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Ed. Note:

Articles in this issue continue to deal with the subject of refugee movements, a thread recently begun in *CIHS Bulletin 46*. We start (see p.3) with the situation before and during World War II and then jump ahead a decade to commemorate the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 and the subsequent flow of refugees to Canada (see p.5). However, pride of place goes to our own modest anniversary and the celebration of it planned for the Annual General Meeting noted below. Finally (see p.11), we bring up to date the list of 'Czechmates' from *Bulletin 46*, then publish a unique 'Historical Document and wind up with good news from Pier 21'

The Founding of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society

by Gerry Van Kessel

Twenty years ago, in February 1986, seventeen persons met in Ottawa to found what was to become the Canadian Immigration Historical Society. This is a brief look at this event.

The seventeen came together in response to a belief probably promoted most by Harry Cunliffe* that there was a gap they were uniquely in position to fill in understanding the history of immigration to Canada, particularly the history of immigration after World War II. Harry and the others who came together felt they were uniquely qualified because they were the professionals who had developed and implemented Canada's immigration policies and programs. They had knowledge and awareness of what had happened in immigration that the documents and papers housed in the National Archives and the books and articles about immigration could not capture. With the actual and pending retirement of so many who had been "inside" players in the post World War II boom in immigration to Canada an effort had to be made to capture these experiences before they were lost and the full knowledge of what had happened was diminished forever.

With these goals in mind the seventeen paid \$20 each and gave the go-ahead for the founding of a properly set up society. Over the next year they and others worked to form the Canadian Immigration Historical Society. A constitution was drafted to set out the Society's objectives and its administrative rules and charitable status was sought. Plans for what the Society wanted to do had to be worked out.

Of particular concern in the internal discussions on the Society and its constitution was the need to remain outside the fiercely ideological debates that characterized the times. The 1980s were

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Please take note of this date: Thursday, November 23rd (5 pm) for the **20th Anniversary Annual General Meeting**. It will be held at St. Anthony's Italia Soccer Club Hall, St. Anthony Street [just off Preston Street north of the Queensway. Members in the Ottawa area will receive the usual invitations. Of course, members from other parts of the country will be extremely welcome if they can make it.

a time of intense disagreement about immigration and refugee policies. It was the decade of the Singh decision, the Stern and Plaut reports, the recall of Parliament in response to the arrival of two boats off the east coast of Canada and the drafting of new refugee determination legislation. (It was a time that a ministerial adviser told me that when it came to a choice between Canada and an applicant for immigration, he would choose the latter). NGO and academic critics condemned in very strong terms the record of immigration as being racist, discriminatory and anti-human rights and they had the ear of the mass media.

By implication immigration staff was tarred with the same broad accusatory brush. For the original seventeen and the others who became involved with the Society this was not what they experienced and lived. They knew that this would be confirmed by the stories they had yet to tell about the policy confusion and the operational priorities and problems they lived daily. These stories could stand on their own in the face of the criticism and the effort of critics to adopt a revisionist view of what had happened. As a result there was much energy expended on ensuring that the Society would remain non-partisan and avoid entanglement in the public debate.

By November 1986 the initial preparatory work had been done: 38 people met and gave approval in principle to a draft constitution and established an interim executive of Fenton Crossman as president (Fenton was a critical early supporter of the Society), Ian Rankin as vice-president, Harry Cunliffe as treasurer and Bernie Brodie as secretary. Special guests at the November 1986 meeting included Jack Manion, Joe Bissett, Michèle Falardeau-Ramsay and immigration historian Dr. Freda Hawkins. The membership secretary reported that the Society had 175 members.

The first issue of the Bulletin was issued in March 1987. It reported on the November meeting, the constitution, the support of the Society for the Pier 21 initiative in Halifax and the intention to be ready for the first annual general meeting in late May or early June.

The first annual meeting was held in June 1987 and by then the Society had charitable status and the constitution was accepted. The objectives of the Society, as stated in its constitution, were "... to support, encourage and promote, research into the history of Canadian immigration, and to foster the collection and dissemination of that history (and) to stimulate interest in, and further the appreciation and understanding of the influence of immigration on Canada's development and position in the world." Bud Clark, former director general of Immigration Foreign Branch, became president. committees on program and planning, research and publications, membership and finance and local chapters were set up.

The following years were marked by continuing efforts to place the Society on a sound footing and to determine the extent of its ability and capacity to meet the objectives it had set itself. Among the issues and aspects of immigration that CIHS was involved with included Pier 21, the memoirs of Maurice Mitchell, Roger St. Vincent's memoir of the 1972 Uganda Asian refugee

movement, the diaries of Fenton Crossman, the review of books on immigration and refugees, a symposium on the Hungarian refugee movement of 1956, a symposium and two commemorations of the Uganda movement and the 80th anniversary of the founding of the immigration border service (1906).

As we look back at those years and examine the current state of the Society, we can only applaud the foresight and energy of those who acted on their conviction that such a society was needed.

* Harry's role in founding the society was critical. As Jack Manion wrote in *The Bulletin* after Harry's death, Harry was "the recruiter who persuaded many of us to join the Society... He was the inspiration, heart and soul of the Society and its conscience and guide (or goad, if you prefer) in its early years".

Refugees Before and During World War II

Email from: Charles.Godfrey@international.gc.ca
To: cihs@ncf.ca
Sent: Tuesday, April 19, 2005 12:07 AM
Subject: January 2005 Bulletin

Warm regards from sultry Manila.

I really like the new "regular feature" of publishing old but interesting immigration documents. If the first feature is an indication of what is to come, this will be a regular highlight of the *Bulletin*.

