

Immigration

Mohammad Case

The bizarre story of Mahmoud Muhammad Issa Mohammad, 46, a Palestinian sentenced to seventeen years by an Athens court for his role in a 1968 attack on an Israeli airliner in Athens that left one man dead, unfolded with increasing drama. Mr. Mohammad applied for and was granted landed immigrant status by the Canadian embassy in Madrid. He told CBC's *The Journal* in an interview shown on January 26, that he was neither asked for nor volunteered information on his conviction in 1968 and subsequent release in 1970 from the Greek jail.

Mohammad has been living with his wife and children in Brantford, Ontario, since last year. He told *The Journal* that he regretted the death of one man in the attack and wanted to live in peace in Canada. But the Minister of State for Immigration, Gerry Weiner, told the Commons on January 20 that deportation hearings had been ordered against Mr. Mohammad. He was released on three conditions: that he report daily to the District Immigration office in Hamilton; that he report to Immigration authorities when requested to do so by senior department officials; and that he report for the resumption of the hearing (*Ottawa Citizen*, January 26). It was reported by *CBC News* (January 23), that an unknown group in Lebanon had threatened to take Canadians hostages if Mohammad was deported from Canada.

Defections

Cubans and Poles led a record number of people who defected at Gander International Airport in 1987. Immigration statistics showed that 180 walked off flights and asked for refugee status in Canada, up from 110 in 1986. The largest number of defectors, forty-nine, came from Cuba followed by thirty-three from Poland. (*Globe & Mail*, January 6). A translator from the Soviet Union working for the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal asked to stay in Canada as a refugee. Andrei Alexandrovitch Rekemchuk, 32, his wife and 5-year-old son Pavel were granted a ministerial permit to stay pending application for refugee status (*The Gazette*, January 15).

Refugees

Minister's Statement

Immigration officials were ordered to monitor cases of landed immigrants and refugee claimants convicted of serious crimes, so that they may be deported once their sentences have been served. Immigration Minister Benoît Bouchard said he wanted to send out a "very strong and very clear message," and that he would not tolerate criminals who use the refugee process to enter Canada to deal in drugs or carry out other serious crimes. Mr. Bouchard stressed that Canada would continue to welcome genuine refugees (*The Gazette*, January 14).

Minister of State for Immigration Gerry Wiener asked the Senate committee studying Bill C-55 not to delay passage of the Bill, which he said was needed to stem the tide of bogus refugees trying to get into Canada. Bill C-55 was passed by the Commons last fall and is now before the Senate. Mr. Wiener also revealed that Department of External Affairs officials had begun discussions with several countries to see whether they would be willing to qualify as "safe third countries" for people turned back at the Canadian border under the proposed law. Mr. Wiener declined to name the countries involved (*Globe & Mail*, January 29).

Agreement with US

Immigration officials had signed an agreement in July to send personal information about individuals to the US, but had never bothered to tell anyone, a government official confirmed. Employment and Immigration spokesman Gerald Maffre was quoted in *The Gazette* on December 16, "As far as I know they didn't make any publicity of the event. It's not as if we signed it some dark and stormy night. It was signed in Washington. It was another operational agreement." But Winnipeg lawyer Kenneth Zaifman said the deal could infringe on privacy rights. "People should be advised the information they supply could be released," he said. He became aware of the agreement when a client had difficulty visiting the United States because of incorrect information supplied by Canadian Immigration authorities.

War Crimes

Ever since the passage of legislation in June, 1987, Canadian investigators have been gathering information to prosecute individuals in Canada against whom evidence could be produced of having committed war crimes or crimes against humanity. To do this, Canadian investigators must videotape courtroom evidence in secret in European countries before proceeding with the trial of a Toronto man charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity, according to a federal lawyer. Bill Hobson of the Justice Department said he was gathering information in Hungary shortly before Imre Finta, 76, was arrested in Hamilton. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for September for Finta. Under the criminal code, Canadians can only be tried for foreign offences after sworn evidence is collected in the country or countries where the crime was supposedly committed. Justice Minister Ray Hnatyshyn was negotiating for permission to seek the information with governments in the Soviet Union, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, West Germany, Israel and the Netherlands (*The Gazette*, December 14).

In this regard, Canada and the Soviet Union were close to ratifying an agreement.