause and, in his own creative organizational ways, he slowly moved into the leadership of the nation-wide Jewish community.

The refugee program was the first step on the road that brought the family name to the centre of world Jewry with Canada and Israel as its foci.

As we shall see when the United Jewish Refugee Agencies finally assumed stable form, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was immediately and without questioning at the heart of the world pattern in which the Canadian group was structured -- unlike Latin America, for instance, where this was debated for years. But the U.J.R. was not the preserve solely of the J.D.C. with its American Jewish Committee orientation. People's Relief, Central Relief, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, the Federation of Polish Jews and other populist groups were deeply interwoven into the Canadian structure; overseas the World Jewish Congress and strictly orthodox groups received more than a hearing and widened the arena of interest of the Canadian organization.

Within months the relief committee became an arm of the Canadian Jewish Congress -- something which did not happen to the J.D.C. in the U.S. -- and Bronfman was elected president of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

Years after, in retrospect, Dean Maxwell Cohen, Canadian chairman of the joint Canadian-American commission, recalled the role of Samuel Bronfman and of Saul Hayes whom Bronfman invited to direct the refugee work first, and later the Canadian Jewish Congress.

"It was Sam Bronfman who gave Congress its unity, strength, and political relevance through his own personality and his general communal position. It was Saul Hayes who gave Congress its intellectual direction and essential political wisdom both from his own store of knowledge and capability but also from the links he was able to establish with knowledgeable and helpful Jews and non-Jews both in Canada and abroad.

"There is no doubt that in their joint custodianship of Congress, Hayes and Bronfman provided the most united Jewish community on domestic and external issues relevant to Jewish life that the Canadian Jewish public has had in modern times." (Canadian Jewish News, Jan.24, 1980)

As J.B. Salsberg recalled it, Bronfman became the leading figure "for 23 of the most action-packed years in the history of our community in this country and of world Jewry.

"Mr. Bronfman, though a man of great wealth even then, was nevertheless closer to the people, the Yiddish-speaking masses, than were his predecessors in the presidency of Congress. His long-range plan for the shifting of power to the native born, the English-speaking generation was gradually accomplished with the minimum of pain and without divisive conflicts.

"Sam Bronfman could not be a figurehead, decorative president." (Canadian Jewish News, Feb. 7, 1980)

Almost as if to illustrate the risks of his friends' judgment and the slipperiness of the task which he assumed, an incident took place in the first months after his election as head of the Congress:

The community was increasingly frantic about the homelessness of the threatened Jews of Europe, and anger flared at the British government for the White Paper it issued just then cutting Jewish immigration into the Holy Land. Jewish attachment to the British tradition was severely strained.

Mr. Bronfman chose this moment, when he addressed a Congress meeting at Regina, to defend the empire and to differ from Canadian Jews who criticized British politics.

"Canada is composed of several groups of people. Jewry forms one of the groups, and it seems to me, therefore, that one of our primary tasks is to build up good relationships with the other sections. But we cannot hope to enjoy the goodwill of the other groups if we permit petty jealousies and bickerings to affect our outlook as Canadians. We, as members of Canadian Jewry -- and this applies with equal force to all other groups which are part of the Canadian mosaic -- are, or should be, first of all, Canadians, and so manage our own affairs that we merit the respect of others.

"We enjoy priceless privileges which cannot be measured in mere words. It is a common occurrence to hear Jews described as a 'persecuted race.' And we still are, in some countries, but not in the British Empire.

"I know there are some people who consider it fine sport to criticize contemporary British politics. May I say to those who do, that if you draw up a list of countries and nations which deal fairly with all the different groups within their realm, the name of the British Empire would head the list. And I think you will also agree with me that that other great democracy, the United States, would share that honor.

"Consider this thought for one moment; if it were not for the great democracies, we, as Jews -- and other groups too, for that matter -- would face a hopeless future. The floodgates of hate and persecution would be opened to a degree which we shudder to contemplate. The barbaric tactics introduced against minorities in some countries would be mild compared with what would ensue if such a situation arose. If, therefore, some sections of our people throughout the world today find themselves, figuratively speaking, at sea, I am profoundly thankful that Britannia rules the waves. May she long continue to hold her sway, to be mistress of the seas, a bulwark against intolerance and the practice of inhumanities. Because she occupies that position we, as Jews, taking the long-range viewpoint have little to fear.

"When there is so much unrest in the world -- and remembering our history -- let us therefore be thankful that we are in the British Empire, but for the existence of which the forces of destruction would spell our doom." (Calgary dispatch in Gazette, Aug. 8, 1939)

Not surprisingly, the Gazette praised him for "showing a true conception of citizenship, one that is characteristic of his race in this country...Mr. Bronfman has said what too many people in these days are inclined to take for granted. The offenders in this respect are not to be found in one minority more than in another, or even in the majority but it is particularly fitting that the caution, which is in some respects a challenge, should come from an influential member of one of the great minority groups." (Aug. 8 1939)

Similarly the Montreal Star noted that Mr. Bronfman speaks as a business man of wide experience and as one of the recognized leaders of Montreal Jewry. Again and again the Jewish group here has turned to him for aid and counsel and he has not failed to give it. His generosity is proverbial. A man of the world, he sees things in their true perspective. His message to the Jews of Canada, speaking as president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, was a memorable blend of idealism and the practical accep-

tance of things as they are -- and as they might be contained in the quotation above. Mr. Bronfman has very definite views on the duty which the Jewish minority in this country owes to the majority. But the converse is equally true, and if, as the speaker said, it is the duty of the Jew to consider himself first as a Canadian, a similar obligation is surely laid upon the Gentile.

"It would be a good thing if Mr. Bronfman's Calgary speech obtained the widest circulation in Canada. Particularly would it be useful if it were most widely read by Canadians not of the Jewish faith. It would be well that they should see what one of the leaders of Canadian Jewry has to say to his fellow-Jews on a subject of such vital interest, and importance to the whole of Canada." (Aug. / 1939)

But within much of the Jewish community there was resentment at his insensitivity to world Jewry's perceptions of the refugee problem, of the Palestine problem and of the British role. Only Bronfman's subsequent record of dedicated striving within these vital program areas finally won him the love of Canadian Jewry whom he led for over three decades.

In the fall of 1938, the Canadian Jewish Congress set up a new committee on refugees with Benjamin Robinson as chairman of the Montreal group.

By September there was a national structure, with Oscar Cohen as its secretary. The Sept. 11 meeting in Toronto brought together Michael Garber and Robinson of Montreal, Ald. M.A. Gray, A.A. Heaps, M.P., and B. Sheps of Winnipeg, and Rabbi Eisendrath, A.B. Bennett, Dr. S.B. Hurwich and Samuel Factor of Toronto.

Its proceedings are of far-ranging interest:

"Mr. Robinson reviewed negotiations which had taken place with the government in connection with the refugee question.

"Mr. Factor delivered a report of the present situation affecting the possibilities of securing the entry of a number of refugees to Canada.

"Following discussion, it was decided to organise a non-sectarian delegation of 15 to 18 members, to interview the government during the week of October 3rd, 1938, in an endeavour to secure cabinet approval to the proposal that a number of refugees be permitted entry to Canada.

"It was indicated that applications were on file from approximately 300 fiancées in Europe, 50 outstanding doctors in Germany and Austria, and 100 capitalists who wished to gain entry to this country; but the government had not as yet permitted any of these categories to settle here. It was agreed that these applicants should be considered apart from the refugee question which is primarily a humanitarian rather than an immigration project."

"Mr. Heaps discussed the refugee question with members of the committee and reported on his negotiations with the government and information which he had ascertained." (Minutes; Letter from Caiserman to Heaps, Sept. 23, 1938)

A bulletin from the Toronto office of the Canadian Jewish Congress dated Oct. 7, 1938 said,

"When the International Conference was held in Evian, France, the World Jewish Congress submitted an all-embracing memorandum and maintained constant contact with members of the Conference. Through the World Congress office in Paris, as well as through cooperation with other agencies in the United States and Great Britain, the Canadian Jewish Congress was in very close touch with the situation and did everything possible to enhance the possibility of the entry of refugees to this country. Not only has the Congress cooperated with Jewish agencies in other countries, but has endeavoured to rally support from those non-Jewish agencies in this country interested in bringing refugees to Canada regardless of their race or creed.

"Another phase of the refugee question concerns those refugees who are at present in Canada or who manage in one way or another to gain entry to this country. There is at present no agency in Toronto to deal with these situations and considerable confusion had resulted as men and women were sent from agency to agency. The executive considered this problem and appointed Mr. Sam Kronick to head a committee charged with the responsibility of calling together the various agencies in Toronto interested in the refugee question in order to coordinate all activities. A meeting was held recently as a result of which more cooperation may be expected between the various agencies in the future. In addition, an inter-agency committee has been set up to act as a permanent body to consider the various cases which require action of various kinds."

F.C. Blair, Director of Immigration reported in 1938,

"There is at present a great pressure at our doors for the admission of many thousands of the distressed people of Europe... most of the refugees and other distressed people. People now seeking to leave continental Europe to find new homes abroad are without funds, and if accepted must leave their capital and equipment behind and arrive here with little more than willing hands accustomed to industrial or clerical work." (Annual Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization, 1937-38, P.235)

Noting the vociferous Quebec stand on Jewish immigration and the constitutional aspects of the problem -- this at a time when provincial legislation loomed as less important than forty years later -- Saul Hayes wrote on Nov. 28, 1938,

"Although immigration is a matter of Federal jurisdiction only, it is well known that the Federal Cabinet, for political and other reasons, will not move until they receive the approval, tacit or express, of the various provincial governments.

"I am not particularly impressed with the idea of delegations to Ottawa which ask the Government for a statement of general principles, as it is inconceivable that the Government is not aware of the sufferings of the Jewish people and of the desire of the Jewish Community of Montreal to have emigrants enter Canada. Moreover, there is the fact that the Government can fall back upon the declaration that they are awaiting results of the Evian Conference and its sub-committee reports and findings.

"If on the other hand the Canadian Jewish Congress were to appoint a committee to draw up a plan of emigration showing why it would be feasible and in the best economic interests of the country to take in 200, 500 or 1000 families and how they would be distributed, and what they would do, I feel that something might be done. The history of the entry of refugees into England and Holland suggest that this plan can be made to succeed. For example -- in England I am informed, and I hope credibly, that 10,000 Jewish refugees were permitted to find their haven there as a result of the plea to the British Government by representative Jewish bodies who came to the Government with a well defined plan, citing chapter and verse as to how refugees would be placed, taken care of and where they would fit in the economic set-up of the country. The same is true on a lesser scale, I am informed, insofar as Holland is concerned.

"My concrete suggestion is that since the protest meetings have been held and a delegation has visited Ottawa, that the new line of procedure be adopted and that the Provincial Government, as well as the Federal Government, be submitted a proposal for the entry and establishment of Jewish refugees in Canada and the Province of Quebec."
(letter to H.M. Caiserman)

Mr. Hayes at this time was in the private practice of law, associated with Marcus M. Sperber. His concern with Congress at this time was largely with youth work, vocational guidance and the plans for the social, economic and demographic research then being initiated together with Louis Rosenberg. But this emphasis on the provincial concern with immigration, from the constitutional, practical and administrative points of view presaged much of his history-making work in this area, especially in the rescue of orphaned children which he was to carry out within a few years when he was placed in full responsibility for the life-saving program.

In line with this emphasis on the role of regional and provincial concerns,Heaps wrote to John Bracken, premier of Manitoba on Oct. 14, 1938,

"I discussed this day with the Hon. Mr. Crerar the question of political and religious refugees being permitted to enter Canada. There is a disinclination to allow refugees to come to these shores because of apparent opposition in the Province of Quebec.

"I suggested to the Minister that if Quebec objected to refugees, that other provinces had no such objection to limited and regulated immigration of such persons. I referred to Manitoba as one Province where I have had representations from many sections of the community favoring such action.

"I am writing you this letter as Premier of the Province of Manitoba in the hope that you may confirm to me what I believe to be your feelings concerning what I have stated above, namely: that insofar as Manitoba is concerned there would be no objection to a limited number of political or religious refugees coming to make their homes in Manitoba. The Hon. Mr. Crerar informed me he would be in Winnipeg about the end of this month and

would probably meet you during his visit and he suggested I write you in this connection. I very much regret that circumstances make it impossible for me to come to Winnipeg at this time, as I would like to have discussed this matter with you personally, but I am sending a copy of this letter to Ald. M.A. Gray of Winnipeg who is interested in this question."

Similarly the Canadian Committee for Jewish Refugees "expressed doubt as to whether the method followed up to the present in dealing with the refugee problem was the right one. It was also felt that it might be advisable from now on to lay stress on negotiations with the Provincial Government with a view of obtaining their sympathy and co-operation. Opinion was voiced as to the advisability of proceeding at once with a social welfare and economic survey to ascertain the possibilities for the absorption of refugees if and when admitted to Canada. It was felt that with the material obtained from such a survey, it may become possible to submit complete and definite proposals to the Government through the intermediary of a small committee mentioned in the discussion with the Prime Minister when he received the delegation on November 23rd." (Minutes of Executive Committee, Dec. 26, 1938)

WITNESS OF SHATTERING CRYSTAL

One witness -- and every witness was a victim -- survived and found a home in Toronto. Four decades later Henry Warschauer, retired after twenty-five years as educator with Holy Blossom Temple, recalled (in the Canadian Jewish News of Nov. 10, 1978),

"The most brutal rehearsal for the Holocaust took place inside Germany, in full view of a passive German population, between Nov. 9 and Nov. 12, 1938. The event known, as if to prettify the pogrom, was 'Crystal night,' the night of broken glass and remembered by Jews all over the world as the beginning of the 'final solution.' It should be remembered and analyzed each year by all freedom-loving people. The 40th anniversary of the event gives me cause to jot down these facts and memories which I feel should never be forgotten.

"Under the Goebbels-organized cover of 'spontaneous demonstrations of irate citizens' following the death of a German embassy official in Paris on Nov. 9, which also was the anniversary of the unsuccessful Hitler uprising of 1923, 171 synagogues were set ablaze all over Germany, and others wantonly destroyed.

