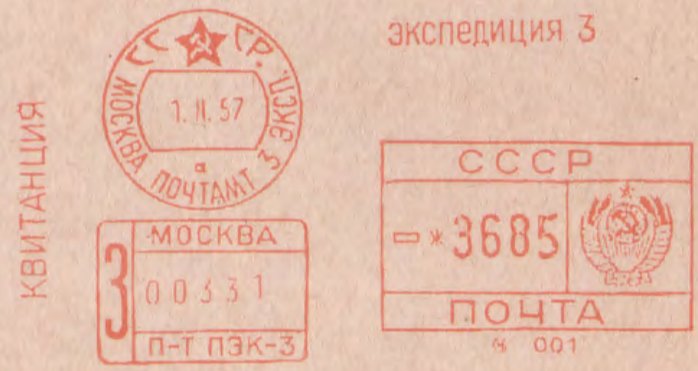

One-Way Ticket

The Soviet Return-to-the-Homeland Campaign, 1955–1960

Glenna Roberts & Serge Cipko

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON CANADIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS
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In memory of PETER M. ROBERTS (1927–2003),
third secretary, Canadian Embassy, Moscow (1957–59),
Canadian ambassador to the USSR (1983–85),
and initiator of this study.

For those who, ever hopeful, persisted in the
belief that somewhere, in the old country or the new,
better lives were attainable for themselves,
their children, their grandchildren.

Contents

Preface

In 1957, a young Canadian named Nadia Golik came to Peter Roberts's office at the embassy in Moscow. She had come with her parents to the Soviet Union from Canada and now wanted to return to Toronto. Peter had just called with his ambassador, David Johnson, on Andrei Gromyko, newly appointed foreign minister of the USSR, who had expressed no sympathy for the Canadians who wanted to leave. Accordingly, Peter told Nadia it was unlikely she would receive an exit visa in the near future. She asked him to communicate to her boyfriend that she wanted to return to him, but could not — a mission that Peter fulfilled on his next visit home. As far as Peter knew, Nadia returned to Ukraine and lived happily, or unhappily, ever after.

That meeting with Nadia was the beginning of the project on the return to the homeland. One day in the early 1990s Peter saw the name of Nadia's friend, a musician, on a Toronto billboard. After making contact with him, Peter learned that Nadia was living in Ottawa. When they met again it became clear that she was part of a little-known story of the Cold War. And so the research began. Nadia helped Peter find other "returnees." They are quoted throughout this book; and the authors are

particularly grateful to them for opening up the stories of their lives. The authors also sympathize with those survivors of the experience who chose not to be interviewed.

Interviews

The quotations with reference to the following families are used with the kind permission of each interviewee. The full interviews are maintained in the Return to the Homeland files at the Centre for Research in Canadian-Russian Relations (CRCR), University Partnership Centre, Georgian College, Barrie, Ontario. The material gives human voice to government documents and offers glimpses of the returnees' resilience.

GOLIK FAMILY · Nadia Golik Demidenko and her brother, Bill Golik, were the first returnees to be interviewed in Ottawa and Toronto respectively (along with Nadia's husband, Anatoly Demidenko, and their son, Slava Demidenko) by Peter and Glenna Roberts and Richard Longley of Fovea Films.

LENKO FAMILY · Material on the Lenko family was taken from an interview with Jim Lenko by Mike Trickey of Southam News, whose permission the authors gratefully acknowledge. His original illustrated article based on the interview appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 November 1999. It was also carried by the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Montreal Gazette*.

THE BRADFORD FAMILY · A member of the family from Bradford who requested that the family name not be used was interviewed by Glenna Roberts in February 2004.

OLGA BRESHKO · Olga Breshko's story is taken from *They Came to Stay: North Americans in the USSR* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987) by Paula Garb, combined with an interview in Toronto with Glenna Roberts, 2005.

WOLCHUK FAMILY · Valerie Wolchuk was interviewed in Toronto by Peter and Glenna Roberts, July 1999.

WATT FAMILY · Carl Watt's interview in Moscow with Mike Trickey, "Voice of Russia has a Canadian accent," was published in the *Ottawa Citizen*, 15 September 1996. Carl was also a subject in Paula Garb's *They Came to Stay*.

GEORGE-YURI MOSKAL · George-Yuri Moskal's story is based on an interview with Serge Cipko.

WALTER SAVICH · Walter Savich's story about his family is based on a conversation with Glenna Roberts.

OLEH PIDHAINY · Oleh Pidhainy (Oleg Pidhaini), author of *Mr. Khrushchev Goes Slave-Hunting*, was interviewed by Glenna Roberts and Richard Longley. He has granted permission for this material to be used in this book.

Interviews in Ukraine

The authors are grateful to Jennifer Anderson Fockenier, a graduate student at Carleton University and an associate of CRCR, who interviewed descendants and relatives of several returnees in April 2001 in Ukraine. This material is also on file with CRCR. The interviewees were identified through advertisements placed in the Ukrainian media by Liudmila Shangina and Leonid Polyakov of the Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies, Kyiv. She also interviewed Volodymyr Ivanovych Serhiichuk, director of the Ukrainian Studies Centre, Taras Shevchenko National University, Kyiv.

Former Members of Canada's Department of External Affairs

Several officers of the Department of External Affairs whose signatures appeared on documents from the 1950s declined to be interviewed because they felt they did not remember the campaign well enough to add to its history. The authors thank those former officers who contributed, most of whom were posted in Moscow between 1955 and 1961: Max Yalden, Marshall Crowe, Kathleen Berton Murrell, Tom Delworth, and Blair Seaborn. Peter Roberts is quoted from his letter to Larry Zolf, CBC, 1992, and from interviews recorded by Richard Longley.

The Authors

Glenna Roberts took part in the interviews recorded by Peter Roberts and analysed the archival documents that became available when he was too ill to continue with the project. She is a member of the board of directors of CRCR.

Serge Cipko earlier conducted research in archives in Ukraine and Buenos Aires for a doctoral dissertation on Ukrainian immigration to

Argentina. He researched libraries and media files and translated Russian-language material from *Vestnik* and *Za vozvrashchenie na Rodinu*, and all Ukrainian-language material from *Ukrainske slovo*, *Ukrainske zhyttia* and *Za povernnenia na Batkivshchynu*. He currently heads the Ukrainian Diaspora Studies Initiative of the Ukrainian Canadian Program at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta.

Sponsors

The Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations began in 1990 as an organized research unit of the history department at Carleton University, Ottawa, under the direction of Professor Larry Black. He and CRCR are now associated with the University Partnership Centre at Georgian College, Barrie. Professor Black provided encouragement and valuable insights throughout the project. Material is included from the publication he edited with Martin Rudner, *The Gouzenko Affair: Canada and the Beginnings of Cold War Counter-Espionage* (Penumbra Press, 2006).

The Donner Canadian Foundation sponsored a CRCR project to find, copy, and bring to Canada from Russia archival documents related to Canada. In 2000 it allocated funds for specific use on the "Return to the Homeland Project." The grant enabled publication of an interim work, CRCR Occasional Paper No. 8, "Canada and the Khrushchev Government's 'Return to the Homeland' Campaign," by Serge Cipko and Peter M. Roberts, in November 2000. To the foundation and its chairman, Allan Gotlieb, the authors are especially grateful. With the publication of this book, another step, although probably not the last, has been taken in discovering "the truth" behind the campaign.

The Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko, Winnipeg, and Lakehead University both supported the project in its early stages.

