

***The Red Patch***

**Political imprisonment in Hull, Quebec during World War II**

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## Foreword

While researching an unrelated subject, I discovered the existence of an internment camp in Hull, Quebec, which had been used to intern Canadian communists and labour union leaders during World War II. Few in the local, historical community, let alone the general public, knew of the camp. The internment puzzled me even more since the Soviet Union was Canada's ally during the War. In fact, the victory of the Allies was in no small measure the result of the resistance of the Soviet Union to fascism. Why had the Canadian state repressed communists during World War II? Why were labour union leaders also interned?

What my research uncovered was a story that might fill the bill for an inspired detective story or espionage tale, replete with surprises, twists and turns, and unexpected reversals of situations and conditions. *The Red Patch* is the story of the internment of Canadian leftists during World War II, a sordid and surprising example of violation of basic liberties in Canada, albeit lesser-known than other episodes such as the forced evacuation and internment during World War II of Japanese-Canadians. The liberation of the Hull internees was also a surprising story for how it was accomplished, and its subsequent impacts on social progress and civil liberties in Canada.

It was in response to pressures from the English-Canadian bourgeoisie and the French-Canadian petty-bourgeoisie that the federal government insisted on a wartime policy of repressing communists and their allies on the left within the union movement. At the same time, these people were among the Canadians most eager to fight against the forces of fascism, nazism, and militarism assembled in the Anti-Comintern Axis of Germany, Italy, and Japan assembled to resist the Communist International. This policy of the Canadian state was perhaps ironic, but it was not sudden. In fact, the policy had begun a generation earlier during World War I, in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917, and had continued during the next two decades. The policy had as its aim to subject Canadian society to the social discipline sought by Canada's ruling classes and the state authorities who served them.

The social combat of communists and their allies during the 1930s and 1940s was not entirely a story of repression. Unionization, social programs, and general social progress, including the expansion of civil liberties, owe much to leftists of previous generations, included among them the Hull internees. In fact, the rights and social conditions enjoyed today by contemporary workers were won by those who struggled on the left during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even if we might also observe that these rights and conditions have been chipped away during the last generation by the contemporary right.

We flash forward sixty years to the beginning of this century. In 2003, the case of Maher Arar, a Syrian-Canadian from Ottawa, captured the attention of Canadians. With

the complicity of agencies of the Canadian state, an apparently innocent Arar was sent to Syria by American authorities during a business trip to the U.S.. In Syria, Arar was imprisoned and subjected to torture for a year, an example of violation of basic civil rights involving the Canadian state at a moment of anxiety produced by the so-called *war on terrorism*. A judge who inquired into the affair reported in September, 2006 that while Arar was without blame in the matter, not so the RCMP, which behaved badly towards a Canadian citizen under the influence of the panic induced by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington.

Organizations representing Muslim and Arab-Canadians and immigrants ,and civil libertarians defend their constituents against measures such as the security certificates that the federal government can issue for detaining or deporting immigrants without explanation, a measure that resembles the measures used historically in Canada to repress communists and labour unionists. The security certificates are just one example of discrimination by police and the judicial system against Muslims and Arabs, of which there have been several, other recent examples of victims: Adil Charkaoui, Mohammed Harkat, Hassan Almrei, Mohammad Mahjoub, Mahmoud Jaballah, and still others. The state repression occurs in a climate where government and the media routinely display negative caricatures about Arabs and Muslims, part of what might be called the Islamaphobia that reigns today in western society. Fortunately, these people are able to fight for their rights, with help from other Canadians sensitized to the need to defend civil liberties.

In the feverish atmosphere of crises and wars, whether real, apprehended, imagined or concocted, it can thus happen that the state violates basic human rights. *The Red Patch* deals with just such a situation during World War II. The lessons for us today should be instructive.

### Note about the Use of Terms

This book refers to the ethnic origin of people as English-Canadian, French-Canadian, or European. These terms might not be used as often today as in the past, but they were common currency in the period covered by this book. As such, they are useful for purposes of this book.

English-Canadian refers to an Anglophone residing in Canada whose country of origin is Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, or the United States. French-Canadian refers to Canadian-born Francophones. European refers to someone who originates from Europe, whether born in Canada or immigrant, who is neither English-Canadian nor French-Canadian. The Europeans mentioned in this book include Ukrainians, Finns, Scandinavians, Germans, Yugoslavs, Hungarians, Poles, Russians, Frenchmen, Italians, and Jews from Poland, Russia, and Germany.



## Introduction

One evening in September, 1940, Petro Kravchuk went to see a movie at a cinema near the corner of Portage and Main streets in downtown Winnipeg. The film being shown that evening was *Foreign Correspondent*, directed by the great, English filmmaker, Alfred Hitchcock. The movie deals with an American journalist who stumbles upon a pre-war nazi plot of intrigue and duplicity in Holland. A more subtle theme of the film aimed at snapping Americans out of their traditional isolationism to confront the reality of the coming war. This certainly was a subject to pique the interest of Kravchuk, a thirty-year-old political activist and anti-fascist, who often employed the anglicized version of his name, Peter Krawchuk. Journalist at *The People's Gazette*, the leading Ukrainian-language daily newspaper, Krawchuk was also active in the Communist Party of Canada and in the Ukrainian Labour-Farm Temple Association, an ethnic organization led by communist Ukrainian-Canadians.

Exiting the movie, Krawchuk was arrested by two members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.<sup>1</sup> Invoking the War Measures Act of 1914, the federal government and its police judged that Krawchuk constituted a menace to the security of the state and the public, without telling Krawchuk how his actions constituted such a menace. Krawchuk was sent to an internment camp in Kananaskis, Alberta, in the Rockies, near Banff. Interned with 39 other leftists from western Canada arrested in similar circumstances, Krawchuk and his fellow internees were transferred in July, 1941 to Petawawa, Ontario, a military base about 180 kilometres west of Ottawa-Gatineau.

One month later, the western internees, along with leftists from central and eastern Canada already incarcerated in Petawawa, were transferred to an internment camp in Hull, Quebec. The camp, in fact, was the current, provincial prison in Gatineau in the Val-Tétreault neighbourhood in the Hull sector, at the northern end of Saint-François Street, one kilometre from Taché Boulevard. The prison was a white elephant built by the first Duplessis government in the 1930s. It had never been used since it did not meet standards for provincial prisons in Quebec. The provincial government of Adélard Godbout leased the building to federal authorities when the latter indicated the need for an additional internment camp.

For fifteen months, the Hull prison was used as a camp to intern Canadian communists, sympathizers, and union leaders. The Hull internees were finally released in the Fall of 1942, after a successful, public campaign across Canada. By then, some internees had spent nearly three years imprisoned or interned, without recourse to the basic protections of the Canadian justice system.

In the collective and popular, local memory of the Ottawa Valley, the episode of the internment of the leftist Canadians simply does not exist. Who were the internees? What happened? How did the Canadian internees experience their incarceration? What were the background, context, and causes and effects of the internment in Hull, and of the broader repression of the left during World War II? In short, how can we understand and explain these events? These are the questions which this document addresses, as we

link an episode of local history, long-since forgotten, to the national and international history of World War II.

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<sup>1</sup> Telephone interview with Peter Krawchuk in January, 1997.

## Chapter 1 – The Iron Heel of Ruthlessness

### The Nature of Historical Explanation

This document tries to explain historical events surrounding the internment of Canadian communists, sympathizers, and labour union leaders which took place during World War II in Hull, Quebec. These internments were part of a general repression of the political left undertaken by the Canadian state during World War II. The historical explanation contained herein addresses what happened, how it happened, and the chain of events that occurred. We try to discern the roots and causes of the events, and their effects and repercussions. An important part of historical explanation is to describe the context of events. The usefulness of context is diminished if it is so vast that it strains credibility with respect to the actual events being studied. On the other hand, the roots and origins of the actors and forces at work do require description in some detail, as does the social environment surrounding the events if we are to make sense of them. Thus, this document broadly outlines the origins of Canadian communism and its history up to the Cold War, including the social milieu in which communism was incubated in Canada, as well as the development of opposition to communism.

### The Events of our Story

The events of our story are simple, but understanding them is not as easy as describing them. After a generation of state suppression of Canadian communists, and the

labour unions and organizations they led, the onset of World War II provided a golden opportunity to repress the Communist Party of Canada by imprisoning and interning communists and their associates. The official, public reason was the position of the Communist Party against Canadian participation in the war after the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Non-aggression Pact in 1939. The Pact and its ramifications are indeed controversial subjects of considerable interest for historians. The Pact, however, was not the real reason for the repression. When the communists wholeheartedly supported the war effort after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June, 1941, the Communist Party remained illegal, while the internees remained in prison. Furthermore, the RCMP continued to track communists, including ex-internees, even when they were serving in the military or otherwise actively working to support the war effort after their liberation.

After some imprisonments of communists at the beginning of the war for specific offences against the War Measures Act and the attendant Defence of Canada Regulations, the government began to intern communists, detaining them without charging them for specific offences. Beginning late in 1939, forty leftists from western Canada, a large number of them Ukrainian, were interned at Kananaskis in the Rockies, near Banff, Alberta. In July, 1941, these people were transferred to Petawawa, where they joined seventy or so internees from central and eastern Canada already interned in Petawawa. The next month, after some compromising incidents, the leftist internees were transferred to an unused provincial prison in Hull, Quebec, on the north side of the Ottawa River opposite the federal capital, where some men remained interned as long as fifteen months before being released.

Nevertheless, once in Hull, life was indeed not so bad for the internees. Hull was an improvement over conditions in Kananaskis and Petawawa, where the communists had been surrounded by fascists and their supporters, since the leftist internees were now alone. Ex-internee Peter Krawchuk reminds us of the obvious: Hull is in Canada. “Hull prison was not comparable to a nazi concentration camp nor the Soviet gulag.”<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, there were still problems and frustrations for the internees, such as absence from loved ones and the internees’ impatience to join the war effort.

By the time the Hull internees were released in November, 1942, some had spent up to three years in prisons without being charged or tried. Obtaining the liberation of the internees required a successful, cross-Canada campaign, during which communists gained public support, even among erstwhile enemies. The campaign in favour of the liberation of the Hull internees corresponded to a general rise in sympathy within the public for the Soviets, and even helped fuel this increase of public support.

Once released, many of the younger ex-internees joined the army, while older men joined the reserves, or returned to their unions or joined organizations that promoted Canada’s war effort. Ex-internees also participated in a general awakening among Canadians to questions of civil rights and to a general, leftward shift in Canada’s political culture via social programmes, as well as the erection of formal collective bargaining, labour relations that finally recognized the necessary and legitimate role of unions. The internees obviously were not the only force, however, at work in Canada’s shift to the

left. A prime motivator and beneficiary of this leftward shift was the CCF, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the ancestor party to the contemporary NDP, the New Democratic Party. Furthermore, war exigencies also contributed importantly to the move to the left by Canadians.

### A Brief Genealogy

Our story will benefit from a brief recounting of the roots and origins of industrial capitalism in Canada, and of the working class it engendered. This is the background from which communism emerged in Canada. In effect, we need a brief genealogy.

Canada had experienced a first industrial revolution during the period of the 1840s to the 1870s. This industrialization was based upon state enterprise, the building of canals, railways, and other public works, and the use of iron and steam power. The first industrial revolution produced a nascent, working class movement in spite of state and capitalist repression. The first industrial revolution was followed by a profound, economic depression in the years 1873 to 1895. Business responded to this depression with massive investment of capital in blue-collar work. New products were also introduced such as petroleum, steel, aluminum, and pulp and paper, as well as mass media and mass consumer products such as electrical appliances. In all this, hydroelectric power played a predominate role. Canadians concentrated in towns and cities that featured the well-known urban squalor wrought by industrialization. Capitalists persistently increased workload, and cut wages of their workers.

The responses of capitalists to the depression of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were so ugly that they provoked virulent opposition from other classes. Debt-ridden farmers organized in populist movements such as co-operatives, farm parties, and soft currency movements. Petty-bourgeois organized the progressive causes of social work and development of social institutions, municipal and electoral reform, trust-busting, and temperance and prohibition. For workers, the prime defence organizations were craft unions and the Knights of Labour. The latter somewhat presaged the industrial unionism of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) during the 1930s depression. Partly owing to its conflict with craft unions, partly since the Knights were ahead of their time in terms of the nature of the economy, the Knights were unable to reach their objective of creating their co-operative commonwealth. The Knights ran out of steam in the U.S. at the end of the 1880s, but continued to exist in central Canada, especially in Quebec. Nationalism and the nature of the economy based upon light industry, where capital investment was less important than an abundant quantity of cheap labour, continued to make the Knights an organization useful to workers in Quebec. This tendency eventually coalesced in the nationalist, Catholic unions of the *Confédération des syndicats catholiques du Canada* in Quebec. In English Canada, nationalist, industrial unions appeared in Canadian-owned sectors such as transportation. A third type of unionism, more radical, appeared in resource industries such as lumber and mining, where many Europeans worked. These workers imported their own traditions to unions such as the International Workers of the World and the One Big Union. This tendency was anarcho-syndicalist; anarchism in many forms was important in Europe. The principal tool of anarchist-syndicalist unions



was to be the general strike of all workers, who would simultaneously lay down their tools, thus achieving ascendancy for the working class. Nevertheless, the most successful union growth in terms of numbers and influence occurred among the craft unions assembled in the American Federation of Labour (AF of L) and its Canadian affiliate, the Canadian Congress of Trade Unions. These unions pioneered techniques such as collective bargaining, strikes, and picketing.

The Knights of Labour left two distinct tendencies among the political parties working on behalf of the working class: labour parties and socialist organizations. Labour parties were electoralist and aimed at winning elections to foster positive, social legislation for workers and their unions. These parties eventually coalesced with other social groups during the 1930s in the CCF, which borrowed its name from the objective of the Knights of Labour of two generations previous, calling itself the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. The CCF was a social democratic coalition of farmers, labourites, fabian socialists of the British persuasion, social planners, intellectuals, protestant reformers in the Social Gospel movement, workers, and trade unionists. A second trend among political parties included those who advocated the replacement of capitalism with socialism. Some socialists eventually supported the Russian Revolution of 1917 in Russia. In 1921, a Canadian party coalesced various socialist parties towards this aim, supported by the communist parties of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.. This party attempted to unite all workers and trade unionists, regardless of strain of unionism. In the 1920s, the communists absorbed the workers and unions of the anarcho-syndicalist

movement as the latter ran its course, although there did remain small anarchist groups in Canada.

## World War I

Before proceeding with the 1920s, we must talk about World War I, or the ‘Great War’. The Russian Revolution occurred in 1917 as a direct result of the Great War, the war to end all wars, as it was called at the time. Indeed, one can understand little of historical importance about the 20<sup>th</sup> century without some understanding of World War I. It is not saying anything new to say that World War I led to World War II; indeed, it was a sort of dress rehearsal for the calamity that befell the world only a generation later.

The Russian Revolution of 1917, engendered by the war, provoked fascist reaction throughout the West, even though during the 1920s, there was a curious alliance between German conservatives and Stalin of the U.S.S.R.. The latter helped the German military secretly train on Soviet soil and re-arm with Soviet assistance in spite of the Versailles Treaty, which had been negotiated after World War I to eliminate German military capacity. For the Soviets, however, anything that weakened the leading, capitalist countries of France and Great Britain was a worthwhile pursuit. The French had insisted upon vengeful terms for the Versailles Treaty as part of the incessant conflict with Germany, which went back to the Franco-Prussian war of the 1870s. There were also other national strategies born in World War I that were pursued during the 1920s and 1930s, which also contributed to starting World War II. The British, who presided over

their massive empire even as it was being transformed bit-by-bit into the contemporary Commonwealth of equals, seemed unaware that their economic superiority had slipped to the Americans, many of whom were also unaware of this reality. Americans continued to exhibit the traditional anglophobia which had served America well during generations of paying debts to Britain. Above all, Americans were taken with the notion of isolationism, that they should not get involved in the periodic, nasty, European habit of warfare. British governments, also reflecting the opinion of Commonwealth governments, pursued a policy of appeasement of Germany to try to soften the harsh terms that the French had imposed on Germany at Versailles.

All these national strategies contributed to the origins of World War II. People, however, also inhabit spaces other than their nation-states. They occupy social and economic spaces, their social classes. All social classes reacted with their particular strategies and ideologies to the trauma of World War I. In effect, World War I was the deadliest war ever seen: about 8.5 million soldiers killed, 21 million injured, 13 million civilians dead owing to hunger, cold, combat, and massacres.<sup>3</sup> World War I, a war of European imperialism, began in a fever of chauvinism, and ended in the despair of simple soldiers who could not understand why they were fighting, dying, getting injured, or even why they should be inflicting similar pain on other, simple soldiers. Consider the despair of these soldiers stuck in awful trench warfare, led by generals who seemingly knew little, other than ordering futile attacks in a war that never ended, in which nothing was concluded, and no one won. Facing this reality, some soldiers took matters into their own hands. They mutinied, deserted, went on strike, worked out informal truces with enemy

soldiers and established soviets, workers' councils, to attempt to make peace with the worker-soldiers among the enemy. It was among Russians that the revolt against the conditions of warfare moved furthest, perhaps owing to the horror of Russian losses. The largest force mobilized in World War I, the Russian army of twelve million suffered casualties of about nine million dead, injured, missing-in-action, or imprisoned, the largest losses of any country in World War I.<sup>4</sup> The czarist regime fell to revolt during the March Revolution of 1917, but the governments produced by the revolt were unwilling to extricate Russia from the War. Owing to the never-ending horrors of the war, Russian soldiers and workers, along with the Bolsheviks, succeeded in imposing peace and a new social order following the Russian Revolution of November, 1917.

The Russian Revolution provided an example that could be imitated and, at least to a certain extent, was imitated by soldiers and workers in western countries. To the bourgeoisie and the ruling class served by western governments, three strategic elements appeared necessary when considering the meaning of the Russian Revolution. Firstly, World War I had to be concluded as quickly as possible, even if had resolved little. Secondly, social revolution had to be stopped at once. Fourteen western countries, including Canada, were united by Winston Churchill in military expeditions against the Russians in an unsuccessful attempt to dislodge the Bolsheviks and their social revolution. In view of the failure of these efforts, western states then conducted continuing diplomatic, espionage, and economic warfare against the U.S.S.R..<sup>5</sup> The revolutionary contagion also required inoculation among western countries and their peoples, hence, domestic measures of political suppression were essential. Thirdly,

difficult to obtain, would be an end to recurring warfare in Europe, especially since it seemed to imply future, social revolutions.

To the reformers within the petty-bourgeoisie, the Great War had been caused by the arms race and by the failure of traditional diplomacy. Attempts at world disarmament, the creation of the League of Nations, and especially within the English-speaking world, recognition of the legitimacy of German complaints against the harsh and vengeful terms of the Versailles Treaty came to be seen as the means to prevent wars. This last policy was commonly known as appeasement, and was pursued by Great Britain in the 1920s and the 1930s. Among the German petty-bourgeois, rightists, and military veterans, some observed yet another abomination. Amidst and immediately following the national shame and disgrace of German defeat, a defeat that right-wing ideology attributed to a lack of civilian support, there were some — communists, socialists, social democrats, anarchists, labour unionists, Jews — who wished to take advantage of the sorry, national position of Germany to launch a social revolution. This was treachery, a point of view best incarnated in the menacing and xenophobic figure of Adolf Hitler.

In short, the horrors of the Great War and the social convulsions it had wrought traumatized all social classes. These reactions of the classes to World War I contributed to the origins of World War II, as did the national strategies pursued by the various countries whose armies had participated in the war to end all wars.

World War I and the Repression of the Left

In Canada, Europeans from enemy countries, especially Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were victims of state repression during and immediately after World War I. For a generation previous, Europeans had received mistrust and slights from English-Canadians, especially in western Canada. European immigration was necessary for settling the country. In fact, it had been a key part of Macdonald's National Policy, however, Europeans also brought with them dangerous ideas: syndicalism, anarchism, and socialism mixed in dangerous, political blends. In such an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and racism, a movement to ban bilingual teaching in public schools in the languages of the European immigrants emerged in English Canada as part of an effort to keep Canada British. World War I provided the occasion for provinces to implement these bans. At the same time, the opportunity also presented itself to ban the French language from public schools in the Prairie Provinces.

The War Measures Act of 1914 adopted early during WWI authorized the federal government to do practically anything to ensure the security of the state, including taking measures aimed at enemy subjects, the terms used for Europeans whose origins were in the belligerent countries with which Canada was at war. For instance, 80,000 Europeans were required to register as enemy subjects. The harassment got more pointed when 8,579 Europeans, of which 5,956 originated from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were interned, even if they had been born in Canada. The largest number were Ukrainians, even though the principal enemies of Canada were the Germans, of which a much smaller number, 1,192, were interned.<sup>6</sup> In 1917, the federal government issued another insult to

Ukrainians and other Europeans. Conscription had made the Borden government unpopular among Europeans, as if registration and internment weren't enough. Conscription was also unpopular with farmers losing their sons important to their livelihood, just as it was with French-Canadians. Fearing electoral defeat in 1917, the government adopted the Wartime Elections Act.<sup>7</sup> This legislation disenfranchised people originating from enemy countries naturalized after March 31, 1902, unless they had a brother, son, or grandson in the military service. It also granted the federal vote to mothers, wives, fiancées, and sisters of military personnel, and to women serving in the military, which made the first victory for women's federal suffrage indeed a tainted one.

The repression of Europeans increased after the Russian Revolution of November, 1917. The federal government adopted a series of measures to induce the social discipline sought by Canada's ruling class, in spite of the fact that WWI ended in November, 1918.<sup>8</sup> In May, 1918, the government undertook massive measures of censorship. In September, 1918, the federal government banned all publications in languages of the enemy, including German, Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Finnish. The pretext was the war; the real goal was to limit and control the effects of the Russian Revolution. At the same time, fourteen political organizations were banned, as were publications of trade unions and socialist and anarchist organizations. On October 11, 1918, exactly one month before the armistice, the government prohibited all strikes, and made conciliation obligatory and binding in industrial disputes. Just as importantly, a pattern of action was installed which was to serve as precedent for similar action in World War II, putatively aimed at wartime security, but actually aimed at controlling and disciplining the working class.

World War I had beneficial effects on industrialization, economic growth, and the condition of Canadian capitalists. The war, however, also helped increase unionization. In 1912, there were 160,000 trade unionists; seven years later, there were 378,000.<sup>9</sup> The war also increased social conflict between business and workers. In spite of the ban on strikes adopted by the Borden government in October, 1918, there were 336 strikes in 1919, a level of social unrest not to be equalled until World War II.<sup>10</sup> There were general, city-wide strikes in Vancouver and Toronto, as well as other general strikes in smaller communities across Canada. Of course, there was the famous, Winnipeg general strike of forty-two days in the spring of 1919, during which 30,000 workers including local police, supported by sympathy strikes elsewhere in the country, struck for union recognition, better wages, and better working conditions.

In the wake of all this social conflict, the federal government adopted the Illegal Associations Act, which banned any association, organization, society, or corporation whose principal objective or avowed purpose was to cause or threaten governmental, industrial, or economic change in Canada by force, violence, bodily injury of persons, or wilful destruction of property.<sup>11</sup> In 1927, this law was integrated to the Criminal Code of Canada as article 98.

The Communist Party



In spite of the post-war repression of workers, two small socialist groups, with the support of American communists, met secretly near Guelph, Ontario in 1921 in order to form a communist party. The new party called itself the Workers' Party of Canada, and established a clandestine structure called 'Z' to deal with problems of government harassment. The Party came out openly as the Communist Party of Canada in 1924 during a break in government repression from the first, Liberal government of William Lyon Mackenzie King. The Party very soon after received the official endorsement of the Communist International in Moscow.

In 1921, the Party had 650 members. It grew to 4,500 in 1925, then decreased to 3,000 members in 1927.<sup>12</sup> A large proportion of members were Ukrainians and Finns, about 40 % of members, according to one source.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the Finnish Organization of Canada and the Ukrainian Labour-Farm Temple Association held associate status within the political bureau of the Party. By no means, however, did this mean that there were no conflicts between English-Canadian and European members of the party. In fact, the former were accused of trying to assimilate Europeans, of trying to destroy national cultures; the latter, of refusing to speak English, while remaining isolated within bourgeois, national enclaves. Over the next two decades, this became a familiar theme among Canadian communists, as indeed it also did among American communists at the same time.<sup>14</sup>

In Montreal, a workers' group called the Labour College, led by Annie Buller and Bella Gauld, conducted socialist education among English-Canadian and European

workers. It quickly joined the new Canadian party. Among French-Canadian Montrealers, a court stenographer and socialist, Albert Saint-Martin, organized the *université ouvrière* to conduct popular education among workers. Saint-Martin asked for recognition from Moscow of a separate, French-Canadian communist party, but the request was rejected. In 1927, one of Saint-Martin's followers, Évariste Dubé, in conjunction with Elphège Paquette, an insurance agent in the Party, formed the first, French-Canadian wing of the Communist Party of Canada.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1920s, the Party mirrored the policies of Moscow by emphasizing the nature of class conflict in Canada. The Party even organized purges of some leaders for being Trotskyites for criticizing Stalin, in imitation of the U.S.S.R. Party. The Canadian Party invited workers of all labour unions to support the party, but in the late 1920s, Moscow and the Communist International, in a reversal of previous policy, suggested that communists organize their own unions in preparation for the major economic depression that USSR communists thought correctly was about to afflict the West. So, Canadian communists then united 12,000 workers in eleven unions under a central called the Workers' Unity League, absorbing in the process the *One Big Union* and the *International Workers of the World*, the so-called *Wobblies*, still strong among British Columbia lumberjacks.

The Jazz Age of the 1920s brought an economic boom to some parts of Canada, but the 1929 crash of stock market speculation in the U.S. plunged the world into the depression of the 1930s. During this period, it appeared to many that capitalism did not

work to the benefit of workers and farmers. In such an environment, the Communist Party was able to work openly and effectively, thus increasing its membership significantly. Before we describe this activity by the communists, however, we should consider the reaction of the state to the depression, and the discontent fostered among workers and farmers by the depression and the state's reaction to it. For this purpose, it is useful to consider one man in particular, R. B. Bennett, the Conservative Prime Minister of Canada. Bennett was a lawyer and millionaire capitalist who, during the 1920s, was the principal owner of an important company in Hull, E. B. Eddy, at the time, the largest producer of wood products on the continent. In response to the depression of the 1930s, and the discontent it wrought, Prime Minister Bennett promised to crush communism with "the iron heel of ruthlessness". This fascistic-sounding expression translated accurately the intentions of Bennett. Bennett ruled from 1929 to 1935, until his defeat by King's Liberals. In 1929, the Communist Party had 2,876 members; in 1931, 1,385 members; and in 1934, 5,500 members.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Bennett with his Tory allies in the Ontario provincial government, managed to arrest 10,000 people.<sup>17</sup> The tool employed was article 98 of the Criminal Code, which had followed the Illegal Associations Act in the post-war period, itself inspired by the War Measures Act of 1914. The Bennett government also made good use of a familiar scapegoat, European immigrants. Using Section 41 of the Immigration Act, 4,025 Europeans were deported in 1930. The next year, 7,000 persons were expelled, often to right-wing regimes in Poland, Hungary or Bulgaria, where the Canadian deportees once again were re-imprisoned or otherwise oppressed.<sup>18</sup> In total, between 1930 and 1935, 26,000 were extradited from Canada for union or political activities, or simply for being poor or unemployed, with little or no

legal recourse in Canada.<sup>19</sup> Early in the 1930s, specific measures were taken to discourage certain Europeans — Finns, Ukrainians, Jews — from coming to Canada.<sup>20</sup> British subjects presented a special case since they had the right to enter and remain in Canada as subjects of the Crown. To address these people, the Canadian government adopted specific legislative measures, thus among the 26,000 deportees were also found British subjects additional to Europeans. Other parts of the state besides the federal government joined in the xenophobia towards Europeans. The ‘red squads’ of the municipal police forces in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver consistently harassed communists. In 1929, the City of Toronto banned the use of languages other than English in public meetings, so as to better control the spread of dangerous ideas among Europeans.<sup>21</sup> In 1931, using article 98 of the Criminal Code, the federal government arrested eight leaders of the Party: John Boychuk, Malcolm Bruce, Tom Cacic, Sam Carr, Tom Hill, Tom McEwen, Mathew Popovich, and Tim Buck, secretary-general of the Party. Buck was the victim of a mysterious murder attempt that was never satisfactorily resolved during his imprisonment in a federal prison in Kingston, Ontario.<sup>22</sup>

The Communists responded to the Bennett repression by organizing the Canadian Labour Defence League. Its leader was a man who secretly was a communist, Alfred Smith, formerly a Methodist minister. Originally from Guelph, Smith chaired the Manitoba Methodist Conference between 1915 and 1917. He left the ministry during the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Between 1920 and 1923, Smith represented Brandon in the Manitoba legislative assembly as a labourite. For organizing resistance to the Bennett repression, Smith was charged with sedition in 1934, but he was acquitted in a jury trial.<sup>23</sup>

The Canadian Labour Defence League was a mass membership organization. In 1931, there were 123 locals, among them, 37 Ukrainian locals with 1,208 members, and 26 Finnish locals with 856 members. In 1932, more than half the members of the League were Europeans, nearly 3,000 Ukrainians and 1,000 Finns.<sup>24</sup> In 1934, the League obtained 483,000 signatures on a petition in favour of the government abrogating article 98 of the Criminal Code. The winds had changed; Canadians were weary of the never-ending depression and of the excesses of the Bennett repression. Sensing this, King and the Liberals promised to abrogate Article 98 of the Criminal Code, a promise that helped the Liberals win the 1935 federal election. It was a promise the Liberals indeed kept shortly after their victory, despite opposition by elements in Quebec.

Bennett also made a dramatic turnabout before the 1935 election from his original do-nothing policy vis-à-vis the depression. Under pressure from the League for Social Reconstruction, a political organization which included both red Tories and social democrats, Bennett developed his own version of American President Roosevelt's New Deal. Bennett's programme included unemployment insurance, which encountered stiff opposition, however, as an intrusion in provincial jurisdiction, opposition led by premiers Hepburn in Ontario and Duplessis in Quebec. King argued that Bennett's proposals, including those for unemployment insurance, would lead to chaos in the country. He instead proposed stability by promising to resolve the depression by balancing budgets. King then supported Hepburn and Duplessis in a court case to quash unemployment insurance, a case that went all the way to the House of Lords in London, which ruled in favour of King, Hepburn, and Duplessis. This was all very disingenuous on the part of

King, who then adopted unemployment insurance in 1940 after provincial approval of a constitutional amendment. As for King's balanced budgets, massive public expenditures would have been required to defeat the depression, as was taking place under the American New Deal.

The Bennett repression of the left led to precisely the opposite of the desired effect. It increased the popularity and support for the Communist Party. In 1936, Tim Buck, mostly unknown before his imprisonment, was fêted by 17,000 people at Maple Leaf Gardens, in Toronto. Moreover, the Canadian Labour Defence League served as an important learning experience for the communists, who learned how to reach the Canadian masses with a just cause. Nevertheless, it was the never-ending depression that played mostly in favour of the communists. The depression also brought a raft of new social ideas, in addition to those of the communists: the League for Social Reconstruction; the economics of Lord Keynes of Britain to the effect that governments should stimulate the economy in hard times by deficit spending; intellectuals who conducted social planning; the political involvement of academics, especially those from McGill and Toronto; and the CCF, created in 1933. In such a propitious environment, Communist Party membership increased from 3,000 in 1929 to 16,000 in 1939.<sup>25</sup>

Communists were active on many fronts, including in the work camps in which single men laboured for a pittance and shelter. These work camps proved to be an important source of members for the Party. The work camps were the idea of General Andrew McNaughton, chief Canadian soldier. Municipalities provided social assistance

only to married men and their families. Often, they literally drove single men outside municipal boundaries. There was, therefore, an army of young, single men who drifted from town to town looking for work that didn't exist. Furthermore, marriage was out of the question for unemployed young men, which helped diminish further their geographic and social stability, ensuring that they couldn't get municipal welfare. The work camps addressed the needs of this population, but under military control. The men worked on construction of roads and other public works projects for three meals a day, shelter, a bed, tobacco, and 20¢ per day. In comparison, American men working on New Deal construction projects were paid \$3 per day, a relatively decent wage for single men in this period. Canadian communists, led by Arthur Evans, organized for better wages and living conditions in the work camps. Their most well-known initiative was the 'On-to-Ottawa trek' in 1935, during which 2,000 camp workers travelled by rail from British Columbia in order to meet federal politicians in Ottawa. The workers stopped at Regina, whereby a few leaders went to Ottawa to meet Bennett, a fruitless enterprise. In fact, on the order of Bennett, the RCMP and the Regina police provoked a riot in an attempt to arrest leaders of the workers.

Communists were also active on other fronts, as well, during the 1930s: organizing secular, charitable organizations; arranging improved social assistance from municipalities; obtaining employment for women; arguing for public health care, a well-known advocate of which was Dr. Norman Bethune of McGill University; and the fight against fascism. It was on two other fronts in particular that the communists were most active: among pro-communist, ethnic organizations and among labour unions. Among

ethnic organizations, the Ukrainian Labour-Farm Temple Association (ULFTA) and the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) were the primary pro-communist organizations. These were mass organizations. For instance, in 1939, ULFTA had about 10,000 members grouped into 200 branches, with 113 meeting-halls or temples.<sup>26</sup> In these ethnic organizations, members received political and language instruction, while concerts and other cultural endeavours such as libraries were also organized. While members might not be communists, the leaders of these organizations often were. There were also similar leftist organizations among other Europeans such as Jews, Germans, Hungarians, and Russians. The ethnic organizations played an important social role for Europeans who were marginalized by Canadian society, and often lived in hinterland communities where they learned little English or French. To these Europeans, the Communist Party was the best way of improving their lives in Canada. At the same time, to many English-Canadians, electoral and parliamentary politics seemed to be the best way to obtain social change, for example, in the tradition of the CCF and the labour and farm parties which had preceded it.

Among labour unions, communists quickly gained influence within the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) soon after its entry from the U.S. into Canada. The CIO had been launched by the legendary John J. Lewis, who led American miners' unions. Even though he was a staunch anti-communist, Lewis still collaborated openly with communists in the organization of factory and mine workers the AF of L refused to organize. In Canada, the CIO quickly found 40,000 members in industries such as rubber, textiles, and transportation.<sup>27</sup> By 1939, communists were among the organizers



and leaders of such major, industrial unions as the United Electrical Workers, the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, the International Woodworkers, and the Canadian Seamen's Union. This was the continuation of a trend started early in the decade. In 1933, the Party claimed that three quarters of the 320,000 work days lost to strikes in Canada that year could be attributed to communist unions.<sup>28</sup> In 1937, communists were instrumental in a major union recognition victory at General Motors in Oshawa, in spite of vigorous repression by Ontario Premier Hepburn, ably assisted by federal Justice minister, Ernest Lapointe. It's not an over-simplification to say that the work of communists, in large part, allowed the industrial unions of the CIO to establish themselves in Canada.

Internationally, in 1933, the ascension of Hitler to power with his anti-Bolshevik discourse forced Moscow to the determination that fascism was the immediate, principal enemy of communism. In 1935, the Communist International promulgated the concept of the popular front, which could include all leftists, even bourgeois parties, in united action to safeguard democracy and civilization from the menace presented by fascism and naziism. In fact, a year earlier, the U.S.S.R. joined the League of Nations after Germany had left so as to encourage collective security against threats from the right. In Canada, communists, under the leadership of A. A. MacLeod, organized the League Against War and Fascism in support of Moscow's objectives. Moscow's prestige was never as high as during the era of the popular front policy, especially during the Civil War in Spain. Twelve hundred Canadians, three-fourth of whom were communists, fought in Spain in spite of legislation sponsored by Ernest Lapointe that made the actions of these

Canadians illegal.<sup>29</sup> About one-half of the Canadian volunteers are buried in Spain, one hundred of them being Ukrainian.<sup>30</sup>

In light of the prestige of Moscow during this period, it is useful to consider the different types of supporters and sympathizers that the Communist Party attracted in Canada. Right from the creation of the Party in 1921, there was a clandestine structure within the party, owing to periods of illegality and state repression. There were also public figures who were secretly members of the Party, but who denied membership in order to be more effective in reaching a wide audience, or in representing organized labour of all persuasions. Two notable examples of this were A. E. Smith of the Canadian Labour Defence League, and J. L. Cohen, one of Canada's top labour lawyers, who defended many of the Hull internees. Some secret members were lesser-known figures working at local levels. Some members openly declared their allegiance to the Party, for example, during elections while working for or presenting themselves as Party candidates, or during labour organizing campaigns. There were also ex-members; for example, hundreds of Europeans left the Party puzzled and demoralized after the Hitler-Stalin Pact, although they still held the tenets of the Party. Some members, at various moments in the Party's history, were expelled for not towing the Party line. This was a factor that led some people to support the Party, but not formally join; they were unable to tolerate neither Party discipline, nor the policy reversals of the Party. For example, Henri Gagnon was introduced to the Communist Party by an anarchist. Gagnon became a pillar of the Party in Quebec for years. His anarchist friend only attended one Party meeting, just so Gagnon could join the Party.<sup>31</sup> There were also family, friends, and

sympathizers attracted by popular front activities, including many who were repulsed by the rising tide of fascism and anti-semitism in the world and in Canada. Then, there were the intellectuals. Legend has it that the Party included many intellectuals. This was not the case, at least, not in Canada. Indeed, perhaps only two Canadian intellectuals who enjoyed general repute from the community-at-large come to mind: Norman Bethune and Stanley Ryerson. In fact, the absence of intellectuals was always a problem for the Party which had, at best, clever *apparatchiks* such as Stewart Smith, Gui Caron, Évariste Dubé et al, but lacked the intellectuals of general repute to directly support the Party and its worker-members. Beyond the Party, there were small groups of intellectuals around McGill and the University of Toronto who shared some of the aims and analysis of the communists, without being communists themselves. For example, Bessie Touzel of Toronto became one of the leading Canadian reformers in the field of social work, and worked for the City of Ottawa organizing welfare during the depression. She never concealed her friendships with communists, nor her sympathy with the communist cause. Henry Ferns recounts the following anecdote about Bessie Touzel, who was good friends with Joe Salsberg, a known Toronto communist:

“She was asleep in Joe Salsberg’s pyjamas when the RCMP raided his home in Toronto to intern him under the Defence of Canada Regulations. Joe had wisely gone to Cuba, and Bessie was keeping Joe’s wife company. [Bessie] told the Mounties they could have Joe’s pyjamas if they wanted.”<sup>32</sup>

Ferns studied at Cambridge University around the time upper-class people such as Guy Burgess and Kim Philby betrayed their origins to join the Communist Party. Ferns, who worked in Mackenzie King's office during World War II, never did join the Party although he did hold a marxist analysis of society, which did not seem to bother King or his staff. Another intellectual who sympathized with communist causes was the Quebec journalist, Jean-Charles Harvey. Harvey was a leading education and political reformer, described by his biographer as a 'precursor of the Quiet Revolution'. Harvey did meet with communists such as Fred Rose and Henri Gagnon, and even attended a few meetings of the Party. Harvey came out squarely against the Party, however, even though he sympathized with their aims. Harvey was one of the leading anti-fascists and anti-clerics in Quebec. Even though he placed his faith in liberalism as the solution for French Canada, Harvey did organize public support in Montreal for liberation of the Hull internees.<sup>33</sup>

So while there were a few intellectuals who sympathized with the communists, there were not that many in Canada and even fewer intellectuals who were Party members, contrary to what might have been applicable, in fact, to the U.S.. Moreover, Canadian academics and intellectuals had other options for public, progressive involvement, such as the League for Social Reconstruction, the promotion and execution of social planning, Keynesianism, and the CCF, which did include leading intellectuals such as Frank Scott of McGill University. Indeed, there were so many important issues that needed addressing by intellectuals in the 1930s: the failure of capitalism, the prospect of war, and the rise of fascism and anti-semitism.