I read with interest **Canada's Refugee Programme 1945-1970**. Indeed, our record in this time period, and later, is exemplary. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said about the period immediately before this, the period during which millions of persons needed refuge. Canada was downright discriminatory, from the Prime Minister down, in most (all?) of its immigration policies and programs, witness the statement made by the Director of the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources, Frederick Charles Blair, who, when asked in 1939 how many Jewish refugees Canada was prepared to admit, answered "None is Too Many". The Branch did not literally follow this statement as the war developed, but during the war Canada took in only 4,000 Jewish refugees, while the United States welcomed 240,000, Britain took 85,000, China, Argentina and Brazil accepted 25,000 each and Mexico

and Colombia received 40,000 between them.

Canada's representatives abroad were certainly not united in their acceptance of this Government policy. While Vincent Massey was a strong supporter from his post in London, Georges Vanier, from a similar vantage point in Paris, took an opposite view. The following article, highlighting General and Mrs. Vanier's actions, is of interest. Of course Canada also has a black eye in its treatment of Chinese immigrants and Canadians of Japanese origins.

Charles Godfrey joined the Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1972 and has had postings in Manila (twice), San Francisco (twice), Bogota, Port of Spain, New Delhi, Colombo, Hong Kong and London. He is currently the Program Manager in New York.

Georges P. Vanier and the Holocaust

**[Kleinmann Family Foundation
Eleventh Annual Cégep Holocaust
Symposium]**

As you may already know, Vanier College was named in honour of Georges P. Vanier, Canada's second native-born and arguably one of Canada's best-loved Governor-Generals of all time. What you may not know is that while he was serving as Canada's Ambassador to France during the Second World War, he was also a vocal supporter of Jewish immigration at a time when those in the Canadian government were decidedly cool, if not downright hostile to the idea.

At the early part of the war, Vanier was interviewed by the London *Times*. He deplored the cruelty and assassination of women and children, a theme both he and his wife Pauline repeated in numerous speeches upon returning to Canada in 1941.

They urged the government to pass a more liberal immigration policy to allow refugees into Canada. Unfortunately their pleas fell upon deaf ears.

This story was documented in a book published in 1982. The title, "None is Too Many" was taken from a statement made by an immigration official when a delegation of Jews went to Ottawa in 1939 to ask: "How many Jews will Canada take in?" The Immigration Minister answered, "None is too many." The authors, Irving Abella and Harold Troper, published this book in 1982 and it was on the Canadian Best Sellers List. They received an award for it early in 1983.

It is a thoroughly researched work with documented proof that our top bureaucrat in the Immigration Department, Fred Blair, wanted no Jews in Canada and did everything he could in the way of roadblocks to prevent it. Mackenzie King's actions (or lack thereof) clearly showed that he didn't want them either. Fred Blair certainly had the opportunity to rescue thousands, but wouldn't budge on his restrictive policy. He simply didn't want any Jewish immigrants. Ottawa would not listen either to the pleas of George Vanier, even though he was Canadian Ambassador to France and was right there on the scene.

Returning to Paris following liberation, Georges renewed his attempts to have refugees accepted in Canada while Madame Vanier spent countless hours organizing services that provided temporary shelter for refugees and that attempted reunification of families separated by the war. At train stations, displaced people were greeted with drinks, refreshments, clothes, and survival kits.

Photos were taken and placed on the walls of the station "...in hopes," she exclaimed, "that someone in the crowd would recognize the name or picture of a long lost relative or friend." She also raised funds from Canada to purchase everything from a cow to provide milk for one village and a tractor for use at a boys' town farm established near the ruins of Caen. Her interest and devotion resulted in the owner of a nursery in Lyons naming a rose the 'Madame Vanier.' Hundreds of grateful letters were received at the Embassy.



Weeks after Germany surrendered, Vanier joined a delegation to visit the Buchenwald Concentration Camp and broadcast to Canada a commentary about the holocaust that was described as "superbly drafted and perfectly delivered." He served as Canadian delegate to the Paris Peace Conference where he helped draft and

sign, on behalf of Canada, treaties with Italy, Romania, Hungary, and Finland before serving as Canadian delegate to the United Nations General Assembly in Paris in 1948.

references:

www.nizkor.org/hweb/camps/buchenwald/diplomatic/georges-vanier-042745.html

www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/antiholo/summani.html

Charges of Anti-Semitism

—A Reply by Al Gunn

Mr. Godfrey's email and attached article were intriguing, being so typical of the view of postwar Canadians towards the attitudes and actions of Canadians during the depression years. It is always interesting to see stories of past events which are obviously looked upon in terms of today's point of view. Certainly, if we go back a century or so, the attitudes and actions of persons in society may well be the subject of ridicule.

Under the feudal system, it was 'normal' to order the hanging of a poacher in England, because he snared a rabbit on the land belonging to the Baron of the area. This is a rather extreme illustration of the need to record and comment on historical events on the basis of the *mores* in operation at the time.

Canada, in the 'dirty thirties,' was not a happy country. The stock market crash, albeit in the USA, created the 'great depression' which dominated the Canadian economy until it was overridden by the beginning of WWII. Unemployment rates of 25% to 35%, the drought on the prairies and a host of secondary problems, created a general feeling of despair throughout the country.

The federal government enacted Order-in-Council (P.C. 695) severely restricting all immigration to Canada. This regulation remained in effect until well after the war. In addition, a number of British Subjects, who had not yet acquired Canadian domicile, were actually deported to the 'mother country' having become a public charge by applying for 'relief' (as welfare was called). The Immigration Act of 1927, which was in force at the time, placed persons who were a 'public charge' or liable to become a public charge, in the 'prohibited classes.'