"In the course of these operations, which stretched into Nov. 10, 91 Jews were murdered, many others severely wounded, and, in broad daylight, more than 7,000 Jewish-owned businesses, including 29 of the largest and world-famous department stores, destroyed. Also, beginning Nov. 10, and ending only Nov. 12, some 25,000 male adult Jews were arrested by the Gestapo and taken to the three largest concentration camps.

"So it was that on Nov. 11 or 12, I found myself in the recently established concentration camp Buchenwald, together with almost half the 25,000 arrested Jews.

"The camp was completely unprepared for our arrival. As we now know, on Nov. 9, before our arrival, the camp count had been 9,842 inmates. Four days later, thanks to us, it had risen to 19,676.

"There was not enough water or food nor barracks or toilets to accommodate us. In fact, by the time we arrived, the first group had already been decimated by men who had gone insane, run berserk and been clubbed to death by Kapos as well as Jews who had taken it upon themselves to 'put some order into this chaos.'

"Others had committed suicide by various means, or died from natural causes. Our arrests had been chaotic: some of the blackshirts were relatively human, others sadists with a killer instinct.

"I still recall the Frankfurt/Main exhibition hall where we were assembled and thoroughly disoriented, the transport to the railway station on trucks ('keep your heads on your knees, whoever raises his head only a second will be shot'), the long train ride to Weimar, the renewed cruelties on the way to Buchenwald, and then the long wait on the parade grounds from 6 in the morning to 4.

"Suddenly, over the PA system, a voice shouted, 'If another of those Jews hangs himself, will he please first put a piece of paper with his name on in his pocket so that we know who the hell he is.'

"As the day progressed and we stood and waited, we relieved ourselves in our pants, tried to help some older men who had fainted by just propping them up. Now and then a Kapo came along and beat some up, the machine guns on the watchtowers were moved like searchlights over us, and when one man screamed out loud, 'Sh'ma Yisrael,'

a crackling and seemingly drunk voice shouted over the PA, 'Pick him up and take him to the bunker; we'll take care of him tonight.' We knew what it meant without being told.

"Late in the afternoon, we were given something to eat, whale goulash. It caused immediate diarrhea. By then we had been put in barracks which were really stables. Rows of planks in three or four layers served as beds, and we were so crowded that most of us could only sleep on our sides to save space. Of course, there were no blankets, not even straw. In fact, the man on my right did not get up next morning. He had died in his sleep and we dragged him out for roll call.

"I will never forget this first night -- it was, again, a preview of hell. Men who had to relieve themselves, used their hats; ten-mark bills served as toilet paper, and,as had happened the night before, some went insane and were beaten to death. Early in the morning we were permitted to use the 'toilets,' open ditches with raw lumber to sit on.

"Rumours spread like wildfire: we would be working at something; we would be released soon; we would stay on an on; and our hopes made a skydive when we were properly admitted and some of us, perhaps 1,000, put into the real camp. I was one of them.

"Of the many impressions that I gained and often recall in nightmares to this day, one will do: the utter corruption of the place. There was a canteen where you could buy some cheese or sausage or, believe it or not, boxes of candy. The profit that went to the SS was unbelievable.

"One morning the PA system bellowed: 'all Jews who own a car report at the gate immediately.' Many did -- and were relieved of their property at one-tenth or less its value. We were working in the quarries and were told

to avoid looking at the house of the Commander, SS Colonel Koch (later executed by the Nazis themselves). His wife Ilse (known for her interest in tattoos and lamp shades made of human skin showing interesting tattoos), was looking for potential victims. The work in the quarries was make-believe work, seemingly without value, but a great opportunity for the supervisors to beat us. Young men who were healthy could survive as I did; men in their 50s and 60s were just driven to 'normal' deaths.

"Even among the SS there were human beings as well as beasts. Some used every opportunity to be cruel, others seemed curiously matter-of-fact. Inside the camp proper you saw the bulk of the 'real' inmates, mainly Gentile. Some were political activists (who seemed to fare quite well), some homosexuals, some ex-jailbirds who had not been let go after their sentence had been served but placed in Buchenwald; some Jehovah's Witnesses, some old and practically dying, some looking rather healthy in spite of all the suffering.

"But I recall an old, slim man, with a two-by-four in place of a leg. An SS officer who knew him, exclaimed upon seeing him, 'Are you still alive? I'll bring you some rope tonight and you can hang yourself.' -- The next morning we had a long roll-call while they cut him off a tree and dragged him to his block comrades so that the elder could report, 'strength, 380. Now, 379 present, and one corpse.'

"On another occasion, as I stood at the fence and near a watch tower, suddenly something was thrown down at me. It turned out to be a perfectly good and tasty sandwich. Obviously, the SS man on the tower had a heart.

"After a week or two inside the real camp we were returned to the stables. By that time rumors had it that those whose emigration papers were ready could be released. Indeed, this is what happened. After about 2½ months in

Buchenwald, my name was called to report at the gate. I was told that I would be released the next morning 'to continue to prepare Jewish youth for emigration at the Juedische Anlernwerkstatt in Frankfurt/Main.'

"It turned out that this ORT-type school had been taken over by the Gestapo or SS to further Jewish emigration through vocational training. I had taught there for over two years when I was arrested, and now I was to return there for another five months until my nerves cracked and I was given an agricultural trainee visa for England, 'to leave England upon completion of the training.'

"On Sept. 1, 1939, World War II broke out. By then, about 170,000 German Jews were left to be exterminated now that emigration had become, except for a very few, an impossibility. The phase that Crystal night had opened and which had enabled perhaps 80,000 German Jews to emigrate in 1939, as the result of world indignation, made room for the 'final solution,' which included my brother Fritz Hermann, and many other relatives who did not make it before the closing of the gates.

"Would it have been possible to save more in 1939? The lesson of Crystal night is simple: People who can be saved today should not be left waiting for tomorrow. It may never come."

NEW NADIR FOR GERMANY

Towards the end of 1938 there appeared the possibility of a change of the Canadian policy of keeping refugees, and even of Jewish refugees, out of the country.

Whether this prospect appeared because Canadians seemed to begin to react to the sheer accumulation and piling of German horrors beyond the tolerance of Canadian conscience; whether it was the worsening of Vatican-Berlin relations; whether it was the unconcealed, barefaced violence against Czechoslovakia; whether it was the unbridled violence of the November 1938 Krystallnacht, when German unfettered cruelty against Jews because a Jewish student had assassinated a Nazi official in Switzerland -- for whatever or no cause, there seemed some reason to hope for Canadian compassion.

The horror of Krystallnacht, November 1938, set a new level for horror and violence.

An unreserved condemnation came from an editor who commented on the German statement that Krystallnacht was the will of the people.

"Two Lies" was the response of Action catholique on the 17th: "In a dictatorship it is the government that acts, not the free people. Besides, the murder of German Jews is immoral. The 'Jewish problem' must be resolved by moral means. Jews are human beings with human rights and the due protection of law. -- They may not be robbed or injured."

The civilized world was aghast; yet Action catholique felt it necessary to comment on "The Jews and Germany" (Jules Dorion, Nov. 14, 1938). Even so the terms of its protest deserve close examination: the Germans imposed a collective fine in dollars upon the Jewish community, a further step in their constant quest for hard exchange following the devaluation of the mark; another procedure in the ancient extortion from the Jews of the moneys they had unfairly secured from the populace, the same procedure that had led the popes to establish ghettos; Jews' furniture and homes were attacked; priests were injured and the home of Cardinal Faulhaber was attacked; some inoffensive Jews were beaten savagely. "The action of the German people may have been wise and practical. It was not beautiful."

In the words of Troper and Abella,

"Time had run out for German Jewry. On November 9 and 10 occurred the worst pogrom in modern world history to that time. Kristallnacht (literally crystal night, because of the broken glass from Jewish homes and businesses that littered the streets in every city, town and village in Germany and Austria) was incited by the government to terrorize the Jews. Countless synagogues, Jewish stores and homes were plundered and razed. Men, women and children were wrenched from their homes, beaten, shot, or dragged off to concentration camps. Hundreds were killed, thousands injured, tens of thousands arrested.

"These tragic events finally touched the Prime Minister of Canada. 'The sorrows which the Jews have to bear at this time', he wrote in his diary, 'are almost beyond comprehension. Something', he added, 'will have to be done by our country...' Coincidentally, on the following day, he personally shared in Jewish grief as he attended the funeral of Mrs. Heaps. Again, he was overwhelmed by the breadth of the tragedy which was about to envelop the Jews. Writing in his diary that night, he noted that it would be 'difficult politically', and his Cabinet might oppose him, but he was going to 'fight' for the admission of some Jewish refugees since it was 'right and just, and Christian.'

"The following week while he was in Washington for talks with Roosevelt concerning the upcoming visit of the Royal Family, the conversation turned to the ghastly lot of Jewish refugees. While the President, Myron Taylor and Cordell Hull discussed what could be done, King remained silent. In his own words, he 'just listened'. Yet during the conversation he 'felt more than ever' that,since countries with 'more crowded areas' such as Great Britain and the United States were accepting refugees, Canada must open her doors. On his return to Ottawa he told the Governor-General, Lord Tweedsmuir, that on humanitarian grounds alone Canada should allow in some refugees and warned that,'if we tried to keep our country to ourselves, we would lose it altogether some day'." (King's diary)

The Hon. T.A. Crerar began to speak in the Commons of the undeniable plight of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

The Hon. R.J. Manion, leader of the opposition told Sen. Cairine Wilson he was as sympathetic to the idea of admitting refugees as the government was, and that he did not consider the problem as an immigration question.

The Jews of Canada mobilized for another effort to save German Jewry. On November 14, at a special emergency meeting, the executive of the Canadian Jewish Congress decided to proclaim November 20 a day of mourning with memorial meetings across the country. It instructed its local organizations to ensure that these meetings be non-sectarian, with non-Jewish community leaders playing a prominent role. These meetings sought to capitalize on the sympathy towards the helpless victims of Nazi brutality and to indicate to the government that public opinion was in favour of admitting some of them to Canada.

Surprisingly, across Canada from Glace Bay to Victoria, mass meetings passed resolutions pleading with the government to open its heart and, more especially, its gate. Mayors, judges, M.P.s, and businessmen took their place on the platform in support of the refugees. Twenty thousand participated in Toronto, four thousand in Winnipeg, six hundred in Quebec City, two hundred in Vegreville, Alberta, eight hundred in Niagara Falls, twelve hundred in Kingston, three hundred in Humboldt, Saskatchewan.

The Canadian Thinker reported on the Winnipeg meeting where "speakers representing three Christian denominations and the Hebrew faith joined in strong condemnation of and protest against persecution of Jews, Catholics and Protestants. The Mayor of Winnipeg, Mr. John Queen; Prof. W.F. Osborne and Miss Constance Hayward of the League of Nations Society...

"Mr. Herbert Cottingham, representing Archbishop A.A. Sinnott, of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Winnipeg, stated he brought a message of sympathy with the persecuted from Roman Catholics and of indignation at the grossly unjust treatment of the Jews in Germany. 'We Catholics stand for justice, freedom and fellowship, and it is appalling that the German people should have allowed this extreme nationalism to develop. Jews have made great contributions to the welfare of mankind. The German Jew has done tremendous work to built up that nation. If they are no longer wanted, it is the duty of every democratic people, in this the hour of trial of the Jewish people, to extend a helping hand. Sympathy and indignation are not enough. We who live in peace and security must open our doors and welcome them to our country, so that they, too, will find a home. The nations that do so will be richer, for people who have these abilities will be an asset to a country.'" (Vol. 3, no. 7, 1938, pp. 6-7)

The Printed Word, a businessmen's periodical, concluded that "Jews would help us solve some of our national problems, many of which are due to the fact that we have insufficient population per square mile to pay for the conveniences and luxuries of civilization with which we have so generously provided ourselves." (Oct. 1938)

Telegrams, resolutions, petitions and letters poured into the offices of the Prime Minister and various Members of Parliament. The demonstrations were, in the words of the Toronto Globe and Mail, an example of the "brotherhood of man asserting itself". Scores of newspapers across the nation -- with the singular exception of the French press in Quebec -- called for a more generous policy towards refugees. To capitalize on this vast outpouring of public support, a high-powered delegation of Canadians arrived in Ottawa on November 22 to meet with the Prime Minister to plead the case for Jewish refugees.

THE JEWISH COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES

By this time the Canadian Committee for Jewish Refugees was in existence. Significantly this creature of the Congress, at its November, 1938 meeting had Samuel and Abe Bronfman, Sydney Pierce and Lazarus Phillips in attendance.

An interview was arranged with the Prime Minister on the initiative of the Toronto Refugee Committee and a delegation representing Canadian Jewry waited on the Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration.

The Prime Minister received the delegation, which included Samuel Bronfman, probably his first active participation in the work of the Canadian Jewish Congress which he was soon to lead with very great distinction. The delegation of Nov. 23, 1938 counted both Jewish M.P.s and the leaders of all the important community organizations including the Congress, JIAS and the Zionist Organization of Canada.

Mr. Robinson of Montreal presented the views of the delegation. He prefaced his remarks by recognizing the difficulties of the government in dealing with the refugee problem due to opposition from Quebec and from other quarters. Canadian Jewry appreciated these difficulties and would undertake to settle refugees admitted by our government in the smaller communities of the Dominion where they would not become a factor in the labour market.

He also assured the government that if 10,000 refugees were admitted, none of them would become a public charge; about 5,000 have relatives in Canada who would guarantee their maintenance; about 2,000 refugees will arrive with capital and will be able to take care of themselves. As for the balance of about 3,000 refugees, who have no means of their own and no relatives here, their maintenance would be guaranteed by Canadian Jewry. He also pointed out that the arrival of refugees would be regulated so that they came over a certain period of time. Canadian Jewry would take charge of their distribution; thus they do not become an economic problem.

Mr. Robinson drew the attention of the Prime Minister to the fact that refugees might not all be German but also Polish, Roumanian, Hungarian or Czech. He expressed the hope that the government will waive, in their cases, the passport and other regulations.