## Fascism and Anti-semitism

A major factor that helped increase support for the communists was the emergence and growth of fascism, along with concomitant racism and anti-semitism. One example of a communist sympathizer was, Jack Bell, a labour unionist in Nova Scotia who never joined the Party formally, but sympathized and worked with communists. In his biography, Sue Calhoun records Bell as saying about the 1930s:

“Many people believed that capitalism had lost its effectiveness, that capitalism had run its course, and could no longer solve the problems of the country, that it was time for a new system, a new order. Some people were leaning towards fascism... Things were pretty black and white... There was the right and the left, and you pretty well had to make a choice. You had to declare yourself. You were either left or right...”<sup>34</sup>

What was this fascism that terrified many into supporting, at least tacitly, communism? At its kernel, fascism was a movement of repugnance, distaste, and opposition to the Russian Revolution of 1917, and all that followed from this world-shattering event. This opposition was combined with anti-semitism, with the Jews being held responsible for bolshevism and its spread. Anti-semitism could trace intellectual roots to philosophers such as Heidegger and Nietzsche, and to still older roots in medieval society, but part of its roots could be found in the concept of race that developed in the

19<sup>th</sup> century. A leading proponent of the idea of race was a French, *déclassé* count, Arthur de Gobineau who, in his 1855 book, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, developed racialist arguments about Aryan superiority and the special mission of white people, indeed of aristocrats as being the best of the Aryans. This racism proved an interesting foil to the rise of republicanism and democracy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; in fact, this was its function.<sup>35</sup> In the case of France, de Gobineau held that aristocrats were descended from the Franks, the German people who acceded to the rule of Gaul after the Roman Empire dissolved, integrating with Roman culture in order to create France. The French bourgeoisie countered this silliness with its own, maintaining that the non-aristocratic elements of France descended from the Gauls, the Celtic people who had preceded the Franks and, therefore, they were the true Frenchmen.<sup>36</sup>

Racism and racists are hardy phenomena, not to be dissuaded by such things as science, evidence, or logic. Above all, racism is useful for political purposes. The ethnic group that bore the opprobrium of the fascists after World War I was the Jews. Anti-semitism was layered over centuries of anti-Jewish sentiment and actions among Europeans which intermittently, but regularly, led to political pogroms against Jews. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews in Europe considered how they could save themselves from this persistent, returning racism. One option was zionism, the effort to create a Jewish homeland in the Middle East. A second option was socialism in its various forms, which would make the world a better place for all, including Jews. The option favoured by most, however, especially as evidenced in their actions, was emigration to the Americas. Using the slim evidence that a few leaders of the Russian Revolution, including the

secular and atheistic Trotsky, were Jews, there emerged a common knowledge among anti-semites. That this knowledge was illogical, preposterous, and self-contradictory seemed to present no obstacle to its spread. The story went like this: the Jews were the secret leaders of a workers' revolution that would take over all the peoples of the world, that this revolution was to be financed by the Rothschilds, Jewish bankers in England, and other similar capitalists. That communists and capitalists apparently were opposed to each other was just another chimerical aspect of the Jewish plot for world domination. Among the chief tools that Jews employed was freemasonry, which had contributed to the French Revolution and, in fact, did result in civil rights for Jews in France. The source for these imaginings was the secret *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, a fraudulent document concocted in Russia by czarist secret police to discredit opposition to the czarist régime from liberals and socialists. The *Protocols* acquired a life of their own, after having been studied and adopted at the first Zionist conference held in Switzerland late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or so the story went. Even today, periodically, the *Protocols* re-emerge, even though they were denounced roundly by scholars years ago as a fraud. The *Protocols* have been credited variously with the Russian Revolution and the French Revolution, and the movements they spawned; with destroying the British Empire by encouraging Indian and Irish independence; with causing the two world wars; and too many other events to list. The *Protocols* found readerships among different groups. For instance, among capitalists, Henry Ford was a promoter of the *Protocols* and published them in his newspaper in Michigan, the *Dearborn Independent*. Promoting the *Protocols* was also useful to certain ethnic groups when they found themselves in social conflicts with Jews. Nevertheless, it was among the petty-bourgeoisie, the middle class, that the

*Protocols* and anti-semitism, in general, held most sway. This was a class that felt itself squeezed on all sides during the depression of the 1930s, deserted by decadent and greedy capitalists, and left to its own devices to combat proletarianization and socialism. It might be possible, hypothetically, to imagine fascism without the accompanying anti-semitism. In fact, Italian fascism was never as anti-semitic as the German variety. Nevertheless, anti-bolshevism, informed by anti-semitism, was the leitmotif of Hitler's life work as he himself had described in his *Mein Kampf*, supplemented by other elements such as nationalism and imperialism.

In hindsight, we know today that World War II was a just war that had to be fought, in which Canadians had to participate for the express political purpose of defeating Hitler, and his Japanese and Italian allies in the anti-Comintern Axis. Even so, this last fact, that the Axis was the organized and co-ordinated opposition to the Communist International, is unknown to most of our contemporaries. This fact was downplayed during the Cold War, as the capitalist countries were engaged in a war of their own against communism. Remembrance of World War II heroes and the terrible war that Canadians fought has focused on everything but its prime political purpose, fighting fascism. Remembrance focuses on the patriotism and valour of the veterans, their sacrifice and camaraderie, and the *post-facto* justification of the war in the light of the appalling inhumanity of the German concentration camps and the Holocaust. Throughout, remembrance is vaguely tied to the fight for freedom, while the prime purpose, the defeat of fascism is downplayed. Also, downplayed in our remembrance, is that the U.S.S.R. basically was most responsible for winning the war in Europe. Also unbeknownst to contemporaries are the internal, civil conflicts associated with World War II. Hitler



regularly employed local, right-wing governments as part of his imperial methods. The defeat of fascism acquired a popular, pro-communist character in several European countries: in Yugoslavia, Greece, Poland, Norway, France, and even Italy. Even in Canada, there were immense left-right conflicts engendered by the war, class conflicts beyond the better-known conscription issue. Our remembrance could better reflect the agony of our parents and grandparents in choosing to fight a war against fascism which had to be fought, where victory was anything but certain.

As early as 1933, there had been an explosion of anti-semitic violence in Toronto, the infamous Christie Pits Park riot. For several months after the rise to power of Hitler in 1933, young men sympathetic to the nazi cause had been harassing Jewish sunbathers and swimmers at the Beaches area in Toronto, a popular, recreation area then, as now. On August 16, 1933, an amateur softball tournament at Christie Pits Park featured a game between a team comprised of English-Canadians and a team of Jewish and Italian players. At the end of the game, English-Canadian fans unfurled a swastika, shouting “Heil Hitler” in response to the result of the game. A riot ensued between Italians and Jews, on one side, and nazi sympathizers on the other. It lasted hours, and involved up to 10,000 people. Finally, at dawn, the police managed to restore a semblance of order. No one, nazis included, was charged.<sup>37</sup> This manifestation was just the tip of the iceberg of fascism in Canada, and there were other exhibitions of this variety throughout the depression. There were many organizers of fascism, so many that one has to be careful to try to include them all.<sup>38</sup> At various times, individual fascist groups combined, drifted apart, then rejoined once again, wrought as they were with political and personality

differences. In Ontario, the Canadian Fascist Union was led by John Ross Taylor and Joseph Farr, while the British-Israel Federation was active in producing anti-semitic propaganda. In Manitoba and Alberta, William Whittaker directed the Nationalist party of Canada, sometimes known as the *Brownshirts*. In B. C., the fascist Young Citizens' Leagues were led by C. S. Thomas. In Nova Scotia, a sailor named William Crane tried to organize a provincial fascist party. In New Brunswick, Daniel O'Keefe organized on behalf of fascism. In Ottawa, a Belgian-born policeman named Jean Tissot agitated and organized on behalf of fascists, before accepting employment with the Quebec government of Duplessis. There were fascist groups among Ukrainians, Italians, and Germans. German fascists were organized in the *Deutscher Bund* and in associated groups, the chief organizers and leaders of which were Hans Fries and Bernard Brott. In Montreal, Italian fascists met in the *Fascio*, led by Dubiani, Romano, and Vetere.

The most important and durable fascist was Adrien Arcand, who carried on fascist activities until his interment under the Defence of Canada Regulations (DOCR) during the War. Arcand was the leader of the National Social Christian party, then eventually formed the National Unity Party, which developed a federating role for fascist groups across the country. Arcand was ably supported by public figures such as Scott, Lambert, Lessard, Closse, Clément, Ménard, Lambert, Lalanne, Décarie, and Papineau. He came to be known as Canada's *fuhrer*; he operated several newspapers over the years, for which he received free propaganda copy from the Nazi Foreign Propaganda Office in Germany, as well as official recognition. The Arcand party, indeed many fascist groups, received funding from the Italian and German consulates, or from German or Italian companies.

Early in his career, before the prospect of World War II became too evident, Arcand also received money from R. B. Bennett and from wealthy Ontario Tories. His last paid employ was as editor for *L'Illustration nouvelle*, a Union Nationale newspaper. Duplessis also supplied him with government printing contracts. For his meetings, Arcand was granted the free use of military armouries across the country, where uniformed soldiers or World War I veterans joined off-duty policemen and the *blueshirts*, the paramilitary *Arcandiste* group, in order to practice military drill. Speaking of shirts, they were important to Canadian fascists, as they imitated the distinctive uniforms worn by their fascist brethren in Europe. In western Canada, fascists wore brown uniforms, hence, the name *brownshirts*. For Italians, black shirts were *de rigueur* for the fashionable fascist.

Fascism, therefore, was very much in the air in 1930s Canada, even though few Canadians actually wore the fascist uniforms and attended meetings. There was, however, one area that struck a large consensus, and revealed the profoundly-held anti-semitism of most Canadians. This was the persistent and successful fight to limit the flow of Jewish refugees from nazi and fascist European countries to safe haven in Canada.<sup>39</sup> The policy was resisted courageously, but in vain by the National Committee on Refugees, under the leadership of Senator Cairine Wilson, Canada's first woman senator, Sir Robert Falconer, former president of the University of Toronto, and Claris Silcox, a United Church minister and social reformer who worked for the Christian Social Council of Canada. The Committee held conventions and meetings at the Château Laurier in Ottawa, then and ever since the site of similar encounters of national, progressive groups. In spite of Silcox and Falconer being Protestant ministers, only the United Church offered support to the

National Committee on Refugees, but the reach of its support among United Church members was indeed modest. The Committee drew most of its support from unions, communists, and CCFers. For the most part, English-Canadians and their organizations expressed their sympathy for the plight of Jews escaping fascism in Europe, but delivered little else in terms of actual actions or results.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the idea of accepting Jewish refugees provoked a reaction of Anglo-saxon nativism, particularly in Ontario, in favour of keeping Canada British. Sometimes and more subtly, not aggravating unemployment was presented as the reason for not permitting entry of Jewish refugees. The nativist charge was led by the British-Israel Federation and the Canadian Corps Association, which represented World War I veterans, besides fascist groups and some Tories. At the same time, in a queer irony that could be found only in Canada, French-Canadian opinion-makers saw immigration of Jewish refugees as an attempt to swamp them with English-speakers, even as some English-Canadians maintained that Jewish immigration would threaten the British nature of Canada. In one well-known incident, Maurice Duplessis raised the prospect of a mass invasion of Jews from Spain and Portugal to Quebec. In a small village during a pre-election meeting following Sunday mass, Duplessis ended a verbal assault on Liberals with a charge that they were in league with the 'International Zionist Brotherhood', a fictional organization of Duplessis' creation. In return for financial help from the non-existent organization, Liberals would allow 100,000 Jewish refugees to settle in Quebec. As proof, Duplessis waved a copy of a letter that described the plot, although the demagogue never did show the letter to anyone. Duplessis won the next election.<sup>41</sup> In spite of the outrage that this fraud perpetrated, Duplessis had tapped into the prevailing anti-semitism in French Canada. Nearly 130,000

people had signed a petition to federal Liberal MP Wilfrid Lacroix, rejecting the idea of accepting Jewish refugees. This was a consensus among rightist newspapers, *Le Patriote*, published by a leading fascist, Joseph Ménard; *La Nation*, published by a separatist, Paul Bouchard, who was also an ardent admirer of Mussolini; and Adrien Arcand's *Le Fasciste canadien*. Anti-semitic opinion was also reflected in more mainstream, Catholic newspapers such as *L'Action nationale* and *Le Devoir*.<sup>42</sup> Within official, Liberal Ottawa, the response was not much better. Professing to not want to interfere in the internal affairs of another country, Prime Minister King, an anti-semitic of the more subtle persuasion, would not even officially denounce Nazi actions against Jews.<sup>43</sup> King's chief public servant, O. D. Skelton, and officials of the Immigration Branch manoeuvred to protect Liberals from political pressure in favour of accepting refugees, while ensuring that concrete measures were not actually proposed or adopted. In the end, they successfully limited immigration of Jewish refugees to 8,000.

As the reality of pending war approached, Canadians became convinced that they would have to fight alongside Britain, as traditional ties demanded. This took the starch out of the many fascist parties and movements in English Canada, but Adrien Arcand and his French-Canadian allies got another kick at the can. Jewish Montrealers had taken to holidaying in the towns and villages north of Montreal in the Laurentian Mountains. In the villages of St-Faustin and Ste-Agathe, Arcand whipped up anti-Jewish sentiment with the help of a local clergyman named Charland. Graffiti and signs appeared in the Laurentians, such as the bilingual sign in Ste-Agathe, the English version of which read: "Jews not wanted in Ste-Agathe, so scram while the going is good." Working from

Montreal, Arcand distributed his new paper called *Le Combat national* for the Laurentian campaign. The new newspaper title also reflected a shift in Arcand's strategy, who was now tapping into isolationist opinion in Quebec, which opposed participation in the war and conscription for overseas service, in combination with traditional anti-semitism and the ever-present anti-communism. This permitted the maintenance of some fascist activity in Quebec, as did the work of German consular officials among Germans in western Canada, ably assisted by Brott, the editor of the newspaper, *Deutscher Zeitung*. As WWII approached, the German *Deutscher Bund* became more active throughout the Prairies, encouraging its members to join the Canadian Nationalist Party, led by William Whittaker, the better to help the German war effort.

The isolationist tendency in French Canada, joined with the painful memories of the conscription crisis of World War I, and crypto-fascistic ideology and activity, as well as outright fascism, combined to produce a plethora of right-wing agendas from different sources in Quebec. So much so that one needs a program to tell all the players. Firstly, there was Arcand and all his supporters, important among them were professionals such as the dentist, Noël Décarie, and medical doctors Lalanne and Lambert, who provided important financing. The *Arcandistes* were forever splitting and re-forming groups, owing to endless personality and leadership disputes. At times, new newspapers, albeit of short duration, would appear. The afore-mentioned Paul Bouchard promoted a French state in North America that would be corporatist and fascistic, and inspired by Mussolini and Franco. Eventually, Bouchard slid into another tendency, Social Credit, or the *Créditistes*, as they were called in Quebec. The Young Laurentians produced leaders such

as André Laurendeau and Jean Drapeau, future mayor of Montreal, who organized anti-war and anti-conscription sentiments and activities. Camillien Houde, Conservative mayor of Montreal, had close links with Italian fascists; he spent most of World War II interned for publicly encouraging rejection of national registration as a step prior to conscription. The ever-present Duplessis even negotiated selling Anticosti Island in the St. Lawrence River to German companies, a plot that Canadian communists helped reveal to the world in 1937. The ultramontane elements of the Church supporting corporatism, anti-communism, and fascism would require a detailing too big for this present author, a job better done by many others, however, the ultramontane leader was the historian, Abbé Lionel Groulx.<sup>44</sup> Federal Liberal MPs were another source of right-wing opinion in French Canada, beyond Justice ministers Ernest Lapointe and Louis St-Laurent, the latter the successor of the former. These included men such as the Ottawa MP, Jean-François Pouliot, and Quebeckers Maxime Raymond, Ligouri Lacombe, and Wilfrid Lacroix, to name but a few. Finally, even the legendary nationalist and grandson of the heroic Papineau, Henri Bourassa, wrote favourable articles about German aggression towards the Slavic countries, the better to maintain European order, as well as the obligatory, unfavourable articles about Jewish immigration to Canada.

### Repression of Communists in French Canada

There is a way to understand all this rightist ferment in such a way that explains much about French Canada, including its repression of communists during the inter-war period and into World War II. Key to understanding anti-communism and other rightist

elements of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s in French Canada is to understand the workings of a group that might be novel to English-speaking readers, the *Ordre de Jacques-Cartier*.<sup>45</sup> The *Ordre* was a secret society whose objective was to create an elite devoted to the interests of French-Canadians. At first glance, the idea of a secret society might appear sinister and anti-democratic to contemporary eyes used to openness, indeed sometimes even to too much transparency and information overload. Nevertheless, the secret society was a social form left from earlier times, when secrecy was necessary for virtually every organization not authorized by state or church. While the form did raise suspicions at the time of the revelation about the *Ordre* in the 1930s and 1940s (Jean-Charles Harvey called it Canada's Ku Klux Klan), it was the substance of the work of the *Ordre* that is most interesting and relevant to our study. The *Ordre* was founded in the second half of the 1920s by political activists and clergymen in a community east of Ottawa then known as Eastview, subsequently re-named Vanier, which has been absorbed by the current City of Ottawa. The initial areas of interest of the *Ordre* were improving French-language, public education in Ontario, and obtaining employment for French-Canadians in the federal public service. The first represented a fine and just cause in light of outright discrimination by Ontario governments. In the second area of interest, *Ordre* members imagined a vast, masonic plot organized by English-Canadians and Jews to keep French-Canadians out of the federal government. Indeed, the *Ordre* tried to imitate putative, masonic methods. In actual fact, no freemasonry was required to keep French-Canadians out of the federal government. That French-Canadians were not welcome in the federal government, except for a few exceptions where knowledge of the French language was essential, simply was policy, with explanations transparent to all



who cared to look. Freemasonry was irrelevant to the question. Nevertheless, these two initial areas of interest of the *Ordre* resounded among French-Canadians in the Ottawa Valley on either side of the Ottawa River. Elsewhere in French Canada, other issues came to the fore which came to dominate the agenda of the *Ordre*. During the depression of the 1930s, membership grew to about 10,000, and then again, to about 25,000 during World War II. During the second and third decades of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church became very active socially in French Canada. In fact, inspired by the social policy of the Vatican, as per the papal encyclical of 1891, *Rerum novarum*, the Church organized social action groups in every sector of Quebec society. There were Catholic unions, farmers' groups, teachers' groups, groups for travelling salesmen, groups to improve use and quality of the French language, women's groups, youth groups, and still other Catholic organizations. While social reform in response to industrial capitalism was its original purpose, the social involvement of the Church became a method of controlling social development in the face of all that was modern in Quebec: urbanization, secularization, liberalism, socialism, and other trends. The Church-sponsored social groups provided the base for the *Ordre* for recruitment, in addition to credit unions, small businesses, municipalities, parishes, religious organizations, political parties, and school boards, among others, including federal and provincial politicians.<sup>46</sup>

A member of the *Ordre* thus usually had a dual membership, publicly as a member of his organization, and secretly in the *Ordre*. This duplication has led some to ask what the *Ordre* did indeed achieve that the public organizations did not, other than wasting members' energies with the organizational busywork with which any volunteer or activist

is too familiar. In actual fact, depending upon the area of activity, the *Ordre* had considerable success in its work of co-ordinating organizations for specific issues. An infamous example was the *achats chez-nous* program, by which French-Canadians were encouraged to buy from each other rather than from Jewish retailers. The program was exactly what it sounds like, anti-semitic in purpose and nature. It was also the *Ordre* that organized the successful campaign in Quebec against accepting Jewish refugees in the late 1930s. The pattern for this and many other questions was similar. The *Ordre* would issue instructions, and members and the organizations in which they worked publicly would undertake the required actions. Often this took the form of letter-writing campaigns to political figures. For instance, here is directive no. 275 to *Ordre* members about immigration of Polish Jews, adapted into English.<sup>47</sup>

We have noticed that immigration of German, Jewish immigrants has diminished somewhat. On the other hand, Polish, Jewish immigration has taken on serious proportions.

Each arrival of trans-Atlantic ships brings to our shores about a hundred Israelites, who enter by special authorization of the Immigration Branch in the Natural Resources Department, and are carrying Polish passports.

Protests have already been sent to MPs and ministers about the entry of German Jews.

Please protest now against immigration on Polish Jews.

We're counting on your immediate co-operation for this movement of primordial importance to maintaining our religious and national interests.

Nevertheless, it was in another area of interest vital to this study, anti-communism, that the *Ordre* played the key, co-ordinating role in French Canada. The Church and the *Ordre* had been quite angered by King's decision after the 1935 federal election to remove article 98 from the Criminal Code, the article then being used to suppress communism. In 1937, the head of the Canadian Catholic Church, Cardinal Villeneuve, consulted with the *Ordre* and struck a secret committee of *Ordre* people to study what could be done. The work of the committee, as proposed to Duplessis, resulted in the infamous Padlock Law, by which the provincial government was authorized to lock any building that housed communist activities or documents.<sup>48</sup> The law did not define 'communist'; even more problematic was the fact that the Criminal Code was in federal jurisdiction, which meant that the law could have been easily quashed. There followed a campaign from the *Ordre* that ensured that the federal minister of Justice, Ernest Lapointe, would not undertake such action, a position which the King government duly blessed. The Padlock Law was resisted in the courts by a group in Montreal called the *Société des droits humains*, comprised of communists, CCFers, and even some Liberals. The group supported the challenge by two Montreal communists, François-Xavier Lessard and Muni Taub, two veterans of the Spanish Civil War. Without opposition from the federal government, the Padlock Law was upheld. It remained in place until the 1950s, when the Supreme Court finally judged it unconstitutional. Obviously, the

Padlock Law was a most effective tool for the right in Quebec in its mission of suppressing communism, nevertheless, the *Ordre* continued its pressure for a new, federal law to prohibit communism. Several campaigns involved missives such as the following English-language adaptation of a petition sent to Ernest Lapointe by *Ordre* members and organizations.<sup>49</sup>

The growing threat of communism and the propagation of this anti-catholic, anti-national doctrine that is destructive of legal, established authority, require urgent attention and active co-operation.

Communist schools, associations, study groups, universities and newspapers operate openly under the benevolent eyes of our governments; liberty has become license.

In view of the rising sea of this dangerous and subversive doctrine, we ask that municipal councils, school boards, chambers of commerce, and national and religious associations send the following resolution to the Honourable Ernest Lapointe, Minister of Justice.

Whereas the communist menace affects all of Canada,

Whereas the secret and public propaganda of Russian communism aims at the overthrow of governments and the established order,

Whereas this propaganda is done in freely-operating schools, clubs, men's and women's associations, newspapers, etc.,

Whereas, since the abrogation of Article 98 of the Criminal Code, communism has increased its activity and become a menace to established authority,

The [name of association], at its regular meeting, demanded unanimously that the federal government include in the Criminal Code an article making muscovite communism illegal, and preventing the publication or promotion of this nefarious doctrine, regardless of its nomenclature.

In spring, 1939, as war approached, another similar campaign was launched asking Lapointe to prohibit the spread of communist publications, meetings, associations, speeches, conferences or any other activity. Whenever there appeared to be a slipping of federal, anti-communist resolve, another of these campaigns would appear. Always, Lapointe and his successor as Justice minister, Louis St-Laurent, could report to King and other members of the government about the sentiment and opinion of Quebec, as if no other views were held in French Canada. In fact, the *Ordre*, its members and organizations represented a certain element, one class, the petty-bourgeoisie, and the views of few else, certainly not of the Quebec bourgeoisie which was, in fact, mostly anglophone, nor of most workers or farmers in Quebec.

## Conclusion

The horrors of World War I resulted in the Russian Revolution of 1917. In response, Western governments, including Canada, engaged in repression of the working

class to protect the bourgeois, social order. This repression provided a pattern in Canada, that was to be repeated in World War II to control the social conflicts that war inevitably engendered. The prospect of social revolution also unleashed the monster of fascism in the world, as it also did in Canada, most particularly among elements of the petty-bourgeoisie.

The character of the repression of the working class and its leaders changed between World War I and World War II. During and immediately after World War I, the repression was based mostly in western Canada. It was racist, xenophobic, sometimes populist, above all, aimed at Europeans, especially Ukrainians. With the depression of the 1930s, the repression seemed to be guided more by the interests of the bourgeoisie in controlling social ferment, especially labour unions. In Ontario, there was a nativist reaction during the 1930s, as well, concerned about maintaining the British nature of Canada. As the possibility of war appeared in the late 1930s, English-Canadians sensed that they might have to join the war and fight with the mother country. Thus, fascism diminished in store in English Canada, regardless of its utility to the bourgeoisie, the ruling class. In contrast, fascism continued to be viable in Quebec. This fascist tendency mixed with other, long-term trends in Quebec: isolationism, pacifism, anti-conscription feeling left from World War I, nationalism, anti-imperial feeling, and ultramontanism. Of course, there were the old standbys in French Canada: anti-semitism and anti-communism. The two went together intimately in French Canada. They were inseparable buddies; one historian has written that “the confusion between Jews and communists was found nowhere else with the same intensity as in Quebec.”<sup>50</sup> The statement may or may

not be exactly true; one would have to conduct an inventory of other countries and periods about this question. Nevertheless, it does infer something of the character of anti-communism in Quebec. The class basis of anti-communism was petty-bourgeois. This class dominated French-Canadian, civil society; while the bourgeoisie in Quebec and elsewhere in French Canada was mostly English-Canadian.

Whether we consider the right-wing opinion of the English-Canadian bourgeoisie, or of the French-Canadian *petite-bourgeoisie*, Canada was a right-wing place in 1939; even if we rely on broad generalizations. For example, English Canada being orange, anti-Catholic, tied to British imperialism, anti-French-Canadian; French Canada as a Church-ridden and isolated society where anti-semitism blended with anti-communism. Communists or other social reformers in either English or French Canada had their plate full when they considered their agendas, even if they might believe and hope that Canadians were not as conservative as their leaders.

## Endnotes to Chapter 1

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<sup>2</sup> Author's interview with Krawchuk in January, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> *Macropaedia Britannica* 15<sup>th</sup> edition, volume 21, 1987, p. 753. See also Susan Everett, *The Two World Wars, Volume 1 – World War I*, Bison Books, 1980. Canada, with only eight millions inhabitants, lost almost 61,000 combatants, while countless more returned physically and psychologically injured. See Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985, p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> Everett, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Those who wish to purview these endless machinations in detail might want to consult Anthony Brown and Charles McDonald, *On a Field of Red*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Melnycky, "The Internment of Ukrainians in Canada", Frances Swyripa and John Herd Thompson, editors, *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada During the Great War*, Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> See *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Edmonton: Hurtig, 1985, p. 1900, for the entry for Wartime Elections Act.

<sup>8</sup> A useful description of these measures can be found in Victor Levant, *Capital et travail*, Montreal: Éditions Étincelles, 1978, p. 178, 179.

<sup>9</sup> National Archives of Canada, *Archives du ministère du Travail, collection de l'inventaire général*, Ottawa, 1988, p. 11, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Levant, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 181, 182.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, *Le droit de se taire*, Outremont: VLB Éditeur, 1989, p. 496.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> For an exposition of this dynamic, see Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979, p. 120, 121, 126-131.



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<sup>15</sup> National Archives of Canada, Communist Party of Canada archives, MG 28 IV 4, volume 34, dossier 54.

<sup>16</sup> Comeau and Dionne, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

<sup>17</sup> National Archives of Canada, Communist Party of Canada archives, MG 28 IV 4, volume 18, dossier 19; see 1951 history project for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Party.

<sup>18</sup> J. Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: The Origins and Activities of the Canadian Labour Defence League, 1925-1940", *Labour/Le travailleur*, vol. 10, Fall, 1980, p. 47,48.

<sup>19</sup> Reg Whitaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration*, Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys Ltd., 1987, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Petryshyn, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58. Three of these men were once again imprisoned, then interned during World War II.

Popovich was interned in Petawawa, then died shortly after his release from internment on medical grounds. Boychuk and McEwen were interned in Hull. (See chapter 4 herein.)

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45, 46; see also Avery, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> Comeau and Dionne, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

<sup>26</sup> John Kolasky, *The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-communist Organizations in Canada*, Toronto: PMA Books, 1979, p. 4. Among the organizations associated with ULFTA, *Todovyrmazu*, which supported the independence of the western Ukraine from Poland, had eighty branches in Canada with 4,500 members.

<sup>27</sup> John Stanton, *Life and Death of the Canadian Seamen's Union*, Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Avery, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>29</sup> Marcel Fournier, *Communisme et anticommunisme au Québec, 1920-1940*. Montreal: Éditions Albert Saint-Martin, 1979, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Kolasky, *op. cit.*, p.19.

<sup>31</sup> Henri Gagnon, *Les militants, Socialistes du Québec*, St-Lambert: Éditions Héritage, 1985, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> H. S. Ferns, *Reading from Right to Left*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983, p.191-3.

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<sup>33</sup> Marcel-Aimé Gagnon, *Jean-Charles Harvey, précurseur de la Révolution tranquille*, Montreal: Fides, 1970, p. 85-87.

<sup>34</sup> Sue Calhoun, *'Ole Boy', the Story of Labour Leader J.K. Bell*, Halifax : Nimbus, 1992.

<sup>35</sup> Possibly the best exposition of the purpose and meaning of anti-semitism can be found in a booklet by Jean-Paul Sartre called *Antisémitisme*, which was published in October, 1944, shortly after the liberation of Paris in August of that same year.

<sup>36</sup> This line of thought is developed in Esther Delisle, *Le Traître et le Juif*, Outremont: Éditions Étincelles, 1992.

<sup>37</sup> For a useful description of the riot, see Cybil Levitt and William Shaffir, "Baseball and Ethnic Violence in Toronto: the Case of the Christie Pits Riot, August 16, 1933", *Sports and Ethnicity*, Spring/Summer, 1985, vol. 7, no. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Useful sources of information about Canadian fascism are Rose-Lita Betchermen, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf*, Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1975; and Fred Rose, *Fascism in Canada: An Exposé*, Toronto: New Era Publishers, 1938.

<sup>39</sup> An episode described in painful but necessary detail in Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many*, New York: Random House, 1983.

<sup>40</sup> Rose-Lita Betcherman, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>41</sup> Abella and Troper, *op. cit.*, p. 162, 163.

<sup>42</sup> Betcherman, *op. cit.*, p. 130, 131.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 132, 133.

<sup>44</sup> Chapters 14 and 15 of the biography of Jean-Charles Harvey provides a useful description of the various rightist tendencies in Quebec. See Marcel-Aimé Gagnon, *op. cit.* Also see Fred Rose, *op. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> The most level-headed study of the *Ordre*, beyond the contemporary polemical writings of its bitter opponent, Jean-Charles Harvey, is by G.-Raymond Laliberté, *Une société secrète : l'Ordre de Jacques-Cartier*, Montreal: Éditions Hurtubise HMH Ltée, 1983; also useful is Fred Rose, *Hitler's Fifth Column in Quebec*, 1943.

<sup>46</sup> During World War II, my own research has revealed as much as twenty Liberal MPs might have been members of the *Ordre*, including Wilfrid Lacroix, Jean Richard from Ottawa, Jean Lesage, future Premier

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of Quebec during the 1960s, Maxime Raymond, who left the Liberals to join the *Bloc populaire*, a Quebec anti-war party, and Fisheries minister, J.-E. Michaud, from New Brunswick. Those who want to pursue this can go to the *Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française* at the University of Ottawa, to whom I provided the results of my own study entitled *L'Ordre de Jacques Cartier et la députation canadienne-française pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*, August, 2005.

<sup>47</sup> National Archives of Canada, Ernest Lapointe MG 26 III B10, vol. 41, dossier 18-8, *Ordre* directive 275.

Here is the original version in French:

“L'on nous fait remarquer que si l'immigration judéo-allemande a quelque peu diminué, que, par contre, celle des Juifs polonais prend une ampleur sérieuse. Chaque arrivée de transatlantiques dans nos ports déverse sur nos rives une centaine d'Israélites, entrant au pays sur autorisation spéciale du Ministre de l'Immigration (Ressources naturelles) et porteurs de passeports polonais. Dans le temps, des protestations furent envoyées à nos députés et ministres contre l'entrée au pays de Juifs allemands.

Prière de protester maintenant contre l'immigration judéo-polonaise.

On compte sur votre coopération immédiate pour favoriser ces mouvements d'importance primordiale pour la sauvegarde de nos intérêts religieux et nationaux.”

<sup>48</sup> Andrée Lévesque, *Virage à gauche interdit*, Montreal: Boréal Express, 1984, p. 138.

<sup>49</sup> The Lapointe archive overflows with signed petitions of this variety from *Ordre* members and public organizations. Here is the original, French-language version of the petition.

### Mise hors la loi du COMMUNISME

La menace croissante du Communisme, la propagation de cette doctrine acatholique, anationale, et destructrice de l'autorité établie et légalement constituée, nous fait un devoir urgent, non seulement d'y attirer votre attention, mais d'exiger une coopération active.

Des écoles, des associations, des cercles d'études, des universités, des journaux communistes opèrent au grand jour, sous l'oeil bénévole de nos gouvernements. Liberté est devenue licence.

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Devant une marée montante d'une doctrine subversive et dangereuse, on vous demande que, par les Conseils municipaux, les Commissions scolaires, les Chambres de Commerce, et nos associations religieuses et nationales, soient envoyées à l'Honorable Ernest Lapointe, Ministre de la Justice, des résolutions sur les considérants suivants :

Considérant que la menace des doctrines communistes s'étend à tout le Canada,

Considérant que la propagande secrète et publique du Communisme russe vise au renversement de l'ordre établi et des gouvernements,

Considérant que cette propagande se fait au moyen d'écoles libres, de clubs, d'associations masculines et féminines, de journaux, etc.,

Considérant que, depuis l'abrogation de l'art. 98 du code criminel, le communisme a étendu son champ d'activités et est devenu une menace réelle pour l'autorité établie.

L'organisme de..... à sa séance régulière du..... demande unanimement au gouvernement fédéral et le prie d'inscrire dans les statuts du code criminel, un texte de loi déclarant hors la loi le Communisme moscotaire, empêchant la diffusion écrite et parlée de cette doctrine néfaste, sous quelque nom ou affabulation dont elle se couvre.

<sup>50</sup> Lévesque, *op. cit.*, p. 130; English language adaptation.

## Chapter 2 – A War of Limited Liability

### Canada in 1939

In 1939, Canada was a poor, conservative, dispirited colony. Despite the Statute of Westminster of 1931, which had granted virtual autonomy to Canada, the country was still beholden to its British roots and to the British Empire, at least, among English-Canadians. This attachment was less perceptible among French-Canadians, bruised by World War I and the social conflict it had engendered over conscription and language issues, or among Europeans, still excluded from full participation in Canada alongside the two founding peoples, or among the native peoples, still living their historic marginalization and exclusion from the rest of the country.

The failure of capitalism during the 1930s had not been addressed by the ruling class nor by the political system. Unemployment, which had been as high as fifty percent in some locales, was only slowly diminishing, and not through anything that governments did. In fact, at the beginning of World War II, young men rushed to join the military for the three meals per day, housing, clothing, and regular pay, however modest, offered by the military. The population of Canada had been 8 million during World War I; it was about 11 million early in World War II. The slow rate of growth reflected low rates of birth, marriage, and household and family formation during the 1930s, as well as immigration policies that begrudged entry by certain groups from European countries – Jews, Finns, Ukrainians – or that had dried up from other countries in Europe.

There was also the social strife contained in the left-right split. In the absence of social programs and union rights for workers, communists and others worked to improve the lives of workers and farmers against the resistance of the bourgeoisie, politicians, and the conservative political culture. In response to the growth of the importance of the left, fascism became an important force, unimpeded by the state and the forces of order. These political developments mirrored developments on the world scene, which Canadians observed in dismay, as the prospect of war became more evident. Canadians were still traumatized by the horrors of World War I. They generally supported the appeasement strategy pursued by the British towards Nazi Germany. Canada's military was virtually non-existent. Entreaties from the military for preparedness and expenditures went nowhere with Liberal politicians, high-ranking public servants, and a large part of the Canadian public. Entreaties upon behalf of the military were considered to be part of the problem. They were war-mongering while military expenditures would only lead to an arms race, which had contributed to World War I, or so many thought. Even with these opinions, Canadians also held the contradictory view that they ultimately would come to the aid of Britain if aggressed, owing to their traditional British ties, a reality even French-Canadians recognized even though they might disapprove.

### Backing into war

Canada's Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, led a Liberal government that had been elected in 1935 on a platform of providing stability in light of the chaos wrought by

the depression. At the same time, the King government had let up a bit, in comparison to Bennett's Tory government, on the suppression of the left although it proposed no tangible actions to combat the depression and its effects. Canada's foreign policy was timid, calculated not to make any waves. This was hardly inspiring stuff, but Mackenzie King personally represented the contradictions that many Canadians displayed. For example, King was anti-semitic, which he displayed during the debate about Canada accepting Jewish refugees from Europe. Furthermore, King did not find Adolf Hitler's ideas to be all that offensive. Canada's Prime Minister had visited Hitler in 1937. He found Hitler to be a patriot, a simple man, peasant-like, not all that intelligent but one who presented a danger to no one. A year later, an American embassy official reported King's reminiscences of his meeting with Hitler:

He described Hitler as being, in his opinion, a sincere man. He even described him as being 'sweet' ... [Hitler] had the face, as [King] studied it, of a good man although he was clearly a dreamer, and gave the impression of having an artistic temperament.<sup>51</sup>

In 1938, the question of the admission of Jewish refugees fleeing nazi Germany might have been perceived by King to be a greater danger to Canada, owing to its supposed, nefarious effect on national unity, than did any plans of Hitler. King wrote at the time:

Hitler and Mussolini, while dictators, really sought to give the masses of the people some opportunity for enjoyment, taste of art and the like, and in this

way, have won them to their side... the dictatorship method may have been necessary to wrest this opportunity from the privileged interests that have previously monopolized it.<sup>52</sup>

A year before Canada declared war on Germany, King wrote about Hitler:

He might come to be thought as one of the saviours of the world... but was looking to force, to might, and to violence as means to achieving his ends, which were, I believe, at heart, the well-being of his fellow-men; not all fellow-men, but those of his own race.<sup>53</sup>

Does one need state the obvious about King's lack of judgement or prescience?

Moreover, these few citations demonstrate that King did recognize, even tacitly sympathized with Hitler's agenda, although the violent methods of Hitler did offend the Canadian Prime Minister. King planned another visit to Hitler in July, 1939.

Nevertheless, King had also warned Hitler directly that Canadians would come to the defence of the mother country if the British were the victims of German aggression, a contradictory position that did represent the position of many Canadians.<sup>54</sup> Canadian support for Britain, however, was not a blank cheque. King was not pleased with British guarantees to Poland and Romania about the security of these countries in the face of German aggression. According to King, Canadians did not want to be drawn into a European war about policies they did not understand nor approve. In the spring of 1939, when Britain was engaged in timid, perfunctory discussions with the U.S.S.R., with



whom an alliance might have been the only realistic way of preventing World War II, King did not approve of the initiative, and complained to British diplomats that these discussions would cause him difficulties among Catholics and anti-communist French-Canadians.<sup>55</sup>

King's position may have reflected the opinion of many, including those in Canada's Establishment, but for different reasons, those to the left of King were not terribly enthused either about the prospect of defending Britain. One example of these people was Lester Pearson, Liberal Prime Minister during the 1960s who, in the 1930s, was a Canadian diplomat working in London. Pearson described in his memoirs his opinion, an opinion shared by many centre-left progressives. Pearson was frustrated that the League of Nations had led to the German-Italian-Japanese Axis against the Communist International; that the French and British, in their duplicity, had refused to strike an alliance for collective security with the Soviet Union; that Hitler was given tacit approval to continue his aggressions. Pearson could see little reason for Canada to get involved with Anglo-French manoeuvres to protect themselves from Nazi Germany.<sup>56</sup> Men such as Pearson could also complain that in Great Britain, certain members of the Establishment supported fascism, or were fascists themselves. These people thought that it was preferable that Hitler, rather than Stalin, win the coming war. In France, the ruling class had reeled under the Popular Front government led by the socialist Léon Blum; perhaps, Hitler was a better option for the French ruling class than was Blum.<sup>57</sup>

To the left of the centre-left progressives such as Pearson, the CCF had a difficult time settling on its position about war in Europe, in part since the party was led by a long-time pacifist, Woodsworth. This confusion only cleared after war actually started, when Woodsworth was replaced as leader by Coldwell. Further to the left, even if communists were lucid and adamant about the dangers of fascism, they were still reluctant to see Canada prepare militarily, since they were also committed to disarmament and pacifism as means of preventing war. They, too, were wary of Canada entering the War.<sup>58</sup> In fact, all classes in Canada representing a broad spectrum of opinion, were still traumatized by World War I. All were most uneasy about the prospect of returning to war in Europe.

Even so, after the Munich fiasco, it now appeared clear to all that German intentions went well beyond uniting German-speakers and protecting German minorities outside Germany. The Munich agreement of September 30, 1938, signed by Germany, Italy, Britain, and France, allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, where 3,000,000 German-speakers lived. French Premier Daladier and British Prime Minister Chamberlain believed this agreement would guarantee peace but the following March, the Germans occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia. Which only demonstrated the pointlessness and bankruptcy of the policy of appeasing Nazi Germany.<sup>59</sup> Many Canadians became mobilized, as did the British, to the necessity of facing down the Nazis, by force, if necessary. Shortly after the September first invasion of Poland by Germany, Canada declared war on Germany since Britain had already done so but then, little more actually occurred. It was the period of the phoney war or *sitzkrieg*, during which it appeared that some members of the ruling classes of Europe and Great Britain were

trying to manoeuvre some sort of alliance with Hitler ,such that the nazis might turn their attention to attacking the Soviet Union, rather than western Europe. Unsuccessfully, however, for in April, 1940, Hitler attacked west, taking Denmark and Norway.

How did the Canadian government see the war after the first, German conquests in Western Europe? On April 30, 1940, O.D. Skelton wrote a document called *The Present Outlook*.<sup>60</sup> Skelton was King's under-secretary of Foreign Affairs, thus King's deputy minister, his most trusted advisor, one of the leading public servants in Ottawa. Skelton's document was remarkable for its lack of foresight. For example, it suggested that Japan represented no danger to the allies. It also linked as one force the two, bitter enemies: communism and fascism, as rival forms of totalitarianism, which now united. Skelton described the horrifying possibility of a victory of the associated Germans, Italians, and Soviets as if Canada were in an undeclared war with the Soviet Union, now allied with the nazis. Writing about U.S. neutrality, Skelton wrote that, in the recent past, probable victory for England and France against Germany meant that the American people rightly saw no need to fight against totalitarianism. With the possibility of a victory of a German-Italian-Russian coalition, American public opinion would now change. All this nonsense from one of the most powerful men in Ottawa, a man who had the ear and respect of King about Canada's war policy. In actual fact, Skelton probably believed the government's own propaganda about the nature of the war as being a war upon totalitarianism and, therefore, an undeclared war against the U.S.S.R.. The nature of anti-Soviet manipulations in Europe during the phoney war was clarified eventually when Swedish diplomatic archives revealed that a week before the German blitzkrieg was

launched upon the French, the French government and military had been preparing to send 50,000 troops to wage war against the U.S.S.R. in Finland, rather than preparing to defend France against Germany.<sup>61</sup>

After France and the Low Countries fell to the Germans in the Spring of 1940, the character of the war changed for Canada. A general panic among the public ensued. Canada was now the most important ally of the British, isolated and beleaguered in Europe. Canadians rushed to volunteer for the military. The King government insisted upon the voluntary aspect of Canada's contribution in military manpower. In October, 1939, Duplessis had sought re-election in Quebec by using the threat of conscription, against which Duplessis was to be the bulwark. Federal Liberals, led by Justice minister Ernest Lapointe, promised there would be no conscription, and pledged their seats in Quebec towards this commitment. Duplessis was defeated when Quebeckers voted for the provincial Liberals, led by Adélard Godbout.