In the light of these conditions, imagine the position of the Government if it decided to admit refugees who would be public charges on arrival, and thus in the prohibited classes as defined in the Immigration Act. Since this was in the Act, not in any regulation, it could not be changed by Order-in-Council, but only by amending the Act. No politician would care to face parliament with such an amendment in view of the public mood in Canada.

The Vaniers may have been aware of the plight of refugees in

Europe, but their action suggests they may have been out of touch with conditions in Canada.

The comparison of Canada's role in accepting refugees in the early war years by simply quoting the numbers accepted by other countries is meaningless, unless accompanied by information which would permit objective analysis. In fact, it is a textbook illustration of statistics "which conceal more than they reveal" to quote an often used example of misuse of raw data.

From 1939 to December 1941, for example, Canada was at war with Germany, while USA was neutral. We were very much aware of the critical situation in Britain, which stood virtually alone, and in imminent danger of invasion by the Nazis. The energy of our country was directed to support of the British as a top priority. Our marine resources were strained to the limit to supply the UK with food, weapons and troops. It may be difficult for persons, today, to realize that we might well have been defeated, if the Nazis had succeeded in invading and occupying Great Britain.

During this period countries such as USA, Brazil, and even Australia, could receive refugees arriving on neutral ships, while our transportation facilities were facing constant attack by U-boats. Would critics of Canada suggest that we should have diverted our war effort to the reception of aliens who had no earthly claim on us for refuge?

The opinions expressed by many 'baby boomers' today reflects the weakness in the teaching of Canadian history. The practice of teaching 'revisionist' history has, obviously, distorted the views of many younger Canadians. The attitude of the Canadian Government, and of Immigration officials, as reported in the quotation of Mr. Blair's remarks, is certainly open to interpretation. Had persons, representing refugees from any race or religion, and from anywhere in the world, asked the same question, it would probably have elicited the same response.

Canada's response to the IRO, as soon as our economy had recovered from wartime conditions, in our acceptance of over 40,000 displaced persons, the majority Jewish, is strange evidence of anti-Semitism, considering that these persons were given priority over other immigrants (except war-brides.) In fact, the special movement of displaced persons was permitted to override PC 695, which was still in effect for other immigrants, until 1951.

There may be some merit to the idea of carefully examining criticism of Canadian Immigration Policy, before bestowing the 'black eye.'

The Significance of the Hungarian Refugee Movement

By Mike Molloy

The Hungarian Refugee Movement of 1956-7 is of historical significance as one of the largest single-source refugee resettlement programs ever undertaken by Canada with 37,566 persons admitted by December 1958.

Its significance goes beyond the mere number of people brought to Canada for resettlement as a result of the crushing of the Hungarian uprising. Of equal importance in terms of Canada's future refugee policy was the precedent the movement set in establishing the idea that one of Canada's roles in the second half of the 20th century would be to provide permanent resettlement for people displaced as a result of war, persecution, repression and other man-made crises. In the following decades the precedent set by the Hungarian Movement pointed the way as subsequent displacements occurred (Czechoslovakian refugees in 1968, Ugandans in 1972, Chileans in the mid-70s, Boat People from Indochina in the late 1970s and 1980s, up to more recent groups like the Kosovars.)

The Hungarian Movement also demonstrated that ordinary Canadians would not only support government decisions to admit refugees in time of crisis but also that many of them would respond generously by contributing their time and money in assisting the newcomers to settle in.

The impact of the Hungarians on Canadian culture has received scant attention over the years but there are those who see them as the first critical ingredient in the transformation of dull old 'Toronto the Good' (and by extension many, many other Canadian communities) into the vibrant cosmopolitan city it would become in the sixties and beyond.

Ed. Note: In order to set the stage for an analytical article and then a very personal account of a refugee's flight from oppression, we consider it appropriate to reprint the following extract from *CIHS Bulletin #9, January 1992*.

PRESENTATION TO THE HONOURABLE. J.W. PICKERSGILL

Together with the Canadian members of the Sopron (Hungary) Forestry and Technical Groups, the Canadian Immigration Historical Society had the pleasure of honouring the Hon. J.W. Pickersgill for his contributions during the Hungarian Refugee Movement of 1956/57 in a ceremony and reception at the Faculty Club of the University of Ottawa on April 24, 1991.

The remarks of Mr. K.J. Roller on behalf of the National Forestry Association of Hungary in presenting an Honourary Certificate to Mr. Pickersgill are as follows:

We have gathered this afternoon to honour a most remarkable man in the history of Canadian Immigration, the Honourable Jack Pickersgill.

I would characterize him as a man with compassion, one who cares for his fellow man, and one who was the source of much

happiness and freedom to many new immigrants to Canada, and especially to the Hungarians of 1956.

It gives me much pleasure to be able to deliver greeting to you, Mr. and Mrs. Pickersgill, to commemorate your effective support to us, on behalf of all Hungarian foresters living in Canada and Hungary. This event marks a very important milestone in my life, and in the lives of all those who came to Canada 36 years ago, after the ill-fated Hungarian Revolution. With your help and continued understanding, we were able to establish new homes in Canada, and sow new seeds and traditions into Canadian soil. That tradition is all the more vital because it has been maintained and nurtured through deep mutual faith and sacrifice. Please allow me to recall a few events of those days when you, Mr. Pickersgill, stepped into our historical destiny.

It was an early, cold, misty morning in Stroble, Austria, in 1956, when we bitterly, desperately, and hopelessly awaited some form of resolution to reestablish our life in the western world.

