

ists noted for the sophisticated structure of their houses and out-buildings as well as the efficient organization of their barnyards.

The success of the resourceful Mennonites in the harsh prairie environment prompted later Canadian governments to offer special concessions to other sectarian groups who appeared to be promising. It was appreciated that the careful selection of refugees with respect to their manpower skills, could be an asset for Canada in terms of their potential contribution to the growth and development of the national economy.

The Doukhobors

A quarter of a century after the initial movement of Mennonites to Manitoba, a second extraordinary group movement of refugees composed of Russian Doukhobors occurred, which in subsequent years spawned a series of complex political and civil problems for Canadian federal and provincial authorities.

The Doukhobors were motivated by much the same circumstances as the Mennonites. They first arrived in 1899.

Their ability to make appreciable economic advances during their initial years of settlement can be largely attributed to the division of labour achieved by their communal organizations, which enabled the men to "hire out" as farm labourers or railroad navvies, while the women and old men cleared the land. Canadians of English stock who were not accustomed to seeing women hard at work in the fields found the Doukhobors different and even strange in their ways.

The selection of the Mennonites and the Doukhobors for their special agricultural expertise underlines the emphasis on economic considerations in these early refugee movements. Furthermore, the blurred distinction between economic migrants voluntarily migrating in search of better economic opportunities and the involuntary nature of refugee movements fleeing from oppression and persecution is substantiated by the passive and sometimes even neutral Canadian response towards refugees during economic crises and during periods of recession or depression.

The Great Depression of the 1930s is a good example. Despite the enhanced political and racial intolerance around the world during the decade of the 1930s, Canada closed its doors to the oppressed peoples of Europe. As a consequence of the ailing Canadian economy no distinction was attempted between economically motivated immigration and refugee movements. Both were essentially perceived in the same manner and subject to a restrictionist approach. The limited resources of the Canadian economy during the Great Depression were channeled into assisting the large numbers of unemployed Canadians.

When the guns had ceased firing at the end of the Second World War, the situation in Europe brought about the existence of more than one million displaced persons and refugees — contrast that figure, which was believed to be an exceptionally large number at the time, with the current total of close to nine times as many. During the post-war period and specifically between 1947-1952, Canada admitted 124,000 European refugees.

Canada's role during the initial aftermath of the second world war has been severely criticized for its very selective nature. It was felt that refugees and displaced

persons were seriously hampered physically and emotionally by their wartime experience to become good workers and to readily adapt to the Canadian environment. Canada's immigration teams preferred to select the young, single men, and rejected applications from families and highly skilled professional individuals. In this regard the Canadian government was implementing an extremely cautious approach in the selection of additional labour in the form of industrial workers destined for the urban centres because the dramatic consequences of the Great Depression had not yet faded from peoples minds. This restrictionist attitude was short-lived as the rapid industrial expansion of the postwar period demanded an immediate solution to the manpower shortages that were becoming evident.

The first positive Canadian refugee program of the post-war period espoused both a degree of self interest and a strong undercurrent of the importance of economic considerations. The Sponsored Labour Movement which was initiated in 1947 was aimed at recruiting workers from overseas for industries that faced manpower shortages. Between 1947 and 1951 more than 100,000 people entered Canada under this program. These refugees and displaced persons were selected on the basis of their skills and aptitudes which would ensure their easy and permanent absorption into the Canadian labour force.

The new criteria determining Canada's immigration policy and refugee programs reflected the vast and rapid expansion of the national economy that occurred in the early post-war period. This was substantiated in the enhanced demand for immigrants and refugees who were educated and possessed skills and training that were regarded as assets in an economy characterized with a broader and expanding industrial and manufacturing base.

The Hungarian Refugees

As a consequence of the Soviet Union's intervention in Hungary in 1956 the widespread but unsuccessful uprising in that country produced the largest flight of European refugees since the Second World War. More than 200,000 Hungarians, approximately two percent of the country's population, rejected the prevailing conditions in Hungary.

It is commonly accepted that Canada adopted the highest ideals of humanitarianism in accommodating the Hungarian Refugee Movement. Resettlement procedures were speeded up and existing barriers were lowered. The final total number of Hungarian refugees admitted was in excess of 37,500 and all of this during a period of less than ten months. Hungarian refugees experienced few problems adapting to Canadian society and became readily absorbed into the domestic labour market, primarily because many of them were professionals and academics.

The White Paper on Immigration released in 1966, among other things, contained references to Canada's perception and programs directed towards the world's continuing refugee problems. The White paper put it this way:

"There will be a continuing obligation to accept individuals or families who have fled their own country for one reason or another. However, neither the extent of the obligation nor our capacity to fulfill it can be predicted with any accuracy. The former depends essentially upon conditions from time to time throughout the world or in particular countries the latter is contingent upon the Canadian social, economic and political structure remaining healthy."