

"I despair for the future of this country."



The Causes and Consequences of Canada's  
First National Internment Operations,  
1914-1920

## The Affirmation of Witnesses

Prepared by the Endowment Council  
of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund  
for Parks Canada  
(Cave & Basin Interpretive Centre)

7-8 February 2011  
Banff, Alberta







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## On Acknowledging An Injustice

The passage of *Bill C-331 – Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act* signalled the Government of Canada's recognition of an historical injustice. The subsequent redress settlement identified commemorative and educational initiatives as being critical for acquainting the public with the importance of being vigilant in defence of human rights and civil liberties, particularly in periods of domestic and international crisis. Resources were allocated to the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund's Endowment Council and, in tandem, to Parks Canada, in the latter case to ensure the installation near the Cave & Basin site of an interpretive centre dealing not only with the internment operations and the development of Canada's National Parks but also providing for a central place of education, commemoration and reflection on the meaning of these events to Canadian national identity.

Informing the public about Canada's first national internment operations requires a focus on what actually happened, an historical injustice, so defined because of:

- The internment of “enemy aliens” as a result of their socio-economic status
- The exploitation of interned civilian “enemy aliens” as conscript labour
- The abrogation of Canada's international treaty obligations and the setting aside of our country's political and moral responsibility for those who consequently endured state-sanctioned indignities, including imprisonment, the confiscation of their wealth, and disfranchisement, not because of any wrong they had done but only because of where they had come from, who they were.

Any account that seeks to educate our fellow citizens on these subjects must converge on these points for without their explicit treatment no appreciation of the wrongs done can be communicated.

Certainly the experience of internment occurred within a wider context, a general atmosphere of nativist pique and wartime anxiety that led to measures violating the human and, at times, basic civil rights of both un-naturalized and naturalized British subjects, including men, women and children. It is that contextual aspect that needs to be highlighted. Diminishing the lived experience of the internees and other “enemy aliens” through the placing of their story within a more wide-ranging, and arguably quite tangential, historical description as tabled in the draft document under discussion is unacceptable.

Should the nucleus of this interpretive centre not address the injustice at the heart of the First World War period internment operations, and the specific context in which those measures took place, then, fundamentally, the purpose of this enterprise will be undone. We therefore maintain that the centre does not need to offer visitors a primer on early twentieth century Canadian history. Rather the purpose of this public exhibition and account of Canada's first national internment operations must be clear and unequivocal as to the negative nature of the “enemy alien” experience. A frank discussion of the injustice of what happened must constitute the very essence of this exhibit space. Anything less would be disrespectful to those who were wronged, to their descendants, and to the affected communities, as well as being a disservice to the public in general.





Accordingly, the standard by which all exhibits should be assessed and critiqued is whether they add to, or detract from, a clear understanding of the nature of this injustice. Extraneous historical information that obfuscates the grievances experienced, particularly when coupled with the use of relativist statements that might be seen to justify what happened, only serve to victimize the victims yet again. We disagree with the deployment of quotations seemingly intended to rationalize the harm done, as, for example, “Park officials thought that the men did acceptable, if slow, work” or “...if they had to depend upon themselves for furnishing their own food they would be content with much less than what is now given them.” Such citations, presumably offered to suggest a ‘balanced approach,’ instead dilute the harm done and diminish what should be made known, further evidence of a lack of appreciation of what the internees were forced to submit to.

With this document we offer the affirmation of witnesses to what happened. We believe that by allowing visitors to directly 'hear' the voices of those who suffered and of those who insisted upon these strictures, of those who protested such injustices and of those who endorsed a continuing harshness, we do justice to the actual past.

Promoting reflection on the nature of this historical wrong within the Cave & Basin centre requires an unambiguous and straightforward account of what occurred, if only because limited audience-time demands that this be so. Only a small opening is presented for securing the attention of visitors. For the message to be effective it must remain undisguised. It is incumbent upon those entrusted with delivering this chronicle that we craft an account that not only hallows the memory of those who suffered but conforms to the essence of the redress accord – which obliges us to craft a remedy that sets right an historical injustice. That mandate was given to all of us to fulfill, together.



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*Endowment Council, Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund*

with the assistance of Bohdan Kordan



160 акрів = 130 моргів австр.