We had already received about 30 refusals from various countries for assistance in finding a new home for our

families as well as for the continuation of our academic and educational activities with our 140 forestry students.

That morning, Mr. Pickersgill, the Minister of Immigration for Canada, and Mr. Cox, High Commissioner for Canada (=Head of Post) in Vienna, visited our campus unexpectedly, and offered the entire student and academic body an invitation to come to Canada.

We could not believe it; how could this possibly be? But Mr. Pickersgill's honest personality and friendly talk, which by the way, we could not understand, convinced us to trust him and accept his offer.

We realized that his invitation was not just a dream, but very positively real. Our miserable inaptitude with the English language did not allow us to express our rapturous enthusiasm in words. We all stood and applauded to show him our happiness.

It would be a very long story to try to recall everything that Mr. Pickersgill has done for us during the economically difficult times which swept over Canada in the sixties, especially during our academic years. But I have to say that we always trusted in him and wholeheartedly appreciated the fulfilment of his promises.

We had very bad experiences with politicians, government agencies and MPs during those days, both in Canada and abroad. But Mr. Pickersgill never disappointed us and we never lost our faith in him when he was in high office and later when he retired. He was always our best friend and benefactor, it was always easy to approach him when we needed help or advice. At the university campus, his assistance even created a slogan during the fifties and sixties. The Canadian colleagues called our students the Pickersgill Boys.

Now, when our country has finally become free and all of us who are now Canadian citizens are able to cooperate freely with our colleagues in Hungary, we feel that the one person who deserves our deepest gratitude is Mr. Pickersgill.

I am honoured to present this honorary diploma from the Hungarian National Forestry Association, which intends to prove: one, that you and the Canadian people did well to assist us, and two, that the Hungarian forest engineers and technical engineers who graduated in Canada did well to accept the hand stretched out over Andau in those dark days of Hungarian history in 1956.

While no certificate can truly express the high honour we hold for you, this Certificate will partly serve to commemorate and honour your invaluable support to the Sopron immigrants.

Our gratitude and appreciation go out to you, Mr. Pickersgill, in recognition of you as one of the best friends of Hungary in the western world. I also thank you for your positive vision and unending faith in us.

On behalf of all of us here, we wish you continued good

health and strength, and God's blessing on you and your remarkable family.

In reply, Mr. Pickersgill made the following remarks:

Dean Roller and the other two gentlemen who have done me so much honour today and those of you who have come to hear what I hope will not turn out to be my concluding words.

I am overcome! I have often said and I've always meant that I thought in my years of public life, the most important service I performed for my own country was the part I had in encouraging refugees from Hungary to come to Canada.

And I did something that I didn't ever admit at the time. Shortly after I had visited the Forestry faculty and students in Austria, when I got back to Ottawa, I learned that no country really wanted to have students because they didn't get jobs right away and couldn't look after themselves.

And I told my Deputy Minister to telephone to Vienna and make no memorandum whatsoever, to tell them that we had decided to take people, and I announced it publicly of course, on the first come first served basis.

But I wanted them to do their best to get all those students who turned up at the front of the line every day and I felt the long term dividend of the additional cost would more than repay us. And I have had so much evidence all over this country that I was right in that judgment.

I'll never forget – it was one of those great moments when I went in to see Mr. St. Laurent, and I said, "You know, we are giving loans to people who come to Canada but I am told that many people among the refugees don't want to have debts and that this is discouraging the movement." "I had already hired every aircraft I could get for the movement and I said I thought we should make it free.

He was a little shocked for about 30 seconds and then he said, "Well, if the Minister of Finance will agree, I will agree." And I went to see the Minister of Finance who had been my predecessor as the first Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Mr. Walter Harris, who is still practising law at the age of 87.

I put this proposition to him. He said, "What will it cost?" and I said "There is no possible way of calculating. I will tell you what it cost when it's over." He said, "Well, it is the right thing to do."

So I went back to the Prime Minister and we had a cabinet meeting called within an hour. I left for Vienna that night.

It was really quite remarkable when you had a really good government how (the public applauded enthusiastically) quickly you can get things done.

Considering that I would like you to go on loving me, I am concluding this speech, but not every speech forever.

All of us hope to have the occasion to hear many more speeches from the Honourable J.W. Pickersgill.

The Movement of Hungarian Refugees to Canada

by Greg Chubak

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the subsequent refugee movement to Canada.

While there were prospects for enhanced global peace and security in early and mid-1956, the world remained fraught with Cold War tensions. The Suez Crisis was front page news and the predominant global political concern at the time. Despite early cause for optimism, the October 1956 Revolution, led largely by students and intellectuals, ultimately failed. Within a period of weeks the Revolution in Hungary was brutally crushed by Soviet troops. In short order the country produced more than 200,000 refugees (fewer than 2% of the total population) most of whom were seeking succour or resettlement from within Austria although there were camps in Italy, the UK, France, and the Netherlands. This mass egress was despite obvious dangers, closed (or closing) borders, and long walks across vast expanses during a harsh central European Winter.

In Canada, the economy was robust with economic growth building on post-WW II prosperity and the effects of the baby-boom, the social climate was largely optimistic and the government of the day was confidently facing an election (which it ultimately lost). It was this confluence of circumstances that led Canada, and the Immigration Service in particular, to facilitate the admission of almost 40,000 Hungarian refugees within less than a year. This process was perhaps spurred on by guilt for having remained, as per the Under-Secretary for External Affairs, 'completely passive' while the Revolution failed, combined with the prevailing Cold War ethos. In per capita terms, this was the most generous resettlement program of any of the major destination countries and was based on a recipe consisting of equal parts ideology and humanitarianism mixed with a liberal dose of good old-fashioned national self-interest.