They were politely rebuffed. King pointed out that unemployment in Canada was still high and that his first duty was "the avoidance of strife...maintaining the unity of the country" and fighting "the forces of separatism". He sympathized with the refugees, he said, but he had "to consider the constituencies and the views of those supporting the Government." Crerar added that there were great administrative problems involved and, in any case, Canada had already accepted three hundred refugees over the past year.

The Prime Minister explained that he cannot promise anything. He said that the cabinet is worried over the problem. He knew that the sentiments of the country have changed, there is more sympathetic feeling in evidence. (Minutes of meeting of Montreal members of Dominion Council of the Congress, Nov. 29, 1938)

With that the delegation was excused.

From the perspective of twentieth-century, this may be one of the first Canadian governmental decisions to be admittedly made as a concession to Quebec separatism. The Jews in the claws of the Germans were to pay the price

"The Prime Minister was asked that the Government admit a reasonable number of the following categories of refugees: industrialists, engineers, those who have immediate relatives and also a number of those who have no relatives at all, and some children. In the course of the conversation it became clear that it would be advisable to conduct an educational campaign to create favorable public opinion and to have a small Committee to deal with the authorities." (Minutes of Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees, Montreal March 12, 1939)

Not for the first time or for the last did King resort to his pseudo-democratic ploy: he will approve the admission of refugees when the public will be seen to be in favour of such a policy.

On the following day King again met his Cabinet and, as he recorded in his diary, he once more asked them to adopt a "Liberal attitude", to act as the "conscience of the nation" even though it might not be "politically most expedient", and offer some aid to Jewish refugees. There was no response to his appeal. The Cabinet, according to the Prime Minister, feared "the political consequences of any help to the Jews." What it was prepared to do, after some discussion, was to help find a home for these Jews "in some (other) land". King then dropped the issue as he "did not wish to press the matter any further."

A.J. Freiman, man of dignity, felt obsequiousness was in order as he wrote to Mr. King on November 23, 1938, following the interview that day,

"Recognizing only too well the enormity of affairs which beset you, I am loathe to greater burden you by encroaching further on your valuable time.

"But the urgency is so great, the need of my co-religionists so overwhelming, that I feel it my bounden duty to direct my humble plea on their behalf again to you.

"May I say, Sir, that I know only too well your feelings in this matter."

In their frustration even sophisticated men sought answers in naiveté. A.H. Goldberg, Calgary grain dealer, wrote to Caiserman,

"There is only one way to cope with this terrible state of affairs, and that is for governments to be as decent as people would expect them to be if they were but ordinary citizens and not sitting in the high places of government. If Mr. Mackenzie King was simply an ordinary citizen and not Prime Minister, if his Cabinet Ministers were ordinary citizens and not Cabinet Ministers, we would see each and every one of them upon platforms and in pulpits preaching tolerance and goodwill, and a manifestation of the simple decency which is expected would be shown on the part of one person towards another. But does their position of high authority give them the right to sit snugly in the high seat of office and permit human beings to be treated like a herd of cattle, and not give them a haven of refuge wherein they in time would prove themselves good citizens and as great a credit to this country as they have proven themselves an honor and a credit to the countries in which they have lived for hundreds of years?" (Dec. 21, 1938)

At the November 1938 meeting, Toronto's A.B. Bennett drew attention to the existence of the National Committee on Refugees, "nevertheless a very interesting experiment." A small subsidy to the National Committee was voted with some hesitation.

On Dec. 7 a conference of interested Jewish organizations at the Windsor Hotel prepared to set up a coordinating committee.

Six days after this Montreal meeting, on Dec. 13, 1938, representatives of Ontario and Eastern Region organizations assembled at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto and approved the principle of a national Jewish committee on refugees, with the title of Canadian Committee on Refugees.

A parallel meeting at the Montefiore Club in Montreal on Dec. 15, which was well representative of the Montreal community, constituted the Jewish Coordinating Refugee Committee, avowedly in response to the Ottawa meeting of the non-Jewish friends of refugees on Dec. 7.

Among those present were delegates from the Jewish Congress, the Jewish Colonization Association, Canadian members of the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Poale Zion, the International Ladies Garment Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the O.R.T., the Y.M.H.A., the National Council of Jewish Women, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society.

B. Robinson was named chairman pro-tem.

Ten days later, upon the motion of Michael Garber and Samuel Bronfman, the scope of the Canadian National Committee for Jewish Refugees was expanded from its Canadian limits to deal also with the world Jewish refugee problem and to cooperate in that respect with world Jewish organizations. (Minutes of meeting of Dec. 26, 1938)

On Jan. 4, 1939 Mr. Bronfman was named chairman.

The fourth national plenary session of the Congress held in Toronto in January, 1939, at which Samuel Bronfman was elected national president, formally established a national Jewish refugee committee, specified its functions and approved a constitution.

Early in 1939 an uncirculated Canadian Jewish Congress survey noted,

"The Fourth General Session of the Canadian Jewish Congress, held in Toronto on January 21, 22 and 23, 1939, will remain in our records as the beginning of the transition from experimental planning and breaking new ground, to organizational achievement, development and consolidation.

"The background of the last Plenary Session was dramatic indeed. The situation of the Jews in Europe continued to deteriorate; anti-Jewish legislation in Italy and their expulsion later; anti-Jewish legislation in Hungary; the cancellation of citizenship of Roumanian Jews, and restrictive legislation which reserved the commercial field for Roumanian citizens only; the anti-Jewish agitation in Spain; the intensification, degradation and persecution of the Jews in Germany; anti-Jewish legislation in Austria; unprovoked attacks by Arabs upon the Jews in Palestine, and the prevailing terror which continued to drive tens of thousands of refugees from country to country and from port to port.

"The Evian Conference, which met under such hopeful conditions but which found most of the participants either unwilling or unable to attempt a solution of the pressing refugee problems.

"On the American Continent too, an intense anti-Semitic propaganda fostered by the Nazi and Fascist organizations in every country, our own included.

"In the midst of all this the Canadian Jewish Congress called the leading Jewish communities in the Dominion to organize a memorial meeting, on November 20th, 1938, to demonstrate their sympathy with the persecuted in Nazi Germany. These meetings, held throughout the country, were attended by members of the Federal and Provincial Cabinets, by Chief Justices, heads of Universities, religious leaders and by Canadians in every walk of life. The press of the country reported these meetings and recognized them as the largest and most important manifestations since the Armistice in 1918."

Mr. Zacks notes, "The first meeting of the National Committee provided for funds for the operation of the Committee. Refugee work had been carried on, and the funds had been borrowed mainly for the Congress treasury. In view of other campaigns being carried on at the time, it was felt that it was impossible to undertake a financial drive, especially inasmuch as it was not known to what extent refugees would be permitted into Canada. Accordingly it was decided to borrow $50,000 on guarantees from prospective contributors. Of this, $30,000 was secured in Montreal and $20,000 in Toronto. The funds were to be used mainly for assistance to refugees who would come into Canada, and partly for administrative and publicity expenses. A letter signed by Mr. Bronfman, the National President, was forwarded to all Congress Committees and organizations outlining what had been done."

On March 12, 1939 the committee was named the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees. (Saul Hayes)

We have Mr. Bronfman's own account of the early work of the Jewish agency, given extemporaneously a few months after the outbreak of the war,

"As a result of the horrible situations that exist for our people in Europe, a Refugee Committee had been formed about a year and a half ago to consider ways and means to do something to alleviate the distress of our unfortunate brethren and to what extent we could help the refugee from Europe, whether it was bringing him to

Canada or helping to find him a haven elsewhere. To that end a committee was formed. The Convention in Toronto was held and formed the Refugee Committee as a part of Congress, and the Refugee Committee then became definitely an arm of Congress. I think that was the beginning of a very close tie between Jewry in Canada as a whole. The heart-strings of all Jews were related in a common bond of sympathy for the poor, unfortunate people that we could think about in other unfortunate lands..

"The Settlement or Survey Committee had to do the work, to settle these people when they came, to make a survey of conditions in Canada that would give us reasons to bring the Jews, as refugees, to Canada on a sound economic basis, and to understand that those refugees we were bringing to Canada would be properly assimilated into the economic and social fabric of the country.

"When the refugees arrived here that needed immediate funds, we went to citizens of Toronto and Montreal and we asked the leading citizens there to give the Committee notes, and we used them to borrow fifty thousand dollars from the Bank and we used those funds to take care of the refugees then in this country, and refugees arriving, and for funds which might be needed at the moment to take care of any refugees.

"The people who gave those notes, and the Bank that loaned us the money, did it because they knew that whenever anything is required to be done in Canada the people of Canada are not found wanting. They knew that the notes would be paid; and the Bank knew that the notes would be paid. And so we carried on with the Refugee Committee.

"In the meantime refugees were arriving, and you should know today that the Refugee Committee has taken care of over two hundred families that had come to Canada prior to the outbreak of the war.

"Some of those refugees have been settled in the City, but largely they are on the land. Over one hundred and fifty families have been settled in Ontario, eight families in Quebec, and the balance have been settled in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

"We have people who just escaped from Poland, that have come over here, husband and wife, two, and three and four, up to five and six children, settled on land. The requisite of these families to come in to Canada, according to the Government, is that they must have a thousand dollars of money; but you know, if they had gone out without a thousand dollars, without any assistance except what the Railways gave them to put them on farms, from the experience of the past we know what has happened. They bought land in the old days. They knew nothing of the development of the land; they had no machinery, they had no cattle or horses or chickens or anything else. We probably have profited by the mistakes of the past, and in this case the Refugees Committees have advanced to each of these families the additional required funds, and have gone out and have set out for them farms that have been ready for the people to go to work on; cultivated farms, farms with buildings on them, with machinery on them, with all the appurtenances that it takes to complete and operate a farm." (Speech before Annual Ontario Regional Conference, Canadian Jewish Congress, Toronto, Jan. 7, 1940)

There were complex reasons that might have justified expectation: the relaxation of the economic crisis, a looming sense of war coming with a concommitant need for manpower; a lessening of French Canadian political pressure; a readiness to accept direction from overseas influences; greater credence given to reports of suffering in Europe at the hands of more generally discredited Germans; and other considerations in Canada's immigration complex.

Indeed, there was even a certain stylistic and contentual uniformity running through much of the new pro-immigration press opinion in English-language expression.

Some of the negative opposition to Jews entering the country seemed to fade.

THE CANADIAN CONSCIENCE

Conscience-stricken Canadians -- even national leaders of political parties -- came to feel helpless within the democratic structure as their intent was frustrated by a stonewall of a government by a no-one-knew -- or knows -- what force. (If the numerous opponents of Jewish immigration thought otherwise at the time, as they saw their antagonism translated into an anti-refugee policy of the government, their turn at crying into the wind was to come within the year when the government turned 180° and declared war on Germany.) But this was small comfort for the millions of hunted creatures, for the millions about to die from the hearltessness of those who could save them.

A new mildness did enter the anti-Jewish scene at this time.

The Semaine religieuse de Québec ceased preaching against the Jews.

Sympathy for the Nazis in the general press lessened. Their propaganda in Canada was appearing more clearly in its diabolitcal artificiality. More sympathy towards their Jewish victims found expression.

As a token of this mildness we even note a paragraph from Eugène L'Heureux in Action catholique of January 4, 1939.

In an editorial on "A Prosperous Year; For the Practice of National Solidarity," he cites the Jews as "one example out of a thousand, there is the solidarity which permitted a handful of impoverished Jews who arrived less than a century ago to organize sufficiently to falsify the numerous majority richly endowed with historic rights.

"Of these Jews, we would have it clearly understood: far from despising them, we set them as an example to be followed in several ways, particularly in their national solidarity."

This is cited not, for an instant, to ignore the intention of an anti-Jewish boycott in the words of L'Heureux. It is to note the slight difference in tone from his editorial of several years earlier, when he cheered the Hitler-Vatican concordat (Aug. 31, 1933)

"The undersigned despises deeply the antisemitism which is based on hatred. He is convinced that the Canadian people must ensure proper treatment to all whom a very questionable immigration policy has brought to this country.

"In any case, if Mr. Turcotte (editor of Le Canada, who provoked this editorial) insists on the word 'anti-Semitism' to describe the stand of those who would prevent the newest Canadians from extorting special powers and privileges from the public authorities which establishes them as a state within a state, we cannot prevent our colleague from amusing himself by falsifying the meaning of words.

"If Mr. Turcotte sees blameworthy anti-Semitism in our preference for authentic Canadians to the inassimilable immigrants who are the Jews, he is free to criticize. But we are free to prefer, tomorrow as yesterday, our own people to these eternal and universal strangers.

"We shall continue to invite our compatriots to practise national solidarity more consistently and intelligently. At the side of those who, even when naturalized, think as Jews, act as Jews, Judaize national wealth, favour Jews to the exclusion of others, and apply themselves to remaining Jews unto future generations -- we shall appeal to our compatriots not to be victims, in spite of the advice of Mr. Turcotte and his group. And we shall win.

"If Hitler has undertaken to remove his people from a Jewish domination such as rests on other peoples, and which is developing systematically here, we could discuss his means but not his ends. As to these means, we must be careful not to see them through the eyes of those who have an interest in blackening the Hitlerite policy and all the good it bears."

L'Heureux looked forward to the day French Canadians would no longer look at their country politically as Tory or Whig, but as enlightened French Canadians, descendants of Frenchmen and of Catholics, just as Jews unfailingly see everything as Jews, triply Jewish.

"If we had not politicized our collective and even our private life, we could have a general organization and a mentality which would be incompatible with Jewish control which has succeeded in establishing itself in the economic realm and -- doubly alas -- in the legislative realm."

During the spring of 1938 the Protestant churches of Canada entered into the refugee debate with great vigour.

As B. Sheps wrote from Winnipeg to Toronto's A.B. Bennett (Oct. 10, 1938),

"It is our feeling that not only should there be a non-sectarian delegation, but a non-sectarian association to aid religious and political refugees. We are inclined to the view that any non-sectarian delegation which ultimately would wait upon the government should be the spokesman of this nation-wide organization. We feel sure that such an organization can be successfully launched throughout Canada, particularly if a lead is given by the Province of Ontario.