Through the National Archives of Canada, now Library and Archives Canada (LAC), the project benefited from the assistance of George Bolotenko, who was seconded to do CRCR research in Moscow. Myron Momryk helped identify files held at LAC. Two requests for access to return-to-the-homeland files of the Department of External Affairs, later the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), were denied in the 1990s. Finally, in 2002, files were made available by LAC after sensitive material had been culled by DFAIT and the RCMP.

Transliteration

The spelling, punctuation, and transliteration of original government documents and newspaper articles have been retained. Otherwise, transliteration from Ukrainian has been used for place names and Ukrainian individuals, following in particular the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* (Toronto, 1984–1993). The city of Luhanske was called Voroshilovgrad in Russian and Voroshylovhrad in Ukrainian from 1935 to 1958, and from 1970 to May 1990. Some interviewees tended to use the forms interchangeably. Kiev, the transliteration from Russian, appears in quotations, but Kyiv is preferred in the text. Similarly Lvov (Russian) and Lviv (Ukrainian) vary according to context.

Some personal names also have Russian and Ukrainian variants. *Mr. Khrushchev Goes Slave-Hunting* was published under the name of Oleg Pidhaini. His subsequent publications and current preferred spelling in English is Oleh Pidhainy. Press stories in the 1950s refer to Pavlo Hlushaniza, also Paul Gluschaniza. He is referred to in the text as Pavlo Hlushanytsia.

The Future of the Project

The authors of this book would be grateful to hear stories of other returnees that have not yet been recorded. Please direct correspondence to the publisher, Penumbra Press (Box 940, Manotick, ON, Canada, K4M 1A8). For e-mail inquiries, contact homeland@penumbrapress.ca .

Typographical Key

To help distinguish interviews from archival extracts and editorial commentary from quoted books and articles, *One-Way Ticket* was typeset in two discrete typefaces. The serifed roman is the main body type. Block quotations in this face indicate the source is a conventional published book or article. Interviews are set in an unserifed roman, archival extracts in an unserifed italic. The chief advantage of such a treatment is that it encourages seamless page-by-page reading on the one hand, and facilitates an efficient, non-linear engagement with the text on the other.

Abbreviations

USSR Security Organizations in Chronological Order

VCHK (also Cheka) · All-Union Extraordinary Commission, 1917–1922
GPU · State Political Directorate, also called OGPU, 1917–1934
NKO · People's Commissariat of Defence
NKVD · People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs), 1934–1946
NKGB · People's Commissariat of State Security), 1941–1946 (police duties not directly involving "state security" remained with the NKVD).
MVD · Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1946–
MGB · Ministry of State Security, 1946–1954
KGB · Committee of State Security, 1954, reduced from a ministry to a committee under the Council of Ministers.
GRU · Military Intelligence Service (Ministry of Defence)

Soviet Organizations

CC · Central Committee
ID · International Department of the CPSU Central Committee
GARF · State Archives of the Russian Federation
GKO · State Committee of Defence
MID · Ministry of Foreign Affairs
OVIR · Office of Visas and Registration

SPSU · Communist Party of the Soviet Union

USSR · Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, of which the Russian Federation is the successor state.

Ukrainian SSR · Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, now Ukraine.

VOKS · All-Union Society for Cultural Relations Overseas

Canadian Organizations

AUUC · Association of United Ukrainian Canadians

DL(2) · Defence Liaison (2), division of the Department of External Affairs.

DFAIT · Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, formerly External Affairs.

FRC · Federation of Russian Canadians

LAC · Library and Archives Canada (formerly NAC, National Archives of Canada).

OUN · Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists

RCMP · Royal Canadian Mounted Police

SUZERO · Ukrainian Association of Victims of Russian Communist Terror, the Canadian associate of FUP, the World Federation of Ukrainian Former Political Prisoners and Victims of the Soviet Regime

UCC · Ukrainian Canadian Committee

One | *The Appeal*

THE FOLLOWING APPEAL IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE WAS ISSUED IN MARCH 1955 from an office in East Berlin, German Democratic Republic, by a previously unknown organization calling itself by the Russian name Komitet za Vozvrashchenie na Rodinu. The Bureau of Translations, Foreign Language Division, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1957, translated this title as Committee for Repatriation to the Motherland; but the Canadian government and others at the time generally used Committee for the Return to the Homeland or Return to the Homeland Committee, the forms that will be used throughout this book. The original text is here grouped into paragraphs and followed by commentary by the authors:

Dear compatriots, brothers and sisters!

We, your fellow citizens, members of the Committee "For the Return to the Homeland," address you. We, together with you, have experienced all the hardships of life in a foreign state, and now, after having returned to the native land, are living in a circle of relatives and friends. We work and raise children, and we have confidence in their and our own future. However, we know that the voice of

conscience does not permit us to be indifferent to those who endured with us, to those who to this day languish in foreign lands.

The "compatriots, brothers and sisters" to whom this appeal was directed were fellow Soviet citizens who, unlike members of the committee, had remained in Western Europe after the Second World War, mainly in camps for displaced persons. Alexander Yakovlev, a former Soviet ambassador to Canada and subsequent architect of *perestroika* under Mikhail Gorbachev, published in 2000 *A Century of Violence in Soviet Russia,* based on his sometimes-privileged access to Soviet archives. He cites the number of Soviet soldiers captured by the Germans during the war as being between 4.59 million and 5.27 million. In addition, an estimated 4.83 million civilians were deported to Germany or German-occupied territories as forced labourers (*ostarbeiter*, i.e., eastern workers). "More than 2,000,000 war prisoners and more than 1,230,000 civilian deportees died in camps and in servitude. More than 1,866,000 former prisoners of war and more than 3,500,000 civilians were repatriated to the USSR. More than 450,000, including 160,000 former prisoners of war, refused to return."[1] Many were forced back against their will because their repatriation was required by the terms of the 1945 Yalta agreement between Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. Others were able to remain in refugee camps in West Germany and Austria. These increasingly disillusioned inmates were primary targets of the appeal in 1955.[2]

We know how hard it is for you. Many of you suffer from malnutrition, do not have living quarters fit for man, and don't have the main thing that a man needs — honest work. Yet even those of you who due to blind chance have enough to eat today, who thanks to a thousand artifices and humiliations contrived to provide for themselves for now, can they be certain of tomorrow?

Many others who had refused to return had by 1955 been admitted as permanent immigrants to countries in the West.

Others may not know, but we know perfectly well that in foreign lands no one is interested in people like you. Is there someone there who will understand all the depth of your suffering, your homesickness? Are they familiar even to some extent at least with your childhood memories? Are they stirred by the language and songs of your native land? Can its vast fields, the smell of freshly ploughed land, the ceaseless hum of the powerful machines you helped to build be dear to them? Who needs you there? And if you are wanted then it is only to use you for

the most exhausting and most dishonest work, and afterward to throw you out without a word of thanks like a useless rag. We know well that many of you harbour in the depth of your souls the cherished dream of return to the homeland, but cannot decide to realize it.

The committee recognized that motives such as pride in the strength of the USSR, and nostalgia for its music, language, and even smells, could be used to encourage people to return.

We also know what hinders your return: You are held back by fear. Yes, fear, spread by the propaganda of the overseas lord and their despicable myrmidons, who repeat to you over and again, day and night, that you would be treated as renegades in the Soviet territories, that you would suffer from discrimination, that you would be sent to forced labour. Do not believe them! It is a lie!