❖ ВІЛЬНОЇ  
ЗЕМЛІ ❖

200 мільонів акрів під управу  
в західній

**КАНАДІ**

ДЛЯ  
КОЖДОГО  
ОСЕЛЕНЦЯ



**“Laving Up Trouble for the Country** – The following dispassionate, unprejudiced and common sense remarks of the Rev. Father Moris...are respectfully communicated to the public, the Minster of the Interior and the Free Press: ‘As for the Galicians I have not met a single person in the whole of the North West who is sympathetic towards them. *They are, from the point of view of civilization, 10 times lower than the Indians.* They have not the least idea of sanitation. In their personal habits and acts, [they] resemble animals, and even in the streets of Edmonton, when they come to market, men, women, and children, would if unchecked, turn the place into a common sewer. In many cases they have been content with building themselves holes in the ground where the family consorts with the animals – all in the common apartment.’ Asked when Galicians would learn French or English the reverend gentleman said: “As to French, never; English in 15 or 20 years. But *they herd together*, they do not understand our ways or tongue; they will not vote; and the regular settlers of the Edmonton district don’t want any more of them, but those, who are already there should be sent away.” As far as the Galicians are concerned the Herald has no hesitation in saying that if proper steps were taken, the first being the abolition of the reserve system, our own North West Indians could be made into farmers and citizens compared to whom the Galicians are so much trash. In 5 or 10 years from now when respectable British and Ontario settlers are vainly seeking for farming lands in Northern Alberta those who are responsible for throwing them away on *a horde of hopelessly immoral and filthy Galicians*, will begin to see the trouble they have brewed for the future administrators and inhabitants of the North West.” [Daily Herald, Calgary, 27 January 1899]



## “These apprehensions, if they exist, are quite unfounded”

“It has come to the attention of the Government that many persons of German and Austro-Hungarian nationality who are residents of Canada are apprehensive for their safety at the present time. In particular the suggestion seems to be that *they fear some action on the part of the Government which would deprive them of their freedom* to hold property or to carry on business. These apprehensions, if they exist, are quite unfounded.” [3 September 1914]



“Persons of German or Austro-Hungarian origin born in Canada regard themselves as Canadian citizens and take the same pride and interest in the welfare of this country as citizens of British descent. The 120,000 Canadian citizens who were born in Germany or Austro-Hungary *have come to Canada for the purpose of making this Dominion their adopted country*. In fifteen or twenty years their children will be indistinguishable in sentiment from Canadians of British descent. They have no love for military service and they appreciate the freer conditions and more liberal institutions which they enjoy in this country... The Austro-Hungarian Consul in Montreal has informed me that a very large number of the Austro-Hungarians in Canada are ignorant and illiterate peasants who are greatly alarmed by the conditions which confront them since the outbreak of the war. They speak some five different languages and only a limited number can speak English intelligibly. Under the war conditions about to prevail in Canada there will be a great deal of distress and destitution among them. The advisers of His Royal Highness the Governor-General consider that they best discharge their duty not only to Canada but to the Empire by endeavouring to remove from these people of foreign origin and birth any apprehension as to their treatment in this country. The proclamation already issued and the public announcements made sufficiently describe the attitude which it has been thought best to assume. After the most careful and anxious consideration the advisers of His Royal Highness remain of the opinion that this course is wise and reasonable. The best precautions possible will be taken to prevent any unlawful acts which might be contemplated by a few hot-heads among the population of foreign birth. Harsh measures of a general character would not only be undesirable, but in a country of such vast extent would undoubtedly be ineffective.” [19 September 1914]





Order in Council respecting alien enemies.  
(2721)

AT THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE AT OTTAWA.

Wednesday, the 28th day of October, 1914.

PRESENT:

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN COUNCIL.

The Committee of the Privy Council have had before them a report, dated 28th October, 1914, from the Minister of Justice, stating that it is expedient and necessary to take measures to prevent espionage and also to prevent alien enemies in Canada who are likely to render effective military assistance to the enemy from returning to the enemy's service, and to provide for the proper supervision and control of such aliens as may be so prevented from leaving Canada, and the detention under proper conditions and maintenance where required of such of said aliens as it may be found necessary to intern as prisoners of war, and that it is likewise desirable considering the lack of opportunity for employment that aliens of enemy nationality who are not likely to add to the strength of the enemy's forces and who desire and have the means to leave the country be permitted to do so.

The Minister observes that it is considered probable that aliens of both classes will be found grouped in particular localities, principally within or in the immediate neighbourhood of the large cities and towns.-

The Minister, therefore, recommends that it be enacted by the Governor in Council under the authority of the War Measures Act as follows:-

(1) One or more offices of registration shall be established in such cities, towns and other places as may be from time to time designated by the Minister of Justice, and an officer shall be appointed by the Governor in Council for each of the offices so established who shall be called "Registrars of Alien Enemies".

