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## Arrival of the Fittest: German POWs in Ontario during the Second World War

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in History

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### **Abstract**

Over 35,000,000 soldiers, sailors and aviators were taken prisoner during the Second World War. Some 35,000 of these prisoners were members of the German army, navy and air force, imprisoned in twenty-five main compounds and 300 small, isolated labour camps across Canada. Once on Canadian soil, German POWs were treated with remarkable hospitality in spite of their status as the “Nazi” enemy. Canada’s excellent treatment of German POWs was a product of many things: a desire to adhere to the Geneva Convention; concern for the well-being of Canadian and other Allied POWs in German hands; and the discovery that German POWs often made valuable workers, for which there was a great need during the war. It was also a product of racism, expressed in numerous actions, suggesting a willingness to perceive German POWs as potential members of society - a willingness not extended to German-Jewish civilian internees or even to Japanese-Canadians who were already Canadian citizens.

### **Lay Summary**

During the Second World War, Canada was the wartime home of several thousand prisoners of war and civilian internees. Though some of these prisoners were Canadian citizens, they were ultimately treated worse than the enemy from overseas due to pervasive racism in Canadian society.

### **Keywords**

Second World War, Internment, Prisoner of War, Japanese-Canadian internee, Jewish refugee, Race, Gender, Ontario, Canada, Germany

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## Introduction

The thirtieth of June 1940 began like any other morning in the picturesque Muskoka region of Ontario. Blinds were still closed as Gravenhurst residents snoozed, and local animals frolicked about on the town's deserted railroad station platforms. A local telegrapher dozed over his keyboard.<sup>1</sup> Suddenly without warning, a grey squirrel climbed a tree and a rabbit, that had been playing on the railroad tracks, disappeared. The telegrapher shot to life. Three buses thundered up the road, and Canadian soldiers poured out of them with their rifles ready. A train pulled up next, and guttural German rang into the Muskoka air as a gang of Nazis stepped out. The town of Gravenhurst was not asleep anymore. Blinds flew up and heads thrust out of open windows. "Good Lord! It's the Germans!" one woman screamed. "Baby killers," a veteran mumbled from the sidewalk, "why waste good food on the brutes?"<sup>2</sup> Residents quickly abandoned the comfort of their own homes and began to line the main street, hissing and booing at the German prisoners of war (POWs) as they marched to Camp Calydor.<sup>3</sup> After the Nazis arrived at the internment camp, barbed wire gates clanged shut. "German eyes stared glumly around at a tall barbed wire fence that wandered over fields, between the trees...around...before...and behind. Their trip was done, their mad wild dream of conquest done. They stared silent in the rain."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Their Mad, Wild Dream of World Conquest Done, Nazis Jailed in Ontario: Defanged Rattlesnakes from Hitler's Forces Who Spread Terror in Europe are put out of harm's way behind barbed wire until empire safe again" *Gravenhurst Banner*, 3 July 1940.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> John Melady. *Escape from Canada! The Untold Story of German POWs in Canada 1939-1945*. (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1981), 45.

<sup>4</sup> "Their Mad, Wild Dream of World Conquest Done," *Gravenhurst Banner*.

This tale was published in the *Gravenhurst Banner* on 3 July 1940. One day earlier, the *Toronto Telegram* described the German prisoners arriving in Gravenhurst as “defanged rattlesnakes” from Adolf Hitler’s air force and navy, who would spend the rest of the war behind barbed wire.<sup>5</sup> But the rattlesnakes would become domesticated remarkably quickly. Before the summer was out, nine-year-old Murray Davidson would routinely deliver the *Toronto Star* to the enemy prisoners housed in the heart of Ontario’s vacation belt.<sup>6</sup> Gravenhurst High School would hold its annual Sports Day on the prison farm’s athletic field because it was more spacious than their own, and the prisoners would watch the sporting events.<sup>7</sup> Local businesses in the Muskoka District would earn money by sharpening piles of skates for the prisoners in the winter months.<sup>8</sup> From 1940 to 1946, dozens of small communities scattered across Ontario had similar experiences.

Over 35,000,000 soldiers, sailors and aviators, statistically one in three combatants, became prisoners of war from 1939 to 1947.<sup>9</sup> Some 35,000 of these prisoners were members of the German army, navy and air force, imprisoned in twenty-five internment compounds and 300 small, isolated labour camps across Canada.<sup>10</sup> Southern Quebec, southern Ontario and southern Alberta received the greatest number of German POWs. This geography is important because it undermines the common belief that internment camps are always located in distant regions of

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<sup>5</sup> “Their Mad, Wild Dream of World Conquest Done,” *Gravenhurst Banner*.

<sup>6</sup> Cecil Porter interview with Mildred Davidson. Cecil Porter Fonds, Gravenhurst Public Library, 1996. Gravenhurst Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Cecil Porter interview with Cathy Hall Pickard. Cecil Porter Fonds, Gravenhurst Public Library, 1996. Gravenhurst Archives.

<sup>8</sup> “Softball Title Won by Guards,” *Gravenhurst Banner*, 21 September 1944.

<sup>9</sup> Martin F. Auger, *Prisoners on the Home Front: German POWs and ‘Enemy Aliens’ in Southern Quebec, 1940-46*, (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2005), 15.

<sup>10</sup> This statistic deals exclusively with prisoners of war and does not take interned civilians into account; *Ibid*.

countries or in the bush. Many Second World War internment camps were established in urban areas, and several were even within city limits. For Ontarians, this meant that the war, as embodied by German soldiers, landed on their doorsteps.<sup>11</sup>

While a considerable amount of literature exists on the Second World War, internment historiography remains limited.<sup>12</sup> The historiography of German POWs in Canada is even more scarce. Perhaps the field has been neglected because unlike the victors, the wounded, and men who are killed in action, POWs tend to represent failure after conflicts have been lost and won. Interned on foreign soil for extended periods of time and ostensibly uninvolved in the war, they are largely forgotten by military historians. The idea that one should not allow oneself to be captured because it was “not the kind of thing that [was] supposed to happen” also led to a marked sense of guilt among POWs.<sup>13</sup> This stigma prevented the publication of many first-hand accounts of captivity. Canada’s social and cultural historians also continue to ignore the presence of German POWs, even though the day-to-day home-front experience in internment camp towns was tightly intertwined with the enemy soldiers.

Several authors who focus specifically on German internment in Canada, like John Kelly and Chris Madsen, have approached the subject from above, focusing exclusively on Canadian government policies towards the prisoners.<sup>14</sup> Other works such as John Melady’s *Escape from Canada! The Untold Story of German POWs in Canada* and David Carter’s *Behind Canadian*

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<sup>11</sup> Chris M.V. Madsen and R. J. Henderson, *German Prisoners of War in Canada and their Artefacts* (Regina: Hignell Printing, 1993), 15.

<sup>12</sup> Matthias Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity: POWs and Sexual Desire in the United States during the Second World War*. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 12.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War Through the Twentieth Century*, (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1994), 100.

<sup>14</sup> John Joseph Kelly, *The Prisoner of War Camps in Canada, 1939-1947*. (MA Thesis, University of Windsor, 1976) and Chris Madsen, *German Prisoners of War in Canada During the Second World War*, (MA Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1992).



*Barbed Wire: Alien, Refugee and Prisoner of War Camps in Canada 1914-1946* are essentially popular histories of murders and escapes that occurred during the Germans' time in Canada.<sup>15</sup> A more recent style of POW history, as evidenced by Ernst Robert Zimmermann's *The Little Third Reich on Lake Superior* and Cecil Porter's *The Gilded Cage: Gravenhurst's German Prisoner of War Camp 20, 1940-1946*, focuses on specific internment camps.<sup>16</sup>

Currently, no literature addresses the social history of Axis POWs in Ontario. Peter Lanosky's work *Barbed Wire, Black Flies, 55 Below: The Story of Monteith, Ontario POW Camp 1940-1946* does suggest that POWs became features of northern Ontario communities, specifically when prisoners and Monteith locals worked together for months on labour projects, but his account of these interactions is not satisfactory.<sup>17</sup> Stefania Cepuch's unpublished Master's Thesis, "Our Guests Are Busy: The Internment and Labour of German Prisoners of War in Ontario, 1940-1946," also comes close to a social history of POWs in Ontario, but even so, the argument of her study is essentially economic, that German POW labour operations had a positive impact on the Ontario economy.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> John Melady. *Escape from Canada! The Untold Story of German POWs in Canada 1939-1945*. (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1981) and David J. Carter, *P.O.W Behind Canadian Barbed Wire: Alien, Refugee and Prisoner of War Camps in Canada, 1914-1946*. (Elkwater, AB: Eagle Butte Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Robert Zimmermann, Michel S. Beaulieu and David K. Ratz. *The Little Third Reich on Lake Superior: A History of Canadian Internment Camp R*. (Edmonton, The University of Alberta Press, 2015) and Cecil Porter, *The Gilded Cage: Gravenhurst German Prisoner of War Camp 20 1940-1946*. (Gravenhurst, ON: Gravenhurst Book Committee, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Lanosky acknowledges that locals and German POWs interacted with each other for prolonged periods of time, but he does not provide any detailed accounts of these interactions; Peter Lanosky, *Barbed Wire, Black Flies, 55°F Below: The Story of the Monteith, Ontario POW Camp 1940-1946*. (Lone Butte, B.C., Lanworth Creative, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Stefania H. Cepuch, *Our Guests Are Busy: The Internment and Labour of German Prisoners of War in Ontario, 1940-1946*. (MA Thesis, Queen's University, 1992.)

A new dimension has recently been introduced to the historiography by researchers exploring the gendered experience of captivity, but Canada is far behind other nations in this regard. For instance, Bob Moore's "Illicit Encounters: Female Civilian Fraternization with Axis Prisoners of War in Second World War Britain" and Matthias Reiss' 2018 book *Controlling Sex in Captivity: POWs and Sexual Desire in the United States during the Second World War* examine the role that sexuality played in British and American internment operations.<sup>19</sup> Reiss argues that Americans were spellbound by the German body and ultimately came to view the prisoners as sex symbols instead of rivals.<sup>20</sup>

The United States is also ahead of Canada in its analyses of local POW operations. Micro histories have been written about twenty-two US states, with titles such as *Stalag Sunflower: German Prisoners of War in Kansas*<sup>21</sup>, *Stalag Texas*<sup>22</sup>, *Stalag USA*<sup>23</sup>, *The Wehrmacht in Florida*<sup>24</sup>, *The German Hun in the Georgia Sun*<sup>25</sup>, *The Nazi Invasion of Florida*<sup>26</sup> and *The Afrika Korps in Arkansas*.<sup>27</sup> Canadian internment operations have only just begun to be studied at the

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<sup>19</sup> Bob Moore, "Illicit Encounters: Female Civilian Fraternization with Axis Prisoners of War in Second World War Britain" in *Journal of Contemporary History* 48(4), 2013 and Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*.

<sup>20</sup> Sonia Haga. "A Comparative Study of the Perceptions of German POWs in North Carolina." (BA Honors Thesis: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2010), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick G. O'Brien, Thomas D. Isern, and R. Daniel Lumley. *Stalag Sunflower: German Prisoners of War in Kansas*. (Topeka, Kansas, Kansas State Historical Society, 1984).

<sup>22</sup> John Lee. *Stalag Texas*. (New York: Pocket, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Judith M. Gansberg, *Stalag, U.S.A.: The Remarkable Story of German POWs in America*. (New York: Crowell, 1977).

<sup>24</sup> Robert D Billinger. "With the Wehrmacht in Florida: The German Pow Facility at Camp Blanding, 1942-1946." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (1979): 160-73.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30149357>.

<sup>25</sup> Leisa N. Vaughn, and Brian K. Feltman. *The German Hun in the Georgia Sun: German Prisoners of War in Georgia*. 2016. <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/1369>.

<sup>26</sup> Leon O. Prior. "Nazi Invasion of Florida!" *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1970): 129-39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30140377>.

<sup>27</sup> Merrill R. Pritchett, and William L. Shea. "The Afrika Korps in Arkansas, 1943-1946." *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1978): 3-22. doi:10.2307/40023162.

micro level, beginning with Martin Auger's *Prisoners on the Home Front: German POWs and "Enemy Aliens" in Southern Quebec, 1940-46*. However, despite being the most comprehensive study of German POWs in Canada at the regional level, *Prisoners on the Home Front* focuses primarily on how closely Southern Quebec followed the provisions of the Geneva Convention.<sup>28</sup>

There is more to Canada's Second World War internment operations than the stipulations of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and government records listing the dates internment camps opened and closed, how many men were housed in each compound, and what category of prisoner they were. The dynamics of internment also tell us who was accepted in Ontario society, and who was rejected. In *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese-Canadian Women, Memory and the Subjects of the Internment*, Mona Oikawa argues that Canadian internment operations reveal and perpetuate a social order in Canada, and this is true in two respects: while a barbed wire perimeter physically excluded German POWs, Japanese-Canadian internees, and German-Jews from Ontario society during the Second World War, one interned group was more included than others due to Canadian racism.<sup>29</sup>

The German enemy's whiteness afforded them social capital in wartime Ontario. This is especially intriguing because it was no secret to Canadians that Nazi Germany was responsible for appalling crimes during the Second World War. From 1939 onwards, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party introduced measures to hunt and, with varying degrees of intensity, murder Jews, political prisoners, including Communists and Social Democrats, Jehovah's Witnesses, Gypsies, physically and mentally disabled Germans, homosexuals, and Slavic peoples, especially Poles

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<sup>28</sup> Auger, *Prisoners on the Home Front: German POWs and "Enemy Aliens" in Southern Quebec, 1940-46*.

<sup>29</sup> Mona Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Internment*. (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2018), 12.

and, from June 1941, Russians. Canadian sons, fathers, brothers, and husbands were also being killed by the Axis Powers in Europe. A total of 42,000 Canadian men never returned from overseas: 22,917 died in the Canadian army, 17,101 in the air force, and 2,024 in the navy. Nearly 9,000 Canadian men became POWs, and captivity in the European theatre did not guarantee their survival.<sup>30</sup>

In 1944, Prime Minister Mackenzie King revealed that the Gestapo had murdered six Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) officers after they tried to escape from Stalag Luft III.<sup>31</sup> When word reached Canada that not six, but fifty, Allied POWs had been shot, and they had not been “shot while trying to escape or while resisting arrest, but were rounded up and taken to a Gestapo controlled prison when they subsequently were removed in small groups and executed,”<sup>32</sup> angry Canadians demanded retribution.<sup>33</sup> That same year, Canadians learned that SS *Brigadefuhrer* Kurt Meyer had shot or clubbed to death at least forty-one unarmed Canadian POWs in Normandy. He ordered the murders of over 100 more, in addition to other crimes, such as razing entire villages to the ground on the eastern front. One *Globe and Mail* article reported that “a story of sadism and mental torture that sounded like an oriental horror tale entered the

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<sup>30</sup> “Canada and the War: The Canadian Armed Forces: Casualties.” Canadian War Museum. [https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/canadawar/casualties\\_e.html](https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/canadawar/casualties_e.html)

<sup>31</sup> Stalag Luft III is a Luftwaffe prison camp; Bruce J. S. Macdonald, *The Trial of Kurt Meyer*. (Toronto: Clark, Irwin & Company Limited, 1954), xiii.

<sup>32</sup> “Eden Reveals All the Facts Of Slaying of 50 Prisoners Pledges Complete Retribution” *Toronto Daily Star*, 23 June 1941.

<sup>33</sup> Macdonald, *The Trial of Kurt Meyer*, xiii.

records today.”<sup>34</sup> In the *Toronto Telegram*, an angry Canadian wrote, “our boys were innocent. This man should be made to suffer in the same way he made them suffer.”<sup>35</sup>

And yet, when German POWs arrived in Ontario, they were shown Canadian hospitality.<sup>36</sup> Canada’s excellent treatment of the prisoners was a product of many things: a desire to adhere to the Geneva Convention; concern for the well-being of Canadian and other Allied POWs in German hands; and the discovery that German POWs often made valuable workers, for which there was a great need during the war. It was also a product of racism, expressed in numerous actions, suggesting a willingness to perceive German POWs as potential members of society – a willingness not extended to German-Jewish civilian internees or even to Japanese-Canadians who were already citizens.

The five chapters that follow are organized thematically. Chapter 1 offers necessary background information about Canadian internment operations during the Second World War and government policies concerning German POWs from 1939-1946. Chapter 2 examines first encounters between civilians and prisoners. After Ontarians saw who was being held behind the barbed wire, most came to distinguish for themselves between the German soldiers housed in their neighbourhood, their corrupt leaders in Berlin, and the propagandized stereotype of the Nazi soldier. Chapter 3 analyzes the responses that various neighbouring communities had towards to the prisoner labour program and argues that POWs were seen as valuable home-front workers. Chapter 4 argues that Ontarians emphasized the identity of German prisoners as manly

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<sup>34</sup> Ralph Allen, “Lonely Walk of Canadians to Death Told” *Globe and Mail*, 15 December 1945 in Peter Kikkert (2015) “Kurt Meyer and Canadian Memory Villain and Monster, Hero and Victim or worse – a German?,” *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 21: Iss. 2, Article 4. Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol21/iss2/4>

<sup>35</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Toronto Telegram*, 15 January 1946.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Franklin, *A Time of Heroes 1940/1950, Canada’s Illustrated Heritage*. (Toronto, Nat. Science of Canada Ltd., 1977), 6.

soldiers, a quality they admired and believed that their own men and soldiers shared. This shared wartime masculinity – and the unspoken whiteness it presumed – allowed the Germans to build bridges with their captors. Finally, chapter 5 examines the responses of Canadian authorities to rule-breaking by prisoners of war, and the varying punishments that were meted out. In each of these cases, German POWs' warm reception highlights the ease with which enemies on ideological grounds could be accepted because of their race.

**Chapter 1**  
**Planning for Unwelcome Guests:**  
**Priorities and Choices in the Creation of POW Camps for German Prisoners**

As the last remaining intact POW camp in Canada, Bowmanville's Camp 30 seems to exude a strong spiritual energy. Tourists have claimed to feel increasingly more uneasy as they get closer to the camp, and the jingling of keys has been heard echoing through the grounds. POW ghost stories also surround Gravenhurst's Camp 20. Two German POWs died in the Calydor Sanatorium in 1941 and 1942, and rumours about their uniformed figures moving around the camp's location at dusk have persisted long after the building's demolition in the 1960s. Some residents still claim to have seen the prisoners' ghosts.<sup>37</sup> These camps have fascinated ghost hunters, but they have been of less interest to historians.

In June 1940, the Canadian government reluctantly agreed to accept German POWs and interned enemy aliens being held in Britain, despite the fears of the Prime Minister and his cabinet of the costs these prisoners might impose on Canadian society and the risks to which they would expose it. The government searched for camp locations with the aim of achieving a range of objectives: keep the costs of the whole operation down by locating both prisoners and POWs in already existing facilities created for other purposes, and enable the employment of the POWs and some of the internees in a range of manual occupations. On the same principles, the government came to rely especially on veterans of the First World War as guards. They had experience as soldiers, and, in some cases, had themselves been POWs, and were generally too

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<sup>37</sup> Gord Aiken, "Camp 20: At dusk, Some Say they can see the ghosts of German POWs" *Gravenhurst Banner*, date unidentified in Gravenhurst Archives; John Robert Colombo, *Mysteries of Ontario*, (Toronto, Ontario, Hounslow Press, 2015), 52; "Camp 20," *Muskoka Today*, 5 May 1995.

old to serve on the front lines in the new war with Germany. The Canadian government adhered, as a matter of course, to the Geneva Conventions in the treatment of prisoners, in part because it was concerned about the treatment of its own prisoners. All of these elements would colour Canada's experience with captivity.

Britain was responsible for the internment of German POWs in Canada during the Second World War. When the war began on 3 September 1939, some 70,000 unnaturalised Germans and Austrians were living in Britain.<sup>38</sup> Many were German-Jews who had fled Nazi persecution after Hitler became Chancellor in 1933. Mounting levels of xenophobia and war hysteria led the British to "intern the lot" as enemy aliens, and after German POWs were captured during the British Expeditionary Force's retreat from France, and in air and naval operations over the English Channel, North Sea, the Atlantic, or England itself, internment sites began to overflow.<sup>39</sup> After Germany unleashed its Blitzkrieg, Britain also became nervous about its national security. If the Nazis invaded Britain in what was known as Operation Sea Lion, they might free German combatants behind British lines. If these men joined the invasion force, armed with knowledge that under ordinary circumstances would not be available to Germans, British defenses would be compromised.<sup>40</sup> A clear solution to these security threats was the evacuation of arrested civilian internees, as well as prisoners of war, to Britain's overseas dominion. Canada was known for its size and resources, and it was beyond the reach of German

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<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth A. Atkins, "'You must all be interned': Identity among internees in Great Britain during World War II" *The Gettysburg Historical Journal*: Vol. 4, Article 5.

Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/ghj/vol4/iss1/5>, 61.

<sup>39</sup> Carter, *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire*, 45.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



paratroopers who might try to release the men behind the lines, so it seemed like an ideal place to which to evacuate them.<sup>41</sup>

When Britain asked Canada to relieve it of a significant number of internees on 30 May 1940, Ottawa was taken by surprise.<sup>42</sup> Thousands of miles away from the front lines, Canadians had paid more attention to their domestic problems than foreign policy that did not concern them. The government was more worried about launching the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, finding homes for child evacuees from Britain, and expanding their war industries and military forces.<sup>43</sup> When British Columbia fruit grower Tom W. Stodart proposed Britain's German POWs could be shipped to Canada in February 1940, his suggestion was vetoed because it might cause "embarrassment in Britain."<sup>44</sup> The Cabinet also reasoned that the transfer of German soldiers to "the arctic waste of Canada" might be taken as an "act of Allied barbarity," resulting in reprisals against Allied POWs overseas. Further objections to the idea involved the increased expenses that would be necessary in order to establish the camps, and a shortage of available young men to guard the POWs.<sup>45</sup>

Prime Minister King was still unconvinced at a meeting on 5 June 1940, when the Cabinet pointed to the prospect of fifth-column activities as a primary concern. The government questioned the loyalty of Canadian enemy aliens and recommended that Britain's internees be

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<sup>41</sup> Tom Villemaire, "POW Slipped Ontario in Great Escape." *Sudbury Star*, 20 December 2015. <https://www.thesudburystar.com/2015/12/20/pow-slipped-ontario-in-great-escape/wcm/cd042c68-4b09-fd25-e4b9-d31007612d99>

<sup>42</sup> Christine Whitehouse, "You'll Get Used to It!": *The internment of Jewish Refugees in Canada, 1940-43*. (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario. 2016).

<sup>43</sup> Zimmermann, *The Little Third Reich on Lake Superior*, 34.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 35.

sent to other places like Newfoundland, South Africa and Australia.<sup>46</sup> Britain inquired one last time two days later, stressing the operation's urgency and reassuring King that they would pay for the internees' transportation and upkeep.<sup>47</sup> On 14 June 1940, King wrote in his diary, "...returned to the East Block for a meeting of the War Committee...discussed the question of refugees, evacuees, interned aliens, and German prisoners. I feel some concern at effectiveness of arrangements to receive these people."<sup>48</sup> On 19 June 1940, Canada succumbed to Britain's wishes and formally accepted the first enemy aliens and POWs from British internment camps.

Ten days later, on very short notice, the first shipment of "dangerous internees" arrived in Quebec City on the SS

*Duchess of York*: 2,112 Civilian

Internees and 535 German POWs.<sup>49</sup>

German combatants continued to arrive in Canada until 1946, and the pattern of their arrivals aligns with

three of Britain's main campaigns: in

1940, aviators and sailors were captured during the Battle of Britain and sent to the Dominion;

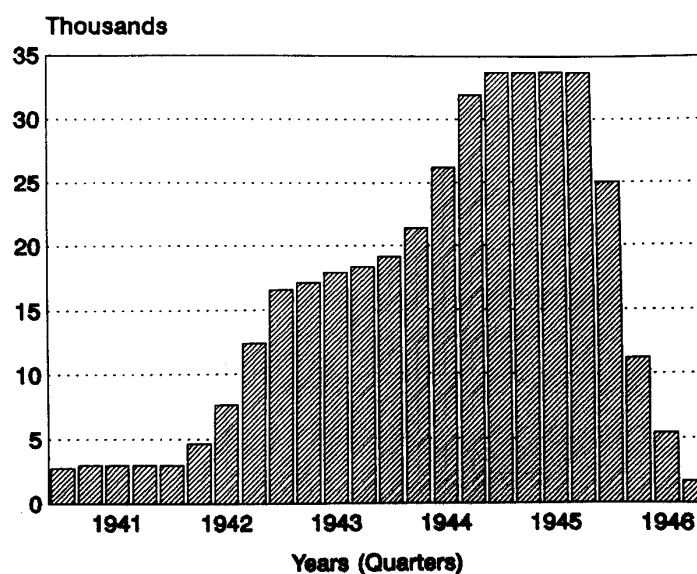


Figure 1: German POWs in Canada during the Second World War  
Source: Madsen, *German Prisoners of War in Canada During the Second World War*, 10.

<sup>46</sup> See *The Dunera Boys* for insight into the parallel experience of Jewish refugees in Australia; Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Zimmermann, *The Little Third Reich on Lake Superior*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> LAC, RG26-J13, Diary of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, June 14, 1940.