Fear would have been a reasonable reaction for anyone aware of the fates of many who had returned in 1945–46. Alexander Yakovlev remembered his experience at the Yaroslavl train station a year after the end of the war:

> The rumour [went round] that a train would be passing through with some of our soldiers and officers from German prisoner of war camps.... Railway cars, small windows with iron bars; thin, pale bewildered faces at the windows. And on the platform, women weeping and wailing. Tossed out through the bars, rolled-up scraps of paper with the names and addresses of relatives and appeals to let them know that so-and-so was alive.... It took a long time, unfortunately, for people to realize that those liberated soldiers would meet their end in concentration camps and prisons.[3]

Yakovlev also describes the screening camps established by the State Committee of Defence (GKO), where in 1945 and 1946 all returning civilians and former war prisoners had to be processed. Conditions were horrific, included compulsory hard labour, and the screening process frequently lasted for years. Of 5,352,963 Soviet citizens who were repatriated by 1946, 3,259,857 were sent to their former places of residence (Moscow, Leningrad, Kyiv, and newly incorporated border areas excluded); 1,055,925 are reported to have been re-conscripted into the Red Army; 608,095 were sent to NKO (Peoples' Commissariat of Defence) work battalions; 339,618 were transferred to NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) authority; 89,468 "remained in Central European assembly centres and [were] used as labourers by Soviet occupation authorities."[4] The

fate of returning civilians and prisoners of war must certainly have reached those who had remained in the West, confirming their decision not to return.

> *We understand that many of you are reasoning in this way: "Thousands of Soviet people returned home long ago, but we to date have hesitated, and this the Homeland will not pardon us."*

Those who had refused to return earlier could have reasonably assumed they would be dealt with especially harshly.

> *Some of you are torn by doubts: "Thousands of Soviet people suffered until the end in camps and torture chambers, but we could not stand the hard test and surrendered to the enemy. We ate out of his hands the bread which was earned by unworthy means. And now, you think they will not pardon us in the Homeland." Let it be known, however, that this is not true! Remember: A foreign land is a wicked stepmother. Even if you crawl on your belly before such a land, all the same it is your enemy. Now the Fatherland is the land of your birth. It will understand and pardon all of its children.*

The Soviet rationale for the treatment administered to returning prisoners of war was that they were traitors by virtue of having surrendered to the enemy and were tainted by ties with German intelligence and the secret police. Those who had been liberated by Western allies were regarded as possible agents for Western intelligence.[5] Although the official amnesty was not passed until approximately five months later (September 1955), the committee promised pardons throughout this appeal.

> *The Homeland knows: A great number of its daughters and sons were flung by the storm of the cruel war beyond its confines, and their destinies varied. Thousands of our people perished in captivity. Whether beaten to death in the torture chambers of the Gestapo and in concentration camps, hanged, weakened by hunger and by work beyond their strength, hunted down by hounds or felled by a bullet of an SS man when attempting to flee, or having committed suicide in the penal camps, where life was harsher than death, all of [these victims] were buried in common graves, which are not marked by crosses or monuments, and their relatives will never bring flowers to their unknown graves. May their memory live on forever!*

Of the approximately 5 million Soviet soldiers captured by the Germans, by May 1944 nearly 2 million had perished in the camps in which they were interned, while more than 1 million others were "unaccounted for."

Hundreds of thousands of our people endured all the hardships of captivity and returned home. Among them were factory workers, tillers of the soil, teachers, engineers, physicians, agronomists, and writers. All of them now live the happy life of the citizens of a free country. But many have not yet returned. That's you, fellow countrymen!

The period from war's end until the death of Stalin in 1953 was dominated by increasing domestic "terror," the fear of arbitrary arrest, and compulsory self-accusation known as *Zhdanovshchina*, after Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's chief of ideology. Nikita Khrushchev wrote of Stalin's growing paranoia:

> In the days leading up to Stalin's death, we believed that America would invade the Soviet Union and we would go to war.... The arrests started again, and soon the prisons were overflowing. Many of those arrested were former prisoners of war who had returned home. However, they did not return to their apartments or their collective or state farms; they were sent to camps. They worked in Siberia, Kolyma, and other remote areas.[6]

The possibility that things might change for the better after Stalin's death was not mentioned in any of the committee's materials. This appeal and the subsequent amnesty in September 1955, however, were the first harbingers of real change. The injustices of Stalin's regime were first exposed in Khrushchev's denunciation and assumption of full power at the twentieth Party Congress in February 1956. The arbitrary treatment of war prisoners was partially addressed by the Zhukov commission in June 1956, and a decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the same month — "On the Elimination of the Consequences of Gross Violations of the Law in Regard to Former War Prisoners and Their Families." Alexander Yakovlev believed that the "regime's hatred of the former war prisoners was total and profound. Their legal rights and those of civilian repatriates were not restored. It was convenient to shift onto these unfortunates the leadership's own culpability for defeats during the war.... The full restoration of the legal rights of Russian citizens captured in battle in defence of the motherland became possible only after Decree No. 63 of the president of the Russian Federation, passed on 24 January 1995."[7]

There are those among you who were captured due to wounds or encirclement; there also are those who put down their arms due to a momentary weakness and

in fear for their lives. There also are those who were driven into slavery by force or who, in desiring to save themselves from death by starvation, yielded to persuasion. Some left the Homeland because they nursed a grudge for some injustice; they did not understand that the memory of offences passes, but love for the native land endures forever.

Soviet soldiers, at least at Stalingrad, did not have the option in battle of retreating. According to Antony Beevor in a description of Soviet forces at Stalingrad, "Chuikov's weakest units were the militia Special Brigades, made up mainly of workers from factories in the northern part of Stalingrad. Blocking groups of well-armed Komsomol volunteers or NKVD detachments were placed behind them to prevent retreat."[8]

However, others, for example, some people from the Baltic regions, from the western districts of Ukraine and Belarus, who had never experienced the Soviet order, believed the enemy slander, were frightened of the new life and threw themselves headlong into the camp of the foe. It is not possible to enumerate all the reasons — there are many. Yet whatever the reasons every one of you might have had, you must know only one thing:

Return, and the Homeland will receive you!

The populations of western Ukraine and western Belarus were Polish citizens between the Treaty of Riga, 1921, and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, 1939. During the Second World War, some were taken as forced labourers to work in German factories and farms, and their lands were devastated. Some also joined military units that fought against the Red Army, for example the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). On 31 July 1945 a Soviet decree was passed that permitted former Polish citizens from these areas to surrender their Polish papers and register as Soviet citizens. This decree was equally valid for former Polish citizens who had left their homeland before the Second World War and emigrated to North America and elsewhere.

The Homeland will receive even those who could not endure the cruel hunger and the beatings and joined military organizations, which were hostile to our country such as the ignominious ROA or national battalions; even those, who, moved by the fear of death, agreed to enter the service of occupying forces; and even those who are guilty before the Homeland.

The ROA, Russkaia Osvoboditel'naia Armiia (the Russian Liberation Army), was unofficially known as the Vlasov army. It was an anti-communist force

of approximately 300,000, mainly prisoners of war, who volunteered to fight for the Nazis. In 1946 145,000 "Vlasovites" and civilians who had served in the German armed forces or police and had returned to the Soviet Union were exiled for six years in special work camps in the far north, where they had little chance of survival.[9] Through the appeal, those who had not returned were offered amnesty.

The old people say that even to die in the native land is a great blessing. But it is too early for you to die; before you is a whole life, but you cannot see it in a strange land.

Return! Help your comrades who suffer together with you the bitter fate of wanderers who lost their fatherland. Resist steadfastly the false propaganda of your enemies! Persuade those who hesitate and encourage those whom the inviting voice of the Homeland has not yet reached. Unite with them in order to travel together the road which will lead you to the land of your fathers!

Most veterans of the Second World War were still young enough in 1955 to be regarded as potential labourers. They were asked to encourage others to return with them. In addition, we know of at least one returnee who was asked to supply the names of others whom the committee could approach.