(2) The Registrars shall be under the immediate direction of the Chief Commissioner of Dominion Police who shall exercise general supervision over them in the performance of their duties and to whom they shall report as may be required. The Minister shall appoint such assistants to such registrars, clerks and other officers as may be necessary for the proper carrying out of the provisions of the present order.

(3) It shall be the duty of a registrar to examine each alien of enemy nationality attending before him, and to register in a book to be provided for the purpose the name, age, nationality, place of residence in Canada and in the country of nationality, occupation, desire or intention to leave Canada and the names of the wife and children (if any) in Canada of every such alien and such other particulars necessary for identification of such alien of enemy nationality or otherwise as may seem advisable.

(4) Every alien of enemy nationality residing or being within any of the cities, towns or places so designated as aforesaid or within twenty miles thereof, shall as soon as possible after the publication in the CANADA GAZETTE of a proclamation designating such city, town or place as one wherein a registry office is to be established under this ordinance, attend before the registrar or one of the registrars, for the city, town or place within or near which he is or resides and truly answer such questions with regard to his nationality, age, residence, occupation, family, intention or desire to leave Canada, destination, liability and intention as to military service, and otherwise, as may be lawfully put to him by the registrar.

(5) No alien of enemy nationality shall be permitted to leave



Canada without an exeat from a registrar; provided that the Chief Commissioner of Dominion Police may in any case, grant or cancel an exeat to an alien of enemy nationality who is registered.

(6) The registrar may issue an exeat to an alien of enemy nationality if satisfied upon the examination and registry that such alien of enemy nationality will not materially assist, by active service, information or otherwise, the forces of the enemy.

(7) If it appears to the registrar that any alien of enemy nationality who is not permitted to leave Canada may consistently with the public safety be suffered to remain at large, such alien of enemy nationality shall be required to declare whether or not he desired and has the means to remain in Canada conformably to the laws and customs of the country, subject to obligation to report monthly to the Chief of Police of the city where or in the neighbourhood of which he is registered. If yea, such alien of enemy nationality may be permitted his liberty, subject to the conditions aforesaid and the provisions of this ordinance. If nay, he shall be interned as a prisoner of war. The registrar shall report to the Chief of Police the names and addresses of those who elect to remain at liberty. Any alien of enemy nationality who in the judgment of the registrar cannot consistently with the public safety be allowed at large shall be interned as a prisoner of war.

(8) If any alien of enemy nationality who is by the terms of this ordinance required to register, fails to do so within one month after publication of the proclamation referred to in section 4 of this ordinance or within seven days after the date when he shall by reason of his residence come within the description of those required to register, whichever date shall be last, or if he refuse or fail to answer truly any of the questions put by the registrar, or if, being registered he fail to report as hereinbefore required or to observe any of the conditions on which he is permitted to be at liberty, he shall in addition to any other penalty to which he may be therefor by law liable be subject to internment as a prisoner of war.

(9) Where any alien of enemy nationality interned under the provisions of this order has wife or children living with and dependent on him, such wife and children shall be permitted to accompany him.

(10) Such provision as may be necessary for the maintenance of aliens of enemy nationality interned as prisoners of war shall be made by the military authorities who may require such prisoners to do and perform such work as may be by them prescribed.