"It is not so much a question of having a large membership, but persons of the right kind. We feel that if such an association were organized in Ontario, there would be no difficulty in recruiting outstanding citizens of all shades of political, social and religious affiliations. Such an association would agitate to provide asylum in Canada for at least a limited number of political and religious victims of European oppression who would not, by reason of their means, or guarantees for their maintenance, become public charges or affect any unemployed now in Canada. Once a precedent is created of this character, it will be less difficult to widen the scope which such an organization might subsequently set for itself."

Whether the Canadian Jewish Congress was foreseeing the developments and personalities of the coming year, or whether it was acting generally in line with its civic philosophy, it remains a fact that in June of 1938 the Congress became a national corporate member of the League of Nations Society in Canada as did the Zionist Organization of Canada and the National Council of Jewish Women. (Letter from Cairine Wilson to H.M. Caiserman, June 18, 1938)

In the years ahead the Congress came to participate actively in a score of civic programs for the advancement of Canadian freedoms, of Canadian programs for the widest justice, the welfare of its own citizens and of the threatened beyond its borders. It became the benchmark of Saul Hayes when he assumed executive leadership and of such of his staff associates as Dr. Manfred Saalheimer. But during these earlier months, the Congress

felt too overwhelmed with its obligations to consider such broader programs. This affiliation with the League of Nations Society was among its pioneer efforts in this vast social area.

This sincere Protestant movement spoke up on the Jewish refugee question and on the fate of other victims of German cruelty. It spoke to its considerable communion-constituency, and it spoke in their name to the political power that acts for Canadian citizenry.

They were led by the energetic man of conscience, Claris E. Silcox, who played an important and dramatic part in the history of Canadian Jewry for two decades. He was courageous and outspoken in his battle against antisemitism wherever this evil raised its head. He was scholarly, articulate and effective in organization.

Characteristic of the man -- and certainly not characteristic of annual reports to large federated institutions -- is this reference to the Provisional Committee on Jewish-Gentile Relationships which he formed and led,

"It sought to stand on guard to act in case of emergency. I cannot possibly report the measure of activities undertaken in this struggle, most of which have been carried on in the name of the Committee on Jewish-Gentile Relationships and not in the name of the Council, nor at the expense of the Council, unless one cares to consider as expense the time of the General Secretary for roughly five months in the last twelve.

"Some may have thought that in these efforts the General Secretary was a bit eccentric. But if they do not realize now the significance of the problem of antisemitism they never will. The world has been appalled by the enormity of the events of the last two weeks in Germany, and we in Canada have been forced to face the meaning of it all for us in a dramatic, if terrible, way.

The General Secretary has given most freely of his time and energy to this problem, even during the hot summer months. The Committee of which he is Chairman circulated over 40,000 pamphlets entitled 'Facts and Fables About the Jews,' thousands of excerpts from the report of the Oxford Conference dealing with antisemitism, pamphlets by Hugo Valentin, Dr. Bruce and others, books by W.W. Simpson for young people's groups, and other volumes for public libraries. He has addressed public meetings and had something to do with marshalling the first evidences of resentment against the hypocrisy of the present Quebec government which tolerated a most damnable type of antisemitic fascism while it showed an unholy zeal in suppressing communism. Finally, his committee has brought to Canada from England Dr. James Parkes, outstanding authority of the Jewish question, to assist in exposing the tissues of falsehood and forgery with which the present antisemites, like their ancient mediaeval ancestors, have sought to bedevil society.

"In all this, he has not sentimentalized over the Jews or refrained from telling them certain things which he felt they should be told, but he has done this, in part upon straight humanitarian grounds, and in part because he feels that the challenge of antisemitism is the greatest single challenge which confronts the Church of Christ today. If we in the churches will stand firm, we may break the sorry record of two thousand years, and heal the ancient breach between the synagogue and the church which has wrought unspeakable harm to western civilization. If Protestant and Catholic alike realize their common danger and fight a common foe, they may go far to compose their own sorry differences. If we in the churches refuse to live up to our profession, the pale face of the Jew whom we adore will properly condemn us, and Almighty God will surely find a more effective tool than the self-styled ecclesia to promote His will for the human race."

The fruit of his work has not yet been appraised fully. This criticism is the more difficult because, on the one hand, he was ahead of his own society in sensing the moral evil and the pervasiveness of Jew-hatred and, on the other, he was laggard behind the urgency and the extremeness of Jewish needs and of the measures the Jewish people needed to take -- especially in Palestine -- for any resolution of its vast problems. In these conflicts with his friends on the Jewish and on the Christian sides of the barriers,he was courageously supported by his friend, Rabbi M.N. Eisendrath.

Silcox narrated this chapter in Canadian history in his very personal General Secretary's Annual Report for 1938 to the Christian Social Council of Canada, successors to the Social Service Council of Canada, constituted of the Baptists, the Church of England, the Evangelical Church, Salvation Army, the Society of Friends, the United Church and the national councils of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A.

"In April of this year, when the government was still hesitant whether to send representatives to the Evian Conference, the Executive carefully considered the matter officially, and finally on April 22nd, despatched a communication to the Honourable Thomas Crerar, calling attention to the plight of the refugees, and urging the Government of Canada to take the necessary steps to collaborate with the other governments of the New World in an effort to find a needed and adequate solution of a condition which, by reason of the factors of persecution and hopeless suffering, is at variance with all our cherished ideals. This communication was followed by further communications confirming our request by our various church-units. Soon after the government announced that it would be represented at Evian.

"Since those April days, the appalling tragedy of Europe has made this our first national problem, and the General Secretary has busied himself in scores of ways to get the obligation of Canada to do something before the Canadian public. He has urged upon the League of Nations Society the formation of a National Committee on the Refugees, he has spoken on the matter over the radio, he has inspired articles in various papers, and sent material to the daily and leading weekly newspapers of Canada. For himself, he has given particular attention to the economic and cultural problems involved in the resettlement of refugees in Canada, and he secured for Dr. James Parkes of England a nationwide broadcast on the subject on Saturday, November 12th. The question is so complicated that there is no time here to enlarge upon it, but it is probably the major issue confronting the Dominion on more counts than one.

"It might be added that in September the General Secretary wrote the Lord Bishop of Niagara asking him to present to the joint Canadian and American meeting setting up the North American organization of the World Council of Churches the desirability of a special Day of Prayer for Refugees on the North American continent. The Lord Bishop of Niagara brought this matter before the Joint Committee, which recommended such a day of prayer; this was observed in Canada on Sunday, October 23rd,

"The plight of these refugees constitutes a challenge to all Christian people everywhere to succour to the measure of their ability, such as are homeless and destitute...Unite their intercessions on behalf of these refugees and persecuted peoples at all times, but especially on Sunday, October 23rd, 1938, beseeching God to have mercy on the afflicted and to show forth his compassion upon them, by our hands, if it so pleases Him, but by His power.

"A prayer for the persecuted,

"O Thou who in Thy word hast shown us that the pathway of the Redeemer is ever one of sacrificial love, grant Thy blessing upon all Thy suffering servants who, in loyalty to conscience, or because of the accident of birth, are today enduring persecution, imprisonment or exile; and may their burden of sorrow be lightened by our hands, if so Thou wilt, but by Thy saving power. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

"Be Thou the light that lighteneth the Gentiles; be Thou the glory of Thy ancient people Israel. Save us from all arrogance of race, from all contempt of creed, from all bitterness of class, and grant that in this Dominion Thy compassion, made manifest in us, and through us, may bear witness to the reality of our faith. Help us to be doers of the Word, not hearers only, that by our works as well as by our words, we may glorify Thy wondrous Name.."

If the consequences of this expression were substantially nil, it but raises questions as to who is a Christian in Canada, as to the sincerity of the various strata of church adherence, and of individual church members. It did not the slightest good to the hounded victims of the Nazi hounds. But in point of Canadian fact a Day of Prayer was declared and an eloquent call to prayer was widely disseminated and read in churches. Presumably the members of cabinet were absent from church services or October 23, 1938.

As the world crisis mounted towards this catastrophic pitch which would engulf the world, the Rev. C.E. Silcox told the nation,

"The main objection to the admission of Jewish refugees is cultural, not economic. It is based on the supposition that, though Canada may need a larger population, we primarily need an influx of Anglo-Saxons; since today we Anglo-Saxons contribute less than fifty percent of the population of this Dominion, and there is grave danger that our whole British outlook on life may be destroyed if we do not encourage fresh infusion of Anglo-Saxon blood.

"Where in all the world are we more apt to find the love of freedom, the capacity for self-discipline, the regard for fair-play, the intellectual eagerness, the respect for cultural and scientific attainment, the political savoir-faire that knows how to deal with all kinds of minorities? Is it not this which we most need in Canada?

"The refugees will come now, not inclined, like Lot's wife always to cast longing glances at the Sodom and Gomorrah from which they flee, but ready to give us their entire allegiance, knowing no homeland but Canada, eager and ready not only to rehabilitate themselves and their fortunes here, but to make a unique contribution to our national well-being.

"Those whom Nazi Germany is rejecting will help to build a new and more prosperous Canada, and make more solid the broad basis of the justice and freedom of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

"Even if this were not so, even if there were no motives of self-interest to which we might appeal, no truly Christian nation can look upon these victims of ruthless persecution, and refuse the demands of humanity, especially when it is well within its power to help. A nation which has the potential resources of Canada and refuses to help in such an emergency does not deserve economic prosperity; it does not even deserve to be called a Christian country.

"By the inexorable law of retribution, if we turn from our obvious duty now, we or our children shall pay for our negligence in the bitter years that may come upon us." (Radio address, "Should Canada Provide Sanctuary for European Refugees?", over CFRC, Kingston, Nov.1, 1938)

In his "Canadian Post-Mortem on Refugees" address at the University of Toronto early in 1939, Rev. Claris Edwin Silcox, secretary of the Christian Social Council of Canada, pointed out that in the face of the challenge possed by the refugee problem -- Canadian workers feared the arrival of other workers, farmers argued that it was futile to settle more people on the land and "certain industrialists and businessmen feared what may happen to them if energetic, shrewd refugees were permitted to enter and initiate competitive industries; especially, may I blurt it out, if they are Jews...

"The sixth reason for our impotence: Nazi propaganda has been particularly active in Quebec, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan. The methods followed have not been unlike those used in Sudetenland and in the inflammable areas of Europe. They have located people with a grievance, they have launched their attacks upon people's nerves, they have drawn the red herring of communism across their own slimy tracks, they have particularly insinuated the issue of anti-Semitism into anything and everything, and they have done this with this definite object of paralyzing effective Canadian action, of creating sympathy for the intolerable and brutal policies of the Third Reich, and of vitiating the possibility of adequate British resistance. Why Canada has permitted such propagandists to continue their work in this Dominion in beyond me. Perhaps the all-important reason is the existence throughout

Canada, but in some centres more manifest than in others, of a latent anti-Semitism. Here we approach one of the most difficult and persistent problems of the ages, in which those of us who have devoted no small portion of our lives to effect some easement of a condition which has bedevilled Western civilization for nearly one thousand years find ourselves continually placed in an almost impossible situation.

"I would, if I had time, present you with a list of almost unbelievable and malicious falsehoods circulated against the Jews right in our own city. One is kept busy running these lies to the ground -- false interpretations of the Talmud, impudent fabrications regarding Benjamin Franklin's opposition to Jewish immigration when Franklin opposed German, not Jewish, immigration, circulation of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion; a recent photograph and finger-prints of a monster, a Jewish criminal, alleged to have been taken from the police records of Antwerp which we are assured by the chief of police of that city has been manufactured in every detail; alleged facts manufactured in Erfurt and Hamburg by Herr Goebbels and despatched to North America in the English language for the edification of those who believe what they want to believe.

"The Jew has always been the scapegoat.

"These are the major reasons for the impotence of Canada to deal effectively with the challenge of the refugees. Had it not been for these reasons, public opinion would have demanded more open action much earlier. But our policy of procrastination and caution has already cost us dearly. We might have incorporated in Canadian life the cream of Europe's technical efficiency in industry; we might have had a fair infiltration of well-trained agriculturists bringing new and more intensive methods of farming; we might have welcomed to our shores some of the

outstanding professional leaders in Europe and some of the ranking brains of civilization to help us to weld our Canadian culture into some semblance of reality; we might have instituted many new developments which would have tempted idle Canadian capital into action, whereas now it is being kept wrapped up in a napkin; we might have created for ourselves first line defences for our democratic institutions; we might have increased our population by adding producers of necessary and desirable goods; thus reducing our per capita debts, providing new business for railways, new employment for our unemployed, and at least getting something tangible for our huge outlays; we might have expanded our markets for both agriculture and manufactures; we might have relieved much of the tension in Europe."

"The result of this first attack was the flight in 1933, together with some political refugees who had no Jewish blood, of some sixty thousand persons, including 25% of all the university teachers in Germany.

"At the same time as the business world was being attacked, the Jews were being excluded from all kinds of middle class occupations, from journalism, pharmacy, medicine, the theatre, the teaching world, dentistry, the cinema, the stock exchange and everything else one could think of. Artisans, employees and humble labourers were similarly affected by exclusion from the labour front. Even rag-collecting was denied the Jews.

"In 1935 Germany, in a special series of laws, deprived the Jews of citizenship, and from that time on difficulties have at intervals been placed in their way, even when they wished to emigrate.

"Yet, Germany, simultaneously, is making it quite clear that she wishes to be rid of the whole of her Jewish population.

"How many does that involve?

"It is believed that at present about 150,000 Jews and persons of Jewish descent have left the country. There still remain over 300,000 professing Jews in old Germany and 200,000 in Austria and the new Sudeten provinces. In addition to these there are about 800,000 who are 'non-Aryan,' that is, people with at least one Jewish grand-parent -- mostly members of the different Christian churches.

IN THE CHURCHES -- PARKES, HOWSE...

In a radio address over the CBC network Dr. James Parkes on November 12, 1938 detailed the plight of the German citizens "who had some drop of Jewish blood in their veins, often unknown to themselves, people who often had never been members of the Jewish community, sometimes people who all their lives had been devout Catholics or Protestants.