We asked the Soviet government to permit us to organize a volunteer Committee to assist the patriotic movement for the return of such citizens as you, and the government has agreed to our request. We approached the government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and it permitted our Committee to develop its activity on the territory of the GDR. Our Committee aims to help you to consider properly your situation, to dispel the doubts inspired by the enemies of the Soviet state, and to assist you to overcome vain, groundless apprehensions.

The "volunteer" committee had the full co-operation of the Soviet Embassy and military officers in Berlin, the headquarters being located at Behrenstrasse 65, at the embassy's back door. It had also a staff of writers and editors in many languages, access through local police throughout the USSR to individuals with relatives abroad, and lists of the names and addresses of those relatives. It soon became evident the campaign was a colossal undertaking and was heavily subsidized by some as-yet-undetermined arm of the Soviet government. In the opinion of one Western monitor of the campaign writing in the *New York Times*, by March 1956 the Soviet Union was spending more on this repatriation project "than [did] the United States in its entire refugee programme."[10] In short, the "volunteer" committee had power and money.

There is nothing that can be harder and more painful than constant remorse, perpetual tears; there is nothing more shameful than a life filled with timidity and apprehension. Shake off this burden from your soul. Many of you, bowed down by extremity, poisoned by the whisperings of the enemy, mired in the trivial and vain struggle for existence, began to lose faith in the genuine life. All for nothing! Lift up your heads, face the future boldly: It is still not too late!

Those who left their families in the Homeland, remember the grey-haired mothers waiting for you, the wives who prematurely regard themselves as widows, and the children who grow up without fathers! Return to comfort them, to dry their tears.

The appeal here plays on feelings of guilt for having abandoned family responsibilities. Letters to family members abroad echoed the same technique.

Do not believe the liars who are frightening you, who bribe your conscience with pieces of silver of Judas. They hatch crazy and impractical plans — to crucify our Homeland. Yet this will never happen. Our state is powerful now as never before. He who raises the sword against it, shall perish by the sword. Man lives on the earth but once. Will you really be willing to spend this life as oppressed, homeless persons wandering about the world, without kith or kin, picking up crumbs from the table of strangers?

Come to your senses, brothers and sisters! Return to the Homeland!

These Biblical references to crucifixion and betrayal for money may have been inserted by an atheistic state to appeal to its Christian citizens.

We do not entice you with some sort of fairy tale; we do not want to embellish anything. There are also some difficulties on our road. But we do not fear them and we shall overcome them jointly by steady and honest work. For we are free, we are at home, we work for ourselves, for our children, for our and their future, for the prosperity of our Fatherland! We are certain of our tomorrow, and we know that quiet and secure age awaits us! Every pair of honest working hands is dear to our country; every manual or intellectual worker will find here his place among the massed ranks of Soviet toilers!

Difficulties and hard work are promised to the returnees; but the ongoing postwar lack of accommodation and basic consumer items, even food, are not mentioned.

Return dear compatriots! The Homeland remembers you! The Homeland beckons you!

The first signature on the appeal is that of Soviet Army Major General Nikolai Filippovich Mikhailov, whose name became so closely allied to the campaign that the term "Mikhailov committee" was frequently used. There follow the names of the sixteen members of the committee. These individuals claimed they had themselves "returned home," presumably at the end of the Second World War under the terms of the Yalta agreement. The only name to occur later in the committee's documents is that of Ihor Leontiovich Muratov, the writer and laureate of the Stalin prize whose poetry was satirized in an anti-Soviet publication. He is noted in the *Encyclopedia of Ukraine,* published by the University of Toronto, as having worked for the Return to the Homeland Committee in the 1950s and as having been editor of its official Ukrainian-language propaganda organ, *Za povernennia na Batkivshchynu*. Nikolai Vladimirovich Dostal, a producer at Mosfilm Studio, is named in the thirty-second volume of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*; but none of the other fourteen appear noteworthy beyond the outward legitimacy their names offered to the campaign.[11]

Mikhailov's signature appeared on most committee documents until he was replaced in 1958. His background was murky and seemed rather mysterious, to the extent that apparently some critics of the committee in 1957 charged that he was "fictitious." The committee rebuffed the accusation, asserting that he was "well-known for his role fighting the fascists."[12] One American source of information about him comes from a 1956 article in the *National Review* by Walter Dushnyck, a former director of the South American Mission of Catholic Relief Services. He charged that Mikhailov had been a prisoner of war of the Nazis and had caused the execution of many Soviet anti-communists by informing against them to the Gestapo. After his liberation from the Germans by US forces, he apparently joined the Soviet security forces. He was said to have compiled thousands of dossiers on anti-communist refugees and displaced persons, and to have attempted to intimidate them into returning to their former homes behind the Iron Curtain while he was working with American and United Nations relief agencies. In 1947, in collaboration with the Italian communists, he endeavoured unsuccessfully to repatriate approximately 11,000 members of the First Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army who had surrendered to the British Army in Austria and were resisting being returned to the Soviet Union.[13] A corroborating *New York Times* article, also from 1956, noted that Mikhailov was hated by many of his anti-communist countrymen. He had become a turncoat in prison camp, then jumped back to the communist side after liberation, denouncing many fellow collaborators.[14]

At the end of the war, Soviet authorities were eager to effect the return not only of all Soviet citizens, but also of the many who had been deprived of Soviet citizenship before the war and were therefore exempted from the Yalta accords. On 14 June 1946, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR promulgated the law "On Restoring Soviet Citizenship to Subjects of the Former Russian Empire and to Persons Who Have Lost Their Soviet Citizenship." As a result of the edict, according to the *Great Soviet Encylopedia*, about 11,000 persons in France alone became citizens of the USSR, of whom roughly 2,000 returned to the motherland.[15] Roy Medvedev, Russian dissident historian, described the situation: "An intensive campaign for return to the homeland had begun in 1945–46 among émigrés living in Western Europe and Manchuria. Several thousand people responded to these appeals, of whom most were by this time children of the émigrés of the early [nineteen] twenties." Many were subsequently arrested. "Most of the arrests before 1950 were on the standard charges of 'espionage' or 'anti-Soviet activity while in residence abroad.' "[16] Regis Wergnier, director of the realistic French film *Est-Ouest* (1999), described meeting people in Central Asia who spoke fluent French:

> I asked them why, and they told me they were born in France and taken to Russia by their families.... They remember getting off the boats, they remember people being separated, they remember people being executed. Some remember being separated from their parents on the arrival day.[17]

A Soviet organization called the Directorate of Repatriation existed from the end of the war until 1953, when it was said to have been disbanded. Although Mikhailov's name has not been connected with the organization, it may provide a missing link in his career and give historic continuity to the campaign from the end of the Second World War to the formation of the committee. The workings of the directorate were described in the debriefing of a Soviet diplomat who defected in Canberra in 1954. The defector, whose name is blanked out in the report, was probably Nikolai Petrov, a third secretary and KGB resident. The "Petrov affair" was a major news item in Australia at the time, and Aleksei Makarov, a Soviet diplomat in Australia before his posting to Canada, mentions it in his recollections in *The Gouzenko Affair*.[18] The Australian document reported:

> The Directorate of Repatriation set up in Moscow after the war to arrange the return of Soviet nationals from abroad was headed and

> staffed by personnel drawn from the RIS [possibly the Repatriation Intelligence Service]. As an example, the repatriation team which visited Sweden when [Petrov] was there consisted of nine men, four of whom were from the MVD [Ministry of Internal Affairs] and five from the GRU [Military Intelligence Service]. In 1953 this directorate was abandoned and the work abroad was carried on by the Consuls; but the Intelligence Service had not lost their grip, because all the Consuls belonged to either the MVD or the GRU. Despite the call to return to the "good uncles" Khrushchev and Bulganin, [Petrov] is sure that there has been no real change so far as the attitude of the Intelligence Services is concerned.[19]

According to American sources the campaign to entice repatriates was being carried out in a "harsh" form in the refugee camps until April 1954, a year before the publication of the appeal.[20] Mikhailov's appointment as head of the Committee for the Return to the Homeland is compatible with continuing efforts to lure those who had previously opposed the regime but who finally saw the error of their ways. Such conversions provided good propaganda material, within the Soviet Union and abroad, and may offer an important motive for the existence of the campaign.