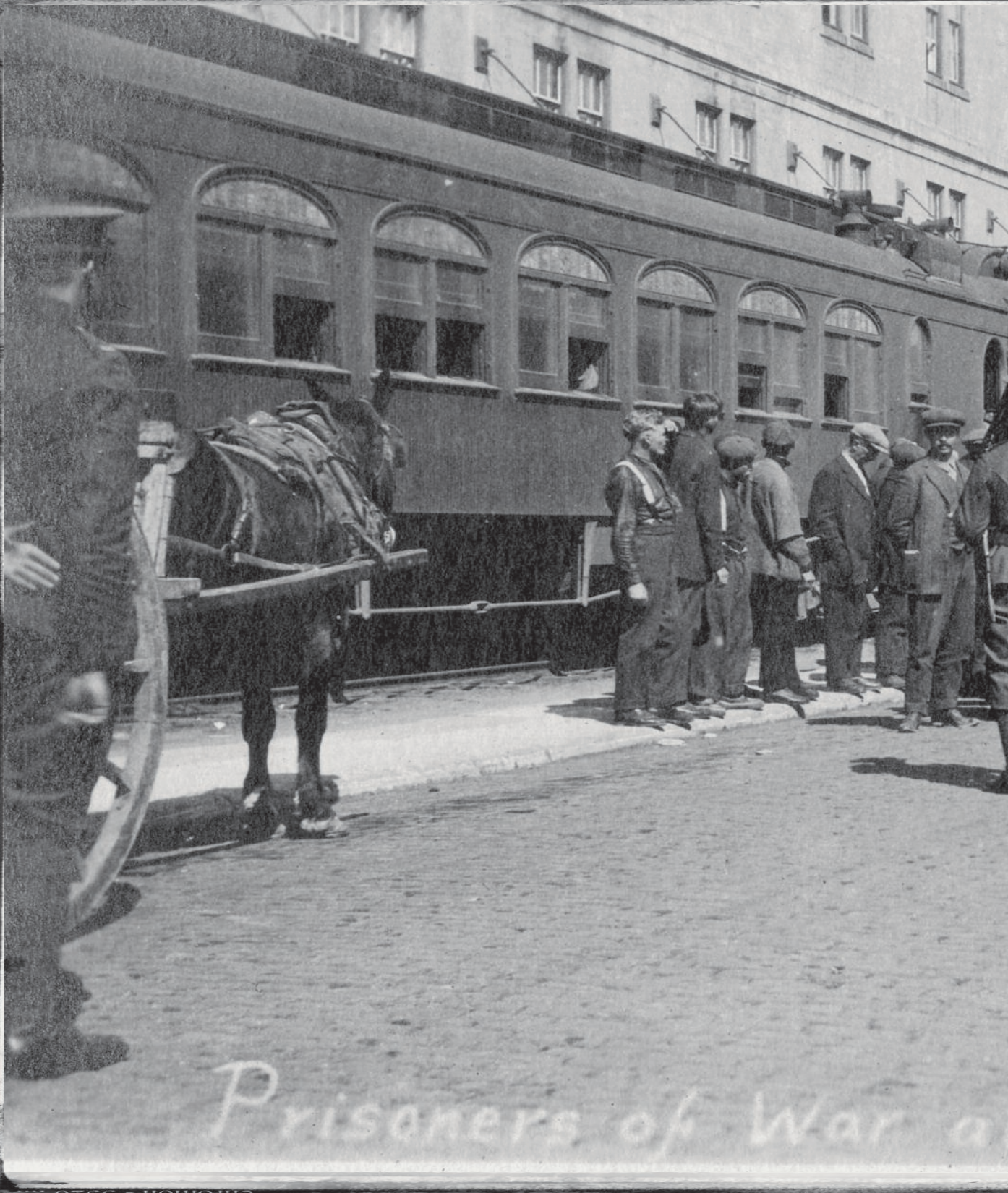
(11) No alien of enemy nationality who is required to register shall be naturalized unless in addition to other requirements he produces and files with his application a duly certified certificate of a registrar that he is registered pursuant to the provisions of this ordinance and that his application for naturalization is approved by the registrar.

The Committee submit the same for approval.



RODOLPHE BOUDREAU.  
Clerk of the Privy Council.







"I have heard of no movement on the part of the people here which would in any way indicate that they were disloyal to the British Empire."

[Paul Wacyk, Komarno, Manitoba to R. Fletcher, Deputy Minister of the Department of Education, Winnipeg, November 1914]



Immigration Bldg. Quebec



## “Badly treated in every way”

“Cases of prisoners being placed in dark cells and given diet of bread and water from 1 to 4 days, are not only proved but admitted by the authorities. *Guards have cuffed prisoners on the slightest provocation* and the conduct of some sergeants has been extremely reprehensible. Two cases have been established where prisoners have been handcuffed and drawn up so that their toes just touch the floor. One prisoner was assaulted twice within an hour by a sergeant (Wellor). The most reprehensible case is that of an assault with a bayonet by a sergeant (Hume) on a prisoner by the name of Koziol. The sergeant made three distinct thrusts, but the wound or wounds were very slight. There seems to have been no cause for use of force. Koziol was an exemplary prisoner, according to the record.” [Samuel C Reat, US Consul, Calgary, 11 November 1915]

“The various complaints made to you by prisoners as to *the rough conduct of the guards* I fear is not altogether without reason, a fact much to be regretted, and, I am sorry to say, *by no means an uncommon occurrence* at other Stations.” [General William Desmond Otter, December 1915]