"Some of them fled because the economic basis of their lives was taken away, and in many cases because they also had to fear physical persecution and the concentration camp.

"Except for outbreaks of brutal violence, such as those which have shocked the world this week, anti-Jewish activity in Germany has long ceased to be news. But it has been continuing now with relentless severity for more than five years.

"Within a few weeks of the Nazis' coming into power, all those with Jewish blood in their veins were expelled from the civil service, from all government positions however humble, and from the universities. Lawyers and doctors were soon treated in the same way.

"That is to say, that there are at least one million three hundred thousand wishing to leave the territory of the German Reich. In addition to these there are at least fifty thousand democrats and socialists who have had to leave Sudeten districts and for whom it will be impossible for the tiny new Czechoslovakia to provide a home. The total, in one way or another, must be little short of a million and a half, nine tenths of whom are still living, persecuted and humiliated, within the frontiers of the countries which proclaim their desire and and intention to expel them. For it must not be forgotten that Germany has proclaimed this intention, and has at times ruthlessly given reminders of it by simply packing refugees, without food or money, across her frontiers, completely indifferent to their subsequent fate. There are today such unhappy groups of individuals on both her Czech and Polish frontiers, and the same has been true of all her other frontiers, at one time or another.

"And there are hundreds of Jews in what was Austria, who have only saved themselves from death or concentration camps by the complete surrender of their property and by signing a promise to leave the country -- sometimes within forty-eight hours, a promise which both they and their persecutors know cannot be fulfilled, as there is no country where they can go.

"More than 90% of the twenty-five million dollars which has been so far raised has come from Jewish sources. Some of you will have noted with surprise that I have not been able to include the Christian churches amongst those who have contributed. What they have raised has been negligible, and I know from my own experience that professing Christians have again and again been helped by the Jewish funds, whose general rule has been to ask no questions about religion of those who are genuine refugees.

"It would be rash to claim that much more than half of those who have already left the country have found permanent homes. The country which has received by far the largest number is Palestine, and whatever we may think of the rights and wrongs of the present situation in Palestine,we cannot but acknowledge the amazing skill with which the different Palestinian Jewish organizations have been able to incorporate in their still experimental economy more than thirty thousand refugees. They have been helped by the fact that Germany, until a short time ago, allowed Jews who were settling in Palestine to take out a larger proportion of their capital, in the form of German goods for sale in the Near Eastern market. Yet, even so, it has been a marvellous achievement.

"In other countries outside Europe, especially in North and South America, there are probably about forty thousand settled, but I have not been able to secure any exact figure. Europe itself has been difficult for permanent settlement owing to unemployment, but some thousands have been able to secure permits to work, to set up factories or to take part in academic life. Again it must be said that France has been more generous than any other country, although the old democratic Czechoslovakia ran her close.

"The problem of settlement has been made more difficult by the character of the people involved. Almost all were town dwellers, and people accustomed to a certain standard of life; more than half of them are already middle-aged; and, while it is possible to train youth for agricultural and manual pursuits, it is difficult to do the same for a doctor or lawyer of fifty.

"Moreover, immigration for any class is in these days exceedingly difficult. Since 1933 country after country has almost or completely closed its doors, and those who are prepared to admit limited numbers prefer agricul-

tural or manual workers. The last thing they desire is to increase the number of urban unemployed. But, as you will realize in this country, agricultural settlement is very expensive. It has been calculated that it costs about $500 to establish an artisan but at least $5,000 to place a family on the land.

"It would be beyond my powers to paint for you the human suffering and tragedy involved in this appalling problem. Of course there are undesirable characters amongst the refugees as there are amongst any human group of a million and a half persons; but in the main they are ordinary decent people, rich and poor and middle-class, who through the mere fact of birth are proclaimed pariahs and driven from their homes and their occupations, robbed of all their possessions and pursued with contumely and derision.

"One German newspaper used to print with glee lists of Jewish suicides under the caption of 'an example we should be glad to see other Jews follow.' Is it surprising that the suicides in Germany during the last five years have run into tens of thousands, or that including political opponents who were not Jews, they amounted in the three weeks of March of this year which followed the seizure of Austria, to over fifteen hundred in Vienna alone?

"Germany has announced that the world must solve her Jewish problem by 1942.

"It is evident that it is far beyond the power of voluntary organizations to deal with a million and a half refugees, even if all possible doors were opened. Unless there is to be a human catastrophe which will be a permanent blot upon our civilization, there must be government action and government money to cope with the problem."

In Fredericton, N.B., a public meeting on February 3, 1939 resolved, in view of the great distress that "exists in Germany and in other countries under German influence amongst certain minority groups, the victims of oppression and persecution,

"And whereas the people of Canada, thoughtful of the rights of their own minorities, are moved both to express their disapproval of the acts of the oppressor and to aid the sufferers,

"Be it resolved that the Government of Canada be urged to join with other countries in devising such means, including financial or other assistance, as will facilitate the removal of refugees to Canada and other countries that may be found able to receive and assimilate them... and that the Government of Canada be urged to join with other democratic countries in submitting Germany to diplomatic or economic pressure in an effort to compel that country to abandon her ruthless treatment of her minorities." (King Papers, Pp. 233218-21)

The United Church of Canada informed the Prime Minister on February 10, 1939 that it approved the admission of selected refugees. Such is "the only policy consonant with our obligations as a democracy and as a Christian country, and a fitting proof of the fact that we hold this vast territory as a sacred trust in the Spirit of Him who said that 'to whom much is given, from him much shall be required.'

"We believe with the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution that the immigration of carefully selected individuals or groups of refugees from Central Europe into Canada will constitute no serious problem for Canadians and will prove of inestimable value in our national economy by introducing new arts, new crafts and new industries and artisans trained to develop the same.

"Moreover, since these refugees are the victims of the fresh wave of neopagan materialism sweeping Central Europe and challenging the very foundations of our common faith, we believe that Canada as a Christian country must show its reverence for the sacred rights of personality and its traditional respect for the proper liberties of minorities (as proved in Canadian tradition in the Quebec Act of 1774) by providing sanctuary for those whom the spirit of AntiChrist has bruised and wounded, thus defending the basic principles of that faith which alone can sustain our civilization.

"It is becoming clear in the light of developments in Europe that it is not only Jews that are subject to persecution. The Hebraic-Christian tradition is the object of attack, and in proportion as that tradition or heritage is weakened the basis on which Democracy rests will be undermined. This, it seems to me, might well be stressed in Parliament as an answer to those who oppose Jewish immigration on religious grounds." (King Papers, Pp. 236947-49)

The Regina Leader-Post summarized it as late as February 22, 1939,

"Not much fervor has been displayed in the cause of refugees from Europe by our parliamentarians assembled at Ottawa.

"Those who have interested themselves in urging a national policy on the admittance of a few thousand have done so without encouragement from the Government and in the face of positive opposition from some members. One Liberal representative from Quebec has been outspoken in declaring on behalf of his province a firm antagonism to entry of any Jewish refugees. In the circumstances, and as the need for immediate decision seems to have passed, the Government's well known tactics are likely to be resorted to and a decisive grappling with the question evaded....

"Immigration restrictions were not relaxed to permit of any refugee influx, as appears in answer to a question in the House of Commons. The Minister, Hon. T.A. Crerar, was asked whether any representations were made to allow refugees to enter without complying with the regulations of the Immigration Act. His answer was that many applications had been received for the admission of refugees unable to comply with the Act, an answer conveying little enlightenment."

Rev. E.M. Howse told the Westminster United Church in Winnipeg, as late as April 1939,

"What has come to pass within the bounds of civilized Germany staggers humanity. While we go peacefully to church and return peacefully to our homes, we can scarcely realize that just across a stretch of sea -- that pleasant Atlantic voyage so many of us have enjoyed -- tens of thousands of men, women and children are living in indescribable agony. Men, women and children of every degree of education, wealth and position, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, scholars, scientists, doctors, teachers and poor obscure folk even as you and I, are harried, robbed, beaten, tortured, pursued like poor hunted beasts, save that, while foxes have holes and birds have nests, these have not where they can in safety lay their heads. Following Anschluss, 15,000 Austrians were deemed unfit to continue at liberty, and during the last few weeks 20,000 arrests have been made in newly acquired Bohemia and Moravia. Nothing else can be half as eloquent as the sober and terrible record of vital statistics. Within four months after the fall of Austria, 7,000 Austrians committed suicide. Fill this church till every seat is packed tight from top to bottom. Come in and find every last person dead. Throw out the corpses, fill it again. Come in and again find every last person dead. Fill it again. Fill it five time over, each time coming in and finding every last person dead, and when for the fifth time you have cast the corpses in an awful pile outside, you have not yet reached the total of those who, in despair of all hope in this world, ended their lives as the shadow

of the Nazi rule fell on them in their own country. They knew what that rule meant. In the face of such horror, how can one lightly talk of exaggeration!

"The coming of refugees to Canada depends upon our initiative. Many have no passports. They are illegally in the country where they are at present, yet it is illegal for them to leave. They can be imprisoned for remaining, and they can be imprisoned for trying to get away. In addition, many of them have been robbed of what money and property they possessed. Even if they have money, they must still seek admittance through our Department of Immigration, and they are too often held at bay by every conceivable technicality. Why is it that it has been made virtually impossible for refugees to come to Canada, even when the cost of their coming was no object, and their continued support was clearly assured?

"There are a number of contributing factors. The most important factor -- we may as well admit it -- is French Canada. Unfortunately, the policy of Sinn Fein -- ourselves alone -- has not been confined to Europe. In past years a narrow and vicious nationalism has gained almost complete ascendency in Quebec. The French Canadians feel that they are a minority, and they intend to be a majority; and they are determined that nothing shall frustrate nor even delay that purpose. So they have fiercely fanned the flame of opposition to all immigration. A petition has been sent to the Dominion Government, signed by 127,000 names, protesting against any immigration, but particularly against Jewish immigration. Ironically enough the petition was sent in the name of the Society of John the Baptist, himself a Jew.

"A second factor is the fear among many men that they may find, in refugees, competitors in their own field. Business men seem to fear that all would not be well if the easy-going methods of well-protected industry had to compete with the almost miraculous efficiency developed in Europe. Professional men, especially in the

cities, burdened with the competition of overcrowded professions, fear the effects of further crowding. Labouring men, never very far from the shadow of the long lines of the unemployed, fear that the lines will be swelled, and that the wages of those who labour will be still further depressed. So they join with others in clamouring that we not allow any more immigration while still we have unemployed among our own citizens.

"A third reason -- let no one underestimate it -- is the insidious, continual and widespread Fascist propaganda, much of it coming in the guise of anti-Semitism. Dr. Silcox has recently spoken of the unbelievable and malicious falsehoods circulated in our own country -- 'alleged facts, manufactured in Hamburg by Herr Goebbels, and dispatched to North America in the English language, for those who believe what they want to believe.'

"And lastly, a final reason and one that comes to us, is the indifferent and mild hospitality of the average citizen. For years this continent has been dripping over with sympathy for the oppressed people in Europe. There are many throughout this continent who went almost blue in the face denouncing Chamberlain last September, because he did not want to have London bombed in the defence of Czechoslovakia. But now when the call is not for such heroic service by Englishmen, but simply for some slight action by Canadians, the same folk who so vigorously denounced Chamberlain, are willing to pass by on the other side and so to allow those determined to block all action to have their prejudiced way...

"In practice it has been made extremely difficult for any Jews to enter Canada. For the first three quarters of last year, out of more than 8,000 immigrants, the number of Jews was exactly 326.

"The opposition, however, has not all been anti-Semitic. In part it has been opposition to immigration per se. The first instinctive antagonism to refugees sprang from the mental picture of floods of destitute people pouring in to further over-populate our slum areas. Now it is becoming clear that what we require is not at all like mass immigration; and that in any case we are dealing for the most part, not with illiterate and submerged classes, but with a group of people containing a very substantial proportion of the most highly trained and gifted families in Europe.

"And above all is coming realization that the most important issue is the moral and spiritual character of the refugees. No large company of human beings can consist wholly of the excellent; but these, in quite unusual way, do represent the refined gold from a very fierce crucible. Multitudes, of course, are suffering from no wrong whatsoever. No one even pretends that they have done wrong. They simply belong to the race that gave us Isaiah, Jesus and St. Paul. But multitudes more are people who are suffering solely for their Christian faith, Protestants and Catholic, who protested against the paganization of the German race." (Two Sermons: I. Christian Canada and the Refugees, II. The Refugee -- A Policy for Canada. (Pp. 24-26)

The Women's Missionary Society of the United Church at Welwyn, Sask. was another humane voice in the desert. They could have saved their breath instead of addressing their government.

The citizens of Humboldt were called to a memorial meeting of their mayor and heard the Rev. Father Dominic, O.S.B., the Rev. A.B. Sharples, and the Rev. F.B. Ball. They expressed horror at the barbarous treatment of the poor and helpless Jews and the outrageous treatment of Catholic and Protestant Church leaders in Germany and Austria. "We join the Jewish people and the whole civilized world in mourning the innocent victims and condemn the destruction of houses of worship and property in Nazi Germany.

"Our hearts go out in prayer for the persecuted, maligned, wretched Jews in Germany and Austria; to all those who are reduced to poverty and slavery, and who are driven into exile from their centuries old homeland, because of religious and racial differences.

"No expression of sympathy, without alleviation of suffering can suffice in this tragedy. We therefore appeal to the Government of Canada to take a firm stand with the other nations of the British Commonwealth in the promotion of measures which will assist in the termination of such persecution and in re-establishing the refugees in safe homes.

"In particular, we urge the sympathetic consideration of the needs of many of the Protestant and Evangelical pastors of Germany, who have suffered intensely for their spiritual convictions; and of the imperative needs of the children, orphaned or semi-orphaned, whether Hebrew, Non-Aryan or Aryan in race, whether Protestant, Catholic or Jewish in religion, who should be taken from Germany without delay and placed in surroundings where they can live without untoward fear and in an atmosphere of kindly understanding." (June 12, 1939, King Papers, P.229,251)

Similar support came from the United Church Women's Missionary Society, Chilliwack, B.C. Branch. (Aug. 4, 1939, King Papers, P. 229,570)

Equally futile was the appeal of the Toronto St. Paul's Avenue Road United Church.