<sup>49</sup> The first shipment of internees and German POWs was actually sent on the passenger liner *SS Arandora Star*, but it was torpedoed by a German U-boat on 2 July 1940; LAC, RG24, C-5368, HQS 7236, High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain to The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Policy, Treatment of Enemy Aliens, June 7, 1940.

members of the Afrika Korps arrived in 1943 after the North Africa campaign; and German soldiers entered into Commonwealth captivity during the 1944 land battle in Italy.<sup>50</sup>

A note on terminology. The terms “prisoner,” “prisoner of war,” “enemy alien” and “internee” are used interchangeably by internment camp officials. Throughout this thesis, I use the term “prisoner of war” to refer to members of Germany’s regularly organized armed forces who were interned on Canadian soil. Unlike POW camps for Allied soldiers in Germany, where the army, navy and air force were kept separately, Canadian camps housed the army, navy and air force branches of the German armed forces together, so all will be referred to as prisoners of war.<sup>51</sup>

“Civilian internee” and “internee” refer to the Japanese-Canadians and German-Jews who were apprehended and interned by the Canadian government, sometimes alongside German POWs, even though they had not committed a crime.<sup>52</sup> Japanese-Canadians were interned after Prime Minister Mackenzie King’s cabinet approved Order-In-Council P.C. 1486 on 24 February 1942. This order gave the Canadian Minister of Justice authority to detain any person from any designated protected area, but as Aldona Sendzikas notes, the powers were “only applied towards one group: the Japanese minority in Canada.”<sup>53</sup> A mass evacuation of men, women, and children of Japanese descent from British Columbia’s “security zone” followed, and Japanese-

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<sup>50</sup> Madsen, *German Prisoners of War in Canada During the Second World War*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> It is also important to distinguish between POW camps and internment camps. Prisoners of war were housed in POW camps. Civilians whose loyalties were suspect were housed in internment camps. All POW camps are internment camps, but not all internment camps are POW camps.

<sup>52</sup> Patricia E. Roy, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 214.

<sup>53</sup> Aldona Sendzikas, “Very Much a Prisoner”: Japanese- Canadians during the Second World War,” in *Behind the Lines: Canada's Homefront during the First and Second World Wars*. (London: McIntosh Gallery, 2017), 1.

Canadians who refused to move or report to their work camps were sent to Angler and Petawawa as punishment. By mid-July 1942, 653 were detained in Angler.<sup>54</sup> Guarded, stripped of all rights, and clothed in POW uniforms, these dissenters were technically classified as military prisoners, but they will be referred to as civilian internees nonetheless.

German-Jews, the so-called accidental immigrants, were marked as “dangerous enemy aliens who presented a military security risk” by British authorities and shipped to Canada in 1940.<sup>55</sup> The large majority were anti-Nazis and genuine refugees from German oppression, but they were interned in New Brunswick, Quebec, and Monteith and Red Rock, Ontario.<sup>56</sup> Immigration authorities kept German-Jewish internees detained for two years, even after Britain advised Canada to release them, because insofar as “whiteness” represented acceptance into Canada’s dominant culture, Jews were not white *enough*.<sup>57</sup>

The term “Nazi” has been placed in quotation marks when it is used to refer to German POWs in Canadian captivity because it is intended to give a sense of the discourse with which Canadians at the time were familiar. Newspaper headlines regularly used the word in conjunction with Canada’s German captives, even though the definition of “Nazi” is complex. Perhaps this is to be expected from the public, as even the Canadian government took three years to recognize political differences among its prisoners from overseas. In a 1943 attempt to make internment operations more efficient, the Canadian government began to categorize German POWs

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<sup>54</sup> Roy, *Mutual Hostages*, 193.

<sup>55</sup> Zimmermann, *Little Third Reich*, 104.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> German-Jewish refugees were also held in Farnham, QC, Sherbrooke, QC, Ile-aux-Noix, QC, St. Helen’s Island, Montreal, QC, Quebec City, QC, Trois-Rivieres, QC, and Ripples, NB; Paula J. Draper, “The Camp Boys: Interned Refugees from Nazism,” in Franca Iacovetta, *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2016), 171-173.

according to their degree of indoctrination. Anti-Nazi prisoners were formally classified as White, those lacking any particular allegiance were Gray, and pro-Nazi prisoners were Black. These classifications largely determined where POWs were housed. The two largest POW camps in Canada at Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, Alberta, for instance, were “Black” camps that housed 2,500 high ranking Nazi officers each.<sup>58</sup>

Despite such classifications, all German POWs were affiliated with the totalitarian regime they served. A membership in the German armed forces was not conditional on NSDAP involvement in the early 1930s, but after Hitler purged the SA in the Night of the Long Knives in 1934, the military began to Nazify itself. All German soldiers swore a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler from then on, and the Nazi Party and the military were inextricably linked in many ways. While not all German POWs cooperated with the Nazis’ genocidal policies, all of them had served Germany on the front lines. Furthermore, the complicity of the German regular army in all manner of war crimes has been established beyond doubt.<sup>59</sup>

Canada’s first Second World War internment camps for civilian internees and POWs opened in Petawawa, Ontario, and Kananaskis, Alberta, in September 1939. Since the first POWs did not arrive until 1940, Italian-Canadians from central and eastern Canada made up most of Petawawa’s internees at first, along with interned German-Canadians and French-Canadian fascists. Kananaskis was readied specifically to house German-Canadians in 1939, but

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<sup>58</sup> Frequent conflicts occurred between hardline Nazis and lesser members of the SS in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, alongside a series of ideologically-motivated murders, perpetrated by pro-Nazi prisoners.

<sup>59</sup> See Ben Shepherd, "The Clean Wehrmacht, the War of Extermination, and beyond." *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (2009): 455-73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40264179>; Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (Hong Kong: MacMillan, 1985); Omer Bartov, *Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1991).

it also held Italian-Canadians, Communists from the region, and Canadians who refused government orders to go to war. This early start was only possible because both sites had been Depression-era unemployment relief camps. Located away from population centres, they had provided meals, accommodation, clothing, and employment in forestry projects to roving, single men unable to find work. These provisions made it relatively easy to convert the sites into Second World War internment camps.<sup>60</sup> When the first group of German prisoners arrived from Britain, however, it became clear that these two camps could not house more than 7000 POWs and civilian internees on their own. Britain was obligated to fund the construction of twenty-three more camps across the country.<sup>61</sup>

Not all of these sites came from nought. Mackenzie King and his Cabinet thought it would be in everyone's best interest to take advantage of existing buildings that were already equipped with heating, electricity, and sewage facilities before internment camps were built from scratch.<sup>62</sup> Sites such as Fort Henry, military training grounds, experimental farms, schools for juvenile delinquents, tuberculosis sanatoria, abandoned saw mills, and prisons, for example, could be made to house POWs with little in the way of renovations.<sup>63</sup> When Director of Internment Operations General Edouard de Bellefeuille Panet contacted federal and provincial departments such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Ministry of Justice, and the Department of Agriculture and Forestry about any potential internment facilities under their control, he asked that they meet three criteria: the site must be located in an area where prisoners

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<sup>60</sup> R. H. Candy, "The Petawawa Unemployment Relief Project." *The Forestry Chronicle*, 1943, 10(1): 14-18. <https://pubs.cif-ifc.org/doi/10.5558/tfc10014-1>

<sup>61</sup> Canada took financial responsibility for the construction, maintenance and day-to-day dealings of all labour camps. They began receiving prisoners in 1942. Carter, *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire*, 93.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Zimmermann, *Little Third Reich on Lake Superior*, 66.

of war could find employment, the possibility of escape from the site had to be extremely remote, and access to a rail line was mandatory.<sup>64</sup> This inquiry drew many responses. The Ministry of Munitions and Supply under C.D. Howe, for instance, provided Panet with an inventory of 2200 unoccupied factories and mills that could easily be transformed into prisoner of war camps.<sup>65</sup> Secretary of the Government of Ontario H.C. Nixon also offered two provincial prison buildings: Monteith, an industrial farm in northeastern Ontario, and Mimico, a former prison for juvenile delinquents on the outskirts of Toronto that was labelled “very suitable for 350 Nazi leaders.”<sup>66</sup> Nixon later extended his offer to include Kingston’s Fort Henry, which he envisioned holding 500 enemy aliens. Lastly, Provincial Ontario Liberal Minister Paul Leduc suggested Panet turn the abandoned pulp and paper mills at Red Rock, Sturgeon Falls, and Espanola into interment sites.<sup>67</sup>

When a location’s future as a POW camp was confirmed by the Canadian government, citizens who lived or worked there were expelled immediately. For example, when the Directorate of Internment Operations decided that the Bowmanville Boys’ Training School was going to become an POW camp, the school was given twenty-four hours to move every juvenile delinquent off site. There was a “hell of a lot of scrambling” as an interim facility was built nearby to house thirty young boys.<sup>68</sup> Other boys were paroled to work on nearby farms, and

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<sup>64</sup> Zimmermann, *Little Third Reich on Lake Superior*, 66.

<sup>65</sup> Leslie Roberts, C.D.: *The Life and Times of Clarence Decatur Howe*. (Toronto, Clarke, Irwin, 1957), 85.

<sup>66</sup> LAC, Department of the Secretary of State, RG6, A1, Vol.207, file 2902, Pt. VIII-I, letters and memoranda written by Panet to Secretary of State P. F. Gasgrain. Paul Leduc to Panet, June 1940.

<sup>67</sup> LAC, Department of the Secretary of State, RG6, A1, Vol.207, file 2902, Pt. VIII-I, Paul Leduc to Panet, June 1940.

<sup>68</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 36.

serious cases were transferred to institutions in Guelph and Mimico.<sup>69</sup> The government used partitions to divide the main living quarters, and set up barbed wire fences around the campus. Guard posts and barracks were assembled for Canadian personnel, and the school became an instant POW camp. Similarly, when the army occupied Espanola's Abitibi Paper Mill on 7 July 1940, residents living in the northeast corner of the city were given twenty-four hours to evacuate their homes.<sup>70</sup> Civilians who moved out of their homes willingly were given the first pick of boarded up homes elsewhere in town; and those who resisted made do with whatever homes were left.<sup>71</sup>

Before the Germans were brought into Ontario communities and interned in their facilities, a number of security precautions were taken. For one thing, someone had to guard the prisoners. The Canadian Provost Corps had guarded enemy POWs in the First World War, so it was assigned to guard duty for the first few months of the Second World War. When it became increasingly inefficient to keep young Canadian men away from active service, a new home guard unit was established on 24 May 1940: the Veterans Guard of Canada, made up of First World War veterans who were now too old to fight on the front lines. Used extensively in all parts of Canada, the Veterans Guard defended targets such as power plants, dams, and bridges from enemy attacks. In addition to their duties as a defense force, they also guarded enemy prisoners of war, and are most remembered for this role.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Eunice Edith Richards. *Bay of Islands: Laurentide Legacy*. (Guelph, Ont. Instant Print, 1999), 65.

<sup>71</sup> *Through the Years: Manitoulin District History and Genealogy*. Volume 13, Number 5. (Gore Bay, Ont, Mid-North Printers & Publishers. 1996), 122.

<sup>72</sup> Wild, John William. "Gathering Our Heroes: Chatham-Kent WWI & WWII Enlistments" <http://www.gatheringourheroes.ca/hero/wild-john-william/>



Canadian men signed up to be members of the Veterans Guard for several reasons. Many did so because Canada needed their help, and they wanted to do their part in the conflict. Other men had been POWs themselves in the First World War, and they felt their first-hand experiences of living in the bleak atmosphere of a prison camp would be useful. Popular media echoed this sentiment. On 12 September 1940, *Gravenhurst Banner* gossip columnist and town reverend, Free Lance, wrote that, “officers who were prisoners in Germany during the last war should now be placed in charge of internment camps...such officers have been through the mill themselves. They are also up to all the tricks a prisoner of war will use to escape, and in short, would be the ideal officer-in-charge of a place.”<sup>73</sup> These veterans would also be familiar with the Red Cross regulations covering these camps and “would not have anything put over them.”<sup>74</sup> Others were willing to serve in the Veterans Guard because it allowed them to relive their time as a soldier. When recruitment opened in Toronto, for instance, hundreds of veterans lined up at the Fort York armoury enlistment station because they were eager to get back in uniform.<sup>75</sup> A typical Veterans Guard member was John William Wild. After Wild enlisted on 14 October 1942, he spent the war posted in “Windsor, Stratford, Espanola, Bowmanville, Niagara areas, Port Arthur, Neys, North Bay, Centre Lake and Grand Ligne, Quebec. In February 1946, he accompanied a ship load of prisoners to England.”<sup>76</sup>

The experience of German POWs in Canada was regulated by a strict adherence to the 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. The Convention was founded on the idea that POWs still retained rights to humane treatment even though they had

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<sup>73</sup> *Gravenhurst Banner*, 12 September 1940.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> “Some Gossip” *Gravenhurst Banner*, 17 May 1945.

<sup>76</sup> Wild, “Gathering Our Heroes.”

given up their liberty. Article 1 of the Convention defined who could be labelled a prisoner of war and what could be done to them after they were captured. Article 7 stated that “prisoners of war shall be...located in a region far enough from the zone of combat for them to be out of danger,” and Article 10 ensured “prisoners of war shall be lodged in buildings or in barracks affording all possible guarantee of hygiene and healthfulness.”<sup>77</sup> Article 11 ensured that prisoners of war received the same quality and quantity of food that Canadian soldiers ate: “the food ration of prisoners of war shall be equal in quantity to that of troops at base camps.”<sup>78</sup> Article 27 of the Geneva Convention maintained that the detaining power could employ prisoners of war as workmen if they were physically fit, according to their ranks and abilities.<sup>79</sup> Articles 29 and 30 mandated that POWs could not be employed into any kind of labour that they were physically unsuited for, and Article 31 specified that prisoner labour could not to be exploited to help Canada’s war effort.<sup>80</sup> Article 32 prohibited the employment of POWs in dangerous work.<sup>81</sup>

Articles 2-3 of the Geneva Convention also specified that “prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated and protected against violence, insults and public curiosity.”<sup>82</sup> Adherence to this article was manifested in several ways.<sup>83</sup> As is standard for enemy prisoners during a world war, the Canadian public was not granted access to POW camps. From 1939 to

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<sup>77</sup> Conditions did vary of course, depending on the place of captivity and the period of the war; Tracy Strong, “Prisoners Under the Law”, *Christian Century* v60 #15 14 April 1943, 455

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Officers and people of equivalent status could not be made to work, although they could volunteer to work.

<sup>80</sup> It was forbidden to employ prisoners in the manufacturing and transport of arms or munitions of any kind, or on the transport of materials destined for combat.

<sup>81</sup> Erich Koch, *Deemed Suspect: A Wartime Blunder*, (Toronto, Methuen, 1980), 93.

<sup>82</sup> Strong, “Prisoners Under the Law,” 455.

<sup>83</sup> Strong, “Prisoners Under the Law,” 455.

1946, locals were prohibited from entering the grounds without cause, sending supplies to the prisoners, and from accepting anything on behalf of a captive.<sup>84</sup> The press was also denied unrestricted access to the prisoners. It was assumed that Nazi German propaganda would twist all press reports into something negative, which could lead to reprisals on Canadian POWs held by the Germans, and the government feared stories about excellent conditions in POW and internment camps could result in public criticism.<sup>85</sup> News stories about German POWs in Canada had to be approved by the Wartime Information Board before they could be published, and this resulted in seriously sanitized reports.<sup>86</sup>

The limited number of camp openings reported in wartime Ontario newspapers shows how tightly controlled POW news was under Article 2. There was no mention in the *Gravenhurst Banner* about the establishment of Camp 20 even though Gravenhurst was a town of only 2,122 people in 1941.<sup>87</sup> The only indication that something irregular might be happening were notices on the front page that citizens should lock their vehicles and double-check that the keys had been removed “due to circumstances which existed in the vicinity.”<sup>88</sup> The *Gravenhurst Banner* does not pinpoint exactly when locals learned “high-ranking, hardcore Nazis” were going to move in and occupy the sanatorium.<sup>89</sup> Renovations were constant on the Calydor property, but neighbours and local media did not know that a group of German prisoners was coming until the 2 July *Toronto Telegram* article.

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<sup>84</sup> “Location of POW Camp Kept Secret” *Parry Sound North Star*, 8 March 1990.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum: Publicity about Conditions in Prisoner of War and Internment Camps in Canada – Censorship, etc. 4 December 1942.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> “Location of POW Camp Kept Secret” *Parry Sound North Star*, March 8 1990

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

But Article 2's censorship policies could not stop all information from seeping out of the camps.<sup>90</sup> Residents observed military vehicles – usually stenciled with their respective camp letters and numbers - entering and exiting nearby camp sites, and it did not take long for POW camp locations to become public knowledge. News of POW escapes also reached the public through rumours and unapproved press reports. Cut off from “hot news” about POWs by Article 2, the press regularly fed fictitious stories to its readership.<sup>91</sup>

The press frequently made mundane POW news more alarmist than it was, and the speculative nature of this news made it easy for Ontarians to become terrified of the activities of “the Nazis” next door to them.<sup>92</sup> For example, a story published by *TIME* magazine on 26 October 1942 on the Battle of Bowmanville revealed how press accounts could become exaggerated. Serious disorder broke out in Bowmanville on 10 October 1942 over the shackling of German POWs. A shackling order was issued as a reprisal measure after Germany announced they had placed 107 British officers and 1,268 non-commissioned officers and men captured at Dieppe in chains. When Camp 30's Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel James Taylor, asked senior prisoners from all three branches of the German Armed Forces to select prisoners to be shackled, they refused.<sup>93</sup> By three o'clock that day, 800 inmates had barricaded themselves in

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<sup>90</sup> Strong, “Prisoners Under the Law,” 455.

<sup>91</sup> The government LAC RG24, Reel C-S420, File: H.Q.S.7236-90 POW, Correspondence from Deputy Minister and the Director of Public Relations. 2 July 1943.

<sup>92</sup> Antonio Thompson and Kurt Piehler, “Men in German Uniform: POWs in America during World War II. (University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 55.

<sup>93</sup> These senior prisoners included Generalmajor George Frieme, senior Luftwaffe officer Hans Hefele, and senior naval officer Otto Kretschmer; “The Battle of Bowmanville” in *True Stories of WWII*, CBC. Posted 18 October 2018.

<https://www.cbc.ca/xcompany/videos/secret-locations-of-ww2/the-battle-of-bowmanville>

the camp's main hall, 100 of them armed with table legs, bags of pepper, and broken ketchup and jam bottles.<sup>94</sup>

It took three days to quash the rebellion, and reinforcements had to be brought in from Kingston.<sup>95</sup> When the prisoners tried to leave the mess hall, *TIME* reported that tear gas was used, their rations were stopped, and “the guards let go a couple of tentative machine gun blasts.”<sup>96</sup> Minister of National Defence, Colonel James Ralston, denied all of these claims. The story also said that 126 of the prisoners had been taken to another camp, which was denied. Ralston griped with both *TIME* and Washington, arguing that the story “contained falsehoods and distortions of a nature likely to provide the enemy with material for propaganda which might be used by the Nazis as an excuse for further mistreatment of Canadian prisoners of war.”<sup>97</sup> On 23 October, the *New York Times* reported that only warning shots had been fired, and on 24 October, the “misleading and damaging inaccuracies” were admitted in the *Toronto Daily Star*.<sup>98</sup> While one Veterans Guard member suffered a skull fracture from a flying jam jar, the Canadian government rushed to report that no guards were given machine guns, no gas was used, and no prisoner rations were stopped.<sup>99</sup>

In another example of misleading reporting, on 13 March 1945, members of the Veterans Guard complained to *Globe and Mail* that German prisoners in Canada were receiving too kind

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<sup>94</sup> Nathan Greenfield, “The Bowmanville Riot: Canadian Troops Fired on German POWs in 1942” in *Macleans*. 7 October 2002. <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/2002/10/7/the-bowmanville-riot>

<sup>95</sup> “The Battle of Bowmanville.” *True Stories of WWII*, CBC. Posted 18 October 2018. <https://www.cbc.ca/xcompany/videos/secret-locations-of-ww2/the-battle-of-bowmanville>

<sup>96</sup> “World Battlefronts, PRISONERS, Battle of Bowmanville” in *TIME*, 26 October 1942.

<sup>97</sup> “Time Writer Violated Act, Ottawa Claim: Informant Is Charged by Justice Department Re: Bowmanville Story” *Globe and Mail*, 13 November 1942.

<sup>98</sup> “Falsehoods Pointed Out in Report on Disturbances: No Gas, Machine Guns Said Used Against Bowmanville Prisoners” in *Toronto Daily Star*, 24 October 1942.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

treatment. The guards claimed they sent five Germans prisoners to work at the lumber camp in Bala, Muskoka, and “this morning two of them got away and hitched a ride into Gravenhurst, where they walked up to this camp and said they didn’t get enough chicken, steaks, etc. So lo and behold, the camp sent the staff car out for the other three prisoners, and the five now are eating in our mess hall along with us.”<sup>100</sup> Two days later, the *Globe and Mail* disclosed that “the recent complaint of members of the Veterans Guard...as recorded on this page on Monday, brought a prompt official inquiry. One of the cases cited was in this military district, and the report received at headquarters contradicts the guard’s complaint.”<sup>101</sup> According to the official report, five prisoners had indeed been dispatched to a work project, but they were found unfit for bush work after a few days and scheduled to return to Gravenhurst. This return was delayed from 6 February to 23 February, and two of the POWs used the dead-time to plan an escape on the eve their departure. When they were caught by the Parry Sound detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police, they were sent to Gravenhurst. “When apprehended,” read the report, “the two prisoners of war stated that it was their intention to return to internment camp Gravenhurst, where the food was good. They were awarded 28 days detention.”<sup>102</sup>

The official report also stated that “the other three prisoners of war were called for by armed escort, travelling in army personnel carrier not a staff car and were placed in the guardhouse cells pending a request by the district internment officer for their transfer.”<sup>103</sup> Since the guard house was far away from the camp kitchen, the five prisoners were shepherded under

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<sup>100</sup> “Pampering German Prisoners,” *Globe and Mail*, 13 March 1945

<sup>101</sup> “Treatment of War Prisoners” *Globe and Mail*, 15 March 1945.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

armed guard to the camp mess hall for meals, which they ate only after Canadian personnel had finished. The *Globe and Mail* states,

The information supplied by the guard and published in this newspaper is described as both misleading and untrue. It is possible the writer of the letter and those who joined him in seeking publicity for the complaint did not know all of the details. Nevertheless, it is apparent they were burning with a feeling that German war prisoners can be treated with too great indulgence, remembering, no doubt, other contacts with Germans in a previous war. Officials claim the prisoners get no more than they are entitled to, and this... is a point which most Canadians want to be assured. Complaints such as were published serve a useful purpose if they do no more than carry a reminder of the fact that the Germans in two wars have not earned credit for dispensing kindly treatment.<sup>104</sup>

On 5 April 1945, the *Timmins Daily Press* reported a fatal motor accident near Monteith, Ontario. Resident John Lupin was charged with manslaughter after he struck and killed a man while driving under the influence of moonshine. The local paper gave sizeable publicity to the Veterans Guard and German POWs at Monteith after rumours that guards had found two stills and thirty-five gallons of moonshine in the POW compound began to swirl. Eventually, press accounts claimed that the moonshine was made in the POW compound and sold locally by the guards at four dollars a bottle. On 12 April 1945, Major Shanks, second in command of the Monteith Internment Camp, was interviewed and said the information he had given the press had been misconstrued. Shanks stated that his guards had been finding parts of stills from time to time, but that they definitely did not find two stills and thirty-five gallons of moonshine referred to in the Timmins newspaper on 31 March. His investigators had not uncovered any information to warrant the press' accusation.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Treatment of War Prisoners," the *Globe and Mail*.

<sup>105</sup> LAC, RG24, reel C-8436, file HQS 9139-2-23, Report by A.B. Spencer, "P.O.W. Camp Monteith, Ont. Excise Act. Timmins Detachment of Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 20 April 1945.

The *Kingston Whig-Standard* also had to clarify misinformation that it had published regarding the POWs when the *Toronto Star* reported that Private Douglas Hammond of Toronto's District Depot had been assaulted by a German POW in a manhunt for escaped prisoners. Commanding officer Lieut. Col. L. H. Hughes told the *Whig-Standard* that military hospital officials had performed an examination of the young soldier's body, and the doctors concluded that he had fainted and fallen on wet land.<sup>106</sup> He was not assaulted by a POW.

In cases such as these, where newspaper reports about POWs were later corrected by military representatives or by another newspaper, these changes were less about information control than about setting the record straight. Not only are the corrections usually more plausible and less interesting than the original sensationalist report, but authors of unauthorized reports were also punished. For example, when Ottawa discovered Edward Gay Rohrbough, an American-born Toronto newspaperman, had supplied the misinformation to *TIME* magazine regarding the Battle of Bowmanville, the Royal Canadian Mountain Police charged him with violating Section 16 of the Defense of Canada Regulations. This section made general provisions for the safeguarding of information, and summary convictions under it carried a maximum fine of \$500, twelve months' imprisonment, or both.<sup>107</sup> After Rohrbough pled guilty to violating censorship regulations, the Justice Department issued the news writer a suspended sentence of two years.<sup>108</sup>

Unauthorized press reports were not the only way German POWs were misrepresented in the media. Even in authorized reports, newspaper headlines used the terms "Nazi" and "Hun"

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<sup>106</sup> "Stage Manhunt" *The Kingston-Whig Standard*, date N/A.

<sup>107</sup> "Time Writer Violated Act, Ottawa Claim: Informant Is Charged by Justice Department Re Bowmanville Story" *Globe and Mail*, 13 November 1942.