“Without exception, the prisoners all complained regarding their imprisonment, as they claimed *they had done nothing to warrant it and did not consider it in keeping with the Dominion order issued at the commencement of the war that alien enemies would be permitted the same rights as others in Canada so long as they complied with the registration laws and were peaceable and law abiding*. A number of the prisoners had been residents of Canada, or the United States, for a long period, ranging from one to twenty years.” [G G Woodward, US Vice Consul, Vancouver, 14 October 1916]

“The prisoners in Canadian Internment Camps came to the Dominion as peaceful emigrants and *the great majority of them at least have been good, law-abiding residents since their arrival*, doing their bit to further the development of its great resources. In other words, these men now held as prisoners, as a class, are good, sturdy, inoffensive men, able and willing to work, most of them desirous of becoming Canadian citizens. The idea, therefore, of a treatment of such men as quasi-criminals seems contrary to the very best interests of the Dominion, and the temporary saving, which may be effected by the payment, or rather allowance, of such pittance as 25 cents per day for a full day’s work, not even payable to them or to their families in full, seems to be as inexpedient as unjust, the former because men will not render a day’s work for that amount, even when pretending to do so; unjust because most of these men had good profitable work prior to their internment and families to support which are now punished more than they are. There is no doubt in my mind, that at the present moment, the great majority of the prisoners at Spirit Lake could safely be returned to their homes and families, and that such return would be more profitable to Canada in the end than their retention in the camps as unwilling workers or strikers.” [G Willrich, US Consul, Quebec City, 16-21 November 1916]

“As you know yourself there are men running away from here everyday because the conditions here are very poor, so that we cannot go on much longer, we are not getting enough to eat. *We are hungry as dogs*. They are sending us to work, as they don’t believe us, and we are very weak.” [Nick Olynyk, prisoner #98, Castle Mountain to his wife]

0000 0000

"The Ukrainians...of Western Canada...have found themselves heavily handicapped since the outbreak of the war by the fact of their Austrian birth which has led...the Dominion Government, as well as Canadian employers of labor, to unjustly class them as Austrians, and therefore enemy aliens. Many have been interned, although they are no more in sympathy with the enemy than are the Poles, for they are as distinct a nationality...which hopes to emerge from the war in the enjoyment of a wide measure of national autonomy...[yet] Ukrainians in Canada are treated as enemy Austrians. They are persecuted, by thousands they are interned, they are dismissed from their employment, and their applications for work are not entertained. And why? For only one reason, that they were so unhappy as to be born into the Austrian bondage.."

[17 July 1916, Manitoba Free Press]







“Fear is the only agency that can be successfully employed to keep them within the law and I have no doubt that if the Dominion Government persists in the course that it is now adopting *the foreign element here will soon be as gentle and easily controlled as a lot of sheep.*” [Sir Hugh Macdonald to the Honourable A Meighen, 3 July 1919]



## “Enemy Aliens Must Go -

The deportation of enemy aliens is one of the most pressing questions of the moment. There can be no doubt that *the enemy aliens must go*. The pressure of public opinion, not alone that of the returned soldier, who knows the enemy alien far better than any who have stayed at home, but of the whole country, has already forced the Government to give way partially on this point, and that pressure will continue until the whole question is settled by the deportation of every alien who cannot substantiate his loyalty to Canada's cause.

There are not wanting those who take the opposite side to public opinion in this matter. It is not now important to enter into the motives which impel them to this course but the arguments they offer divide themselves roughly into two

divisions. First is that which insists that in encouraging these immigrants of enemy alien origin to come to Canada we have undertaken a solemn obligation to allow them to stay irrespective of their opinions or loyalty. Second is that which points out that these enemy aliens from Central Europe are doing work which will not be accepted by Canadians, owing to its severity and distasteful conditions surrounding it.

Neither of these objections will hold water for a moment. These immigrants were encouraged to come to Canada, it is true. They were offered the privileges of Canadian citizenship, the right to live here, and to make money here. That has been freely granted them. Be it remembered there was no written contract in perpetuity to this effect. It was merely an unwritten understanding.



On the other hand, these immigrants also have their undertakings to keep. They also were unwritten, but none the less binding - no less binding than that of Canada. They came here for the purpose of becoming Canadian citizens. They came here to a country freer to individual opportunity than that they came from. They came with a full understanding that in coming they must undertake the responsibilities, even as they were given the privileges, of Canadian citizenship.