"In view of the restrictive nature of the present immigration legislation in Canada, we urge the Department of Immigration to give far more generous interpretation to such regulations, to the end that this Dominion, which professes to be a Christian country, may provide sanctuary for a much larger number of these refugees who can contribute to, and take advantage of, the potential riches of this country.

"In particular, we urge the sympathetic consideration of the needs of many of the Protestant and Evangelical pastors of Germany, who have suffered intensely for their spiritual convictions; and of the imperative needs of the children -- orphaned or semi-orphaned, whether Hebrew, non-Aryan or Aryan in race, whether Protestant, Catholic or Jewish in religion -- who should be taken from Germany without delay, and placed in surroundings where they can live without untoward fear and in an atmosphere of kindly understanding.

"We thoroughly approve the platform and resolutions of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees, and the further statement issued by the United Church of Canada, 'We hold this vast territory as a sacred trust in the Spirit of Him who said that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required.'" (Letter to Crerar, June 12, 1939; King Papers)

A. Raymond Booth, of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution, was irritated, "after many months of intense and nerve-exhausting work on behalf of refugees:

"I am chaffing under the anti-refugee attitudes of people who ought to know better. Honest and intelligent differences of opinion always present a challenge. Assertion of prejudices as intellectual opinions, in this as in other spheres, is sometimes a bit annoying...

"Particularly obnoxious is the crop of anti-Semitic objections. It is a blind emotion not subject to ordinary rational processes. It grows out of economic fear and religious perversion. People who are otherwise rational beings will generalize from one unfortunate experience with a Jew, but quite rightly refuse to do so about bald-headed or left-handed men.

"They say, for instance, that the refugee problem is only a Jewish problem. But my rather intimate experiences over many months tell me this is not true. The first refugee whom I met, a long while ago, now, was a flaxen-haired blond, blue eyed, German Czech, Roman Catholic, who teaches in our swankiest private school for boys. The last one who came in the office was also pure 'Aryan,' a nephew of the last Minister of Social Security in Czechoslovakia, a Unitarian by faith. Just before him came a young woman of 27 who had been born in Canada and had been taken back to Germany some years ago, a member of the United Church of Canada.

"There are of course a large number of Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, whom Hitlerism has classified as Jews because of some inter-marriage. Many had not even known of such ancestry.

"Our problem is that people on this side of the Atlantic are in imminent danger of doing what the world is more and more doing, e.g., following Hitler's lead. We are calling that man, or child, Jew, whom Hitler classifies as 'Juden.' A scurrilous attack on refugees has coined the hyphenated word, 'refu-Jews'...

"The Jews are no better and no worse than the rest of us. They are a peculiar people only in that their peculiarity is different from other equally peculiar people. A common humanity binds us together.

"Human suffering transcends creed, race and nation. God hath made of one blood Jews, Nazis, and Quakers, and we have made of his handiwork a mess. The refugee problem is not a Jewish one, but if it were, I would want to help just the same."

The Montreal Presbytery of the United Church adopted a resolution deploring "the continued and bitter persecution of the Jewish people by certain European Governments, chiefly Germany and Italy, that is driving into exile and making homeless hundreds of thousands of helpless men, women and children, thus creating a world problem in suffering of the last degree of poignancy; the Presbytery, therefore, earnestly calls on the citizens and Government of Canada to do everything in their power to do wisely, to help the persecuted and hopeless by opening the gates of Canada to as large a number as possible of such expatriated and pitilessly plundered people." (Communicated to the Jewish Congress, Sept. 16, 1938)

Leading citizens of Winnipeg, encouraged by the American president's appeal, petitioned their prime minister in Ottawa to consider, on humanitarian grounds, the admission of such number of refugees as can reasonably be absorbed. (transmitted by Rabbi Solomon Frank, May 26, 1938) Mr. King responded on June 4,

"You are of course aware of the difficulties under present conditions of admitting any very large number of immigrants; but every attempt is being made to give most careful consideration to individual cases. While the Canadian Government has independently been giving the matter attention and has adopted a course which, in the light of all the circumstances, will I believe compare favourably with that of other countries, we are at the same time prepared to cooperate in a further study of the subject, and have accepted the invitation of the President of the United States to appoint representatives on the special committee which is to meet shortly in a European centre to consider the refugee immigration question." (King Papers, Pp. 213290-93)

Some were led to encourage the government to act. Canon W.W. Judd wrote to the prime minister,

"The Council for Social Service of the Church of England in Canada understood that the Canadian Government had representation at the recent World Conference at Evian concerning this matter. The Council, therefore, realizing the great distress of these unhappy people, asks the Canadian Government to continue to explore the possibilities of help for them. This Council expresses the conviction that the Canadian Government should continue to explore the possibilities for the immigration of selected groups of Jewish people and non-Aryan Christians from Austria and Germany, so far as is possible and desirable, and thus assume a share of the responsibility of finding a home for these unfortunate victims of political aggression." (King Papers, P. 214,793, Oct. 12, 1938)

Two weeks later Mr. Judd telegraphed Mr. King to reiterate the views of the Council in the light "of this juncture in cabinet deliberations."

Similarly Mrs. W.H. Lugadin, president of the Council of Young Women's Christian Associations of Canada, wrote to the prime minister,

"As one of the Christian forces of Canada, this organization begs the Government to protest officially against the inhumanity of the treatment accorded the Jews under the Nazi regime.

"We share in the universal horror, not only of the brutality of this crime against civilization, but of the moral paralysis that is creeping over the world and making it possible to accept such acts without protest. Such acceptance will quickly be reflected in other areas of public conscience, affecting our own national welfare, whereas it is believed that public action in a common cause would be a re-vitalizing and unifying force.

"It is indeed a terrible indictment of Christianity that such a religious persecution should go unchallenged. It is this aspect that makes infinitely more serious and far-reaching its effect on national life everywhere.

"Furthermore, while we realize that to bring refugees into Canada presents many difficult problems, we wish to assure you of our sympathy with the consideration now being given the matter by the Government and our hope of early action." (P.215,491, Nov.22, 1938)

In Moose Jaw, Sask., the Ministerial Association prayed on Nov. 18, 1938 to the "Father of all the families of the Earth, and we ask our people to join us in praying that the hands of all right-thinking leaders may be so strengthened that they may be able to discover a generous, happy and abiding solution of this problem.

"That we express our confidence in the right purpose of our Government thatCanada may take her place in the solution of the problems of the world. We desire only to strengthen the hands of those charged with the framing of particular policies. We believe that Canada should be prepared to receive a generous quota of these unfortunate Jewish refugees.

"...we call upon the people of our churches and community to face honestly the individual and personal implications in this international situation; that we shall not cure this situation of hate and oppression by bitterness and resentment; that Canada's part in the solution of the problem may call for unusual determination on the part of her leaders and sacrificial cooperation on the part of her people, that we shall rather make a place for these persecuted people than waste our energies in condemnation of the persecutors."

The United Farmers of Canada reacted, in a letter to Minister of Justice Lapointe, to Adrien Arcand's anti-Semitic campaign against Jewish refugees being admitted to Canada.

"If anti-racial campaigns are allowed to proceed in Canada, we would soon arrive at a condition in our country wherein racial bitterness could precipitate our peace-desirous people into an internal turmoil, more vicious and alarming than any racial conflict at present engaging public attention throughout the world.

"While the campaign is to protest against Jewish refugees coming to Canada, it will, I feel sure, be quite plain to you that no such campaign could be engaged in, without engendering the racial hatreds against races of people who have come to Canada from all parts of the world." (George R. Bickerton, president of United Farmers of Canada, to Ernest Lapointe, released on Dec. 8, 1938)

Queen's Principal Dr. R.C. Wallace urged, "Canada, an open and free country which needs more people, has an opportunity to show in a practical way its deep sense of the needs of a suffering people. We cannot miss this opportunity."

Dr. E.W. Stapleford of Victoria University declared that, "Canada ought to adopt an immigration policy that would increase the country's population to 25,000,000 within 25 years. The Dominion, he said, had developed government, railway and educational services that could take care of more than twice its present population and should now open its gates and open them widely." (Toronto, Daily Hebrew Journal, Feb. 15, 1939)

...GWETHALYN GRAHAM...

Gwethalyn Graham Ericksen Brown, who was later to write the sensitive Canadian novel on antisemitism under the nom de plume of Gwethalyn Graham, Earth and High Heaven (N.Y. Lippincott, 1944; N.Y., Sun Dial Press, 1945; London, Cape, 1945; Toronto, New Canadian Library, no. 13, 1960; French translation, Entre Ciel et terre, Paris, 1946) wrote in Saturday Night,

"For Canada there is no excuse whatever. These refugees are asking only some land of their own and a chance to live in decency and peace. They do not want charity, nor would they permit themselves to become a burden upon us." (Nov. 12, 1938)

A week later she wrote on "The Economics of Refugees",

"There are two major objections which are raised whenever admission of the Jewish refugees is discussed: the first, that so long as we have unemployed of our own we have no right to open up immigration of any sort, and the second, that the absorption of so many aliens more or less at one gulp would be impossible.

"To begin with the first point, there are a good many economists who disagree with the theory that immigration increases unemployment, and their arguments are worth great consideration, since the lives of so many people depend on us.

"Supposing immigration does increase unemployment, then the contrary should hold true. If our population were reduced by the number now receiving relief, this country would then be able to provide jobs for everyone. If the balance between production and consumption is more or less exact, then the optimum population of Canada is ten or eleven million, not twelve, and our present unemployment is due to over-population. No one, however, could reasonably maintain that if you have ten people, one will be on relief; if you have twenty, two will be jobless, and so on. In other words, there is no fixed ratio between the number of people and the number of jobs available; there is a variation not only between countries but between different localities within a country.

"On the other hand, it is clear that each immigrant is a consumer as well as a producer, and that for every one added there is a further demand for capital equipment as well as for such personal requirements as housing, clothing, food and transportation. If each individual spends his total earnings, consuming the equivalent of what he produces each day, then the balance between production and consumption will apparently remain largely what it was. This statement only holds good so long as the immigrant has better than average earning power, however, as it is fairly generally accepted that for the people in the lower wage groups, a large part of both capital and personal equipment is provided by the well-to-do, and by reserve capital accumulation. Anyone who doubts this has only to look at the housing problem in almost any country where it is recognized that a man supporting a family on ten or twelve dollars a week cannot pay the rent of a decent house without assistance.

"On this basis there is every justification for the belief that the demand for goods created by fairly extensive immigration exceeds the quantity which the immigrants can produce. This country is not suffering from a general shortage at the moment, but rather from a depression which is at least partly due to a lack of demand for capital goods.

"So far as giving jobs to our own unemployed rather than to immigrants is concerned, if those jobs are there, ready to be seized by outsiders, why haven't our jobless men and women filled them before this? They do not, as ninety-nine out of a hundred unemployed will tell you. We appear to have reached a dead end where our general condition is static. With mass immigration it would be dynamic. If the statement that such mass immigration would in all probability not only take care of itself but provide a partial solution for our already existing problems seems paradoxical, it is at least no more paradoxical than hunger on the one hand and the deliberate destruction or restriction of crops on the other.

"You may say that economic theories such as those given above are all very well, but before this country undertakes to settle a large number of immigrants at one time, some more concrete proof that it can be done is needed.

"There is such proof in Greece.

"In 1922 and 1923, one million four hundred thousand Greeks had to leave the shores of Asia Minor where they had lived for 3,000 years. They numbered more than a quarter of the total population of Greece at that time, and not even an immigration of three and a half million into Canada would provide a comparable problem, for Greece is a small, poor country.

"The statement that the Jew is very largely what his Gentile neighbor has made him seems to be borne out by the experience of England, and pre-Hitlerist Germany and Austria. At this crucial time,when false generalizations are heard on every hand, it is perhaps worth while to remember that according to modern anthropological belief, the Jew does not differ so much from the Gentiles who surround him as he does from the Jew of another country. Many of us have a kind of collective face in mind which we label 'Jewish,' if we do not know the blonde, blue-eyed Jews of Vienna, and if we have not encountered a shaven-headed, keen-featured man of military bearing whom we would unhesitatingly call 'Prussian', but who turns out to be a doctor from Berlin of pure Jewish origin.

"Those who will not heed the refugees' plea for land of their own, maintaining that Jews are not farmers and never have been and never will be, usually fail to take into consideration the fact that until very recently there was almost no country where Jewish ownership of land was permitted. In spite of that, some Jews have been farmers, however, notably in the Ukraine and North Caucasus, where countless families got around the Imperial Russian laws by renting land on what was often an illegal 99-year lease system. Generation after generation tilled soil which was not and never could be their own.

"The dog in the manger has never been much admired. Whether we like it or not, that is the way we look to the outside world at the moment, and so long as thousands of helpless men, women and children are suffering intolerable persecutions and abuse in Germany, or being herded like cattle from one already crowded European country to another, while we continue to slam our door and refuse them admission, there will be little reason for anyone to think better of us. Beyond certain material contributions, Canada has done little or nothing for humanity as a whole. We merely exist, harming no one, and doing no one any good either. It is a record of mediocrity.

"The Nazis jeer at us, say we make a great show of equality of race and creed, and criticize them for not wanting their Jews, while in actual fact we don't want them either. There is just enough truth in those accusations to make any honest Canadian uncomfortable, and there are many of us who feel that should Finns, or Swedes, or Norwegians have been forced to endure such atrocious suffering through no fault of their own, we, the people of Canada, would have taken some action before this. If that is the case, the implications behind it bode us no good.

"Our sympathy is of no assistance to a group of several hundred human beings huddled together on a boat midway between Austria and Czechoslovakia, unable to go either forward or back, nor to all those people waiting desolately in offices and parks and railway stations for some country to lead the way. Should that country be Canada, we would thereby strike the greatest blow for democracy this country could make, and no one can say how powerful and far-reaching an effect it might have."

... THE WORKING MEN

Significantly, among those who at this time came to appeal for the refugees were the more morally sensitive labor elements -- putting the quietus on the common excuse for social ills, the overriding, all-explaining economic force.