What then was to be Canada's contribution to the defence of Britain? King prepared Canada for a war of limited liability in terms of its contribution to the war effort. The priorities were to be economic aid, which would help Canadian capitalists make profits, re-launch the economy, and create jobs; national unity, especially the unity of King's Liberal Party, powerful in Quebec; and defending Canada's borders and infrastructure but even more importantly, Canada's internal social order. In the immediate flush of pro-British enthusiasm after the start of proceedings, King had sent an army division of 20,000 troops to Britain. He soon regretted this decision when negotiations were held between Britain and Canada to train aviators in Canada as part of the British

Commonwealth Air Training Plan. During the acrimonious negotiations with Britain, King fought and scrapped about the costs of the plan, \$600 million per year, of which Canada was to assume \$350 million, in order to train 20,000 airmen per year for use by Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. King insisted that Canada's contribution to the plan would be its most effective contribution to the war effort. Emphasis on the plan also permitted King to envisage a reduced loss of military lives, which might also ease pressure for conscription.<sup>62</sup>

Many English-Canadians felt that King's proposed contribution to the war was too calculated, too timid. They wanted Canada to do more than help Britain financially, guard borders and infrastructure, and train aviators. They wanted Canadians to fight alongside Britain, this in spite of the phoney war early in WWII that precluded immediate, actual combat. In Ontario, the provincial Liberal government of Mitchell Hepburn said so in a resolution, adopted on January 18, 1940, which criticized King's lack of vigorous execution of the war. King used this occasion to call elections, which were coming due as King was now in the fifth year of government. King manoeuvred the leader of the Tories, Robert Manion, into approving the no-conscription pledge to Quebeckers. On March 26, King won an overwhelming majority, 181 seats out of 245 in the House of Commons. The Liberals were now free to conduct a war of limited liability according to their priorities. King's priorities for this war of limited liability illuminate the real reason why Canada went to war. Writes Jack Granatstein: "Canada went to war in September, 1939 because Britain had gone to war, and for no other reason. It was not a war for Poland; it was not a war against anti-semitism; it was not even a war against naziism,"<sup>63</sup> even

though the horrible atrocity of the nazi genocides against Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, and political opponents did provide *post facto* moral justification for World War II and Canada's participation therein.

### Defending Canada from What?

Canada entered the war with little military preparation, and with no external intelligence capacity. British intelligence provided the sole source of intelligence to Canada.<sup>64</sup> Internally, defending Canada throughout the war meant assigning a considerable number of troops, including conscripts, to guarding bridges, ports, dams, and the like. Guarding from what? Possible enemy attacks, but there were none other than a few penetrations of German submarines into the St. Lawrence, and one harmless, Japanese flurry near Esquimaux, B.C.. Guarding installations from sabotage? Yes, but in spite of the considerable discourse this possibility engendered in the early years of the war, in fact, there were never any incidents of sabotage throughout the war on Canada's soil or waters, or in its airspace. Canada was safe, far away from theatres of war. In fact, the obsession with protecting internal installations had mostly propaganda value, for the real aim behind the announced defence of Canada was protecting Canada's social order from labour agitators, as they were called, particularly those of the communist persuasion. This was a continuation of state policy from World War I and the inter-war period. In spite of the obvious peril presented by the significant fascist and pro-nazi element in Canada, the RCMP was fixated on the red peril, a fixation which led to the internment of the communists and sympathizers. Moreover, the Canadian state expended

enormous energy jailing people in Canada during World War II. There were 34,000 German, Italian, and enemy, civilian prisoners-of-war held in Canada, including prisoners that the British had taken but asked Canada to guard, given Canadian distance from the theatres of war. Britain had sent another 5,400 plus enemy civilians to Canada to be detained, including many of whom were Jewish or leftist refugees from rightist states in Europe.<sup>65</sup> Then, there were the enemy alien internees within Canada: 847 Germans, 632 Italians, and 782 Japanese, beyond the 22,000 plus Japanese evacuees from B.C.. At the same time, in spite of the considerable quantity of home-grown fascists in Canada, only 27 followers of Adrien Arcand, and Camillien Houde, the Conservative mayor of Montreal associated with Italian fascists, were interned while there were many more fascists floating about Canada unimpeded. Even getting the RCMP to move vis-à-vis the rightists operating in Canada required sustained effort from high-ranking public servants. When the RCMP did move against German and Italian operators, it did so with overkill, interning mostly innocent Germans, Italians and Japanese. Writing about the internment of the Italians, one writer says that the Canadian state behaved during World War II like a police state, rather than one governed by laws.<sup>66</sup> The Canadian state took to heart literally the words in the national anthem about standing on guard.

Nevertheless, government policy makers made much of the idea that most Germans and Italians in Canada were quite innocent. For one thing, they were generally not on the left of the political spectrum. Furthermore, there were 600,000 Germans in Canada, and they had political clout. German-Canadians were mostly assimilated and/or naturalized, while few were recent immigrants with direct knowledge of Hitler's regime.

There were about 3,000 members in three pro-nazi organizations: the Nationalist Socialist Workers Party, the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, and the *Deutscher Bund*.<sup>67</sup> Among the 110,000 Italians in Canada, most were considered to have joined fascist organizations for social purposes, and were judged to present no political or security risks. Of course, this was not the estimate held of the Japanese. If the policy towards Germans and Italians was perceived internally as liberal, the hundreds of pointless arrests of these people leave one wondering what would have been an illiberal policy. Would it have led to mass evacuations as it did in the case of the Japanese, against whom government planners displayed flagrant paranoia and racism?

At the same time as Canada backed into World War II, which it planned as a war of limited liability, development of the Defence of Canada Regulations (DOCR) advanced inexorably. In March, 1938, Cabinet authorized the creation of inter-departmental committees under the general supervision of the Department of National Defence to deal with censorship, defence co-ordination, and ship, aircraft and air raid precautions. Two other committees were also struck, one under the leadership of Secretary of State to deal with policy towards enemy aliens and their property, and a second, chaired by the deputy minister of Justice, to design emergency legislation that would be necessary in the event of war or insurrection. These committees were co-ordinated by the Department of National Defence, which had a mandate of producing a Government War Book to deal with the prospect of world war with Japan and Germany.



The policies adopted by the government in the wake of this committee work resulted in general arrangements for the arrest and detention of suspect enemy aliens, arrangements that were applied, as well, to Canadian communists. The RCMP was to have wide discretionary powers of arrest and detainment. A director of Internment Operations, appointed by the minister of National Defence, reported to the Secretary of State, and was to oversee the operation of internment camps. RCMP or local police officials would administer the registration of enemy aliens, and determine who were to be interned, while an appellate tribunal would hear appeals from the internees.<sup>68</sup> The DOCR provided the RCMP with considerable latitude about whom it could arrest and detain. Regulations 21 of the DOCR allowed the minister of Justice, upon advice of the police, to arrest and intern people deemed dangerous to the nation's security. The RCMP had successfully argued within the federal administration that:

...There is a serious danger that attempts to impede the war effort of the nation might be made by persons actuated not by sympathy with the enemy but by 'international' affiliations or by disinterested opposition to war... This power of internment, therefore, cannot safely be limited to persons of hostile origin or associations, as in the last war, or even to persons of hostile sympathies.<sup>69</sup>

In actual fact, 'international affiliations', and those who expressed 'disinterested opposition to war' meant communists and their sympathizers.

These broad powers of arrest and detention were contested by some public servants who, indeed, eventually did effect changes that limited these arbitrary powers. When these public servants seriously challenged the relevance of the communists' internment, they were able to end military detention procedures. On the other hand, however, some war developments also had the opposite effect of tightening the legal screws on the communists, such as the fall of France, when organizations were made illegal, including the Communist Party and associated, ethnic organizations.

#### The Substance of the DOCR

The RCMP and the Defence Department won the battle within the federal administration against certain elements of the Prime Minister's Office, External Affairs, Justice and even Finance, who were offended by the illiberal, arbitrary detention provisions of the DOCR. For the RCMP, the worst danger to Canada during World War II came from the possible subversion, sabotage, and agitation to labour peace that might be wrought by those on the left, despite the existence of healthy, fascist movements in Canada which, it might reasonably be surmised, could undermine Canada's war effort against the fascist countries. The head of the RCMP's intelligence section, Charles Rivett-Carnac, justified this *parti pris* on the part of the federal police by arguing that, unlike communism, the fascist countries left in place a semblance of capitalism. Furthermore, fascism was the reaction of the middle classes to the communist peril. Thus, Rivett-Carnac analyzed fascism in a way similar to how Trotsky had, even though it is doubtful that the RCMP were aware of their similarity of their analysis to that of Trotsky,

the advocate of permanent revolution. The irony here is too rich to be ignored: were the RCMP Trotskyites?

Under the DOCR, the Communist Party of Canada and its associated organizations remained illegal for the duration of World War II. Canada was the only allied power to maintain such a policy. In the U.S. and Great Britain, communism remained legal throughout the war. In fact, at times, the Canadian government was admonished by representatives of allied countries about Canadian policy. The policy continued even though the U.S.S.R. became our ally, and even though the main, indigenous resistance in German-occupied countries to the nazis came from communists, as in Greece, Yugoslavia, France, Norway, and even in Italy, after Mussolini's fall. Other than Canada, the only other countries who outlawed communism during World War II were those of the German-Italian-Japanese Axis, or those occupied by Axis powers. Obviously, repression of the Communist Party of Canada reflected a conscious policy of the Canadian state that existed not by war necessities, but in spite of them. The *raison d'être* of the repression, in fact, was based upon larger considerations of the Canadian state and its ruling classes.

Furthermore, the Canadian government showed a clear preference for internment as a *modus operandi*. A total of 2,423 Canadians were interned Germans, Italians, Japanese, as well as communists and a few fascists. Great Britain, with a population four times that of Canada, was situated only 30 kilometres from the nearest nazi front in France; still, only 1,800 British inhabitants were interned.<sup>70</sup> When he was criticized for

the harsh internment policies of Canada in comparison to the more liberal policies of Britain, Justice minister Ernest Lapointe grew indignant and racist. Great Britain only had one race; Canada had many races. Furthermore, Canada's soldiers had to submit to military law which was much more restrictive than the DOCR, therefore, it was fair to ask that civilians sacrifice some of their civil liberties in wartime.<sup>71</sup>

The War Measures Act of 1914 provided the legal basis for the DOCR. The World War I law had authorized the federal government to undertake "such acts and things, and [to] make from time to time such orders and regulations as [it] may, by reason of the existence of real or apprehended invasion or insurrection, deem necessary or advisable for the security, defence, peace, order, and welfare of Canada."<sup>72</sup> The public servants preparing the Government War Book judged that this provided sufficient legal precedent for the DOCR. As well, public servants referred to the examples of measures adopted in Great Britain. Examples of measures authorized by the War Measures Act included censorship and control of publications, writings, maps, photographs, plans, communications and means of communications; powers to arrest, detain, exclude, and deport people; and the use and control of property. Cabinet alone would determine if there was a state of war or insurrection, as well as the duration of this state. The DOCR were adopted a week before Canada's declaration of war against Germany on September 10, 1939. The regulations were sweeping. As just one example, the government could name any business or mine as essential for supplying the war effort. It then was illegal to loiter around such a business, a regulation which was initially interpreted in Ontario courts to mean that strike pickets outside the business were illegal. Owing to protests

from organized labour, this regulation was amended so as to exclude from the loitering provisions workers involved in a legal strike.

The most relevant articles with respect to the imprisonment and internment of communists were regulations 21, 22, and 39. Regulation 21 permitted the government to intern whomsoever might present a danger to the state or the public, or who might threaten the prosecution of the war. Regulation 22 authorized the creation of advisory committees to hear appeals from internees about the reasons for their internment, and to advise the minister of Justice to release internees or continue internment. Nevertheless, the Minister of Justice could then accept or ignore their advice. Regulation 39 prohibited anyone to behave in such a manner, or to make statements:

intended or likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty, or to interfere with the success of His Majesty's forces... to prejudice the recruiting, training, discipline, or administration of any of His Majesty's forces... to be prejudicial to the safety of the state, or the efficient prosecution of the war.<sup>73</sup>

Regulation 39A, adopted in the fall of 1939 after the initial promulgation of the DOCR, prohibited printing, publication, distribution, and even possession of documents that contravened Regulation 39. Regulation 39C, adopted on June 6, 1940, rendered illegal three German and six Italian, pro-fascist organizations; two organizations that were overtly fascist, the National Unity Party, led by Adrien Arcand, and the Canadian Union of Fascists; and eleven communist or sympathizing organizations. Additions were also

made to this list. One year later, the list of prohibited organizations was expanded to include the pro-communist Finnish Society of Canada, five left-wing publishing houses, and the religious group, Jehovah's Witnesses, to make a total of thirty organizations in which membership alone was an illegal act, an extraordinary breach of British justice. With respect to the Jehovah's Witnesses, it took years to establish that the Witnesses had a legal right to preach door-to-door in Canada. Witnesses provided a reliable scapegoat for the right in Quebec, almost till the end of Duplessis' rule during the late 1950s. Even today, the mere mention of this religion engenders irrational hostility among some. Above all, prohibition of the Jehovah's Witnesses certainly had nothing to do with the successful prosecution of World War II. It was a perfect example of how governments can misuse arbitrary detention to exclude virtually any activity that political expedience might indicate.

The case of the banned organization, Technocracy Inc., is not as sad. In fact, it's quite bizarre, even farcical, but also most revealing. The RCMP's attention was drawn to this group when the police discovered their publication, *Eastern Technocrat*, in November, 1939. Technocracy Inc. was an American group of technophiles who wanted to spread the use of engineering, and the development of an economy based upon massive consumption of energy.<sup>74</sup> If these guys were indeed responsible for the nature of our current economy, they certainly were influential and successful. Technocracy Inc.'s motto was: "Be an engineer — a social engineer — a technocrat". Engineering was promoted as providing solutions to all manner of social or economic problem. Once again, if these guys were responsible for the prevalence of social engineering in

contemporary society, then they certainly were effective. The group may have had some link to Social Credit, a legitimate though certainly not left-wing mode of thought popular in the 1930s and 1940s. Social Crediters were known for their ‘funny-money’ ideas, and there may have been some links with certain personalities in Social Credit. The Technocracy case was a good example of the RCMP acting as ‘dumb cops’, but what of the Justice Department lawyers and the minister of Justice who approved the prohibition? The case reveals much about the intellectual level and the paranoia of the federal police, and those who supervised them.

Here is a summary of important dates in the development and evolution of the DOCR.

- On March 14, 1938, PC 531<sup>75</sup> authorizes a secret inter-departmental committee within the federal Public Service to study emergency measures that might be necessary in times of war or insurrection.
- In September, 1938, this committee submits a draft report.
- During the summer of 1939, a revised committee report and the Government War Book are submitted to Cabinet.
- On September 1, 1939, PC 2481 promulgates regulations about censorship.

- On September 3, 1939, by PC 2481, the government adopts the DOCR seven days before Canada enters the war.
- On May 31, 1940, PC 2322 insists on use of the term ‘prisoner-of-war’ rather than ‘internee’, ‘detainee’, ‘prisoner’, or any other term, the better to argue more readily that repressive measures are a necessary, legitimate part of wartime.
- On June 6, 1940, PC 2363 establishes regulation 39C, by which communist organizations are rendered illegal. This same order expands the list of police officers who can apply the DOCR to include inspectors and their superiors within the RCMP and provincial police forces in Quebec and Ontario, as well as police chiefs in municipalities with a population greater than 10,000.
- On June 20, 1940, PC2682 adds Technocracy Inc. to the list of outlawed organizations. On the same day, PC 2667 directs the Custodian of Enemy Property, reporting to the Secretary of State, to seize the properties of banned organizations.
- On August 30, 1940, the list of police officers who can apply the DOCR is enlarged, once again, to include all members of the RCMP and provincial police forces in Quebec and Ontario, as well as any chief of municipal police; practically speaking, any police officer in Canada.



- On October 29, 1940, PC 6124 prohibits internees or any other members of banned organizations from occupying elected office in Canada, regardless of the level of government. This applies to several of the internees, and to other members of the Communist Party who hold elected office in Canada. It follows similar action in Manitoba with respect to elected officials in the province; it means that duly-elected officials can be stripped of their functions.
- On February 7, 1941, PC 892 specifies that the prohibition against loitering near a business defined as an essential service does not apply to legal strikers.
- On June 25, 1941, with PC 4651, the government publishes a consolidated version of the DOCR. It also adds the Finnish Society of Canada, five leftist printing houses, and Jehovah's Witnesses to the list of banned organizations.
- On April 14, 1942, PC3016 specifies that participation in a legal strike does not constitute a reason for internment, this in response to the factually-correct charge that several internees were actually interned for union activities during labour disruptions.

The DOCR were repressive measures: censorship of the press; arrest and detention without just cause or explanation of motive; prohibition of political and religious expression; outlawing organizations, making people guilty by association. It is hardly surprising that these clear violations of legal principles would be accompanied by methods of administration that were also repressive. Basic legal protections were set

aside in the application of the DOCR. It usually was impossible to learn the precise reasons for internment. The stock phrase used to explain internment under Regulation 21 referred to 39C; it was “representations have been made to the effect that you are a member of the Communist Party of Canada, a subversive organization, and are, therefore, disloyal to Canada”. An Ontario judge, in the case of internee Pat Sullivan, ruled that *habeas corpus*, by which a person detaining someone must explain without delay the reasons for the detentions to the detainee and to a judge, was held to be of no effect. The curious reason given was that the final decision upon the detention accrued to the minister of Justice, and not to the person doing the actual detaining. Regulation 22 authorized advisory committees to serve as appeal mechanisms for internees in response to complaints from lawyers and Parliamentarians. Nevertheless, there were too few of these committees, who met too infrequently. Their work was done in secret. The RCMP would reveal the evidence supporting internment to presiding judges, but not to internees nor their lawyers. The hearings deteriorated to discussions of the politics of the internees, or to searching for information about the internees’ associates. Finally, even were the committees to rule in favour of the release of the internee, the minister of Justice was not required to accept the recommendation, nor explain his reasons. Regulation 39C, making organizations illegal contrary to the principle that association cannot be a reason for guilt, meant that the burden of proof fell to the internees rather than the state. For example, that internees were members of the Party during 1936, 1937, or 1938, when the Party was indeed legal meant nothing; nor did claims to the effect that the internees were not now, nor had ever been a member of the Party. Regulations 39C and 21 were read together; for instance, using article 21, police might say that the internee presented a security danger.

When asked how, they would resort to 39C, saying he or she was a member of the Party, with no specific actions given. Charging a person with violations against regulation 39 and 39A often proved to be difficult cases to prosecute in regular courts, since serious evidence had to be presented about a person's actions. Many charges against communists using Regulation 39 and 39A failed, especially before juries. No matter... in some cases, a person not proven guilty of violating Regulations 39 or 39A would simply be charged using Regulations 21 and 39C, which required no trial nor formal charges. In several cases, persons found not guilty according to Regulation 39 or 39A were arrested by the RCMP immediately after exiting the courthouse after the court's decision, then interned. Finally, organizations whose properties had been seized using 39C had no option for regaining property, unless there would have been a specific Cabinet order removing the organization from the list of banned organizations. Once on that list, in fact, banned organizations were only once again made legal after the war, by which time, property became even more difficult to regain.

The controversial nature of the DOCR, including contestation by elements of the federal administration, meant that there were minor amendments made during the life of the DOCR, although the basic thrust still remained. In 1940, 1941, and 1942, Parliamentary committees dealt with the DOCR. The 1940 committee, in particular, had some powerful members: a progressive Liberal from Montreal, Brooke Claxton; a young Tory, John Diefenbaker; and M. J. Coldwell, leader of the CCF. Changes did result, such as requiring the minister of Justice to report to Parliament when he did not follow the advice of an advisory committee to release an internee. As well, the minister now had to

report once a month to the House of Commons when it was in session about the numbers of detainees and the status of their appeals. The advisory committees were expanded from one, sometimes unknown official, to include three judges, well-known and established in the community. Eventually, responding to pressure from organized labour, the prohibition against loitering outside essential services specifically excluded legal picketing, while participation in a legal strike was also eventually excluded as a reason to be interned. Non-communist, organized labour and the CCF argued, even though they insisted upon their essential differences with communists, that it was important that internees had a useful appeal procedure.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, the spirit and most of the letter of the DOCR remained unchanged throughout the war. Their application was softened, however, as the character of the war changed, and communists and those of similar opinion on the question of civil rights successfully argued that the internment policy was no longer tenable, if it had ever been.

#### Administration of the DOCR

Administering the DOCR proved to be a boon to the careers of RCMP men. At the start of World War II, the Intelligence Section of the RCMP was a six-man operation at headquarters, attached to the Criminal Investigation Branch. By 1943, there were now 98 in the headquarters operation of the Intelligence Section, with important increases in the field: twenty more men working in Toronto, nineteen in Montreal and nine in Vancouver.<sup>77</sup> The effect of World War II on the overall size of the RCMP was also impressive. The RCMP force was immediately increased by 700 at the start of the war.

On June 6, 1940, the list of police officers who could enforce the DOCR was expanded to include all RCMP officers from the rank of inspector and up, and officers of similar rank in the provincial police forces in Quebec and Ontario, as well as chiefs of police in municipalities with populations of more than 10,000. There were still not enough police. On June 24, 1940, RCMP Commissioner Wood wrote Ernest Lapointe to complain that he could no longer meet demand, especially in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Wood went so far as to express concern for the health of his men, so busy and over-extended were they. So, on August 30, 1940, authority to administer the DOCR was extended once again to include almost all police officers in Canada, whether at federal, provincial, or municipal levels.<sup>78</sup>

One of the products of the increased RCMP workload were the monthly security bulletins issued by the Intelligence Section to senior federal officials and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Right from the beginning, some of the recipients of the bulletins were wary of the value of the reports. Jack Pickersgill, second-in-command in the PMO, analyzed the bulletin of October 30, 1939. His comments reveal some of the deficiencies in the RCMP analysis; they bear summarizing:

- no distinctions between fact and hearsay;
- no distinctions between subversive doctrine, and legitimate social and political criticism;
- obsession with communists, to the exclusion of information about nazis or fascists;
- no evidence of sabotage or espionage directed against Canada;

- no co-ordination with military intelligence, censorship officials, immigration officials, or External Affairs;
- police spying on law-abiding Canadians, thus making the police political censors;
- lack of capacity and training for real intelligence work directed against the real enemy.

Also wrote Pickersgill:

It is more likely that there are secret, German agents in the country. From a casual reading of these 'Intelligence Bulletins', one would scarcely realize that Canada was at war with Germany; there is not the slightest hint that anything is being done in the way of intelligent and well-directed anti-espionage work.<sup>79</sup>

Pickersgill suggested that an intelligence branch be created within Justice, to whom the RCMP would report, in order to co-ordinate government intelligence efforts.

Nonetheless, King, Lapointe, and the Justice Department continued to support the work of the RCMP in spite of criticism both internal and external to the government. When the tide turned against the government's policies of repression of the left, the RCMP ceased the widespread distribution of security bulletins.

One shouldn't expect just administration of a law that is itself unjust. The violations of normal, legal protections under the DOCR might also accrue to another element,

however, which explains why internees were never explained the full nature of charges against them. Some information obtained by the RCMP was retrieved secretly from informers within the Communist Party, sources that had to be protected were they to continue to be useful. There is a series of letters that establishes the policy of the RCMP and government about this secret information.<sup>80</sup> In the first of these letters, the Justice deputy minister wrote to the RCMP:

If you have evidence which has been obtained through the medium of a police secret agent, the identity of whom it would be extremely undesirable to disclose, then I suggest that you are not compelled to, and should not produce such evidence, even by withholding it you may have little in the way of other evidence to support the order for internment. The recommendation of the tribunal is only a recommendation and not a judgement, and the release of the appellant after the finding of the tribunal is a matter which is in the absolute discretion of the Minister of Justice, and he may, with or without assigning any reason, order the further internment or the release of the appellant. In cases where you do not disclose confidential information to the tribunal, you should notify the Department so that all the facts may be brought before the Minister when called upon to act in the matter.

When the RCMP asked if the instructions about secret information were to apply to enemy subjects, as well as to British subjects, Lapointe responded in the affirmative, adding that he would consult with the RCMP before freeing internees. At least, some of

the explanation for the functioning of the DOCR, therefore, lies in the government's protection of its espionage network among communists. In fact, during the 1920s, an RCMP Staff-Sergeant, John Leopold, had become a highly placed informer within the Communist Party. Leopold, who used the pseudonym 'Jack Esselwein', had provided evidence in 1931 that permitted the government to prosecute Tim Buck and seven of his leading colleagues in the Party. During World War II, we know of at least one other RCMP informer within the Party, although there probably were more. A certain 'Koyich' was active in Alberta, a fact uncovered by Patrick Lenihan, a Calgarian, and Ben Swankey, from Edmonton, both of whom were interned in Hull.<sup>81</sup>

#### Opposition within the Federal Administration to the DOCR

As already suggested, the provisions for arbitrary detention were controversial within the federal Public Service. The opinions of the RCMP and Defence, and ultimately King and Lapointe, were countered by those of External Affairs officials, doubly important since King was directly responsible for External Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office, and even by some senior officials within Justice and Finance. In June, 1938, officials in Justice, including deputy minister Plaxton, argued to Lapointe against the arbitrary detention provisions. Their argument was unsuccessful. The Justice officials had compared arbitrary detention to a totalitarian practice in Germany and Italy known as preventive detention, whereby critics of the government were arrested. Plaxton called the arbitrary detention provisions of the DOCR "...violently repugnant to the fundamental constitutional rights of a British subject."<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the Criminal Code already



outlawed sedition, and naturalization certificates for Europeans easily could be revoked, if necessary.

After the DOCR was adopted in September of 1939, a sub-committee chaired by External Affairs was made responsible for application of the regulations to fascists and nazi sympathizers. Norman Robertson, assistant under-secretary was responsible for this sub-committee, and was succeeded in this role by Lester Pearson when Robertson was named to replace the deceased O. D. Skelton as under-secretary of External Affairs. Justice chaired a sub-committee dealing with the Jehovah's Witnesses and communists. Robertson and Pearson were great reformers, and were typical of the men who worked in External Affairs during this era. The Department had done much to increase the autonomy of Canada within the British Commonwealth, indeed, even to create and define the Commonwealth. External Affairs officials enjoyed considerable, public prestige. Nevertheless, their political boss, Mackenzie King usually followed the advice of his Quebec lieutenant, Ernest Lapointe, minister of Justice, when differences of opinion emerged. These differences emerged right from the beginning. In July, 1939, the sub-committee studying emergency legislation requirements reported to the government about the fundamental conflict between External Affairs and the Justice Department.

It is felt by some members of the committee that persons of hostile internationalist affiliation may attempt to impede the war effort of the nation by the dissemination of news or propaganda or by other means, and that it is, therefore, necessary to provide for a means of taking swift and effective

action against such persons, whether they be British subject or aliens. Other members feel that it is an unnecessary interference with the liberty of the subject.<sup>83</sup>

Just before the war, the RCMP proposed a list of 641 names of possible internees, all leftists, ninety percent of which were Europeans. Robertson was beside himself. Where were the names of the fascists? The RCMP had no such list. Robertson consulted writings by Fred Rose, then leader of the young communists in Quebec, who had researched and written about the subject. Eventually, Robertson was able to produce a list of 325 nazi sympathizers among German-Canadians.<sup>84</sup> In the fall of 1939, Lapointe proposed regulation 39A to prohibit publication and distribution of documents which might hinder the prosecution of the war or the security of the state. John Read, legal counsel for External Affairs, summarized the unsuccessful opposition of External Affairs to Lapointe's proposal. "The reasons advanced for these drastic regulations presumably are that the communist movement is taking part in an international campaign under the control of Moscow against the British Empire." If this were true, existing laws against sedition would suffice. Read added further that the proposed regulation was well conceived if its aim was to support a nazi or fascist revolution in Canada. Read's document was an impassioned plea in favour of democracy.

Already, free discussion in Canada is blanketed and discouraged by censorship, by colonialism, by the docility of our people... We are called upon by this Order-in-Council to submit to the police methods of totalitarian

states. Instead of a bill of rights, we have a string of ‘verbotens’. In fighting for the liberty of Poles and Czechs, we are to sacrifice the liberty of Canadians. After revising section 98 and in most cases, condemning the Padlock Law, we are to enact far more sweeping restrictions.<sup>85</sup>

After the German invasion of the U.S.S.R. in June ,1941, the RCMP’s anti-communism wore out its welcome in the Prime Minister’s Office. In 1942, King’s Principal Secretary, W. J. Turnbull, wrote to his boss complaining about the RCMP’s red-hunting.

“Apparently, there are in the... police, some men like the notorious [staff] Sergeant [John] Leopold, whose jobs seem to depend on continuing to uncover Bolshevik plots... I would think that a change of policy might well be indicated to them [the police], with Russia a valiant ally.”<sup>86</sup>

#### Sources of Anti-communism

Support, therefore, for the DOCR within the federal administration was not unanimous. The forces countering the DOCR were significant: the Prime Minister’s Office; External Affairs; sometimes even senior officials in the Justice Department and in the Department of Finance were offended by the breaches in traditions of British law contained in the DOCR. They were ranged against Defence and the RCMP, King and Lapointe, as well as the federal Department of Munitions and Supply, of which the minister was C. D. Howe. The RCMP’s clumsiness in administering the DOCR made

many senior officials wary, so that the federal police's sway eventually was diminished. There was another element to the work of RCMP, however, which continued to grow throughout the war: fingerprinting of ordinary Canadians, as part of wartime security screening. Once considered odious by most Canadians and applicable only to the criminal element, fingerprinting spread to include one in five Canadians during the war. The million Canadians who served in the military, as well as merchant seamen and certain public servants were fingerprinted by the military or by the RCMP. Moreover, by 1945, another million Canadians who worked in the 500 or so companies that had government procurement contracts, by order of Howe's Department of Munitions and Supply, and in public utilities or oil refineries and even distilleries, had been subjected to fingerprinting, thus, to control by the RCMP. Fingerprints of about 2.3 million civilians and military people were collected from Canada's 1941 population of only 11.5 million. According to one observer of Canada's security system:

The Second World War security-screening system was meticulously organized, extensive, and explicitly ideological. Its targets were several, but communists remained its primary focus. In other words, its most important purpose was overtly political, to monitor and control left-wing radicals.<sup>87</sup>

This presents additional perspective to understanding the DOCR and the obsession that seemed to guide some officials of the state towards repression of the left, regardless of war requirements. The DOCR was part of a system with several parts which responded to the needs of the ruling classes in Canada: the English-Canadian bourgeoisie and the

French-Canadian petty-bourgeoisie. To begin with the needs of the bourgeoisie, recall that one of the priorities of King when organizing Canada's war of limited liability was economic aid to Great Britain. This meant supply contracts, which would mean profits for Canadian companies and more jobs for under-employed Canadian workers.

Unfortunately, British officials and companies were reluctant to send work to Canada.

Changing this situation fell to C. D. Howe. Howe went to Britain to complain about the situation. He returned with an armful of contracts, and a process for obtaining others.

Howe then engaged a brewer, E. P. Taylor, to undertake a similar mission in the U.S.<sup>88</sup>

Howe sat in one of the ablest Cabinets ever assembled in Canadian political history, any of whose members might have done the job as prime minister. A U.S. expatriate, Howe was an engineer who made his fortune building grain elevators in Canada. The depression was bad for business, so he ran successfully for election as a Liberal in Port Arthur, Ontario, part of present-day Thunder Bay. Howe was King's link with the business community, within which Howe was much admired. Howe's influence was ubiquitous during World War II; he was nicknamed 'Minister of Everything'. With the help of Tory businessmen who moved to Ottawa for the duration of the war, he successfully organized economic production in Canada. In 1944, he was named Minister of Reconstruction. Howe then set about re-converting the Canadian economy to a private enterprise system organized for the peacetime needs of the post-war period.

The scope of the economic achievement of Canadians during World War II was breathtaking. It left Canada a prosperous country at the end of the war, even though many were still jittery that the economic gloom of the 1930s might return. As with World War

I, World War II created enormous returns for Canadian capitalists. Capital, represented by the Canadian Manufacturers' Association (CMA) and other business groups, had successfully resisted the government at the start of the war when it tried to limit profits for war contracts to five percent of their total value. In 1941, a delegation from the CMA, meeting with Cabinet, took the occasion of a discussion about the DOCR to demand that industrial unionism *à la* CIO be prohibited as being little else in wartime than sabotage and subversion, while its leaders should be imprisoned. Even the King government could not swallow these demands.<sup>89</sup> Besides, more subtle forms of control of labour were being employed. In 1941, Quebec's Catholic unions struck an important aluminium smelter in Arvida, in the Saguenay region. Howe demanded soldiers to crush the strike as being an act of sabotage. Army generals, who insisted upon following the law, resisted Howe's demands. Howe threatened to resign from Cabinet unless his colleagues helped him deal with the dangers of sabotage by workers, as Howe perceived them. While King managed to control Howe in his most right-wing extremes, it is also true that many of the Hull internees were arrested during difficult collective bargaining with employers, who pressured federal authorities using the medium of Howe's influence. This was the case of Pat Sullivan, Dave Sinclair, and Jack Chapman of the Canadian Seamen's Union, which had struck on the Great Lakes just before the internment; of Fred Collins, who had led a strike by furniture workers in Stratford, Ontario; of James Murphy, from the technicians' union of the CBC; of Charles Murray, from a fishermen's union in Nova Scotia; of Clarence Jackson, of the United Electrical Workers in Hamilton; of Bruce Magnuson, from a bushworkers' union in Northern Ontario; of Orton Wade, who was in the process of negotiating a contract for meat packers in Winnipeg when he was interned.

In fact, harassment of labour leaders was a central part of the King government's labour policy at the start of World War II. Wages were controlled and tied to levels last seen in the 1920s. (While profits exploded, the government also did control prices to limit wartime inflation somewhat over the course of the war.) The government operated on a premise that labour unrest owed to labour agitators, especially communists, and was not based upon workers' real needs or motivations. Thus, the DOCR and the repression of communists served as an element of useful propaganda, but were also key in limiting labour militancy. Other parts of the strategy included a statement of principles by which employers were encouraged to bargain in good faith, while workers were to exercise restraint in their demands; recourse to the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, which made government conciliation obligatory in essential war industries, the latter being broadly-defined; and use of coercion to prevent strikes by tightening legal controls on unions. When confronted with the initial blush of worker militancy as workers sensed their disproportionate contribution to the war effort when compared to that of capitalists, the government tried to clamp down ever more precisely. By 1942, however, the lid was off as worker militancy mushroomed, even beyond the ken and control of unions, so that the King government eventually had to change its labour policy.<sup>90</sup>

The needs of the bourgeoisie, therefore, led to the government's labour policy early in the war. Labour, however, was not monolithic. In English Canada, there were labour leaders who were Liberals, some who were CCFers, in addition to those who were communist. High-handed, anti-labour actions by the Ontario Liberal government of

Mitchell Hepburn, backed by complicitous courts who had recourse to the DOCR, united labour in its opposition to the Ontario government. About the question of whether the DOCR should target communists, however, the non-communist unions were more compliant with the government. They did not contest the fundamental need for the DOCR, as much as that application of the regulations should provide fair opportunity to appeal decisions. In fact, 'legitimate' unionists sometimes even profited from the opportunity presented by the DOCR and the accompanying propaganda environment to remove communist competitors within organized labour ranks.<sup>91</sup>

Supporting the general, anti-communist fixation of the DOCR were other conservative elements that pushed hard on the government to repress communists. In addition to the provincial Liberals in Ontario, there were also the federal Tories and the Social Credit Premier of Alberta, William Aberhart. The Civic Election Committee, the political arm of the business community in Winnipeg, successfully argued that communists not be allowed to hold public office in Manitoba, a suggestion that the federal government gratefully adopted for the whole country.<sup>92</sup> The Royal Canadian Legion showed its continuing capacity to represent right-wing opinion, regardless of the actual politics of its military veteran membership. The Legion even presented to the authorities a list of people it judged to be communists. The Legion also argued that all foreigners in Canada from enemy countries should be interned, although it did not specify just how one half of the country was to intern the other half, all the while fighting a war.<sup>93</sup> Ukrainian communists and sympathisers were interned, partly owing to pressure from Ukrainian nationalists in the Ukrainian National Federation, the Ukrainian War Veterans'



Association, the Ukrainian National Youth Federation, and the para-military, right-wing group, the United Hetmen Organization.<sup>94</sup> In fact, throughout the war, the Ukrainian community was rent with division between leftists and nationalists, a division which the government tried to control in order to maintain national unity for the war effort.

Anti-communist propaganda and support for the DOCR had a different class basis in French Canada. In English Canada, the government was egged on by the bourgeoisie, supported by the traditionalist elements of the conservative political culture. In French Canada, the class basis for repression of the left was the petty-bourgeoisie, which included some fascistic elements. This was the petty-bourgeoisie that had always defined the national inspirations of French-Canadians, particularly those in Quebec. Clergy, small businessmen, professional men — doctors, lawyers, notaries, journalists, academics — comprised the petty-bourgeoisie, which made its living outside the capital-labour relationship between buyers and sellers of labour, bourgeois and workers. The petty-bourgeois were organized in the *Ordre de Jacques-Cartier*, which successfully ensured that any letup in the repression of the left by the federal government would run into public opinion campaigns in Quebec which the *Ordre* organized. One local example from the local press: early in the war, an October 17, 1939 editorial in the Ottawa-Hull newspaper, *Le Droit*, argued in favour of outlawing communism, well before the Communist Party was formally outlawed in June, 1940.<sup>95</sup> The editorial argued that, since the King government removed Section 98 from the Criminal Code,

it left the field open to those who exploit the misery of the people, who use the basest instincts, who incite envy and hatred among social classes, who attack the rights of property, and family, morality, and religious feeling by using brutal force against the order established by God.

The government should, therefore, take advantage of the current situation to outlaw the Communist Party. King and Lapointe would be waging war on behalf of Christianity and civilization in defence of Canada, against the current collusion between nazism and bolshevism. *Le Droit* argued that:

Using the authority of the War Measures Act, the federal government should imitate the actions of France, which has dissolved the Communist Party and interned communist parliamentarians.

This editorial neatly summarized the opinion of those in the *Ordre*, an opinion that was reflected throughout French Canada in organized, public opinion campaigns. As far back as December, 1937, *L'Émerillon*, the secret publication of the *Ordre*, had written that “the worst enemy of the Church and of French Canada was communism”, but communism very broadly defined to mean:

...anything that permits the spread of the pagan spirit. Sometimes, it's the movies, the radio, the press, entertainment; at other times, it's the fashion for new political systems, which are the shame of current governments...<sup>96</sup>

In March/April, 1939, *L'Émerillon* congratulated federal MPs in the *Ordre* who had fought successfully against immigration of German, Jewish refugees.<sup>97</sup> In November 1939, following a convention in October (held about the time of the editorial from *Le Droit* quoted above), the *Ordre* embarked on a campaign to get communism outlawed, this at a time when other Canadians were frustrated and confused by the Hitler-Stalin pact. All members of the *Ordre* were instructed to take part in the anti-communist campaign.<sup>98</sup> There are other examples of anti-communist propaganda published in *L'Émerillon*; here are only a few examples from the war years.

- In December, 1939, a *Le Droit* editorial is re-printed, arguing that defeating Hitler will be useless as he'll only be replaced by the communists;
- In May/June, 1940, an article argues that the U.S.S.R. orchestrated the war;
- In October, 1942, even as the Hull internees are being finally freed, an article argues in favour of continuing to outlaw communism, and against collaborating with the U.S.S.R.;
- In June/July, 1943, as the U.S.S.R. is finally defeating Germany, the entire issue is devoted to the communist peril;

- In December, 1943, a particularly hateful and paranoid editorial by Georges Pelletier of *Le Devoir* is reprinted; its title: “When the *Anglais* only speak Russian... French-Canadians will only be speaking English.”

### The Vichy Tangent

During World War II, the *Ordre* was a pillar of corporatism, anti-semitism, anti-freemasonry, and anti-communism. The *Ordre* also openly supported the Vichy government in France and its national revolution. Much of the French-Canadian petty-bourgeoisie, at least those influenced and oriented by the *Ordre* and its member organizations, in fact, was *pétainiste*.<sup>99</sup> Support for the Vichy government within the French-Canadian petty-bourgeoisie might appear to be an issue tangential to the question of the internment in Hull. The Vichy story, however, reveals much about the relationship between the King government and the French-Canadian ruling class. Along with demands from the English-Canadian bourgeoisie, it also explains the demands and support for repression of the left, including those communists and labour leaders who were interned in Hull.