A first-hand encounter with Mikhailov was described in a United States Information Service press release from Berlin in September 1955 by the Nemovs, a family of Russian refugees. Living in Munich and intending to return to the Soviet Union, they visited the headquarters of the Committee for the Return to the Homeland in East Berlin and met Mikhailov. He apparently received the family very cordially at first; but on their second visit he showed a complete change of attitude "and made it clear that he was uninterested in their future fate — that this was a matter for the Consulate." His reserve was attributed in the report to the family's lack of co-operation, which was due to the family's growing sense they were dealing with an intelligence-gathering organization. They had refused to supply the names and addresses of émigré groups and individuals whom they knew in West Germany.[21] Forming lists of potential informants was undoubtedly another strong motive behind the committee's activities.

The appeal's clarion call echoed from East Berlin around the world in Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and the languages of the Baltic republics of the USSR: Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian. In addition to the appeal document itself, the committee began to publish newspapers and broadcast appeals over shortwave networks. Soviet embassies and consulates were

instructed to assist in facilitating the resettlement of expatriates to the Soviet Union. Letters with emotional pleas from relatives in the Soviet Union to relatives and friends abroad were sent directly by first-class mail. Appeals were also made from the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate in Moscow to congregations abroad.[22] Noting these activities Western governments and media began paying attention.

A second major step in the return-to-the-homeland campaign occurred a few months after the publication of the appeal with the promulgation on 17 September 1955 of an amnesty for Soviet citizens considered to have collaborated with the enemy during the Second World War. Amnesties had already been proclaimed by other Iron Curtain countries (Bulgaria in 1953, Hungary in April 1955, Czechoslovakia in May 1955, and Romania in June 1955). Nor was it the first time the Soviet Union had offered pardons. Numerous amnesties had been issued in the period between 1921 and 1926 to permit the repatriation of those who had participated in anti-Bolshevik organizations and rebellions, including soldiers from the White armies and other former citizens abroad. In a Soviet government publication, *Why We Returned to the Soviet Union*, a comparison is made between the return of approximately 120,000 in 1921 and the repatriation movement of the 1950s: "To some extent it was a repetition of the situation in 1921: guided by the Leninist principles of humanity, the Soviet state granted amnesty to those Soviet citizens who during the war ... were involved in collaborating with the occupying forces."[23]

The terms of the amnesty — *Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the Amnesty for Soviet Citizens who Collaborated with the Enemy During the Period of the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945* — are included here with slight editing:

> *After the victorious end of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet people achieved new and great successes in all the branches of economic and cultural development and further strengthened their socialist state.*
>
> *Taking this into account and the fact that war between the Soviet Union and Germany has terminated, and guided by humanitarian principles, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR considers it possible to extend amnesty to those Soviet citizens who, during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, due to faint-heartedness and ignorance, were drawn into collaboration with the occupation forces.*

In order to give these citizens a chance to return to a life of honest labour and to become useful members of socialist society, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR decrees:

1. The release from places of imprisonment and the lifting of other penal measures ordered against persons who were sentenced to terms of up to 10 years, inclusive, for collaboration with the enemy during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 and for other crimes that are defined [by the criminal code].

2. To reduce by one-half the sentences which were imposed by the courts for a term of more than 10 years for crimes as quantified in Article 1 of this decree.

3. To release from places of imprisonment, regardless of the length of the prison term, the persons who were sentenced for service in the German army and police, and in special German units. To terminate the sentences of persons who were exiled and banished for such crimes.

4. Not to extend this amnesty to members of punitive expeditions, who were sentenced for killing and torturing Soviet citizens.

5. To dismiss all cases under investigation and also all cases which were not tried by courts of those crimes committed during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945.

6. To quash the conviction and disenfranchisement of citizens who are released on the strength of this decree. To quash the conviction and disenfranchisement of citizens who have been tried previously and have served sentences for crimes quantified in Article 1 of this decree.

7. To absolve of their guilt those Soviet citizens who are living abroad and who during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945 surrendered to the enemy or served in the German army, police forces, and special German units. To absolve of their guilt those Soviet citizens who are now living abroad and who during the war held leading positions in security organizations formed by the occupying forces, gendarmerie, and in propaganda agencies, inclusive of persons who were drawn into anti-Soviet organizations in the post-war period, if they expiated their guilt by subsequent patriotic activities for the benefit of the Homeland or show remorse. In accordance with the legislation in force, to consider as extenuating circumstances

the voluntary surrender of Soviet citizens who are now living abroad and who committed serious crimes against the Soviet state during the Great Patriotic War. To order that in such cases the punishment by a court must not exceed 5 years of exile.

8. To entrust the Council of Ministers of the USSR to take measures to facilitate the return to the USSR of Soviet citizens and their families who are living abroad, regardless of their citizenship, and to arrange for their employment in the Soviet Union.

The first six articles of the amnesty pertain to "collaborators" who had returned to the USSR earlier, had been sentenced, and were still surviving in camps in the Soviet Union. Some of these were by 1955 being released. The seventh article was directed toward those displaced by the war and judged guilty of collaboration who had not returned to the Soviet Union, particularly from camps in West Germany and Austria. The eighth article deals with all Soviet citizens living abroad, whether or not they were judged to have committed crimes against the state, and who possibly had families who were not Soviet citizens. On 21 September 1955, just three days after the publication of the amnesty, Mikhailov linked the amnesty with his committee through a press release in which he announced that the committee was interested in obtaining the return of all former Soviet citizens "regardless of when they had left." The campaign's scope thereby encompassed pre-war emigrants to the Americas, non-returning wartime soldiers and forced labourers, and postwar refugees to the West from behind the Iron Curtain.

Walter Dushnyck attributed the increased vigour in the Soviet repatriation campaign in September 1955 to the "Spirit of Geneva," a period of softening in East-West tensions that followed the summit conference of July 1955. In the first summit since the Potsdam conference of 1945, Nikita Khrushchev, first secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, and "Premier" Nikolai Bulganin, chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, met with British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, US President Dwight Eisenhower, and French Prime Minister Edgar Fauré in an attempt to resolve the problem of a divided Germany. Although unsuccessful in that respect, the leaders seem to have made real efforts to understand each other, and the "Spirit of Geneva" was the beginning of a period of Cold War détente that lasted for approximately one year. In spite of the apparent softening of relations at the top, the instruments of Cold War espionage no doubt continued their activities unabated.

Peter Roberts raised the question of the role played by Khrushchev early in his research on the return-to-the-homeland campaign. The campaign had begun before the Geneva summit and before Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in February 1956. Roberts and Serge Cipko postulated in a 2000 publication, however, that the repatriation campaign could not have been initiated without Khrushchev's knowledge and support. By 2002, despite further research, the degree of Khrushchev's involvement was still not apparent. In an interview with Richard Longley of Fovea Films, Roberts stated:

> I've gone through his [Khrushchev's] memoirs, all of them, and I've gone through his son's memoirs, and I've gone to meet his son at Brown University where he now lives and works, and I've gone through all of Gromyko's memoirs looking for any trace of anything about the return-to-the-homeland campaign and there's nothing. Really nothing at all.... Khrushchev's son told me that Khrushchev himself had not given the order to proceed with this. His son went for a walk with him every night and the old man discussed matters of high policy with him. The son, ... Sergei Nikitich, told me that his father had never discussed the return-to-the-homeland campaign with him, or anything about it, or [had] anything to do with it.[24]

Premier Bulganin, however, was not only present at the Geneva Conference, but also received Konrad Adenauer, chancellor of the Federal German Republic, at the end of September 1955 in Moscow. The visit was part of an attempt to normalize relations with the Soviet Union. Bulganin raised the repatriation issue and asked Adenauer to assist in returning Soviet displaced persons and former prisoners of war still in Germany, whom he estimated to number 100,000.[25] An essential part of this program was the recent amnesty of 17 September.