How have they carried out their share of the mutual bargain? By proving a constant menace ever since the war started. By terrorizing the loyal people of the district in which they were the majority. By acclaiming the victories of our enemies. By refusing to aid the cause of Canada. By giving every possible aid and comfort to the foe.

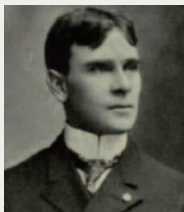
No one proposes that those who have been truly loyal to Canada, who have faithfully carried out their share of the bargain, and become true citizens of Canada, shall be deported. Such loyal citizens are known by their deeds. They are readily recognized. They can easily establish their right to be placed apart from their undesirable fellow countrymen. They have the right to stay, and every Canadian will welcome immigrants also their presence.

The second objection is equally groundless. Are we to assume that Canadians have reached that stage of

luxury loving where it is essential that we should *import a race of inferior beings to do our work*? Are we already so degenerated that we cannot become a self contained nation, that we cannot accomplish the tasks which lie before us within our borders? The thing is unthinkable. The returned soldier was drawn from every rank of life. He was a professional man, a businessman, a mechanic, or a laborer - every possible occupation is to be found among the ranks of the returned soldiers. For every kind of work that is to be done in Canada, men among the returned soldiers can be found to do it. But it is not to be expected, and Canada does not expect, that the returned soldier shall be asked to do that work at less than reasonable wage, or that he shall be expected to compete with *the bohunks of Central Europe*, who have been *accustomed in their own country to submit to being driven like cattle, who are ignorant of every principle of sanitation, and lost to all sense of decency in living conditions.*"

The returned soldier, or any other white man, must be given decent working conditions, as well as decent living conditions and a decent wage. If those conditions in any occupation at present are unfitted for a white man then they must be made fit. It will then be unnecessary to depend upon enemy aliens for labor to develop the resources of Canada."

[Winnipeg Telegram, 10 February 1919]



"I say unhesitatingly that *every enemy alien who was interned during the war* is today just as much an enemy as he was during the war, and I demand of this Government that each and every alien in this dominion *should be deported at the earliest opportunity. Cattle ships are good enough* for them." [Herbert S Clements, MP, Kent West, Ontario, 24 March 1919]

**“Alien Enemies** - When peace is declared will the enemy aliens who are now confined to internment camps in Canada be sent to the country of their allegiance as part of the process of exchanging prisoners? That they will be turned loose into the free life of this country to share in the abounding opportunities it presents is hardly conceivable, says a Toronto paper. Men who were a public danger in time of war ought not to be trusted in time of peace, and ought not to have thrown open to them all the careers and advantages that should be reserved for our own loyal people and brave defenders. Canada has nurtured too many serpents in its bosom. One lesson the war has taught is the necessity for rigorously excluding every alien immigrant who does not give reasonable assurance of readiness to renounce his foreign allegiance and embrace the British citizenship to which after due probation all worthy candidates ought to be admitted. Men who proved themselves so hostile to this country’s welfare as did the enemy aliens now interned ought to be shipped to the land of their birth and their preference. They cannot be put on the same

footing as our own people. They cannot be allowed to snap up the prizes of business and industry before our own men have returned to Canada and been discharged from military service. We must give first thought to our own. That there are in Canada employers of labor who now at least as readily give work to any alien enemy as to a loyal citizen is, we regret to say, a fact. They, too, ought to be in the internment camps but they are British subjects in name and are not so indiscreet as to proclaim that self interest is to them more than patriotism. All the positions in the industrial and business establishments of this country will be needed by the men who will be returning from the war and by immigrants of the right stamp from the United Kingdom. Loyalty to the men who are enlisting requires that we do not allow released enemy aliens to gobble up the livelihoods that have been relinquished for sacrifice against Germany. *While the war lasts the labor of interned enemy aliens may be utilized for productive purposes, but once the war is over these foreigners should be sent to the country where their heart is.*”

[Vernon News, 20 July 1916]





"My dear father: We havent nothing to eat and they do not want to give us no wood. My mother has to go four times to get something to eat. It is better with you, because we had everything to eat. This shack is no good, my mother is going down town every day and I have to go with her and I don't go to school at winter. It is cold in that shack. We your small children kiss your hands my dear father. Goodby my dear father. Come home right away."

[Katie Domytryk, 9, to H Domytryk, internee #1100, arrested in Edmonton, March 1916, father of four].