Soon after the fall of France in the Spring of 1940, rightist collaborators in France established a civilian government to rule the southern France, while the Germany military occupied northern France. The rightists’ capital was at Vichy. The president of the government at Vichy was general Philippe Pétain, hero of the French army during World War I, while Pierre Laval, Admiral François Darlan, then Laval once again served as the

Vichy prime ministers. At the same time, however, Charles de Gaulle, a junior tank commander in the French army was promoted by the British as leader of the Free French Forces, the small remnant of the French army that had survived the German onslaught to escape from Dunkirk when France fell. De Gaulle was promoted as head of the French government-in-exile, a policy the British applied, as well, to other European countries such as Poland. After the fall of France, French communists organized resistance to the nazis and the Vichy regime in spite of the Hitler-Stalin pact, and the bizarre and confusing propaganda that issued from the Communist International in Moscow after the pact. De Gaulle was able to establish salutary links with the communist resistance in France. His stature grew among the allies, especially in the English-speaking world, from which official recognition and support were both tangible and immediate.

In Canada, however, support for de Gaulle's cause from the federal government, to say the least, was weak, if not entirely absent. In fact, the Canadian government was subjected to a persistent, pro-Vichy campaign. From the fall of France onwards, the typical, anti-communist propaganda in the French-Canadian press which had appeared with increasing frequency before and during World War II was now accompanied by pro-Vichy propaganda, directly supported by Vichy diplomats stationed in French Canada. Indeed, Vichy was a source of inspiration to the right in French Canada. Not only was the federal Liberal government aware of the campaign and its provenance; it more or less acquiesced. There are many examples of this pro-Vichy stance from the Canadian government. On November 10, 1941, the federal government's Information Service addressed a memorandum to Ernest Lapointe about the extent of pro-Vichy propaganda

in the French-language press. The aim of the Information Service's intervention was to obtain the expulsion of the Vichy consuls active in the propaganda campaign.<sup>100</sup>

Lapointe was quite ill, indeed dying, which occurred just two weeks later. No action was taken upon the request to expel Vichy representatives. In March, 1942, in the middle of the plebiscite campaign about conscription, the Information Service made known the contents of a report from French de Gaulle supporters living in Ottawa about the anti-conscription campaign in French Canada, which combined anti-communist and anglophobic propaganda to inspire the 'no' side in the plebiscite campaign. The latter was organized and led by André Laurendeau, an active, leading member of the *Ordre de Jacques-Cartier*. According to the Gaullists' report, Ricard, the Vichy consul in Quebec City, was deeply involved with the anti-conscription campaign. The group which opposed conscription called itself the *Ligue pour la défense du Canada*. Part of the *Ligue's* argument was that Canada itself was in danger in World War II. This should be Canada's priority, not sending troops from an over-extended colony for the defence of the mother-country. Gaullists complained that "Quebec was ripe for nazi propaganda", owing to the anti-conscription campaign of the *Ligue*. Furthermore, the attitude of the *Ligue* was also dangerous since:

The absurdity of the idea that Canada can be defended exclusively on Canadian soil is apparent at first sight and certainly of German origin. All military critics agree that a war like this one can be won only by taking the offensive... All the armies and all the fleets in the new world combined would protect the immense length of our coasts in such a weak way, that an

enemy concentration on one or more points would not fail to penetrate it. A certain manner of presenting Canada as directly and urgently in danger overreaches the aim, excites the minds and plays into the hand of anti-conscriptionists.<sup>101</sup>

In fact, Vichy actually provided money to the *Ligue* for its anti-conscription campaign through its consul at Montreal, facts uncovered by the RCMP.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, the King government maintained formal relations with Vichy until November, 1942, coincidentally, when the Hull internees were all finally released. Up to this time, the King government was clearly anti-gaullist. There are several examples of this stance.<sup>103</sup> In the fall of 1940, J. L. Ralston, Minister of Defence, brought to the attention of Lapointe an analysis of pro-Vichy propaganda in Quebec, written by a French-Canadian officer working in military intelligence. The officer recommended the creation of a committee of French-Canadians who would promote the Gaullist cause in Canada, an idea which Lapointe rejected, a position which received the specific approval of King. Still in the Fall of 1940, French citizens living in Quebec City wanted to form a Canadian, Gaullist group, as already existed in the U.S., called *France Forever/France quand même*. Reforming journalist Jean-Charles Harvey, whom we have already encountered in chapter 1, was a member of the American group, and he promoted its views in his own writings.<sup>104</sup> A Quebec City notary, Victor Morin, was engaged to determine if Lapointe would permit formation of the group, despite the continuing diplomatic relations of the Canadian government with Vichy. Lapointe responded that "it was not a good idea to encourage any movement that would have the effect of dividing French-Canadians into

supporters of de Gaulle versus supporters of the Pétain government.” When Morin added later that the committee would be limited to French citizens, and would not include French-Canadians, Lapointe still responded with a curt ‘no’, with no further explanation. A similar request from French residents of Montreal to permit the creation and incorporation of a Gaullist organization was also rejected in the fall of 1941. In his letter of September 29, 1941, Norman Robertson explained to the deputy minister of Secretary of State, E. H. Coleman:

I do not think that it would be helpful at the present juncture to take any formal step in the way of incorporation of a Free French organization, however representative its membership and admirable its objectives might be, which would be likely to precipitate further debate about the continued reception of the French minister in Ottawa, and force a premature definition of the status of General de Gaulle and the Free French movement.<sup>105</sup>

In the summer of 1940, Great Britain asked Canada to train French aviators for the Gaullist forces, using the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, which King indeed had claimed was going to be Canada’s most effective contribution to the British war effort. The King Cabinet refused the request, citing public opinion in French Canada, as well as the costs involved. The request was eventually approved under British pressure, although the British had to pay the costs of training the French aviators.<sup>106</sup> In the fall of 1940, Cabinet rejected de Gaulle’s request to conduct recruitment efforts in Canada, “which would divide Canadians into those who supported Vichy from those who



supported de Gaulle.”<sup>107</sup> These examples demonstrate that the aim of Cabinet was to minimize public debate about the Vichy/de Gaulle controversy, all the while maintaining official recognition of Vichy since, according to Lapointe, French-Canadians did support the Pétain government.<sup>108</sup> Lapointe’s argument, however, was only valid for the petty-bourgeoisie, as organized in the *Ordre de Jacques-Cartier* membership and groups, including the *Ligue pour la défense du Canada*. Moreover, Lapointe was a close, personal friend and admirer of Pétain; the extent of *Ordre* documents in Lapointe’s archives in the National Archives of Canada leads one to suggest that Lapointe himself was a member, perhaps even a leader, of the *Ordre de Jacques-Cartier*.<sup>109</sup>

In November, 1942, Canada finally broke off diplomatic relations with Vichy, but only after playing diplomatic games of peek-a-boo with the Allies who had been pressuring Canada, hitherto unsuccessfully, to terminate relations with Vichy. The Vichy consuls were only asked to leave in May, 1942, after the conscription plebiscite. The Vichy ambassador’s departure followed later that year, once again, even as the last of Hull internees was being released in November.

## Conclusion

The conscription debate indeed was a strange one in Quebec. No campaign was necessary in English Canada to release King from his pledge to French Canadians that there would be no conscription for military service overseas; King’s pledge had been made to French-Canadians and not to English-Canadians. In Quebec, however, the

federal Liberals kept out of sight during the plebiscite debate with only a few, perfunctory speeches by Louis St-Laurent, King's replacement for Lapointe as his Quebec lieutenant, in defence of the government's position. In actual fact, the most effective organizers in support of the government's position in Quebec were members of the still-illegal Communist Party organized into barely-tolerated Tim Buck Plebiscite Committees. This fact was one of the arguments of the 'no' side; in effect, if the communists supported conscription, then it must be bad for French-Canadians. In actuality, censorship regulations limited the arguments that could be employed and publicized against conscription by the *Ligue*. Laurendeau and the *Ligue pour la défense du Canada*, as the name itself implied, employed arguments which English-Canadians critics scathingly called the doctrine of 'home defencism'. Consider some of the reasons offered by the *Ligue* in its manifesto as to the reasons why French-Canadians should refuse conscription for service overseas:

Whereas in the opinion of political and military leaders, Canada is being increasingly threatened, and our primary and supreme duty is to defend our country;

Whereas, according to the government's own statistics about recruitment, voluntary enrolment has supplied by February ,1942 twice as many recruits as Canada's military could absorb;

Whereas a small country with only eleven million inhabitants required to feed and supply the Allies cannot also be, at the same time, an inexhaustible source of combatants;

Whereas Canada has already reached and surpassed its military limits; indeed, should Canada be on the victorious side, Canada would not want to end up in a worse predicament than the losers of the war;

Whereas Canada, proportional to its population size and financial resources, has already contributed as much as any major Allied country.”<sup>110</sup>

These are sentiments with which MacKenzie King himself could hardly have differed as the Canadian government first planned, then implemented its war of limited liability. An important part of this war of limited liability was the repression of the left, including the internment of the communists and certain labour leaders in Hull. These sentiments became surpassed, however, as the nature of World War II changed to become one of total war, in which repressing communists was unproductive and made no sense to most, if indeed it had ever made sense to any but Canada's ruling classes and their most right-wing supporters within the broader community.

## Endnotes to Chapter 2

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- <sup>51</sup> Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many*, New York: Random House, 1983, p. 36, 37.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37
- <sup>54</sup> Jack Granatstein, *Canada's War*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 2.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.
- <sup>56</sup> Lester Pearson, *Memoirs: Through Diplomacy to Politics*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1973, p. 120.
- <sup>57</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961, p. 112.
- <sup>58</sup> Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
- <sup>59</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th edition, 1987, entry about Munich Agreement.
- <sup>60</sup> National Archives of Canada, External Affairs archives, RG 25, reel TI791, volume 774, file 353.
- <sup>61</sup> Tim Buck, *Thirty Years, 1922-1952*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1953, p. 163-164.
- <sup>62</sup> Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985, p. 180.
- <sup>63</sup> Granatstein, *op. cit.*, p. 420.
- <sup>64</sup> Gregory Kealy and Reg Whitaker, *RCMP Security Bulletins*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1989, p. 9, 10.
- <sup>65</sup> The experience of these detainees is described by Erick Koch in *Deemed Suspect: A Wartime Blunder*, Toronto: Halifax: Goodread Biographies/Formac Publishing Co. Ltd., 1985.
- <sup>66</sup> Bruno Ramirez, "Ethnicity on Trial: the Italians of Montreal and the Second World War", in *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*, Ottawa: Canadian Committee for History of the Second World War, 1988, p. 81, 82.
- <sup>67</sup> Daniel Robinson, "Planning for the 'Most Serious Contingency': Alien Internment, Arbitrary Detention and the Canadian State, 1938-1939," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 28, No. 2, Summer, 1993, p. 9.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>70</sup> Reg Whitaker, "Official Repression of Communism during World War II", in *Labour/Le travail*, no. 17, Spring, 1986, p. 145.

<sup>71</sup> National Archives of Canada, Ernest Lapointe archives, MG 27 III B10, volume 48, file 22, see document of Department of Justice.

<sup>72</sup> Revised Statutes of Canada, *War Measures Act*, 1914, chapter 206, 1927 edition.

<sup>73</sup> DOCR, consolidated version, 1942.

<sup>74</sup> Drawing comparisons with today when we are surrounded by technophiles promoting the glories of the computer, it might not occur to us to imprison these guys, even if they are often rather boring. See NAC, RCMP archive, RG 18. volume 3523, regarding Technocracy Inc..

<sup>75</sup> PC refers to Privy Council Orders, Cabinet decisions in the form of regulations or orders.

<sup>76</sup> Laurel MacDowell, *op. cit.*, p. 168,169.

<sup>77</sup> Kealey and Whitaker, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> National Archives of Canada, Secretary of State archives, RG 6 W4, volume 802, file 2135.

<sup>79</sup> Kealey and Whitaker, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> National Archives of Canada, RCMP archives, RG 18, volume 3564, dossier C11-19-4, volume 1, letters from the deputy minister of Justice to the RCMP Commissioner, dated October 26, 1939; from the RCMP Commissioner to the minister of Justice, dated November 13, 1939; and from the latter to the former on November 25, 1939.

<sup>81</sup> Gilbert Levine, *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unions*, St.John's:Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1998, p. 137.

<sup>82</sup> Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 15, 16.

<sup>83</sup> National Archives of Canada, External Affairs archive, RG 25, reel T 2202, volume 817, dossier 652, report of the inter-departmental committee studying the DOCR, July 1939, p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> See Jack Granatstein, *A Man of Influence*, Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1981, p. 81-86; Fred Rose, *Fascism over Canada: An Exposé*, Toronto: New Era Publishers, 1938.

<sup>85</sup> National Archives of Canada, External Affairs archives, RG 25, reel &2202, volume 817, dossier 652, see memorandum of November 20, 1939 written by Read.

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- <sup>86</sup> Kealey and Whitaker, *op.cit.*, p. 17.
- <sup>87</sup> Larry Hannant, *The Infernal Machine*, see chapter 4.
- <sup>88</sup> David Scott, *L'effort de guerre au pays*, Hull: Canadian Heritage Department, Canadian Studies Programme, 1995.
- <sup>89</sup> Whitaker, *op. cit.*, p. 152, 153.
- <sup>90</sup> Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, *Labour Before the Law*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004, p. 28-30.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, p. 231-233.
- <sup>92</sup> See Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond*, Toronto: Methuen, 1988, p. 172.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p. 172; and MacDowell, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
- <sup>94</sup> Penner, *op. cit.*, p. 171.
- <sup>95</sup> *Le Droit*, October 17, 1939, editorial by Charles Gautier; author's adaptation from French to English.
- <sup>96</sup> *L'Émerillon*, December, 1937; author's adaptations from French to English.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, March/April, 1939, p. 35.
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, November, 1939.
- <sup>99</sup> Those who want to pursue the subject of French-Canadian *pétainisme* during World War II should consult the excellent articles by Béatrice Richard, Jean-François Nadeau, Claude Marsolais, Fabrice Mosseray, and Yves Lavertu in *Bulletin d'histoire politique*, volume 3, issues 3 and 4, Spring, Summer, 1995.
- <sup>100</sup> National Archives of Canada, Ernest Lapointe archives, MG 29 III B10, volume 24, dossier 82, letter from Claude Melançon, associate director of the Information Service, to Lapointe.
- <sup>101</sup> National Archives of Canada, Louis St-Laurent archives, MG 26 L, volume 4, dossier 53-7, letter from minister of Revenue to minister of Justice, March 18, 1942, and attachments.
- <sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, dossier 53-2, report by the RCMP about the *Ligue*.
- <sup>103</sup> National Archives of Canada, Ernest Lapointe archive, MG 27 III B10, volume 24, dossier 82, letters from: J. L. Ralston, Defence minister, to Lapointe, September 27, 1940; from Lapointe to Ralston, September 30, 1940; from Lapointe to King, October 1, 1940; and from King to Lapointe, October 2, 1940.

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<sup>104</sup> Marcel-Aimé Gagnon, *Jean-Charles Harvey, précurseur de la Révolution tranquille*, Montreal : Fides, 1970, p. 190.

<sup>105</sup> National Archives of Canada, Ernest Lapointe archive, MG 27 III B10, volume 24, dossier 82, exchange of letters between Morin and Lapointe, dated October 18, October 31, November 16, and December 5, 1940; as well as the letter cited in text, from Robertson to Coleman.

<sup>106</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 27 C, volume 3. minutes of the July 10, 1940 meeting of the Cabinet War Committee.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, November 5, 1940 meeting.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, Cabinet War Committee meetings of August 27 and September 26 in 1940; see also Sandrine Romy, *Les Canadiens face au régime de Vichy (1940-1942) d'après les archives diplomatiques françaises*, Master's Thesis, Université de Paris I, p. 50, 52. In fact, Canadian policy of mistrust towards De Gaulle mirrored that of the U.S. and Roosevelt, who were concerned that De Gaulle was not a democrat, and would end up being another European dictator. Perhaps, this partly explains the traditional Gaullist antipathy to the U.S., which has continued even in recent Chirac times. See Marc Ferro, *Ils étaient sept hommes en guerre*, Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 2007, p. 227-231.

<sup>109</sup> Paul Bychok, "La muraille qui vous protège : Ernest Lapointe and French Canada, 1935-1941", Master's Thesis, Queen's University, February, 1984, p. 246.

<sup>110</sup> Archives nationales du Québec en Outaouais, Fonds Aimé Guertin, p. 8-2/14-27, *Manifeste de la Ligue pour la défense du Canada*, 1942; author's adaptation into English.

## Chapter 3 — Panic, Arrests, Imprisonments, Internments

### More about Historical Explanation

The job of the social historian is to explain particular social incidents, however, what can also emerge from an explanation of particular events is a portrait of past times, broader than the social incidents themselves, that describes how and what people thought in another era, and how the past society was organized and functioned. In order to do this, the historian must produce truth about the particular social incidents, explanation that best assembles evidence in response to the questions of who, what, when, and how into a cogent narrative. The historical truth indicates the best, possible balance of probabilities about causes, effects, and implications. In so doing, the historian must avoid the jungle of the errors of logic to which thinking persons are subject when they seriously address any subject worth studying.<sup>111</sup>

There are several things that good historical explanation does not do, but with which it is often mistaken. These things should be kept in mind; they are traps into which historians fall that limit the utility of their work. Firstly, historical explanation does not provide the forensic truth. It is not a legal case, the aim of which is to establish, beyond a doubt, guilt or innocence of certain people. This is because new information produced by future generations of historians can change historical opinion about particular social incidents, whereas a court case establishes the facts at a specific moment in time. In actual fact, the meaning of past events is always evolving. For instance, the fall of the



Soviet Union in 1989 might mean several things. Was it the beginning of the end of communism, with other communist regimes to soon fall? Was it just a blip in the history of Russia where authoritarian governments seem to be the norm, as appears to be the case even today when democracy appears to be evolving, once again, into a new form of state despotism? Was the communism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as it appeared in the U.S.S.R., a false start, a social experiment that Marx, Engels, Lenin et al would have disavowed? Is the fall of the Soviet Union a harbinger of still other things yet to be identified and analyzed? Only future generations of historians will have answers to these questions, in spite of all the efforts of contemporary pundits.

Secondly, historical explanation does not provide the polemical keys so that readers can separate the 'good guys' from the 'bad guys', according to the values and morals of contemporary readers. It is not a morality play; nor seldom does historical explanation correspond to war propaganda. The latter is indeed a subject worthy of historical study in itself, for propaganda is important to maintaining morale and encouraging recruitment, and for providing domestic or international support for the conduct of a war. It thus reveals much about its times. Nonetheless, there is a cliché whose validity reappears every time war is envisaged or begun, when states put into operation the machinery of propaganda: the first victim of war is truth. Historical explanations and war propaganda seldom match.

Thirdly, historical truth does not equate with contemporary political truths, which are always many and contradictory, ever-changing with the times. For example, with

respect to the repression of the communists during World War II, some may support *post facto* the actions of the government, or even argue that the government should have gone further. On the other hand, that the government was harshly unfair to a small and unimportant group, whose right to political expression was denied unfairly, is a plausible, liberal interpretation of events. Or, that the events of sixty-five or so years ago are an example of how primitive, how silly was the society of World War II, a view, however, that trivializes both World War II, and the events of the repression and the internment of the communists. Moreover, this view ignores the silliness of today's society, which will be clearer to people of subsequent generations than it is to contemporaries.

The best historical explanation for the repression of the left and the internment in Hull during World War II is that the acts themselves of repressing provided excellent propaganda on behalf of the ruling class. The repression was necessary to the ruling classes because communists provided ardent, effective examples of working class opposition to the ruling classes, the state, and the way society was structured to benefit the ruling classes. The repression of World War II was not sudden; it was part of a continuing policy of repression of communism that had begun during World War I, and continued through the Cold War after World War II. This having been said, we need to add a few elements to complete a useful portrait of times that were World War II in Canada. We might start by recognizing in the social dynamic of World War II a social reality of all wars. Wars are nasty; innocents get hurt or die. War is conducted in a fog; its participants, unlike subsequent generations, do not have the benefit of hindsight. They have only limited information, while victory for participants is uncertain, always

precarious. As well, war occasions domestic strife within a society that can manifest itself ideologically in class, regional, and ethnic divisions. One element of this strife is civil panic, potentially always present, frightening citizens and underlying public opinion, pushing governments in certain directions, or being manipulated by governments. It might be easy to be smug about periods of panic in retrospect. On the other hand, we need only think of the panic that the FLQ crisis of 1970 provoked in the Liberal government of the day and among certain Canadians; or the current panic caused by the so-called 'war on terrorism'. Our smugness about the periods of panic during World War II then disappears. Panic was an important factor that defined the specifics of the repression of the left, including the internment in Hull, in terms of when and how certain occurrences transpired. There were two periods of significant, public panic among Canadians immediately before and during World War II. One panic was unleashed by the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Non-aggression Pact of August, 1939; a second, by the fall of France in June, 1940.

### Understanding the Pact

The antifascist, common front policy of the Comintern fell away when it finally appeared clear that France and Britain were not prepared to strike an alliance with the U.S.S.R. to contain fascism. The pact allowed the U.S.S.R. the security that the Germans would not concoct an alliance with the capitalist countries in order to make war on the U.S.S.R.. A secret deal appended to the pact invited the Soviet Union to occupy the eastern parts of Poland, a part of Romania, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and

Lithuania, formerly part of the Russian Empire, while the U.S.S.R. was permitted to wage war on Finland without German interference. This allowed Stalin to erect a *cordon sanitaire* around the U.S.S.R. which he hoped would deter invasion from the west. When the Germans moved into Poland, the Germans invited the Russians to fulfil their part of the secret deal and occupy the new lands. Stalin thus was given a level of serenity; so much so that he refused to believe his generals when they informed him about Hitler's invasion in June, 1941. In fact, Stalin had a mental breakdown after the invasion began, so great was his belief and store in the utility of the pact for protecting the U.S.S.R..<sup>112</sup> Stalin and his officials only had to have read *Mein Kampf* to know that Hitler's long-term goal was to destroy communism. This meant destroying the Soviet Union, which would then provide the German race its *lebensraum*. We might presume the motives of Hitler in concocting the pact. Was he trying to ensure peace on his eastern front, so as to conduct his aggression to the west, unworried about being caught in a war on two fronts, as Germany had been in World War I? Once his western flank was secured in the blitzkrieg operations of the spring of 1940 in western Europe, Hitler then moved east. So, if we are to judge intentions by subsequent actions, this might have been Hitler's motivation in signing the pact.<sup>113</sup> Perhaps, over time, historians will discover additional information to shed light on this perplexing period, including the motives of Hitler and Stalin.

Our concern about the pact, however, is limited to two issues: the use by the Canadian government of the pact for propaganda purposes, and the effects of the pact upon Canadian communists. Capitalist countries used the pact in their pro-war propaganda before the U.S.S.R. became an ally. The idea was to link fascism and

communism as an enemy called totalitarianism, engaged in a struggle with the democracies, regardless of the anti-fascist campaign of the communists during the latter half of the 1930s.<sup>114</sup> Anti-totalitarian propaganda early in the war did not take hold among the general public in Canada, perhaps owing to the nature of the 'phony war', where words flew much more readily than did bullets, and to the fact that the U.S.S.R. and Germany were not actually allied. Nevertheless, arguing that the U.S.S.R. and Germany were allied under the pact helped increase the panic felt among the population, if only for the level of danger being forecast. Moreover, to many Europeans who had supported the anti-fascist campaign of the 1930s, the pact, then the execution of the associated secret agreement whereby the U.S.S.R. greatly extended its territory in eastern Europe, were incomprehensible, if not outright betrayal. Many left the Communist Party or became inactive members. The problem was aggravated when the U.S.S.R. demanded that communist parties deny participation in an imperialist war between Germany, and France and Britain. This was a tough pill to swallow for English-Canadian members of the Party, who were concerned about danger to the mother country. Nevertheless, most members of the Party acquiesced in the Party's eventual position, even after a couple of positions had been earlier developed in support of Canadian participation in World War II. The zigzag nature of Stalin's positions had already been analyzed critically by Trotsky.<sup>115</sup> The pact and the position of the communist parties opposing participation in World War II, was a reprehensible example of reversals of position by communists. This might have been a view expressed by George Orwell, the British socialist and anarchist who had fought in Spain for the republicans against Franco's fascists, and against the communists in their battle with anarchists at Barcelona. In his great novel, *1984*, Orwell

satirized the pact as organizing three large divisions of the world cynically pairing off with one against the other for temporary gain. Perhaps, as Norman Penner suggests, Stalin thought that a call from the Comintern for member countries to criticize participation in the war might have brought Hitler to retreat from his aggressive plans toward the U.S.S.R..<sup>116</sup> In actual fact, however, instructions from the Comintern to specific countries were usually written by local members of the Party, rather than by people from the U.S.S.R., who then received Comintern endorsement, thus increasing the saliency of the leading factions in the member-countries, who could then make use of the Comintern pronouncements that they had just written! This is the view of long-time Party stalwart, Stewart Smith.<sup>117</sup> Thus, it was never really a situation of Moscow dictating to the Canadian party; in fact, certain people or factions would claim support from Moscow so as to increase their store within the Canadian Party. Canadian communists could have exercised their own judgement at the beginning of the war, as did those French or British communists who ignored Moscow's injunction against supporting participation in an imperialist war. In fact, the Canadian Party developed three different positions before it backed the Moscow line in October, 1939. In its first position, the Party's leader, Tim Buck, expressed support for Canada's participation in the war, especially from the angle of commitments made to Poland. The Party then drafted two more positions as it dawdled, waiting for guidance from Moscow, which was severely divided between the Comintern and the U.S.S.R. Party. Nonetheless, before the Canadian Party even produced its final position, the RCMP had begun conducting raids of Party headquarters arresting individuals. Finally, in the evening of October 14, 1939, the Party conducted a door-to-door distribution of 250,000 pamphlets across the country, in which it formally opposed

Canadian participation in the imperialist war in Europe.<sup>118</sup> Thus, the Canadian state's repression of the Communist Party could begin in earnest.

In actual fact, the pact and Canadian communists' opposition to Canadian participation in the war were never the true reason for the imprisonment and internment of communists. We know this since the planning of the DOCR, aimed at communists, not fascists, began well before the signing of the pact on August 23, 1939, and the beginning of the war on September 1, 1939. Furthermore, thirty-three Hull internees were Ukrainians, interned mostly owing to membership in the banned Ukrainian Farm-Labour Temple Association (ULFTA) which, even though pro-communist, never opposed Canadian participation in the war; to the contrary, ULFTA clearly supported Canadian participation. Were opposition to the war to have been the real motive for the internment of communists, Canadian prisons would have filled with French-Canadians opposed to the war. In actual fact, the only French-Canadian interned for this reason was the mayor of Montreal, Camillien Houde. Finally, government explanations for the repressive policy against the communists, even after the U.S.S.R. and Canada became formally allied, changed constantly, a process we describe in chapter 5.

Repression of the communists during World War II, of which the Hull internment was an important part, was the continuation of a longstanding policy. It was a policy that served well the interests of the English-Canadian bourgeoisie and the French-Canadian petty-bourgeoisie. Internment and related actions were useful propaganda coups for the ruling classes. They provided useful tools to assist the federal government in the

mobilization for its hoped-for war of limited liability, such as it was in the early years of World War II. They also were evidence of the government's response to the panic engendered among the Canadian people by the initiation of World War II, and then again, after the fall of France in the spring of 1940.

#### The Pact and the Communists in Canada

For the Canadian Party, the pact and the repression that followed were disastrous. Tim Buck went into exile to Buffalo, New York, where American communists were still operating legally. Other Canadian leaders went underground. Canadian leadership fell to a clandestine operating centre, under the direction of Stanley Ryerson, Leslie Morris, and Stewart Smith. These men were Canadian nationalists; they took the message of the Canadian Party that Canada should get out of the imperialist war, and changed it to one of getting Canada out of the British Empire. In actual fact, long before nationalism became fashionable in English Canada, communists were always among the most nationalist Canadians. Nonetheless, as if the communists' credibility wasn't already diminished as a result of the pact, and the position of Canadian communists against the participation in the war, this anti-British talk hardly endeared the communists to many English-Canadians. In actual fact, the two factions within the Party, the nationalist faction and the Tim Buck faction, resolved their differences in support of the Tim Buck position only after the German invasion of the U.S.S.R. and the reduction of the state repression in Canada, which allowed Buck to resume control of the party. Factionalism and the



seeming, ever-changing positions of the Party, contributed to further damaging the communists' credibility.<sup>119</sup>

Among Party leaders, in fact, only Norman Freed and Tom McEwen were interned. Other communist internees were lower in the Party hierarchy, however, there was one area in which they were profoundly involved, local union activity. With communist organizers now interned or pushed underground, CCF unionists were able to remove communists from leadership positions in major industrial unions such as the Steelworkers. Communists were also frozen out of leadership positions at the founding convention of the Congress of Canadian Labour in September, 1940, which united the CIO with the All-Canadian Congress of Labour, and firmly established a continuing relationship between the CCF and organized labour.<sup>120</sup> Otherwise, state repression made the work by communists on the ground within organized labour very difficult. Ex-internee Bill Walsh humourously remarked that, in the conduct of their work, communists...

wore disguises, but we were pretty obvious; we all wore dark glasses, a moustache, and a topcoat, so you can be pretty sure anybody walking down the street looking like that was in the communist underground.<sup>120A</sup>

The factionalism in the party early in the war continued later in the war when Buck and his associates adopted a near-browderist position. Earl Browder was the leader of the communists in the U.S.. So overtaken was he with delight at the collaboration of

Roosevelt and Stalin, and the prospects this meant for future, rosy relations between the two that Browder advocated abolishing the American Party so as to replace it with a political educational association. The Canadian Party worked hard to distance itself later from browderism, even though it veered dangerously close to it in the latter years of WWII . The Party called for a wartime alliance with the Liberal Party, mockingly called the 'Lib-Labs' by opponents, and used the name, Labour Progressive Party. It called for an end to industrial strikes, advice workers ignored, and locked itself in endless conflict with the CCF. This move to the right was eventually arrested, but not before considerable, emotional factionalism. Responding to criticism from the left in B.C. and Quebec after World War II only further hurt the credibility of the Party. It appeared once again to be reversing positions, sort of like Stalin himself.

Throughout Canadian history, there are incidents that reveal the dual, national nature of Canada, and continue to frustrate those who deny this reality. In one example of this phenomenon, as disastrous as the pact and its ramifications were for the Communist Party in the English Canada, the pact had a salutary effect in French Canada, even increasing Party membership throughout the war. During Buck's absence in the U.S., Stanley Ryerson produced two pamphlets for the Party's operating centre for distribution in Quebec: "French Canada: A Nation in Bondage" and "French Canada and the War". These documents described French Canada "as a subjugated nation held in colonial slavery to the English-Canadian rulers, who were acting as surrogates for the real rulers in Britain."<sup>121</sup> Ryerson, himself half French, was one of the few, respected intellectuals in the Party. This position started to draw the interest of French-Canadian nationalists such

as Henri Bourassa, Lionel Groulx, André Laurendeau, and Camillien Houde, who were vigorously anti-war and were organizing opposition to conscription. Later, the Party was to condemn these men as fascistic or crypto-fascists, however, links between the communists and the French-Canadian nationalists during the early war period were most tangible at the local, working level. The Party also went a long way to recognizing the national duality within the Canadian state. As well, French-Canadian communists never supported conscription, regardless of the positions held by English-Canadian communists. Canadian communists recognized the economic inferiority of French-Canadians, and participated in the formation of ideas that some Quebec progressives were formulating about economic and social progress. They proclaimed the need for national equality of French-Canadians with English-Canadians. The Young Communist League, led by such men as Henri Gagnon and Gui Caron, joined with fifty workers' and nationalist groups at a *Congrès des Canadiens français*, held in November, 1940. From communist offices on Ste-Catherine Street in Montreal, Caron published an anti-war, leftist, nationalist publication called *La Voix du peuple* after the convention. The Party was also able to establish solid links with nationalists and trade unionists in local, industrial unionization efforts. The collaboration between French-Canadian nationalists and communists came to an abrupt end after the Canadian Party adopted a strong, pro-war position. The communist work in Quebec then acquired a mission of rooting out fascists, for example, when Fred Rose wrote about fifth-columnists active in Quebec among nationalist circles.<sup>122/123</sup>

The collaboration between nationalists and communists in Quebec re-surfaced after the war. In 1947, a crisis led to some Quebecers separating from the Canadian Party, after which they negotiated various special relationships over the years between the two groups. Most recently, the *Parti communiste du Québec* has joined with socialist groups, feminists, social democrats, and environmentalists in Quebec to form a new provincial party, the *Parti Québec solidaire*. It is not clear what will become of the *Parti communiste du Québec*, or its relationship with the Communist Party of Canada, especially if the new party proves to be successful and long-lasting.

## Panic

The start of the war in September, 1939, and the signing the month before of the Hitler-Stalin Non-aggression Pact provoked panic within the Canadian population. Among the first steps the King government undertook in response to this panic was harassing and arresting communists, who were charged with specific offences. The second, major panic occurred after the fall of France in June, 1940, and the ignominious escape of the British Army via Dunkirk, in France. Britain's most important ally now was Canada. During the second panic, communist organizations proved useful targets, so they were made illegal, leading to the internment of communists and sympathizers.

There were also more informal, expressions of panic that occurred across the country. Locally, for instance, on June 21, 1940, shortly after France surrendered to Germany, two Hull men received sentences under the DOCR. Roland Schryer, 18 years

old, from Laurier Street, received a month in prison for having declared that he hoped for German victory. Paul Séguin, 39 years old, from Saint-Rédempteur Street, also expressed hope for a German victory, and characterized the English “... d’un terme particulièrement vulgaire et méprisant,” (... with language that was particularly vulgar and hateful), for which he was sentenced to three months in prison. The two men were charged for having made declarations that violated DOCR regulation 39.<sup>124</sup>

The public panic also corresponded what came to be known as the ‘fifth-column’ issue, after Hitler’s easy victories in western Europe. ‘Fifth-column’ was a specific reference to the Spanish fascist dictator, Francisco Franco who, when successfully marching upon Madrid during the Spanish Civil War with four columns, claimed that he had the support of a fifth column within Madrid itself. Hitler’s *blitzkrieg* victories were achieved with the help of rightist elements within defeated countries, such as Quisling in Norway. Thus, fifth-columnists were dangerous elements within the country that had to be rooted out and suppressed. In Canada, there were mass meetings, often of veterans, in the spring of 1940, aimed at enemy aliens, fifth-columnists, saboteurs (whatever these might be), fascists, and of course, communists. In Vancouver, two rallies in May of 7,000 and 5,000 people demanded that the federal government organize veterans to assist police in fighting espionage and sabotage. They also enjoined the government to bar enemy aliens from employment in government, municipal services, or key industries, and to fire enemy aliens already employed therein. In Calgary, 9,000 demanded internment of Germans and other measures aimed at fifth-columnists. In Windsor, Ontario, 3,000 veterans called for mass registration of all Canadians, and internment of all enemy

aliens. In Toronto, 50,000 veterans on June 9 demanded that the government put the country on a total war footing. On May 27, 7,000 gathered in Montreal to hear that all potential suspects should be arrested.<sup>125</sup>

Organizations qualified as 'sixth-column', aimed at suppressing fifth-columnists, popped up around the country. In Quebec, the Civilian Protection Committee, comprised of veterans, policemen, soldiers, and businessmen, started making vigilante-like anti-communist sounds.<sup>126</sup> In Ontario, a similar group, the Legion of Frontiersmen, benefited from support by right-wing Tories and by provincial Liberals in the Hepburn government. Canadian communists eventually proved to be among the sixth-columnists most annoying to authorities when they started identifying fascist elements active in Canada, as Fred Rose did when he exposed fascist currents in Quebec.<sup>127</sup> A most amazing example of the sixth-column phenomenon occurred in Saskatchewan, where rioting veterans attacked German and Ukrainian facilities. Then, in a period of just three weeks, 7,500 World War I veterans and Canadian Legion members were organized in the Saskatchewan Veterans Civil Security Corps, to help the RCMP and municipal police forces fight subversion. The men were grouped into platoons, companies, and battalions, and regularly undertook shooting practice and military parades, including in some rural areas where there was no police presence. The mission of the 'silent column', as it was called, was to protect against subversive activities among the large German population of Saskatchewan, as well as among other Europeans. With such an objective, it is easy to understand that membership of the 'silent column' was mostly English-Canadian.<sup>128</sup>

The para-military fever distressed the government and the RCMP, who were being told by some of the Canadian people, in effect, that they were not doing their job in light of the war. The RCMP demurred; after all, they were the professionals who best knew the real enemies of Canada.<sup>129</sup> Even though the targets of the sixth-columnists were amorphous and imprecise, sixth-columnists did represent a broad slice of Canadian society: right-wing Tories and Liberals, military veterans and policemen, businessmen and labour union leaders, CCFers and communists. Although the RCMP and Justice were scarcely impressed with sixth-columnists, some officials did use their information, as when Norman Robertson, responsible for ensuring control of fascists in Canada, consulted with communists such as Fred Rose in order to learn about fascist operations in Canada. One of Robertson's useful sources about fascism among Italians was an enterprising newspaper journalist, a leftist editor named Antonio Spada, who published Italian-language newspapers that were the focus of anti-fascist activity among Montreal Italians. Nevertheless, J. F. MacNeil, deputy minister of Justice opined to Robertson with a rather surly and racist comment about the utility of Spada's information about fascist activity among Italo-Canadians. "Spada, in my opinion, is not any more reliable than the other Italians who are imbued with the spirit of the vendetta."<sup>130</sup> The *parti pris* of the RCMP and Justice against the left was always clear. The activity of sixth-columnists aimed at the Germans greatly distressed Mackenzie King, who was the MP for Prince Albert, an important, German centre in Saskatchewan. Even more annoying was the criticism by Hepburn Liberals and right-wing Tories in Ontario. In the War Cabinet meeting of May 22, 1940, King complained that Canadian aid provided to Britain meant that Canada was no longer able to ensure the defence of the country's shores, nor its

internal social order, especially in light of the fifth-column and sixth-column agitation. It would be necessary to increase the size of police forces, and to create an internal, military force to defend Canadian territory.<sup>131</sup> Finally, in June, 1940, the King government responded “by taking the assault on subversion under official, federal auspices.”<sup>132</sup> On June 5, King’s government banned fascist and communist organizations. On June 18, it announced national registration as per the National Resources Mobilization Act; two months later, the registration was *fait accompli*. By March 1941, the RCMP and military systems of fingerprinting and security screening had been greatly expanded to cover one Canadian out of five. The fifth-column crisis was over, and the King government appeared to be in control of the situation once again.

#### Arrests and Imprisonments<sup>133</sup>

During the panic of the fall of 1939, the RCMP began harassing communists, arresting them for violating DOCR regulations 39 and 39A, even before the Party published its position against Canadian participation in the war. On September 9, Philip and Gordon Tonner, from Toronto, were arrested for distributing Party materials. The court quickly threw out the case against the two men. The Party published its position against Canadian participation in the war on October 14, 1939. On November 10, the RCMP arrested 23, including ten in Montreal, for distributing communist documents. Canadian Press reported on November 13 that four more communists in Toronto, eight more in Montreal, as well as one man in Lacombe, Alberta were arrested and charged for having distributed anti-war flyers.<sup>134</sup> On November 21, Canadian Press reported that



Douglas Stewart, business manager of the communist newspaper, *Clarion*, was sentenced to two years of imprisonment for printing the Comintern statement of opposition to participation in the war.<sup>135</sup> In Oshawa, an ex-soldier, Frank Towers, was sentenced to three months imprisonment for having sold *Clarion*, even before it had been banned along with its French-language equivalent, *Clarté*.<sup>136</sup> Most of these cases were thrown out of court, although some did receive sentences of up to six months in prison and fines of \$500. Four communists were arrested for violating regulation 39, or for merely saying things that police judged to be dangerous to the security of the state or the prosecution of the war. Nick Tuchinsky, from Tilsonbury, Ontario and Alfred Neal, from Kingston, were arrested in December, 1940, but each case ended in acquittal. Nevertheless, two men from Kirkland Lake, Ontario, B. L. McMillan and Charles Stewart, each received sentences of three months and fines of \$200 for having expressed sentiments judged to be dangerous or subversive. Four people were accused of having distributed Party newspapers, and twenty-one were charged with possession of communist documents, while eight Winnipeggers were arrested for being Party members. The most common reason for arrest was distribution of subversive flyers, for which 44 were charged. Most cases were thrown out of court for insufficient evidence. In fact, this was the case for twelve women from across Canada, while Olive Swankey, wife of Hull internee Ben Swankey, was held for ten days of interrogation in Edmonton, then released without being charged. Hull internee Charles Weir was arrested for distributing anti-war literature, but was freed since there were no witnesses, only to be soon interned.<sup>137</sup> Another Hull internee, Patrick Lenihan, a Calgary alderman, was acquitted by jury of

having expressed statements likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty, only to be interned soon after.<sup>138</sup>

Not all was failure for the authorities when charging communists for specific offences. Nine women were successfully charged, including three in Manitoba and four in Saskatchewan, where authorities seemed to be more successful in prosecuting precise offences. The unfortunate Annie Buller and Margaret Mills each received sentences of two years, while Ida Corley received a sentence of one year. All were from Winnipeg, while Regina resident Gladys McDonald was imprisoned for a year, followed by fourteen months of internment, making her the only communist woman to be interned during World War II.