Adenauer did not agree to the proposal, and Bulganin endeavoured to strengthen his argument by addressing a formal declaration, the main focus of which was displaced Soviet citizens, to the government of West Germany. As with the amnesty, the declared Soviet assumption was that they were being detained against their will, rather than remaining in the camps by free choice. After ten years, their hopes of being accepted as immigrants in Western countries must certainly have been dying, and morale was low.

The *Declaration of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, N.A. Bulganin on the Question of the Soviet Displaced Persons Who are Detained in West Germany* is as follows:

In the last war many hundreds of thousands of peaceful Soviet citizens were deported by force to Germany from the temporarily occupied areas of the USSR.

A multitude of them perished in the forced labour camps in Germany. After the defeat of Hitler's army, most of the survivors among the Soviet displaced persons returned to the Homeland, but a considerable number were detained, particularly in West Germany.

According to the available data, in the Federal Republic of Germany there are still over 100,000 such Soviet citizens who are called, in many cases, "stateless persons." The majority of these unfortunate people who were taken away from the Homeland and their families by force, have no steady jobs, shelter, or means of livelihood, and suffer great hardships and privations. They are in foreign hands, are dependent people with no rights. We know of many cases of Soviet displaced persons, who, dissatisfied with their difficult situation, are held in prisons in the German Federal Republic.

Certain organizations that are hostile to the Soviet Union, supported by the corresponding authorities, conduct malicious propaganda which hinders the work of repatriation, and intimidates and terrorizes the people who wish to return to their Homeland. Moreover, unacceptable attempts to use these people for criminal political purposes continue.

We believe that the situation that has developed in the German Federal Republic with respect to the Soviet displaced persons is abnormal, and violates humanitarian principles and those of personal liberty. The Soviet government moreover believes that it must defend also those Soviet citizens whose conduct, under certain conditions, toward the Homeland was unfair. We hope that they will improve and we will not make them answer for the crimes they committed.

Drawing the attention of the state delegation of the German Federal Republic to this fact, we hope that the government of the German Federal Republic will take the proper steps and will help return Soviet displaced persons to the Homeland.

The West German government continued to oppose Bulganin's request and refused to take part in the repatriation campaign. The USSR countered the lack of West German co-operation in mid-October 1955 by halting its return of German prisoners of war. Until that time 5,900 of 9,626 German prisoners had been freed from Soviet camps. *Izvestiia*, the official newspaper of the Soviet government, charged that Soviet nationals in Germany were being detained "in contradiction to the principles of humanity and person-

al freedom." *Izvestiia*'s Berlin correspondent reported that the "return-home committee" set up to facilitate the repatriation of Soviet nationals abroad had received dozens of letters from "Soviet exiles" in West Germany telling of the "tragic conditions" there.[26]

An additional repatriation initiative was made in 1955 at the United Nations, which had a particularly strong delegation headed by then-Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Michailovich Molotov. The second-ranking member was Yuozas Y. Matulis, a deputy of the Supreme Soviet and president of the Lithuanian Academy of Science. As Soviet representative to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (the Third Committee) he proposed on 15 October that the United Nations assist in the drive to repatriate Soviet nationals and those of other communist countries. In the words of the *New York Times* the Soviet Union "asked that the United Nations use its influence with the countries where the refugees now resided to stifle propaganda hostile to the countries of origin of the refugees, while opening the doors to propaganda designed to persuade the refugees to return."[27] Although in making his proposal Matulis had apparently emphasized that UN efforts should be "in accordance with the principle of voluntary repatriation," Western delegates rejected it on the grounds that the refugee problem could not be solved in this manner because the majority of refugees had already refused repatriation.[28]

Joseph Blaustein, chairman and American representative to the Third Committee, spoke strongly against the return-home campaign and summarized the way it was perceived at the time in the West. His statement was later broadcast through the Voice of America in Europe, and in the form of a pamphlet "widely distributed in émigré camps and other European centers of unsettled refugees."

In his statement, Blaustein recognized there was a real problem with so many refugees remaining in camps in West Germany and Austria who had neither returned to homelands east of the Iron Curtain, nor been resettled in new homes even ten years after the end of the Second World War. In part, he said:

> *Under the United Nations program, it is intended that each refugee be left entirely free to choose the solution to his own problem.... A refugee can decide to return to his home country. He can apply for settlement in another country. Or he can seek integration into the country in which he is now living.... The [United Nations] program which the United States firmly supports is designed to solve the particular refugee problem primarily by integration and with the help of rehabilitation....*

When the Soviets speak of "encouraged" repatriation or "voluntary" repatriation they do not mean the free choice which this term implies. What they really mean is persuasion and pressure to force these people to go back.... This bid and other approaches to the thousands of political refugees in the West ... fits right into the current Communist campaign — a campaign aimed at demoralizing and breaking the spirits of the refugees under the guise of invitations to return home and what the Communists term "amnesty." The steady flow of refugees from behind the Iron Curtain to the West has long been a challenge and a mockery to the claims of the superiority of the Communist system.

For the past 18 months, the Communists have aimed their come-home drive at these people under the nominal tags of repatriation. And the Soviet bid in the United Nations was just another attempt to gain for the Communists personal access to these refugees and to put new pressures on them and their families. The refugees recognize the weakness of the Communist "come-home" drive. They know better than anyone the nature of the system from which they fled, and the reasons for trying to induce them to come back across the Communist borders. They see through the "come-home" campaign all the way to its fearful implications of forced labour and the suppressed liberties, which have marked reprisals so often in the past.

These refugees continue to request asylum because they are convinced that police-state restrictions upon political, religious and other personal liberties continue to exist in their countries of origin. They do not wish to return to these conditions, and will not be influenced by temporary demonstrations of benevolence in a few selected exhibition cases of those who have returned.[29]

To reinforce its arguments in favour of resettlement and integration, the US government presented a cheque for $500,000 to the United Nations high commissioner for refugees, an initial contribution to a $16-million fund to be raised over four years. The United States, along with seven other countries (not including Canada), countered the Soviet proposal the following day, 6 October 1955, with one in which resettlement and integration, as well as repatriation, were included as means of solving the refugee problem. The USSR joined as a ninth proposer, presumably somewhat reluctantly, and the Third Committee adopted the proposal. States were urged to contribute to the special fund. Canada's representative to the Third Committee, Mrs. John E. Houck, pointed out that of forty-four countries that had voted in 1954 for the program of reducing the number of refugees in the camps, only twelve had contributed by August 1955.[30]

To strengthen its accusation that the Soviets did not really support voluntary repatriation, on 17 October 1955 the United States released reports that the Austrian government was applying pressure on refugees to return to their homelands. It claimed that a secret agreement had been made between the Soviet government and the Austrian chancellor when the latter had visited Moscow in the summer of 1955. "Russian missions" were being permitted to visit refugee camps in Austria and were attempting to intimidate the refugees into returning.[31]

By the fall of 1955 Canada's Department of External Affairs had been aware of the campaign to entice people back to the USSR for approximately six months, and it was developing a policy for addressing the issue. G.G. Crean, head of Defence Liaison (2), summarized a US State Department document titled "The Soviet Redefection Campaign" for distribution within the department:

> *The current repatriation campaign was first manifested in 1954 in increasing terrorization of the émigrés in Western Germany and Austria by the MVD.... Kidnapping, murders and staged redefection characterized this stage of the campaign aimed at creating panic and uncertainty among refugee leaders and organizations as a [prelude] to the campaign of inducements aimed at the ordinary émigrés.*

Crean wrote that he was not sure whether this was the intention of the Soviet leaders, "or whether having tried to break the nerves of refugees by tough methods and found these methods unsuccessful they tried an approach more in keeping with the tactics of Soviet diplomacy in 1955."[32] The appeal made by the Committee for the Return to the Homeland and the amnesty of that year show signs of a "softer" approach than that used by the Stalin-era Directorate of Repatriation.