"We, the undersigned, Ukrainian and Austrian women, wish to bring before the notice of the women of Calgary [that] we came to this country to make Canada our future home. We are not spies. Thousands of our men are fighting under the British and Russian flags. We have been discharged from work because we are considered aliens but we are loyal to Canada. What are we to do if we cannot get work? Are we to starve or are we to be driven [to] a life of vice? Will not the women of Calgary speak for us?"

Annie Berlin  
Dinah Dobrizka  
Mary Antonowsky

Olga Kranoka  
Mary Zechn  
Mary Prochkin

Mary Kaskin  
Annie Crashiski  
Olga Diskin

Mary Zebrowka  
Mary Prolowsky  
Mary Broshka

[29 February 1917, Calgary Daily Herald]



"No Civic Aid For Alien Enemy Baby - Under the order recently passed by the City Council the authorities at the City Hall have decided that *an eight-weeks-old baby, born of Austrian parents, is an alien enemy, and it has been denied civic assistance* at one of the hospitals. A city official has undertaken to pay for the infant for two days to see if in the meantime some way out of the difficulty cannot be found." [The Globe, 3 August 1918]





## “I despair for the future of this country”

“Let not this franchise be extended in the manner proposed, at the expense of removing the franchise from those who now have it. Let it not be done by depriving any of our people of rights and privileges which have always been sacred under the British Constitution. Do you believe that when our Canadian immigration agents will go to the Balkan States, among the Galicians, Bukowinians, and Rumanians, that these races will be disposed to come to this country, when *they know that Canada has not kept its pledges and promises* to the people from foreign countries who have settled in our midst, and they know in the United States there was never any attempt to curtail or interfere with their rights as American citizens which immigrants to that country were granted. For my part, I hope that it is not too late for Parliament to pause, and to consider the bad precedent it is establishing, which must be far-reaching in its consequences. The measure is such that it must have serious consequences. *If it be said in Canada that the pledges which we have given to immigrants when inviting them to come to this country to settle with us, can be broken with impunity*, that we will not trust these men, and that we will not be true to the promise which we made to them, *then I despair for the future of this country.*”

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 10 September 1917]

“It is quite probable that if this proposal becomes law the alleged “foreigners” and hitherto “naturalized” Canadians will bear their reproach meekly, but they will have sown in their hearts the seeds of a bitterness that can never be extirpated. The man whose honour has been mistrusted, and who has been singled out for national humiliation, will remember it and *sooner or later it will have to be atoned for.*” [Daily British Whig, 7 September 1917]



“In striking contrast with the contention that Canadians are fighting for freedom, democracy and the observance of national obligations, is the mean and unworthy spirit of persecution displayed towards the so-called “alien enemies” who are quietly attending to their own business here. *These people are here on our invitation.* For many years successive Governments both Liberal and Conservative, despite the protests of the labor unions, have spent millions of dollars in scattering over Europe invitations to men of all nationalities to settle in Canada, where they would be free from military despotism and be accorded equal opportunities with our own people. *They took us at our word,* came by the hundred thousand, and were made welcome and regarded as desirable accessions to our population. *Suddenly on the outbreak of the war they found themselves ostracized. They were deprived of their employment, not allowed to leave the country, and many of them interned on any display of natural resentment, or on the merest suspicion.* Those who were guilty of the “crime” of sending money to their starving wives and families at home were sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Our courts have almost invariably dealt harshly with any man of alien birth accused of minor offences, inflicting heavy penalties frequently accompanied with coarse and brutal insults from the dispenser of alleged justice. Bear in mind that the great majority of these people are only enemies in a technical sense, being about as loyal to Hohenzollern or Hapsburg as a Sinn Feiner is to the British Empire. The growing scarcity of labor has somewhat ameliorated their condition, but latterly a systematic crusade has been set on foot to drive them from the factories where they are employed in productive labor and compel them to work for more subsistence wages. They are making too much money, it is said. I think you will admit that the manufacturers may be trusted to see to it that they earn not only their wages, but enough in addition to enable their employers to realize a substantial profit. It is quite beside the question to urge that Canadians found in Germany have been, or would be, worse treated. The cases are not parallel. Germany never invited Canadians to go there and cast in their lot with the German people.”