<sup>108</sup> "Holds Report On Prisoners Assisted Foe: News Writer Is Given Suspended Sentence of Two Years at Barrie" *Globe and Mail*, 26 November 1942.



indiscriminately. The prisoners were painted as vicious men ready to kill or destroy anyone with little or no provocation, and the press abuse of the terms Nazi and Hun made it easy for the public to become uneasy about enemy prisoners living near or within their communities.<sup>109</sup> On 2 July 1940, a *Toronto Telegram* article described the German POWs arriving in Gravenhurst as defanged rattlesnakes, death dealers, and baby killers who inflicted flaming hell upon the innocent.<sup>110</sup> In the 12 September 1940 issue of the *Gravenhurst Banner*, gossip columnist Free Lance warned the Muskoka public that the sooner they realized German POWs were dangerous and deceitful men, the better it would be for Canada. “The only good German is a dead German,” he stated, and “there is no way of instilling a sense of sanity into Germans except by killing them.”<sup>111</sup> The article observed that the “Nazi” prisoners had slain women, babies, and old, defenceless men, but by the provisions of the Geneva Convention, they were entitled to humane treatment, food, shelter, and clothing. Instead, wrote Free Lance, “we should see that they receive cold justice. That, and nothing more, is all we owe them.”<sup>112</sup>

German POWs recognized the Allies’ propensity to tar them with the same brush. In *Full Circle: The Long Way Home from Canada*, former POW Ulrich Steinhilper recounted his escape from Bowmanville to the United States border. After he was recaptured in Watertown, New York, and returned to Camp 30, he started to read his story in the papers, principally the *Globe and Mail*. He stated, “when looking at the headlines of the newspapers which reported our recapture at Watertown and earlier, my adventures to Niagara and Montreal, the key words were

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<sup>109</sup> Ulrich Steinhilper and Peter Osborne. *Ten Minutes to Buffalo: The Story of Germany’s Great Escaper*, (Great Britain: Independent Books, 1991), 212; Ulrich Steinhilper, *Full Circle: The Long Way from Home* (Keston, Bromley, Independent Books, 1992), 71.

<sup>110</sup> Porter, *The Gilded Cage*, 48.

<sup>111</sup> “Wise and Otherwise” by Free Lance, *Gravenhurst Banner*, 12 September 1940.

<sup>112</sup> “They are Still Nazis After All,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 April 1941.

Nazi and Hun.”<sup>113</sup> Indeed, on 24 November 1941, the headings “Across Border, Didn’t Know it, Nazi Caught” and “Nazi Captured by Train Crew” were emblazoned across the *Globe and Mail*’s front page.<sup>114</sup> Other newspapers also followed suit. On 26 November 1941, the *Kingston Whig-Standard* reported that an “Escaped Nazi” had been recaptured, and on the same day, the *Toronto Daily Star* printed its article “Nazi Rides In, Out of U.S. Then Back into Captivity.”<sup>115</sup> On 27 November, the *Canadian Statesman* published its own version: “Escaped Nazi Seized at Niagara Unaware he Had been in States, Back in Bowmanville Wednesday.”<sup>116</sup> Steinhilper responded, “I am not a Nazi.”<sup>117</sup>

Like Steinhilper, many German POWs had a complicated relationship with National Socialism. A former POW wrote to *Gilded Cage* author Cecil Porter and said, “I wanted to be a professional navy officer ever since I was ten years old and it had nothing to do with the party in power. This commitment, of course, also meant that if there was a war, I would willingly fight for the aims of my government.”<sup>118</sup> He continued:

For us, who grew up in the thirties, Nazism meant re-awakening pride in our country, willingness to put our country’s interest above personal desires, unity of German people and culture, loyalty under adverse circumstances, integrity, honesty, achievement, competition, sacrifice, full employment, autobahns, beauty of the workplace, erasing slums, simple beauty in art, crime-free streets, holiday cruises for workers, great adventures in the Hitler Youth, and of course, a growing navy to join.

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<sup>113</sup> Steinhilper, *Full Circle*, 71.

<sup>114</sup> “Across Border, Didn’t Know it, Nazi Caught” *Globe and Mail*, 26 November 1941, pg. 1; “Nazi Captured by Train Crew,” *Globe and Mail*, 26 November 1941, pg. 2.

<sup>115</sup> “Escaped Nazi Recaptured” *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 26 November 1941; “Nazi Rides in, Out of U.S. Then Back Into Captivity”, *Toronto Daily Star*, 26 November 1941.

<sup>116</sup> “Escaped Nazi Seized at Niagara Unaware He Had Been in States Back in Bowmanville Wednesday” *Canadian Statesman*, 27 November 1941.

<sup>117</sup> Steinhilper, *Full Circle*, 71.

<sup>118</sup> “German perspective of Camp 20 given to Cecil Porter.” Cecil Porter Fonds, Gravenhurst Public Library, 1996. Gravenhurst Archives.

For us, it did not mean concentration camps, Kristallnacht, war, master race, and it certainly did not mean world domination...<sup>119</sup>

Since Nazi rule did, in fact, mean war, glorification of “Aryan” Germans as a master race, and pursuit of world domination, these claims to the contrary are self-serving and cannot be taken at face value. However, the majority of Ontario’s POWs were professional soldiers or they had volunteered when their country entered the conflict – in other words, for the same reasons that volunteers came forward in Allied countries.<sup>120</sup>

Public opinion was also stacked against German POWs because local and national newspapers reprinted stories about Fifth Columnists.<sup>121</sup> For instance, when POWs Peter Krug and Eric Boehle escaped from Bowmanville’s Camp 30, it was discovered that Krug had made contact with a real Nazi underground railroad in Detroit which helped him get to the Mexican border. Residents were up in arms after this news.<sup>122</sup> Krug and Boehle were caught, but their escape strengthened wider fears that organizations of Nazi sympathizers were ready to assist the “Huns” who escaped from their prison camps.<sup>123</sup>

The alarmist news reports and indiscriminate use of terms like Nazi and Hun increased people’s anxiety about German POWs in their communities, and led many Ontarians to fear their first meeting with the foreigners who had arrived on the home front. One woman in Fingal pleaded with her husband to sell their farm after she learned German prisoners would be living close by. Another Bowmanville woman did all of her shopping in another town to avoid running

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<sup>119</sup> “German perspective of Camp 20 given to Cecil Porter.” Cecil Porter Fonds, Gravenhurst Public Library, 1996. Gravenhurst Archives.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Zimmermann, *Little Third Reich*, 56.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

into German POWs from Camp 30. At night, she locked her doors and shoved kitchen knives into her door hinges so the Germans could not break into her home.<sup>124</sup>

This reaction was characteristic of Bowmanville. Most residents there objected strongly to the plan to transform the training school's palatial buildings into "Nazi prison quarters."<sup>125</sup> Protests were wired to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, Harry Nixon, and J. L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence, from the councils of Bowmanville and Darlington Township, Lions and Rotary clubs, Bowmanville Chamber of Commerce, and the Country Federation of Agriculture.<sup>126</sup> Alex McGregor, President of Bowmanville's Chamber of Commerce, wrote to Nixon:

Manufacturers, business and professional men, in fact all citizens are registering strenuous objection through us to your proposal to turn Boys Training School into German prisoner camp. This site has become one of the most valued assets in province. It has been developed primarily as an educational center. It is completely and obviously unsuited for purposes of prison camp without expenditure of large sums that would in itself build a much better camp in a locality suited to the purpose.<sup>127</sup>

J.F. Heyland, President of the Durham County Federation of Agriculture, worried that housing German prisoners at Camp 30 would lead to a "depreciation in farm values as the school [was] located in an orchard and dairy district."<sup>128</sup>

Manson Comstock, the President of Bowmanville's Rotary Club, lobbied Nixon because the Rotary Club had invested a lot of money into equipping and building the gymnasium and swimming pool at the Boys' Training School. Other service clubs such as the Kiwanis Club had

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<sup>124</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 36.

<sup>125</sup> "Protest Giving Germans 'Vacation Spot': Bowmanville Residents in Uproar over plan to use school as Nazi Prison Quarters," *Canadian Statesman*, 2 October 1941.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> "Citizens Shocked," *Canadian Statesman*, 7.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

also given generously to the school, donating a large dormitory to house underprivileged boys and give them a chance to succeed with their lives.<sup>129</sup> “That chance should not be taken away under war conditions. We cannot urge too strongly that government reconsider its decision to turn the school into a prison camp for German officers.”<sup>130</sup>

Elderly residents loathed the fact that the school was being taken away from the young people and being placed at the disposal of the enemy. “It is a shame our own boys can’t have the use of its facilities instead of the hated Germans,” Mrs. Roy Porter, who lived near the farm, stated.<sup>131</sup> After he was flooded with requests to publicize opposition to using the Boys Training School as a German POW camp, the *Canadian Statesman’s* editor also mailed a letter of protest to Ralston. He urged him to investigate the location further and to take the public’s reaction into account before he brought German soldiers to Bowmanville.<sup>132</sup>

Bowmanville citizens’ apprehension evoked wide sympathy from the province. The City of Guelph Council advocated for the restoration of the Boys’ Training School to its original use, and summarized the community’s concerns. It wrote,

The land and over \$40,000 cash were contributed by private persons and Service Clubs towards the express purpose of establishing this as a training school for boys. These contributors were never consulted when this property was turned into an internment camp. Without such a training school, there is no other suitable place in Ontario where boys may be sent for corrective training without being in contact with confirmed criminals. This is a serious handicap in the proper functioning of our Juvenile Courts toward correcting the present serious trend of Juvenile Delinquency. It is far more important to the welfare of our province that we use the specially built facilities at Bowmanville school for training delinquent boys rather than for comfortably housing enemy prisoners. That copies of this resolution be sent to every

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<sup>129</sup> Anthony W. Norton, *Bowmanville: Another Farewell to Arms*. (Canadiana Collection, Queen’s University, Kingston, 1981), 13.

<sup>130</sup> While this quote refers directly to the officers held at Camp 30, most Canadians did not treat the officers differently than the enlisted men, nor did the guards; Norton, *Bowmanville: Another Farewell to Arms*, 13.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

city in Ontario urging their support in restoring the Bowmanville School to its original and important functions.<sup>133</sup>

Gananoque, Ontario, indicated that its citizens were also concerned with the future of the province and the welfare of Canadians: “we, the Municipal Council of the Corporation of the Town of Gananoque, meeting this 20<sup>th</sup> day of April 1943, are gravely concerned at the increase in juvenile delinquency and the lack of facilities to properly deal with the situation.”<sup>134</sup> In the article “Security an Essential in Locating Prison Camp”, the *Toronto Telegram* sided with Bowmanville residents:

Resentment of the citizens of Bowmanville and district at the prospect of a German officer’s prison camp set down in their midst is understandable. Like other Canadians they have no desire to see these swaggering bullies enjoying the site and privileges of such a fine property as the Bowmanville Training School which is now being fitted up for the accommodation of the officer prisoners who the German government insists must not be imprisoned in the hinterland. The only justification for the extension of this concession to the enemy is that it may assist ameliorating the lot of our boys and other British soldiers, sailors and airmen who are held in Nazi prison camps.<sup>135</sup>

Before locals met the enemy from overseas, most Ontarians relied on the newspaper for their impressions of Germans in uniform. Portrayed as a horde of Huns who had ransacked Europe, the POWs were allegedly unshaven, dirty men who wore oversized, rumpled uniforms.<sup>136</sup> “They look like anything but good soldiers. Few of them are even good physical specimens...they look pale and tired and some of them even sickly,” the *Globe and Mail* wrote.<sup>137</sup> The *Oshawa Daily Times* quoted a Peterborough soldier on duty at a POW camp “somewhere in Ontario.” He described his charge as a series of “ill-mannered, blustering thugs,

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<sup>133</sup> Norton, *Bowmanville: Another Farewell to Arms*, 13.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> “Security an Essential in Locating Prison Camp,” *Toronto Telegram*, 3 October 1940 or 1941

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> “Finds Germans Insolent Bullies” *Oshawa Daily Times*, 15 July 1940

especially the younger ones, products of Hitler's system of youth training...but all of them, officers and men alike, are tarred with the same brush."<sup>138</sup> The young soldier warned the public not to assume that any story they read about sneering Germans had been exaggerated, because nobody could believe how bad they were, and as an example, he spoke of a six-foot Prussian officer swaggering past a Scottish sentry of slight build and bringing his heel down with all his weight on the little Scotsman's toe.<sup>139</sup> The German POWs who were moving into neighborhoods supposedly "constituted a large percentage of the brutal force which, under gangster leadership, has set out to conquer the world."<sup>140</sup> Ontarians who learned that a POW camp was coming to their town might well have believed that they had good reason to fear the worst.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> "Security an Essential in Locating Prison Camp," *Toronto Telegram*.

**Chapter 2**  
**“Thighs like Hams”:**  
**Ontarians’ First Encounters with the Propagandized Enemy from Overseas**

Before German POWs arrived on Canadian soil in the flesh, sensationalist press reports and the absence of personal encounters with the enemy made it easy for Ontarians to demonize the prisoners. Citizens who learned that an POW camp would be established near or within their community were usually unenthusiastic about the news because wartime propaganda had taught them that all Germans were monsters.<sup>141</sup> Still, when trains full of German POWs reached their destinations, the local populations of nearby towns lined the streets to see them. Ontarians were eager to see what a “Nazi” soldier looked like in real life, and they wanted to test the reality against the propaganda that portrayed Germans as brutes. Most first impressions were positive. Canadians were impressed by the prisoners’ fit, masculine, disciplined demeanor. Many wished to get to know them.

On 9 July 1940, the *Sault Daily Star*’s editorial “Why Not Let Prison Camps Make Canada Money” suggested that the network of POW camps scattered across Canada could be turned into a million-dollar tourist business, potentially Canada’s largest tourist attraction after the Dionne Quintuplets who were born in 1934:

Come to Canada to see real live Huns. See the baby-killers in person! See the men who torpedo fishing boats, who sink unarmed passenger ships without warning! See the Germans who make war on women and children! See the Huns who machine-gun columns of refugees! See them scowl, hear them curse England! Hundreds of hard, tough, dangerous fellows-behind barbed wires and under the guns of Canadian guards. Come to Canada!<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 35.

<sup>142</sup> “Captive Nazis Would Compete with the Quints” *Ottawa Journal*, 13 July 1940 pg. 6



The article said that German POWs should be used as tourist bait to bring Americans into the country; if Americans were allowed to know the locations of few POW camps in Canada, and the authorities had no issue with people gawking over the German POWs, it could potentially help the Canadian government with war finances.<sup>143</sup> *The Ottawa Journal* agreed that an effective publicity campaign could be waged on this idea, especially if the German POWs agreed to help out:

If the Huns could be persuaded to scowl and look fierce for the visitors, to sing their song about marching against England, to harangue the crowd in their best imitations of Hitler himself, it would be a thrill comparable only to the sight of the five little Dionne [quintuplets] visible at one and the same time.<sup>144</sup>

These suggestions were made tongue-in-cheek, but Americans did visit Canadian POW camps. Since the United States did not join the Second World War until 1941, it did not receive its own German POWs until 1942. After the first POWs arrived in Canada, many wanted to see the dangerous, snarling, Nazi enemy. Tourists – including German-Americans - travelled to Espanola's Camp 21 from as far away as Detroit before Pearl Harbor, and Espanola became such a popular tourist destination that on 26 June 1941, the commandant asked for the designation of a restricted area around the camp, including the public highway. The reason he gave was that “civilians are loitering and talking to prisoners of war while employed on road projects in the vicinity of Espanola” and he advised that “the troops guarding the Prisoners of War on road work should keep all traffic moving in the vicinity and prohibit any conversations between civilians and Prisoners of War.”<sup>145</sup> Likewise, in June 1944, healthful Muskoka had the “greatest influx of

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<sup>143</sup> “Why Not Let Prison Camps Make Canada Money” *Sault Daily Star*, 9 July 1940 pg. 4

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> LAC, RG24, reel C-8435, file HQS 9139-1-0-3-2, “Restricted Area: Espanola” District Officer Commanding Military District 2, Toronto, ON: 26 June 1941.

visitors...from many parts of Canada and the United States in all its tourist history.”<sup>146</sup> The greatest bulk of tourist enquiries came from Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Ontario and Quebec, stated the *Gravenhurst Banner* manager on 27 July 1944.<sup>147</sup> It is likely some Americans came to see the camp. In this sense, the *Sault Daily Star* and the *Ottawa Journal* are not far from reality. Since Article 2 of the Geneva Convention banned the exploitation of German POWs for the purpose of public curiosity, the ‘Hun’ prisoners were never made to glower or impersonate Hitler. Their presence alone was often enough to draw crowds wherever they appeared, and what people saw was not usually what they expected.

It must have been an unusual experience for Ontarians when they saw the German enemy in the flesh for the first time. Most of the population had not experienced the reality of the Second World War, and when trains carrying the prisoners pulled up to their destinations, it made the war more tangible than any press outlet’s description of any military campaign in Europe. Crowds turned out to watch.

For instance, when the first German prisoners pulled into the Gravenhurst train station and marched under armed guard towards Camp Calydor, residents lined the street.<sup>148</sup> One resident recalled the day:

The POW camp seemed to bring the 20<sup>th</sup> century right to our doorstep. Most people had only read about Germany and Italy; very few had been to Europe. Suddenly there were these topnotch officers; these enemies from the war zones, landed on our doorstep. I can well remember the day they first arrived by special train and they marched through town. There really was a hatred for them at first. People yelled at them – it was like a chant – they became so emotional.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Gravenhurst Banner*, 22 June 1944.

<sup>147</sup> “Greatest Tourist Season on Record,” *Gravenhurst Banner*, 27 July 1944.

<sup>148</sup> Henderson, *German POWs and their Artefacts*, 15.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

Three years later, as uniformed POWs strode from the Bowmanville railway station to Camp 30, “traffic stopped and everybody came out to gawk...those guys really looked impressive. They were all in uniform and in perfect formation.”<sup>150</sup> In Barry Broadfoot’s *Six War Years*, one Canadian man remembered being impressed when he ran into several POWs out of uniform in the woods. When he got off of a train in “one of those places on the top of Lake Superior, Marathon or someplace like it” to get some fresh air, forty POWs came out of a bush nearby. “Every bloody one was a giant, 6’2, 6’4. All fair haired, blue eyed, thighs like hams and tanned like Charles Atlas, Mr. World...” When he learned they were Afrika Korps soldiers captured in North Africa, he said, “we have to fight men like that?”<sup>151</sup> These memorable first encounters not only made it clear to civilians that German POWs were not all monsters, but also that they were becoming fixtures of their local communities.

As more and more POWs arrived, Ottawa received hundreds of requests from private citizens who wanted to learn more about the foreign men behind the wire. Some came from the friends or family of a German prisoner, or a handful of locals who supported the Nazi Party, but most members of the public desired tourist-like visits.<sup>152</sup> Camp 23’s war diary illustrates the variety of applications Ottawa received. The diary reveals that:

Representatives from sixty-seven military, government and civilian organizations visited Monteith while the camp was open. These visitors included an officer researching insect repellent for northern internment camps, an FBI agent from the United States conducting an interrogation of one prisoner, a theatre troupe from South Porcupine staging the three-act-comedy play of Full House, the Anglican bishop of Moosonee, a federal potato inspector who commented that the Camp 23 farm was the “finest vegetable farm he had seen between North Bay and Cochrane,” a former premier of Ontario on a victory bond sales campaign, a baseball team from

<sup>150</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 42.

<sup>151</sup> Barry Broadfoot, *Six War Years, 1939-1945: Memories of Canadians at Home and Abroad*. (Toronto, Paper Jacks Ltd., 1976), 61.

<sup>152</sup> Lanosky, *Barbed Wire and Blackflies*, 86.

the American army that was stationed in the Cochrane area, and a Royal Canadian Air Force officer and pilot.<sup>153</sup>

Since POW camps were carefully controlled military establishments and not public spaces, civilians could not walk through the gates as pleased. They had to apply for permission to enter, and if the request was made to the right person or deemed valid enough, they could get in. This is an example of the difference between centralized regulations and what happens on the ground.

Interestingly, Canadians also sought access to the prisoners for humanitarian reasons. In his doctoral dissertation, “Welcoming Strangers: Race, Religion and Ethnicity in German Lutheran Ontario and Missouri, 1939-1970,” Elliot Worsfold discusses how civilian organizations such as the Lutheran synod in Waterloo, Ontario, wanted to talk to German POWs held in Canada to learn for themselves whether they were well looked after and to ensure the prisoners’ relationship with God did not suffer because they had been captured while doing their duty.<sup>154</sup> The CWS and EPC organized weekly visits by pastors to the POW camps, and they wanted to send the German prisoners relief packages, but this was not permitted.<sup>155</sup>

Waterloo’s Lutheran community acted so philanthropically towards German POWs because “as Germans, the synod leaders believed they had a distinct obligation to provide for the spiritual needs of prisoners while other religious groups would merely forget about them.”<sup>156</sup> Feelings of a shared German identity trumped ideological differences, but not race. This did not occur with German-Jewish organizations. The Jewish community approached the Jews in Camp R with wariness at first. In “The ‘Camp Boys’: Interned Refugees from Nazism,” Paula Draper cites an official with the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agency (UJRA) as stating: “Our

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<sup>153</sup> Lanosky, *Barbed Wire and Blackflies*, 86.

<sup>154</sup> Worsfold, *Welcoming Strangers*, 95.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

information is that all internees at Camp R are categorized as Class A [dangerous]...our organization is interested only in Class B and C [friendly] internees, irrespective of whether conceivably there might be injustice in neglecting the Class As.”<sup>157</sup> The UJRA was confused because Britain had branded the Jews as dangerous internees before sending them to Canada, and it felt that the Jewish community could not risk consorting with their unfamiliar counterparts behind the wire. As Christine Whitehouse writes in, “‘You’ll Get Used to It!’: The internment of Jewish Refugees in Canada,” “Anti-Semitism was so pervasive that Canadian Jewish aid organizations worried that if they advocated on behalf of the internees too aggressively, they would rock the fragile boat of Jewish-Canadian relations. To smooth things out, the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies and the Committee of Interned Refugees gifted cartons of cigarettes and rum to be distributed among the guards.”<sup>158</sup>

Another humanitarian cause that drew civilian organizations to POW camps was the education of German prisoners. The Canadian government made it possible for civilians to give academic lectures to prisoners under the auspices of the International YMCA and the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE).<sup>159</sup> University of Toronto history professor George Brown was in charge of the effort to educate prisoners. Each year the CAAE sent POW camps a list of possible lectures from which the internees made selections. Professors from Bishop’s, McGill, University of Toronto, and the United Theological College voluntarily participated in the CAAE program, with these lectures giving German POWs a broader and clearer

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<sup>157</sup> Draper, “The Camp Boys,” 176.

<sup>158</sup> Whitehouse, “*You’ll Get Used to It*,” 78.

<sup>159</sup> Hermann Boeschenstein Papers, Minutes for the Meeting of the War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA for Canada, 2 September 1942. University of Toronto Archives.

understanding of Canadian and American history.<sup>160</sup> It was easy to find suitable lecturers in Eastern Canada because of the high concentration of universities, but also because of the surplus of non-academics who registered to teach the enemy. For example, H.E. Rice, a sixty-five-year-old man from Huntsville, Ontario, applied to give a lecture to the prisoners. Under ‘Subjects which speaker has used in past’, he wrote that he “could handle almost any subject.”<sup>161</sup> These programs brought a select group of civilians into the barbed wire compounds who otherwise would not have had the chance to see a German POW.

Most Ontarians relied on the media for their first impressions of the POWs, and news reports about the enemy’s high standard of living under the Geneva Convention struck a negative chord with many. Newspapers questioned whether the enemy was being coddled, and it was widely advertised that POW camps were run like five-star hotels with un-prison-like material comforts.<sup>162</sup> For instance, Camp 30’s barbed-wire perimeter was the only thing that gave it away as a prison camp. It had a green house, a menagerie, five tennis courts, an indoor swimming pool, a gymnasium, a brewery, a theatre, and a concert stage. A Luftwaffe pilot who was held captive there wrote: "I am convinced that nowhere in the world did prisoners of war have better

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<sup>160</sup> Hermann Boeschstein Papers, Minutes for the Meeting of the War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA for Canada, 2 September 1942. University of Toronto Archives.

<sup>161</sup> “Memorandum on Lectures at the Bowmanville Officers’ Internment Camp, 1942-1944.” George W. Brown, Department of History, University of Toronto. Application of H. E. Rice to Lecture. Herman Boeschstein Fonds, University of Toronto.

<sup>162</sup> See “Luxury Accommodation for German Prisoners of War” *Canadian Statesman*, 25 September 1941; “Are Nazi Prisoners Too Well Treated?” *Globe and Mail*, 3 May 1945; “Treatment of War Prisoners” *Globe and Mail*, 15 March 1945; “Pampering German Prisoners” *Globe and Mail*, 13 March 1945; “Canadian Resorts Lure Wehrmacht,” *Gravenhurst Banner*, September 21 1944; “What People Talk About: Letters From the Editor’s Mail: Steak and Chicken for Nazi Prisoners” *Daily Boston Globe*, 17 May 1943; “Four Nazis, Two Canadians Held in Beer-Drinking Probe,” *Globe and Mail*, 7 May 1945; “Rules Governing Prisoners of War Set at Geneva Convention...Much Freedom Allowed” *Canadian Statesman*, 4 December 1941.

housing, better food, better recreation facilities, better educational opportunities, and above all, fairer treatment, than in Canada."<sup>163</sup> German POWs held there made only one complaint to the Red Cross: because Camp 30 was formerly a boys' training school, the urinals and sinks were too low.<sup>164</sup> Likewise, just as Muskoka is seen as a place of regeneration today, its German captives also appreciated Camp 20's serene location and clean, bracing air. The camp's location on a bluff overlooking Muskoka Bay permitted barbed wire to be strung out into the water so that prisoners could swim and cliff dive during their leisure time.<sup>165</sup> Prisoners were supposed to stay inside the wire, but many rowed beyond it while their guard sat and watched them.<sup>166</sup> Town residents named Camp 20 among the best of wartime Muskoka's tourist resorts.