While there remains some incertitude as to the genesis of the decision to accept a significant number of these refugees (within or without government), once it was made, the mobilization of resources was rapid. Notable was the active and enthusiastic leadership and participation by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, J.W. Pickersgill.

Processing, from selection and screening in the camps in Austria through to landing in Canada, was extremely swift and involved a great deal of work and the creative application of the relevant policies. Given the proscriptions of the extant Act and the

prevailing security (and anti-Semitic) concerns, it appears that Ministerial fiat was responsible for the 'modified' selection and admissibility criteria applied. Interestingly, there seemed to be no inter-party disagreement and the entire movement was swept along in a *deus-ex-machina* manner without any formal direction or agreed upon financial commitments by the government of the day. The process included providing transportation by air or sea to several Canadian ports of entry and destination cities and was notable in that it was not done on a cost recovery basis.

Settlement services and support upon arrival were provided, in many cases enthusiastically, by federal, provincial, and municipal governments, universities, as well as by charities and existing Hungarian communities in Canada. The most prominent and well-documented example of this support was the acceptance of the entire Sopron University of Forestry by the University of British Columbia. This group received a broad range of support which ultimately allowed them to graduate as a unit and with surprisingly little delay. [See reprinted article earlier in this issue.]

The group that left Hungary in 1956 was unique in its composition. The refugees were young (75% < age 35 and ~ 50% below age 25, urban, educated (20% were still post-secondary students), and many were the educated elite with significant professional experience. Of these there was a significant percentage of Jews (reliable estimates indicate up to 20%) who saw little cause for optimism after the Holocaust. While the genesis of the refugee movement was the failed Revolution, the vast majority of those taking flight were not combatants but those who had some idea what might await them under continued Soviet occupation and a repressive Communist regime.

This group ultimately chose to settle in urban areas. In several cities they effectively doubled the Hungarian population. In Ottawa they increased the existing Hungarian population by a factor of almost 10.

Given that this group was significantly different, especially with respect to ideology, from the two or three previous waves of Hungarian immigrants (the largely rural peasant groups that came between the 1880s and 1930 and the 'DPs' who came on the heels of WW II), they did not integrate well with them. As a result, this group tended to reject ethnic polarization and politicization with all of its 'isms' and sought economic and personal advancement in the broader Canadian context. In this regard, members of this movement have excelled in, inter alia, the arts, media, business, engineering and the pure sciences. This group contributed greatly to the change in perception of the Hungarian community in Canada from stolidly rural and agrarian to urban and sophisticated.

While the circa 40,000 who came to Canada were not singularly responsible for the downfall of communism in 1989, it may be said that they constituted a significant catalyst for change. There may be no doubt that the efforts of this group in the years after the Revolution ensured that the eyes of the West were not averted from Hungary as they were in 1956.

From an Immigration perspective, the mobilization of resources

and agencies and the underlying humanitarian and compassionate resettlement of this group became the template for dealing with subsequent refugee and migration and refugee challenges including the Czechoslovak, Ugandan Asian and Indochinese movements.

Despite a conclusion by some in External Affairs in 1957 “that the action of the UN on Hungary was largely a failure,” a corollary according to Minister Pickersgill’s reflection in later years may have been that “without any security clearances or most medical services, I think we got as fine a group of immigrants as ever came to Canada in the whole of our history”.

Greg Chubak recently returned from three years as immigration program manager in Hungary. He went with the misbegotten belief from his grandparents that he was of Hungarian Magyar origins only to find, after much historical and genealogical research in the traditional crossroads of Europe, that his family was actually of Ruthenian provenance. He now finds himself torn betwixt the history of his Hungarian relatives and the heady intoxication of nascent Ruthenian nationalism.

Budapest to Montreal 1956-57, a Mini-Memoir

by Peter Duschinsky

The last time I saw the Budapest of my childhood, a line of Soviet tanks stood in the park, facing the tenement blocks in the outer district of Pest where my aunt Olga and uncle Joseph lived. The buildings bore scars of the heavy fighting of early November, when the lumbering behemoths encased in steel, that thirteen years before had faced Hitler’s panzers on the eastern front, rolled into Budapest and pulverized all in their path. The kids inside the tanks were terrified of the ‘fascists’ on the outside and shot at anything that moved. The kids on the outside, armed with handguns, rifles, the occasional Soviet machine pistol and Molotov cocktails consisting of bottles, rags and gasoline threw themselves at the tanks in acts of mad desperation. They fought out of frustration with the oppression, the poverty, the lies, out of a longing for something better than what they lived in, what they grew up in. Were they nationalists, socialists, democrats, fascists? Most fighters would not have been able to define what they were, they just knew instinctively

that the time had come to fight, to make a stand even at the cost of their lives. Against the onslaught of the most powerful land army of the day they fought and died in their tens of thousands. Others were caught and transported to disappear in the Gulag, never to resurface again.

During the revolt, I was a thirteen year old living in an orphanage in Old Buda. My mother, mortally ill with the heart disease that was to kill her in another few months, was in hospital in Pest. My father had been dead since 1942, before I was born, lost on the Eastern Front at the bend of the River Don, where the Romanian and Hungarians armies and their unarmed Jewish beasts of burden, serving as exposed labourers in the mine fields, were annihilated by the Red Army. My father had been one of those beasts of burden. The only proof of his death was a terse telegram my mother had received from the Red Cross.

