

Fact Sheet

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Mr. Melnyk
03/24/03

Against: "Enemy Aliens" posed a real threat to Canada and deserved to be locked up.

A description of my interpretation of the issue:

Interning enemy aliens was the wrong thing to because they did not pose a real threat to Canada. No act of spying or sabotage was **ever** proved.⁽¹⁾ Regardless thousands of people from different ethnic origins were locked up even though they had remained loyal to Canada.

Argument One:

The government tried to use the War Measurement Act to force all immigrants from countries against Canada in the war in to internment camps. They used unreasonable methods and inexcusable reasons. They had no justification in doing so.

Evidence:

- 1914- more than 100,000 Germans and Austro-Hungarians lived in Canada⁽¹⁾
- Respected people, helped Canada's economy
 - Businessmen, scientists and respected municipal officials
 - Thousands of unskilled workers working on transcontinental railroad and farms⁽¹⁾
- No act of spying or sabotage ever proved⁽¹⁾
- 8% of the German and Austro-Hungarian population was confined⁽¹⁾
- Majority of others were unemployed (municipal authorities refused to help)
- The loyalty of 400,000 Canadians of German origin questioned⁽¹⁾
- Ukraine part of Russia with whom Canada allied with during the war⁽⁵⁾
- Only because Ukrainians had Austro-Hungarian passports they were considered "enemy aliens"
- British government document recently found, dated in January of 1915, instructed the Canadian government that the Ukrainian nationals were hostile to the Austro-Hungarian empire and should be considered as friendly aliens⁽⁵⁾
- Most of the people interned were foreign nationals, a few were Canadian born citizens, and almost all non-combat, unemployed civilians (victims of the 1913 depression and wartime hysteria)⁽⁶⁾

The government used reason for internment included like "acting in a very suspicious manner" and being "undesirable". By the middle of 1915, 4000 of the internees had been imprisoned for being "indigent" (poor and unemployed). A total of 8,579 Canadians were interned between 1914 and 1920. Over 5,000 of them were of Ukrainian descent. Germans, Poles, Italians, Bulgarians, Croatians, Turks, Serbians, Hungarians, Russians, Jews, and Romanians were also imprisoned. Of the

8,579 internees, only 2,321 could be classed as "prisoners of war" (i.e. "captured in arms or belonging to enemy reserves"); the rest were civilians. ⁽⁹⁾*

Argument Two:

Even if the government had reasons to put the "enemy aliens" in to internment camps, the conditions they lived under were hostile and the treatment they faced was unjust (including people not interned).

Evidence:

- War turned people back at the Canadian homefront to hatred and intolerance⁽¹⁾
- Public opinion demanded all "enemy aliens" be fired from their jobs and locked up⁽¹⁾
- 8% of the Hungarian/ German population in Canada was interned (even if there were spies –8000 or 8% is unrealistic)
- 1916- Old town Berlin in Western Ontario threatened with boycott until German-speaking citizens reluctantly changed name to Kitchner⁽¹⁾
- Winnipeg changed the name of hamburgers to nips (hamburgers were German)
- Symphony orchestras stopped playing composers such as Beethoven & Wagner⁽¹⁾
- German no longer taught in schools
- Little boys even threw stones at Dutch Hounds (German dogs)
- Government banned all "enemy alien" newspapers
- International law forbade such procedures but they were went ahead with anyways
- Ukraine part of Russia, with whom we were allied during world war one⁽⁵⁾
- Austrians who had enlisted in the war for Canada were expelled and interned⁽⁵⁾
- Internment camps located where the surrounding territory is hostile to the inmates⁽⁵⁾
- The War Time Elections Act of 1917 disenfranchised most immigrants since 1902⁽⁵⁾
- 88000 immigrants required to register as "enemy aliens"
- Anyone found without work or without identity papers, and those who failed to report regularly to the police became candidates for the camps⁽⁶⁾
- Interns had to provide cheap labour, life in camps was grim, working conditions were harsh, clothing was scarce and food was rationed⁽⁶⁾
- Desperation led to suicide and more than 60 escape attempts⁽⁶⁾
- One hundred and seven internees died, including several shot while trying to escape⁽⁹⁾
- Ukrainian Canadians suffered losses estimated between \$21.6 and \$32.5 million (1991 dollars) while interned⁽¹⁵⁾
- Between 10 and 20 farms were lost⁽¹⁵⁾
- Over \$32 000 cash was taken and not returned to immigrants⁽¹⁴⁾
- Other internees' valuables (property, real estate, securities, etc.) taken from them⁽¹⁴⁾

Quotes:

``He was arrested only because he held an Austro-Hungarian passport and was labelled an enemy alien."

``They suffered because of cold and lack of proper clothing"

``Food was poor, and after all this, they suffered the humiliation of racial slurs and profanity directed at them by the guards."

``The Dominion of Canada confiscated their personal property, including religious items, conscripted their labour, stripped them of their citizenship, silenced their presses, and suspended their voting rights, all on the basis of a perceived allegiance to a homeland many of them had fled."

“Ukrainians and others **during Canada's** first intern at concentration camps in western **Canada” Historical Gallery**

www.artukraine.com/historical/unjustint3.html (24 March 2003)

One such Ukrainian Canadian, Nick Chonomod, writing from a camp near Halifax to a Captain Adams of the 6th Military Division, recorded that not only had he joined a battalion being formed in Edmonton in August 1914, but that he had lived in Canada for seven years, married a Canadian born woman, become naturalized and taken up a homestead in Alberta. Having so affirmed his loyalty, he added that he could not understand 'on which charge I am being kept here.'"

"Enemy-alien" Internment of Ukrainians in Canada 1914-1920

www.infoukes.com/history/internment/booklet02/doc-018.html (23 March 2003)

"Looking back at my short time I was here, and I was only a boy, I realized all the time what marvels you can do if you just had the labour...We had plenty of labour. Anybody who asked us to do anything, we provided the slaves."

- Col. Anderson-Wilson, May 4, 1913

"...inform me if I can be released from detention camp. From several weeks my naturalization papers are laying in the office of the Major Commander of your camp...If I have my Canadian papers, if I am loyal to this country in which I am from twelve years I don't think guarantee is necessary."

- J. Leskiw to General Cruikshank, 1915

"...the conditions here are very poor, so that we cannot go on much longer. We are not getting enough to eat. We are hungry as dogs. They are sending us to work as they don't believe us and we are very weak."

- No. 98 Nick Olynyk to his wife, 1915

“When Canada entered the first world war” **Banff National Park – World War I Internment Camps**

www.worldweb.com/parkscanada-banff/intern.html (22 March 2003)

Opponent’s First Argument:

The War Measures Act was enacted on 22 August 1914, and gave the federal government full authority to do everything deemed necessary "for the security, defence, peace, order and welfare of Canada".⁽⁹⁾

Defence:

Even with the War Measurement Act in place giving Canada exceptions to human’s civil rights, they still managed to violate the restrictions many times. The act did not justify the harsh conditions the “enemy aliens” faced. Racism, and stripping the immigrants of their rights and possessions was not part of the act.

Opponent’s Second Argument:

Locking up the “enemy aliens” made Canadian citizens feel safer.

Defence:

The peace-of-mind of the Canadian citizens was not a good enough reason to lock up thousands of innocent people who had been loyal to Canada. They placed 8% of the Ukrainian population in to intern camps (8000 people). There is no way all of them could have been spies.

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