A "softer" approach may have referred to method, but not to a change in the authority responsible for the campaign's implementation or in the reasons for its existence. Alexander Yakovlev has recently brought to light a reference both to the rationale behind it and to the responsible agency, in files not available for examination by Canadian archivists. In writing of the paranoia of Stalin's period, he cites the special convict-labour camps, "half of whose inmates were persons 'suspicious for their anti-Soviet ties' — former war prisoners and civilian repatriates." Yakovlev continues:

> Stalin's death brought little change. In 1955, ten years after the war, the top leadership returned to the war-prisoner problem, not however, out

of mercy. What happened was that KGB chairman Serov [Ivan Aleksandrovich, chairman 1954–58] informed the CC [Central Committee] of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] that the "defectors" from among the former war prisoners and Ostarbeiters who were in the West could be used as troops in a future war against the USSR. Heeding Serov, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet adopted a decree on 17 September 1955, "On an Amnesty for Soviet Citizens Who Collaborated with the Occupation Forces during the Great Fatherland War of 1941–1945."[33]

After providing this direct link between the amnesty and the KGB, Yakovlev unfortunately does not explore the repatriation campaign further, although he emphasizes that the amnesty was not "guided by Leninist principles of humanity." The connection with the KGB suggests their files could eventually provide more understanding of the return-to-the-homeland campaign. It may further account for the fact that George Bolotenko, archivist for CRCR, in the 1990s failed to find in the Russian state archives any materials relating to the origins and early days of the committee, or its first leader, Mikhailov.

Two | *Mikhailov's Committee Attacks*

On 20 September 1955, three days after the announcement of the amnesty, Mikhailov stated to the press that the Return to the Homeland Committee was interested in obtaining the return of all former Soviet citizens regardless of when they had left. In doing so he expanded its focus beyond the emphasis on wartime "collaborators" and brought to public attention the committee's activities related to article 8 of the amnesty decree, namely, "to facilitate the return to the USSR of Soviet citizens and their families who are living abroad regardless of their citizenship, and to arrange for their employment in the Soviet Union." Thus the KGB and the committee, its public face, were empowered through the amnesty directly by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, to which the KGB was nominally responsible.

Publication and distribution of propaganda were the most visible activities of the committee. The three most important documents of the campaign — the appeal, the amnesty decree, and Bulganin's declaration — were reprinted in Russian by the committee as a booklet, *Rodina zovet!* [*The Homeland Calls!*].[1] It was distributed to countries throughout the world, including Canada. The translation into English used in this book was made

by the Bureau of Translations, Foreign Language Division, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1957.

Beginning in 1955 the committee published a weekly Russian-language newspaper, *Za vozvrashchenie na Rodinu* [*For the Return to the Homeland*], which was also distributed globally. It featured stories of expatriates who had successfully resettled in the Soviet Union and open letters from people in the homeland to family and friends abroad with appeals to join them. Material from this periodical was also gathered together and published in booklet form, for example in *Golos Otchizny: Sbornik* [*Voice of the Fatherland: A Collection*]. The Russian version of *For the Return to the Homeland* was used as the model for similar periodicals in other East European languages — Latvian, Polish, Czech, Ukrainian.

The Ukrainian-language version, *Za povernennia na Batkivshchynu* [*For the Return to the Homeland*], was distributed widely in Canada, in addition to the original Russian-language version. CRCR holds in its files issues dating from 1956 to 1960. They contain articles highlighting the return of people to the USSR from many countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, West Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela.[2] The paper seems to have been distributed in Russian and other languages in all of these countries. The repatriates' ancestral roots in the Soviet Union were also diverse: Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Finn, Armenian, Jewish, Greek, Tatar, and Muslim.[3]

Each of the various incarnations of *For the Return to the Homeland* had its own staff of editors and writers situated at the headquarters in East Berlin. George-Yuri Moskal, a Canadian who left to study in Ukraine in 1957 and lived there for 35 years, learned a little of the structure of the publication when he worked for its successor, *Visti z Ukrainy* [*News from Ukraine*], in Kyiv in the 1960s.

> The well-known writer Iurii Kornylovych Smolych was in [East] Berlin. They were war correspondents for the Soviet Union during the war ... all those top writers. Then, after the war, he was the editor or one of the co-editors of the Ukrainian-language version of *For the Return to the Homeland*, in Berlin. In early 1960, I believe, the Ukrainian section was all transferred to Ukraine. He headed the Association for Cultural Relations with Ukrainians Living Abroad.

The message in all issues was strongly propagandistic. A sampling of the headlines to the letters that were published yields such pleas as: "Come home, Tomash, we're waiting for you!" and "There is no happiness in a foreign land."

The texts include: "I want everyone to know my happy news. I received my Soviet citizenship back. What happiness it is to live on your own land — your motherland." Another read, "Lots of people immigrated here, believing empty promises from the Canadian authorities and now many of them are going back home to Ukraine."

Articles on historical subjects in the paper supported the committee's claims that life in the West was not all that exiles had anticipated. The return of tens of thousands of Armenians from around the world in 1946–47, particularly from Lebanon, was featured in several stories.[4] Another topic dealt with the many Spanish Civil War refugees who had come to the USSR in the 1930s and in the mid-1950s were being allowed to return to Spain. Some apparently regretted this decision and settled once again in the USSR. "Here in the Soviet Union," one such refugee declared, "we feel at home. The way workers are protected here — Spanish workers can only dream." Another expressed it more succinctly, "Our Homeland is the Soviet Union."[5]

In late 1957 some Hungarians who had left Hungary during the anti-Soviet uprising of 1956 wanted to return but claimed they were being prevented from doing so by the British and French governments, a story that provided more material for the pages of *Za povernennia na Batkivshchynu*.[6] The occasional story focused on Canada, where a number of the 36,000 Hungarian refugees had reportedly made inquiries about returning to Hungary.[7]

The Ukrainian diaspora occupied a special place in the committee's efforts, as evidenced in its publication of the Ukrainian-language booklet *Batkivshchyna klyche!* [*The Fatherland Calls!*]. The opening pages were devoted to the text of the amnesty decree of 17 September 1955, a date that happened also to be the anniversary of the 1939 Soviet annexation from Poland of western Ukraine and western Belarus on the basis of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.[8] The preponderance of letters appealing to relatives and friends to return (82 per cent) originated from the western regions of Ukraine. *The Fatherland Calls!* endeavoured to inform its readers about the amnesty decree, that its terms encompassed veterans of the wartime Vlasov Army and of the SS Galicia Division, as well as members of the auxiliary police, of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, and of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The booklet stressed that the five years of imprisonment-exile referred to in the amnesty would only affect those guilty of major war crimes, active Nazi collaborators, or those who led anti-Soviet formations after the war. But even these culprits, it suggested, might not be sentenced to the five years of hard

labour if they were repentant. In urging readers not to believe the lies about the Soviet Union being disseminated in the West, it concluded with the rousing words from the appeal: "Our state is now more powerful than ever. He who raises a sword against it, will die by the sword."