I was thirteen, but I was precocious. Like a couple of other boys at the orphanage, I burned with impatience to be out in the street where things were happening, where heroes were fighting for our people. We stole supplies from the medical office and assembled a first aid kit. We snuck out with our first aid box to help the wounded fighters. In the cold wind of late October we crossed the Danube in an open truck, the only transportation available at a time when there was no public transport, where everything, except the people’s collective will, had ground to a halt. Around us were young people, very young people. We may have been children, but we were the youngest by only a couple of years. (Joke that made the rounds in Budapest after the Soviets had crushed the revolt: Question: “Why did the Russkies roll into Pest in the middle of the night?” Reply: “The children were asleep”). I witnessed the mob going wild in Republic Square, in front of Communist Party Headquarters where they dragged some State Police officers from the building and strung them up on trees. I was disgusted with the violence, especially that of the women, who appeared wilder, crazier than the men. I walked back to the orphanage through streets strewn with the debris of urban fighting, with the occasional corpse of a horse or a dog still lying on the ground amidst a chaos of cobblestones and downed electric wires.

Later I managed to get back to my godmother’s apartment in Pest where I saw my first Soviet soldier, who came to the cellar where we were hiding and told us that we could come out now, the fascists have been defeated. For the next six weeks the city subsisted in a state of suspended animation. No work, no school, no public transport, candles burning in apartment windows every night mourning the revolution’s defeat. There was enough food as the farmers managed to supply the city but money was worth little and a lot of family heirlooms were being exchanged for sustenance. I sat in the dining room of my godmother’s apartment, playing cards with a new friend. The neighbouring apartment had an enormous hole in the bedroom where a wayward shell from a tank had hit.

As often as I could, I went to see my mother in the hospital. Over the weeks, as news of the open borders spread, people left

Budapest by train, by truck, by any available means of locomotion, heading for the West. People-smuggling networks were established, rumours spread about who was leaving, about the best method for getting out. In the hospital my mother was burning with a strange determination, almost an obsession. She repeated over and over that I must leave Hungary, that nothing will ever be right here again. I cried and said that I would never leave her. She insisted to me, to my godmother, to my aunt Olga.

Olga made up her mind to emigrate on the spur of the moment. Conscious of my mother's pleading, she told my godmother that she would take me, but I would need to get ready, all was arranged and the truck won't wait. There was no solid reason for her to leave, except that her younger sister Elizabeth had left soon after the war and had been living for five years in Montreal with her husband, and her younger brother Ernest had also left with his family and was already in Austria. If Olga and her husband Joseph were to escape as well, only two very sick women of our family would be left alone in Budapest, my mother and my godmother.

So Olga left, leaving behind memories of wars and deaths and I went with her and Joseph. I felt terribly confused and guilty in leaving, but at the last moment I decided to go, with an old suitcase full of summer clothes and without any papers. Had I not left I would have betrayed the most ardent wish of my mother, but by leaving I left her to die alone. Within the next fifteen months both she and my godmother were in their graves. Of our large family, Hungarians on all sides as far back as we knew, not one person was left living in Hungary.

Fourteen people, including three family groups and two single young men were in the back of the large canvas-covered truck. The two young men had pistols and, to everybody's horror, stated that if we were stopped they would fight, they would not go back to prison or worse. My uncle Joseph, who was originally from a small Transdanubian town, sat in the front with the driver, since both his accent and appearance lent a trace of legitimacy to our wandering in a truck through the back roads of the hill country. I had no idea where we were, but we kept on rolling, slowly and patiently, through the whole day. A drive that under normal conditions should have taken four hours took us ten, until seven o'clock that December night.

The driver and Joseph were sipping peasant wine and exchanging stories in the front, getting tipsy. Eventually this served us well, for in the early evening, already close to our destination, we were stopped by a patrol. Deathly silent in the back, we heard a patrolman ask, "where are you heading this late, don't you know that this is restricted territory?", and Joseph reply, "we're off to a wedding". "Some wedding you are going to", said one of the patrolmen, "you've been into the sauce already, haven't you? Go on, off with you and good luck." Shortly after, we arrived at a farmhouse in the fields, where our guide was waiting.

We had a quick meal and then we were off, walking in silence in dark stubble fields covered by the first dusting of snow. In the

distance we heard the insistent barking of village dogs. The moon, reflected by the snow, lighted our way. Close to our right, may be a half kilometre away, we saw lights behind a stand of trees and heard snatches of Russian singing, "...kalinka, kalinka, kalinka maya...". Those homesick Russian boys must also have been into the sauce, for there were no guards posted, nobody stopped us. I have heard that song many times before and since, but will never forget that rendition.

And then, seemingly only a short time later, although according to our watches we had been walking for two hours, our guide said, "this is it, you are in Austria. The village is down that way, just a ten minute walk away." The two boys with the guns fell down and kissed the ground. The rest of us headed to the village. I was lagging behind, my suitcase felt heavy. Walking along the main street, my aunt Olga stopped a well-dressed man and said something to him. He replied, took out his wallet and handed her a bill. I understood nothing. As we walked along, she explained, "I told him we were Hungarian refugees and asked him where we should go. He gave me this—she showed Joseph and me a 200 schilling note—and told me to go to that building beside the church." She appeared dazed. We spent our first night in the West in a village hall sleeping in straw. Next day we took the train to Vienna.

Vienna is a fog in my consciousness. Very different from grey, dark Budapest, with neon lights, many cars, clean buildings, talk that sounded like gibberish. We went to some offices and registered with the Jewish Agency and when we said that we had family in Canada, we were told to fill out Canadian forms. We spent our nights in another big hall and were given food in a large cafeteria.

