

dividing the two countries until the problem was resolved. He indicated his intention to join Mr. Davis in pressing the US to set specific targets and timetables — “backed up with cash” (*Globe and Mail*, January 23).

## Immigration

### Refugee Status

Following a dramatic increase in the number of claimants for refugee status, Minister of State for Immigration Walter McLean announced that “genuine” refugees were in “great jeopardy due to deliberate and persistent abuse” of the refugee determination process. While Canadian refugee policy was based on the humanitarian tradition of assisting those individuals who needed protection, the process could not be “sustained under a systematic attempt to subvert it by claimants whose basis for coming is designed to circumvent normal immigration requirements, and is not related to fear for their safety.” A backlog of some 20,000 claimants was, in large part, due to exploitation of the system as a means of remaining in Canada. A warning was also issued, both to refugees and immigrant aid associations, with regard to “unscrupulous individuals” securing large sums of money for immigration advice and guarantees of Canadian residence. The Minister added that the possibility existed for the introduction of “more stringent” measures for control in the determination of refugee status — including the imposition of visa requirements (Employment and Immigration release, December 23).

The ministerial statement had been issued in response to a recent deluge of purportedly spurious refugee claims from Portuguese nationals both arriving and already in Canada. A majority of these had claimed refugee status as Jehovah's Witnesses suffering religious persecution in a Roman Catholic Portugal. The Portuguese ambassador, representatives of Amnesty International and spokesmen for Canada's Jehovah's Witnesses all disputed the claims. While in 1984 Portuguese were not in the top ten of claimants for refugee status, in 1985 they headed the list (*Globe and Mail*, January 7). The huge increase in claims was regarded as an “organized assault” on the Canadian determination process, organized by those same “unscrupulous” immigration counsellors castigated by Mr. McLean in his statement.

Because of the “deliberate and persistent” abuses, Mr. McLean ordered the “tracking” of suspected cases of non-legitimate refugees. A system was established to monitor specific cases for possible legal action (*Globe and Mail*, January 8). Mr. McLean justified the system as a necessary means of preventing both the abuses and possible backlashes against legitimate refugees. While the Minister acknowledged that the Portuguese problem was not isolated as an instance of mass fraud (having been preceded by similar influxes from the Dominican Republic and India),

it was by far the greatest single source of bogus claimants at present. The difficulty was compounded, he added, by the “relatively new phenomena” of arrivals having destroyed their documentation en route to Canada, creating an additional burden on immigration officials who must determine identification and establish bona fide from bogus refugees (CTV Television [External Affairs transcript], January 9). Emergency measures would be instituted to deal with the current backlog, and to integrate legitimate refugees into Canadian society. Speaking in the Commons January 24, Mr. McLean stated that Canada's attention was currently focused on those Portuguese “encouraging fraudulent claims.” Where appropriate, he added, prosecutions would be undertaken with the assistance of both the Portuguese and other communities.

## Terrorism

### Air India Investigation

A judicial inquiry held in New Delhi into the loss of an Air India 747 off the coast of Ireland in June 1985 — long suspected as the result of a terrorist bombing — heard testimony from both Indian and Canadian sources. (The flight had originated in Canada — see “International Canada” for June and July 1985.) A report from Canada's Federal Aviation Safety Board (CASB) presented at the investigation concluded that the plane had been deliberately bombed (*Globe and Mail*, January 29). As well, the report identified three “possible security deficiencies” in Canada which might have facilitated the placing of the explosive device — failure to perform a security correlation between connecting passengers and their baggage, improperly trained security staff and the failure of an X-ray machine. Counsel for both Air Canada and Air India sought to have the report blocked, citing the conclusions on security lapses as “unwarranted.” While CASB investigators had not ruled out the possibility of a structural fault, additional laboratory evidence led the board to its conclusion that the cause was “an explosive device that should not have been there.” While the evidence was circumstantial, the report went on, it was considerable and did not support “any other conclusion.”

Air India lawyer Lalit Bhasin, strongly opposing the CASB report, stated before the New Delhi inquiry that the report had been filed “in collusion with the Government of Canada to help the Canadian government fight its civil liability claims in Canada” (*Globe and Mail*, January 31). A CASB investigator responded that the board's report had been prepared to assist in determining the “contributing factors and causes” of the crash and not to “apportion blame.” Neither was their any “collusion” between the board and the government of Canada. (The conclusion reached by the CASB — that of a bomb having been planted on the flight — was the same as that reached by India's own director of air safety.)

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