[Philipps Thompson, 29 March 1918, The Globe]



"About 100 farmers and their families, mostly Ukrainians, will leave Western Canada for Ukrainia late in July, abandoning the farms on which they have been living for 10 years or even more, it was stated today by steamship agents. The cause of this emigration is said to be the latest amendments to the Naturalization Act." [28 May 1920, Calgary Daily Herald]

## “They could arrest me again”



“At the outset of the war the Government had an option to expel the persons of enemy alien nationality...at the outset of this war, we took the position, not only that we would allow these people to remain within the country, but I might say at the suggestion - and I might even say upon the insistence - of the authorities of the Mother Country we took the position that these people, those of them at all events who were of military age, should not be allowed to leave this country. And, taking that position, not only consenting that they should remain but actually preventing their departure, we felt bound so long as they violate no law of this country, so long as they behaved themselves as good citizens within is country, to extend to them the protection of the law. We announced that to them. We announced to them at the same time that those of them who by act or word showed a spirit of hostility to this country, or who did not conform to the laws of this country, would be interned. And large numbers were interned. Some of them for cause. Quite a number of them were interned more largely under the inspiration of the sentiment of compassion, if I may use the expression, than because of hostility. At that time, when the labour market was glutted, and there was a natural disposition to give the preference in the matter of employment to our own people, thousands of these aliens were starving in some of our cities. There were thousands of them in Montreal, great numbers of them in Winnipeg, large numbers in Port Arthur. In many instances we interned these people because we felt that, saying to them “You shall not leave the country” we were not entitled to say, “You shall starve within the country.” However that may be, a considerable number for cause, and an additional number for the reasons which I have given, were interned, until at one time we had some seven or eight thousand interned aliens.... *We found that the sentiment of every man who came into contact with the Austrian who was interned was that he was absolutely not dangerous.*”

[Honourable C J Doherty, Minister of Justice, 22 April 1918]



“In this great, happy hour, *I have forgotten wrongs done to me. I forgive all those who during this war have done their utmost to make my staying in Canada impossible; I forgive all those who were attacking me in different papers and before the authorities, without the slightest foundation. I am sorry to state that all these denunciations have not hurt so much myself, as our good name particularly.* But let us not be divided; on the contrary let us in harmony and unity live under the Flag of Canada and the faith of our fathers.”

[Bishop Nikita Budka, 23 November 1918]



“They told me that I had been arrested because I was trying to illegally escape Canada and because there was a war on and I was an Austrian. I told them that I was not an Austrian. They then asked me where I came from and I told them; as well I let them know that I was a Ukrainian. They just repeated that as an Austrian citizen I was their enemy. I lost all of my rights. They didn’t doubt where I said I came from but *they found it useful to lock up us all as enemies.*” [Nick Sakaliuk, 1978]



“All that time wasted being interned. Having my freedom taken away. I could have worked and earned something. Instead, what did I get? Nothing. I hope the government decides to make some kind of tribute to those who are still living, in Canada. Not to me. I can’t say how much. *I am not in a position to say anything against the government. They could arrest me again.*”

[Nick Lypka, interned at Banff-Castle Mountain]



## “No one bothered to remember”

“To estimate the number of Ukrainians who have enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Forces would be very hard as they were enlisting in various battalions from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, but it is safe to say that, to the approximate half million soldiers in Canada, if the figures of the War Office were available, it could be shown that these people, per population, gave a larger percentage of men to the war than certain races in Canada have, after having enjoyed the privileges of British citizenship for a period of a century or more.”

[H.A. Mackie, MP to Prime Minister Robert L Borden, October 1918].

FILIP KONOWAL




VICTORIA CROSS



“I was one of the thousands of Ukrainian Canadians rounded up as ‘enemy aliens’ and put in concentration camps between 1914-1920. I was just six years old then. I was born in Canada. I lived in Montreal with my parents, brother John and sisters, Anne and Nellie. Nellie was born in Quebec. She was just two and a half when we buried her near the Spirit Lake internment camp. Canada’s Ukrainians were not disloyal. Our imprisonment was wrong. We were Canadians. Those who, like my parents, had come from Ukraine to Canada came seeking freedom. They were invited here. They worked hard. They contributed to this country, with their blood, sweat and tears - a lot of the latter. *What was done to us was wrong. Because no one bothered to remember or learn about the wrong that was done to us it was done to others again, and yet again. Maybe there’s an even greater wrong in that.*”  
[Mary Manko, a Spirit Lake internee, 1994]







"Memories of the camp gradually began to fade away...but one could never really forget it."

"They had broken his spirit up there. He could never get over the injustice of his treatment, the falseness of his hope in this new world."

"...few on whom the long years of captivity had not left their mark...confinement in a strange land, inactivity, and hopeless waiting were in themselves enough to shatter the nerves and undermine the health."

[www.internmentcanada.ca](http://www.internmentcanada.ca)