Then we were off to Salzburg, put up in a cheap hotel on the outskirts that was used to house Hungarian Jewish refugees. The three of us had a room and there was a shared bathroom in the hall. It was in that room that I began really to know Olga and Joseph, my new parents. They were a childless couple in their fifties, Olga spoke some German, Joseph spoke nothing but Hungarian, they had limited educations. Slowly they became aware of what they had done, leaving their home, their culture, everything they knew. Only decades later did I realize how scared they must have been, but they did not show it. Their simple courage and humanity animated their lives and everything they did, even when they suffered.

My mood alternated between enormous sadness over my dying mother and lost homeland and total unrestrained joy. I wondered the hills of Salzburg, watched the skiers, the mountains, the snow, the clear blue skies. Never before had I seen anything as beautiful as winter in the Alps. We ate at the hotel with the other Hungarians, waited anxiously, impatiently for our papers for Canada, for our new lives. We made up outlandish hopeful stories about what was waiting for us. To understand this, we must recall that for Hungarians and even more for Hungarian Jews after the hell of the second world war, Canada was the mythic land of plenty. We knew nothing of Canada and were told

little until we arrived, but we had hopeful myths and they kept us going.

Finally, the notice arrived that we were to do medical tests and we were given the fare to take the train again across Austria. It was back to Wiener Neustadt, not far from Vienna, a quick meeting with a Canadian official whose face and name are a blank after all these years and then, with our papers in hand we reported to Vienna's Western Station for the train trip to catch the boat sailing across the Atlantic from Liverpool to Saint John. Our trip through continental Europe was like a victory march. The train stopped in small and large Austrian and German stations and everywhere there were welcoming committees with flowers and songs and food and drinks. We crossed the Channel on the ferry from Oostende and finally hit total strangeness in Dover. Here the language was completely different, even more of a gibberish, people looked different, even the trains were different. And nobody cared that we were freedom fighters.

Crossing the Atlantic took six days. It was one of the last crossings for the "Empress of Britain", an old dowager of the North Atlantic. She would soon be rendered unusable by jet planes making the trip in a few hours rather than a week. It was a stormy crossing in February, Olga was terribly seasick, she could neither eat nor drink, threw up constantly, stayed in bed in the cabin for the whole trip. Joseph and I ate in the ship's dining room along with the other refugees and the paying passengers. The white table cloths and linen napkins, the plethora of eating utensils, the strange exotic dishes with unaccustomed flavours, the buzz of low key English conversation put us ill at ease in our threadbare clothes, looking and feeling like what we were, displaced refugees. To hide their embarrassment, their feelings of inferiority, some of the young freedom fighters, make believe studs in their late teens and early twenties travelling alone in the world, made up outlandish obscene rhymes in Hungarian, making fun of the strange English sounds around them. They also made up improbable lies about the voracious sexual appetites of the beautiful young English, Canadian and American girls on the boat.

And then we were in Saint John. We arrived in the early afternoon and were greeted by a welcoming committee. A middle aged lady made a speech in Hungarian, explaining that she was welcoming us on behalf of Canada and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Her Hungarian was stilted, full of English words and strange phrasings, difficult to understand. In the new world even our mother language sounded like gibberish. She told us about the Queen and the Dominion, democracy, our political rights, job opportunities and wages and what help we could expect. It sounded wonderful, but very strange. That night they put on a dance for us. There were soft drinks and flowers and a big sign saying "Welcome Freedom Fighters". There was a local band playing rock and roll songs and slow numbers and beautiful rosy cheeked girls putting the embarrassed young freedom fighters at ease, asking them to dance. Everything was friendly and optimistic and magical, full of good feelings and hope in a new land. Who knows, maybe that night some of the young studs even struck it lucky.

Next day, it was back to reality. After a night spent in another dormitory, there was the long overnight train ride to Montreal through white fields and forests. We arrived at the old Windsor Station, where Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Sandor met us. We took an enormous taxi to their apartment through the snowy dusk of a late winter afternoon. I sat in front, while they discussed things in muffled voices. Although I wasn't meant to, I overheard Sandor whisper, "why did you have to bring him, things will be hard enough as it is" and Olga reply, "he's a good boy, everything will be all right."

I was frightened and sad, lonely for my old home and missing my mother terribly. Yet I was also looking forward to the adventure of a new life in a new world, learning English and French and But that's another story.

Peter Duschinsky is a recently retired immigration foreign service officer who served as visa officer in Paris, Chicago, Cairo and Budapest and in various areas at CIC HQ

THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN REFUGEE MOVEMENT 1968

Were you there?

The following is a revised list of officers thought to have served at HQ and Vienna during the Czechoslovakian Refugee Movement according to some of those who contributed to *CIHS Bulletin 46*. If any of our readers have names to add we would be grateful to receive them and would publish further revisions.

LIST OF OFFICERS AT HQ DURING THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN REFUGEE MOVEMENT 1968

ED ASHFIELD, AL ARLETT, BILL BURTON, JOE BISSETT, BILL BERNHARDT, GENE BEASLEY, MOE BRUSH, DON BANDY, MOE BENOIT, LIZ BOYCE, MRS. BENDER, CY COUTU, NALDI COLLETO, BERT CARKNER, DALT COLLINS, CHARLIE DAGG, BILL COSTELLO, LEO CAMPBELL, JOHN DOBSON, WALLY DICKMAN, HARRY DONNER, JEAN DEWAN, STEVE FONTAINE, JESSIE FALCONER, GUS GALIPEAU, TOM GILL, AL GORMAN, NESTOR GAYOWSKY, BENOIT GODBOUT, AL GUNN, RANJITT HALL, JOHN HUNTER, DICK HUNT, TOM HERLEHIGH, RED JOHNSON, AL JORDAN[?], VAL LATOUR, GERRY LAMBERT, GEORGES LAPLANTE, LOU LABELLE, ART LEPITRE, GILLES LABELLE, D'ARCY MURPHY, ROY MCGRATH, CRAIG MACDONALD, BUD MUISE, BOB MCINTOSH, BILL NAUSS, EDITH O'CONNOR, GEORGE O'LEARY, ARNOLD PATTON, [?] POOLE, DON PELTON, BETTY ROTH, TERRY SHEEHAN, KEN STUART, BILL SORIKAN, JOE SWALES, JOHNNY ST.ONGE, PHYLLIS TURNBULL, ART VASS.