Canadians also considered the POW camp menu incriminating evidence of coddling. Some of the items on it included sausages, eggs, cheese, bacon, mayonnaise, milk, soda, and fruits.<sup>167</sup> German prisoners were also given items like sugar and butter that had been rationed in urban centers, and the fact that they enjoyed turkey at Thanksgiving and Christmas was especially hard for locals to accept. In a 1942 government meeting regarding "Publicity about Conditions of Prisoner of War and Internment Camps in Canada," for example, the fact that "there was considerable criticism in the press about the Christmas turkeys which were provided for German prisoners of war in Canada by the International Red Cross" was a primary point of concern.<sup>168</sup> That same year, Canadian Red Cross Chairman Mr. Justice P.H. Gordon heard that

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<sup>163</sup> Carola Vyhnak, "D-Day in Bowmanville for Nazi POW Camp" *Toronto Star*, 6 March 2009. [https://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/2009/03/06/dday\\_in\\_bowmanville\\_for\\_nazi\\_pow\\_camp.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/2009/03/06/dday_in_bowmanville_for_nazi_pow_camp.html)

<sup>164</sup> Fritz Wentzel, *Single or Return?* (London, New English Library, 1975), 131.

<sup>165</sup> *The Gravenhurst Banner*, 13 March 1942.

<sup>166</sup> "Taking the Cure: Muskoka's TB Hospitals" *The Muskokan*, 12 October 1995.

<sup>167</sup> Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 131.

<sup>168</sup> Memorandum: Publicity about Conditions in Prisoner of War and Internment Camps in Canada – Censorship, etc. 4 December 1942.

German POWs in Canada were receiving truckloads of fruit so many times that he asked to see copies of their menu “to be assured that they are no better than they should be.”<sup>169</sup> On 8 July 1943, a Niagara Falls woman wrote to the *Globe and Mail* complaining, “we are giving our German prisoners of war better food than the average Canadian tax payer can afford to buy... In return for this, we are receiving only contemptuous insults from these self-styled ‘superior’ people.”<sup>170</sup> Hungry Canadians thought that the rations German POWs received were more than they deserved.

On 2 June 1942, the *Timmins Advance* sketched the German POWs as “haves” and Canadians as “have-nots” in its article “Why No Tennis Balls?” A civilian tennis enthusiast decided to purchase a moderate number of tennis balls while they were still obtainable, but found the stocks of several stores exhausted. He was informed that all the tennis balls had been sold to German POWs at a Northern Ontario camp.<sup>171</sup> Three years later in 1945, the *Globe and Mail* condemned POW pampering when author Alexander Douglas Hume of Toronto asked:

Are we erring in being too considerate of the prisoners in our custody?...They are allowed healthful recreation privileges—concerts, swimming, hockey, football, gardening, etc.: but in the matter of rations, is it advisable that we allow them “the same basis as the troops” and the privilege of purchasing additional delicacies such as summer sausage, beer, turkeys at Christmas, etc. out of their army funds?<sup>172</sup>

Notably, the need to protect Canadian POWs from the Germans no longer existed at the time this claim was published.

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<sup>169</sup> Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 131.

<sup>170</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 39.

<sup>171</sup> “Why No Tennis Balls?” *Ottawa Journal*, 2 June 1942 pg. 8; reprinted from *Timmins Advance*, 2 June 1942.

<sup>172</sup> Alexander Douglas Hume. “Are Nazi Prisoners Too Well Treated?” *Globe and Mail*, 3 May 1945.



In a series of interviews conducted with the Canadian guard staff at Camp 30 and some residents of Bowmanville, Sergeant Don Kemp reported feeling bitterness, anger, and frustration while he worked with the POWs. He ended his interview with the comment, “they had everything, we had nothing. We were the prisoners – not them.”<sup>173</sup> Another Bowmanville resident reported that she disapproved of the German prisoners because she found them “too autocratic” when they came into her drug store and ordered things. It became personal for her when “things were mighty short as far as availability those days. We could hardly get enough. So, in came the officers, and for them it was available. They would buy CASES. Now, that’s a personal thing.”<sup>174</sup> A parole system made it possible for POWs to go into this Bowmanville drugstore and buy things. If POWs gave their *Ehrenwort* or word of honour that they would not escape, they were allowed to leave the camp confines under low supervision.<sup>175</sup> Still, it is difficult to accept that events happened exactly as this woman recalls. For instance, German POWs were not permitted to hold Canadian cash, and they likely paid for the drugstore items on account with the money remitted by the camp. But if her memory is faulty, there is likely a reason why she remembers things that way. Perhaps her memory has become clouded by things she heard about POWs after the fact.

Canadians also denounced the tender treatment of German POWs because of the poor treatment that Canadian POWs received in German captivity. Germany had signed the Geneva Convention and mostly followed it, but a German soldier’s diet was made up of fewer calories

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<sup>173</sup> Daniel Hoffman, “Don Kemp: One Canadian’s Perspective” in *Camp 30: Ehrenwort: A German Prisoner of War Camp in Bowmanville 1941-1945*, (Bowmanville, Ont, Bowmanville Museum, 1990), 172.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 179.

<sup>175</sup> Debates of the House of Commons, 20 March 1944, pg. 1685; Madsen, *German Prisoners of War in Canada During the Second World War*, 105.

than his Canadian counterpart. As the German armed forces' already low caloric content became progressively more restricted during the war, Canadian POWs received less food as well.<sup>176</sup> Additionally, Canadian POWs did not receive adequate blankets or clothing, and they were usually housed in facilities with poor heating, lackluster shelter, and unhygienic lavatories. While a limited food supply and an unhealthy living environment caused Canadian POWs to lose weight in German captivity, the average POW in Lethbridge gained twelve pounds in his first ten months of internment.<sup>177</sup> Disparities such as this one triggered a continued citizen protest.<sup>178</sup>

Ontarians protested the treatment of POWs because they felt that as the Allies' enemy, they deserved less hospitality than they were receiving. But this did not stop many Canadians from offering their own private property to the government to house German POWs. On 3 September 1940, for instance, Mr. W. A. Gedden of Mississippi, Ontario, offered a site for an POW camp, but Panet said they had established sufficient camps to accommodate the number of internees now in their charge.<sup>179</sup> Panet had the same response on 6 July when John L Cousintine of Timmins offered the government a nine room house near one of the northern camps.<sup>180</sup> On 16 July 1940, Olof Hanson offered his Saugan River Holiday Camp as the nucleus of a camp,<sup>181</sup> and Graham W. Curtis, an Industrial Commissioner in Pembroke Ontario, presented a potential site between Round Lake and Barry's Bay.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Thompson, "Men in German Uniform," 59.

<sup>177</sup> Vance, *Objects of Concern*, 132.

<sup>178</sup> Thompson, "Men in German Uniform," 59.

<sup>179</sup> LAC, RG 24, reel C-5369, file HQS 7236-1-6-27, Letter from Mr. W. A. Geddes of Mississippi, Ontario, to E. de B. Panet, 3 September 1940.

<sup>180</sup> LAC, RG 24, reel C-5369, file HQS 7236-1-6-22, Letter from John L. Cousintine of Timmins, Ontario, to E. de B. Panet, 6 September 1940.

<sup>181</sup> LAC, RG 24, reel C-5369, file HQS 7236-1-6-34, Letter from Olof Hanson to E. de B. Panet, 16 July 1940.

<sup>182</sup> LAC, RG 24, reel C-5369, file HQS 7236-1-6-29, Letter from Graham W. Curtis of Pembroke, Ontario to E. de B. Panet, 5 July 1940.

On the other hand, when a group of ninety Japanese nationals volunteered to go to a work camp in the northern Ontario town of Chapleau, the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council protested so aggressively that their departure was cancelled. A CBC newscast quoted Gordon Fraser, Conservative MP for Peterborough West, as saying “Ontario wanted no Japanese evacuees.”<sup>183</sup> When the first group of 130 Japanese-Canadians arrived in Northern Ontario after being forcibly relocated from British Columbia arrived, the *Sault Ste. Marie Star*’s 1941 article “First Japanese Arrive in Schreiber From B.C.” stated that “many of these young men had been born in Canada and to that extent, are Canadians, albeit they are of a race so profoundly distinct from Anglo-Saxons that they carry marks of racial division which never can be covered up or camouflaged. They are of an alien breed.”<sup>184</sup> A considerable number of these men were put to work on the trans-continental highway to the east of Schreiber, to which the *Star* commented, “it would be idle to say that the people of the lakehead and of Schreiber welcome this influx with open arms. However, if it is necessary in the wider interests of the Dominion, there would be protests of a purely petulant nature.”<sup>185</sup> Similarly, in the *Fort William Daily Times-Journal* April 1942 article “3000 to Work on Link East of Schreiber,” it states, “Schreiber residents do not welcome the arrival of the Japanese but welcome the fact that this section of the highway east will soon be completed.”<sup>186</sup> The *Globe and Mail* repeated this statement, writing “citizens here do not welcome the Japanese but are anxious to have this section of the highway completed.”<sup>187</sup> Essentially, some citizens did not want anyone of Japanese descent, regardless of their Canadian

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<sup>183</sup> Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: An Account of the Deplorable Treatment Inflicted on Japanese-Canadians during World War Two*. (Toronto, ON: the Canadian Publishers, McClelland and Stewart Limited), 231.

<sup>184</sup> “First Japanese Arrive in Schreiber From B.C.,” *Sault Ste Marie Star*, 7 April 1942, 4.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> “3000 to Work on Link East of Schreiber” *Fort William Daily Times-Journal*, April 1942.

<sup>187</sup> “Japs Leave Coast Today for Ontario Work Camp” *Globe and Mail*, 30 March 1942.

citizenship, in their country, and they were either horrified by them or ignored them.<sup>188</sup> The phrase “protest of a purely petulant nature” suggests Canadians could not help but sulk when Japanese men were placed in their communities, and saw no benefit to their presence beyond the construction work they would complete.<sup>189</sup>

German-Jewish refugees constituted another party that was not shown any warmth when they arrived in Canadian internment camps. In 1940, when Canada agreed to take in Britain’s “enemy aliens” and POWs, Britain did not disclose that 2,300 of these individuals were actually Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. In part, this is because communication between Britain and Canada was notoriously poor where POWs were concerned.<sup>190</sup> The refugees were interned, and then deported to Canada. In Panet’s opinion, Jewish refugees, regardless of their individual intentions and loyalties, were “the most troublesome of them all.” Camp officials disliked them because they requested Kosher food, “were unusually dirty and untidy” and, in their view, “caused more bother than all the others” because they were unversed in military discipline.<sup>191</sup> The Director of Canadian Internment Operations after Panet, Colonel H. Stethem, was also an antisemite. He supposedly “smiled only when he was promising to twist Jews’ tails right,” or when he was advising commandants to use their rifles more and hit the Jews.<sup>192</sup> On inspection

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<sup>188</sup> “3000 to Work on Link East of Schreiber” *Fort William Daily Times-Journal*.

<sup>189</sup> “First Japanese Arrive in Schreiber From B.C.,” *Sault Ste. Marie Star*.

<sup>190</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Vance, ‘The Trouble with Allies: Canada and the Negotiation of Prisoner of War Exchanges,’ in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996): 69-85.

<sup>191</sup> Norman Hillmer, *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*. (Ottawa, Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War: Canadian Government Pub. Centre, 1988), 157.

<sup>192</sup> Koch, *Deemed Suspect*, 119.

tours of internment camps, military men found Jewish inmates “sloppy in appearance” and “totally lacking military bearing.”<sup>193</sup>

For the first few months, German-Jewish internees were treated like dangerous prisoners. By the spring of 1941, British authorities had released them, and were pressuring Canada to do the same. Canada refused to release them because of its antisemitic immigration policy and public sentiment. In *Little Third Reich on Lake Superior*, Zimmermann considers the implications of keeping blameless Jews detained in Camp R. For one thing, many officials in charge of the camp’s administration – the Veterans Guard and the camp commandant - were soldier-like to all army, navy and air force prisoners, even the dedicated Nazis, and ill-disposed to the Jews. Paula Draper’s PhD thesis *Accidental Immigrants: Canada and the Interned Refugees* shares this opinion, stating that “the soldiers’ attitude towards the Jews was accordingly a most unfriendly one, whilst they treated the Nazis with a certain amount of respect as customarily accorded by one soldier to another. Some of the Canadians quite openly curried favour with the Nazis.”<sup>194</sup> When the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* announced “Canada Eases Treatment of Interned Jewish Refugees,” the *London Jewish Chronicle* reported: “Canada Camp Allegations, Preferential Treatment for Nazis.” “The Nazis are less strictly guarded,” said one report. “Their food and their clothes are better; they are treated with chivalry and have lax censorship of their letters and many other privileges!...The Canadian authorities refrain from treating German prisoners of war badly because they fear reprisals. Nazis are welcome...but refugees are a burden.”<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Hillmer, *On Guard for Thee*, 198.

<sup>194</sup> Paula J. Draper, *The Accidental Immigrants: Canada and the Interned Refugees*. (PhD. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1983), 60.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, 334.

German POWs were usually given preferential treatment by officers and staff because, in their opinion, guarding enemy soldiers was straightforward. Since the POWs routinely followed orders and instructions in the German army, they obeyed Canadian orders quickly. This made them ideal prisoners in a military sense. On the other hand, Jewish refugees did not know how to respond to military discipline or structure. They had never been soldiers so they were confused by many of the orders given to them, and guards considered them to be “sensitive and temperamental human beings” who used up too much of their patience. For instance, Commandant Campbell at Monteith ordered Jewish refugees to clean out the guards’ bathroom and allowed drunk guards to shoot the Jews’ huts and tents at night.<sup>196</sup>

Unlike German-Jews and Japanese-Canadians, there was a clear rationale for the detention of German POWs. The Axis soldiers had actively participated in hostilities overseas, and they were the only wartime internee group detained on Canadian soil who had done so. The Axis soldiers had actively participated in hostilities, and since they had fallen into enemy hands in the field of battle, the Germans were Canadians’ most logical enemy. And yet, they were more welcomed in Ontario society than Japanese-Canadians and German-Jews, who were not enemy combatants, but were civilians who had not been involved in the war in any way. Some were even Canadian citizens. The POWs’ white skin and membership in the military brotherhood took precedence over their enemy status. German soldiers were seen as peers and objects of curiosity instead of fundamentally threatening beings, and this was a luxury not afforded to the other wartime internee groups.

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<sup>196</sup> Zimmermann, *Little Third Reich*, 199.

**Chapter 3**  
**“Strange Lumberjacks Employed in the Bush”:**  
**Prisoner of War Labour and Perceptions of Productivity in Wartime Ontario**

For some five thousand German POWs who worked in the Canadian bush during the Second World War, mosquitos and blackflies were the only real enemies. While Japanese-Canadian labourers faced harsh opposition from the communities they worked in, and Jewish internees were excluded from the employment program altogether, German soldiers became respected members of the communities in which they laboured. When they descended on lakes, peat bogs, and farmer’s fields in 1943, the prisoners were not considered intruders, but a central cog in the government’s effort to alleviate Canada’s labour shortage. By 1946, German POWs were so esteemed that farmers sought their permanent employment. This did not happen with any other interned groups.

As historians like Stefania Cepuch have demonstrated, aggregate POW labour helped alleviate Canada’s manpower shortage between 1939 and 1945. According to the provincial census of 1941, there were 178,204 occupied farms in Ontario, covering 22,387,981 acres of land.<sup>197</sup> When a significant portion of Ontario men left farms to work in war industries or join the military, more labour was essential, particularly where wheat and sugar beets were concerned. Agriculturalists faced a loss of livelihood if they did not find farmhands before planting and harvesting season, and many people felt that German POWs, some of whom had spent years idle

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<sup>197</sup> Stefania H. Cepuch, “The Public and the POWs: Reaction to the Release of German Prisoners of War for Agricultural Labour” in *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, volume IX, edited by Donald H. Akenson. (Gananoque, ON: Langdale Press, 1994), writes that 178,204 farms covered 22,000 acres of land. Consultation with the provincial census proves it is 22,387,981; “Table 1. Provincial Census: Population: Farm holdings, tenure, areas, condition of occupied farm land, live stock and farm values, 1871-1941; expenses and value of farm products, 1900-1940, Ontario” in *Census of Canada*, 1941. Pg 852.  
[http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2017/statcan/CS98-1941-8-2.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/statcan/CS98-1941-8-2.pdf)

behind barbed wire, should work for their keep.<sup>198</sup> Farmers wrote to King asking for the loan of a POW to help with farm work. Some stated that “they will not bother with sugar beets if they have to have German POWs to work them,” but more Canadians said, “fill up the camps with the prisoners of war. We can keep them busy all season.”<sup>199</sup> Even before the government got involved, Canadian civilians were already suggesting the employment of German POWs in Ontario’s industry. After visiting relatives in Port Arthur in 1940, L. G. Neville reported that he had

heard how those Nazis sit on their fat hams, devouring good food and doing nothing to earn their keep...it occurred to me that it would be far better to turn those sullen, ugly Germans loose, on the end of a chain of course, and make them work on the roads. The motto should be, ‘no work; no food’ They would have more respect for Canadians if you did.<sup>200</sup>

In a 1941 letter addressed to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, James Payne from Meaford, Ontario, requested prisoner labour on his farm. He asked for “a German prisoner who can speak English...around 30 years of age, with a round face, not too strong a chin, black or brown hair, not red hair, nor black brown eyes...must have a couple years’ experience with agriculture.” Payne’s request is clear: he wants a European prisoner, and only a European one, to work on his farm. The Payne letter acts as a clear point of comparison for how the Canadian public viewed the so-called enemy. While the *St. Catharines Standard* reported on residents threatening to drive Japanese-Canadian prisoners off the town’s pier into Lake Ontario, and Beamsville, Ontario, residents resorted to Ku Klux Klan tactics of burning crosses on the lawns of farms employing Japanese-Canadians, other Canadians like James Payne were asking to employ the

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<sup>198</sup> Cepuch, *Our Guests Are Busy*, 64.

<sup>199</sup> LAC RG 25, vol 2764, file 621-R-40-1, Earnest L. Maag to S. Morley Scott, 10 June 1943.

<sup>200</sup> Notably, just as in Chapter 2, the term “hams” is used to describe German POWs’ thighs; Henderson, *German Prisoners of War and their Artefacts*, 14.



enemy.<sup>201</sup> Canadians were just as willing to accept their European enemies as they were to turn away from their fellow citizens. As the *Sault Ste Marie Daily Star* asked pointedly, “why send German prisoners to an internment camp to be supported by Canadian tax payers? Why not let them earn their keep by building badly needed roads in New Ontario?”<sup>202</sup> In March 1943, A. Boyer of Vanleek Hill, Ontario, wrote to the Commission of Internment Operations in Ottawa to ask:

At one of the Counties’ Council Sessions last year one of your officers was present at one of the sittings and explained to the members that internees could be had for farm work. Now that there is a campaign to secure additional fuel wood for next season, would there be any internees suitable for such work? We have in our district individuals who have large wood lots and if they could secure additional help a large amount of fuel wood would be cut for next winter. Would you let me know just how far you could go in the matter, and if it would be possible to open a camp in the district?<sup>203</sup>

On 16 April 1943, G. T. Byshe of Rideau Fruit Farm in Ottawa wrote to the Department of National Defence to inquire whether there were any prisoners of war available or likely to become available for work on a civilian farm.<sup>204</sup>

On 10 May 1943, the Canadian government passed Order-in-Council P.C. 2326 which approved the use of POWs for labour.<sup>205</sup> It was not until July 1943 that arrangements were made for the employment of prisoners of war on labour projects located outside of POW camps, and the Department of National Defence turned POWs over to the Department of Labour and the Department of Labour Projects. The first POWs came from St. Helen’s Island Internment Camp

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<sup>201</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 279

<sup>202</sup> “Put German Prisoners to Work” *Oshawa Daily Times*, 14 August 1940.

<sup>203</sup> LAC, RG24, Reel-C- Letter from A. Boyer to The Commission of Internment Operations, in Ottawa, Canada on 23 March 1943.

<sup>204</sup> LAC, RG24, Reel C- file H.Q.S. 7236-42, Letter from G. T. Blyshe to Department of National Defence on 16 April 1943.

<sup>205</sup> Cepuch, “The Public and the POWs,” 327.

in Montreal, and they were taken to work at a logging camp operated by the Standard Chemical Co. at South Bay, Ontario.<sup>206</sup> From that time on, “large numbers of prisoners of war were distributed for employment at various logging and lumbering camps, brick works, fertilizer plants, lumber mills and military camps, and for road maintenance, fuel wood cutting, work on individual farms, irrigation and sugar beet harvesting.”<sup>207</sup> In total, fifty-eight companies employed POWs, including Abitibi Power and Paper Co., Great Lakes Paper Co., Kalamazoo Vegetable Parchment Co., Marathon Paper Mills, Newago Timber Co., Nipigon Lake Timber Co., Norther Paper Mills, Ontario Paper Co. Ltd., Ontario-Minnesota Pulp and Paper Co., Pigeon Timber Co., Provincial Paper Co., and Pulpwood Supply Co. Ltd.<sup>208</sup> With additional agricultural work and the employment of POWs at two military camps, 199 sites relied on prisoner of war labour in Ontario.<sup>209</sup> About 5,000 German prisoners were employed in Canadian logging camps, cutting pulp and fuel wood, and nearly 4,000 of these prisoners worked in Ontario forests. For example, it was reported in 1943 that prisoner labour had cut 90,000 out of 98,000 cords of pulpwood harvested by the Pigeon Timber and Lumber Co.<sup>210</sup> Others worked in road-building and construction. These labour projects caused German POWs to become features of many local landscapes.

Officers were not required to work due to their rank, but many volunteered because working in the community held obvious advantages. For one thing, a September 1944 memorandum listed that POWs “who are employed and who have worked satisfactorily will be

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<sup>206</sup> *Canadian Philatelist – Journal of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada*, Volume 34, Jan-Feb 1983, Number 1, 18.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Pauline Dean, *Sagas of Superior the Island Sea...and its Canadian Shores*. (Manitouwadge, ON: Great Spirit Writers, February 1992), 129.

the first to be repatriated at the conclusion of hostilities. Those not employed and those who have not given satisfactory service will be repatriated last.”<sup>211</sup> The illusion of independence in wide-open spaces, and the opportunity to escape the repetitive nature of prisoner life were also appealing. As former POW Fritz Wentzel – who did not work - reasoned, “the Geneva Convention certainly says that during their detention officer prisoners may not be made to work on behalf of their captors, but despite that I think that given the chance, most of us would willingly have worked in order to escape from the monotony of camp life.”<sup>212</sup> When the Canadian government asked POWs in Alberta whether they would volunteer to work in Ontario, the prospect of working in the bush appealed to 330 of them. They were dropped off in Ramsey, Sheahan, and Cartier, all located in the Sudbury District, to cut cords of pulpwood.<sup>213</sup> POWs also received monetary benefits from working, which could be spent in the camp canteen, and labour gave them a chance to interact with residents, such as Canadian farmers and lumbermen.<sup>214</sup>

In many cases, POW labourers exceeded the expectations of the public. Farmers praised the German character in the press: “because we found we needed POW labour to harvest wheat, build roads and cut logs, we decided that the Germans who were already here were not a bad lot.”<sup>215</sup> When it came to the Germans’ work ethic, farmers were laudatory, “little or no difficulty

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<sup>211</sup> “Memorandum of Instructions and Information to be Read by the Camp Commandant to all Prisoners of War Work Parties Detailed to Proceed on Department of Labour Work Projects,” Ottawa, 1 September 1944, [http://forestry.ssmpl.ca/library/FDP-Scan\\_Files/WM%2040-46%20Box%201%20of%205/9634-001.jpg?Hist\\_ForestryDB2Dir=Asc&Hist\\_ForestryDB\\_tbl\\_CompDir=Asc&Hist\\_ForestryDBDir=Asc&Hist\\_ForestryDB1Dir=Asc&Hist\\_ForestryDBPage=2&Grid1Dir=Asc&Doc\\_Ref\\_ID=9634&s\\_keyword=P.O.W](http://forestry.ssmpl.ca/library/FDP-Scan_Files/WM%2040-46%20Box%201%20of%205/9634-001.jpg?Hist_ForestryDB2Dir=Asc&Hist_ForestryDB_tbl_CompDir=Asc&Hist_ForestryDBDir=Asc&Hist_ForestryDB1Dir=Asc&Hist_ForestryDBPage=2&Grid1Dir=Asc&Doc_Ref_ID=9634&s_keyword=P.O.W)

<sup>212</sup> Wentzel, *Single or Return?*, 123.

<sup>213</sup> Andy Thomson. “A Pulp Camp for German POWs” <https://andythomsonbooks.ca/a-pow-pulp-camp/> Excerpt from *Pogmasing, The Story of a Northern Lake*. (Erin, Ontario, Why Knot Books, 2011).

<sup>214</sup> Thompson, “Men in German Uniform,” 91.

<sup>215</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 36.

has been encountered with the employment of POWs, and the work performed has been of great assistance in the agricultural production of [Port Arthur.]”<sup>216</sup> One farmer even remarked,

The only real help, believe it or not, was the German prisoners, the P.O.W.s. They gave me two and they were farm lads. Some fellows around got city fellows, fellows who had been bookkeepers and like that in Germany before the war, but I got two real farmers and we could make the fur fly. They were good and they knew how to work. I’ll never forget those two. Good fellows.<sup>217</sup>

Chatham-area farmers were also impressed by the German POWs and made additional requests for more in the fall of 1944.<sup>218</sup> Residents asked for 2,000 POWs to help with a barley harvest, another 2,000 for a tomato harvest, and others to work on local chicken farms.<sup>219</sup> One negative report judged the prisoners’ work to be unsatisfactory, but the report was retracted after Chatham camp authorities discovered the farmer’s sixty cows had been eating the beets while the prisoners tried to harvest the plants.<sup>220</sup> The steers were blamed, and the Germans were let off the hook.