Two cases of imprisonment in Manitoba deserve special mention. In the fall of 1940, Mitch Sago, a Ukrainian community leader, and Tom McEwen, a member of the political bureau of the Party, were charged with being members of the Party. On November 8, 1940, Sago and McEwen were tried and sentenced to two years less a day of hard labour at the provincial jail in Headingly. Nowhere was hard labour to be found within the DOCR, therefore, on October 10, 1941, McEwen and Sago applied for *habeas corpus* on the grounds that the original magistrate had exceeded the law with the hard labour sentence. Justice Donovan of the Manitoba Supreme Court agreed and granted Sago and McEwen their freedom, however, on September 9, 1941, Justice minister Lapointe had issued an order for internment, which took effect immediately after the men's liberation from Headingly, whereupon they were interned in Hull.<sup>139</sup>

Internment was to prove a much more useful tool for repressing communists, as opposed to imprisonment for specific offences, especially after the Party was made illegal in June, 1940. Approximately two-thirds of those detained were held using articles 21 and 39C of the DOCR read together. The official history of the Communist Party of Canada cites that “according to the Canadian Civil Liberties Union, 64 persons had been arrested by the end of February, 1940, of which nineteen received prison terms ranging from one month to two years, while the rest were fined amounts ranging from \$1 to \$500.”<sup>140</sup>

#### Tentative Figures About Imprisonment<sup>141</sup>

A tentative listing of communist prisoners arrested for specific offences includes 68 people, with the proviso that this listing is only tentative. The largest number of prisoners was in Saskatchewan where C. Post, George Rudak, John Alexiewich, Peter Parcheta, Harry Gesef, and A. Alexandra were communists imprisoned for specific offences. In Manitoba, Alfred Bass, M. Bilinsky, R. Bellinsky, James Ramsay, and I. Guberman served time. Ontarians imprisoned included Harry Binder, Douglas Stewart, Charles Stewart, Anthony Parsons, and B. L. McMillan. Also imprisoned were Tom Lawrence, from Nova Scotia, Albertan Fabrin Paradis, and British Columbian Wilfrid Ravor. Besides the four women imprisoned already mentioned-- McDonald, Buller, Mills, and Corley — Angela Dubé, wife of Évariste Dubé, founder of the French-Canadian wing of the Party, served six months and was fined \$500, while fellow Montrealer, Yvonne Richard, was sentenced to one month in prison. Three other women

from Regina received prison terms: Jane Kenilworth, six months; Florence Theodore, a Party leader in Saskatchewan, three months; and Ella Gehl, one month.

Fourteen Hull internees served prison terms of three months or more before being interned. They included Mitch Sago and Tom McEwen, each fourteen months; Fred Spewak, Harry Asson, and Max Butler, one year each; Bill Walsh, nine months; Dmitri Nikiforiak, Peter Keweryga, and Samuel Levine, six months each; and Jacques Villeneuve, Joe Wallace, Alex Miller, Harvey Murphy, and John McNeil, three months each. As well, twenty-six Hull internees also spent less than three months in prison before internment. In alphabetical order, they were: Alcide Aubrey, William Beeching, Louis Binder, Tom Chopowick, Mischa Cohen, Fred Collins, Joseph Duchesne, Muni Erlich, Norman Freed, Archie Gunn, Ernest Holwell, Nick Huculak, Robert Kerr, Pat Lenihan, Rodolphe Majeau, Fergus McKean, Julius Nyerki, John Perozek, Nicholas Pyndus, William Rigby, Arthur Saunders, Charles Smythe, Pat Sullivan, Ben Swankey, Muni Taub, and Charles Weir.

## Internment

On January 11, 1940, the DOCR were amended so as to permit preventive detention, internment before the fact of having committed a crime, ie. article 21. This meant that even though charges for precise offences might not hold up in court, communists could still be interned using vague terms. As well, should the police fail in making a DOCR charge stick, then the freed prisoner could quickly be interned. This

situation applied to Ottawans Louis Binder and Arthur Saunders, and to westerners Charles Weir, John McNeil, Pat Lenihan, Alex Miller, and Ben Swankey.<sup>142</sup>

In June, 1940, via DOCR regulation 39C, the Communist Party and related associations were made illegal. These associations included the Young Communist League, the League for Peace and Democracy, which had succeeded the League to Fight War and Fascism, and the Canadian Labour Defence League, as well as several pro-communist, ethnic associations: The Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association, the Canadian Ukrainian Youth Federation, the Finnish Organization of Canada, the Russian Workers and Farmers Club, the Croatian Cultural Organization, the Hungarian Workers Club, and the Polish People's Association. Membership in these organizations became illegal; it came to be the grounds most often used for internment.

The first internments took place on June 26, 1940, when Jacob Penner and John Navis, from Winnipeg, and Ottawans Louis Binder and Arthur Saunders were interned. Arrests for internment could follow at any time, but there were more active periods. On June 28 and 29, 1940, nine Montrealers as well as Nicholas Pyndus, from Trois-Rivières, and Robert Kerr and Fergus McKean, each from Vancouver, were interned. On July 8, 1940, seventeen Ukrainian Winnipeggers were interned. On August 9, 1940, seven men including five Montrealers were interned. On September 8 and 9, 1940, five more were arrested for internment; on October 10, 1940, four more were interned. The last internment in Hull began on February 10, 1942 when Harvey Murphy was transferred from a Toronto prison.

The cases of Jacob Penner and Pat Sullivan provided important legal precedents about the question of *habeas corpus*. Were the governments and the police obliged to provide motives for the decision to intern someone, other than article 21 of the DOCR, whereby people presented a danger to the security of the state or the prosecution to the war, or article 39C, whereby people were members of an illegal organization? Jacob Penner was a highly-respected communist and municipal councillor in Winnipeg. After being interned in Kananaskis, Penner's family hired a lawyer who successfully applied for *habeas corpus*, however, federal authorities simply held him during the summer of 1940 in an immigration centre in Winnipeg. In August, 1940, a federal appeals judge ruled that *habeas corpus* did not apply to DOCR article 21. Penner was returned to Kananaskis, providing an important precedent relative to internees from Western Canada.<sup>143</sup> In central Canada, Pat Sullivan, President of the Canadian Seamen's Union, was arrested on June 18, 1940. The only explanation for Sullivan's arrest offered to lawyer J. L. Cohen was Sullivan's membership in the Communist Party, which the defendant denied. Cohen then launched unsuccessful *habeas corpus* proceedings in which an Ontario judge ruled that *habeas corpus* was not relevant since the detainer was not the minister of Justice, and the latter was not required to accept recommendations of a consulting committee considering the detention. Cohen was going to subject this tortured logic of the Ontario Appeals Court judge to the Supreme Court, but decided to desist when the federal government promised to improve the workings of the consulting committees, and to reveal more about the motives for Sullivan's internment. Nevertheless, after considerable stalling by the minister of Justice, it became clear that

the real reasons for Sullivan's internment were strikes by the Canadian Seamen's Union in 1938 and 1939, and especially in April, 1940, when Sullivan's union closed shipping on the Great Lakes from the Lakehead to Montreal. Conciliation following this last strike was proceeding when Sullivan was arrested. Not only did Sullivan's case show that *habeas corpus* was of no effect with respect to the internees, it also showed that for some internees, at least for Sullivan, the real motive of internment was union activity. One suspects the considerable influence of C. D. Howe and his business colleagues working in Ottawa. This was also the case for several of Sullivan's colleagues within the Canadian Seamen's Union. A month after Sullivan was arrested, Jack Chapman, union secretary, was arrested while a few days later, Dave Sinclair, editor of the union's newspaper *Searchlight*, was arrested for having written about the Sullivan case. Sinclair's case also demonstrated farcically the incompetence of the RCMP. Sinclair was the *nom de plume* of David Siglar, a fact he did not hide. During his appeal before the consulting committee, the RCMP presented as evidence activities of someone unknown to Siglar named 'Segal', a common name among Jews. Siglar had no idea about whom or what the RCMP was talking not knowing the 'Segal' in question, but he did plead guilty to having known several people named 'Segal'.<sup>144</sup>

The case of Charles Murray, organizer for a fishermen's union in Lockeport, Nova Scotia, a union affiliated with the Canadian Seamen's Union, provided another example of how union activities might lead to internment. On June 15, 1940, Nova Scotia's labour minister, L. D. Currie, sent a letter to Murray stating that:

... You are a communist and as such, deserve to be treated in the same manner as I would be treated if I endeavoured to carry on in Russia as you are doing in Nova Scotia. I warn you now to desist from your efforts to create industrial trouble, and I warn you too that your conduct will from now on be carefully watched and examined, and if I find out that you do not quit this sort of business, then it will be most certainly the worst for you. I am giving you this final word of warning. My advice to you is to get out of Lockeport and stay out...<sup>145</sup>

A few days later, Murray was interned in Petawawa.

Other union leaders received similar fates to those of the leaders of the Canadian Seamen's Union. Fred Collins had led a successful strike against furniture manufacturers in Stratford, Ontario. James Murphy was the leader of the Technical Employees Association of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and was arrested in the middle of negotiations.<sup>146</sup> Orton Wade was negotiating with meat packing companies in Winnipeg when he was arrested. Bruce Magnuson was a union leader from Port Arthur, where he was local president of the Union of Lumber and Sawmill Workers. Unfortunately, his federal MP was none other than C. D. Howe. In August, 1940, Howe responded to one of Magnuson's colleagues complaining about the internment of Magnuson.

For very obvious reasons, the normal course of the law must be supplemented by special powers. Otherwise, the effort of the government to suppress fifth-



column activities would be of no avail. The now tragic account of fifth-column activities in Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France is ample proof of the inadequacy of the ordinary peacetime machinery of the law in controlling subversive elements... Persons who are considered to be friendly towards Canada's enemies, or who in any way interfere with Canada's war effort, are recommended for internment on the strength of evidence assembled by the Force (RCMP).<sup>147</sup>

The motive given for Magnuson's internment was his membership in the Party, but after the Party began supporting the war effort, Howe wrote to Magnuson in October, 1941:

... do you think that the ends of justice would be served by your release merely because circumstances have caused a change of front by the Communist Party? You were interned because you were out of sympathy with Canada's war effort, and because you were an active member of an organization which sought to impede that effort.<sup>148</sup>

The case of Clarence Jackson also demonstrated the long arm of Howe. On June 11, 1941, Howe wrote to Justice minister Lapointe, demanding that Jackson be arrested.

Please permit me to call your attention to the activities of one C. S. Jackson, who is undoubtedly one of the most active trouble makers and labour racketeers in Canada today. Jackson has been expelled from the Canadian Congress of Labour as a Communist. He has been responsible for strikes at the R.C.A. Victor plant, the Canadian General Electric plant,

and he is now boring in to the Canadian Westinghouse plant at Hamilton. The Westinghouse plant is the most important war manufacturer in Canada, having contracts for anti-aircraft guns, naval equipment, and a wide variety of electrical work important to our production. A strike at Westinghouse would directly stop many branches of our munitions programme.

I cannot think why Canada spends large sums for protection against sabotage and permits Jackson to carry on his subversive activities. No group of saboteurs could possibly effect the damage that this man is causing.

I feel sure that this is a matter for prompt police action. I suggest that responsible labour leaders can supply any information that you may require on which to base police action.<sup>149</sup>

There is evidence, furthermore, according to the biographer of Jackson, that the Canadian Congress of Labour was complicitous in the internment of Jackson.<sup>150</sup> Jackson was arrested on June 23, 1941, but was released from Hull six months later owing to pressure by the American section of his union.<sup>151</sup>

Others were interned for strange reasons. Rodolphe Majeau, a member of the Canadian Seamen's Union, was interned for having aided Communist candidate Évariste Dubé during the federal election of 1940, when the Party was still legal, an example of a retroactive charge. Scott McLean, a Cape Breton millwright was interned because of dynamite he had in his possession when arrested, dynamite he was using to explode rocks and a manure pile on his farm. John Prossack, from Winnipeg, an elderly Ukrainian charged with membership in the Party, was not in the least involved in politics. Prossack believed that he was interned owing to a bad relationship with his former son-in-law, a

paid police informer.<sup>152</sup> Muni Taub, a Montreal tailor left the Party at the end of 1939, one of the many Europeans disgusted at the Hitler-Stalin pact. Nevertheless, motives given for Taub's internment included his writing for a leftist, Jewish newspaper; his membership in the banned Canadian Labour Defence League, and most of all, Taub's challenge of the constitutionality of Duplessis' Padlock Law during the 1930s.<sup>153</sup>

## Ukrainians

No other ethnic group suffered from the state repression during World War II to the same extent as the Ukrainians who were members of the banned association, the Ukrainian Labour-Farm Temple Association (ULFTA). This was partly a legacy of the racism that Ukrainians traditionally had suffered in western Canada, as during World War I when over 5,000 Ukrainian-Canadians were interned. It was also, in part, a result of the state's suppression of communism since the ULFTA leadership was pro-communist, even if most members were not. In fact, ULFTA had recognized, official status within the Communist Party of Canada. Moreover, there were also considerable pressures against ULFTA from conservative, nationalist Ukrainians, concerned about the independence of their homeland from Soviet domination, who competed bitterly with ULFTA for the allegiance of Ukrainian-Canadians, and the attention and favour of the Canadian government.

In actual fact, ULFTA never bought the Communist Party line about criticizing Canada's participation in an imperialist war. *The People's Gazette*, ULFTA's official

newspaper, persistently editorialized in favour of Canada's participation in the war.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, of the thirty-three Ukrainians interned in Hull, only about fifteen were actually members of the Communist Party.<sup>155</sup> It was especially in Manitoba where the RCMP harassed Ukrainians. Of the thirty-three Ukrainians interned in Hull, twenty-four came from Manitoba. The police went about its mission with its usual competence. It was known to all in the Ukrainian community that the RCMP had an arrest warrant for Mike Lenartovich which it vigorously pursued, unaware that Lenartovich had died three years earlier. This led people to say that the RCMP also had a warrant for the dangerous revolutionary, Taras Schevchenko, the nationalist poet of the Ukraine who had died in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>156</sup>

After ULFTA was made illegal, the federal government seized 201 ULFTA properties, including 108 labour temples; among them, the property in Ottawa that today houses the Italian organization, St. Anthony's Soccer Club, in the Preston Street area.<sup>157</sup> The Trustee of Enemy Property, a federal public servant reporting to the Secretary of State, then sold or rented these buildings at ridiculously low prices, often to nationalist, Ukrainian groups. It took several years for ULFTA to receive compensation from the federal government, after endless legal battles, and in amounts far inferior to their true value. Furthermore, the actions of the federal government seriously divided the Ukrainian community, which compromised national unity. Within the federal government, Secretary of State tried, with only modest success, to limit the war of propaganda between Ukrainian nationalists and leftists throughout the war. One of the most shameful episodes in the repression of ULFTA was the disposal of their libraries by the trust companies

working on contract to the federal Trustee of Enemy Property. Books carelessly were burnt, a dread tactic used by the nazis, in Edmonton, Calgary, Oshawa, and Fort William, Ontario (now part of Thunder Bay). In Winnipeg and Toronto, ULFTA's books were sold for recycling. Two tons of ULFTA's books in Toronto brought taxpayers the heady sum of \$9.18 of financial relief.<sup>158</sup>

### Petawawa

From the beginning, western Canadians, who were interned in Kananaskis along with pro-nazis, demanded separate facilities and their own spokesman in order to protect themselves. The initial spokesman for the forty or so leftist internees in Kananaskis was the Calgary alderman, Patrick Lenihan.<sup>159</sup> In Kananaskis, the most pressing problem was that the communists were surrounded by pro-nazi, German-Canadians. In fact, even German POWs were eventually imprisoned in Kananaskis where the Canadian leftists were held.<sup>160</sup> In Petawawa at the same time, the Canadian communists were a small number among hundreds of Italians, including known fascist leaders. Tensions became inevitable on work details, or in common areas such as dining areas and kitchens.<sup>161</sup>

The tactic of the communists in Petawawa was to seize control of barracks so they could be housed together, apart from the others. They also tried to separate themselves in working parties away from the others, this with less success. Indeed, they were always concerned about working with rightists where axes, shovels, and other tools were employed.<sup>162</sup> Under pressure from Saskatchewan MP, Dorise Nielsen, secretly a member

of the Communist Party and the only woman to sit in the House of Commons during World War II, the Kananaskis internees were transferred to Petawawa in July, 1941, shortly after the German invasion of the U.S.S.R..

Petawawa had begun receiving internees from central Canada at the end of June, 1940. Thirteen of them were interned between June, 1940 and October, 1940, but were liberated from Petawawa by the summer of 1941. These people were mostly Montrealers: Louis Baillargeon, Douglas Betts, Paul Durand, Max 'Jack' Laxer, Joseph Lévesque, Solly Markman, Bernard Moreyne, and Mathew Popovich. Sidney Neil, from Kirkland Lake, Ontario and Manitoban Harry Guralnick, husband of communist prisoner Annie Buller, were also among their number. Markman, Popovich, and Neil were freed from Petawawa for medical reasons owing to illnesses aggravated or contracted during internment. Unfortunately, all died shortly after gaining their freedom, a silent scandal that went unnoticed and barely reported, even by the communists.

Now concentrated in Petawawa, the ninety or so remaining communists began making life miserable for the military authorities guarding them. The internees started sending petitions demanding their immediate release to join the war effort, now that the U.S.S.R. was an ally of Canada. The always-existing tensions between communist internees and the others escalated, especially over the quality of food, as some leftists became concerned that the Italians were serving them inferior-quality food; some communists were even concerned that the Italians were trying to poison them. In one incident, an Ottawa Jew, Louis Binder, led a protest about the quality of the food, even the

throwing the food at the camp gates, which earned him a stay in solitary confinement and anti-semitic threats from Sergeant-Major Barry.

In August, 1941, the Petawawa internment camp was inspected by Timothy Eden, who was a brother of Britain's foreign affairs minister, and a public servant involved in operating British internment camps. In front of the communist barracks, Eden enquired as to the nature of the internees facing him. One soldier answered, "These are our Russians". Joe Wallace, an internee from Toronto, blurted out: "That's a damn lie, we're Canadians; come and see how they treat anti-fascist Canadians." Wallace's insolence drew him 28 days in solitary confinement. More importantly, the communists started demonstrating. They went on strike, refusing to work or collaborate with camp administrators. At one point, they threatened to march through the barbed wire fences, and dared the veterans guarding them to shoot. The pressure on the military and the government was too much; perhaps, the afore-mentioned Mr. Eden joined in this pressure. So, a transfer was quickly organized in August, 1941 to the Hull prison, where the Canadian communists could be interned by themselves, without being surrounded by rightists, and where they might also benefit from special treatment by the military.

### Endnotes to Chapter 3

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<sup>111</sup> The best description of the logical problems in writing history, in fact, probably applicable to many fields of inquiry is David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

<sup>112</sup> Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 1999, p. 323.

<sup>113</sup> For explanations of the reasons for the Pact, see A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961; in the National Archives of Canada, archives of the Communist Party of Canada, MG28 IV T4, volume 49, dossier 48, see the document entitled *Soviet Historiography of Soviet-German Pact*, Gravenhurst, Ontario: Northern Publishing House; National Archives of Canada, J. L. Cohen archive, MG 30 A94, volume 30, dossier 2917; see the first file about the Hull internees for a remarkable document, a speech Cohen gave to the National Council for Democratic Rights in July, 1942 about the pact.

<sup>114</sup> Pierre, Broué, *L'assassinat de Trotsky*, Brussels: Éditions Complexes, 1980, p. 78.

<sup>115</sup> Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company Inc., 1937, p. 86.

<sup>116</sup> Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond*, Toronto: Methuen, 1988, p. 179.

<sup>117</sup> Stewart Smith, *Comrades and Komsolmocos*, Toronto, Lugus, 1993; see also Robert Comeau and Robert Tremblay, *Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson: un intellectuel de combat*, Hull: Éditions Vents d'Ouest, 1996, p. 61.

<sup>118</sup> National Archives of Canada, Tim Buck archive , p. 626, 629, 630; see also Oscar Ryan, *Tim Buck: A Conscience for Canada*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1976, p. 200, 201.

<sup>119</sup> See James Laxer, *Red Diaper Baby*, Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2004, p. 180; and Penner, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>120</sup> Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 2001, p. 130.

120A Author's interview with Walsh.

<sup>121</sup> Penner, *op. cit.*, p. 167.



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<sup>122</sup> Henri Gagnon, *Les militants, socialistes du Québec*, St-Lambert: Éditions Héritage, 1985, p. 134;

Gagnon remembered these early days of the war as halcyon days for the growth of the Party among French-Canadians.

<sup>123</sup> Fred Rose, *Hitler's Fifth Column in Quebec*, 1943.

<sup>124</sup> See *Le Droit*, June 21, 1940.

<sup>125</sup> These meetings are described in Larry Hannant, *The Infernal Machine*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995, p. 94.

<sup>126</sup> National Archives of Canada, Norman Robertson archives, MG 30 EI63, volume 14, dossier 158.

<sup>127</sup> Fred Rose, *op. cit.*, 1943

<sup>128</sup> See Robert MacDonald, "The Silent Column: Civil Security in Saskatchewan during World War II", *Saskatchewan History*, volume 39, no 2, Spring, 1986.

<sup>129</sup> See Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker, editors, *RCMP Security Bulletins, 1939-1941*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1989, p. 9-20.

<sup>130</sup> National Archives of Canada, Norman Robertson archives, MC 30, E163, volume 13, file 133 of journals; see communications between MacNeil and Robertson dated September 5, 1940, and the letters to Inspector D. C. Saul and Superintendent E. W. Bavin of the RCMP, written in August, 1940.

<sup>131</sup> National Archives of Canada, Privy Council archives, RG2, 7C, volume 3, minutes of May 22, 1940 of Cabinet War Committee.

<sup>132</sup> Reg Whitaker, "Official Repression of communism during World War II", *Labour/Le Travail*, no. 17, Spring, 1986, p. 44.

<sup>133</sup> Much of the information about arrests and imprisonments of communists comes from the archives of the Communist Party of Canada at the National Archives of Canada, MG 28 IV, volume 63, dossier 30, microfilm reel H-1629; see documents of the National Council for Democratic Rights, the organization created by the Party to fight for the liberation of the Hull internees.

<sup>134</sup> *Le Droit*, November 14, 1939.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, November 21, 1939.

<sup>136</sup> Tim Buck, *Thirty Years, 1922-1952*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1952, p. 165.

<sup>137</sup> Gonick, *op. cit.* p. 133.

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<sup>138</sup> Gilbert Levine, *Patrick Lenihan from Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1998, p. 135-137.

<sup>139</sup> Tom McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1974, p. 208-210.

<sup>140</sup> Communist Party of Canada, *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1982, p. 137.

<sup>141</sup> In addition to the archives of the Communist Party of Canada at the National Archives of Canada (see endnote 23), another source is the House of Commons archives at the National Archives of Canada, RG14, volume 2483, file 62, "List of Cases in Ontario and List of Interned and Imprisoned Labour People", graciously supplied by Myron Momryk of the National Archives; see also Henri Gagnon, *op. cit.* about Yvonne Richard and Angela Dubé.

<sup>142</sup> Ben Swankey, "Reflections of a Communist Canadian Internment Camps", in *Alberta History*, Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, Spring 1982.

<sup>143</sup> National Archives of Canada, J. E. Rea archive, MG 31 B11, interview of Brian McKillop with Norman Penner, Jacob's son, June, 1969, p. 45. Penner was also the subject of another precedent; in October, 1940, Winnipeg's municipal council tried to remove Penner's seat on council owing to his internment. In response to Winnipeg's lobbying, Manitoba adopted the Public Officer Disqualification Act, by which internees could not retain their elected positions. The federal government followed with a DOCR order applying the measure across the country; see p. 13 of this same interview.

<sup>144</sup> There is ample documentation about the internees of the Canadian Seamen's Union. See Laurel MacDowell, *The Renegade Lawyer: The Life of J. L. Cohen*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001; National Archives of Canada, J. L. Cohen archives, MG 30 A94, volume 19, dossier 2801-2, volume 20, dossier 2801, volume 22, dossier 2825; National Archives of Canada, *Canadian Seamen's Union History Project* archive, MG30 A 124, volume 4, dossier 6; National Archives of Canada, *Searchlight*, Canadian Seamen's Union newspaper, November, 1941, volume V, no. 11, p. 1, 2; Jim Green, *Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union*, Toronto, Progress Books, 1986; John Stanton, *Life and Death of the Canadian Seamen's Union*, Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978; and J. A. P. Sullivan, *Red Sails on the Great Lakes*, Toronto: MacMillan, 1955.

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- <sup>145</sup> National Archives of Canada, J. L. Cohen archives, MG30, A94, volume 22, dossier 2805, p. 58 of Murray's appeal before the consulting committee.
- <sup>146</sup> National Archives of Canada, J. L. Cohen archives, MG30 A94, volume 31, dossier 2817-T.
- <sup>147</sup> National Archives of Canada, J. L. Cohen archives, MG30 A94, volume 31, dossier 2917-S, letter from Howe to W. R. Eggleton, dated August 19, 1940.
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, letter from Howe to Magnuson, dated October 27, 1941.
- <sup>149</sup> Doug Smith, *Cold Warrior: C.S. Jackson and the United Electrical Workers*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997, p. 75, 76; see also National Archives of Canada, Clarence Jackson archives, MG 31 B54, volume 1, letter of November 19, 1941 from Minister of Justice.
- <sup>150</sup> Doug Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
- <sup>151</sup> National Archives of Canada, Clarence Jackson archives, MG31 B54, volume 26, dossier entitled "The Defence of Canada: Civil Liberties during WW II, transcription of CBC radio program *Ideas*; Jackson's case was brought before the Cabinet War Committee, the only individual case to be so treated. (See chapter 5).
- <sup>152</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, *op. cit.*, dossier 2917-I.
- <sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, dossier 2917-V; the Padlock Law was eventually struck down as unconstitutional during the 1950s.
- <sup>154</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, MG90 A94, volume 31, dossier 2917-W, letter from Myron Kostaniuk And John Boychuk to the Parliamentary committee studying the DOCR; also see volume 30, dossier 2917-P about Hull internee Mathew Shatulsky, editor of *The People's Gazette*, the newspaper for which Peter Krawchuck wrote.
- <sup>155</sup> Telephone interview with Peter Krawchuk by author in January, 1997.
- <sup>156</sup> William Repka, *Howard Lowrie, MD: Physician, Humanitarian*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1977, p. 69.
- <sup>157</sup> Suzanne Holyck Hunchuck, "A House Like No Other", Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 2001, p. 85, 86, 133.
- <sup>158</sup> About the question of ULFTA's libraries, see NAC, Communist Party of Canada archives, MG28 104, volume 24, dossier 64, Civil Liberties Association of Toronto, "An Appeal for Justice: The Case of the Seized Properties of ULFTA; also J.L. Cohen archives at the National Archives of Canada, letter by

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Kostaniuk and Boychuk, quoted above; and also in the Cohen archives, volume 27, dossier 2893, declarations under oath by Mike Andrichuk and David Simkin.

<sup>159</sup> Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, p. 139.

<sup>161</sup> National Archives of Canada, Communist Party of Canada archives, MG 28 IV4, volume 43, dossier 2, see the document published by the Hull internees on May Day in 1942 entitled *The Red Patch*.

<sup>162</sup> Doug Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

## Chapter 4 — Internment in Hull

### The Transfer to Hull<sup>163</sup>

For six days, the internees demonstrated and struck against the administrators of Petawawa before a transfer was arranged. Hull prison was a white elephant built by the first Duplessis government in the late 1930s. It had never been used since it did not meet provincial standards. Quebec's Public Works minister, Téléphore-Damien Bouchard, arranged the rental of the facility when the federal government looked for a facility for the communist internees. On August 20, the transfer took place, not without overwrought drama from the authorities. The Petawawa prisoners, 85 strong, were loaded into five trucks with two machine gunners each, each truck separated by armed men on motorcycles, who escorted them to the train in Petawawa making its regular run east on the Ontario side of the Ottawa Valley. The men occupied special cars, again supervised by soldiers with machine guns. The train arrived half an hour late on August 20, 1941 at 6:40 p.m. at the Brewery Creek station in Hull, just west of Hull Island. A considerable crowd of onlookers had gathered to greet the train. They were no doubt curious owing to the army trucks and the presence of RCMP, provincial police, and municipal policemen. After disembarking, the men were loaded anew into army trucks, and accompanied by police escort to their new home at the northern end of Saint-François Street. Spirits among the men were good; after all, they had won a victory by their political agitating at Petawawa. *Le Droit* reported that the men were singing 'It's a long way to Tipperary', a traditional wartime song, during their trip from the train station in Hull to the prison.

The men's mood changed when they realized that their new camp was actually a prison. Norman Freed spoke for the men. "We're not going into a political dungeon — don't move, fellows!", Freed declaimed. Tension mounted between the men and the soldiers. An hour or so later, the ranking officers came out of the prison, having spoken by phone to their superiors in Ottawa. They advised the men that this was their facility, which they were to operate free from military intervention, and that they could come and see for themselves. Freed and others went in, checked out the prison, and returned to tell the rest of the detainees that things were going to be alright, that they should enter the facility.

#### Internment in Hull — the Good

The Army was true to its word. The cells on each side of the floors were unlocked. The cells were each occupied by two internees, who slept on bunk beds. At the south end of each floor was a common room, which the internees could use for recreation purposes. The guards stayed outside the prison walls. They were members of the Veterans' Home Guard, units that had been formed of veterans of World War I and even of the Boer War, often local men. The maximum age of these soldiers was supposedly fifty, but this requirement was often not respected.<sup>164</sup>

The internees were free to come and go within the prison. There was an outside exercise compound, a rest area with trees and grass, a community hall, and a communal

kitchen and dining area. The entire administration was in the hands of the internees, who organized themselves into teams for cooking, serving, cleaning, and other household work. The sudden nature of the transfer meant that much of the Hull prison was not yet completely organized; for instance, kitchen, laundry room, even mattresses. The heating and hot water did not always function<sup>165</sup>, but when a new commandant, Major Thompson, replaced the original commandant, Major Green, improvements were made, such as fencing an enclosure adjacent to the prison in which the internees could play softball and volleyball.

So, while Joe Wallace remained in solitary confinement in Petawawa, which had actually launched the strike that had led to the transfer to Hull, and internees Michael Sawiak and Wasyl Kolynsk remained ill in the military hospital in Pembroke near Petawawa, 85 internees settled into a routine in Hull. Of itself, being freed from harassment by the fascist internees in Petawawa represented a considerable improvement. In an interview with the author in 1997, Peter Krawchuk summarized his perspective about conditions in Hull:

“We had lots to eat and clean facilities. We were warmly dressed.<sup>166</sup> No one was beaten, and no one died in prison. We had to follow military orders and salute officers, but conditions in Canadian internment camps were not at all similar to those of German concentration camps nor of Soviet gulags.”<sup>167</sup>

One might hope so; after all, this was Canada!

As for morale of the internees, ex-internee Ben Swankey distinguishes two periods: before and after the German invasion of the U.S.S.R. on June 22, 1941. Before the invasion, the internees wondered whether they might ever be released from Hull. Nevertheless, they tried to maintain a positive attitude, especially by devoting themselves to studies. After the Soviet Union entered the war on the side of the allies, the internees knew they would eventually be released but it became a question of when, so their impatience and frustration grew.<sup>168</sup>

The internees had a lot of time on their hands; after all, there was only so much work required to produce meals, clean their facility, and do laundry. The rest of the time was devoted to recreational pursuits and to study. Here was the typical routine of a day in Hull internment camp:

7 a.m.	Reveille
7:45	Showers, ablutions
8:00	Breakfast
8:45	Work begins
10:00	Medical appointments
11:00	Commandant's inspection of internees
11:15	Work continues
noon	Lunch
12:45	Rest period
14:00	Work resumes



16:15	End of work period
17:00	Supper
20:30	Roll call of internees
20:45-21:30	Showers, ablutions
22:30	Lights out <sup>169</sup>

Army policy was to treat the internees as enemy subjects, similar to Canadian internees of Italian, German, or Japanese origin.<sup>170</sup> Internees could not be obliged to work on military operations. On the other hand, they were not to be paid for administrative or domestic work, however, they could receive 20¢ per hour to work on special projects. In this way, some of the men worked on work details cleaning and enlarging Saint-François Street, then a dirt road linking the prison to present-day Taché Boulevard. Most of the work done by the internees, however, was of the domestic variety, caring for each other and their facility. The men chose as their leader and spokesman Gerry McManus, from Saskatchewan, with Montrealer Roméo Duval as his assistant.<sup>171</sup> Some of the men, including Pat Sullivan, and some of the Ukrainians, among them Peter Keweryga, were cooks by trade, so food quality was never a problem in Hull.

With all this time on their hands, the internees devoted themselves to improving themselves using books provided by the YMCA and books about marxism smuggled clandestinely into prison, including a copy of *Das Kapital*. Many of the internees were blue-collar workers for whom the Communist Party had always been a prime source of instruction. So the internees studied trade unionism, Marx, and Lenin. As well, Jacob

Penner taught German; bilingual Montrealer Kent Rowley taught French to anglophones and vice-versa; Dr. Howard Lowrie of Toronto gave lectures on medicine; while Samuel Levine, a professor of mathematics and physics at the University of Toronto, gave lectures on science and mathematics. There were persistent group discussions about international politics and the progress of the war. Many of the internees spoke about Hull internment camp as being their ‘university’, while the Party did emerge from the internment with better-trained leaders.<sup>172</sup>

The YMCA provided the internees with musical instruments such as mandolins, guitars, and banjos. In March of 1942, the Army rented a piano for the internees. The internees took to organizing regular concerts that would feature music, poetry, especially by Joe Wallace, and comedy routines, including imitations of politicians by Napoléon Nadeau. There might be Ukrainian dancing, while the internees would be led in song by Ben Swankey, Dmitri Nikiforiak, Samuel Levine, Jean Bourget, or Ernest Gervais.<sup>173</sup> Any occasion was reason enough for a celebration: St. Patrick’s Day, New Year’s Eve, the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. These celebrations would be accompanied by impressive feasts. For instance, here was the menu internees published for their dinner on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, November 7, 1941.<sup>174</sup>

Hull House

Supper on the Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, served in the renown

Smolney Banquet Hall, 6 p.m.

Hors d’oeuvres (*sans* caviar)

'Red Flag' tomato soup  
'Jolly George' roast beef  
'Kornilov' mashed potatoes  
'Internationale' vegetables  
Brown sauce  
Pickles  
'Ameriskanski' salad  
lettuce and tomatoes  
'Gosplan' cakes  
'Mikoyan' fruits  
'Samovar' coffee  
Hull white wine (internees' homemade concoction)  
Corona cigars  
Bourgeois chocolates".

The internees lived high at these celebrations. At one of these feasts, at first toast in the new year, in front of a banquet table groaning with steak, turkey, vegetables, and potatoes, Bill Walsh remembers delivering a rendition of 'Arise ye Prisoners of Starvation' to his inebriated friends."<sup>175</sup>

Homemade booze was commonplace at these celebrations. Ben Swankey described one recipe for homemade wine used by the internees: a quart of grape juice, a pound of sugar, yeast, and a gallon of water. Swankey described the result of this concoction: "A

tolerable wine after 14 days, but if we waited longer, it turned to vinegar; thankfully, no wine was wasted as we hurried to drink it all on the fourteenth day.”<sup>176</sup> Pat Sullivan also seemed to be expert in producing alcoholic beverages using a secret still. Cooking detail was equally divided into two parties: Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians, with both collaborating on Sundays. Clarence Jackson describes how the Ukrainians made their homemade hooch.

We had these great big garbage pails, and a considerable range of fruits and vegetables from the Ukrainian community in Ottawa. We'd mix all the fruit in the garbage cans, and put it in a broom closet where there was a fair bit of heat coming up from the pipes. With the first batch, nobody could wait until it was really matured — as a result, people were sick all over the place. But finally, it all got organized. The Ukrainians decided they were going to make a real brew. In the kitchen, there was a great big stock-pot, always on the back of the stove, for throwing in left-over vegetables and so on. The Ukrainians built a little three-legged wooden stool that sat inside the stock-pot. We poured what wine we made in there. A hand basin was just the right size to fit inside, and the army mixing pan for mixing bread was just the right size to fit on top. We had a walk-in ice refrigerator with lots of ice, and we'd chip off the ice, put the ice in the top pan, put a little dough around, seal the thing, put the lid on it, and place it at the back of the big cooking range. After about three days, you got 50 per cent alcohol.<sup>177</sup>

The soldiers seemed to know about the procedure; in fact the guards sometimes even brought in bottles of whiskey for the internees. Patrick Lenihan describes one instance in particular of how the Army tolerated the internees' booze-making.

Fred Collins, Misha Cohen and myself were in the kitchen and in came Captain Shaw, the orderly officer this day. We had made maybe ten gallons of it, and we had it in vinegar gallons behind sacks of flour. We had a supply, but we were making another batch. And when you came into the kitchen, you could certainly get an odour.

So he comes up, smart looking, and we're busy, of course, chopping meat or some other thing. He's looking at all the pots because we're getting ready for lunch. And he looks at this one and says, "What's this?" Fred Collins says, "Oh, that's a new kind of French soup we're making." I could have died laughing. He turns around to the sergeant and he says, "Isn't that interesting?" And away he goes. So we didn't hear a word. Everything went fine.

About three days later, I'm walking out towards the door where the soldiers were, and who comes out the door but the colonel in charge [actually a major]. He stops me and says, "You're working in the kitchen?" I say, "Yes, sir."

He says, "What's that stuff you've got behind the flour sacks in the kitchen?" They had checked the kitchen at night time when we were asleep, and they had found it. I says, "Oh, sir, that's vinegar." He looks at me and says, "Well, take it easy drinking it."<sup>178</sup>

For the most part, the middle-aged men of the Veteran's Home Guard treated the internees well indeed. Many of the veterans had participated in unionization efforts and unemployment demonstrations during the 1930s, and were quite sympathetic to the plight of the internees. The guards even brought the internees books. The familiar and friendly attitude of the guards is illustrated in a story told by Jack Bell in his biography. Bell was a union organizer from Cape Breton who was friends with Charles Murray, the organizer from the Nova Scotia fishermen's union who was interned in Hull. Bell was part of a union delegation from Nova Scotia which was meeting the next day with MacKenzie King and Humphrey Mitchell, King's Labour minister at the time, to discuss labour conditions in the Nova Scotia shipyards. Bell and his mates decided to go to Hull prison to bring the internees a bottle of navy rum and cigarettes, and to visit Murray and the others.

We found the gate to the camp, but there was no one there. We went through the guard office, and ducked into one of the sleeping quarters. A couple of guys were there shining their shoes, and we said, "Where the hell is everybody?" They said, "They're over in the kitchen-mess area." So we went over, and here were a couple of older guys, veterans of World War I, who were guards at the camp. They had their jackets off, and they were playing cards with the boys and drinking homebrew. When they saw us, they jumped up and grabbed their guns. "Who are you, what are you doing here?", putting on an official act. By then, a couple of the boys recognized us and yelled out.

The guards saw that they knew us, and we immediately produced the rum and the cigarettes. So the guards said nothing, and offered us some of their homebrew. So we stayed there talking to the boys and drinking.<sup>179</sup>

In May, 1942, the Army supplied the internees with a radio and loudspeakers. Unbeknownst to the military, however, the internees already had their own clandestine radio. Ukrainians from Ottawa had sent the internees a barrel of cheese with a crystal set, a radio for which one uses an ear-piece, hidden in the bottom of the barrel. So, according to Peter Krawchuk: “We not only received a radio, but our cook, Peter Keweryga, who was famous for his preparation of Ukrainian dishes, made delicious varenykys out of that cheese for the entire antifascist commune. It meant that the parcel... was just as tasty as it was useful.”<sup>180</sup> Patrick Lenihan shared a cell with Muni Taub in the middle of one of the floors in the prison, so the crystal set was placed in the top bunk in which Taub slept. A thin, copper wire was run to a metal clothesline outside, with the wire requiring installation every day. Taub, Lenihan, Fred Collins, and Mischa Cohen took turns listening to the daily news, then reporting them to their *confrères*. Lenihan recalls one news report in particular.

I’ll never forget it — I’m laying in the bunk this night listening to the crystal set, and the news broke about Pearl Harbour. I almost sailed out of my bunk. I don’t think my feet hit the ground until I got down to the end of the hallway

where Norman Freed was sleeping or resting and reading. I says, “Norman! Get up! I just got it. Pearl Harbour is wiped out!” Well, he thought I had gone crazy. They all did for a couple of seconds. I says, “Come on up and listen to it. Come on up and listen.” Sure enough, it was true.”<sup>181</sup>

In fact, having access to the crystal set was a real coup for the internees, since we shall see soon, censorship policies of the Army meant that the men were deprived of news of the outside world from regular channels.

One surprising activity of the internees was their composition and reading of poetry, an activity led by Joe Wallace. Wallace, poet of the working class, was 52 years old when he was published for the first time.<sup>182</sup> Originally from a petty-bourgeois, Irish Catholic family from Toronto, Wallace received university instruction at St. Francis Xavier in Nova Scotia. Wallace spent much of his young adult life in Halifax, working in the advertising industry, even becoming a leader of the young Liberals. Wallace had an epiphany and became a communist, eventually working in Quebec for the Canadian Labour Defence League. While in solitary confinement in Petawawa in August, 1941, in a sombre mood, Wallace wrote *The Dream We Shared*.

The dream that we shared was splendid,

Aye, but the dream is ended,

Too far, too fair to be true.