In the debate on the speech from the throne on January 30, 1939 Heaps brought up the refugee problem,

"During the past few days there has been raised in this house the question of immigration and the question of the refugee. Representing as I do a constituency made up of a mixture of races, although it is preponderantly Anglo-Saxon, I feel I should be remiss in my duty if I did not make some statement with regard to these important questions, affecting as they do so many peoples, and touching principles with which I think most of the honorable members of this house are concerned.

"So much, Mr. Speaker, has been said on this question of immigration that the facts, I believe, ought to be known and given consideration and prominence. Certain honorable members have been speaking of immigration and refugees as if they were one and the same problem, with the same meaning and the same implications. There is a great difference between immigration and the problem of refugees. No one to my knowledge has ever asked in these times for an influx of immigrants in the ordinary sense of the word. No one has even asked that the country should be flooded with refugees. In matters of this importance people should not make rash statements without ascertaining the facts; nor should they deal in generalities.

"What are the facts? Early last year a delegation of members of this house met the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) and discussed the question with him.

Subsequently a subcommittee of the cabinet was appointed to consider the matter, and a number of the members of this house had an interview with the subcommittee. The members of the cabinet present -- and I think I am entitled to make reference to this -- were four members who had been designated as a subcommittee to deal with this important question: the minister in charge of immigration, the Minister of Mines and Resources (Mr. Crerar); the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Mackenzie); the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Ilsley); and the Secretary of State (Mr. Rinfret).

"What the delegation requested was that a reasonable number of refugees of all races and creeds be allowed to come forward to parts of Canada where it was considered most desirable that they should settle. The number suggested at the time was five thousand men, women and children -- approximately one thousand to twelve hundred families. All the members of the subcommittee at the time appeared to me to be sympathetic, and the members of the delegation present were prepared to give proper undertakings that none of the refugees would become a public charge. The number for which entry was requested was extremely small, in view of the need; but we felt that our government should show its sympathy in the matter; and to permit refugees to enter Canada and be freed from political, religious or racial persecution was in strict accord with historic Liberal principles.

"But, sir, a new phase has now been injected into the problem. Everyone who has kept himself informed as to recent events cannot help extending sympathy to the refugees for the plight in which they find themselves, whatever their race or creed may be. Never in the history of mankind have human beings been treated so barbarously as they are being treated at the present time by fascist powers. Men, women and children, families which have been rooted for centuries in the land in which they lived, have been deprived and robbed of everything they possessed and ordered to leave the country, their only crime being that

their racial origin or religious beliefs were distasteful to the powers that be or their democratic principles unwelcome in totalitarian states. The pitiful plight of all these people has aroused international concern. Almost every civilized country has definitely taken sympathetic action. Canada as yet has not done so, and I should like to see her take her rightful place with other democratic countries and show her sympathy in a practical manner. Great Britain, France, Holland, Australia and many other countries are giving asylum to tens of thousands of refugees, and in no place, to my knowledge, have they been a burden to the governments that have received them.

"In regard to employment it might be well to mention that lately Sir Samuel Hoare said that in England eleven thousand refugees had given employment to fifteen thousand Englishmen. Speaking now with a knowledge of the conditions, and not from mere hearsay, I say that if our government had shown the same sympathetic attitude on this question, the same conditions could have obtained here.

"May I point out that the Right Hon. R.B. Bennett, speaking in Saint John, New Brunswick, only on Thursday last, said that we owed a debt of gratitude to these refugees, and that we should accept our quota of them. There is in this country as a whole a very large body of opinion to the effect that the government should extend the hand of brotherhood and friendship to these people. It is they who have been the first victims of fascist tyranny and oppression; who knows who will be the next?

"I make this plea on broad humanitarian grounds, not for any one sect or creed but for all victims of persecution. It pained me last week, Mr. Speaker, to hear honorable members deny the plea of the refugee to the right of asylum. It seemed so inhuman. I am in a sense proud to have this opportunity of making such a plea and in a humble way to follow the teaching of ancient and modern religious thought so beautifully expressed in the words, 'Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you;' and

if I may be permitted to add one further question familiar to us all, let us if possible have peace on earth, goodwill towards men.

"I have no desire to follow at length this line of argument, but I do wish to call attention to certain remarks that were made in Montreal on the twentieth of this month by the Secretary of State. I quote his words as reported in the Montreal Gazette:

"'Despite all sentiments of humanity, so long as Canada has an unemployment problem there will be no 'open door' for political refugees here,' Hon. Fernand Rinfret, Secretary of State, declared last night in an address before the St. James Young Liberals Association.

"'The government of Canada,' Mr. Rinfret said, 'has decided to date that restrictions on immigration from foreign countries are to be maintained. There is no intention,' he added,'to diminish those restrictions and as long as there is an unemployment problem the government will be opposed to doing so. This is not only my personal opinion,' the Secretary of State said, 'but the policy of the government to which I belong.'

"Possibly with a cheering and admiring audience the minister's enthusiasm ran away with his discretion, as so very often happens. My criticism in the first place is that it is a most unusual procedure for a cabinet minister to declare the government policy at a meeting in a constituency, especially when it relates to a department not under his control. Further, and of more importance, any statement of government policy should be made on the floor of the house itself, and particularly so when the house is in session. I have already referred to the fact that the Secretary of State was a member of the sub-committee, had been present at a meeting with members of the house and knew what the actual requests were. He knew that no request had ever been

made from any responsible source for a policy of the 'open door' in regard to immigration or even in respect to refugees. Such being the case the minister has, to say the least, been guilty of misstating the facts, and has created a wholly erroneous impression amongst his followers. Already many of his supporters from Quebec have taken the cue from the speech of the minister and have drawn inferences which are wholly incorrect and not in accordance with the facts. Statements have been made in the house which tend to create discord between the different races in Canada. It is exactly this kind of talk that is not desirable in the dominion at the present time. Anything which tends to create discord among our people is an obstacle to real progress.

"A recent statement made within the past few weeks on behalf of His Holiness the Pope may appropriately be quoted at this point:

"'The thoughts and feelings of the Holy Father Pope Pius XI will be correctly interpreted by declaring that he looks with human and Christian approval on every effort to show charity and to give effective assistance to all those who are innocent victims in these sad times of distress.'

"Thus the head of the great Roman Catholic Church joins with other Christian leaders in a plea for aid to the victims of cruelty such as the world has seldom seen.

"The first few words that the Secretary of State used were these: 'Despite all sentiments of humanity.' I can hardly believe that anyone could have used language which sounds so harsh and brutal; yet it is given as a statement of government policy. Am I to assume that the government as a whole are devoid of sentiments of humanity? I can hardly believe such to be the case; it seems almost libellous on some members of the government whom I know. I

do not think there is a more humane and considerate member in this chamber than the Prime Minister. I have met him under all sorts of conditions, and I know his kindliness and thoughtfulness for others. For a cabinet minister to claim that the members of the cabinet are devoid of all human sentiments is a rash statement which I think cannot go unchallenged...

"I know how political parties sometimes function; I realize that in the past issues were raised on which it was felt one party might obtain an advantage over the other. But where common humanity calls for action I hope that no group will try to exploit the issue. In order to avoid any such possibility I suggest that the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition should get together. They could also if they wished call in the leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation group, who represents a fairly large body of opinion in this country, and also the leader of the Social Credit group. The Prime Minister might make a statement...

"It has been stated further that labour is hostile to the admission of refugees to Canada, but I believe that generally speaking the assertion is entirely erroneous. First of all let me quote from a statement that was submitted to the dominion government on January 6 by the All-Canadian Congress of Labour. At page 15 of their submission this is what they say:

"'In the meantime, however, the plight of the refugees in Europe is forcing itself upon public attention, and, if only because the problem has become intensified by the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which was permitted by the Munich agreement and which at least postponed the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of young Canadians, the waste of enormous material wealth, and the piling up of an unbearable burden of debt, Canada is believed to be under a moral obligation to cooperate fully with all international bodies which are trying to relieve the situation, and also to provide a place of refuge within her own borders for an appreciable number of these refugees.

"'Even if it were necessary to maintain these immigrants, the cost to the nation would be infinitesimal in comparison with what war would have cost. The Congress therefore joins with the many Canadian citizens who have given this question careful consideration in urging that the government present to the forthcoming session of parliament such amendments to the Immigration Act as will permit the admission of refugees, under adequate safeguards as to number, occupation, or other conditions, and that it will assist in every possible way in the attempts which are being made to lessen the suffering of these unfortunate victims of inhuman and relentless persecution. It is felt, however, that any efforts to assist refugees should not involve trade or financial concessions to governments which hold refugees for ransom.'

"Let me go a step further.

"So far as the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada is concerned, in the last year it has taken identically the same stand on the question of immigration -- but it has not made any pronouncement at all on the question of refugees; and, knowing as I do the members of that congress and those that are affiliated with them, knowing their sentiments as I do, I do not believe there would be any objection from that organization if the government permitted a reasonable number of refugees to enter Canada...

"The appeal on behalf of refugees is made on purely humanitarian grounds to allow people who are fleeing from persecution to come in, to give them the right of asylum, that old historic Liberal principle vindicated by men like Gladstone and Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman. I remember when certain refugees found it necessary to flee from Russia and obtained asylum in Britain. This was in 1905, and who was it that welcomed them? None other than the prime minister of Great Britain himself. And today, if I make a plea in this chamber for refugees of all races and creeds, I am at least appealing to the same liberal sentiments on the part of honorable gentlemen who now occupy the treasury benches.

"May I place on the record a telegram forwarded from this city by the great man who was then the prime minister of Canada? I have before me the original telegram from Sir Wilfrid Laurier, dated at Ottawa, November 20, 1905. It reads:

"'I beg you to accept expression of my regret that other duties will not allow me to attend meeting to be held this evening to protest against recent massacres in Russia. I heartily sympathize with the object of meeting and I earnestly concur in your laudable efforts.'
(Signed) 'Wilfrid Laurier.'

"Thus some of the leaders in church and state in Quebec and in Canada thirty-three years ago expressed themselves forcibly and freely; and I wondered when I read that telegram what Sir Wilfrid Laurier would say if he sat in this house as prime minister today.

"At that time Great Britain was endeavouring to bring about an entente cordiale with Russia, having completed one with France; yet in spite of the fact that negotiations may have been difficult, the prime minister of this country at that time did not fear or fail to express himself in the terms that I have just read.

"Today we are granting most favoured nation treatment under our tariff and other treaties to Germany, and when we make a concession to other countries Germany participates. Therefore Germany gets her chromium, her nickel and other supplies from this dominion under the most favoured nation terms, while the victims of the fascist terror hammer at our gates in their desperate search for refuge.

"The Canadian people are democratic. They are warm-hearted, and I believe we have an opportunity to demonstrate our humanitarianism now. We are urging the Prime Minister to take the house into his confidence and tell the house immediately whether this country will receive -- not a large influx, unregulated, of the victims,

because there are a million and a half of them, but whether in common with other democratic peoples we will take our fair quota of those who are suffering from the terror in central Europe. May I add that under a proper policy, just as in days gone by when our forefathers received the Huguenots from France and exiles from other places, these refugees may do much to help us in this country to build up a balanced economy."

J.A. Cherniack has assembled a number of these expressions in his The Case for Refugees (Winnipeg, Conference of National Groups on Refugees, 1939). He recalls that the March 30, 1939 delegation to Ottawa on behalf of refugee admission included Rev. Dr. Ritchie, Prof. F.R. Scott and Raoul Trepanier, the latter "occupying the dual position of president of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. The participation of Mr. Trepanier is all the more significant because of the fact that for many years the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada at its annual sessions adopted resolutions opposing immigration."

This also seems to be the opinion of organized labor in Winnipeg, whose representatives and spokesmen have on many occasions publicly declared their sympathy with the cause of the refugees and their readiness to assist in a movement to admit them into Canada.

The delegation was supported by resolutions from the Toronto Trades and Labor Council and other public bodies.

The C.C.F. had formally expressed "its sincere sympathy with the victims of religious, racial and political persecution in Central Europe, and requests the government to admit, on humanitarian principles, in the same manner as other democratic nations are doing, a reasonable number of the victims of persecution, to this Dominion."

Mr. Trepanier made it clear that labor opposition to immigration was directed at subsidized immigration and that which came as a result of unwarranted publicity, carried on by unscrupulous traffic agencies, destined to end disastrously for the immigrants themselves as well as for labor population in this country; it was not meant to extend to refugees, victims of political, religious and racial persecution, who commanded the sympathy and support of organized labor in Canada.

J.S. Woodsworth, M.P., the conscientious head of the CCF, wrote to Sen. Cairine Wilson on May 10, 1939 (King Papers, P. 238,438),

"I am sure that you must feel half desperate with regard to the response which has met your efforts along these lines. I personally feel almost ashamed of our Canadian smugness and selfishness.

"I know that for most Canadians, Europe is a long way off; but it would seem as if on the whole we are quite content to reap any advantage that may come through our dealings with a disturbed world without, on the other hand, being willing to assume any responsibility for the distress which our neighbors are suffering.

"As individual members of the House, we seem almost helpless. I have sometimes wondered whether it might be well to make one more effort to get a representative group to interview the Government with regard to a more generous policy towards Refugees."

B.K. Sandwell said in a radio address (February 16, 1939), "The refugees from central European countries consist of two classes: The Jews, who are not a majority in the total, and the political and religious refugees who have been compelled to flee because of their passionate desire for political and religious freedom... A very great number of them have already committed suicide, and a very great many more will commit suicide if they cannot find sanctuary in some country like Canada."