The urban population was much less enthusiastic about the policy shift away from maximum security and towards prisoner labour.<sup>221</sup> The prospect of German soldiers working in the private sector made many people uncomfortable, specifically because the sabotage of Ontario industries appeared to be a natural consequence of it.<sup>222</sup> These concerns were not totally irrational, because exaggerated media reports at the time made it seem like German prisoners, when let loose, would wreak havoc on the war industry and murder everyone who got in their way.

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<sup>216</sup> Cepuch *Our Guests Are Busy*, 70.

<sup>217</sup> Broadfoot, *Six War Years*, 167.

<sup>218</sup> LAC RG24, Reel 5379, file 7236-34-1-20, request for POW to work chicken farm, 10 January 1944. LAC RG27, Lacelle File, vol. 156 file 611.1.21.1 request for 2000 for barley harvest; request for 2000 POW for tomato harvest. Cepuch, *Our guests were busy*, 69.

<sup>219</sup> Cepuch, *Our Guests Are Busy*, 69.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Moore, “Illicit Encounters,” 1.

<sup>222</sup> Cepuch, *Our Guests Are Busy*, 11.

Mimico is a useful example of urban resistance to POW labour. Located on the outskirts of Toronto, Camp 22 was one of the few POW operations located in a suburb of a large city. In the spring of 1943, the president of Donnell and Mudge Limited, Charles Annable, asked the Department of National Defence and the Department of Labour for POW employees.<sup>223</sup> He needed extra hands because his leather tannery was one of the largest sheepskin tanners in the Dominion, and over 4,000 jobs in the area were listed as unfilled. When word spread that POWs were going to be hired, residents vehemently petitioned the New Toronto Council. Concerned about the safety of their residential neighbourhoods, they did not want the Nazi enemy from overseas near their family or homes.<sup>224</sup>

It is interesting to note that *The Advertiser*, Mimico's local newspaper, did not mention Camp 22 until the dispute about the use of prisoner labour in the vicinity arose. No notice had been given about the camp's opening, but the proposed plan to house the POW laborers in a dormitory adjacent to the camp was followed diligently.<sup>225</sup> *The Advertiser* also took special care to relay the New Toronto Council's opposition to the plan. Challengers argued that housing German soldiers in town would "create a hazard to war industries now operating in the town as well as danger to citizens from escapes," place "vital war industries near the leather plant and also a large railway centre...in danger," and "would not be in the interests of the war effort, labor or our citizens."<sup>226</sup> On 12 August 1943, Annable held a private meeting with New Toronto councillors so that he could respond to their concerns. The two parties entered into negotiations

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<sup>223</sup> *Paper and Records*, Volume XX 1992, *Thunder Bay Historical Museum*, 108.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> "N.T. Council Not Reconciled to Plan for Hiring Internees: Leather Plant Representatives Fail to Sway Town Fathers at Early Morning Session." *The Advertiser*, 12 August 1943.

<sup>226</sup> "An Historical Perspective on Toronto's New Superjail." *Clio's Current*. 5 September 2013. <http://cliocurrent.com/blog/2013/9/4/an-historical-perspective-on-torontos-new-superjail>

about whether they should hire internees instead of POWs, but the *Advertiser* wrote, “the matter at the moment stands at deadlock.”<sup>227</sup> Annable continued to petition both Town Council and the Department of Labour for the rest of August.<sup>228</sup> Despite protests from residents, the Department of National Defence gave Donnell and Mudge Ltd. permission to hire thirty German POWs at the tannery on 26 August 1943. By the end of 1943, fifty POWs worked there, and Mimico continued to file complaints.<sup>229</sup>

As more POWs began to work at Ontario pulp mills, lumber centres, and on farms, the urban public gradually started to view the Germans as useful workers and contributors to the Canadian war effort. The strongest evidence for this claim is the reaction many Canadians had to the forced repatriation of POW labourers after the war. The terms of the Geneva Convention mandated that all POWs had to return to their home country, and returning Canadian servicemen needed their jobs back, but many wanted the POWs to stay in Canada and keep working for them. Farmers, logging companies, factory owners, and others begged the government to let certain POWs remain in the country, and some employers offered to legally sponsor a handful of POWs if it meant they could stay. Letters to the editor, newspaper editorials, and radio commentaries all reflected the view that not all prisoners should be sent back to Germany.<sup>230</sup>

Those who had “proven themselves” in farms and factories after 1943 were considered desirable Canadian citizens. On 30 November 1946, for example, Toronto’s *Saturday Night*

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<sup>227</sup> “N.T. Council Not Reconciled to Plan for Hiring Internees: Leather Plant Representatives Fail to Sway Town Fathers at Early Morning Session,” *The Advertiser*.

<sup>228</sup> “30 Civilian Internees Arrive Monday to Work in Local Plant – will be under guard at Donnell and Mudge Factory – critical labor shortage reason for use here” *The Advertiser*, 26 August 1943.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Hans-George Neumann, *A Man Worth Knowing: The Memoirs of Hans-Georg Neumann*, (Toronto, Natural Heritage, 1996), 60.

magazine reported a growing demand that German POWs in Canada, who had performed manual labour for the last few years and were now being shipped back to Germany, be given the opportunity to remain in Canada as free men if they decided to do so:

If he was an active Nazi, that is another matter; but by the time a POW has been in Canada three years it is easier to tell whether he is an active Nazi or not than if he had been in Germany for the same period and the authorities had just run into him... The country is in urgent need of labour of exactly this kind, men who will engage in hard physical tasks which the great majority of Canadians decline to do and have always declined to do whenever they could get immigrants to do them instead. The Germans, or at least a fair number of the best of them, are actually here in Canada and can be turned into immigrants by the signing of an order-in-council, without a single ship bottom being needed to transport them.<sup>231</sup>

If many communities came to view the German enemy as productive members of society over the course of the Second World War, there was no similar transformation in attitudes to other internees. Anti-Japanese sentiment was palpable in many of the same places that welcomed the Germans, and this notion of a “natural difference” was structured along racial lines. In no region is this clearer than Kent County, the most vocal region in Canada in its opposition to the use of Japanese-Canadian internees as labourers. While Chatham residents condemned Hitler’s actions overseas, they were even more vehement in their disapproval of Japanese men assisting with their sugar-beet harvest and advocated for a program against the “Japs.”<sup>232</sup> Hiring Japanese-Canadians to perform menial work allowed Canada to “deal with the Japanese problem” and ensure the completion of roadbuilding projects at the same time. By the end of May 1942, some 2,000 Japanese-Canadian men had been sent to road camps in the interior provinces, and nine of

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<sup>231</sup> *Saturday Night*, 30 November 1946.

<sup>232</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 279.

these camps were located in Western Ontario in 1942: Glencoe, Centralia, Petrolia, Wallaceburg, Essex, Valetta, Chatham, Dover Centre, and Dresden.<sup>233</sup>

Just as the New Toronto Council disputed the use of POW labour in Mimico, Chatham's City Council also deliberated about the employment of Japanese labourers. Unlike Toronto, however, where the opposition named threats to the war effort such as escape as the primary reason for their reluctance, Chatham cited the inherently deceitful nature of the Japanese. There was no room for pests and traitors in Kent County. For example, on 29 June 1942, one alderman moved "that the infiltration to Kent County by citizens of Japanese origin be eliminated and that steps be taken to have all Japanese removed from the district."<sup>234</sup> As locals began to accept German soldiers as agricultural labourers and tannery workers, Chatham city council stood strong in its disapproval of Nisei labour. Minister of Agriculture P.M. Dewan responded specifically to these prejudices of the Chatham city councillors by pressuring the council to use the official line: "Being a national problem, it seems only reasonable that Ontario should not shirk its share of responsibility, and certainly the difficult task of locating Japanese evacuees from the west coast should not be aggravated either by provincial obstacles or local prejudices."<sup>235</sup>

German POWs enjoyed a greater degree of freedom than Japanese-Canadians. The parole system afforded to German soldiers focused on the issue of surveillance to a far lesser degree, whereas Nisei labourers received very few movement privileges.<sup>236</sup> This absence of freedom was

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<sup>233</sup> Chatham-Kent had five camps under the Ontario Farm Service Force; "Will Close Jap Camps: Workers May Choose Lumber or Road Work" *Globe and Mail*, 29 October 1942.

<sup>234</sup> Chatham City Council also did not want "our boys to come back and find their jobs filled by Japanese who were not here when they went to fight." Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 47.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>236</sup> Ketchell, "Carceral Ambivalence: Japanese Canadian 'Internment' and the Sugar Beet Programme during World War II." *Surveillance & Society* 7(1): 21-35. <http://www.surveillance->



instituted on 21 September 1942, to shield the agricultural workers from open acts of violence.<sup>237</sup> Ten employees could enter Chatham at one time, accompanied by an RCMP officer, and while this rule was never violated, it was also never relaxed because, as Ken Adachi notes, government officials felt that “hostility was more marked in Chatham than anywhere else.”<sup>238</sup> At a Chatham Police Commission meeting, the mayor claimed “that 99 and 9/10 of thinking people of Chatham do not want the Japanese here, and that they should all be interned, and that public opinion has not changed since the Japanese first arrived here.”<sup>239</sup>

Indeed, it was not just city officials who objected to the use of Japanese laborers in Kent County. The federal government’s decision also angered private citizens. After it was publicized that Japanese sugar-beet workers were going to be boarded in a house on King Street, eighty-one residents of Chatham’s west end protested against housing them in residential areas. They feared their property values would decline, and they accused the labourers of posing a “mental hazard” to children and the elderly.<sup>240</sup> Other reasons given for this animosity were “inassimilability, unfair competition, lower standards of living, and threats to national security.”<sup>241</sup> In the end, local opposition led the federal government’s housing plan to be altered three times, and a site farther away was selected to house the beet workers.

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and-society.org | ISSN: 1477-7487, 32.

<sup>237</sup> The *Globe and Mail*’s article “Sending Japs to Beet Fields,” informed readers that police protection would be given to Japanese-Canadians to prevent molestation and other acts of aggression; “Sending Japs to Beet Fields” *Globe and Mail*, 7 April, 1942.

<sup>238</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 48.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> “Jap Workers Not Wanted: Kent Residents Protest Federal Labor Plan” *Globe and Mail*, 11 May 1942.

<sup>241</sup> Stephanie Bangarth, “The Long, Wet Summer of 1942: The Ontario Farm Service Force, Small-town Ontario and the Nisei” in *Canadian Ethnic Studies*; 2005; 37; 1, ProQuest, 46.

Chatham was not the only southwestern Ontario city with an ugly history of racism during the Second World War. Wartime newspapers make it clear that Essex County was also unfriendly to the Japanese-Canadian workers. Although they were Canadian born, Essex locals firmly believed that they belonged to an enemy race.<sup>242</sup> So many Essex residents complained about the internees running wild without supervision and demanded more movement restrictions that beet workers were ultimately banned from entering the town.<sup>243</sup> Gary Wells, author of a recent work on Japanese-Canadians who came to Essex County, states that while farmers who worked closely with the men formed relationships with them, those who were farther removed from the field – “especially a bunch of city people” – had a negative attitude towards the internees and labourers for the duration of the war.<sup>244</sup> In Dresden, members of the Canadian Legion appealed to Premier Mitchell Hepburn about the admittance of Japanese-Canadians into Kent County. Their reasons were unoriginal:

They can never become real Canadians. That once here they would stay. Our standards of living would be lowered due to their competition in the labour market and elsewhere. It is our aim to keep Canada British and oppose the admission of any person or persons that cannot become British subjects in mind and deed.<sup>245</sup>

Similarly, when Japanese labourers arrived in Ontario’s Niagara fruit and vegetable growing area, Beamsville citizens were furious and resorted to KKK tactics. In one instance, residents set a cross on fire in C.H. Prudhomme’s garden to protest his use of Japanese labour.<sup>246</sup> In an 11 August 1943 meeting about banning Japanese labourers from the city, one member of the

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<sup>242</sup> Sharon Hill, “Dark History of Japanese-Canadian detainees brought to Light.” *Windsor Star*, 15 March 2019. <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/dark-history-of-japanese-canadian-detainees-brought-to-light>

<sup>243</sup> Hill, “Dark History of Japanese-Canadian detainees brought to Light,” *Windsor Star*.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> Bangarth, “The Long, Wet Summer of 1942,” 46.

<sup>246</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 279.

Toronto Board of Control stated, “I wouldn’t trust a Jap outside an internment camp.” Another responded, “I wouldn’t trust one inside an internment camp.”<sup>247</sup>

The overt presence of anti-Asian prejudice in Kent County is not surprising, considering the geographic locale’s history of anti-Black sentiment. African-Canadians living in Dresden – the home of Josiah Henson, former American slave and inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* - and the surrounding area were regularly refused service in restaurants, barber shops and stores during the 1940s. When Hugh Burnett, a descendent of escaped American slaves, returned to Dresden after fighting for Canada in the Second World War, he was not served in restaurants because the colour of his skin trumped his veteran status. In 1954, under Burnett’s direction, the National Unity Association (NUA) staged two restaurant sit ins that brought a legal end to discrimination in Ontario on the basis of race, but residents remained defiant. Morley McKay, owner of Kay’s Café, stated, “I have to break the law to protect my business. My customers have told me if we serve Negroes, they won’t come in.”<sup>248</sup> By 1956, locals boycotted Burnett’s carpentry business, and he became so ostracized that he was forced to leave Dresden. By the time the first black patrons were served in Dresden restaurants, Burnett was living in London, Ontario.<sup>249</sup> This helps to explain why Kent County manifested the feelings and actions that they did towards Japanese-Canadians.

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<sup>247</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 279.

<sup>248</sup> “Amid Sweeping Change, a Pivotal Anniversary Goes Unremarked,” *The Toronto Star*, 6 July 2008.

[https://www.thestar.com/news/2008/07/06/amid\\_sweeping\\_change\\_a\\_pivotal\\_anniversary\\_goes\\_unremarked.html#](https://www.thestar.com/news/2008/07/06/amid_sweeping_change_a_pivotal_anniversary_goes_unremarked.html#)

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

As the treatment of Japanese-Canadians in wartime Ontario illustrates, government-sanctioned policies approved and encouraged racism in local communities. Most people in Ontario had never seen anybody who was Japanese, and as Adachi explains:

The act of evacuation in itself stigmatized the entire Japanese population and gave the spurious colour of official approval to racism.” No public information program was put in place that might have made the Japanese-Canadians more acceptable to the host communities, and people were left to ask themselves, if the Japanese were so dangerous that they had to be removed from the West Coast, why would they not be equally dangerous in Ontario?<sup>250</sup>

If the Japanese were harmless, Ontarians asked, why did they have to be guarded by RCMP officers? On the other hand, German POWs had an easy-to-understand reason for being in Canada. They had been captured on the field of battle, and residents understood they had no choice but to remain in Canada until the war was over. It made sense that group of strong, German soldiers should become a labour force, and any fears of escape or sabotage were based on their status as the enemy, not on their race. The fact that Japanese-Canadians had been evacuated from British Columbia left Ontarians questioning their identity as trustworthy citizens from the outset, and this was magnified by xenophobia.

This was also the case with Jewish refugees. The Mackenzie King administration was rife with antisemitic prejudice, and the discriminatory attitudes and policies of internment officials affected the experience of Jewish refugee labour. Officials immediately dismissed Jewish refugees as a potentially untapped pool of labour. Stethem stated,

It is becoming increasingly evident that the group of orthodox Jews do not propose to adapt themselves to the circumstances in which they are placed, and there is a distinct lack of cooperation on their part...strictly speaking, it would be quite in order to state that the internees will carry out compulsory labour six days a week, and the

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<sup>250</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 280.

only day which shall be observed as a day of rest will be the Lord's Day, as recognized by Canadian legislation.<sup>251</sup>

Any time a Jewish internee displayed interest in becoming a farm laborer, Frederick Charles Blair, Director of the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources, took it as a scheme to escape internment and enter Canada through an illegal back door. "There is no use closing eyes to the impossibility of making farm labourers out of the Jewish enemy alien," he stated, "it cannot be done."<sup>252</sup>

In years past, we have tried in every conceivable way to tie Jewish young men to farms who declared before coming in that they intended to engage in that occupation. If my life depended upon it, I could not turn up one single case where we succeeded. If the Jew is orthodox, he cannot possibly eat Gentile food and live in a Gentile home and if he is unorthodox, he will use the same excuse to abandon farm work almost immediately after obtaining his liberty.<sup>253</sup>

Occasionally, a Gentile farmer would ask for a Jewish refugee to help him on his farm.

For example, on 23 July 1942, Albert Zilversmith wrote:

Dear Sir, I live at the above farm which is very large and cannot get any help at all. There is just myself and wife and it is impossible for us to carry on under such strain of work. I would appreciate very much if you could assist me. I have just heard that many Jewish lads are at non-Jewish farms maybe you can send me some one...you will do me a great favour by assisting me. Here is a very good home for any one experience not necessary as long as one is willing.<sup>254</sup>

But Blair's standard reply was that the internee was "a German born person of Jewish race and faith [and] his background is as far from farming as the Poles are apart."<sup>255</sup>

As Jack Lipinsky writes in *Immigration Opportunity or Organizational Oxymoron?*,

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<sup>251</sup> The Canadian legislation recognized Sunday as the Lord's Day, but the Jewish Sabbath was Saturday. This suggests a preference for Christianity; Koch, *Deemed Suspect*, 121.

<sup>252</sup> Draper, *The Accidental Immigrants*, 409.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, 408.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid,410.

“that Blair was an antisemite is beyond doubt; indeed his zealous stereotyping of Jews as non-agriculturalists even when there was incontrovertible evidence to the contrary would cost Canada valuable immigrants who could well have added to farm technology and breeding techniques.”<sup>256</sup>

But his attitude was not original. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, private Jewish organizations socially engineered many Jewish farming settlements throughout Canada as a way to disperse urban Jews and help them assimilate into Canadian culture, with the larger institutional goal of promoting the state’s continued acceptance of European Jews. Although Jews seemed to have an aversion to farm labour, partly due to the Jewish preference for urban/industrial life and a cultural/religious emphasis on brains over brawn, it is worth noting that these sponsored farming projects were virtually guaranteed to fail for a host of reasons that had little to do with Jewish incompatibility with farming.<sup>257</sup>

Even though some 150 Jewish refugees had “impeccable agrarian pedigrees and...possessed considerable capital which would have made them among the few Jews admissible under the immigration regulation of the time...Blair was convinced that most, if not all, of them were lying.”<sup>258</sup> The Department of Immigration proceeded to claim it was unable to admit the refugees for farm work because Jews were not farmers.<sup>259</sup> And yet, while inexperienced Jews could not be taught to work the land, inexperienced Germans could. A

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<sup>256</sup> Jack Lipinsky, In *Immigration Opportunity or Organizational Oxymoron? The Canadian Jewish Farm School and the Department of Immigration, 1925-46*, Jack Lipinsky writes, 55

<sup>257</sup> Reasons for the failure of these sponsored farming projects include unrealistic expectations, infertile soil, bad planning, poor coordination of aid by Jewish philanthropic institutions and their failure to strive for the concentration of Jewish colonization in a single geographic area; see Yossi Katz & John C. Lehr (1993) *Jewish Pioneer Agricultural Settlements in Western Canada*, *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 14:1, 49-67, DOI: [10.1080/08873639309478380](https://doi.org/10.1080/08873639309478380); Jack Lipinsky, *Immigration Opportunity or Organizational Oxymoron? The Canadian Jewish Farm School and the Department of Immigration, 1925-46*;

<sup>258</sup> Lipinsky, 63.

<sup>259</sup> Draper, *The Accidental Immigrants*, 408.

government memorandum titled, “General Procedure for Training German Prisoners to be Pulp-cutters and Bushmen” outlined effective methods of training POWs to work:

Remember that these men are starting from scratch – few, if any, with the least idea of how to use an axe safely and properly. If you can, by much repeated example, show them the right way, they will always do it the right way. If you let them cultivate a bad way, that wrong way will become a habit. Being completely inexperienced, they have no set way of using their tools, lifting, carrying, limbing, chopping and sawing. If you can only start them right, they will develop as a habit the right way....At the start, be very alert to catch wrong and unsafe methods, and in a very short time, the right methods will become a habit.<sup>260</sup>

Blair yielded after the YMCA pressured him to find work placements for Jewish refugees, but as soon as placements were found, Toronto’s United Jewish Relief Agency (UJRA) began to receive letters from upset workers. Many Jews wanted to switch camps, and news gradually filtered back to other refugees that they should avoid farm work altogether: “Some of the fellows who were released as farmers write back that they are worse off than in camp...after all these years of isolation we are hungry for city life and human company other than our fellow internees” one diarist wrote.<sup>261</sup> One explanation for this is that, because they were not prisoners of war, the Jewish refugees fell outside of the protection of the Geneva Conventions. They were usually treated worse than the Germans as a result. For example, the Convention ensured the Canadian government took time to make sure the living conditions of farms housing German POWs were adequate. When German POW T. Brenkert left the farm of his employer, Mr. C. Kearn, and walked five miles to give himself up to the police instead of go back to the farm, an

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<sup>260</sup> “General Procedure for Training German Prisoners to be Pulp-cutters and Bushmen” sent to all employers of prisoners of war by the Department of Labour on 8 September 1944. [http://forestry.ssmpl.ca/library/FDP-Scan\\_Files/WM%2040-46%20Box%201%20of%205/9667-001.jpg?Hist\\_ForestryDB2Dir=Asc&Hist\\_ForestryDB\\_tbl\\_CompDir=Asc&Hist\\_ForestryDBDir=Asc&Hist\\_ForestryDB1Dir=Asc&Hist\\_ForestryDBPage=4&Grid1Dir=Asc&Doc\\_Ref\\_ID=9667&s\\_keyword=P.O.W](http://forestry.ssmpl.ca/library/FDP-Scan_Files/WM%2040-46%20Box%201%20of%205/9667-001.jpg?Hist_ForestryDB2Dir=Asc&Hist_ForestryDB_tbl_CompDir=Asc&Hist_ForestryDBDir=Asc&Hist_ForestryDB1Dir=Asc&Hist_ForestryDBPage=4&Grid1Dir=Asc&Doc_Ref_ID=9667&s_keyword=P.O.W)

<sup>261</sup> Draper, *The Accidental Immigrants*, 413.

investigation into the farms' living conditions took place and no more POWs were sent there. Such investigations did not occur with Jewish refugees, and they were often exploited.<sup>262</sup> Jewish labourers were exploited in several ways unique to their prisoner group. First, they received a fraction of the wages that other farm workers like German prisoners of war received for the same work. Second, they were sometimes hired by German non-Jews with relatives in Nazi Germany, or other antisemites, which made their living situation uncomfortable. Third, they were regularly subjected to abuse by employers who were openly antisemitic.<sup>263</sup>

Virulent antisemitism was not exclusive to Germany in the twentieth century. It was commonplace across the world. During the 1930s, Ontario was home to approximately 45,000 Jews, most of whom lived in very Protestant Toronto.<sup>264</sup> Jews were banned from holding high-status positions in institutions like banks or schools, and they were banned from a variety of neighborhoods. In the summer of 1933, for instance, Nazi sympathizers took to the streets of Toronto's Beaches District to deter Jewish families from visiting the beach. This attempt at intimidation reflected the festering resentment Toronto's Protestant population felt towards their Jewish counterparts, and led to the Christie Pits riot a few weeks later. In one of the largest and most violent demonstrations of antisemitism in Canada, young Jewish men retaliated after Nazi devotees unfolded a large swastika flag at a baseball game in Christie Pits. For the next six hours, thousands of male Jewish and Gentile teenagers battled each other. As Monda Halpern explains in "A spectacular incident...had somehow eluded my attention': The Impact of Cyril Levitt and William Shaffir's book, *The Riot at Christie Pits* (1987)," one gentile's mother

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<sup>262</sup> LAC RG 24, War Diaries, vol. 15387, 12 March 1946.

<sup>263</sup> Draper, *The Accidental Immigrants*, 415.

<sup>264</sup> Monda Halpern, "A spectacular incident...had somehow eluded my attention': The Impact of Cyril Levitt and William Shaffir's book, *The Riot at Christie Pits* (1987)," *Social History*, vol. L.n. 102, November 2017. 424.



blamed her son's antisemitic actions on his unemployment, which left him too much free time. An older man agreed: "if most of these young fellows had jobs to take up their energies, they would not be going around scrapping."<sup>265</sup> One swastika gang member who participated in the riot confirmed this connection, stating, 'with so many of us out of work, there is nothing else we can do but come here to amuse ourselves.'<sup>266</sup> Figures of authority also chose to overlook the antisemitic behaviour that started the riot, and a police officer insisted that the unfurling of the flag was a boyish prank. Christie Pits is perhaps the best example of Toronto's climate of pervasive antisemitism in the 1930s.<sup>267</sup>

Antisemitic attacks were also recorded in Brantford, Ontario, after Germany's *Kristallnacht*. On 9 November 1938, the front window of a Jewish-owned home was smashed, and the *Globe and Mail* reported that the words "Jew, you can't stay here" were smeared on the wall.<sup>268</sup> The fact alone that only 120 Jewish men were released to farms before the problems became too overwhelming reflects the anti-Jewish public mood.

Whether it was recognized at the time, productivity encompasses more than physical labour. Unlike German combatant and Japanese-Canadian recollections of internment, prisoner employment is seldom discussed in the memoirs of former Jewish internees. This has something to do with Blair's antisemitic attitude and the marginal number of Jewish farmers he permitted to leave the barbed wire, but it also reflects the fact that Jewish internees valued mental labour over physical. Rather than tilling fields, Jewish refugees organized camp schools where they taught

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<sup>265</sup> Halpern, "'A spectacular incident...had somehow eluded my attention': The Impact of Cyril Levitt and William Shaffir's book, *The Riot at Christie Pits* (1987)," 425.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> "Brief History of Anti-Semitism in Canada," *Montreal Holocaust Museum*.

