

Deportation Threatened for Polish Seamen

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By MAUREEN PHINNEY

Nine Polish seamen seeking asylum in Canada face deportation back to their own country.

The men, who jumped ship last year, have been held by immigration authorities since last November. Their application for asylum was turned down by the Immigration authorities then. They were ordered deported immediately afterward.

A retrial was granted them by the Immigration Appeal Board. Within the next couple of days they should know whether or not they will be granted permission to stay on in Canada.

Why must they fight to remain in Canada, whose immigration laws are supposed to grant refuge to those whose deportation would mean persecution back home?

According to Manpower and Immigration Minister MacEachen there was presumably no danger facing the seamen on their return to Poland; therefore they were to be sent back. But this does not seem to be the case. This was brought out by the seamen's lawyer, Walter Goodfellow. He brought to the attention of the Immigration Appeal Board the grounds for a rehearing. He stated that "Within the area of the evidence itself there is, I would suggest, a clear line of thought and intention expressed: First - a desire to defect from a communist regime that is repressive and oppressive. Second - a genuine fear relating to the existence of a Polish law providing for imprisonment for defecting."

In an interview with the Gazette, Mr. Goodfellow briefly explained the nature of this law. "If anyone leaves Poland without permission of the Polish government he is subject to one to five years imprisonment once he has been returned to his country.

He commented that in addition to this, a charge of treason might also be brought against them. This would subject them to another five or ten years of imprisonment beyond that of the first charge.

Mr. Goodfellow said that the Immigration Appeal Board failed to recognize that the one to five year sentence for leaving the country without a permit was not, as they suggested, a "disciplinary measure", and as such, not sufficient ground for giving the seamen asylum in Canada.

The last sentence of the board's majority decision read: "However, if a term of imprisonment should be imposed it would be for crossing the border of Poland without authorization, not for activities of a political character".

Mr. Goodfellow stated that "...the Board, I submit, was in error in two respects: one is not considering defection an act of a political character itself - indeed a most dramatic act of a political nature, secondly the majority seem to require that the political activities be ones committed before defection. The witness Maciejewski gave evidence of serving almost a year in prison for making a derogatory remark against Stalin. The approach of the Board... suggests his further testimony that as this occurred over 10 years ago that his political act would not be held against him suggests that the Board was requiring evidence of political activities in the past."

The Gazette asked Mr. Goodfellow what repercussions there would be on the Canadian policy on asylum if the seamen are sent back to Poland.

"It's difficult to say. Canada is supposed to provide asylum to people from Warsaw Pact countries. Therefore the action on the part of the Immigration authorities to deport the seamen seems questionable. Why can't the seamen apply for landed immigrant status? Is there a legal barrier? Under one act if the person does not have certain documents; visas, medical certificate, it is impossible to apply for landed immigrant status. But the seamen claim that they cannot obtain these documents from the Polish authorities.

Has the present decision of the Immigration authorities been influenced by economic considerations? Has the Polish government put pressure on Canada by using economic considerations?

Last year 50 Polish trawlers and factory ships docked at the Port of Halifax. Docking, refueling, and obtaining supplies for 50 ships means a substantial inflow of money into the city. If the Polish government suggested that perhaps she would take her business elsewhere it would mean a great loss of profit to the city.

A spokesman for the Dalhousie Committee for Political Action commented on the situation: "In Stalinist countries, defection isn't considered to be a picnic. The question is not one of communism and capitalism, but rather of the totally anti-democratic nature of the Polish regime.

Last year, several communist students at the University of Warsaw wrote a critique of Polish Communism. Even though they were arrested before it was published, they were sentenced to prison for 'anti-state activity', as were a number of intellectuals who supported them. When seen in this perspective, the future of the seamen -- who actually attempted to leave the country -- doesn't look terribly rosy.

"The policy of our government in dealing with this matter is unforgivable -- it becomes clear that international diplomacy is a terribly cheap game, unfortunately in human lives. The attitude of the government in handling the whole case, including the secret cloak under which decision have been made, the fact that no reasons have been given for deportation, etc., will probably even make Ulbricht envious of Canada's bureaucratic technique.

"We have in our hands certain information that other groups in Halifax are willing, if necessary, to take militant action to release these unfortunate prisoners of Canadian 'justice', if it appears they are to be sent back.