M.J. Coldwell, leader of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation, said in the Commons on January 18, 1939, "Today the victims of the fascist and nazi terror cry aloud to all civilized people for consideration and for aid. I am wondering what is going to be Canada's response to that cry. Pro-nazi papers printed in Canada, and pro-nazi literature printed in Germany and widely circulated in Canada are trying to poison us with anti-semitic propaganda. It strikes me as being a strange thing that again and again in this chamber and other legislatures of this Dominion we hear of communistic propaganda, and the need, so it is said, to meet it, to keep it out of the country; but so far nowhere in parliament or in any legislature has an attempt been made to keep out this vicious nazi propaganda which is attacking a minority in the country in which we live. Bear in mind that two-thirds of the refugees who today suffer in central Europe are non-Jews. I do not suggest, of course, that with our present problems of agricultural depression and unemployment we can open wide our gates to all who seek admission... Canada, however, should today be willing to join with other democracies in offering asylum to a fair quota of sufferers, both Jews and Christians, in a broad humanitarian effort to relieve their distress, and with proper safeguards that they will not become public charges or increase our problems of agriculture and unemployment. I submit to the government that this policy will conform to the principles of what we sometimes call traditional liberalism.

"What is 'traditional liberalism?' Last evening I read some letters in an old Montreal newspaper file regarding Canada's reaction to similar but much less serious atrocities in Russia in 1905, now thirty-three years ago. At that time a great protest meeting was held in Montreal and a resolution of protest and of horror was passed unanimously and forwarded to the Czar.

Protestants, Roman Catholics and Jews in the province of Quebec joined in expressing their abhorrence of crimes which pale into insignificance before the cruelties of nazi persecution in Germany and the areas under Hitler's iron heel. Many notable people who could not be present sent messages...

"After over thirty years of education and Christianity are we going to say anything less than our predecessors did thirty-three years ago?"

THE RESISTANCE CONTINUES

But in Quebec there was no letup of opposition.

Early in 1939 the Société St. Jean-Baptiste de Québec circulated a petition against immigration of Jews for presentation to the Commons by W. Lacroix, M.P. for Montmorency. They reported over 127,000 signatures in the Quebec diocese, from 75,000 families on the parish rolls. "If all Canadians in the entire country had been asked, we would have had the signatures of millions." (Circular signed by Me. Lucien Lortie, secretary of the diocesan council of the Société, January 20, 1939; and King Papers, Pp. 226,416; 229,393-97) The Montreal Société supported the Quebec initiative. (Jan. 27, 1939)

Some of these anti-humane petitions, such as that of the Municipality of Notre Dame de Bonsecours (What a name in this context!) and the Club Ouvrier Maisonneuve of Montreal, coupled their anti-Jewish concerns with opposition to Canadian military intervention outside the Dominion's frontiers. (Feb. 7, 1939, King Papers, Pp. 229,188-89; Feb. 10, 1939, P. 229,267)

The St. Hyacinthe diocesan Société St. Jean-Baptiste protested to the federal government against giving even temporary sanctuary to refugees from Germany proceeding to Australia. (Montreal Star, Jan. 13, 1939)

Like Benoit, so Léopold Richer was suspicious of government statistics. "According to the figures on special permits, of the 1242 immigrants in that category in 1938, 608 were Jewish. There could not be 607. But there could be more. Is there anyone who does not know Jews by the name of Brown or Smith who were classified as English immigrants?"

He was supported by Anatole Vanier. "Some members have sought to bring to light the origin of the immigrants who reach us in the guise of Englishmen. Messrs. Wilfrid Lacroix, Reid, Parent have interrogated Mr. Crerar on this matter. They appear to be no more successful than Messrs. Jean and Gauthier." (Le Devoir, Apr. 14, 1939)

Jacques Tousignant approved the stand of King's minister. (L'Homme libre, Feb. 4, 1939)

After the events, in the ghostly stillness of the European field of carnage, a Quebec priest who was later to occupy an important post in government, wrote in the same Action catholique (Jan. 21, 1953)

"Our past is not quite irreproachable in regard to hate of the Jews. We need only think of the troubled years from 1923 to 1936, when the large scale problem of the coming of many Jewish refugees fleeing Hitlerite persecution was before us. The Catholic literature of the period was not the last to express itself in a language conforming neither to justice nor charity. They were probably not fully aware of the gravity of the condition, but it needed only to hear the Jewish refugees of the time to realize how inhuman and how distant from Roman Catholicism our attitude seemed to be.

"We need also think of some campaigns of 'Achat chez nous', legitimate in themselves, ran the risk of forming sentiments far from charitable in narrow or badly shaped minds.

"The anti-Semitic miasma has been around too long about us not to have left traces. From the outside our relations with the Jews seem to be most cordial. Indeed, for the most part they are indeed inspired by sympathy and true friendship.

"But there is a basis for fearing that the theoreticians of anti-Semitism can still easily find support in our midst. We can find symptomatic expression in our speech, and unfavorable judgments stated absolutely without reference to any facts to justify them.

"There is the more or less open contempt which many evidence. There is the common habit of attributing all our ills to alleged plots of international Jewry which keeps us from the less agreeable but possibly more fruitful examination of our personal conscience...

"It is a natural human weakness to make a person or a group into a scapegoat who is thus responsible for our own sins. In the event it proved a very dangerous game; the horrors which set on foot this attitude against the Jews of Europe should lead us to profound reflection. It is a position which can prove profitable for much pride, weakness and low sentiments." (R.P. Louis O'Neill)

In Rigaud the municipal council considered Ottawa's plan to spend millions on the national defence and concluded with a resolution,

"Because of the large number of unemployed and the crowding of the cities, we oppose all immigration movements and particulary Jewish immigration." (Devoir, Apr. 14, 1939)

Roger Duhamel, writing in Action nationale of January 1939 (pp. 49-51), feared that the British government, controlled as it is by London Jews, would pressure Ottawa into opening its doors to political refugees, i.e., Jews.

One French-Canadian voice spoke in favour of admitting some Jews. Jean-Charles Harvey favoured Jewish immigration, with discernment, bearing in mind a proper distribution of nationalities in the immigration policy; for Canada is a rich country capable of sustaining five times its present population. Refugees have always enriched the lands that adopted them, of which the United States is the prime example. (Le Jour, March 29, April 1, 1939; cited by Gagnon. P.203)

When Jean-Charles Harvey spoke in Toronto in favour of admitting refugees, at least those with some capital, this was rejected by Secretary of State Fernand Rinfret as contrary to the national interest.

Immigrants are no greater a menace for Canada than a high birth rate in the country. "I am neither pro-Semite nor anti-Semite. My opposition to racism has been expressed clearly, and I cannot speak strongly of my disgust at the shameful persecution of a part of humanity by those who have no justice, no truth, nor decency -- not even a sense of their own interests. This should be our position; we cannot exclude Jews from our immigration policy, nor can they be admitted without discernment. I favour fair distribution among the diverse nationalities. To welcome the mass immigration of a particular group at the expense of others would probably be a grave error. I believe in a mixture of 'races,' in the combined effort of all healthy atavisms and of all recognized civilizations to form a great nation on Canadian soil, as they have created in the U.S. and elsewhere. Racism, with its savage exclusivism, can lead only to a shrinkage of brain and of heart." (Le Jour, March 11, 1939)

Joseph Houde, humanist on Harvey's staff, urged a concession to Jewish bankers to settle 100,000 refugees in the James Bay and Abitibi regions. (Jan.7, 1939)

There was, of course, a profound conflict of ideas between Groulx and Harvey which is to be respected. It is something else, however, to note Groulx' question, "What is Le Jour? Who had founded it? Who was financing it? Jewish capital? English capital? Or both?...

"Le Jour was founded primarily, if not solely, to combat nationalism. A deeply rooted ideology had enflamed another generation. Jewish and Anglo-Canadian capitalists were alarmed." Groulx recorded the finding of his friend, radiologist Dr. Leo Pariseau, "Le Jour consists only of kikes." Indeed, the entry is under "Youpins" (kikes), not Juifs. (Mes Mémoires, vol. 6, Pp. 350-51)

When the Intergovernmental Committee on Jewish Refugees met in February, 1939, a ridiculous and macabre minuet was played by the diplomats on rear stage, while in front Dachau was in full frenzy, Auschwitz was abuilding and armourers were loading the bombs. A 5-year plan was being negotiated with the Germans who were promising re-training of emigrants; "Old persons and those unfit for emigration were promised tranquillity unless some extra-ordinary circumstances should occur; the Haavarah method of transfer would be permitted to operate. This agreement would greatly strengthen the hand of the more moderate elements in Berlin, whereas partial or half-hearted acceptance of the plan might present powerful arguments to extremists in Germany." (Massey dispatch, Feb. 13, 1939)

But Canada was not in step in this dance. While other players made meaningless but approving statements, Ottawa scarcely acknowledged Massey's reports. He decided to absent himself from the meetings and sent Mr. Mayrand as an observer representing the silent nation.

At this Ottawa spelled it out to Massey on Feb. 13, 1939:

"Progress is being made in arrangements for admission of Sudeten German refugees and...our anxiety is lest premature publicity in Ottawa or London prejudice the carrying out of this substantial project. In light of these circumstances and of your knowledge of political history of immigration question in Canada you will understand why we fear any public statement of policy in respect of reception of refugees will provoke essentially irrelevant controversies which would put in jeopardy what is presently being done through use of discretionary powers under Immigration Act and what it is hoped may be done for the Sudeten Democrats.

"Until such time as the Government are in a position to submit statement of policy to Parliament there is nothing positive that you can say to Inter-governmental Committee with whose purposes Government have fullest sympathy and in whose work they are prepared to cooperate so far as feasible. It would be most unfortunate if your absence from meetings of Committee were construed as evidence of lack of Canadian interest in its task, and I should therefore be grateful if you would continue to attend as Canadian representative."

The show came to an end. On Feb. 15, Massey telegraphed, "Meetings of Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees concluded yesterday; next meeting to take place probably next July. Subject of Sudeten German refugees lay outside scope of Committee's deliberations which were concerned exclusively with problem of Jewish refugees from Germany." (Public Archives of Canada, King Papers, Pp. 231629-38)

It was a constant conflict for lives, with the prosecution sitting as umpires and judges. On Jan. 20, 1939 Secretary of State Fernand Rinfret assured the Young Liberals Association of St. Jacques that, in spite of all its sympathy for the strangers, the government had decided to maintain the restrictions on immigration, a declaration that "met with public approbation from the French-language press and from some Quebec Liberal M.P.'s", Mr. Rinfret said that "we are aware that some elements assimilate with difficulty with the English or French of our country."

This greatly pleased Mr. Brunelle of Cap de la Madeleine who congratulated Mr. Rinfret for making this anti-refugee announcement,

"I want to be placed on record as one who objects strongly to the entry of Jews, en masse or otherwise, into our country. I hasten to say that I have no brief against the Hebrew race; but since through all the ages they have been the cause, justly or unjustly, of great difficulties in various countries, I say we must take care. History repeats itself.

"I have deep sympathy for the Jews who are now being persecuted in certain countries of Europe; I think their situation is deplorable; but at the present time in our own country we have thousands of fellow citizens whose situation is also deplorable, and I believe that charity begins at home. I do not want one job in Canada to be taken by an immigrant, be he a Jew or otherwise, so long as we must spend money for relief.

"It is known by all hon. members that for the most part Jews inhabit only the cities and towns. If they are admitted they will either find jobs or be thrown on relief. We have at present too many people on relief, and if there are jobs available they should be given to our fellow citizens. I dislike reading press reports to the effect that the government in London or some English societies wish to assist the Jews by sending them to the colonies -- and in that statement they include Canada. May I point out that we are not a colony. To preach charity and generosity, and then to practise those virtues at the expense of someone else is not a worthy procedure." (Jan. 24, 1939)

At the same gathering Anatole Vanier said, "There is but one course for us: to demand that the government adopt the policy which the Secretary of State has attributed to it. We know he has neither the habit nor the desire to annoy the government. Since he said so, that must have been the policy of the government in January. But this declaration, so Canadian in inspiration, became the policy again. Mr. Heaps will, doubtless protest again. But is it not clearly in the best interest of the nation that Mr. Heaps protest rather than us?" (Devoir, Apr. 14, 1939)

Annai Laison was even more indignant as he wrote in La Boussole, founded by Notary L.-Athanase Fréchette, president of Montreal's Societé St.-Jean-Baptiste and director of the Ligue d'Achat chez nous (Feb. 4, 1939):

"Under the circumstances nothing remains for Mr. Rinfret but to leave the cabinet... Since his colleague Mr. Lapointe seems to have changed with Mr. King and now prefers European political refugees to our unemployed and our idle farmers' sons, will Mr. Rinfret continue to support the cabinet which is turning him into a huge bluffer? If he remains silent he will be sacrificing his honor as a man, as a Member of the House and as a minister for the sake of party solidarity. If he does not join the growing group of members who prefer their country to their party, he will miss a wonderful opportunity to rehabilitate himself in his constituency and in his province."

A.A. Heaps forced the prime minister and the minister of justice to correct Mr. Rinfret's statement. 'I suppose,' Mr. King declared in reply to the criticism of Mr. Heaps, 'that Mr. Rinfret intended to speak first of the humane sentiments that impel us in a certain direction; then he might have continued by saying that, in spite of these sentiments, some things cannot be done. What he referred to as impossible was the open door, which is a very different matter from refusing to study the best possible solution outside open doors.'

"Mr. King indicating that he can open the doors a little to admit a certain number of immigrants and of political refugees, without opening up the country to mass immigration. The government has not officially modified the entry rules, in order not to alienate a large part of the voting population. He is proceeding by detour. He is supposed to study each case in particular as it is submitted to him by the minister of immigration, and he permits a number of them to come and settle in the country by ministerial orders in council. This results in a number of acts which are not to the credit of those involved." (Georges Héon, M.P. for Argenteuil, before Société St. Jean-Baptiste de Montréal, at Monument National)

This open infusion of French Canadian nationalism, including the initiative of the Société St. Jean-Baptiste then becoming politically activist, was challenged by some Protestants. Rev. Gordon A. Sisco, general secretary of the United Church of Canada, citing the Société's petition, said,

"The government is afraid of the opposition from Quebec, which is to some extent cancelling our resolutions." He cited the petition opposing admission of refugees, which he said was presented last week by the Society of St. John the Baptist.

"Regarding the French-Canadian petition, the New Outlook, United Church official publication, says editorially; 'If our government is to be intimidated by the narrowest forms of nationalist parochialism, it should forego the luxury of associating with the other civilized nations. If we do not translate our professions into practice, a very horrible chapter will be written in the history of human hypocrisy.'"

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