[https://museeholocauste.ca/app/uploads/2018/10/brief\\_history\\_antisemitism\\_canada.pdf](https://museeholocauste.ca/app/uploads/2018/10/brief_history_antisemitism_canada.pdf)

languages, wrote and distributed newspapers, and produced art. They are the wartime internee group with the largest paper trail.

Many Jewish men went on to do great things after they were released from Canadian camps: Max Perutz won the 1962 Nobel Prize in chemistry, Walter Kohn won the 1998 Nobel Prize in chemistry, Fred Kaufman became the justice of the Quebec Court of Appeal, Walter Homburger became managing director of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and Gregory Baum is a theologian at St. Michael's College and McGill.<sup>269</sup> Obviously, Jewish refugees had the intellectual capacity to be productive members of Canadian society and to contribute to the war effort in other ways, if not through physical labour, but their potential was not utilized. Esteemed for their brawn and labour, German POWs were widely regarded as the most productive contributors to the Canadian war effort. As James Payne's 1941 letter suggests, the fact that the German soldiers were European made them instantly appealing to Ontarians, and Canadians were just as willing to accept European enemies onto their farms as they were to turn away from their fellow citizens.

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<sup>269</sup> "How Jewish 'Enemy Aliens' overcame a traumatic Stint in Canadian Prison Camps during the Second World War." *National Post*, 7 February 2014.  
<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/how-jewish-enemy-aliens-overcame-a-traumatic-stint-in-canadian-prison-camps-during-the-second-world-war>

#### **Chapter 4** **Losing the Fight Against Fraternization: The German Body, Soldierly Masculinity, and Ontario Women**

Between the agency that German POWs were sometimes able to exercise in captivity and their predominantly Anglo-European exteriors, internment was less emasculating for them than it was for German-Jews and Japanese-Canadians. Since the German prisoners fit into Ontario's wartime ideals of whiteness and masculinity, their identities as masculine soldiers were emphasized by press and public alike. White Canadians saw little reason not to admire or consort with the POWs, and the same locals who had once been alarmed by the prospect of German POWs living near them romanticized them as the epitome of white, military masculinity.<sup>270</sup> Headlines did not report on buff, disciplined Japanese-Canadians or German-Jews, and these groups were kept more or less isolated from local communities during their time in Canada. More Ontario women flocked to German POWs than they did any other interned group as a result.

In Nazi Germany, soldierly masculinity reigned at the top of male identities. The German military was a masculinity machine that demanded hard manliness, aggressiveness, strength, and regimented discipline from all German men, and as a result, the male body became standardized to an unprecedented extent before the outbreak of the Second World War. After Germany's sweep across Europe in 1939-40, occupied countries such as France confronted something new: the Nazi state's extreme cult of the male body. According to French historian Patrick Buisson, this led to an erotic shock in May and June 1940. Some French civilians were instantly struck by the attractive, manly soldiers who appeared in their hometowns, and they entered into liaisons

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<sup>270</sup> Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, 38.

with their German occupiers over the course of the war. Essentially, admiration for the German body undermined many negative perceptions of the Germans as creatures of terror, and French women were harshly punished for this *collaboration horizontale* after the war. While Canadians encountered Germans as defeated soldiers instead of occupiers, they too experienced an erotic shock.<sup>271</sup> “Upon meeting the prisoners, the residents realized that the Germans they met there seemed not to match the image presented to them by the war propaganda press, neither in appearance nor in their behaviour.”<sup>272</sup>

Many of the German POWs held captive in Ontario during the Second World War were experienced soldiers. They had undergone exhaustive training back home in Germany, and when these soldiers arrived in Ontario’s communities, they provided Canadians with examples of the disciplined German body. When members of the Afrika Korps, a force remembered for its devotion to Hitler and the Nazi Party, were captured and sent to Ontario in 1943, they were widely regarded as elite masculine soldiers. It did not hurt that they had been captured in Tunisia during the North African Campaign, and men and women alike were taken aback by the Afrika Korps’ bronzed bodies and their uniforms that had been bleached by the desert sun. In Lethbridge, Afrika Korps prisoners retained these uniforms for the duration of the war. Former POW Ed Billet writes:

Rommel’s Afrika Corps stood out from the rest of the German army. They wore tropical uniforms that gradually changed from a light brown to an off-white under the mercilessly hot sun of the North African desert. The lighter their colour, the longer one had survived the desert sun. Rommel’s men, officers and other ranks alike, were

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<sup>271</sup> Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, 17-18.

<sup>272</sup> Franz-Karl Stanzel, (2018) "German Prisoners of War in Canada, 1940–1946: An Autobiography-Based Essay," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 27 : Iss. 2, Article 19, 9-10. Available at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol27/iss2/19>

in one respect like today's teens, who prefer worn out and bleached jeans to new ones. And this trend did not change after many of them became prisoners of war.<sup>273</sup>

Canadian men who watched the force march in uniform reported being impressed by their discipline, and those who saw them out of uniform gawked at their fair hair, height, blue eyes, suntanned skin, and their thighs, which were reportedly as large as hams.<sup>274</sup> The Afrika Korps were quickly depoliticized in Ontario society because of their appealing physical appearances.

Canadian newspapers concentrated on positive descriptions of the German body.

Whether scrawny or brawny, the press agreed that most Germans were in excellent physical condition. For example, newspapers stressed the Afrika Korps' strength, vitality, and veteran status. They were recognized as the essence of manhood: tall, blonde, husky, physically fit, and well-ordered. Similarly, POWs were described in RCMP Publication Prisoner-Most-Wanted as having powerful builds, large good teeth, straight noses, and deep, manly voices. References to their clean-shaven faces, well-parted hair, prominent Adams' apples, and, above all, their smart, well-educated look appear consistently in the documentation.<sup>275</sup> It is particularly telling that one gentleman in Chapter 2 chose to liken the prisoners' physical appearances to Charles Atlas. Atlas, a bodybuilder who was named the 'World's Most Perfectly Developed Man' in 1922, is known for being a symbol of virile strength and the absolute masculine ideal.<sup>276</sup> In the same sentence, he describes the Veterans Guard members watching the prisoners as "ginky."<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Billet was captured in North Africa and sent to a northern Ontario internment camp; Madsen, *German Prisoners of War in Canada During the Second World War*, 45.

<sup>274</sup> Broadfoot, *Six War Years*, 61.

<sup>275</sup> RCMP Prisoners-Of-War-Most-Wanted

<sup>276</sup> "The Pecs That Launched a Thousand Gyms" *Globe and Mail*, 11 January 2000.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/the-pecs-that-launched-a-thousand-gyms/article25453158/>

<sup>277</sup> Broadfoot, *Six War Years*, 61.

Americans took a similar position after German POWs arrived on the scene in the United States, and the prisoners there were described as “mostly magnificent specimens who gloried in exhibiting their rippling muscles down to the waist.”<sup>278</sup> Even more than Canadians, if only because of the climate, Americans were exposed to the image of the shirtless German soldier. In 1943, the *New York Times* published a photo of shirtless Germans on a West Virginia farm. In 1944, *Washington Daily News* published a photo of ten suntanned, bare-chested German POWs. Seven out of ten of them were only wearing shorts. That same year, *LIFE* magazine printed three photos of bare-chested Germans marching, carrying a bunny, and lying on their beds. Again, all three prisoners were only wearing shorts.<sup>279</sup> It is clear that “the icon of the muscular shirtless tanned young man working outdoors in a healthy environment was deeply ingrained as a positive image in American culture” as much as in Canadian.<sup>280</sup>

This hyper-masculine image was not disrupted even when German POWs began to openly cross-dress. Cross dressing was, and is, common in all-male milieus such as the military. In Canadian prison camps, it happened for various reasons. Since there were no women around to play female acting roles in POW camp theatre groups, men would don makeup, wigs, pearls, and long extravagant dresses provided for them by the YMCA, and they adopted feminine mannerisms on stage. It is also likely that some cross-dressing POWs were invested in purposefully subverting gender and sexuality expectations and used the theatre as a socially acceptable way to personally, overtly, or covertly express themselves.

Matthias Reiss, author of *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, argues that dressing in drag:

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<sup>278</sup> Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, 30.

<sup>279</sup> In the second photograph, it is worth noting that the contrast of a vulnerable, powerless bunny with large men who made their living in the military – a physical, “manly” field – likely made the POWs appear softer and more human; Reiss, “The Importance of Being Men,” 39.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

represented episodes of controlled licentiousness that complemented the rituals of military discipline and drill and emphasized the prisoners' masculinity by sexualizing and objectifying the female other in the form of impersonators. There was no playing with and subversion of gender roles in these performances. The theater groups and camp shows both affirmed and strengthened the heterosexual norm, not questioned it.<sup>281</sup>

Male to female cross-dressing was generally practiced in POW and internment camps, but it did not cause POWs to see each other as effeminate, nor were they considered feminine outside the barbed wire. Rather, it strengthened perceptions of the prisoners as masculine.<sup>282</sup>

Lastly, German POWs saw themselves as masculine. In *Single or Return?*, a POW recalled Colonel Stethem addressing a number of the German prisoners as "you boys."<sup>283</sup> He responded, "we are not your boys" and explained to him that as German officers, the POWs were given names and ranks.<sup>284</sup> While the Jewish refugees labelled themselves "The Camp Boys" in an effort to form a familial bond, German POWs were adamant they should be seen as men captured in the field of duty.

German POWs were also romanticized by Canadian women, which only added to their legend. While local communities were not entirely emptied of men during the Second World War, there were far fewer eligible bachelors around for young, single women to marry. Since two out of five Canadian men had been rejected on physical grounds from going off to fight, the majority of men left on the home front did not exude military masculinity. Therefore, "in a community depleted of young men, these handsome young Germans were quite an attraction for the girls."<sup>285</sup> When German POWs showed up on the scene, their appearances, together with

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<sup>281</sup> Reiss, "The Importance of Being Men," 37.

<sup>282</sup> Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, 115.

<sup>283</sup> Wentzel, *Single or Return?*, 94.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> *Through the Years: Manitoulin District History and Genealogy*, 129.

their exoticism, led some to see them as physically superior to Canadian men. On 9 December 1942, the *Ottawa Journal* went so far as to publish an article titled, “Canadian Soldiers Rated Physically Below Hun Prisoners.”<sup>286</sup> The article claimed that if the physical appearance of 100 Canadian soldiers and 100 German soldiers were compared, the Canadians would rate most unfavorably.<sup>287</sup> Friendly and intimate relationships, then, were a natural response to the circumstances in which Ontario women, and German prisoners, found themselves.

After the Second World War broke out and the first German POWs came to the Dominion in 1939, the Canadian government tried to keep Axis prisoners and civilians apart through defense regulations. The military was especially eager to prevent sexual relationships between the Germans and Canadian women, and passed a series of anti-fraternization regulations in order to do so. Authorities warned German POWs that personal relationships with resident women were forbidden: intercourse itself, sexual advances, or even a simple conversation could all result in punitive action.<sup>288</sup> Despite these efforts, the Canadian military held no jurisdiction over private citizens, and every manner of surreptitious relationships existed.<sup>289</sup>

Sexual contact between the resident female population and enemy soldiers was especially controversial, and there were many opportunities for sexual relationships involving German POWs in camp towns. These ranged from short affairs to long-term relationships. No POW camp was identical, and different circumstances at each camp made physical, sexual contact between local women and POWs possible. In Manitoba’s Riding Mountain National Park POW camp, for

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<sup>286</sup> “Canadian Soldiers Rated Physically Below Hun Prisoners” *Ottawa Journal*, 9 December 1942.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> *Through the Years: Manitoulin District History and Genealogy: Espanola Prisoner of War Camp*, 130.

<sup>289</sup> *Internment Camp: Espanola, Ontario*. (Espanola Directorate of History, 30 November 1966), 2.



example, there was no fenced compound or guard towers. The boundaries of the camp were designated by trees, and there was nothing but miles of wilderness beyond them. It was easy for prisoners to slip away at night if they desired companionship, and they used hand-made compasses fashioned out of Eaton's catalogue watches to visit communities near the park. They would be back for roll call the next morning.<sup>290</sup> On 20 March 1944, Hon. J.L. Ralston referenced an incident when Veterans Guard members drank beer with two Germans, then drove off with four girls in Quebec.<sup>291</sup> Southern Ontario camps were enclosed, but POWs had the privilege of less supervision while on parole. In the bush, POWs could walk around alone for twenty minutes. While many took the opportunity to masturbate, in his memoir *A Man Worth Knowing*, former Gravenhurst POW Hans-Georg Neumann notes that he once came across a house with military wives who were naked and tanning.<sup>292</sup> Fritz Wentzel also reported seeing stylish, attractive women on his parole walks through Bowmanville, but unlike Neumann, he found the sight disturbing. Since women were in the POWs' minds constantly, Wentzel felt that it was easier to suppress such thoughts if he saw no women at all. He ultimately gave up his parole walks because Canadian women "brought useless and unnecessary disturbance[s] into our monastic existence."<sup>293</sup>

The government's 1943 decision to use Germans as labourers also made illicit romances possible, since security was far from meticulous at work sites. In Monteith, Canadian military authorities and the RCMP commandeered a condom from POW A. Schiffman when he returned

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<sup>290</sup> Bill Waiser, "Manitoba History: Riding Mountain POWs: The Teacher's Tale." *Manitoba Historical Society*, 2009. [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/61/ridingmountainpows.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/61/ridingmountainpows.shtml)

<sup>291</sup> "Probe Now Underway on Prisoner Guarding," *Globe and Mail*, 21 March 1944.

<sup>292</sup> Neumann, *A Man Worth Knowing*, 116-122.

<sup>293</sup> Wentzel, *Single or Return?*, 137.

from work.<sup>294</sup> In Chatham, several Canadian girls followed “the prisoners from work project to work project and have been seen talking to and in some cases, have left the fields with the Prisoners and remained away for an hour or so.”<sup>295</sup> The guards believed the women were interested in a sexual relationship.<sup>296</sup>

Infatuation with the enemy took place in western Canada as well. In Lethbridge, Canadian authorities found an empty cigarette case which contained “writing in German which when translated is a request to civilians to bring their daughters to Prisoners of War for immoral purposes.”<sup>297</sup> In Medicine Hat, a concerned mother sent a letter to the Department of National Defence detailing that “several girls in or around Medicine Hat have become pregnant through associating with German Prisoners of War.”<sup>298</sup> Chris Madsen notes that in Germany, “sexual relations between Allied prisoners and German women constituted a serious offence, and were judicially punished.”<sup>299</sup> This was definitely not the case in Canada.

Despite these cases, most contact was not sexual. Horst Steinert, a former POW who now lives in Canada, worked in the Tuberculosis (TB) Hospital in Espanola during his captivity.<sup>300</sup> All internment sites were outfitted with a camp hospital, but a specialized TB hospital was established in Espanola on 1 March 1941 to separate prisoners with TB from the general population. Prisoners could apply to work there, and each day at specific times, the patients were brought out on the porch for fresh air. When local girls walked by, the patients would pick their favourites, which was “fair enough until two prisoners got into a heated argument as to which of

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<sup>294</sup> LAC RG24 Reel C-8250, Intelligence Report No. 155, 16 October 1945.

<sup>295</sup> LAC RG24, Reel C-5415, RCMP Report, Wallaceberg Detachment, 30 October 1944.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> LAC, RG24, Reel C-5415, Extracts from POW Mail, September 1942.

<sup>298</sup> LAC, RG24, Reel C-5396, Letter, Camp 132 to DND, Army, 7 October 1944.

<sup>299</sup> Madsen, *German Prisoners of War in Canada During the Second World War*, 109.

<sup>300</sup> *Through the Years: Manitoulin District History and Genealogy*, 129.

their girls was prettiest. According to Horst, he and the German commanding officer were required to calm the situation.”<sup>301</sup> Likewise, since some young women lived in the houses bordering Camp 21, the commanding officer would yell “Eyes Right!” or “Eyes Left!” if they were outside when the Germans marched to or from work.<sup>302</sup> In Lethbridge, Margaret Sullivan “made a practice of being on the street corner when the prisoners of war passed and followed them for about two blocks, having snatches of conversation whenever the opportunity arose.”<sup>303</sup>

The feeling was mutual. Ontario schoolgirls were especially intrigued by German POWs, and they communicated with the prisoners through the barbed wire at several camps. In Barry Broadfoot’s oral history *Six War Years*, an unidentified Canadian woman remembered girls from her summer camp on Lake Muskoka rowing across the lake after dark to the enclosure of Camp 20. The campers would stop about twenty feet from the shore, talking to and flirting with the German prisoners: “A lot of them were young boys, maybe 20 or so, and we were all about 16 or 17, and things went along okay because some of them talked English and quite a few girls spoke German.” Nothing ever came of the practice, she says, because “it was only in the summer, in the camp season about six weeks, and [they] were still prisoners, although they were just like boys from the towns, but more polite.”<sup>304</sup> And so it went camp after camp. In Cobalt, Ontario, prisoners “succeeded in making friends with some of the women in the neighbourhood.”<sup>305</sup> An RCMP report from 24 October 1943 recorded Isabel MacLeod Jobb defending herself after being found with a German sailor on the train to Fort William, now Thunder Bay. She stated, “I tried

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<sup>301</sup> *Through the Years: Manitoulin District History and Genealogy*, 130.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> LAC, RG24 Reel C-5415, RCMP Report, Lethbridge Detachment, 7 February 1944.

<sup>304</sup> Broadfoot, *Six War Years*, 127.

<sup>305</sup> LAC, RG24, Reel C-8250, Letter, R.D. Cumming to Leslie Blackwell, 17 July 1945.

sitting in several positions to get comfortable, and finally he put his arm around me and we sat that way.” She claimed she was “thrilled be able to talk to a German prisoner” this way.<sup>306</sup>

In a report to the Department of National Defence dated 15 September 1941, pages from the confiscated diary of Camp 20 prisoner H. Steig were reviewed. The excerpts revealed that he knew a number of young, unwed girls staying at Calydor Cottage, a fashionable guest home beside Camp 20 where the Canadian officers lived, and that Steig had waved to one of the young women. A relationship developed, and she returned to the same spot every day with binoculars. Steig hid messages in potatoes and threw them into the Calydor Cottage garden, and Canadian day workers delivered the woman’s responses to Steig until a prisoner transfer put an end to their romance.<sup>307</sup>

When young Canadian women were caught communicating with the enemy, the cases were publicized.<sup>308</sup> On 19 March 1941, the bizarre story of Espanola teenagers exchanging love letters with German war prisoners lodged in the city’s pulp and paper mill unfolded in a Sudbury courtroom. Five smitten fifteen-year-old girls were charged under the Defence of Canada Regulations for coming into contact with German POWs housed at Camp 21. One girl claimed to have kissed a POW at a hockey game, and a government document references another girl kissing a prisoner when she was upstairs in an Espanola shop. “Where was the guard when she was supposed to be with this prisoner at this time? The girl states that he was downstairs watching some officers.”<sup>309</sup> A black notebook was found containing photographs of the girls,

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<sup>306</sup> LAC, RCMP Report ‘D’ Division 27 December 1943.

<sup>307</sup> Porter, *Gilded Cage*, 47

<sup>308</sup> Alan Patrick Malpass, *British Attitudes Towards German Prisoners of War and Their Treatment: 1939-48*. (Doctoral, Sheffield Hallam University, 2016), 157.

<sup>309</sup> LAC, RG24, reel C-5369, file HQS 7236-0-2 Conditions at Internment Camps, Espanola and Gravenhurst, Ont: Sudbury Detachment Investigation, pg. 5. 22 March 1942.

notes on scraps of paper, several German phrases which were not part of the girls' school lessons, suggesting they were learning German to converse with a POW, a photo of a prisoner taken inside the Camp 20 compound, and newspaper clippings regarding the escape of POWs from Bowmanville on 23 February 1942.

Under the headline "These Five Silly Girls Are not the Real Problem," the *Ottawa Journal* called the charges trivial and thoughtless, and stated that the girls no doubt looked upon the whole thing as a romantic adventure.<sup>310</sup> The *Globe and Mail* called the incident "a silly love-affair thing" and reduced it to a simple case of natural attraction. "The silly and stupid young girls", the *Globe* wrote, "likely did it in the spirit of romance and may be forgiven for knowing no better."<sup>311</sup> The judge gave them suspended sentences for two years or for the duration of the D.O.C.R., and a promise was extracted from each girl that she would never again contravene any part of the D.O.C.R.<sup>312</sup> While these teens were punished for their romances with German POWs, they were not punished *because* of the romance – they were punished because of the security protocols they breached by giving the Germans information. As the *Globe and Mail* stated, "the real culprits were those responsible for a system for internment and for the laxness of its enforcement which made such a thing possible."<sup>313</sup>

Even when the *Peterborough Examiner* reported that it did not think sufficient severity was shown in the treatment of the five Espanola girls, its prose had the secondary effect of affirming how acceptable it seemed for Ontario women to find German lovers at the time. Labelling the teenagers traitors and Fifth-Columnists, the paper denounced everyone's excuse

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<sup>310</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, 21 March 1942

<sup>311</sup> "Sent Prisoners Camera, Love Notes, Girls Admit," 1942.

<sup>312</sup> LAC, RG24, Reel C-5365, File 9139-4-33 Conditions at Internment Camps, Espanola and Gravenhurst, Ont: Sudbury Detachment Investigation, pg. 2. 22 March 1942.

<sup>313</sup> *Globe and Mail*, 1942.

that the girls were young and foolish, and replied that a girl of fifteen is “quite old enough to know that aiding Nazi prisoners to send clandestine letters is a traitorous action. As things stand at the moment it is unlikely that these girls will behave so stupidly again, but it is also clear that their case has not been treated with sufficient severity to deter other silly girls from similar acts.”<sup>314</sup> This article confirms that society did not see the Espanola case as a serious crime.

In some similar situations, a group of Espanola girls were caught concealing messages into snowballs and throwing them over the Camp 20 fence to prisoners.<sup>315</sup> Another girl left love letters under a rock, for a Camp 20 POW to collect and respond to on his way to fetch fresh water. When a guard finally noticed, the two were brought in for questioning. Authorities cast it off as an innocent affair, but the letter writing still had to stop.<sup>316</sup>

Officially, internment officials could not tolerate these relationships and did their best to keep German POWs and local women away from each other. For example, authorities ended a budding romance between Doris Cameron and Heinz Von Haefen in September 1945 by reassigning him to a different work project. The RCMP left Doris with a warning. One month later, Canadian authorities ended a relationship between Ethel Hoffmann, the daughter of two German-Americans, and a German POW in the eastern irrigation district. The POW was transferred to a farm in Rainier, and Hoffmann was warned not to fraternize with any other German POWs.<sup>317</sup>

It was not only Canadian youth who found themselves changed by wartime circumstances. The war strained matrimony on all fronts, and it was not uncommon for women

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<sup>314</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, 1942.

<sup>315</sup> George Morrison, *Espanola on the Spanish*, Oliver Graphics, 1989, 129.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>317</sup> LAC, RG24, Reel C-5415, Letter, H.N. Streight to Commissioner RCMP, 13 December 1943.

and men to become estranged from their spouses during wartime. Some prisoners received applications for divorce while they were held captive in Canada, but “a polite letter of rejection was often the only indication that wives, fiancés or girlfriends had drifted away or found another man.”<sup>318</sup> Many older Canadian women had been without companionship for as long as the prisoners, and they sought human connection to combat the loneliness. Letters were the only way to communicate with their men overseas, and this long-distance dialogue was limited. One woman whose husband had been away fighting for three months complained, “How can you make love though the mail?”<sup>319</sup> Prolonged gaps in correspondence, which were common due to “a lost ship or a plane, a misdirected letter, poor weather or mechanical difficulties,” occasionally resulted in misunderstandings. These misunderstandings were amplified because:

Fidelity [did not] always withstand the strain of loneliness and long separations... returning servicemen or men who were sent home wounded often told stories about Canadians screwing around overseas. Potential confirmation was provided by the more than 8,000 Canadians who had taken a British war bride by the end of 1942.”<sup>320</sup>

Of her husband stationed in England, one Winnipeg woman stated, “I knew what he was doing over there...I’d have been a fool if I didn’t, so I had a right to live my own life too.”<sup>321</sup> The inundation of Ontario towns and cities with German prisoners created opportunities for these women, and relationships between the two parties demonstrate how immersed German POWs were in Ontario society.

American and British citizens also entered into relationships with German POWs. In Britain, eighteen-year-old June Tull and twenty-five-year-old German POW Heinz Fellbrich

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<sup>318</sup> POW Karl Konoplee received an application for divorce; Madsen, *German Prisoners of War in Canada During the Second World War*, 111.

<sup>319</sup> Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War*. (British Columbia, UBC Press, 2007), 124.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

were anathematized after they announced their courtship. They were spat at, punched and shunned by their families, and women yelled, “aren’t our boys good enough for you?” at June.<sup>322</sup> Comparably, *Enemies Within* by Alexis Clark follows the relationship of African-American army nurse Elinor Powell and her white, German POW boyfriend, Friedrich Albert. There had been too much fraternization between white nurses and German POWs in Arizona’s Camp Florence, so the United States Army brought black nurses in as their replacements.<sup>323</sup> The pair met when Albert was assigned to work in the mess hall, and the nurses entered for their meal. When the war ended, the pair decided that the quickest way that Albert would be able to return to the U.S. would be to conceive a child, and he returned to the US on 26 June 1947 where he married Powell.<sup>324</sup> Their interracial marriage created a substantial amount of backlash and the family was forced to move to Germany.<sup>325</sup>

There were few such relationships where Japanese-Canadians and Jewish civilians were concerned. Hardly ever portrayed as manly, wartime propaganda painted the Japanese as a different species entirely, usually rats, and descriptions of Jews’ feminine emotionality and lack of aggression called their masculinity into question. Additionally, there was not the same degree of interaction that allowed people to see that their mental picture of the Japanese or Jews was inaccurate. Fraternization with Ontario’s women was very rare as a result.

