



Canada's Role During the Period of the Holocaust

Canada's Immigration Policies- Background

*The following information is summarized from the book *None is Too Many* by Irving Abella and Harold Troper. *None is Too Many* is perhaps the foremost body of work on Canada's immigration policy during the period of the Holocaust and Canada's response. This summary is also used as a Teaching Resource in the British Columbia Ministry of Education Resource Guide on Social Responsibility and Global Citizenship for Grade 11 Teachers.*

During the first part of the twentieth century, Canada's immigration policy was ethnically selective, with preference given to British and Americans, followed by Europeans. Non-preferred immigrants such as "Orientals" and Blacks were admitted only when they were needed to perform risky or undesirable tasks such as the building of the railway or farming and mining in remote parts of Canada.

In 1923, the Canadian Immigration Act was tightened up to severely limit the admission of non-preferred immigrants, especially Jews. Only farmers or immediate relatives of those already in Canada were permitted.

During the Great Depression of the 1930's, the Canadian government moved to limit immigration even further. In 1931 an Order-In-Council effectively banned all non-agricultural immigrants, except those of British and American nationalities. In 1934, despite the worsening refugee crisis in Europe, James G. McDonald, the High Commissioner for Refugees at the League of Nations, failed to persuade Canada to liberalize its policies. Canada's doors were effectively closed to Jews until after the war.

Canada's Immigration Act ranked immigrants according to their desirable characteristics and placed them in a hierarchy of four classes. The First Class consisted of British and Americans, who were guaranteed entry into Canada. Europeans were divided into four groups. The Preferred Class consisted of immigrants from Western and Northern Europe, including Germany. These immigrants were mostly Protestant, with the exception of the French who were primarily Roman Catholic. They were admitted in deference to Québec. This group was exempt from most immigration restrictions. The Non-Preferred Class was comprised of eastern Europeans from Austria, Hungary, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania and the Baltic States. This group had to prove that they had sufficient economic resources and that they would stay on the land.

The last group was the Special Permit Class, comprised of southern Europeans and Jews. This group could not apply through normal immigration channels but instead had to get special cabinet permission. Jews were separated out of their national groups and placed in this Special Permit Class so that the cabinet could control their entry. Canada did not process Jews according to their nationality or citizenship but according to 'racial criteria'. For example, Jewish citizens of France or Hungary were segregated and treated differently than non-Jewish citizens of the same countries. Canada continued to use its Immigration Act to exclude Jews and other 'undesirable' ethnic groups until 1948.

The Children

Children also accounted for many of the victims during the Nazi rule and it is important to give them a voice. More than one million children, from infants to teenagers were persecuted and murdered by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has dedicated a special wall of remembrance to these children.

Perhaps the most well-known child victim of the Holocaust is Anne Frank. Her diary which chronicled her life in hiding has become one of the most widely read books in the world. She was just thirteen when her family went into hiding for two years before being discovered. Anne, her older sister Margot and their mother were sent to Westerbork transit camp, where they perished. Anne's father Otto, would be the only family member to survive, and he had Anne's diary published as a testimony about the Holocaust.

After confronting the horrors of the Holocaust, many young people-whether children or young adults, will undoubtedly have more questions than answers. The question that will arise for all is "why?". We must not be afraid however to explore these difficult questions as we try to understand how the Holocaust could have happened.

Canada's Role

The role that Canada played in assisting and accepting refugees from fleeing Nazi tyranny has been chronicled in the book **None Is Too Many** by Irving Abella and Harold Troper. For a more complete understanding of Canada's role and action this book is a definite must.

Between the years of 1933 & 1945 Canada opened its doors to less than 5,000 Jewish people. Of the 65,000 refugees let into Canada through 1948 only 12% were Jewish, though the majority of displaced persons in Europe were Jews. This was not the result of a governmental policy.

None Is Too Many seeks to expose the deep-rooted antisemitism of the Canadian government & its policies during the 1930's and 1940's. Throughout the entire genocide of the European Jewry, the Canadian officials in the Immigration and External Affairs ministries kept Jews out of Canada. Even in the late 1930's, when the world was well aware of the degree of antisemitism in Nazi Germany, Canadian immigration director F.C. Blair was encouraging Hitler to find 'domestic solutions' to the 'Jewish problem'.

The political calculations of the government were supported by the Canadian public, especially in Québec, where petitions were signed opposing 'all immigration and especially Jewish immigration'.

After the war, Canada eased up on immigration policies and the situation improved. However the book **None Is Too Many** gives a highly detailed and documented account of the policies that existed in Canada, Canada's role in accepting Jewish refugees and the evolution of immigration policies.

Country Number of Jewish refugees brought in during the 12 years of Nazi rule in Germany

United States	200,000
Palestine	125,000
Britain	70,000
Argentina	50,000
Brazil	27,000
China	25,000
Bolivia and Chile	14,000
CANADA	5,000