LIST OF OFFICERS IN VIENNA DURING THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN REFUGEE MOVEMENT 1968

IMMIGRATION: JOHN ZAWISZA, DAVID BULLOCK, JOHN WEISDORF, JOHN KLASSEN, JOHN HOLM, MARIA HACKE, JOYCE CAVANAGH, RUDI DENYS, SHIRLEY MACMILLAN, DON LYGO, LUDWIG (LOUIS) MACH, BRIAN O'CONNOR, MAGGIE JONES (NOW NEBOUT), TOBY PRICE, ROGER ST. VINCENT, HARRY CUNLIFFE, GINETTE TREMBLAY, CHUCK MORROW, DARRELL MESHEAU, DOUG DUNNINGTON, MIKE MOLLOY.

VISA CONTROL: BOB GOLDSMITH, BERT COWAN, MARGARET GRANT, RAY TROTTIER, GARRY FROESE.

MEDICAL: ROGER LECLERC, PETER ABEAR, DAVE TRAFTON, JOHN (JIM) ROOKS

Historic Document THE FIRST COUNTERFOIL VISA

For many decades a 'visa' consisted of an inked impression made in a passport with a rubber stamp. These were reasonably easy for criminal groups and even terrorist organizations to counterfeit, so in the 1970s the Immigration Branch decided to develop a visa that would be more secure. The result was the counterfoil: a paper visa with a number of built-in security features, with a special glue backing devised with the assistance of the Canadian Bank Note Company. According to CIHS member Bud Muise, Don Reid, Chief of Operations, had the lead on this project and Bud, along with his boss, the late Val Latour, was involved. Once the design and features of the visa were approved the Canadian Bank Note Company took charge of production.

The day the job was finished Bud went over to the company's plant to inspect the results. On arrival a senior official of the company handed Bud visa number 0000001 and asked him to accept it as a souvenir. Bud reports he had some qualms but the official told Bud that the inventory of visas would begin with visa 0000002. Bud showed the visa to his colleagues and then stuck it in his brief case and eventually forgot about it. Many years later it came to light and Bud took it out to his summer cottage and stuck it to the beer refrigerator on the cottage's

veranda. Recently Bud decided that a decade or more of exposure to the wind, rain, snow, heat and cold was enough of a field test and turned the door over—with visa attached—to the Society.

With professional assistance and a pair of tin snips the visa was removed from the door and it is now in safekeeping pending a decision by the Society regarding its future.



Good news from Pier 21

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug 3, 2006

DORA Construction Places winning bid for the first component of Pier 21's Expansion

HALIFAX—Although it has only been seven short years since Pier 21 re-opened, plans for an extensive expansion that will see Canada's last standing immigration port facility converted into a three level immigration museum are already underway. We are pleased to announce that DORA Construction placed the winning bid for the first component of this exciting project. The main components of the initial physical expansion include re-locating the Pier 21 Gift Shop and Research Centre to our beautiful foyer. Other components of Phase 1 will be announced this fall.

"It is a very exciting time to be working at Pier 21," says Robert Moody, CEO, Pier 21 Society. "With construction of Phase 1 to be complete by the end of the fiscal year, we are looking forward to the future Pier 21 and how it will speak to contemporary Canadians, reaching further than the immigrants during the Pier 21 era."

Under the leadership of consultants, Lydon Lynch Architects in collaboration with Design + Communication Inc., Apropos Planning and Gardner Pinfold, plans for the Strategic and Thematic Conceptual Design have been underway since December. "It has been a wonderful opportunity to be involved with Pier 21's expansion," says Andy Lynch of Lydon Lynch Architects. "Once the expansion is complete Pier 21 will be an even more inviting and innovative facility, offering the public a new perspective on museums."

The Gift Shop and Research Centre relocations will see both departments expanding in size and services. The new locations will enable them to attract more walk-in traffic and to accommodate additional materials and visitors. Further components of Phase 1 will include a 5,000 sq ft Temporary Exhibit Gallery that will help facilitate Pier 21's ability to tell Canada's entire immigration story. Phase 2 will see a thematic and physical expansion of the current exhibit in Rudolph P. Bratty Exhibition Hall. There will be extensive upgrades to Exhibition Hall that will enhance the current exhibit, while still focusing on the Pier 21 years. Additional permanent exhibit space will also be added through the creation of two new galleries to address the larger immigration story.

The Conceptual Design Study was made possible via financial participation by Canadian Heritage, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Government of Canada. Phase 1 would not have been possible without a \$1.5 million capital grant that was generously awarded to the Pier 21 Society by the Province of Nova Scotia in 2005. Phase 2 of the Conceptual Design Study will commence as funding becomes available.

Since the adoption of Pier 21's Five Year Strategic Plan in March 2003, the Pier 21 Society has been working hard to ensure that their goal of Pier 21 thoughtfully examining and celebrating Canada's immigration story becomes a reality.

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