Lay it away in rosemary,



Rosemary and rue.

The broken wind is nae mended,

The broken heart is nae tended,

Lay it away in rosemary,

Rosemary and rue.

In a more optimistic mood in the same period, Wallace wrote *How High, How Wide*.

My prison window is not large,

Five inches high, six inches wide,

Perhaps seven,

Yet it is large enough to show

The whole unfettered to and fro

Of heaven. How high, how wide is heaven?

Five inches high, six inches wide,

Perhaps seven.

Wallace wrote a poem dedicated to Jenny, Norman Freed's wife, entitled *For N.F.*

What's this?

Surely the guards are not remiss?

Surely the gates are watched too well?

Nevertheless, I must insist

That I've had Jennie in my cell,  
Had her with me from the start,  
Ever and always in my heart.

One of his finest poems written during the internment in Hull was *Escape by Night*.

Sometimes in sleep the walls recede,  
The doors dissolve, and your feet are freed  
To follow and find thro' time and space  
One who is waiting, in drowsy grace,  
Her hair adrift in the pillow's press,  
And her arms outflung in their loneliness.  
You bend above her; she loves you yet  
For she dreams your name and her cheeks are wet.  
"Winter is over, sweet, my sweet,  
And the heart returns to the heart's retreat.  
So a sign that the year uncloses,  
I lay my head on your breast of roses."  
She starts to waken; alas, it seems  
You're only a dream in a dream of dreams.  
She tries to hold you: a sound appals  
The clang of doors and the rush of walls.  
Wake the steel and stone of your cell,

From the brief hello

To the long farewell.<sup>183</sup>

### Internment in Hull — The Bad

The internees' writings and interviews reveal surprisingly positive memories about their internment in Hull. The decent food and facilities, the adult education, the celebrations, the camaraderie and solidarity, the political purpose, even the general times of World War II all seem to leave a rosy hue to the memories of the ex-internees about their internment in Hull. Some of this might be explained by old men remembering with nostalgia the vigour and pleasures of their youth, without the attendant difficulties of the period, such as one might when recalling one's youth spent in school or the military. Nevertheless, regardless of how the internees made the best of the situation, they were still prisoners of the state who were being held for political purposes.

The first problem was the aggressive attitude of the initial camp administrator, Major Green, towards the internees. Green was angry with the internees for the problems they were causing the Establishment. His attitude showed up in silly confrontations with the internees over rules and military discipline. For instance, commencing in September, 1941, some men were detailed to work on the cleaning and construction of Saint-François Street. Green refused to pay the men, seemingly unaware of army regulations that would have required him to pay 20¢ per day to each internee as it constituted a special project. Green instead offered to pay this amount to make camouflage nets but the internees

refused to do this work, since they claimed that it should be done by unionized workers. It appears that neither Green nor the internees were aware that having internees do military work, in any case, was against Army regulations. Green also displayed his negative attitude in his comments about the internees in the war diaries, a sample of which follows.

- The internees are quite disagreeable; they caused the trouble in Petawawa, and they are trying to do the same here.
- I believe that these internees have no loyalty towards their country; they are traitors to the country and its war effort.
- The prisoners have once again begun protesting, and they are demanding that I mail their petitions, which I refuse to do.
- The prisoners persistently display their hatred of the government owing to their internment.
- The consulting appeals committee works hard and is very conscientious; it gives all the chances to the internee, who normally tells a pack of lies.<sup>184</sup>

Green's opinion about releasing John McNeil:-- It's like pulling teeth, but I have to follow orders. The only consolation is that there are enough restrictions to hold him and keep him under observation for a while."<sup>185</sup> About the sick Michael Sawiak, who died shortly after his release, Green writes:

The consulting appeals committee is very gentle to Sawiak, but he becomes very emotional, which he does when he wants to provide a show to gain sympathy. <sup>186</sup>

About Fred Spewak, eventually diagnosed with tuberculosis, Green writes: “Spewak has started once again to behave badly; ever since Lowrie has been released owing to his illness, the idea has occurred in Spewak’s mind that he could be released if he behaves like a sick person.”<sup>187</sup>

Major Green tried to block the internees’ attempts to petition the government and inform the outside world about their situation. Moreover, Green was a spy for the RCMP, most likely with the connivance of the Army, since Green openly wrote about his activities in military documents.

I have some data for RCMP Intelligence Section, so I go to the Justice building and have a look at their methods. Am very pleased with what I see, and am glad of having the chance to see what marvellous work they are doing, and the thorough and efficient manner in which it is done. I now know where to go for my information which I may need regarding those who are interned.<sup>188</sup>

The next day, Green brought the RCMP information about Norman Freed and Dave Sinclair. On December 5, 1941, Green brought to the attention of the RCMP three letters

he intercepted, intended for McNeil, Peter Prokop, and Nikita Krechmarowsky.<sup>189</sup> Later that same month on Christmas Day, Green sent his superiors copies of letters sent by Gerry McManus, the internees' spokesman.<sup>190</sup>

The RCMP tried to place plants among the internees, false prisoners whose mission was to spy on the other internees. Patrick Lenihan reports that it happened twice, although this author has uncovered only one occasion.<sup>191</sup> This involved a man who arrived from Montreal in March, 1942 named Paul-Henri Robert. Some of the French-Canadian internees knew Robert. Jean Bourget and Joseph Duchesne had known him in a Montreal group that defended the unemployed called *ouvriers unis*. His behaviour with this organization, always calling for violent demonstrations and confrontations with the police, led some of the internees to believe that he was an *agent provocateur*, working for the authorities. If Robert was sent to spy, he was not very effective for he even admitted that he had once been an RCMP officer, who had been mistakenly sent to Hull rather than Petawawa. Robert shared a cell with Jacques Villeneuve and described to his cell-mate the circumstances of his most recent arrest which led him to Hull. Robert claimed he had been arrested for making anti-British remarks while in a tavern. The story sounded strange, at least in the opinion of Bourget, Duchesne, Villeneuve, Rodolphe Majeau, and Roméo Duval, who wrote to Major Green on March 25, 1942, demanding that Green get rid of Robert since they believed he was a stool-pigeon, a spy, a plant. Green refused to acquiesce to the demands, maintaining that he had no idea who Robert was. The internees made life miserable for Robert, isolating him, and threatening to beat him. Was this an instance of the Hull internees being paranoid about someone they did not like from the

outside world? Possibly, but when Green was transferred to the POW camp for German soldiers at Bowmanville, near Oshawa, Ontario, on April 15, 1942, the very same day, Robert was transferred to Petawawa. The whole incident is unclear but shows, nevertheless, that the internees, at the very least, were concerned about spies among their ranks.

A phenomenon readily detectable was the censorship to which the internees were subjected. Letters from family were intercepted and delivered. Mention of news from the outside world, including actions being taken by lawyers on behalf of internees, was removed from letters. The internees were not allowed to use terms such as 'anti-fascist' to describe themselves, nor were they allowed to refer to Hull as a 'concentration camp'. Censorship was a regular part of military life during the war. Soldiers were required to be circumspect in describing their whereabouts or activities, and their communications both to and from were subject to censorship. Applied to the internees, however, censorship was just one more limitation of their civil rights, which provided dubious military benefits, at best. Sometimes, correspondents of internees were objects of investigation; this was especially the case for soldiers who were sons of the internees.<sup>192</sup>

According to a Cabinet order of May, 1940, the federal government was responsible for social assistance provided by municipalities to the families of internees, but this did not mean much if municipalities refused to provide this assistance, or if the amounts were too little. The trust companies working for the Trustee of Enemy Properties froze assets of the internees and their families. Spouses and children of the internees were

left in a destitute situation. In at least one case, internee Ernest Gervais was released in a rare humanitarian gesture to tend to the needs of his family.<sup>193</sup>

The internees were not permitted visits by their families, always an object of contestation by the internees. Nonetheless, Jenny Freed did lead a delegation of wives, who hitchhiked from Montreal to the Hull prison, and caused quite a commotion when the men were able to talk to the women, who were standing outside the prison walls. In October, 1941, the authorities began permitting conjugal visits to Hull. John McNeil's wife from Winnipeg was the first to visit her husband. In November, 1941, other visits followed, and they soon become typical, even if not too intimate since the visits were limited to thirty minutes in the presence of guards. Visits from others were also controlled, including even one official visit from the Premier of Quebec, Adélard Godbout. Godbout was allowed to meet Colonel Sherwood, commandant of the Ottawa region, and Major Green, during a visit in Hull in October, 1941. While Godbout was permitted to inspect the quarters of the guards, the Army did not allow Godbout, accompanied by local politicians from Hull, inside the prison to visit the internees' quarters. His only contact with the internees that was permitted was listening to a few songs sung by a choral group of the internees.<sup>194</sup>

One problem had disproportionate effects on the various internees. This was the question of the health of the internees. It appears that a large number of them became seriously ill, and did not receive the medical care they required. Three of the ex-internees already released from Petawawa on medical grounds had died shortly thereafter:



Markman, Popovich, and Neil. Michael Sawiak, editor of the ULFTA publication , *Farmer's Life*, became so ill that he lost seventy pounds. His illness precipitated his release, and he died shortly thereafter. A similar situation occurred for another internee in Hull, Alcide Aubrey, from Montreal. Mathew Shatulsky, Muni Taub, and Fred Spewak each developed tuberculosis, while Dr. Howard Lowrie was released on medical grounds. Pat Sullivan had several heart attacks between March and June of 1941, and required nine days of hospitalization in Toronto. His health became a public concern for his lawyer, J.L. Cohen, and for Sullivan's union, the Canadian Seamen's Union.<sup>195</sup>

Fifteen internees were sick with stomach ulcers when transferred from Petawawa to Hull, while there were two outbreaks of dysentery among the internees in Hull.

There are important holes in the medical records of Hull internment camp, ten months for hospitalizations, and six months for the medical records of the prison. These represent serious gaps in the official record. Nonetheless, we know that at least seventeen internees were hospitalized in Rideau Military Hospital or at the Civic Hospital, both in Ottawa 196. They were:

<i>Internee</i>	<i>Illness</i>
George Balint	Cholecystiditis (inflammation of the gall bladder)
Tom McEwen	Lipoma on the thigh (benign tumour)
Scott McLean	Haemorrhoids
Julius Nyerki	Berger's Illness (renal illness)

Mathew Shatulsky	Tuberculosis
Fred Spewak	Tuberculosis
Pat Sullivan	Heart problems, appendicitis
Muni Taub	Tuberculosis
William Taylor	Pulmonary infection
Joseph Billings	Depression
Jack Chapman	Dysentery
Roméo Duval	Colitis, appendicitis, diarrhea
Nick Huculak	Generalized pruritis (itchiness)
Peter Keweryga	Appendicitis
Wasył Kolysnik	Venereal disease
Dr. Howard Lowrie	Colic, gall bladder infection
Rodolphe Majeau	Unknown

The men sometimes suffered another calamity. Their family's difficulties rebounded upon the internees. Besides the obvious destitution that affected the internees' families, sometimes wives would make alternate arrangements for conjugal life or wives themselves could suffer ill health. Bill Walsh's wife was Anne Weir, the sister of Walsh's fellow internees, Charles and John Weir. Anne became very ill during Walsh's imprisonment and internment, and died shortly after Walsh's release.

So, while on the one hand, the Hull internees sometimes remember fondly their time in Hull, it is also true that life was difficult for the Hull internees. It was a lonely

period, isolated from their wives and families, with all that this attended. The men were harassed, censored, and spied upon, while many became ill. In fact, two sick Hull internees died shortly after their liberation. Professional careers were seriously affected, as in the case of Samuel Levine, professor at University of Toronto, or Dr. Howard Lowrie, a Toronto family physician, whose practice was seriously compromised by his internment. In short, internment was a good way to ruin the life of a man, whether young, middle-aged, or old, and that of his family.

### Internment in Hull — The Ugly

The internment in Hull, of course, represented a violation of civic and political rights. In addition to two members of the political bureau of the Communist Party being interned, McEwen and Freed, the internees included local labour leaders, including three union presidents: McKean, Sullivan, and Magnuson; and leaders of ethnic organizations, especially Ukrainian-Canadian. There were also duly-elected, local politicians who were interned. Municipal councillor Wasyl Kolysnik, of Winnipeg, was the first communist ever to hold elected public office in North America. Kolysnik was joined in Hull by his colleague on Winnipeg's municipal council, Jacob Penner. Pat Lenihan and Norman Freed were municipal councillors in Calgary and Toronto respectively. Andrew Bilesky sat on a local school board in Winnipeg, as did John Weir in Toronto. One of Weir's colleagues on schoolboard in Toronto, William Lawson, narrowly escaped serving time in Hull. Lawson was arrested and awaiting internment in Hull in the Don prison in Toronto during the summer of 1942. His crime: to have opposed a school board motion

that would have barred the use of any school building to persons or organizations who might directly or indirectly express views contrary to the war aims of Canada or the allies. Whatever could this mean?! Lawson was arrested late in July of 1942, well after Canadian communists were supporters of the war aims of Canada and its ally, the U.S.S.R..197

Once in Hull, the internees spent considerable time trying to get out, sending multiple petitions to the government, even though many petitions were initially intercepted by camp commandant, Major Green. Otherwise, it was as an individual that the internee appeared before the consulting committee that would hear the appeal of the internee as to whether he might be released, and make a recommendation thereupon to the minister of Justice. The internees and their lawyers often did not receive all the information presented to the committee by the RCMP. Other than being accused of being a member of the Party, which many internees chose to deny, new grounds for the internment kept appearing during questioning by the consulting committee members. Sometimes, these appeal sessions degenerated into wide-ranging political discussions about war and peace, where internees might be expected to name associates in the Party. In short, the burden of proof fell to the defendant rather than the state. Usually, the official offence for which he was being held was membership in an outlawed group, that is, guilt by association. Bill Walsh wrote to his wife, Anne, about the nature of his experience with the consulting committee.

The very star chamber nature of the procedure had a stultifying effect upon me... Seeing the indifference written all over their faces at the moment that I am literally turning myself inside-out for them to see and understand; all the time, growing consciousness that your happiness, my freedom... leans so heavily upon such a method of dispensing 'justice'; it was only with an effort that I could force myself to continue.<sup>198</sup>

Internee Kent Rowley, in fact, refused to participate in a closed hearing wherein his legal rights were denied. Rowley spent two and a half years either imprisoned or interned, never to actually hear any charges read against him.<sup>199</sup>

Pat Sullivan's hearing before the consulting committee became a *cause célèbre*. Sullivan was charged with being a communist, which he denied. The proceedings then amounted to a discussion of strikes which Sullivan had led, or in which he had been involved, including a 1940 strike of East coast fishermen. The federal deputy minister of Labour during the last of these events had been William Dickson, whose opinion at the time was that the strike had been illegal. Now, Sullivan's fate was in the hands of the former deputy minister, who was sitting in judgment of him. Another internee arrested for strike activity was Clarence Jackson. Jackson sat before a panel in September, 1941 that included Dickson, Justice Daniel O'Connell, a virulent anti-communist, and Justice Robert Taschereau, who eventually led a royal commission after the war into the allegations of a communist spy ring operating in Canada during the war on behalf of the U.S.S.R., the famed Gouzenko affair. During four days of hearings, the consulting

committee grilled Jackson. Jackson and his lawyer, J. L. Cohen, gave as good as they got, nevertheless, Jackson repeatedly denied membership in the Communist Party. He spent a considerable time answering questions about various strikes in which he had been involved. He also resisted provocation by the judges into saying that he supported violence. Finally, in a display of considerable *chutzpah*, Jackson skilfully defended comments he had made, criticizing the arbitrary nature of the DOCR themselves and of the appeals procedure in which he was participating.<sup>200</sup> Jackson's case drew support from the Toronto Civil Liberties Association and the Toronto Star. Jackson's case also drew the ire of his American brethren in the United Electrical Workers, who made representations to officials of the Canadian and American governments about Jackson. The case became something of a diplomatic issue. James Carey, Secretary of the CIO in the U.S., met with officials of the Canadian legation in Washington about the Jackson case. Carey argued that Jackson interned was more of a nuisance to the war effort than Jackson freed. In September, 1941, the United Electrical Workers in the U.S. recommended to the U.S. government that it press Ottawa about the Jackson case, since isolationists in the CIO in the U.S. were making use of the internment question in competition with unions who supported U.S. involvement in the war. Washington demurred from making such pressure openly, but did inform the Canadian government about the position of the United Electrical Workers in the U.S.. All this indeed did present subtle, political pressure upon Ottawa to release Jackson. These events took place before Pearl Harbour in December, 1941, which allowed American President Roosevelt to openly declare war against the fascist countries. Until such time, dealing with U.S. isolationists presented a serious problem to the Roosevelt administration.

The Jackson case was the only case of an internee, or indeed the internment policy itself, to ever be directly discussed by the King's Cabinet.<sup>201</sup> On October 2, 1941, King reported to his colleagues that 'strong representations' had been made to the Canadian legation in Washington by James Carey of the CIO. By way of response, Justice minister Ernest Lapointe reported that the RCMP was reluctant to see Jackson released, and that Jackson had been interned on the strong recommendation of C.D. Howe and the-then minister of Labour, Norman McLarty. Howe reported to his Cabinet colleagues that "... Jackson's activities had been deliberately obstructive of war production", and that furthermore, "responsible labour were disposed (sic) to agree with the necessity of drastic action" in Jackson's case. On October 28, 1941, a memo written by External Affairs for the Cabinet War Committee meeting the next day argued that: "Jackson's release... would help to allay the uneasiness in the U.S. trade union movement that formal participation in the war might mean suppression of fundamental civil liberties."

At the October 29 war committee meeting the next day, King reported to his colleagues that he had received widespread concerns about the DOCR and their arbitrariness, and the absence of normal trial procedures, however, Howe, Lapointe and McLarty were all absent. Cabinet agreed to discuss the matter once their colleagues had returned. On November 6, Howe was present at the Cabinet War Committee, but neither McLarty nor Lapointe were present, so the matter was not discussed. On November 12, Cabinet agreed that the Jackson case could not be discussed in the absence of Lapointe, who had become gravely ill. The matter was placed on the agenda of the November 19

meeting of the Cabinet War Committee although, once again, it was not discussed. Finally, Jackson was released on December 20, 1941, the day after the consulting committee which had heard Jackson's appeal recommended Jackson's release, but still without a formal decision from the Cabinet War Committee.

#### The Hull Internees — Names and Numbers

There were 89 internees in Hull. Eighty-five had come from Petawawa on August 20, 1941, while internees Sawiak and Keweryga remained ill in a Pembroke military hospital, and Wallace was still in solitary confinement in Petawawa. The three soon joined their *confrères* in Hull. The last internee to come to Hull was Harvey Murphy, a union organizer from Toronto, in February, 1942, that is, exclusive of any putative police informers such as Paul-Henri Robert. Nonetheless, sometimes even identifying names correctly in research documents presents a challenge. Many of the Europeans anglicized their names, as was the fashion at the time. As well, sometimes for Party purposes, an internee used a name different than his own. Among Ukrainians, spelling could vary greatly using the phonic approach, e. g. Andrechuk or Andrichuk. In the listings that follow, where the men are known by their pseudonym, we've added the real name if it is known to us, just to clarify things. We've listed the internees according to their ethnicity, using their family names or other information where pseudonyms are involved. The ethnic listing is only an approximation that takes no account of the possibility of mixed marriage.



## 89 Hull Internees, According to Geography

### Manitoba (33)

Anton Bayliuk, Michael Bidulka, Tony Bilecki, Andrew Bilesky, Michael Biniowski, John Boychuk, Max Butler (Marcus Beutler), Alfie (Corey or Cowie) Campbell, John Dubno, Archie Gunn, Nick Kaschak, Wasyl Kolysnik, Myron Kostaniuk, Peter Krawchuk, Nikita Krechmarowsky, Philip Lysets, Tom McEwen, John McNeil, Dennis Mosiuk, John Navis (Navizowski), Dmitri Nikiforiak, Jacob Penner, John Perozek, Jim Petrash, Peter Prokop, John Prossak, Mitch Sago (Saramengo), Michael Sawiak, Mathew Shatulsky, John Stefanitsky, William Tuomi, Orton Wade, John Weir.

### Montreal (17)

Alcide Aubrey, Jean Bourget, Tom Boychuk, Jack Chapman, Eugène Charest, Joseph Duchesne, Roméo Duval, Ernest Gervais, Paul Gervais, Rodolphe Majeau, Napoléon Nadeau, Kent Rowley, Joseph Sheer, Dave Sinclair (Siglar), Pat Sullivan, Muni Taub, Jacques Villeneuve.

### Toronto (12)

Tom Chopowick, Mischa Cohen, Fred Collins, Muni Erlich (aka Jack Taylor), Norman Freed, Ernest Holwell, Clarence Jackson, Samuel Levine, Dr. Howard Lowrie, Harvey Murphy, James Murphy, Joe Wallace.

Other Ontarians (11)

Joseph Billings (Billinski) — Timmins

Louis Binder — Ottawa

Max Gray — Ottawa

Nick Huculak — Windsor

Peter Kewerya — Port Arthur

Bruce Magnuson — Port Arthur

Julius Nyerki — Hamilton

Arthur Saunders — Ottawa

Fred Spewak — Windsor

Bill Walsh (Wolofsky) — Windsor

Charles Weir — St. Catharines

Alberta

George Balint, Pat Lenihan, Alex Miller, Bill Repka, Ben Swankey

Vancouver

Harry Assan, Robert Kerr, Fergus McKean, William Rigby (Isaac Levine)

Saskatchewan

William Beeching, Gerry McManus, William Taylor

Nova Scotia

Scott MacLean, Charles Murray, Charles Smythe

Trois-Rivières

Nicholas Pyndus

Hull Internees, Ukrainians (33)

Bayliuk, Bidulka, Bilecki, Bilesky, Billings, Biniowski, John Boychuk, Tom Boychuk, Dubno, Huculak, Kaschak, Keweryga, Kolysnik, Kostaniuk, Krawchuk, Krechmarowsky, Lysets, Mosiuk, Harvey Murphy, Navis, Nikiforiak, Petrash, Prokop, Prossack, Pyndus, Repka, Sago, Sawiak, Shatulsky, Spewak, Stefanitsky, Charles Weir, John Weir.

Hull Internees, English-Canadians (24)

Beeching, Campbell, Chapman, Collins, Gunn, Holwell, Jackson, Kerr, Lenihan, Lowrie, MacLean, McEwen, McKean, McManus, McNeil, Miller, James Murphy, Murray, Rowley, Saunders, Smythe, Sullivan, Taylor, Wallace.

Hull Internees, Jews (15)

Assan, Binder, Butler, Chopowick, Cohen, Erlich, Freed, Gray, Levine, Penner, Rigby, Sinclair, Sheer, Taub, Walsh.

Hull Internees, French-Canadians (10)

Aubrey, Bourget, Charest, Duchesne, Duval, Ernest Gervais, Paul Gervais, Majeau,  
Nadeau, Villeneuve.

Hull Internees, Other Ethnic Origin

Scandinavian: Wade and Magnuson

German: Balint and Swankey

Finnish: Tuomi

Polish: Perozek

Hungarian: Nyerki

## Endnotes to Chapter 4

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<sup>163</sup> Sources about the transfer to Hull include the following: National Archives of Canada, archive of the Canadian Army, RG 24, volume 15, 394, volume 1, 1941, war diaries of Hull internment camp. In wartime, units of the Army maintain daily journals that summarize the main activities of the unit; they are invaluable research tools. Also see National Archives of Canada, Clarence Jackson archive, MG 31 B54, volume 1, p. 11; Doug Smith, *Cold Warrior: C.S. Jackson and the United Electrical Workers*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997, p. 83; and *Le Droit*, August 21, 1941.

<sup>164</sup> See Daniel Hoffman, *Camp 30, 'Ehrenwort', a German Prisoner-of-War Camp in Bowmanville, 1941-1945*, Bowmanville, Ontario: Bowmanville Museum, 1988.

<sup>165</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Interned Without Cause*, Toronto: Kobmar Publishing Co. Ltd., 1985, p. 95.

<sup>166</sup> The internees wore blue pants with a red strip down the sides, and a blue shirt with a circular, red patch in the middle of the back. The internees joked that the red patch on the back served as a target, so that soldiers could shoot them were they to try to escape. In fact, there were no escape attempts, a matter of Party policy, so as to avoid propaganda victories for the government about dangerous escapees; therefore, the utility of the red patch was never tested.

<sup>167</sup> Telephone interview with Krawchuk in January, 1997.

<sup>168</sup> Telephone interview with Swankey in January, 1997.

<sup>169</sup> National Archives of Canada, Army archives, RG 24, reel C-5395, HQS 7236-69-32, see the permanent orders published by Major Thompson.

<sup>170</sup> National Archives of Canada, Army archives, RG 24, volume 6588, dossier 6-1-1; see the letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Hubert Sthethem, director of Internment, to the commandant of the Kingston region, which included Hull, June 15, 1940.

<sup>171</sup> Krawchuk, *Interned Without a Cause, op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>172</sup> For examples of this opinion held by the ex-internees, see Gilbert Levine, *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1998, p. 141; Doug Smith, *Cold Warrior: C.S. Jackson and the United Electrical Workers*, St.

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John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1997; and Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 2001, p. 142.

<sup>173</sup> Krawchuk, *op. cit.*, p. 115, 116.

<sup>174</sup> J.A.P. Sullivan, *Red Sails on the Great Lakes*, Toronto: MacMillan, 1955, p. 85, 86.

<sup>175</sup> Gonick, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>176</sup> Ben Swankey, "Reflections of a Communist: Canadian Internment Camps", Alberta History, Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, Spring, 1985, p. 20.

<sup>177</sup> Doug Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>178</sup> Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 144, 145.

<sup>179</sup> Sue Calhoun, "Ole Boy", *Memoirs of Canadian Labour Leader, J. K. Bell*, Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 1992.

<sup>180</sup> Krawchuk, *op. cit.*, p. 100, 101; see also Suzanne Holyck Hunchuk, "A House Like No Other", Master's Thesis, Carleton University, p. 134.

<sup>181</sup> Levine, *op. cit.* p. 143.

<sup>182</sup> Joe Wallace, *Poems*, Toronto: Progress Books/New Labour Press.

<sup>183</sup> Joe Wallace, *Poems*, Toronto: Progress Books/ New Labour Press. All poems used with permission of the publisher.

<sup>184</sup> National Archives of Canada, war diaries, *op. cit.*, volumes 2 to 7.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, volume 7.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, volume 5.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, volume 7.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, volume 4.

<sup>189</sup> National Archives of Canada, Army archives, RG 24, volume 11,249,dossier10-1-1.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>191</sup> Levine, *op.cit.* p.143-144; Yves Bernard and Caroline Bergeron, *Trop loin de Berlin*, Sillery:Septentrion,1995.

<sup>192</sup> National Archives of Canada, Army archives RG 24, volume 11,249,dossier10-1-1;see letter of July 30,1942.

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- 193 A brochure produced during the internment provides some examples of the destitute condition of some families. See *They fought for labour—now interned*, National Archives of Canada, Communist Party archives, MG 28 IV T4, reel H01629, volume 63, dossier 17, documentation of the meeting of the spouses of internees with the minister of Justice, Ernest Lapointe, National Archives of Canada, Justice archives, RG 18, volume 3564, dossier C11-19-4, volume 2.
- 194 *Le Droit*, Friday, October 10 and Saturday, October 11; see also National Archives of Canada, Army archives war diaries, series 15,394, volume 3 October 9, 1941.
- 195 Laurel Mac Dowell, *The Renegade Lawyer: The Life of J.L. Cohen*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001, P. 174, 175.
- 196 Here are the sources for the medical information about the internees: National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, MG30 A94, volume 31, dossier 291-V; William Repka, *Howard Lowrie M.D.: Physician, Humanitarian*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1977; National Archives of Canada, Army archives RG24, war diaries, *op.cit.*, volumes 1 to 12 of volume 15,395; also reel C-5371, dossier HQS 7235-1-8-32, and reel C-5372, dossier HHS 7236-1-9-32. Dr. Alain Couët, a family physician in Gatineau, helped me understand the nature of the illnesses of the internees.
- 197 Reg Whitaker, 'Official Repression of Communism during World War II,' *Labour/Le travail*, no. 17, spring, 1986, p. 147, 148.
- 198 Gonick, *op.cit.* P. 140-141.
- 199 Rick Salutin, *Kent Rowley, the Organizer*, Toronto: Lorimer, 1980, p. 29.
- 200 Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker, *Labour before the Law*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004, p. 248; also MacDowell, *op.cit.* p. 161-165 and p. 180-182; and Doug Smith, *op.cit.* p. 86-91.
- 201 National Archives of Canada, Privy Council archive, MG26 J4, V-424, WWII, PCO War Cabinet minutes, July, 1941 to December, 1941; V-425, September-November, 1941.

## Chapter 5 — The Campaign to Free the Hull Internees

### The Families' Campaign

According to A. E. Smith, the former Methodist minister who played an important role in obtaining the release of the Hull internees, the DOCR substituted the Nazi method of disappearing people for the protection of personal and political freedoms, as had existed for years in British law.<sup>185</sup> 202 The internees were often arrested in the middle of the night in order to ensure the presence of the police target at home. In fact, it usually was easier for the police to find married men as compared to bachelors, since the former had stable addresses and employment.<sup>186</sup> 203 This presented the beginning of the problems for the wives and families of the internees since, without explanation of why or where the man was being taken, he disappeared. Wife and family members would only learn where he was when they received a censored letter weeks later.

The internee's wife then had to seek social assistance from the municipality if she was fortunate enough to receive it. Municipalities often took the opportunity to add their political 'two-cents' about how to deal with traitorous communists and their families, sometimes refusing assistance. The internee's wife would then be obliged to seek employment were she fortunate enough to have someone to mind her children. She had few other means of meeting the food, clothing, housing, and medical needs of her young charges. Here are some examples of the difficult situations faced by wives of the Hull internees. Sadie Taub, Muni's wife, had to move from Montreal to Saskatchewan to her



sister's home since Sadie had to work, and she had no one else to mind her young child. Dr. Howard Lowrie's wife was left without income and the care of two children when Lowrie's medical practice was ruined by his internment. Jean Bourget's wife received \$4.95 per month of social assistance for her and five children. Helen Krechmarowsky, Nikita's wife, went nine months without any social assistance. Wasyl Kolisknyk's wife received one month of social assistance, \$13, and nothing thereafter. She could not pay for the medical care of a child sick with tonsilitis and measles. Unable to meet payments, she lost the family house and car. On February 14, 1942, Ernest Gervais was released from Hull, owing to the extreme poverty of his family.<sup>187</sup>204 In fact, this rare humanitarian gesture probably could have been applied with good reason to almost all the internees and their families.

Under such conditions, it is hardly surprising that the first, serious efforts to obtain the liberation of the Hull internees, or even to improve the conditions of the internment, came from the wives and families of the internees. Six wives first tried to visit their men in Hull prison on September 21, 1941. Led by Jenny Freed, the women had hitchhiked from Montreal. A second group tried once again, still unsuccessfully, on October 19, 1941. Each time Major Green refused the women entry, although internees and wives were able to see and talk to each other from a distance. After the second, attempted 'break-in' by wives of the internees, Green installed a barbed wire fence around the prison, so that men and women could not exchange written notes.<sup>188</sup>205 Nevertheless, Norman Freed still managed to get a letter secretly to Jenny, using the

services of Freed's lawyer, J.L. Cohen. Jenny then sent the letter to the *Ottawa Citizen*, so that the internees' petition to Mackenzie King was published on October 18, 1941.

Editor, Citizen: The enclosed is a copy of a letter which the anti-fascists interned at Hull jail sent to the Prime Minister, and which I think would be of interest to your readers and all those interested in seeing that justice prevails in our country. — MRS. NORMAN FREED, Toronto, Oct. 16, 1941.<sup>189</sup>206

September 10, 1941

The Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Prime Minister:

At the Hull Jail, within sight of the Parliament Buildings across the Ottawa river, eighty anti-Fascist Canadians are being held in a concentration camp.

We have been denied our liberty, separated from our loved ones, and prevented from carrying out our duties as Canadian citizens, some of us for as long as fifteen months, under the arbitrary powers granted the minister of Justice, the Right Honorable Ernest Lapointe, by the Defence of Canada Regulations.

Our appeals against this injustice have gone unheeded. At the hearings, no charges were presented that we were in any way guilty or even suspected of sabotage, spying, or subversive activity. The only excuses for our incarceration that have been presented to us have been that “representations have been made” that we had been members of the Communist party of Canada, or some other labour organization, or that we had associated with communists. The particulars supplied consisted of references to trade union and anti-fascist activities in the past, as far back as twenty years ago. The hearings constitute a recounting of crimes on our part, such as trying to improve the living standard of our fellow-Canadians, defending civil liberties, or urging the Canadian people to fight against fascism! Not one of our number has been charged with a single overt act; in not a single case has reason been shown why any should be imprisoned in the interest of the security of the state.

We have presented several petitions to the minister of Justice, declaring our loyalty to Canada, our support of the maximum war effort against the fascist states, our support of your government in all measures to carry the just war against fascism to victory, and our views in favour of democratic unity of the whole Canadian people to these ends. We do not know whether these petitions actually reached the minister, only that no action has so far been taken to affect our release.

Therefore, although we are aware of the multitudinous responsibilities that claim every minute of your time, we, nevertheless, take the liberty of addressing this appeal to you as the head of the state (sic), feeling that your personal intervention will serve to right these injustices...

Despite our physical isolation, we have never allowed our personal plight to spiritually separate us from the desires and aspirations of our fellow-Canadians and the world-wide struggle against fascism. We share with them all their trials and tribulations, and all their hopes and determination for victory.

We are aware that the turning point in the war is upon us, that the future is being decided on the battle fronts of Eastern Europe, that the glorious struggle waged by the U.S.S.R., its army and peoples, together with the people and armies of the British Commonwealth, in which Canada is participating, will determine the whole course and duration of the war, the security and freedom of all humanity, and of Canada herself. We know that it is exactly now, and in the momentous months to come, that our country is called upon to exert its utmost to bring victory.

We are convinced that the answer to Hitler's and Mussolini's totalitarian war is a democratic people's war, uniting the anti-fascist forces both internationally and within each country against nazi barbarism. Stern

suppression of fascist groups and intrigues within the country, the greatest extension of democratic rights to the common people, determined struggle against war profiteering and exploitation on the part of selfish interests, the boldest rallying of the common people for fullest participation in both the production and military branches of the war effort— these are the guarantees of Canada's full contribution to the epochal struggle which has engulfed the entire world...

We urge you, in the interests of the democratic war program, to use your office to order our release from the concentration camp, so that we could do our best in helping to rally the Canadian people to contribute together with ourselves, our all to the democratic war effort, to provide guns, tanks, planes and munitions to the armies of Britain, the U.S.S.R. and their allies, for all-out economic and military participation in the war to defeat Hitler Germany.

We hope that you will heed our appeal and assist our return to freedom, to our families, to our citizen duties as loyal Canadians.

On behalf of the imprisoned, anti-fascist Canadians,

Respectfully yours,

T. G. McMANUS

## Camp Spokesman

In punishment for the transgression of having smuggled out this letter, Major Green threw Freed and McManus into solitary confinement. In retaliation, the two men threatened to go on a hunger strike. Other internees stopped writing their wives, who then peppered the Justice Department with questions about their husbands. The Army was then obliged to order Green to end the solitary confinement of Freed and McManus.<sup>190</sup>207

In March, 1941, while the internees were still in Petawawa, a group of wives accompanied by Norman Penner, son of internee Jacob Penner, had undertaken lobbying in Ottawa. With the help of MP Dorise Nielsen, the wives' delegation met with sixteen MPs, as well as Ernest Lapointe and the deputy minister of Justice. The women included Rose Billings, Stella Chopowick, Jenny Freed, Mary Huculak, Kate Magnuson, Mary Prokop, Gertrude Siglar (wife of Dave Sinclair), Helen Krechmarowsky, and the wives of Jean Bourget and Charles Murray (whose names do not appear in the documentation of the Ottawa meeting). The women demanded of Lapointe the immediate liberation of the internees from Petawawa, and the abrogation of Article 21 of the DOCR, which authorized the use of internment. Until such time as the men were freed, the delegation also demanded:

- that internees be allowed visits by families and friends;

- that goods and other property frozen or seized by the federal Trustee of Enemy Property be returned to the families of the internees;
- that the internees be designated as ‘political prisoners’ rather than ‘prisoners-of-war’, so that they be permitted to receive letters uncensored, as well as newspapers and other publications;
- that adequate social assistance for the families of internees be provided.

Lapointe responded that the demands fell within the jurisdiction of Cabinet colleagues, however, he promised to send copies of the women’s submission to relevant colleagues.<sup>191</sup>208

Sometimes individual wives undertook their own initiatives , such as when Anthony Bilecki’s wife sent the following letter to Lapointe on October 14, 1941, which presented arguments typically made by the wives.

This letter is written for the purpose of requesting that my husband, Anthony Bilecki, be released from internment in Hull, Quebec, based on the following:

- contrary to the charge that he was a member of an illegal organization, namely, the Communist Party... he was not a member after the Party was declared illegal in June, 1940, and therefore has committed no act against the existing laws of the country;

- his being a member of the Party prior to the dissolution of it did not constitute an offense because the Party was legal, well-established, and recognized as such, a political organization having two aldermen and two school trustees in the civic administration of the City of Winnipeg; as well as a member of the Manitoba Provincial Legislature;
- he never was disloyal to Canada, having never done anything that could be constituted as an offense...;
- he was and is still an ardent anti-fascist, has always fought against fascism to the best of his ability; in fact, his joining the Party was done for this purpose because he regarded it as the only genuine, anti-fascist organization; proof of this as well as of his willingness to fight fascism can be found in his testimony given before Judge Hyndman of the advisory committee last September, 1940, at Kananaskis, so it cannot be said that his opinion has changed with the present, changed international situation;
- even if it were an offense to be a member of a legal organization before it was declared illegal, to be interned for over 15 months should be punishment enough, more so when he has again reaffirmed his loyalty to Canada... by a sworn affidavit which was sent to yourself, as well as his expressed desire to help Canada in its present war by all means, even enlisting in Canada's armed forces, if accepted.<sup>192</sup>209

### The Internees' Campaign



The German invasion of the U.S.S.R. on June 22, 1941 had a catalyzing effect on communists throughout the world as they were now freed from the instructions of the Comintern about not participating in an imperialist war. In a sense, the Comintern and the U.S.S.R. Communist Party now caught up with the reality of the war whereby, in many countries, especially those defeated by the Axis powers, it was local communists who were leading the fight against the nazis. In Canada, the change of circumstances freed the communists to openly advocate total war against the Axis. In the internment camp at Petawawa, and in Hull after the August 20, 1941 transfer of internees, the internees increased the pressure to obtain their release. Their method was to send petitions, firstly to the Army's director of Internment, then to the minister of Justice, then starting in September, 1941, directly to the Prime Minister. Bill Walsh had set the tone for these petitions when he wrote from the Ontario Reformatory in Guelph on July 11, 1941 to Ernest Lapointe.<sup>210</sup><sup>193</sup> Walsh described his anti-nazi activities among Germans in the Kitchener area before the war, then offered his services to the Canadian Army, vaunting his ability to shoot and his familiarity with several languages. In fact, having grown up in attack on Pearl a German, Jewish part of Montreal, Walsh was fluent in German, French and Yiddish. Walsh's real name was Moshe Wolofsky. His red, curly hair often led people to assume that his adopted name of Walsh was real, indeed that Walsh was obviously Irish. The offer to join the war effort, along with the appeal to the-often bitter irony of the internees being anti-fascist yet interned during a war against fascists, were regular elements of petitions that now rained upon the government, in spite of the attempts by Major Green in Hull to block the petitions. From Petawawa in the summer of 1941 had come petitions dated June 27, July 1 and 31, and August 7, 9, 14, and 15.

Beginning shortly after the transfer to Hull on August 20, 1941, there followed petitions dated August 22, Labour Day, September 4 and 10, October 1 and 28, November 28, and December 11, 1941. The petitions continued into the next year: February 2, May 26, and June 6.<sup>194211</sup> The petitions sometimes made topical references, for example, to the war in the Pacific a few days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour Harbour. The petitions sometimes also contained specific demands. On June 27, 1941, the Petawawa internees protested about the release of known fascists among Petawawa internees. One case in particular involved James Francheschini, a wealthy, Italian construction contractor and a Liberal, who was released on medical grounds the same day that Clarence Jackson was arrested, June 19, 1941. The internees' letter on Dominion Day, 1941 advised the authorities that the internees were the victims of threats from fascists interned at Petawawa. On August 7, 1941, Fergus McKean and Gerry McManus sent the following telegram.