"We are, however, only petitioning to demand the release of these men, so that they may start the jobs which they have already found, as soon as possible; at the very least we expect that someone in the Immigration Department will immediately do the people of Halifax the honor of telling us why such an incredible action has been taken. Or is there too much to hope for from a Department of Immigration which, as amazing as it seems, appears to have gone Stalinist before the country has even gone socialist?"

An Editorial

Leading to a conclusion

In one act

Four editors are sitting in the GAZETTE office discussing policy. The lights are dim, cigarette smoke fills the air; editor-in-chief, stage left, has head in hands.

CURTAIN RISES.

ED. 1: Did you hear Pierre's New Year's address? Fantastic, inspirational! There has obviously been a change in the government -- he was talking about Canadian humanitarianism.

ED. 2: That of course brings to mind Alan MacEachen.

ED. 3: He's certainly the one Just cog in Trudeau's political wheel!

ED. 4: I'm breathless when he opens his mouth.

ED. 2: But you know... you know, something has been bothering me. When I went to school, we were always taught that the Communists are enslaving progressively larger portions of the world's population every day, every hour!

ED. 1: Yes, my school taught me that there are millions of poor serfs to dictatorship all over the world who trudge aimlessly on, denied freedom and all of the other things that are so close to us here in Canada.

ED. 4: Yes, the things that it's WORTH spending our defense budget on...

ED. 3: Yes, and the things that our allies and friends, in the USA, are fighting so heroically to protect in Vietnam.

ED. 1 (standing): You see, the thing that's bothering me is, you know those Poles?

ED. 3: Which poles?

ED. 1: The Poles who escaped from all that horror they're being sent back to... you know, communism. I wonder why the Department of

Immigration is sending them back? I can't understand it.

ED. 2: It must be a problem of communication. I was talking to one of the chaplains today and he said most of our problems come from lack of communication.

ED. 4: Yeah, I'll tell you, what we learned in school certainly doesn't seem to agree with what's happening here. It's almost as if the communists aren't our enemies any more!

ED. 3: Maybe it's a federal-provincial split.

ED. 4: Yeah, the education minister can't be talking to the minister of immigration.

ED. 1: No, it can't be that alone, because the defense department is still spending our money protecting us from communism; the minister of defense can't be talking to the minister of immigration.

ED. 2: Yeah, and if the CBC is any example, the secretary of state can't be talking to the minister of immigration.

ED. 3: Poor Alan. Obviously nobody's talking to him.

(All four editors shake their heads. Editor 1 looks up, gleam in eyes.)

ED. 1: My news sense is leading me to a conclusion. Well, at first glance, this communications problem seems like a plausible answer, but it can't be, because we all know that Alan keeps popping up whether you want to speak to him or not.

(All four editors pick up copy of Chronicle-Herald. They fight over it. Editor 1 loses. He comes up with the news and editorial section.)

ED. 1: The Chronicle-Herald doesn't have any-

thing to say about it.

ED. 3: But that's not unusual...

ED. 1: My news sense is leading me to a conclusion. No, it's not unusual, except for one highly significant point: this is such a wonderful opportunity to bring out the community's fanatic anti-communism.

ED. 3: You'd think they'd be reporting it with incredible vigour.

ED. 4: Yes, and with incredible editorials.

ED. 3: Like they did for the Russian submarines 80 miles off the coast.

ED. 2: And Vietnam

ED. 4: And Medicare and fishing unions.

ED. 1: But they didn't. My news sense is leading me to a conclusion. You know, the port does a lot of business with the Polish government... Polish ships are always in and out of the harbour...

ED. 2: You're not suggesting, surely, that our leaders would be allowing a matter like that to interfere with the safety of these men's lives?

ED. 3: That in a free country like Canada, state policy could be so inhuman as that?

ED. 4: That they would be allowing business interests to sentence each of these men to ten years in jail by sending them back?

EDs. 2, 3 & 4 (together): You cynic! How grotesque! We know what you are. (Sneer knowingly). You're dirty, pinko, Commie faggot. Worse than MacEachen! WE QUIT!!!

(Stomp Out)

ED. 1: My news sense is leading me to a conclusion.

CURTAIN FALLS, amidst thunderous applause.