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<sup>322</sup> Helen Weathers, “Sleeping with the Enemy: The British Women Who Fell for German POWs,” *Daily Mail*, 17 August 2007. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-476097/Sleeping-enemy-The-British-women-fell-German-PoWs.html>

<sup>323</sup> Alexis Clark, “The Army’s First Black Nurses were Relegated to Caring for Nazi Prisoners of War” *Smithsonian*, 15 May 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/armys-first-black-nurses-had-tend-to-german-prisoners-war-180969069/>

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.



Mary Jane Lennon's *On the Homefront* provides an unsettling example of Canada's racist, government sanctioned propaganda against the Japanese. Under the heading "HOW TO SPOT A JAP," the physical appearances of Chinese and Japanese men are compared. The Chinese man is the same height as the average American, while the 'Jap' is shorter "and looks like his legs are joined directly to his chest."<sup>326</sup> His skin is the colour of a lemon, and his eyes slant downwards towards his nose. He has buck teeth, and typically shuffles instead of walks, unless he is cunning enough to fake a normal stride.<sup>327</sup> There is also a wide space between the Japanese man's first and second toes.<sup>328</sup> In conclusion, the poster states, "Spotting a Jap depends upon three things: appearance, feet and pronunciation." If he "can't pronounce our 'L'...hisses on any 'S' sound, [has] almost no waist-line, stocky build, short, squat, fairly heavy beard, lemon yellow skin, slanted eyes, [or a] wide space between first and second toes," he is a "Jap."<sup>329</sup> In reality, it is unlikely that all Japanese-Canadians were shorter than Chinese and North American men, but their height was seen as a marker of physical and racial inferiority nonetheless. In many ways, assumption became reality.

Japanese-Canadians filled the same labour shortages in Ontario's agriculture and lumbering sectors as the Germans, but the thought of white women living and working in such close proximity to the "Japs" made many residents apprehensive. The Niagara region, for example, relied heavily on female labour, and "the protection of vulnerable female workers" was

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<sup>326</sup> M.J. Lennon, *On The Homefront* (1981); D. Read, ed, *The Great War and Canadian Society* (1978), 70.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*

the main justification for opposition to the placement of Japanese-Canadians in the region.<sup>330</sup> On 11 May 1945, the *St. Catharines Standard* recounted Charles Daley, Ontario's Minister of Labour, observing that he could not see any way Japanese Canadian men could work near Canadian women. On the rare occasions that white women did enter into relationships with Japanese-Canadian men, white men's masculinity was challenged and violence broke out. In Ingersoll, for example, some 200 young men started a riot and tried to break into a Nisei home because they had heard a handful of Japanese boys were going out with white girls and they were jealous.<sup>331</sup> Japanese-Canadian labourers were styled as dangerous sexual predators not because of their actions, but because they fell outside the racial boundaries of the communities in which they were placed.

Reis relates the social consequences of a relationship between a white woman and a German POW on the one hand, and Japanese-American women and German POWs on the other. Reiss notes that Adele Sophie Weiler, from Colorado, was involved with a German POW from January to April 1944. She was arrested but not charged. Media portrayed her as a pathetic figure and a woman in peril instead of a criminal or traitor: "instead of openly criticizing Weiler, the *San Jose Evening News* for example described her as a 'spinstress...42...short and plump' who desperately tried to keep her 37-year-old German lover...happy so that he wouldn't want to leave."<sup>332</sup> At the same time, five Japanese-American women had their photos taken with two German POWs near Camp Trinidad, Colorado, at the POWs' request. On 9 May 1944, three of

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<sup>330</sup> Carmela Patrias, "More Menial than Housemaids? Racialized and Gendered Labour in the Fruit and Vegetable Industry of Canada's Niagara Region, 1880-1945" *Journal of Canadian Labour Studies*, vol. 78 (2016).

<sup>331</sup> Roy, *Mutual Hostages*, 149.

<sup>332</sup> Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, 64.

the five women were indicted on charges of treason and conspiracy to commit treason.<sup>333</sup> “The fact that the two German soldiers testified against the women and thereby possibly condemned them to death penalty for treason also added to the evidence.” When the women’s counsel Kenneth W. Robinson argued that the women had acted foolishly because they loved the Germans, US District Attorney Morrissey replied, “these were married women. If this be American love, God help us – God help our democracy.” Unlike Weiler, the women were branded as “Traitors, traitors – little Benedict Arnolds in skirts.”<sup>334</sup> Weiler’s whiteness - unremarked upon by media because it was the default race - allowed her to be portrayed as an innocent young woman, while a simple photograph caused the Japanese-American women to be branded as immoral and even treasonous.

For Jewish civilian internees, camp life constituted even more of an all-male prison-like environment. Like Japanese-Canadians, they were considered less masculine than the POWs. Perhaps this is because there was no publicized, comparable Jewish image of the muscular, muddied and hard-working field labourer. Since they were barred from working, agriculture as a means of building the masculine body could not be applied to the group, and this reduced their visibility in wartime Ontario. Jewish internees were also thought to be effeminate because antisemitic inscriptions of the Jewish male body described them as passive and weak instead of violent and strong, “totally lacking military bearing.”<sup>335</sup>

Unlike German POWs, relationships between German-Jewish internees and Canadian women were asymmetric. Sex was more of a fantasy than a reality. Former Jewish internee Walter Igersheimer recounted the reactions of many Jewish internees watching women walk by

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<sup>333</sup> Reiss, *Controlling Sex in Captivity*, 66.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*, 67.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid*, 198.

his internment camp. He described a situation when the presence of a woman on the other side of the wire led his fellow internees to shout, throw kisses, show off, and dance around.<sup>336</sup> One internee began to pose, “taking a deep breath so as to make his chest look mightier, showing off his muscles and his powerful legs,” and another remarked, “look at that one over there. God, I would give all my cigarettes to have her. Look at those legs! Watch closely, she’s wearing a rather short skirt and, by God, you can just see the upper rim of her stockings.”<sup>337</sup> Other girls came and stopped, and internees ran to that side of the camp until the mass of people alerted the guards and the girls were told to move along – which they did, “languidly swinging their sexy hips.”<sup>338</sup> One Jewish internee recalled a tunnel being dug to sneak prostitutes into the camp, and another observed that the “Jewish men redirected their sexual urges by talking about the conquests they made just prior to internment.”<sup>339</sup>

Japanese-Canadian internees, Jewish refugees, and German POWs were all men whose lives had been disrupted by wartime and who were trying to make the best of their circumstances.<sup>340</sup> In wartime Ontario, though, looking like a man meant looking like a German POW. German bodies were considered reflections of male virtues already present in Canadian society, and feelings of shared wartime masculinity allowed the Germans to build bridges with their captors. Negatively coded language such as the terms small, short, vermin, and monkey-

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<sup>336</sup> Walter W. Igersheimer. *Blatant Injustice: The Story of a Jewish Refugee from Nazi Germany imprisoned in Britain and Canada during World War II*. (McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 2005), 66-67.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Draper, “The Camp Boys,” 184.

<sup>340</sup> Sendzikas, “Very Much a Prisoner”: Japanese- Canadians during the Second World War,” 8.

face marked Japanese-Canadians and Jewish refugees as inferior, and the feminization of these two groups was an effective way to exclude them from Ontario society.

**Chapter 5**  
**“Not Criminals, But Simply Soldiers Out of Luck”:**  
**German POWs and Canadian Authorities**

German combatants were *held* in Canadian POW camps for the duration of the Second World War. Importantly, they were not *incarcerated*, because the POW system was not designed to punish soldiers for being captured. The term “prisoner” of war in itself is deceptive, as it evokes images of penitentiaries, single-person cells, handcuffs, jumpsuits and shackles, but the Geneva Convention forbids the treatment of POWs as ordinary criminals, convicted under ordinary laws. The opinion that German POWs were not criminals, but ill-fated soldiers who had been captured doing their job, was shared by many Canadians during the Second World War. In *Single or Return?*, former POW Fritz Wentzel wrote that at first, Colonel Stethem did not “realize that there was all the difference in the world between prisoners who had violated the law and prisoners of war. We were even told that on his appointment to his post as Director of Internment Operations he had visited a large penitentiary in order to learn how to treat prisoners.”<sup>341</sup> But Stethem’s intentions were good, Wentzel believed, and he came around as the war progressed. For most, German POWs fit into wartime Canada’s well-defined racial boundaries in a way that non-European, non-white POW groups did not, so the prisoners were “not treated as criminals, but as soldiers out of luck.”<sup>342</sup>

Most Canadians agreed that the German POWs who arrived in their towns had been captured while they were doing their job.<sup>343</sup> People considered the prisoners to be men who had been swept up in the situation of their country, and they did not treat them like regular criminals

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<sup>341</sup> Wentzel, *Single or Return?*, 94

<sup>342</sup> Strong, “Prisoners Under the Law,” 455.

<sup>343</sup> “Location of POW Camp Kept Secret,” *Parry Sound North Star*.

as a result. , Canadian society treated some POW rule-breaking as an accepted and expected response to captivity, or as the hijinks of boisterous young men. It showed, at least before 1945, a remarkable leniency.

Home to four federal penitentiaries, the largest concentration in the country, and the former site of a German POW camp during both world wars, the Kingston region provides an illuminating case study for a chapter on criminality. Almost immediately after their arrival in 1940, Kingstonians recognized that the enemy soldiers were different from the men inside Kingston Penitentiary. *The Kingston Whig-Standard* even informed its readers that the prisoners of war who arrived at Camp 31 were “the same as all other men. They were trained soldiers, but any army is a cross-section of the people from whom it was recruited.”<sup>344</sup> Since nobody bought into the idea that the Germans were actually a super-race, the *Whig-Standard* reasoned that the POWs in Fort Henry were no more cunning than actual convicts. In fact, there was reason to believe the opposite. For instance, unlike habitual criminals, most prisoners of war did not have experience with prison life. They did not know the ins and outs of the system like repeat offenders did, and any escape from Camp 31, the *Whig-Standard* concluded, would be the consequence of insufficient guarding and escape protocol rather than the meeting of conniving criminal minds.

In *Our Guests Are Busy*, Cepuch agrees that “Canadian successes in thwarting POW attempts at freedom cannot be credited to constant vigilance.”<sup>345</sup> In some of the more inventive escape attempts, POWs injected dental wax into their chins, causing disfigurement to their faces

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<sup>344</sup> Cepuch, *Our Guests Are Busy*, 26.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

and making them unrecognizable to the guards,<sup>346</sup> tunneled underneath camp barracks, hid inside pianos, and squirmed their way through latrine draining systems. But most of the time, prisoners literally walked out of their camps.<sup>347</sup> In Kingston, two POWs offered to paint the wooden fence around Fort Henry and walked away when they were finished.<sup>348</sup> In Blenheim, three Germans working in a corn field hid behind tall corn to escape.<sup>349</sup> In Gravenhurst, a POW escaped the swimming compound by snorkeling below the surface until everybody left. Another Luftwaffe officer put on coveralls and climbed the camp fence in broad daylight, carrying a ladder and tools. Guards believed he was a maintenance mechanic until he saluted.<sup>350</sup>

Canadian guards recognized that it was only natural for German prisoners to try to escape, and both parties considered Article 54 of the Geneva Convention, which outlined a penalty of thirty days in solitary confinement, to be fair.<sup>351</sup> Escape attempts were constant as a result. In RCMP Publication “Prisoners-of-War Wanted,” for instance, Ontario POWs were reported to have escaped from Gravenhurst; the Labour Project at Long Lac; a farm at Cyrille; Hurdman’s Bridge; a farm at Murillo; “from the farm of Albert Hahn, Charlotteville Township

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<sup>346</sup> John Joseph Kelly, “Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence in German Prisoner of War Camps in Canada During World War II,” *Dalhousie Review*, 287.  
[https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/60063/dalrev\\_vol58\\_iss2\\_pp285\\_294.pdf?sequence=1](https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/60063/dalrev_vol58_iss2_pp285_294.pdf?sequence=1)

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid, 30; Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 100.

<sup>349</sup> They came from Camp 10, near Chatham. Ted Jones, *Both sides of the Wire: The Fredericton Internment Camp*. (Fredericton, NB: New Ireland Press, 1989), 614.

<sup>350</sup> In June 1942, escaped parachutist Egbert Brosig covered more than 500 miles of Canadian territory in four days in his German Luftwaffe uniform. When a North Bay family picked him up on the highway between North Bay and Iroquois Falls, he told them that he was a Greek flyer and spent several hours dining with them before he caught a train to Montreal. At the last second, he told the family he was a German flyer who had escaped that morning, and the family notified the police. The police told them if he was really a German POW he would not have admitted it and dismissed the tip.

<sup>351</sup> Geneva Convention, Article 54.



near Delhi, Ontario”; Stillsville; Fingal; Cooksville; Donnell and Mudge Ltd. in New Toronto; a work project at Flanders; Monteith; a farm at Westboro; Glencoe and St. Thomas. Otto Schultz and Erhard Schwartz even escaped from the POW camp in Chatham during a tornado on 17 June 1946, by cutting the barbed wire.<sup>352</sup>

On 13 August 1943, nineteen Germans escaped from Fort Henry through its sewage pipes. News of the break slowly spread throughout the city, and the general reaction was not one of alarm or fear, but one of surprise that nineteen men could escape from the closely guarded fort.<sup>353</sup> The Kingston *Whig-Standard's* article “People Seem Sure Germans Will be Caught” states, “when the break was announced, a small measure of surprise and alarm was apparent, but citizens did not lose their heads...the older men of the Veterans Guard did their jobs methodically, stopping traffic and undergoing an investigation, but the younger men of the army admitted that they were happy to have the routine of training broken by some excitement.”<sup>354</sup>

Just as people held an internment system full of glaring irregularities responsible for the contact between German POWs and schoolgirls in Espanola, Kingstonians realized that when nineteen prisoners of any institution are able to escape as a group, especially in a military town, some part of the system has failed. It may be the prison itself, or the staff, or the administrative framework, or those who manned it. But it was not the prisoners themselves. Speaking both for itself and on behalf of the people of Kingston and the district, the *Whig-Standard* stated that one has “every right to demand an intensive and exhaustive investigation of this prison-break and immediate and drastic elimination of the inefficiency which permitted it, regardless of whether

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<sup>352</sup> RCMP Publication Prisoners-of-War-Wanted.

<sup>353</sup> “District Residents Surprised but Calm as Fort Henry Escape News Spreads,” *Kingston Whig Standard*, 24 August 1943.

<sup>354</sup> “People Seem Sure Germans Will be Caught” *Kingston-Whig Standard*, 25 August 1943.

than ineptness is shown to be manual or mechanical, animate or inanimate.”<sup>355</sup> It asked Kingstonians to think about what would happen if a group of nineteen prisoners escaped from a federal penitentiary:

Very probably, the warden of the prison concerned would be called upon to resign within 24 hours, and various minor official heads would be subsequently and swiftly lopped off by the axe of an aroused and irate public opinion. It is only fair to point out, however, that the mechanics of imprisonment are more or less perfected in our penitentiaries; this condition does not appear to be prevalent in our prison camps.<sup>356</sup>

Similarly, the *Globe and Mail* article “A Nazi’s Pleasant Outing” demanded an explanation from high officials about how POW Egbert Brosig got away and why no warning was given to the public.<sup>357</sup> Brosig was able to outmaneuver Canadian military authorities and residents so easily because of general laxity and astonishing stupidity, the article argued, not because Brosig was inherently deceitful or immoral.<sup>358</sup>

The carelessness of the Veterans Guard was also blamed when twenty-eight POWs escaped from Angler in April 1941.<sup>359</sup> Angler’s location 400 kilometers northwest of Sault Ste. Marie and 300 east of Thunder Bay made it one of the remotest POW compounds in Canada, and prisoners had very little else to do besides try and escape. The prisoners spent several weeks organizing their escape for April 20 – Hitler’s birthday – and after they dug a tunnel and established a cover system, the escape was carried out. When Colonel Stethem arrived at the camp, he told a reporter how long the tunnel was, how much time the prisoners likely spent

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<sup>355</sup> “Germans at Large” *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 16 August 1943.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> “A Nazi’s Pleasant Outing” *Globe and Mail* 23 June 1942

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>359</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 122.

digging it, and that the tunnel should have been discovered by the guards before the escape.<sup>360</sup> In *Escape from Canada*, Melady references a letter that Stethem wrote to a friend on 28 April 1941,

I am afraid the breakout at the western camp was due entirely to negligence on the part of those responsible for the custody of the prisoners. They have been given all kinds of suggestions and advice and the regulations are very explicit, but, if regulations and instructions are ignored, then escapes will occur...many of the guards are, undoubtedly, beyond the age of usefulness...the trap doors were not discovered because dust had been swept over them, and the area under the floors had not been examined for the storage of earth. Prisoners were in the possession of knapsacks, and table knives had not been checked.<sup>361</sup>

Melady also includes a letter Stethem wrote to a senior VG member in Toronto:

Had those responsible for the custody of these prisoners paid any attention to the instructions issued from this office, the escapes would not have occurred...the security of the prisoners must necessarily depend on the alertness of the individual compound policeman or sentry and the constant surveillance of the camp staff. Unfortunately, the Department of National Defence has sole control of the appointments to these camp staffs, and, in some cases, many of the guards have outlived their usefulness as sentries.<sup>362</sup>

On 21 April 1941, *Toronto Telegram* publicly blamed the mass-break at Angler on the “careless, slovenly, inept and happy-go-lucky stupidity that has marked [the care of German POWs in Canada] from the start.”<sup>363</sup> The *Telegram* questioned the government’s declaration that POW escapes could not be prevented in their entirety, and claimed this “was true only where the custodians have been careless or venal, and where the authority above has lacked capacity to make the security of prisoners sure.”<sup>364</sup> According to the *Telegram*, “the Department of National Defence had proved to be so inefficient that “the force in charge might be entrusted with the guarding of Old Men’s Homes, but as

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<sup>360</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 132.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

guardians of husky and inventive Germans that have too frequently proved their incapacity.”<sup>365</sup> The *Kingston Whig* also demanded to know why so many POWs were escaping:

It must be obvious to all citizens that whatever inefficiency there is (and there certainly is inefficiency of some kind when many escapes occur) is to be found right within internment camp boundaries. It is very difficult indeed to draw any other conclusions than that some of the guards employed must be congenially incapable of performing the duties to which they have been assigned, or that various camp commandants are permitting slackness and negligence or have failed to work out suitable methods for keeping a close check on all that goes on in the camps under their command.<sup>366</sup>

On several occasions, German POWs were even treated like celebrities when they returned from an escape attempt. In Bala, Muskoka, cottagers revered recaptured POWs from Camp 20 as heroes and asked for their autographs.<sup>367</sup> In the “social event of the summer season,”

hundreds of holidayers crowded outside the barred open window of the cell, and chatted and laughed with the young German as they sought his autograph. The husky, tall, N.C.O autographed the Navy League arm bands of a dozen girl[s]...and the hundreds of holidayers acted friendly towards him...and as he was being escorted away by a detachment of armed guards, he raised his manacled arms in acknowledgement and smiled as the holidayers shouted to him, ‘Goodbye Joe!’<sup>368</sup>

In a letter to the editor, one Bala visitor asked, “shouldn’t Canadians be stopped from being too friendly?”<sup>369</sup> When word spread that Angler’s escapees had been recaptured, people asked for autographs and souvenirs. As the first group of prisoners waited to catch their train back east,

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<sup>365</sup> Melady, *Escape from Canada*, 133.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>367</sup> “Fools Rush In” *Globe and Mail* 6 September 1940.

<sup>368</sup> The *Whig* continued on to question the integrity of a police cell that is so close to the street that it permits chattering and laughing through the barred window and the autographing of arm bands of a dozen girls who were tagging for the Navy League; “Somewhere in Muskoka,” *Kingston Whig-Standard*, Aug 31 1943.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*.

they chatted with newspaper reporters. Peter Desbarats' account of the prisoners returning to Angler is as follows:

When we got back to camp at Angler, the commandant shook hands with us and said: 'Congratulations! Good Spirit! But you've broken the law, you know. I'm afraid you'll have to spend 28 days in the punishment cells. Later, when they let all the escapees go back to the main barracks, we were greeted by the prisoner's band and given a heroes' feast, complete with raisin wine.'<sup>370</sup>

When the second group gave themselves up, they were taken to the railway station at Heron Bay where the whole community appeared to get a glimpse of the "Nazis." The prisoners signed autographs, and gave away souvenirs of knives, tins of food, chocolate bars, and even bandages stolen from Angler Hospital.<sup>371</sup>

The historical record is full of similar examples of recaptured German POWs being treated with striking forbearance after escaping. When twenty-three-year-old prisoner Joseph Haubs was recaptured after escaping from Camp 20, he was held in a cell located underneath Gravenhurst's City Hall for a few days. He became a local curiosity. Local musicians became aware of him, since they performed above his cell every night, and one of them, a woman named Helen Gardiner, was allowed to meet the 'Hun.' When she introduced herself in German and told the prisoner she had been learning the language in university, he encouraged her to keep learning it because Germany would win the war.<sup>372</sup> In January 1946, a civilian employee of a Toronto brickyard was sent to the Ontario Reformatory for playing host to two German POWs working under guard at the labour project. He helped them escape, elude guards, and go on an entertainment spree, driving them to a local dance hall. In fairness to the accused, the Crown

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<sup>370</sup> Dean, *Sagas of Superior the Island Sea*, 126.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Scott McClellan, *Straw Hats and Grease Paint*, Vol. 1. (Muskoka Publications, Bracebridge, Ont. 1984).

Counsel said, he was just trying to be kind to the Germans. The district intelligence officer complained of the growing concern in labour camps with the public helping Germans to escape.<sup>373</sup>

On 1 March 1945, a German paratrooper was held criminally responsible for looting a mail bag and stealing articles for his personal use in the course of an escape. He hid in a mail bag on a Canadian National train until it was placed inside the mail car, and once the train began to move, he exited the bag and stole some cigarettes, ate some gum, and used some perfume from other parcels. The Magistrate let him off for using the perfume, because “he used it in order to assist his escape by concealing the extreme odour of his perspiration.”<sup>374</sup> The POW was sentenced to two months for pocketing the cigarettes and the gum, however, because they were for personal use and not to aid in his escape.<sup>375</sup>

In the Magistrate’s Court of the County of Renfrew, Ontario, a POW was charged with breaking and entering after fleeing from Petawawa’s prison camp.<sup>376</sup> The soldier broke into a family’s small cabin, raided the kitchen for food, and stole a rifle, a safety razor, a jack knife, a can opener, and several articles of clothing. He was charged with theft after he was captured, and he quickly admitted he had stolen the items in order to defend himself from wild animals during his escape. The presiding judge applauded the German’s resourcefulness rather than label his actions as stealing, and ruled that a German POW could not be punished for anything he may

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<sup>373</sup> “Host to Nazi Prisoners Sent to Reformatory” *Globe and Mail* 19 January 1946.

<sup>374</sup> “Rex V. Brosig in the Ontario Court of Appeal” *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Jul., 1945), pp. 592-598 Published by: Cambridge University Press Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2193541> Accessed: 28-10-2018 17:03 UTC

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> “Rex v. Guenther Krebs in the Magistrates Court of the County of Renfrew, Ontario” *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Jul., 1944), pp. 505-508 Published by: Cambridge University Press Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2192399> Accessed: 28-10-2018 17:25 UTC

reasonably do to escape, or having escaped, to survive. The escaped POW could not be expected to find shelter in a legal way, he said, and since all the articles he stole were essential to his survival in the bush for an extended period, he could not be punished under civil law for his offence.<sup>377</sup>

Germans who broke the rules were considered husky and inventive. More importantly, they were not considered criminals. Therefore, they could not be convicted for their wrongdoings. When the POWs escaped en masse from Fort Henry, the *Whig-Standard* admitted their cleverness. When members of the court of inquiry investigated the sensational escape, they admitted that the job had been clever and was a product of careful planning: “the 19 prisoners had to be selected according to size and weight, or they would not have been able to get through the sewer pipe.”<sup>378</sup>

Two men who remained on the home front even pretended to be escaped German POWs. In Niagara Falls, Walter Joseph Lamonthe, a taxi driver in St. Catharines, was sentenced in a magistrate’s court to a year and eight months in the Ontario Reformatory on a charge that he pretended to be an escaped German prisoner of war. He posed as Lieutenant Ernst Bruns of the Luftwaffe and claimed that he escaped from a POW train at Oshawa while en route from Fredericton, New Brunswick, to Monteith, Ontario. At his trial, “Lamonthe gave no reason for his action except that he had been drinking.”<sup>379</sup> Another *Globe and Mail* article, “Poses as

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<sup>377</sup> The judge stated, “it has been suggested to me that once the prisoner escaped from the confinement of the prisoners’ camp at Petawawa he was at liberty. In the case of the prisoner, I would think that to say this would be analogous to saying that a prisoner in a penitentiary would be at liberty when he had escaped from his cell, although still within the confines of the penitentiary”; *Rex v. Guenther Krebs in the Magistrate's Court of the County of Renfrew, Ontario.*

<sup>378</sup> “Three Fort Henry Inmates Still Remain at Large,” *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 30 August 1943.

<sup>379</sup> “Reformatory Term for Posing as Nazi” *Ottawa Journal*, 5 April 1945.