Sergeant-Major Barry in charge of compound police supposed to protect us from fascist internees. Instead goes into cell of one anti-fascist L. Binder and threatens physical beating as a Jewish obscene also stating that the Jews started this war. L. Binder protested against poor quality of food. Form of protest regrettable but immaterial. Barry instructs to hut leaders of huts composed of anti-fascist Canadians quote tell the Jewish obscene in your huts that they will not get away with such stuff unquote. Further states quote we fought the last war for the Jewish obscene we will not fight this war for the Jews over unquote. Action of Barry bears out our warnings given in our

communications to Ottawa that situation in camp most dangerous. Our appeals and warnings rest with government. We request that our repeated appeals be heeded immediately. How long are we going to be kept in this dangerous situation and subjected to threats and insults? (sic)<sup>195</sup>212

On August 14, 1941, the Petawawa internees protested to Lapointe about Joe Wallace being restricted to solitary confinement, while they also announced the beginning of their strike to protest Wallace's confinement. On August 22, 1941, two days after the internees were transferred to Hull, the internees thanked Lapointe and the government for having separated them from the fascists at Petawawa, however, they also expressed the wish that the internment in Hull be only temporary. On September 4, 1941, the Hull internees complained to Lapointe about not being able to receive visitors, about pressure by Major Green on internees to do military work, and finally, about the censorship of letters to and from the internees. In their letter on September 10, 1941, the internees complained about their appeals before the consulting committees, including the lack of specific reasons for the detention of the internees. On October 1, 1941, the internees congratulated Prime Minister King for having designated Hull prison as a clearing-house for freeing the internees, and for having named a committee of public servants to exercise this function. In fact, an observer could now detect the government moving in small steps towards the release of the Hull internees. On November 14, 1941, federal MP Dorise Nielsen presented to the House of Commons a petition from the internees, in spite of persistent objections by Mackenzie King.<sup>196</sup>213 On November 28, 1941, a letter from Hull provided a list of internees who would be prepared to serve in the military after their

release from Hull, and a list of internees who would be ready to work in military production or in services supporting the war effort, such as recruitment and financial campaigns.

On December 11, 1941, shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, nine French-Canadian internees addressed the following letter to Prime Minister King, parts of which have been adapted herein into English. This letter reveals much about the political opinions of some French-Canadians vis-à-vis the war.

We, French-Canadian anti-fascists imprisoned in the concentration camp in Hull prison, feel obliged to make this special appeal to you in light of the additional, terrible danger now presented by the war in the Pacific, as well the evidence of potentially disastrous, subversive activities in the Province of Quebec.

...

Owing to our realization of the imperative necessity of a united effort by all, we consider as serious the slowdown in the war effort in our province, in comparison with other provinces, and the destructive fifth-column activities of the secret society, the *Ordre de Jacques Cartier*, which have been recently exposed in *Le Jour*.

...

The real and honest sentiments of the French-Canadian people are being exploited by subversive individuals, groups, and newspapers in an attempt to destroy Canadian unity, to turn people against Great Britain and English-Canadians in order to destroy the war effort, and to prepare the road to defeat in the war.

We, therefore, ask you to consider this dangerous situation, and to undertake the most resolute, emergency measures to prevent and eliminate this serious, internal danger by recognizing, on the one hand, the just desires of the French-Canadian people for economic security and political equality, and on the other hand, to take the measures necessary to suppress pro-fascist activities, and to rally the French-Canadian masses towards greater efforts for victory. Freeing the anti-fascist French-Canadians would provide to the great majority of loyal citizens of Quebec, perhaps currently intimidated by our detention and by the unhindered activities of subversive forces, strength and courage.

We affirm our full support for government measures to win victory, and we request that we be allowed to take our place in the Armed Forces, and in war industries and services so as, by our example and efforts, to encourage the

development and mobilization by our people for greater efforts towards victory.

Therefore, in the interests of the war effort and national unity, to which we can contribute greatly, we, the undersigned, request our immediate liberation.

Roméo Duval	Ernest Gervais
Napoléon Nadeau	Paul Gervais
Joseph Duchesne	Rodolphe Majeau
Jean Bourget	Jacques Villeneuve
Eugène Charest <sup>197</sup> 214	

Beyond the petitions, the Hull internees made declarations under oath of their loyalty to Canada, and of their support for the war against fascism. In their documents, the internees described themselves as ‘anti-fascists’, while they refer to Hull prison as a ‘concentration camp’, the better to embarrass the government about the irony of their internment during a war against fascism. The term ‘anti-fascist’ was also a reference to the glory days of the 1930s, when communists led the attack in Canada against fascism. Moreover, use of the term ‘anti-fascist’ also was a practical way of describing the internees as a group, since some internees denied they were members of the Communist Party, even if they secretly were, while others were no longer members of the Party or never had been. While there is no evidence that the government responded directly to the petitions and letters of the internees, we know that these measures

increased pressure on the government and support for the internees ,since considerable community support for the internees now emerged, often using the same arguments that the internees themselves used.

## Community Support

In the late 1930s, civil liberties associations had been formed in Montreal and Winnipeg, the former including McGill academics such as Frank Scott, the latter under the leadership of historian Arthur Lower. The issue at the time was Duplessis' Padlock Law. During the war, concern about the state of civil liberties led to the founding of civil liberties associations in Vancouver under the leadership of lawyer John Kerry, and in Toronto, under the leadership of B.K. Sandwell, editor of the magazine, *Saturday Night*. These local organizations then coalesced into a national body under the presidency of Sandwell. These organizations conducted lobbying, organized conferences and petitions, and wrote articles in support of the internees, rendering a lasting service to the cause of human rights in Canada. In the spring of 1940, the civil liberties associations, as well as some Conservatives, Liberals, CCFers, marxists, members of the League for Social Reconstruction and the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order along with labour union representatives met in Montreal for a national convention of civil libertarians. The presence of communists at this convention caused a considerable uproar. In Toronto, civil libertarians included among their number well-known communists such as Barker Fairley, Drummond Wren, and Clarence Jackson, but in Winnipeg, communists weren't even permitted to participate in Arthur Lower's human rights group. The majority of the

press shared the opinion of the RCMP that the members of these civil liberties associations should be themselves interned. Participants at the 1940 convention, however, argued on behalf of the liberation of the internees, maintaining that the internment policy created an environment of public opinion that diminished the enthusiasm of workers for the war effort.<sup>198</sup>215

For three consecutive years, beginning in 1940, the House of Commons organized committees to discuss the DOCR and the internment policy. While the government stood firm on the general direction of the DOCR, there were some amendments resulting from the committees' work. More importantly, the committees provided supporters of the internees, and opponents of the liberal government's repressive policies, opportunities to raise public issues about the internment. The work of J.L. Cohen before the committees on behalf of the Jehovah's Witnesses and ULFTA was vital in affecting public opinion. Cohen presented the Commons committee with so many documents demonstrating the pro-war position of ULFTA, that as Cohen wrote to the committee:

Based upon the above record, it is difficult to understand upon what basis, any excuse, let alone justification, existed for banning the ULFTA...<sup>199</sup>216

From Hull prison, internees John Boychuk and Myron Kostaniuk wrote to the Commons committee on behalf of the ULFTA internees to inform the committee of the official position of ULFTA in support of Canadian participation in the war, the ULFTA position even before war had actually been declared.<sup>200</sup>217 A second source of support for the



internees came from labour leaders and CCF circles, although these people constantly reminded any who would listen that they had serious disagreements with the communists. Nevertheless, according to leaders of organized labour, the DOCR should be amended so that it was clear that, in the future, union activities not be a reason for internment. As well, internees should have the right to fair appeals of internment orders. By the summer of 1942, the House of Commons committee pronounced itself in favour of the liberation of the Hull internees. Owing partly to the work of the Commons committee and to those who argued before the committee on behalf of the internees, partly to the evolving nature of the war, an important shift in public opinion in English Canada had occurred, whereby the government was chastised for continuing the internment in Hull and maintaining the ban on the Communist Party. This new public opinion was now being reflected in magazines such as *Saturday Night* and *Canadian Forum*, and newspapers such as the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *Toronto Star*. Sometimes, even conservative newspapers such as the *Globe and Mail*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Winnipeg Tribune*, and *Ottawa Journal* editorialized on behalf of the Hull internees. Commenting upon the internment of Clarence Jackson, the *Toronto Star* wrote that:

Mr. Jackson and others who may have been interned on similar grounds should be tried openly in the courts so as to remove the suspicion, which is gaining ground, that internment is being used by the government to hinder trade union activity.<sup>201</sup>218

Commenting upon the internment of Dr. Howard Lowrie, a *Toronto Star* editorialist wrote on August 2, 1941:

... It is too much like Germany under a nazi government, and too little like Canada under a Liberal government, to have men like this spirited away and held incommunicado without a hearing and without a hint as to their supposed wrong-doing.<sup>202</sup>219

The situation of the Canadian communists also drew the attention of British and American media. An article in the British magazine, *The Economist*, about the internment policy of the Canadian government advised Canadians to protect themselves against the growth of fascism in Canada. Another British magazine, *The New Statesman and Nation*, complained that the intimidation of communists was growing in Canada to include intimidation of workers and intellectuals by police at all levels of government.<sup>203</sup> 220 An article published in February, 1941 in the American magazine, *New Republic*, strongly criticized the Canadian internment policy.

Is it possible for people whose ideal is decent, democratic behaviour to build up and use their military strength, yet continue to act toward one another in a spirit of democratic fairness and decency? ... In Canada, the answer to the question seems dangerously like 'no'. ... This is more like fascist than democratic behaviour, and many Canadians recognize the fact.<sup>204</sup>221

On September 18, 1942, the largest, Protestant church in Canada, the United Church, adopted a position in favour of the liberation of the Hull internees and ending the ban on the Communist Party. The Ontario and Manitoba governments spoke out in favour of the internees, as did representatives of all the federal parties, even including some Liberals. In the Prime Minister's office, King's two main advisors, Jack Pickersgill and W.J. Turnbull, advised against continuing the internment. In External Affairs, Lester Pearson tried in October, 1941 to obtain the release of the internees. Pearson asked Norman Robertson, then under-secretary of State for External Affairs, to get the question on the agenda of the Cabinet War Committee but ,other than the discussion surrounding Clarence Jackson, Cabinet never held a formal discussion either about the internment policy or about individual internees. The question of what attitude the government should take about the leftist internees came up in the spring and summer of 1942. The immediate catalyst was a request from the British government that German communists among POWs, originally captured by Britain but transferred to Canada, be permitted to work on behalf of the war effort, as was happening in Great Britain. On behalf of External Affairs, Robertson expressed a positive opinion, countered by that of S.T. Wood, RCMP Commissioner, who expressed concerns about agitators among the foreign population in Canada. In fact, even if not discussed in Cabinet, the government eventually permitted German POW leftists to work on behalf of the war effort, including in Hull prison. (See Postscript herein.) Another example of bureaucratic pressure came when the Commons committee heard from the commissioner of prisons in England and Wales, Alexander Patterson, that while fascists including Oswald Moseley and his followers were taken

seriously in Britain, communists were left untouched as they presented no real danger.<sup>205</sup>222

Not all was negative in terms of public opinion about the internment policy. While public opinion in English Canada had evolved to support the communist internees, the government could still count on some newspapers: the *Toronto Telegram*, the *Montreal Star*, and the *Montreal Gazette*. Business people generally continued to support the government's internment policy. In January, 1941, committees from the Montreal Board of Trade and the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce studied the government's internment policy, and came out in favour. Of course, the government could count on the bourgeoisie, as represented by C.D. Howe and Cabinet ministers in the King government. The one exception was the Quebec City MP and minister of National Defence for Air, Charles Power, who did have problems with the internment policy. The government could also count on the support of Ukrainian nationalist groups, as well as the *Ordre de Jacques-Cartier*, and the groups, individuals, and newspapers over which the *Ordre* had influence. In fact, other than Jean-Charles Harvey's newspaper, *Le Jour*, most French-language newspapers, including *Le Droit* in Ottawa, supported the government's internment policy, and in fact, worked actively for its maintenance.

National Council for Democratic Rights

An organization that had long existed in the communist camp was the Canadian Labour Defence League (CLDL), led by A. E. Smith. The mass organization had been set

up during the period of the Bennett repression a decade earlier. At the same time as the Communist Party and sympathetic organizations were rendered illegal by DOCR article 39c in June, 1940, the CLDL was also banned. In January, 1941, communists, under the leadership of A.A. MacLeod, former leader of the League to Fight War and Fascism, established a new newspaper, *Canadian Tribune*, to replace the banned communist newspaper, *Clarion*. In Quebec, communists led by Gui Caron, had established *La Voix du peuple*, in replacement of the banned communist newspaper, *Clarté*. While not officially communist, all knew that the new newspapers did present the communist viewpoint. MacLeod and Smith used the *Canadian Tribune* to editorialize about the plight of the internees, calling themselves the *Canadian Tribune Civil Rights Bureau*. Later in 1941, Smith converted the bureau into the National Council for Democratic Rights (NCDR). This organization was not mass-membership, as had been the CLDL, but rather served as a point of encounter for organizations already favourable to the release of the internees. The NCDR held conventions in Toronto and in Ottawa, the latter at the Château Laurier, to discuss the liberation of the internees and the ban on the communist organizations. The RCMP did not take the organizing by the NCDR lying down. The police held a long-standing internment order for the arrest of Toronto labour unionist Harvey Murphy. When Murphy was hired by the NCDR as its Ontario organizer in November, 1941, the RCMP quickly snatched him. Murphy had been underground for sixteen months. In February, 1942, he became the last of the Hull internees when he was transferred from Toronto to Hull prison.<sup>206</sup>223 In February, 1942, the national convention of the NCDR in Ottawa united 173 delegates from 76 organizations. The day after the convention, the NCDR obtained promises from Louis St-Laurent, the new

Justice minister who had replaced the deceased Ernest Lapointe, that the internees' cases would be heard quickly, and that arrests would cease. St-Laurent repeated the same message in a speech in March, but the next month, Dick Steele, who had been underground for months, and William Lawson, the aforementioned school board member in Toronto, were arrested. Steele and Lawson were the subject of considerable discussions at the Ontario convention in Toronto, held May 17, 1942. Moreover, the message of the NCDR was different than that of other organizations who supported release of the Hull internees, in that the NCDR was quite aggressive towards pro-fascist elements still operating in Canada even while communists were being repressed. The Ontario wing of the NCDR argued the following.

We believe that strong steps should be taken to investigate, prosecute, arrest, and curb those elements in the Dominion who besmirch the United Nations Alliance and weaken it (in violation of sections 39 and 39a of the Regulations), who advocate peace with Hitler, who spread anti-semitic ideas, who oppose the war effort, who express the ideology of the Laval-Pétain clique, i.e. the ideology of collaboration with Hitlerism, who sow racial hatred, or who by other means sabotage national unity, and, in effect, carry on in Canada the duties of a 'fifth column'.<sup>207</sup>224

The Ontarians demanded the creation of a royal commission to study alleged espionage activities by pro-nazis and fifth-columnists in Canada, similar to what the FBI was doing in the U.S.. The NCDR also advanced the argument that the internment of Canadian

communists went counter to the policies of Churchill and Roosevelt of unity of all those fighting Hitler and the Axis.

In May, 1932, the government accepted that DOCR article 21 not be applied to union or strike activity, an admission that, in the past, this had been the case. As well, the Justice minister established an advisory committee with a labour representative to hear the backlog of internees' cases.<sup>208</sup> On July 23, 1942, the Commons committee recommended the release of the Hull internees, and an end to the ban on the communist organizations.

#### Ukrainian Support

Even though banned, ULFTA organized on behalf of the internees. On June 29, 1941, a week after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, ULFTA organized public meetings in several cities to demand the release of the interned Ukrainians, the return to legality of ULFTA, the return of ULFTA properties already in the hands of nationalist, Ukrainian organizations, and lifting the ban on the Workers and Farmers Publishing Company Ltd., which published the leftist Ukrainian newspapers, *Farm Life* and *The People's Gazette*.<sup>209</sup> On July 26, 1941, the pro-communist Ukrainians created the Ukrainian Association to Aid the Fatherland. The organization offered its full support for the war effort, but also demanded the release of Ukrainian internees and the return of ULFTA properties. In June, 1942, a national convention in Winnipeg re-named the new

organization the Association of Ukrainian Canadians, a direct challenge to the conservative, nationalist Ukrainian organizations.<sup>210</sup>227

### The Communist Party

The Hull internees drew support from a variety of sources in the community: the nascent, civil liberties movement, labour unions, some of the mainstream commercial press, federal politicians even including some Liberals, the provincial governments of Manitoba and Ontario, elements of the federal public administration, elements of the progressive, social gospel movement, and the United Church of Canada. Remnants of the outlawed CLDL, ULFTA, and the communist press also re-surfaced in new forms to join in the fray to obtain the release of the Hull internees and the end of the ban on the Communist Party. Nevertheless, even with this community support, the Party itself undertook actions to take advantage of a more favourable public climate in order to obtain the liberation of the Hull internees. In actual fact, the Party was acting in self-defence when it sought an end to the internment. In addition to its propaganda value for the ruling classes, the repressive policy towards the communists did have serious, negative, practical effects on the Party. With the Buck faction in exile in the U.S. and underground in Canada, the Party had a difficult time operating at the national level. The internment also deprived the Party of local leaders on the ground. So, that at the same time as public support for the cause of the internees, indeed of the Communist Party itself had increased, the Party was in a crisis. In fact, the Liberal government's repressive policy was effective in controlling the activities of communists, even if it was not



successful in controlling the militancy of the workers who, in the view of the ruling classes, were stirred to militancy by communist agitators rather than by the needs and motivations of workers themselves. Still, for the Party, something had to give, or the Party itself might be broken.

While all this was proceeding, the nature of World War II had evolved beyond what the Party itself noticed, even though calls for the internment to end always did refer to the desire of the anti-fascists to join in the struggle to defeat the Axis. The Party's official history relates that Canadian communists were slow to notice the evolution of the war, even continuing to hold to its analysis of the war as an inter-imperialist struggle, in spite of the character of the war having changed

... from an inter-imperialist conflict into an anti-fascist, national liberation war, particularly in the countries occupied by Hitler fascism; this transformation of the war's character came about as the communist parties of Europe took the lead in organizing partisan, resistance movements.<sup>211</sup>228

This was indeed the case where communists resisted nazi occupation, as in France, Poland, Norway, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, and northern Italy. The communist resistance during World War II contributed to the defeat of the nazis, but it also helped occasion civil wars and socialist revolutions. So, while World War II still was indeed an inter-imperialist war for world hegemony, a war won by the U.S., it also became a war of national liberation for the peoples of nazi-occupied Europe. The war also was one of self-

defence by the Soviet Union; of resistance by the Chinese to Japanese imperialism which eventually turned into socialist revolution; and of national liberation among colonized Asian peoples that spilled over in some cases, for example, Indochina, into socialist revolution.<sup>212</sup><sup>229</sup> Indeed, World War II was a complex affair. Canada's communists now supported the war effort and the U.S.S.R., Canada's powerful ally, even as they sought to end the repression of which they were victims, the latter as a matter of their own self-defence and continued existence. Communists began to organize mass, public rallies about the internees' cause throughout 1942 in conjunction with their non-communist allies, especially in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Among the organizers of these rallies were the civil libertarian lawyer, John Kerry in Vancouver, and Jean-Charles Harvey, the reforming journalist in Montreal. Besides the liberation of the Hull internees, ending the ban of the communist organizations and the abrogation of article 21 of the DOCR, these rallies also made demands about the conduct of the war, such as the opening of a second front in Europe so as to relieve the pressure upon the Soviets; development of a co-operation agreement between Canada and the U.S.S.R.; and increased taxation of business profits from war contracts.<sup>213</sup><sup>230</sup> On June 22, 1942, a large rally in Toronto marked the anniversary of Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. The next month, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 300 people, including the Toronto novelist, Morley Callaghan, and the former president of the United Church of Canada, Robert Bryce, signed a public letter in the Canadian Tribune demanding the liberation of the Hull internees. The next day, another rally was held in Toronto; among the speakers were Joe Noseworthy, a CCF-MP from Toronto who had defeated a Tory stalwart, Arthur Meighen, in a by-election in February, 1942, and businessman J.M. MacDonnell, an

important Tory who was pushing his party in new, progressive directions. Sometimes, events on the international scene encouraged Canadian communists in their campaign to free the internees and lift the ban on the Party. For instance, on February 5, 1942, Canada and the Soviet Union signed a diplomatic agreement, allowing them to exchange ambassadors for the first time. In July, 1942, British communists successfully rallied 60,000 people in Trafalgar Square in London to demand the opening of a second front in Europe.<sup>214</sup>231

During the conscription plebiscite early in 1942, communists organized *Tim Buck Plebiscite Committees*, as they were called, to support Mackenzie King's position in favour of the possible use of conscription for overseas service. Even though the Party was still illegal, these committees led the charge on behalf of the government's position in French Canada, even as the government itself ran a fake campaign in support of its position. This action by the communists in Quebec frustrated French-Canadian nationalists who, only a few months earlier, had openly collaborated with the communists in resisting Canada's war effort and conscription. Public documents of the *Ligue pour la défense du Canada*, the anti-conscription group led by André Laurendeau, argued that since communists were going to vote 'yes' to Mackenzie King, then it was incumbent, right, and natural that French-Canadians vote 'no'. French-Canadian, communist leaders such as Henri Gagnon, Gui Caron, and Émery Samuel never did support conscription, however, adding an additional difference of opinion between the two, national elements within the Communist Party of Canada.

In English Canada, the pro-war activity of the communists had positive effects on the Party. After the conscription plebiscite of April, 1942, the Tim Buck committees were re-named *Communist Labour Committees for Total War*. These committees were now permitted to organize public meetings with only mild police harassment. On August 28, 1941, Buck had already published a document called *A National Front for Victory*, in which he called for a pro-war coalition of all classes, parties, and ethnic groups.<sup>215</sup> 232 On May 30 and 31, 1942, the communists held a national labour convention in support of total war.<sup>216</sup> 223 On October 13, 1942, even as almost all the Hull internees had been released, communists held yet another mass rally at the Maple Leaf Gardens in support of the war effort.<sup>217</sup>234

It now appeared to the communists that, increasingly, members of the King government and of the federal public administration were now supporting the communist, pro-war effort. In fact, Norman Robertson suggested that the communists had become “a restraining rather than revolutionary influence in trade union organizations”. For tactical reasons, the communists should be encouraged rather than suppressed, if only to steal some of the electoral thunder from the CCF.<sup>218</sup>235 In Ontario, Mitchell Hepburn was also facing the threat of the growing CCF, so despite years spent bashing reds and unions, Hepburn now became one of the leading advocates of releasing the Hull internees and lifting the ban on communist organizations. The irony was extraordinary. Hepburn helped obtain the recently-arrested Dick Steele a quick release from Toronto’s Don Jail. To celebrate, Hepburn invited Steele and his family to his farm near St. Thomas, in southwestern Ontario.<sup>219</sup>236

Specific war events now made the government's repressive policy towards communists, including the internment policy, seem counter-productive. Early in 1942, Colonel 'Wild Bill' Donovan, the legendary head of American intelligence, came to Canada on a hunting expedition. His target was to be found among Yugoslav communists in Canada, some of whom might be persuaded to help the communist partisans' campaign led by Tito, and to develop links between the allies and Tito's forces. This mission obviously had received, at least, discrete approval from Canadian authorities, who directed Donovan to meet A.A. MacLeod, editor of *Canadian Tribune*, who then obtained approval for the idea from Buck and other party leaders still underground. The Party then was able to recruit twenty members among members and the pro-communist, ethnic associations to volunteer for duty with allied military intelligence in Yugoslavia. These people were mostly Croatians, but also included Serbs, Macedonians, Slovenians, and Montenegrins. After training in the U.S. Army, these men were parachuted into Yugoslavia behind enemy lines. Several died in combat, while others remained in Yugoslavia after the war, including an eventual secretary-general of the Yugoslav Communist Party.<sup>220</sup> 237 In Ontario, Premier Hepburn heard about the Yugoslavs, and asked to meet with Buck. During their meeting, the two men discussed how to increase enthusiasm among workers for the war effort. The irony was extraordinary. Hepburn had been elected in 1937 with a vigorous, anti-communist programme. Now, Hepburn concluded his meeting with Buck by volunteering to assist the communists in their pro-war, national unity campaign.

From other sources, a major coup against the internment policy on behalf of the communists came on September 21, 1942 from none other than Pat Sullivan, recently released from Hull prison, who was now secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Labour and Trades Congress.<sup>221</sup> 238 Three young heroes of the Soviet Army were participating in a youth congress in the United States, in which Eleanor Roosevelt, the U.S. President's wife, also was involved. Three, Canadian unions wherein communists were strong, the United Electrical Workers, the Canadian Seamen's Union, and the United Automobile Workers of Canada, invited the Soviet heroes to Toronto. The Soviets accepted the invitation, but the federal government refused to endorse the invitation. The Soviet embassy then insisted that the provincial government of Ontario endorse the invitation. After exchanges between Buck and Hepburn, Sullivan obtained an official invitation from the Ontario premier. Advance publicity for the rally to honour the Soviet heroes described a Ukrainian woman, Lieutenant Lyudmila Pavlichenko who, as a sniper, had killed 309 Germans; Russian Lieutenant Vladimir Pchelintsev, another sniper who, with 154 shots, had felled 152 Germans; and Commissar Nikolai Krasivchenko, one of the organizers of the defence of Moscow. On the morning of September 21, 1942, the heroes were received in Toronto. After a tour of the financial sector on Bay Street, the three guests inspected an honour guard at City Hall, then placed a wreath at the cenotaph. There, Toronto Mayor Conboy greeted the guests, while outside City Hall, an orchestra was playing the *Internationale*, the communist hymn. Hepburn then met the Soviets at Queen's Park, the provincial Parliament in Ontario. The party then lunched at the Royal York with the very bourgeois, Canadian Club. Gordon Conant, the provincial Solicitor-General who had led the anti-communist campaign of the Hepburn Liberals, presented

the Soviet guests to the assembly at the Royal York. After lunch, the Soviets discussed the necessity of a second front in Europe with Major-General Constantine, head of the Canadian Army in Ontario. Next came a visit of the Inglis factory, where Bren guns were manufactured, followed by an automobile tour of Toronto. Supper was the occasion for another extraordinary banquet, once again at the Royal York. The evening's programme at Maple Leaf Gardens began with a speech by Sullivan, in which he spoke of the necessity of a second front in Europe. General Constantine and Lieutenant Pchelintsev followed, the latter speaking of the coming day when Canadian General McNaughton and Soviet General Timoshenko would meet in Europe. Then followed messages by Paul Fournier, president of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress in Montreal, George Burt, Canadian Director of the United Auto Workers, former internee Clarence Jackson, and Commissar Krasivschenko. A.A. McLeod then whipped up the crowd to raise \$10,000. Sullivan introduced Hepburn, who presented Lieutenant Pavlichenko and offered her a rifle as a gift. Hepburn also criticized the federal Liberals for their half-hearted war effort.<sup>222</sup><sup>239</sup> In response to Hepburn, Pavlichenko re-iterated the need for a second, Allied front in Europe. The day and the evening were wild successes. At the same time as Canadians were being interned for being communists, the Ontario government, the Canadian Army, and community leaders were fêting the Soviet communists. The irony was blatantly obvious to the entire country. The internment in Hull could not continue.

Tim Buck finally perceived that the communists had many cards in terms of their position vis-à-vis the authorities. Somehow, these cards had to be played to force the

government's hand so the communists could operate freely. In what Buck perceived as a bold gamble, he proposed that 17 leaders of the Party, recognized by all as communist leaders, surrender for internment. Their internment could not be maintained, thus forcing the government to end the internment policy for all communists, and letting the Party resume its normal work. To Buck, the communists had no choice, as they could not continue in the current pattern of repression and internment while their leaders and workers remained underground. The idea produced a howling debate within the Party leadership, but all eventually saw the utility of Buck's proposal to surrender. Among the seventeen leaders chosen to surrender was Fred Rose. Hitherto leader of the young communists in Quebec, Rose had been of assistance to Norman Robertson, under-secretary of External Affairs, when the latter was responsible for identifying monitoring and controlling fascists in Canada. Rose and Lester Pearson, Robertson's successor at External Affairs in the same role vis-à-vis the fascists, organized a secret meeting on a tourist boat on the Ottawa River. The two agreed that the leaders would surrender, would receive 'pretend' trials, and would then be freed. After this, it would be impossible to continue the internment in Hull.<sup>223</sup>240

On September 25 and 26, seventeen, recognized Party leaders surrendered in Toronto. From Toronto came Buck, Stewart Smith, Sam Carr, James Litterick, Sam Lipshitz, Gustav Sundquist, William Kashtan, and Leslie Morris. From Montreal came Stanley Ryerson, Évariste Dubé, Fred Rose, Henri Gagnon, and Émery Samuel. Also surrendering were Gérard Fortin, from Drummondville, Quebec, Joe Zuken, aka William Cecil Ross, from Winnipeg, and Oscar Kane, from Windsor, Ontario. On September 25,



1942, Buck and twelve others met at the office of J.L. Cohen, who had organized the presence of journalists. Cohen called the headquarters of the RCMP in Toronto to inform the police that Buck and his colleagues wanted to surrender. The RCMP responded that it was up to the communists to come to the RCMP office. Cohen protested that any municipal police officer in Toronto could arrest his clients on the streets of Toronto. The RCMP then agreed to send cars to pick up the communists, and bring them to RCMP headquarters. Such was the response of the RCMP to the surrender of these dangerous communists. Kane joined his mates later the same day at Toronto's Don Jail, while the following day, Fortin, Gagnon, and Samuel came in from Quebec to join their colleagues.

Premier Hepburn must have been in the know about the surrender since the next day, a Canadian Press article reported that Hepburn had already sent Louis St-Laurent a telegram demanding that Buck et al. be released in the interests of national unity for the war effort.<sup>224</sup>241 Hepburn ensured that the prisoners ate very well, in a section of Don Prison reserved for them and William Lawson, the Toronto school board trustee arrested in April, 1942. Hepburn himself brought the men cigarettes, candy, chocolate, and other gifts. As organized with the authorities, the seventeen now received fake trials, wherein the RCMP seemed to be more interested in the communists' communication methods while underground than in any alleged, subversive activities. The release of the Hull internees, which had started in September, 1941 when Joseph Scheer had been freed, now assumed a much greater rhythm after the seventeen leaders were freed on October 7, 1942. Only Peter Keweryga, who was sick in an Ottawa hospital until the next month when he was released, remained under army supervision.

The seventeen leaders, as did the Hull internees, signed documents committing themselves to present themselves to the RCMP twice a month. As well, the freed men agreed to not participate in any activities of the Communist Party, nor of any other of the illegal associations named in article 39C of the DOCR. The liberated men were required to swear under oath that they would provide no information about the internment to the press or whomsoever else. Furthermore, they were not allowed, without risking arrest once again, to criticize the government. These amazing requirements were imposed in the Canadian democracy of 1942.

The battle was not over yet in the French-Canadian press. Not to give up the ghost too quickly, *Le Droit* editorialized against the decision to free the seventeen Party leaders and the Hull internees on October 8, 1942, the day after Buck et al were freed. The next day, *Le Droit* reported that a local Church group, the *Comité paroissial d'action catholique de Notre-Dame de Hull*, voted in a general meeting that it remained opposed to the legalization of the Communist Party, and sent a message to this effect to Louis St-Laurent. Even though the internment in Hull had ended, the question of the legal status of the Communist Party continued to be debated.

#### Schedule of the Release of the Hull Internees

The federal government preserved few archives about individual internees, other than the release dates for each internee, which are contained in the war diaries of Hull

Internment Camp. There has been no specific information maintained in federal government archives about reasons for detention, or the internees' hearings before the consulting committees. Apparently, such an archive once existed in the archives of External Affairs, but this archive was destroyed by orders of the Public Archives Committee and Treasury Board during the 1950s, since they reportedly repeated content found in the archives of the Army, the RCMP, and the Justice Department. Nevertheless, there is no information about individual internees in these other, three archives.<sup>225</sup>242

Individual internees were released from Hull according to this schedule.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Internees</u>
September, 1941	Scheer, Nikiforiak, Aubrey, Kolysnik
October, 1941	Holwell, Butler, Kaschak, Levine
December, 1941	Jackson, Bayliuk
January, 1942	Murray, Krawchuk, Sawiak, McManus
February, 1942	Ernest Gervais
March, 1942	Bilesky, Charest, Tom Boychuk, Sullivan, Chapman, Sinclair, Lowrie, McNeil
May, 1942	Nyerki, Bourget
June, 1942	Spewak, Duval
July, 1942	Bidulka, Mosiuk, Prossak, Biniowsky, Petrash, Perozek, Majeau, Dubno

August, 1942	Magnuson, Freed, Stefanitsky, Krechmarowsky, Collins, MacLean, Billings, Bilecki
September, 1942	Swankey, Lenihan, Lysets, Shatulsky, Kostaniuk, Prokop, Penner, Sago, Harvey Murphy, John Boychuk, Taub, Taylor, Navis, Wallace, Smythe, Binder, Repka, Gunn, Nadeau, Rowley, Balint, Beeching, Villeneuve, Gray, Charles Weir, Pyndus, Cohen, Tuomi
October, 1942	October 7, Buck and the other Party leaders were freed in Toronto; soon followed the last of the Hull internees: Saunders, Huculak, Wade, Duchesne, Miller, Walsh, Kerr, McKean, Rigby, McEwen, Assan, James Murphy, John Weir, Campbell, Chopowick, and Erlich. The next month, Peter Keweryga was released from hospital in Ottawa.

There were only seventeen internees left in Hull when Buck and the other sixteen leaders were released from Toronto. This means that the government had already taken most of the steps necessary to end *de facto* the internment in Hull. The actions of Buck and his colleagues and their government actors in the charade of the surrender in Toronto lead one to ask if the final gestures were only symbolic, a public relations coup that allowed everyone to get off the hook. In fact, the internment policy was already dead. The surrender of Buck et al. provided a *modus operandi* for nailing the internment policy in its coffin, although the Communist Party of Canada still remained formally illegal throughout the war, itself an object of considerable, public debate.

## Counting 133 Internees

The government's final, official figure about the number of communist and sympathizing internees during World War II was 133.<sup>226</sup>243 This figure can be obtained if we add the following:

- 89 Hull internees
- 14 Petawawa internees released before the August 20, 1941 transfer of remaining internees to Hull
- 17 Party leaders who surrendered on Sept. 25 and 26, 1942, and were released on October 7, 1942
- 9 Internments ordered but not executed, as of January, 1943:
  - Rolland Bellinski
  - Charles Bordonardo
  - Garry Culhane
  - Joseph Gershman
  - Israel Guberman (aka Louis Vassil)
  - Joseph Hamel
  - Myer Klig (in New York City since 1935)
  - Teho Pylypas
  - Charles Rosen
- 4 special cases, including Gladys McDonald, who was interned in a special area in Kingston Penitentiary; Anton Woytyshyn, secretary of a Ukrainian, mutual aid

society in Winnipeg who, for reasons unknown to this author, was interned in Fredericton with fascists; Dick Steele and William Lawson, both arrested in April, 1942, but who were never sent to Hull.

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133 Total

## Endnotes to Chapter 5

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- 202<sup>185</sup> National Archives of Canada, archives of the Communist Party of Canada, MG28 IV4, volume 62, dossier 53, "On Guard for Civil Liberties", Canadian Labour Defence League, February, 1940.
- 203<sup>186</sup> Merrily Weisbord, *The Strangest Dream*, Toronto: Lester and Oryen Dennys Ltd., p. 108, 109.
- 204<sup>187</sup> These examples were brought to the attention of the minister of Justice during lobbying in Ottawa by the internees' families in March, 1941; National Archives of Canada, archives of the Justice Department, RG18, volume 3565, dossier C11-19-4, volume 2.
- 205<sup>188</sup> National Archives of Canada, Army archives, war diaries, series 15, 394, volume 3.
- 206<sup>189</sup> *Ottawa Citizen*, p. 30.
- 207<sup>190</sup> Peter Krawchuk, *Interned without Cause*, Toronto: Kobzar Books, 1986, p. 102.
- 208<sup>191</sup> National Archives of Canada, Justice Department Archives, *op. cit.*, see endnote 204 above.
- 209<sup>192</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, MG30 A94, volume 30, dossier 2917-F.
- 210<sup>193</sup> Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: The Story of Bill Walsh*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 2001, p. 139.
- 211<sup>194</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 24, war diaries for Hull Internment Camp, August 18, 1941 to August 31, 1941; and Army archives, RG 24, volume 6588, file 5-1-7.
- 212<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*
- 213<sup>196</sup> House of Common Debates, November 14, 1941.
- 214<sup>197</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG24, volume 6588, file 5-1-7; the signatories to this petition refer to the explosive investigative articles about the *Ordre de Jacques Cartier* published by Jean-Charles Harvey in his newspaper, *Le Jour*.
- 215<sup>198</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, MG30, A94, volume 20, dossier 2807.
- 216<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, volume 27, dossier 2893; see page 22 of Cohen's paper.
- 217<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, volume 31, dossier 2917-W.
- 218<sup>201</sup> National Archives of Canada, Clarence Jackson archives, MG31 B54, volume 1; see "The Case of Mr. C.S. Jackson".

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- 219<sup>202</sup> William Repka, *Howard Lowrie, M.D.: Physician, Humanitarian*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1977, p. 70, 73.
- 220<sup>203</sup> National Archives of Canada, External Affairs archives, RG 25, reel T-1770, volume 770, dossier 339.
- 221<sup>204</sup> National Archives of Canada, RCMP archives, RG18, volume 3565, dossier C11-19-4, volume 2.
- 222<sup>205</sup> MacDowell, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
- 223<sup>206</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, *op. cit.*, dossier 2917, first file, NCDR Bulletin, November 5, 1941.
- 224<sup>207</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, MG30 A94, volume 31, dossier 2917-y, June 8, 1942 document from the Ontario chapter of the NCDR.
- 225<sup>208</sup> MacDowell, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
- 226<sup>209</sup> National Archives of Canada, J. L. Cohen archives, MG30 A94, volume 30, dossier 2917-P, “Memorandum of Submissions to the Government relating to Canadian Ukrainians”, p. 4.
- 227<sup>210</sup> Thomas Prymak, *Maple Leaf and Trident*, Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1988, p. 58.
- 228<sup>211</sup> Communist Party of Canada, *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1921-1976*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1952; see p. 133-146, especially p. 135.
- 229<sup>212</sup> Ernest Mandel, *The Meaning of the Second World War*, London: 1986, p. 45.
- 230<sup>213</sup> Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, editors, *Le droit de se taire*, Outremont: VLB Éditeur, 1989, p. 91.
- 231<sup>214</sup> Prymak, *op. cit.*, p. 70, 82.
- 232<sup>215</sup> National Archives of Canada, Communist Party archives, MG28 IV4, volume 63, dossier 1.
- 233<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, dossier 17.
- 234<sup>217</sup> *Ibid*, dossier 28.
- 235<sup>218</sup> Gonick, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
- 236<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, p. 147.
- 237<sup>220</sup> National Archives of Canada, Tim Buck archives, MG32 G3, volume 1, *Reminiscences*, session 19, p. 78-83; see also the web page of Veterans Affairs Canada, “S.O.E. in Yugoslavia and the Balkans”, 1998.



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238<sup>221</sup> An account of Sullivan's organizing activity can be found in his autobiography, *Red Sails on the Great Lakes*, Toronto: MacMillan, 1955.

239<sup>222</sup> *Le Droit*, Tuesday, September 22, 1942, p. 1, Canadian Press article, "M. Hepburn blâme le parti politique qui nuit à un effort de guerre totale".

240<sup>223</sup> John English, *Shadow of Heaven: The Life of Lester Pearson, volume 1, 1897-1948*, Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys Publishers, 1989, p. 245; also Weisbord, *op. cit.*, p. 112, 113; it appears that the source of this information was Henri Gagnon, one of the 17 Party leaders who surrendered in Toronto, who was then leader of the young communists in Quebec; one can only imagine what else might have been discussed, exchanged, or agreed between Pearson and Rose.

241<sup>224</sup> *Le Droit*, Saturday, September 26, 1942, "Hepburn demande la libération de Tim Buck", p. 1.

242<sup>225</sup> See the notes written by National Archives of Canada archivist, G. W. Hilborn, in September, 1952, in the External Affairs archives, RG25, volume 288, dossiers 2118-S-40 and 2118-D-40. Sources for the release schedule for the Hull internees include the war diaries, series 395,14 and 395,15; *The Red Patch*, published by the Hull internees on May Day, 1942, in the National Archives of Canada, Communist Party archives, MG28 IV4, volume 43, dossier 2; and volume 63, dossier 3-0, reel H-1689, dossiers of the National Council for Democratic Rights. Other than the internees' own recollections, the only sources about the appeals before the consulting committees are to be found in the J.L. Cohen archives at National Archives of Canada.

243<sup>226</sup> The sources of these figures are Norman Hillmer et al., *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*, Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1988, p. 63; National Archives of Canada, RCMP archives, RG24, volume 6585, file 4-1-5, v. 3, "Internments ordered but not executed ,as of January, 1943."

## Chapter 6 – After Internment in Hull

### Leaving Hull

When the internees got home, some received nasty surprises. They were billed for trustee services, on behalf of the Custodian of Enemy Property, for managing the internees' seized property. Patrick Lenihan described his reaction:

When I got home, I got another letter from the government sending me a bill for a hundred and some dollars from the Custodian of Enemy Property. If you had property when you were interned, he took the works over and sold it. For his so-called services, I get a bill for a hundred and some dollars from the government. I never had any property. I never saw the guy or anything else! I was so mad. I sat down, and wrote them a letter, and I told them, 'Look, I've received your letter, but before I'll pay it, I'll spend the rest of my life in jail. So do the best you can about it.' And I sent it to them, and I've never heard from them since.<sup>227</sup>

One can easily imagine the sense of outrage of the internees, especially considering the poverty and dire straits in which internment had left their families.