Fleeing Nazi Prisoner, Youth Can't Even Talk German" of April 1941 highlights a similar scenario. Every Canadian sixteen or older was required to carry a registration card and have it ready for inspection at all times. If they could not produce it when called upon, they were liable to penalty.<sup>380</sup> After a young Northern Ontario man lost his registration card, he feared the consequences and posed as one of the "Nazis" who escaped from a POW camp. He told of being flown out of Northern Ontario in a plane piloted by a Fifth Columnist, and hid in the bush until cold and hunger forced him to seek food and shelter in Port Hope. The story blew up when police brought an interpreter and it was found the supposed Nazi did not know a word of German.<sup>381</sup>

Men would not be posing as prisoners of war while drunk, or in order to get themselves out of trouble, if it meant harsher penalties would be brought upon them. It is clear that it was occasionally more advantageous to be a German POW than it was to be a Canadian man in wartime Ontario. No one pretended to be an escaped Jewish internee, or a Japanese-Canadian, because this did not reap the same rewards. Since Japanese-Canadians were members of a visible minority, it would have been difficult for someone not of Japanese ancestry to pretend to be them. Nonetheless, other Asian populations such as Chinese-Canadians wore buttons to distinguish themselves from Japanese-Canadians:

To avoid being mistaken for the Japanese, the Chinese people in Winnipeg and other parts of Manitoba are now wearing little victory buttons. Announcing the wearing of buttons by the Chinese, Charlie Foo, chairman of the Chinese Patriotic league, said: "So many people have mistaken us Chinese for Japanese that we decided it would be better if we wore some distinguishing mark." The word Chinese is plainly seen on the button.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> "Carry Your Registration Card," *The Advertiser*, 17 October 1940.

<sup>381</sup> "Poses as Fleeing Nazi Prisoner, Youth Can't Even Talk German," *Globe and Mail*, April 24 1941

<sup>382</sup> "Buttons to Show Manitoba Chinese Not Japanese," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 28 May 1942.



The buttons were used to signify the loyalty of other Asian populations, as opposed to Japanese treachery, and this stands in sharp contrast to white men pretending to be German POWs.

The *Ottawa Journal's* article “German Prisoners Help Move Office Furniture” also implies that the German POWs were considered harmless.<sup>383</sup> On 7 September 1945 – after the Second World War ended - German POWs helped the government’s Internment Branch move offices from the Monument Nationale to No. 8. Temporary Buildings at the Experimental Farm by carrying their own baggage across Ottawa. Personnel files of Germans employed on Ottawa valley farms were stored at Monument Nationale, and instead of calling the employees of the Works Department to shift the prisoners’ possessions, internment officials brought prisoners to Ottawa to work as moving men for the day. Once they carted their own effects from Lower Town to the Farm, the prisoners also installed the furniture in No.8 building as it was transferred from the Monument Nationale. Internment officials said that this was the first time they invaded a government building to work side by side with the Ottawa service.<sup>384</sup> No other prisoner group was allowed to do this, suggesting that German soldiers in Canada were viewed as “good Germans” while those still in Germany were considered the “Nazis.”

On the other hand, since the Japanese had been vilified for decades, Ontarians assumed it must be warranted. As John Dower writes in *War Without Mercy*, there was no equivalent to the “good German” where Japanese-Canadians were concerned: newspapers wrote about “Hitler” and “the Jap” synchronously, and this deprived Japanese-Canadians of the pluralism Germans were afforded.<sup>385</sup> Even though most were Canadian citizens, all Japanese-Canadians were treated

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<sup>383</sup> “German Prisoners Help Move Office Furniture” *Ottawa Journal*, 8 September 1945.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup> John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 78; Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence*, 12.

as threats to Canada's security. Canadians did not distinguish between "Japanese" and "Canadians of Japanese ancestry."<sup>386</sup> As *Mutual Hostages* illustrates, Canadian newspapers like the *Vancouver Sun* "recounted the inassimability of the Japanese, blamed them for all the atrocities committed in Asia, declared they had not renounced their allegiance to the Japanese throne, and concluded that that their retention in Canada would cause such a provocative situation it would be in the best interests of the Japanese to be deported."<sup>387</sup> The *Halifax Herald* called the Japanese-Canadians' circumstance "the fault of the Barbarians of the East who have committed the foulest and most monstrous crimes against humanity and civilization." The *Toronto Telegram* declared, "any Japanese man who wanted to forsake Canada when he thought Hirohito and Tojo were going to win cannot be trusted to be loyal to this country and he certainly should be thrown out."<sup>388</sup>

Japanese-Canadians had not left their homeland, and yet they were blamed for the brutalities committed in Asia. On the other hand, the public largely exonerated POWs from the atrocities committed by Germany. The liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in April 1945 only reinforced pre-existing opinions of 'good' and 'bad' Germans. When an extraordinary volume of information— wireless broadcasts, newspaper articles, newsreels, and in some cases letters and conversation with relatives and other contacts in the military—presented the Canadian public with evidence of the atrocities perpetrated under Nazi Germany, it was difficult to evade exposure to the stories. But comprehension of the true nature of Nazi atrocities was also severely lacking. Adolf Eichmann's televised war crimes trial in 1961 was the first time the world heard from Holocaust survivors in a public venue, and it was not until historians entered eastern

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<sup>386</sup> Roy, *Mutual Hostages*, 174.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid, 175.

European archives in the 1980s and 1990s that they truly understood how involved the German army was in war crimes. Therefore, the Holocaust seems to have had little effect on attitudes towards the German people and the treatment of German POWs during the war years. Local admiration for them did not diminish, and compassion for the Jews did not increase as the war raged on, and information about the torture and murder of Jews became more widely known.

**Conclusion:  
Arrival of the Fittest**

The Second World War has been glorified as a “good war” fought by the Allies against Nazism. It is thought of as a black-and-white, democracy vs. dictatorship, good vs. evil event, and has been romanticized as a nation building battle in Canadian history. And yet, Canadian society at the time didn’t have much to be proud of when it came to racial relations within its own borders. The country was hardly free of racism. Behind the scenes, it burned red hot. While Canada may have been actively fighting to defend western civilization against Hitler and the Nazi Party’s racist policies, discriminatory practices and a fondness for white, Anglo-Europeans existed within our own borders. Canadian civilians, though not fighting on the battlefields in Europe and the Pacific, were active in a war of social and racial discrimination.

In 1934, Jewish psychology student Esther Einbinder wrote her Master’s thesis on attitudes towards Jews in Toronto. As part of her broader argument that antisemitism was approaching a state of hysteria in the city, she cited one lawyer who wrote on his questionnaire that he ranked Jews lower than sewer rats and thought they should be exterminated like vermin.<sup>389</sup> This antisemitism did not falter after the fate of Europe’s Jews became publicized. In 1939 and 1940, Canada rejected countless requests for the immigration of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution, and in *None is Too Many*, Irving Abella and Harold Troper attribute this to home-grown racism and antisemitism.<sup>390</sup> “Even while the Nazis’ slaughter of European Jews was taking place, the determination of immigration officials to withhold entry to those few

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<sup>389</sup> Esther Einbinder, *An Exploratory Study of Attitudes towards Jews in the City of Toronto*. (M.A. thesis, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto, 1934,” 19-24.

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<sup>390</sup> Irving M. Abella and Harold Martin Troper, *None Is Too Many*. (Toronto, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1986), xii.

Jews who might yet be rescued never wavered.”<sup>391</sup> Between 1933 and 1945, Canada accepted fewer than 5,000 Jews, and between 1945 and 1948, it accepted a mere 8,000 more, the worst of all refugee-receiving states.<sup>392</sup> Canada began lifting its barriers on Jewish immigration after the state of Israel was founded in 1948, but it also opened its doors to Nazi war criminals. Only in the late 1980s, after more than forty years of inaction, did the government move to deal with the accused Nazi war criminals living in Canada. Soon after, the government decided to focus on barring alleged war criminals from entering Canada and revoking their Canadian citizenship instead of prosecuting them, and most war criminals lived quiet lives in Canada until their passing.

Unsurprisingly, white men were also the only group of Canadians who could serve in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) until 1943, and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) until 1944. After some racial minorities, such as black Canadians, were allowed to enlist, Chinese and Japanese men remained banned due to an anti-Asian element in Canadian society.<sup>393</sup> The strongest evidence of this anti-Asian prejudice is the government-sanctioned, forced evacuation of 22,000 Japanese-Canadian men, women, and children after Pearl Harbor. This racism was institutionalized into law after 1945, and on 1 May 1947, Prime Minister Mackenzie King outlined his view on immigration in a speech to Parliament. He said: “with regard to the selection of immigrants...I wish to make clear that Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. It is not a ‘fundamental human right’ of any alien to enter Canada. It is a privilege.”<sup>394</sup> Together with Jews, King believed, the

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<sup>391</sup> Abella and Troper, *None Is Too Many*, xiii.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid*, xx.

<sup>393</sup> Simon James Theobald, *A False Sense of Equality: The Black Canadian Experience of the Second World War*. (M.A. Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2008), 6.

<sup>394</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 348.

Japanese were incapable of assimilating into Canadian society, and they would “change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population and cause social and economic problems” if they immigrated to the country.<sup>395</sup> The fact that this was Canada’s official immigration policy until 1962 confirms the existence of stringent entry requirements and racial prejudice in post-war Canada.<sup>396</sup>

German POWs were ultimately accepted in post-war Canada because their racial status ranked them above prospective Jewish and Asian immigrants. A Privy-Council document entitled *Assimilation as a Factor to be Considered in Immigration Policy* warned, “it is obviously more difficult to assimilate a Chinese than it is a Dutchman; a Jew than a German.”<sup>397</sup> Labour-starved employers also campaigned against immediate repatriation. The ex-prisoners could not remain in Canada because the 1929 Geneva Convention required them to return to Germany after the war ended, but many Canadians asked the government to let them stay. On 5 April 1946, the Canadian government asked the British for retention of 3,500 German soldiers to alleviate “the shortage of farm labour in Canada, particularly in sugar beet production.”<sup>398</sup> In a 7 June 1946 House of Commons debate, W.M. Benedickson asked “for a postponement of the return of these prisoners of war in the Kenora-Rainy River District.”<sup>399</sup> The Department of Labour, the Department of National Defence, and the Prime Minister’s office received similar

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<sup>395</sup> Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 349.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> LAC, RG2-B-2 Vol.82. *Assimilation as a Factor to be Considered in Immigration Policy*.

<sup>398</sup> Britain did agree to hold some POWs in Canada so that they could be defendants and witnesses in war crimes trials, and in 1945, former Hull, Quebec, POW Alfred Helzel was a witness in Kurt Meyer’s trial.; Donald M. Page, eds., *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 12, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1977, p.202. *Debates of House of Commons*, 24 May 1946, p. 1848-1849.

<sup>399</sup> Donald M. Page, eds., *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 12, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1977, p.202. *Debates of House of Commons*, 24 May 1946, p. 1848-1849.

requests from other companies and individuals. These efforts were to no avail.

Over 6,000 German POWs made written applications to settle in Canada despite the unlikelihood that this request would be granted, and on 3 December 1946, the applications of 200 POWs were approved.<sup>400</sup> Only when Alberta Premier E.C. Manning and the Canadian Legion protested this decision was it overturned, and all German POWs had to return to Europe.<sup>401</sup>

Between January and May 1946, 23,396 German POWs left Canada, and by 1 January 1947, only twenty-eight remained.<sup>402</sup> Many returned home to a devastated country, since heavy bombing and an enormous loss of life had brought ruin to Germany.<sup>403</sup> To make matters worse, the eastern one-third of post-war Germany was under Russian occupation, and this uncertain future was difficult to embrace. Some POWs wanted out of Germany simply because they had had “enough of war[s] and all these enemies, [such as] France and Poland.”<sup>404</sup> They decided to restart their lives in Canada, and applied to join the immigration queue. As white Europeans, most had no trouble and began immigrating to Canada as soon as they could. For instance, former Afrika Korps POW Hans Pfeffel immigrated in 1955 and settled a few miles away from Lethbridge camp in Coaldale, Alberta; Johannes Lieberworth spent half of the year in Germany, and the other half in Lake of the Woods, Ontario; Eric Haase moved to Winnipeg after the war and never went back; Siegfried Osterwoldt left Germany in 1955 and settled in Edmonton;

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<sup>400</sup> The men who were accepted believed in democracy, cooperated with Canadian internment officials, and had skills that Canada needed.

<sup>401</sup> Henderson, *Artefacts*, 92.

<sup>402</sup> This group was recovering in Canadian hospitals or serving sentences in civil penitentiaries for various crimes.

<sup>403</sup> Eva Colmers, *The Enemy Within*, Documentary Film, 2003.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*

Helmut Meyer moved to Waterloo, Ontario; and Bruno Petrenko moved to Toronto in 1956.<sup>405</sup>

Unlike Jewish and Japanese-Canadian internees, many ex-POWs experienced feelings of nostalgia for their host country. A sense of community continues to draw ex-POWs from around the globe to their former camp sites. After returning to Canada in 1951 and beginning his new life in Mississauga, former Gravenhurst POW Hans-Georg Neumann returned to the Muskoka district where he was held in order to collect wild lady's slippers and plant them in his new garden. Found in central and eastern Canada, the flower is known as the orchid of the north, and it played a central role in his memories of captivity. Since the flower requires a specific PH balance to blossom, which Toronto does not have, Neumann loaded a rotting tree stump from Gravenhurst into his vehicle in order to provide his cherished lady's slipper with the right environment. The flower is a relic of his time in Canada during the Second World War, and when his memoir was published in 1966, it still bloomed every year.<sup>406</sup>

Similarly, camp reunions bring ex-POWs together. In 1991, thirty former officers returned to Bowmanville for Camp 30's fiftieth anniversary. As the *Canadian Statesman* notes, it was not unlike a high school reunion: "there were tears and memories and discussions about friends from days gone by."<sup>407</sup> Talking amongst themselves, many of the "dapper, older men wandering through the grounds, swapping stories about the old days when they were younger and had more hair and smaller waistlines," asked: "Do you remember when?" "Remember so-

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid; Helmut Meyer – "Camp 30: German Prisoners of War Return to Bowmanville Camp for 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," *Canadian Statesman*, 9 Oct 1991; Petrenko – "German POWS Harbour Fond Memories of Canada: Former Prisoners-Of-War Return to Bowmanville Camp for 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion." *LIFE*, 4 October 1991.

<sup>406</sup> Neumann, *A Man Worth Knowing*, 180.

<sup>407</sup> "Camp 30: German Prisoners of War Return to Bowmanville Camp for 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," *Canadian Statesman*, 9 Oct 1991.



and-so?” and “What ever happened to?”<sup>408</sup> *LIFE* reported that the officers laughed about the home-made whiskey they sold to guards, and snickered over escape attempts.<sup>409</sup>

Touring the vacant buildings brought back intense emotional memories for the men: “One man let a trickle of tears slide down his cheek at one point. He quickly swept them away. Many of the visitors comment[ed] on the condition of the interior and exterior of the buildings they had spent time in.”<sup>410</sup> “I am thankful that we could make this trip in due time,” said another veteran. “Most of us are 70-plus. Many are already dead... the men who watched over us were our guardians but never our enemies,” he noted.<sup>411</sup> “Looking back, we were very, very, very lucky” said Hermann Kell, who moved to Sault Ste. Marie, during a reception held for the POWs and their significant others at the Bowmanville Museum. “Bowmanville is the nicest camp I ever saw – I say this in hindsight...my compliments to the Canadian Army for striving and achieving this.”<sup>412</sup> Similar pilgrimages occurred in Kananaskis, Wainwright, and elsewhere across Canada, and these fond memories reflect the POWs’ good treatment in Ontario. David Carter writes, “it is only German officers who had been interned in Canada as POW who have reunions, not those imprisoned in Russia, the USA, Britain or other countries. The spirit of camaraderie has its roots in the Canadian POW camps.”<sup>413</sup> Neither Japanese-Canadians nor Jewish refugees held reunions after the war. Instead, many continue to blame Canada for their misfortunes, and rightfully so.

After the Second World War, German POWs could choose to identify as German or Canadian, depending on the situation. But above all, they could identify as white. Japanese-

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<sup>408</sup> “German POWS Harbour Fond Memories of Canada,” *LIFE*.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> “Camp 30: German Prisoners of War Return to Bowmanville Camp for 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *Canadian Statesman*.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> Carter, *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire*, 220.

Canadians, on the other hand, could not live in Canada without their identities as Canadians being questioned due to their non-white skin.<sup>414</sup> The contrasting responses to different kinds of captives in wartime Canada is nowhere clearer than in a number of high-profile war crimes cases after the war.

In *The Kurt Meyer Case: The Press and the Canadian Public's Response to Canada's First War Crimes Trial*, Karen Priestman proves that most Canadians hated Meyer and his ideals in December 1945. The press wrote about Meyer's crimes in gruesome detail, and popular rhetoric labelled him a beast, a monster, and a complete and vicious Nazi. Essentially, the general population "believ[ed] that regardless of his guilt or innocence or abundance or paucity of evidence, the only thing owing him was his death."<sup>415</sup> When he received the death penalty, emotionally charged Canadians applauded the deliverance of justice. But the sentence of death against Kurt Meyer, accused and convicted German war criminal, was commuted to life imprisonment on an appeal in 1946. Canadians vehemently denounced the decision.

By 1951, though, support for Meyer had grown exponentially. A combat veteran of campaigns in Poland, the West, the Balkans, and the Eastern Front, his aptitude as a soldier gradually replaced his war crimes as the center of attention, and many developed feelings of sympathy towards him.<sup>416</sup> One veteran asked the Canadian government to "release Kurt Meyer from his pitiful confinement, for he is a good soldier and a noble gentleman."<sup>417</sup> Another stated,

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<sup>414</sup> Shawna Carroll, "The Construction and Perpetuation of Whiteness," in *Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning* 2014, vol.8, Issue 15, 97.

<sup>415</sup> Karen Priestman, *The Kurt Meyer Case: The Press and the Canadian Public's Response to Canada's First War Crimes Trial*, (Waterloo, Ont, Wilfred Laurier University, 2003), 39.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>417</sup> Kikkert, "Kurt Meyer and Canadian Memory," 6.

<https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1653&context=cmh>

“Kurt Meyer was a good soldier and led a hard division. We have no right to hold ourselves up as saints.”<sup>418</sup> Media headlines and letters to the editor reflect the popular view that “Meyer was not a guilty man trying to clear his way from conviction, but a man who still commanded unwavering respect and loyalty from his subordinates, a man to be admired.”<sup>419</sup> Priestman reasons that Meyer’s whiteness and soldierly masculinity made it difficult for Canadians to square the image of a war hero with the man on trial, so they christened him the former.<sup>420</sup>

Meyer was released from prison on 7 September 1954, after the Canadian government reduced his sentence to fourteen years, and reduced this further for good behaviour. It is especially telling that after Meyer’s release, “some say as a way to curry favour with the blossoming post-war relationship between Canada and Germany,” he was allowed to join the SS Veterans Association and at the same time held the contract to supply beer to Canadian troops in West Germany.<sup>421</sup>

Canadians did not have the same cognitive dissonance with war criminals of Japanese ancestry. Meyer’s trial coincided with the trial of Kanao Inouye, also referred to as “the Kamloops Kid.” Inouye was a Canadian citizen born in Kamloops, British Columbia, but he joined the Japanese war effort and interrogated Canadian POWs held in Japanese-occupied Hong-Kong. His violence and brutality earned him a reputation, and he was responsible for the deaths of at least eight Canadians.<sup>422</sup> When Inouye was tried and sentenced to death by the British War Crimes Court, his lawyer appealed the decision because as a Canadian citizen,

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<sup>418</sup> Priestman, *The Kurt Meyer Case*, 46.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> “Murder in Normandy: Remembering a Notorious Nazi War Crime in the Days after D-Day.” *Ottawa Citizen*, 6 June 2019.

<sup>422</sup> “Kamloops Kid: Treason treated with a rope” *Toronto Sun*, 4 November 2018

Inouye could not legally be tried as a war criminal. He was a member of the Commonwealth, not an enemy of it. Even though Inouye won the appeal, he was tried for high treason and executed in 1947. He is Canada's only Japanese-Canadian war criminal. Meyer and Inouye were both ruthless war criminals charged with similar crimes, but Canada showed more leniency with the former. Inouye's ancestry put him at a disadvantage and likely played a large role in his execution, while Meyer's white, soldierly-masculinity allowed him to share drinks with Canadian troops as a free man in the 1950s.

Canadians also demanded clemency for four pro-Nazi Medicine Hat POWs sentenced to death for murdering Karl Lehmann, an anti-Nazi POW in 1944. By 1946, a concerted campaign to save the lives of the POWs emerged, centering around the idea that the soldiers followed orders from their superiors when they killed Lehmann.<sup>423</sup> Canadians sent petitions and pleas to the government, arguing that the men would have been law-abiding citizens if not for the "soul destroying indoctrination which turned them into murderers."<sup>424</sup> Letters from the soldiers' families and friends in Germany, who remembered the young men before the war, came as well, begging that their lives be spared. On 6 September 1946, Hermann Boeschstein, Director of the War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA, even sent his humble plea for clemency on behalf of the four men. Praising the Germans' character, Boeschstein wrote that he had reason to assume the men regret and hate the soul-destroying indoctrination which turned them into murderers. Writing unofficially, he was prepared to get the rest of his committee to send letters if needed.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> "Alberta's Largest Mass Hanging," *Edmonton Journal*, 2011.

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/hanged/mass1.html>

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> "YMCA Letter Asking for Mercy on Behalf of the POWs" 6 September 1946, found in "Alberta's Largest Mass Hanging," *Edmonton Journal*, 2011.

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/hanged/mass1.html>

On 24 September, the Red Cross also sent letters to the Director of the POW Information Bureau in Ottawa asking for mercy on behalf of the prisoners' families.<sup>426</sup> The murder certainly challenged the "boys will be boys" attitude applied to German POWs, but a significant part of the public found it difficult to accept that men with soldierly qualities could be guilty of these crimes. And so it went.

As the only existing study of prisoner of war and internment operations in Ontario during the Second World War, my thesis reveals important aspects of regional history. But the wartime handling of Jews, Japanese-Canadians, and German merchant seamen also reflects a national narrative towards race. Everything that happened for Jews in Canada happened in a climate of pervasive anti-Semitism. Hostility toward Japanese Canadians before, during and after the Second World War was persistent, pervasive and severe. Germans were accepted because their racial status ranked them above their Jewish and Asian counterparts, even their counterparts who were actual Canadians to begin with. Canada has begun to acknowledge the racism in its past, and it is imperative that the tragic legacies of residential schools and the Chinese head tax are not viewed as isolated events of history. Racial discrimination was, and continues to be, a force in Canada, and the conclusions I have made in this project show there is still much more to be done to reconcile the many difficult parts of Canada's history.

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<sup>426</sup> "Red Cross Letter Asking for Mercy on Behalf of [Heinrich] Busch's Family, 4 September 1946, found in "Alberta's Largest Mass Hanging," *Edmonton Journal*, 2011. <http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/hanged/mass1.html>

Appendix

*Table 1. Source: Library and Archives Canada: Internment Camps: Second World War, Finding Aid, pg. 95-97.*

Number	Letter	Camp	Dates of Operation	Type of Prisoners
	R	Red Rock, ON	1940-1941	Civilians, EMS
10		Chatham, ON	1944-1946	EMS, Officers and ORs
20	C	Gravenhurst, ON	1940-1946	Officers and ORs
21	E	Espanola, ON	1940-1943	ORs
22	M	Mimico/New Toronto, ON	1940-1944	EMS and Civilians
23	Q	Monteith, ON	1940-1946	ORs
30		Bowmanville, ON	1941-1945	Officers and ORs
31	F	Kingston, ON	1940-1943	EMS, Civilians, ORs
33	P	Petawawa, ON	1939-1946	EMS and ORs
100	W	Neys, ON	1941-1946	Japanese Civilians and ORs
101	X	Angler, ON	1941-1946	

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**JORDYN BAILEY**

- MA The University of Western Ontario, History, 2017/09-2019/08  
Thesis: “Arrival of the Fittest: German POWs in Ontario during the Second World War”  
Advisors: Jonathan F. Vance and Eli Nathans
- BA The University of Western Ontario, Honors Specialization in History  
2013/09-2017/06

Honors and Awards

Professor Kenneth Hilborn Graduate Student Award for Research and Conference Travel 2018

- Awarded to graduates in History to support research and travel costs-based on academic achievement and research merit.

Western Graduate Research Scholarship 2018

Western Graduate Research Scholarship 2017

Dean’s Honor List 2016-2018

The Western Scholarship of Excellence 2013

Research Experience

Dissertation, “Arrival of The Fittest: German POWs in Ontario during the Second World War,”

The University of Western Ontario, London 2019

Advisors: Jonathan F. Vance and Eli Nathans

- Research of Library and Archives Canada and local archives in Chatham, Gravenhurst, Espanola, Toronto, Monteith, Bowmanville, Kingston, Petawawa, Neys, Sault Ste. Marie, Marathon, Red Rock and Thunder Bay.

Teaching Experience

The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario 2017/09 to 2019/05

Teaching Assistant, History Department

- Teaching Assistant for History 1401E-Modern Europe, 1715 to the Present: Conflict and Transformation.
- Developed and directed tutorial discussions covering the following topics: the French and Industrial Revolutions, First World War, experience of Communism in the Soviet Union, Fascism, Nazism and the Second World War, decolonization, and post-war efforts at European integration.
- Guided students in the evaluation of primary sources, the historical context in which documents were composed, and the larger historical significance of the sources.
- Evaluated weekly postings on tutorial readings, tutorial participation, research and drafting exercises, and final papers.

Presentations and Invited Lectures

- Master’s Public Lecture, “Arrival of the Fittest, German POWs in Ontario during the Second World War” The University of Western Ontario, 8 July 2019.
- “Pathways to the Past” Graduate History Conference, “Masculinity and German POWs in Ontario during the Second World War,” The University of Western Ontario, 26-27 April 2019.



- The Bruce McCaffrey Memorial Graduate Seminar Series, “Canadians and the Big Blond Nazi Boys,” The University of Western Ontario, 31 January 2019.
- Master’s Symposium, “Canadians and the Big Blond Nazi Boys,” The University of Western Ontario, April 2018.

#### Languages

- English: Native Language
- German: Novice Listener, Novice Speaker, Novice Reading and Writing