As part of the terms of their release, internees were required to report regularly to the RCMP, a requirement that quickly petered out being of no particular use to anyone, or

as Tom McEwen wrote, “probably because the RCMP were getting as fed up seeing me as I was seeing them”.<sup>228</sup> The internees were also to refrain from speaking about the internment or criticizing the government. These were terms to which most internees, in the view of McEwen, did not have the slightest intention of adhering.<sup>229</sup> One example of an internee immediately ignoring the terms of his release was Pat Sullivan. No sooner had Sullivan returned to Montreal after his release in the Spring of 1942 than he granted interviews to journalists, then delivered a speech. Sullivan was typical of the ex-internees who plunged into the activities of the *Tim Buck Plebiscite Committees*, re-named the *Communist Labour Committee for Total War* after the conscription plebiscite. The RCMP and the Justice Department responded by harassing the leadership of the Communist Labour Committee, and by threatening ex-internees with internment once again.<sup>230</sup> The threats were hollow; the RCMP and those parts of the federal administration that supported the repression of the communists were now surpassed by events and by other elements within government opposed to the internment policy.

In fact, the RCMP was running smack into the pro-Soviet opinions during World War II held by Canadians, the extent of which might be difficult to imagine for people of our society, conditioned by two generations of the Cold War and related propaganda. These sentiments, however, were real, and Canadian communists, including the ex-internees from Hull prison, contributed to their development. After the internment, communists created organizations that enjoyed broad public support, for instance, the Canada-Russia National Council, the Anti-fascist Mobilization Committee for Aid to the Soviet Union, Canada-Soviet friendship and aid societies, as well as an association whose

aim was supplying Canadian medical aid to the U.S.S.R.. The legendary Paul Robeson, the American, communist singer, filled the Montreal Forum in support of medical aid for the U.S.S.R.. Communists regularly organized pro-Soviet rallies, filling the Montreal Forum or Maple Leaf Gardens. It was not atypical to hear Prime Minister King vaunting the courage and strength of the Soviet allies at these rallies. Even more amazingly, Cardinal Villeneuve, head of the Canadian Catholic Church, the same Villeneuve who had worked to obtain the Padlock Law, sometimes spoke at these rallies in support of the U.S.S.R.. There were pro-war, pro-Soviet groups among unions, women's associations, and youth organizations. Throughout 1942 and 1943, public opinion in English Canada demanded the opening of a second front in Europe, productive diplomatic relations between Canada and the U.S.S.R., and the provision of Canadian aid and supplies to the Soviet Union.

#### The Hull Internees as Soldiers

During their internment, the Hull internees argued that they should be freed so that they might join the military. True to their word, sixteen of the young internees joined the military : William Beeching, Louis Binder, Michael Biniowsky, Alfie Campbell, Fred Collins, John Dubno, Muni Erlich, Norman Freed, Ernest Gervais, Paul Gervais, Archie Gunn, Ernest Holwell, Gerry McManus, Bill Repka, Ben Swankey, and Bill Walsh. Older internees joined the military reserves. While in Europe after the invasion of Normandy, ex-internee Muni Erlich and Dick Steele, who had been arrested in Toronto but freed as the internment in Hull was ending, lost their lives in combat. Another communist ex-

prisoner, Ottawan Harry Binder, brother of internee Louis Binder, was injured thrice in combat.<sup>231</sup> The Communist Party reports that over sixty, Canadian communists served with distinction behind enemy lines for American intelligence, the Office of Strategic Services, or for British intelligence, the Special Operations Executive. These communists were mostly Yugoslavs, Bulgarians, or Hungarians.<sup>232</sup>

Two Hull internees, in particular, did not serve in the military following internment in Hull. Kent Rowley had joined the Army briefly at the start of the war but had been discharged for health reasons; in fact, Rowley had been judged to be a disciplinary problem. In June, 1942, John McNeil replied to advertisements about the Navy needing skilled workers. McNeil had spent 21 years with Canadian Pacific as a machinist, but was turned down curtly once the Navy learned from the RCMP that McNeil had been interned. Only late in 1942 did the military reverse its policy of not accepting communists into its ranks. Thereafter, even veterans of the Spanish Civil War, in addition to the Hull internees, could join the military. They were, however, subject to close scrutiny, including RCMP surveillance while they served.<sup>233</sup> Some of the communist might have been candidates for officer commissions, but the military was opposed to the idea owing to security concerns. So, the rank of sergeant was common, especially for men in their late twenties or early thirties who might have had supervisory work experience.

Bill Walsh

Throughout this book, we have endeavoured to show the Hull internees as human beings, and not just as names nor numbers. Thus, some men have been the subject of repeated references at various points in the story of the internment misadventure: Norman Freed, Peter Krawchuk, Ben Swankey, Joe Wallace, Tom McEwen, Kent Rowley, Pat Sullivan, Muni Taub, Clarence Jackson, Pat Lenihan. These are names that have appeared repeatedly in this account of events in Hull. One internee's life during this period was so interesting that it bears an additional recounting of events after the internment; that's the story of Bill Walsh.

Walsh's wife, Anne Weir, was sick throughout his imprisonment and internment. Just in her twenties, Anne suffered from chronic stomach ulcers and migraine headaches. One evening after the internment, in February, 1943, while Walsh was conversing with someone in their apartment, Anne had retired to the bedroom when suddenly Walsh heard a piercing scream, "Bill!" Before a doctor had arrived, Anne had died in her husband's arms of a brain hemorrhage at 30 years of age. Mortified and completely at loose ends, Walsh saw no option but to join the Army to fight the fascists, not an easy decision for a man who was already 33 years old. "What did I have to lose?", asks Walsh, describing his desperation at the time.<sup>234</sup> Walsh had made arrangements with his best friend, Dick Steele, to take care of Dick and Esther Steele's twin boys should something happened to Dick in combat. Unfortunately, something did happen to Steele. Within days of being in combat in France, during the autumn of 1944, Walsh heard about Steele's death. Walsh started communicating with Esther in order to fulfil his promise about the Steele boys. In the National Archives of Canada, the Bill Walsh archive is filled with these

communications. The letters, over a period of months, in effect, transform to become the story of Walsh's courtship of Esther.<sup>235</sup> The Walshes included the letters in the archive "so that young people today might understand the difficulties through which young people of their day and times had to pass."<sup>236</sup> The result of the postal courtship dictated by the necessity of war was that Bill and Esther married after Walsh's return from combat. They were still together over fifty years later, having raised two families together, when this author interviewed Walsh. In the late 1990s, seriously ill, Walsh died shortly after our interview.

Walsh recounted to me one of his adventures while in France during World War II.<sup>237</sup> Owing to his knowledge of German, Sergeant Walsh was given the job of conducting reconnaissance missions behind enemy lines. The aim was to capture German soldiers, and obtain useful, military information by interrogating the prisoners. Meanwhile, the RCMP had a policy of monitoring ex-internees, even those who were now serving in the armed forces. One RCMP officer met with Walsh's company commandant, who grew indignant about the enquiries, especially as Walsh was one of the best soldiers of the company. Some of Walsh's friends among the men overheard the RCMP enquiry, and also grew impatient with the policeman. They advised the RCMP officer to be careful when leaving, since there had been lots of shooting in the area of late. To prove their point, the men shot over the head of the RCMP officer as he left crawling on his belly until he could no longer be seen. Even taking into account possible exaggerations in the story about events over fifty years earlier, this anecdote does show

the relentlessness of the RCMP vis-à-vis the communists, even when the latter were loyally serving their country.

### Still the Communist Party Remained Illegal

The campaign on behalf of the Hull internees had been successful. The Commons committee had recommended the end of the internment, which was becoming more and more the case as the rhythm of liberation of the internees increased. The committee also recommended in the summer of 1942 that the ban on the Communist Party and related organizations be lifted. The response of Justice minister Louis St-Laurent, however, was clear, even if the reasons he invoked were anything but. The Communist Party itself would remain illegal, even though the internment ended effectively with the October 7, 1942 release of the seventeen Party leaders in Toronto. The original, official justification for the government's policy of repression of the communists was the initial opposition of the Party to the Canadian participation in the war. Now that the Party supported the war against the Axis, the government's explanations about the internment policy changed, indeed continued to change. The explanations offered included a range of contradictions and illogical affirmations. Internee Fergus McKean's appeal before the consulting committee revealed much about government thinking on this matter. Commenting upon his hearing before the consulting committee, McKean had written from Kananaskis in July, 1941 to his lawyer, John Stanton.



At the hearing, the questions and discussion hinged mainly on the relationship of the U.S.S.R. to Germany, my attitude towards the war between Britain and Germany, and my attitude towards the type of government in the U.S.S.R. The inference seemed to be that since the U.S.S.R. had signed a non-aggression pact with Germany, the U.S.S.R. thereby became an ally of German fascism, and since, as a Communist, I sympathized with the socialist regime in the U.S.S.R., which was regarded as a dictatorship similar in many respects to the nazi dictatorship, therefore, my loyalty to Canada in the struggle against Germany was placed under suspicion.<sup>238</sup>

When McKean, secretary of the Party in BC, reminded the Army that the Soviet Union was now in a war against Germany with Great Britain, the Army wrote McKean:

Although the U.S.S.R. had been attacked by Germany, and although the United Kingdom and other members of the British Commonwealth had pledged aid to the U.S.S.R., this did not constitute an alliance with the U.S.S.R., and therefore, had no bearing on your internment for activities in the Communist Party of Canada prior to your arrest.<sup>239</sup>

McKean now asked that were a formal alliance to be struck between Britain and the U.S.S.R., would this mean that the internees could then be liberated? In fact, Great Britain and the Soviet Union did sign a formal alliance in May, 1942, yet the internment continued beyond this date.

For many members of the ruling class, including their representatives in the federal administration, the Allies' alliance with the Soviet Union was only temporary. It did not change what was obvious to all: communists were still dangerous. It was even thought by some that the Soviets could not be trusted because the Germans might seduce them into a separate peace. The Canadian internees, therefore, were hostages for the good behaviour of the Soviets during the war.<sup>240</sup> Nevertheless, King himself rejected this point of view. On November 6, 1941, Vancouver CCF MP Angus McInnis, asked King in the House of Commons:

“Since Russia is now our ally, will the government continue to arrest and intern Canadians owing to their membership in the Communist Party?”

On November 10, King replied to the House that:

“The Communist Party was made illegal, not because of its links with Russia, but because of its subversive activities towards Canada's war effort. The entry of Russia to the war changes nothing.”

King's answer to the House was similar to the explanation given by Justice minister Lapointe four days later in the House:

“The Communist Party, since the beginning of the current war, has openly offered a political programme aimed at hindering our war effort. By organizing strikes and labour difficulties, the Communist Party has tried to paralyze our defence industries.”<sup>241</sup>

So the Communists were interned because their strikes and labour activities were hurting the war effort... but in a letter on August 12, 1941 to Cohen, Lapointe had written:

In your letter, you say “that there are at present in this camp [Petawawa] internees detained because of alleged subversive activities on the labour front”. This statement is not a correct one in that it suggests that there persons who have been detained for labour activities, and I think you are quite aware that this is not so.<sup>242</sup>

Round and round the mulberry bush went the government trying to explain the reasons for the internment. Was it membership in the Communist Party, or subversive activities which justified the internment? First, Lapointe, then his successor, St-Laurent, explained the internments as not resulting from union activities, opposition to fascism, the attitude of the Canadian communists towards the U.S.S.R., nor the past activities of individual internees in unions or on behalf of the unemployed or human rights associations. Yet, before the appeals committees, these were presented as proofs of alleged subversion, which served as reasons for internment of some internees. In other cases, it was explained to internees that it was not such past subversive activities that

explained their internment, but rather just their membership in the Communist Party.<sup>243</sup> St-Laurent constantly changed explanations of his government's internment policy. At one point, St-Laurent argued that the internment was justified by the use of communists of force and violence; alternatively, by the anti-Christian nature of communism.<sup>244</sup> As for the first of these explanations, the Canadian Party was resolutely opposed to the use of force and violence to impose its opinions; the Party had made several official declarations to this effect.<sup>245</sup> As for the second explanation, the anti-Christian nature of communism, communists responded that this was the same language that the fascist Franco had used in Spain.<sup>246</sup> Furthermore, the Communist Party of Canada was never aggressive towards religion. Many of its leaders were practising Christians or observing Jews. The very day that Prime Minister King was boasting of the virtues of the Soviet Union during a rally on behalf of Canada-Soviet co-operation, St-Laurent announced that the Party would remain illegal since communism was illegal according to the Common Law in English Canada and the Civil Code in Quebec. Cohen responded in a press release to this explanation that were this the case, why had the government needed article 39C of the DOCR? This theme was repeated by the NCDR in its press release of August 1, 1942.<sup>247</sup> Cohen was furious about St-Laurent's attempt to divert the issue of removing the ban on the Party by arguing that enabling legislation would be required to permit the Party to become legal. Cohen called St-Laurent's position both "crass and class politics".<sup>248</sup> Ontario Premier Hepburn responded to St-Laurent's explanations by sending the following telegram.<sup>249</sup>

It seems to me that you too are obliged to carry out what is the expressed will of the Canadian people by immediately lifting the ban on the Communist

Party STOP While I am very pleased that you have taken this first step [freeing the internees], I, in common with the people of this province, object to any conditions attached to the release of these men, which after all merely gives them the status of second class citizens STOP I am convinced that the people of Canada want the slate wiped clean in order that national unity behind our war effort may be complete STOP Let me again make it perfectly clear to you that as matters now stand, this important issue is far from settled.

In actual fact, none of the explanations put forward by the government or Lapointe, St-Laurent, or King held water. The DOCR were developed well before the Hitler-Stalin Pact, well before the war, well before the German invasion of the U.S.S.R.. The aim of the DOCR and the internment had always been to repress the Communist Party, and the war provided the government with the ideal opportunity. Nevertheless, the evolution of the war, including the entry of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. as active combatants; social conflicts within Canada, which were aggravated by the war; the requirement for national unity for the war effort; the marked tendency of public opinion to shift to the left; all these eventually did contribute to the liberation of the Hull internees.

The decision to maintain the illegality of the Communist Party after the internment had ended was left to St-Laurent. Just as King had done with his previous Quebec lieutenant, Lapointe, King was prepared to accede to St-Laurent and his needs vis-à-vis Quebec opinion, opinion created and promulgated by the Catholic Church and the *Ordre de Jacques-Cartier* groups. St-Laurent now was reduced to trying to distinguish between

the sufferings of the Russian people in the war who needed Canadian support as allies, separate from the pernicious doctrines held by the Russian people's communist leaders. It was all very obscure, but it was a line that now started to appear in the Catholic press in Quebec. In a memorandum to King on January 6, 1943, St-Laurent wrote:

Perhaps a sufficient answer would be a statement that the Prime Minister and his colleagues have very carefully considered the representation of His Eminence and other Catholic archbishops in Canada concerning communism, and are very much alive to the threat the marxian teachings involve to our institutions, and to the clear distinction which must always be drawn between our admiration and our gratitude to the Russian people and our sympathy with them in their terrible sufferings, and the acceptance of religious, political or economic theories, which at one time appeared to be advocated by their government.<sup>250</sup>

In 1943, public opinion from English Canada was growing more adamant in favour of removing the ban on the Party. In a memorandum dated July 15, 1943 to Prime Minister King, Jack Pickersgill recommended that King make a strong statement renouncing communism, at the same time as he might lift the ban on the Party. This would satisfy liberal opinion in English Canada, especially as in the views held by the publisher of the Toronto Star, Joseph Atkinson.<sup>251</sup> An idea was even floated that the Party might be re-named. Might this solve the problem of the legality of the Party, necessary to English-Canadians as part of the war effort, but anathema to French-Canadians? Was this

a Canadian solution that also would maintain intact the unity of the Liberal Party? In fact, international events once again intruded to make evident a Canadian solution. In May, 1943, Stalin abolished the Comintern, partly as a gesture of support to his Allies, Churchill and Roosevelt, partly as a way of limiting the scope of the Comintern, which sometimes had acted as a brake on Stalin in his pursuit of Russian, national interests. Officially, the Communist Party of Canada was no longer part of the Comintern, which was no longer even in existence. The Party in Canada therefore, was no longer beholden to Moscow. At least, this was the logic of some. In response to a question in the House of Commons from Angus McInnis of the CCF on May 24, 1943, St-Laurent said:

It could perhaps be no longer necessary to refer to article 39c of the DOCR, adopted at a period when the Communist Party of Canada was part of the Third Internationale. If this latter organization no longer exists, and if the Canadian Party conforms to the views of the Comintern, as the newspapers have reported, then little would be gained by returning to the question. The Communist Party of Canada would have disappeared, and nobody would be interested in its existence. If a party or group re-emerged from those who used to be part of the Communist Party of Canada, then there would be ample time to determine what attitude should then be adopted.<sup>252</sup>

Was this the Canadian solution to the problem of squaring the circle, of having two, completely opposed views held by two, distinct peoples within the bosom of one governing party, the Liberal Party? Did this mean it was legal to be a communist, even if

the Communist Party of Canada were to remain illegal? That's what might be gleaned from the tortured and byzantine logic of St-Laurent. Nevertheless, this bizarre fiction also suited Canadian communists who, in August, 1943, re-constituted themselves as a new party, the Labour Progressive Party, with the same programme and philosophy as the illegal Communist Party of Canada. The fiction remained until September, 1945, after the conclusion of the war with Japan, when the Communist Party of Canada once again became legal. Still, the Communist Party continued to use the name of Labour Progressive until 1959, even though the two were one and the same organization.

ULFTA<sup>253</sup>

In October, 1942, the leader of the civil liberties movement in Toronto, B.K. Sandwell, editorialized in *Saturday Night*, criticizing the government for continuing the ban on communist groups, even as the internment was ending. In 1943 and 1944, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association campaigned on behalf of ULFTA, demanding the return of ULFTA properties, or appropriate compensation for properties, too many of which had already been turned over to conservative Ukrainians at low prices. In 1944, the government offered ULFTA fourteen percent of the value of the properties in compensation. In contrast, ULFTA asked for the restoration of the lost properties, claims for damages, and an inquiry into government actions. In 1945, the government finally returned properties, and a fraction of the compensation due owing to ULFTA properties it had already sold. In an ultimate, cynical slap in the face, the government's Custodian of Enemy Property charged ULFTA for administration of the expropriated properties, similar to what it did in the cases of individual internees in Hull.



## Browderism and Factionalism

At heart, the Communist Party of Canada accepted the fiction of the Communist Party of Canada remaining illegal, while communists re-formed into the legal Labour Progressive Party. Events in 1943 conspired to make this a suitable option: the victory of the Soviets at Stalingrad, the opening of a second, European front with the Italian campaign, the dissolution of the Comintern, and the Teheran conference whereby Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill met together for the first time. At least in rhetoric, it now appeared that socialism and capitalism had reconciled to defeat the common foe, fascism. The possibilities for post-war co-operation made the heads of communists spin the world over. Except for China and Yugoslavia, communist parties around the world argued for coalitions with national bourgeoisies in order to defeat fascism. In the United States, the phenomenon went even further. Earl Browder, general secretary of the U.S. Party, proposed that even the existence of the Party in the U.S. was problematic, owing to the exceptionalism that made the U.S. different from other countries in the world. So, Browder arranged for the American Party to go defunct, to be replaced with a communist political association that would undertake public education to achieve the goal of socialist-capitalist co-operation in the post-war period. In fact, during the war, some American communists even opposed racial desegregation of the American military on the grounds that it would weaken the war effort by hurting the morale of white Americans.

In Canada, where the American party had always been influential, communist leaders spoke about ‘creative marxism for the post-war period’.<sup>254</sup> Communists attacked the CCF for offering the illusion of socialism during and immediately after the war. Communist leaders proffered a ‘no-strike pledge’, arguing that workers understood that the war necessitated class collaboration in order to defeat the enemy. Canadian communists openly supported the Liberal Party, even presenting Labour candidates to join with Liberals in elections in order to defeat the CCF and the Tories. The whole phenomenon was called ‘browderism’; and Canadian communists unconvincingly tried to distance themselves *post-facto* from the phenomenon. In April, 1945, a leading French communist, Jacques Duclos, roundly attacked browderism in the theoretical journal of the French party, *Cahiers du communisme*. According to Duclos, Browder was guilty of “liquidating the independent party of the American working class, preaching a long-lasting, class peace at home and abroad; spreading a notorious revision of marxism; transforming the Teheran Agreement from an instrument of diplomacy to a political platform full of opportunistic illusions; and attempting to influence other communist parties, especially those in neighbouring countries”,<sup>255</sup> to wit Canada. Almost immediately, the American party reversed itself, and by February, 1946, Browder himself was expelled from the American party. As elsewhere in the world, the Canadian Party joined in the criticism of Browder and the browderist tendency. Some within the Party were not convinced. In August, 1945, a former Hull internee, Fergus McKean, provincial leader of the Labour Progressive Party in BC, accused the Party leadership of browderism, however, McKean’s credibility was hurt when he spread a rumour to the effect that Party leaders were *agents provocateurs*, working on behalf of the Canadian

government since the mid-thirties.<sup>256</sup> In October of 1947, at a provincial convention of the Party in Quebec, a group led by Henri Gagnon, one of the seventeen Party leaders who had surrendered in Toronto in September, 1942, left the Canadian Party. Gagnon's group reprised McKean's charges about browderism and revisionism having gripped the Party leadership. There was an additional element, however, that had begun in the days of the 'lib-lab' alliance. While English-Canadian communists demanded social measures that required centralization in Ottawa, the same centralization made it difficult for Quebec communists to defend the national aspirations of French-Canadians.

#### A Lost Opportunity

World War II had submitted the Communist Party of Canada to a deliberately, repressive policy from the state, including the internment of 89 leftists in Hull prison. The disastrous repression was followed by periods when browderism, then factionalism gripped the Communist Party. Even so, Canadian communists were on the right side of history as World War II evolved to become a war between left and right, a war of national, popular liberation against the fascist juggernaut. The colossal, Soviet victories at Stalingrad, then at Kursk and elsewhere as the Soviets pushed the nazis back to Germany, provided a heady mixture of inspiration, courage, and heroism to Canadians, from which Canadian communists benefited. In terms of membership alone, the 16,000 Party members in 1939 grew to be 23,000 in 1947. Even in French Canada, while quite different, the situation of communists was still encouraging. It is estimated that while there were only 200 French-Canadians in the Party in 1939; by 1947, there were 500.<sup>257</sup>

World War II and the immediate post-war were good times for the Party in Quebec. Communists recognized that there were two nations in Canada who received unequal treatment. The Party often spoke about living conditions being worse for the Quebec worker in comparison to the Ontario worker, conditions such as smaller salaries for longer working hours, lack of doctors and health care services in Quebec, higher frequency of illnesses in Quebec related to poverty such as tuberculosis, and the high infant mortality rate.<sup>258</sup> Relations between French-Canadian communists and nationalists, on the other hand, varied over time. At the beginning of the war, both groups worked together to decry Canadian participation in a supposed imperialist war. The change in the communist position after Hitler's invasion of the U.S.S.R. meant that there came to be considerable opposition between the two groups. This opposition was emphasized when communists such as Fred Rose expended considerable efforts identifying crypto-fascists and fascists among French-Canadian nationalists. As the war continued, Quebec communists allied themselves with progressive reformers who were not in the nationalist camp, men such as Jean-Charles Harvey and Téléphore-Damien Bouchard, Quebec's Public Works minister, later named to the Senate. Tim Buck summarized the attitude of English-Canadian communists towards French-Canadian nationalism when he described the poverty of the French-Canadian worker as a "curse of capitalist exploitation, not an expression of the plundering of a subject people by English-Canadians as a nation".<sup>259</sup>

Electorally, in Montreal-Cartier, both in a by-election on August 9, 1943 then in the general, federal election of June 11, 1945, Fred Rose won elections for the Labour Progressive Party with considerable French-Canadian support. Moreover, on August 4,

1943, in a provincial election in Ontario, two well-known communists were elected: A.A. MacLeod, in Toronto-Bellwoods and Joe Salsberg, in Toronto-St. Andrew. In the same time period, there were communists who were successful in municipal politics; in Toronto: Charles Sims, Stewart Smith, and Edna Ryerson; in Montreal, Michael Buhay; in Winnipeg: ex-Hull internee Jacob Penner, Joe Zuken, one of the seventeen Party leaders who surrendered in Toronto in September, 1942, and Bill Kardash.<sup>260</sup> Electoral successes for communists in 1943 thus contributed to a mood of optimism in August, when communists formally established the Labour Progressive Party.

The communists did experience electoral success which indicated optimism for the cause of the left in Canada. Nevertheless, it was the rise in the support of the CCF that best showed the leftward tendency among voters. A public opinion survey in September, 1943 put the CCF ahead of Tories and Liberals in popular support.<sup>261</sup> In fact, much CCF support came from military voters.<sup>262</sup> During the federal by-elections of August, 1943, the Liberals lost four seats. Besides Montreal-Cartier, lost to Fred Rose, Stanstead, in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, went to the *Bloc populaire*, while Humboldt, in Saskatchewan, and Selkirk, in Manitoba, voted CCF. Provincially, by 1944, while the CCF formed the official opposition in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and BC, Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan formed the first, socialist government in North America. Even among Tories, the war had the effect of pushing the party towards the left. The key figure among the Tories was J.M. MacDonell, President of National Trust, who had participated in the campaign to end the internment and the ban on the Communist Party, In September, 1942, Tories met in Port Hope, Ontario to move the party to the left with social security

and employment for all at decent wages as their new goals. In December, 1942, the Tories chose as their new leader, John Bracken, leader of the Progressive-Liberals from Manitoba. As part of the deal, the Tories re-named their party the Progressive Conservative Party.

The Liberals were now on the right of the political spectrum. With the prospects of electoral defeat staring them in the face, however, the Liberal Party finally adopted some social measures in a policy convention held in September, 1943. One of the most important changes resulted in PC 1003 in February, 1944, a change of 180 degrees in comparison with existing, Liberal labour policies. PC1003 followed the Collective Bargaining Act of 1943, introduced by the Hepburn government in Ontario, and similar legislation in Quebec, adopted in January, 1944 by the Liberal government of Adélard Godbout. PC1003 recognized the rights of workers to organize unions and to bargain collectively. It obliged employers to negotiate in good faith, and it made company unions illegal. PC 1003 was the Magna Carta for Canadian workers. Also, in January, 1944, the Liberals announced the family allowance programme, which was to go into effect July, 1945. All this leftward movement in elections and the development of social policy was matched by a level of labour militancy in the period 1942-1947 that had been unseen since World War I. The mood was one of Canada moving to the left, in imitation of workers elsewhere in the world. Even so, the Communists, with their no-strike pledge, their alliance with the Liberals, their constant conflict with the CCF, browderism, and factionalism, seemed increasingly irrelevant to a working class population that had moved far to the left, beyond the control and seeming awareness of the communists.

Historically, it appears to have been an opportunity that was missed by Canadian communists, so absorbed were they with internal problems.

### The Start of the Cold War

On September 5, 1945, a cipher clerk in the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, Igor Gouzenko, revealed to an incredulous, Canadian government that there was a spy ring operating in Canada out of the Soviet embassy involving Canadian communists. In March, 1946, a Royal Commission on Espionage, co-chaired by Justice Robert Taschereau, one of the judges who had heard appeals of the Hull internees, caused a sensation with its intimation of hundreds of Canadians betraying their country. No matter that the Soviet Union had been our ally during World War II, or that the information collected at the Soviet embassy was mostly innocuous, or that only a handful of people actually were successfully prosecuted. In the same month, Winston Churchill made his infamous speech to a graduating class in Fulton, Missouri about an 'iron curtain' descending upon Europe. The Cold War had now begun. A new phase had begun in the conflict between capitalism and socialism. As much as the countries already in the communist camp or in danger of being so, the target of the Cold War was the working class in countries such as Canada that western bourgeoisies had to bring in line with their social discipline and their new version of the 'red scare' of the 1920s. The collaboration of communists with the capitalist countries to defeat fascism, as had taken place in World War II, was buried in the amnesia of the Cold War. This also meant that events such as the internment in Hull, and the national campaign to free the Hull internees, whereby

thousands of Canadian had expressed their support for the communists, had to be forgotten and quickly. Which is exactly what happened, for even in contemporary Gatineau or Ottawa, no one recalls the events described herein, centred on the Hull prison.



## Endnotes to Chapter 6

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<sup>227</sup> Gilbert Levine, *Patrick Lenihan: From Irish Rebel to Founder of Canadian Public Sector Unionism*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1998, chapter 10.

<sup>228</sup> Tom McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1974, p. 213.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>230</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, MG30 A94, volume 30, dossier 2917, second file; see letter from deputy minister of Justice to Cohen, dated December 2, 1942; National Archives of Canada; also Tim Buck archives, MG32 G3, volume 4, "A Democratic Front for Canada", January, 17, 1943, p. 39, 40.

<sup>231</sup> Tim Buck, *Thirty Years, 1922-1952*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1952, p. 176.

<sup>232</sup> Communist Party of Canada, *Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist party of Canada, 1921-1976*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1982, p. 144.

<sup>233</sup> Larry Hannant, *The Infernal Machine*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995, p. 119, 120.

<sup>234</sup> Cy Gonick, *A Very Red Life: the Story of Bill Walsh*, St. John's: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 2001, p. 149.

<sup>235</sup> National Archives of Canada, Bill Walsh archives, MG31 B27.

<sup>236</sup> Interview of Walsh with author, February, 1998.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> National Archives of Canada, John Stanton archives, MG30 E270, see letter dated July 3, 1941.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> National Archives of Canada, J. L. Cohen archives, Cohen's speech to the NCDR on July 6, 1940, p. 39, MG 30 A94, volume 30, dossier 2917, first file.

<sup>241</sup> House of Commons debates for November 6, 10, 14 of 1941.

<sup>242</sup> National Archives of Canada, Army archives, RG24, volume 6588, dossier 5-1-7, internees' petitions; see letter of May 26, 1942 by Norman Freed, on behalf of the Hull internees, sent to the special Parliamentary committee studying the DOCR.

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- <sup>243</sup> A. E. Smith, *All My Life*, Toronto: Progress Books, 1947, p. 210.
- <sup>244</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, MG30 A94, volume 30, dossier 2917-0; see declaration by internee Myron Kostaniuk to the special Parliamentary committee.
- <sup>245</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
- <sup>246</sup> National Archives of Canada, J.L. Cohen archives, volume 31, dossier 2917-A-10, Cohen's press release, and volume 30, dossier 2917, first file folder.
- <sup>247</sup> Laurel MacDowell, *The Renegade Lawyer: The Life of J.L. Cohen*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001, p. 189.
- <sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>249</sup> Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond*, Toronto: Methuen, 1988, p. 188.
- <sup>250</sup> *Ibid.* p. 188.
- <sup>251</sup> See House of Commons Debates, May 24, 1943; as well as National Archives of Canada, Tim Buck archives, MG32 G3, volume 4, "A Democratic Front for Canada", January 17, 1943, p. 39, 40.
- <sup>252</sup> Gonick, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
- <sup>253</sup> MacDowell, *op. cit.*, p. 191,192.
- <sup>254</sup> Penner, *op. cit.* p. 29.
- <sup>255</sup> Communist Party of Canada, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
- <sup>256</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>257</sup> Robert Comeau and Bernard Dionne, editors, *Le droit de se taire*, Outremont: VLB Éditeur, 1989, p. 495.
- <sup>258</sup> See, for example, National Archives of Canada, Communist Party archives, MG28 IV4, volume 42, dossier 20, Gui Caron, "French Canada's Struggle for National Equality", in *National Affairs Monthly*, September, 1947.
- <sup>259</sup> National Archives of Canada, Communist Party archives, MG28 IV4, volume 42, dossier 41, Tim Buck, "The False Theory of French Canada as an Oppressed Nation".
- <sup>260</sup> Penner, *op. cit.*, p. 143; Henri Gagnon, *Les militants, Socialistes du Québec*, St-Lambert: Éditions Héritage, 1985, p. 779.
- <sup>261</sup> Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1985, p. 192.

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<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.* p. 223.

## Conclusion

Historians seek to understand past events. After defining the nature of the events, they try to explain what exactly happened, when and how, as well as the causes, effects, and implications of the events. The job is easier when events are far away in the past. It is easier to avoid errors of logic, polemics, justification, or moralizing when studying ,for example, the Battle of Hastings, rather than more recent events such as the invasion of Normandy in World War II. In the former example, were historians to take sides and argue on behalf of Harold rather than William, the actual victor in the Norman invasion of England, the discussions would dissolve into silliness since it's impossible to imagine the actual course of history without the successful invasion of Saxon England by the Norman Vikings. The historian's job, however, is more complex when events are close to us in time, when the parties active in the events are still alive, and events are still unfolding. For example, in 1989, the U.S.S.R. disaggregated, in the process liberating Eastern Europe. How this happened and the meaning of this are still unclear. The full impact of the fall of the U.S.S.R. will depend upon developments in the future. Will communism appear anew elsewhere? Now that Russia appears to be resuming its historic character as an oriental despotism, is it fair to ask if the U.S.S.R. ever was socialist? What of China? Cuba? Was the Stalinist turn in the history of the U.S.S.R. endemic to the marxist project or an unfortunate perversion? Opinions might be ventured today, but only historians will know the answers to these questions and then, only in the future.

When seeking to explain the causes of the internment in Hull during World War II, we argued that the Hitler-Stalin agreement just prior to the outbreak of war in 1939 was not the explanation. Even during the war, this explanation as argued by participants in the events did not hold water.

To some people, the internment in retrospect might represent a violation of civil liberties, especially of political expression and freedom of association, one that was completely unnecessary owing to the small number of communists. In this view, the reaction by the ruling classes of previous societies to the communist threat was overwrought. While it is true that both the communists, who were affected directly by the repressive policy of the Canadian state, and others who supported the cause of the communists, did much to advance civil liberties in this country, communists did play an important role historically in improving the lives of Canadian workers through social programmes, collective bargaining, labour unionism, especially the industrial unions of the CIO, and by advocating Canadian independence. All these were part of the communist project for Canadian workers. The communists did frighten the ruling classes, which is not to say that others such as the CCF and other labour leaders did not also frighten the Establishment. The repression of the communists during World War II, therefore, was important and useful to Canada's ruling classes, and not just an over-reaction to a minor, inoffensive group. Others might argue that the eventual course of history after the repressive policy of the Canadian state during World War II towards communists, did prove in the long run to be correct policy, especially considering the course of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. These people might argue what is the fuss – why even study the repression of communists two generations

ago,including the internment and imprisonment of 200 or so people during WWI?As a partial reply,one might recall that certain current events in Canada such as security certificates and other measures of repression vis à vis Arabs and Moslems in the war on terrorism resemble the measures taken against the communists in WWII.

In summary,it is this writer's contention that the internment of the communists during World War II was the continuation of a policy of state suppression of the working class that began in World War I. This policy was promoted and supported by the English-Canadian bourgeoisie and the French-Canadian petty-bourgeoisie. The evolution of World War II, and of public opinion in Canada were such that the internment policy could not continue throughout the war when Canadians moved sharply to the left. Not until the Cold War at the end of the 1940s was this wartime radicalism of Canadian workers quelled. Then, the typical, historic opposition between worker and capitalist, between socialism and capitalism, once again resumed its course.

## Postscript

In September, 1942, even as Hull prison was being emptied of the Canadian communists and sympathizers who had occupied internment camp 32 from August of the year before, a new kind of prisoner was greeted jovially by the Hull internees. These new occupants who were fêted by the Canadians internees were German POWs – soldiers, sailors, merchant seamen – themselves communists or other leftists, or trade unionists, or sons thereof. How did these POWs end up in Hull prison?

Canada played the role of jailer for Great Britain during World War II. The British were afraid to imprison on their own territory, for security reasons, the thousands of German and Italian POWs they had captured, therefore, they sent them to Canada. Combined with its own POWs, Canada held about 34,000 enemy POWs, kept in detention camps throughout the country. To help maintain security in these POW camps, the Canadian Army used a simple intelligence method by which enemy POWs were categorized; they were labelled ‘black’, ‘grey’, or ‘white’. ‘Black’ POWs supported the nazis and fascists, or were themselves of that political persuasion, such that they demanded close supervision. ‘Grey’ POWs were neutral, while ‘white’ POWs denounced the policies of their governments. Among the ‘whites’ were communists or other leftists, or their sons, who themselves might have been subjected to repression by the nazis. As the war evolved, some of these POWs asked to be allowed to work actively for the Allied war effort, as indeed was already happening among enemy ,‘white’ POWs held in Britain. In order to do so, ‘white’ POWs had to renounce the protection provided to

enemy POWs by the protecting power, as it was called, for Axis POWs held by the Allies, Switzerland. The Portuguese government played a similar role vis-à-vis Allied POWs held in Axis detention camps. These arrangements permitted the Swiss and Portuguese governments to inspect the detention camps in which POWs were held, and to report to the combatant countries about conditions in the camps.

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the situation of the 'white' POWs became precarious in the POW camps as tension grew between them and 'black' POWs. The Canadian government had seen the movie before... among Canadian leftists held in internment camps alongside Nazi and fascist sympathizers. So, the 'whites' were transferred to Hull prison, even as the facility was being emptied of Canadians. These 'white' POWs remained under the administrative control of the Veterans' Guard in Hull prison for up to a year after the end of the war, before they all could be returned finally to Germany. For nearly four years, they were prisoners at Hull. Nearly one percent of enemy POWs, or 300 men, were stationed at Hull prison, although there was only room for 100 prisoners in the prison itself. In actual fact, the men were placed as poorly-paid, farm workers on farms in Carleton county, south of Ottawa, or in the Outaouais, on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River. Contacts with the prison itself and its personnel occurred usually only during visits for administrative or medical purposes.

Conditions on the farms were difficult, especially since many of the POWs were city boys unused to farm work. Farmers might demand their pound-of-flesh; they sometimes mistreated the POWs. The results included many illnesses and accidents, and a



surprisingly high number of escapes. The war diaries abound with examples of such escapees, who would be retrieved quickly thereafter. Nonetheless, it appears that a handful of these POWs were never re-captured, at least according to war diary records, therefore, one might surmise that some POWs might have melted away into the country undetected, if the problem indeed is not simply one of incomplete records.

The history of the German POWs at Hull prison is not as well-documented as that of Canadian communists held early in the war at Hull Internment Camp 32, nevertheless, it might still provide an interesting story... which I leave, however, to someone else.

## Chronology

### Key Events re. the DOCR with War in Background

Period of Time	DOCR	War
March, 1938	Cabinet Order PC531 authorizes the federal government to create secret committees to prepare government action in the event of war or insurrection.	
Year – 1939		
July	The secret committee reports to Cabinet and recommends the DOCR.	
August 23		Signature of German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact.
September 1	Government authorizes censorship measures.	Germans invade Poland.
September 9	Arrests of communists begin re. specific offences against the DOCR.	
September 10		Canada declares war on Germany.
September 27	PC2891 adds paragraph 39A to DOCR which makes it illegal to publish, distribute or possess documents that violate the DOCR.	
October 14	The Communist Party of Canada publishes its opposition to Canadian participation in the war via a flyer in 250,000 copies delivered door-to-door.	
November 7		The Comintern sends a document to member parties denouncing the war as imperialist, and that furthermore, it should

		cease immediately.
November 10	23 communists are arrested for specific violations according to the DOCR; the communist newspapers, <i>Clarion</i> and <i>Clarté</i> , are made illegal.	
1940		
April 9		Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
May 10		Germany invades the Low Countries.
June 4	By article 39C added to the DOCR, the Communist Party and pro-communist organizations are made illegal.	
June 5	Via PC 2667, the Custodian of Enemy Property within Secretary of State seizes the properties of banned organizations, especially those of ULFTA.	
June 21		France surrenders to Germany.
June 22	Using article 21 of the DOCR, first arrests of internees Navis and Penner, in Winnipeg, and Saunders and Louis Binder, in Ottawa.	
June 28		Great Britain recognizes de Gaulle as the legitimate leader of the Free French Forces.
Summer	Mass arrests of communists and sympathizers; western Canadians are interned in Kananaskis; central Canadians and easterners are interned in Petawawa.	
1941		
June 18	Montrealer Emilio de Sylva is the last communist arrested for a specific offense	

	under DOCR.	
June 22		Germany invades the U.S.S.R..
Mid-July	Communists interned in Kananaskis are transferred to Petawawa.	
August 14	Internee Joe Wallace receives a month in solitary confinement, which starts a strike in protest from leftist, Petawawa internees.	
August 20	Leftist, Petawawa internees are transferred to Hull prison.	
September 13	Montrealer Joseph Scheer is first Hull internee to be freed.	
End of November		Justice minister, Ernest Lapointe, dies.
December		Japanese attack Pearl Harbour; Germany declares war on U.S.; Americans are now officially at war. Louis St-Laurent replaces Lapointe as King's Quebec lieutenant.
1942		
February 10	NCDR Ontario representative Harvey Murphy is interned in Hull when transferred from prison in Toronto; Murphy is the last internee to enter Hull.	
July	Eight internees are freed from Hull.	
July 23	Special Parliamentary committee recommends the end of both the internment of communists and the ban on communist organizations.	
September	27 internees are freed from Hull; as this occurs, Hull prison now starts receiving leftist, German POWs.	
September 27	Large rally in Toronto where 18,000	

	demand the end of the internment in Hull and the ban on communist organizations, and the addition of a second front in Europe to ease pressure on the USSR.	
September 25/26	17 recognized, communist leaders surrender to the RCMP in Toronto to undertake fake trials and symbolic internments.	
October 7	The 17 leaders are freed, signalling the effective end of the internment in Hull.	
End of October	All Hull internees are freed with the exception of Peter Keweryga, sick in an Ottawa hospital, who is freed in November.	
1945		
May		Allied victory in Europe.
August 14		Japanese surrender following use of atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
August 16	Articles 21, 22, 39A, B, C of the DOCR are revoked, except for Japanese interned under article 21; the Communist Party is now legal, although it chooses to continue using the name Labour-Progressive Party.	

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