The Fatherland Calls! also contained a number of messages addressed specifically to friends and relatives in Canada. They were similar to the open letters published in other campaign literature and in the pro-Soviet press in Canada. Why live unhappily in Canada when you could be content, surrounded by supporting relatives and friends in your homeland? Addressed specifically to western Ukrainians and western Belarusians, it asserted: life at home has changed; it is no longer what you knew under Polish rule. There is no unemployment; there are no uncertainties, only opportunities and progress.

The return-to-the-homeland cause was helped by left-leaning Canadian organizations through their own publications. An article reprinted in *Ukrainske slovo* [*Ukrainian Word*], a publication of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC), cited the case of Tamara Volodymyrivna Vetrenko, who was elected to a city council after her return from abroad, indicating that it was even possible for returnees to be elected to office.[9] And the comforts of life could be acquired: in one claim a letter writer from the city of Lviv assured his brother in Winnipeg, "The state stores here are organized along the same lines as the Eaton's department stores in Canada."[10] Comparisons such as this may seem ludicrous and they may even have seemed so then to the recipients. Perhaps the statement was meant as a clear warning to the brother that he should not believe any of the contents of the letter.

How the committee gathered the letter writers and their addressees may be answered through Mikhailov's history and the kind of power he seems to have exercised. Walter Dushnyck wrote:

> After the Geneva Conference the committee received large sums of money and unlimited powers to speed up its campaign. With a vast network of secret agents and front organizations at its service, it has become much more than a "repatriation" center. It is, in fact, a world-wide center of training for espionage, with probably the best mailing list and register of political exiles in the world.[11]

Given that the letters of appeal originated from hundreds of individuals and villages, the committee clearly had access "on the ground" with the power to extract letters, which the writers probably realized would be misused. Suspicion of anyone with family abroad or having contacts

with foreigners was a long-standing feature of Russian and Soviet regimes. Such contacts were especially dangerous in Stalinist times, and the danger certainly remained for as long as the East-West tensions of the Cold War existed. Correspondents knew that letters sent abroad were usually intercepted, and files on the writers were maintained by local KGB offices. Mikhailov's committee undoubtedly had access to such information, which it used for its own purposes. A letter from a mother in Estonia to a daughter in Vancouver was sent unofficially in the diplomatic bag, and was therefore written without fear of interception. She explained:

> *I forgot to tell you that you shall by no means come back here. This is no longer our home and the life is very difficult for all. Every person who applies for a visa is requested to ask their relatives abroad to come back to Estonia. I have also been asked to do so. Do not trust what is said about the conditions, everything is distorted.*[12]

Another source of possible addressees for return-to-the-homeland materials came to light when a series of robberies in West Germany was reported in *Ukrainski visti* (*Ukrainian News*) with the headline, "A List Thief Caught: Evidence Points to East Berlin."

> The German Political criminal police is conducting an investigation in the case of Petro Karpatski, 32, a driver, arrested November last. Evidence points to his having committed four robberies on the territory of the German Federal Republic, carrying away lists of data on emigrants from Eastern Europe.
>
> The accused was born in Russia and had lived in the last several months in Obermenzing. He is accused of having broken into the offices of the American Help Committee on March 25, 1955, and having removed besides 300 German Marks (DM), all the lists of foreigners. A month later he broke into a hotel and stole a document case from one of the emigrants from the Soviet Union. On June 13, 1955, he stole in Neu Ulm, from the office of the foreigners' camp, the list of data on 1,200 emigrants from Eastern Europe.
>
> This newspaper has connected that crime with actions of the committee of Mikhailov in East Berlin. The only strange thing about the whole affair is that the German police resolutely denied such supposition and now finds itself in an awkward position when faced with the confession of the accused.[13]

Locating and making contact with former Soviet citizens in West Germany had a purpose that became apparent at a press conference called 2 April 1957 by the executive secretary of the Return to the Homeland Committee, A.N. Dubovikov, held at the press office of the prime minister of the German Democratic Republic. In the process of repatriating "persons heading some subversive groups ... they told members of the Committee what activities they had to engage in." At this press conference and at a similar event, 6 February 1957, a number of Soviet citizens who had returned home testified that they had been forced to work as American spies while living in the West. One witness assured the assembled journalists: "His repentance was taken into consideration in the USSR and he was not punished in any way."[14]

Volodymyr Serhiichuk, Ukrainian historian, when asked how the emigrants were located in Canada, said, "Actually they were helped by some secret services. Here in Ukraine people were made to write letters to Canada, 'Life is wonderful here.' Newspapers, brochures were sent."[15]

Although the letters were addressed and signed individually, the contents followed a predictable formula. They are not quite form letters, but the pattern is repetitious. One letter might be effective, but en masse they are unconvincing — and show signs that the basic message may have been dictated or copied from a formula, with the writer being encouraged to add a little corroborative detail. These details, however, were sometimes just enough to negate the whole message.

The following story was sent to CRCR when it requested information on returnees through the media in Ukraine:

> My uncle, Iakiv Mefodiiovych Bortiichuk, and several other fellow villagers left for Argentina during Polish times. Admittedly, they did not come back. Though after the war there was a letter with the request to describe how we lived here under the Soviet regime. It was not possible to write the truth, the letter would not reach the addressee, and the author could find himself in Siberia.
>
> There was a very poor family in our hamlet: they had a small hut, children, the man wore *trepas* [wooden shoes] on bare feet during the winter, and the people called him by the nickname Kazio. So we wrote in the letter that we lived generally well, have everything, very affluent — like Kazio.[16]

Nadia Golik Demidenko, one of the Canadians interviewed for this book, had a very similar story about a letter sent by her father's niece:

> My cousin said she wrote my father that if he came back he'd have exactly the same kind of life a certain person had. Since this man was the most miserable, poorest person in the village, my father was supposed to get the message to stay away.

In this case, the recipients, Nadia's parents, did not "break the code" and, in spite of the warning, returned. According to Nadia, the relatives thought they were idiots for having done so.

One way to circumvent the censors in family letters is the subject of a famous and typically wry Russian joke. Two brothers had agreed before one left the country that the remaining brother would use black ink in his letters when writing the truth and red ink when not. The first letter arrived written all in black describing the success of the harvest, his new housing, the shelves crowded with consumer goods. Only one item was missing in this utopia, the brother wrote — red ink!

The need for families to communicate across the ocean could not be totally repressed, and extraordinary means were occasionally used. In 1957 an immigrant to Canada corresponded with his brother in Ukraine in poetic verse, using religious references. For example, in a poem titled "Penitence," "Satan" became a code word for the Soviet regime. In "Brothers" he speaks of his love of Mother Ukraine and of his "exile" in a way that makes clear that he does not intend to return. By not using specific identifying information, such as names or dates, the poet hoped to protect his relatives from the persecution to which they might have been subjected by Soviet authorities. In 1958 the Ukrainian brother's reply was published in a return-to-the-homeland newspaper in Berlin and reprinted in a pro-Soviet paper in Canada where his brother would see it. The letter contained clear propaganda material and a plea to his brother to return; but a reference to the amnesty decree was included that would have reminded his brother that he could still be considered "guilty" because of his war record. He had protected himself and his family by writing for publication, thereby showing support for the regime.[17]

In other letters, reference to a deceased relative as if he or she were still alive, whether made purposefully or unwittingly by someone not fully acquainted with the family, warned the recipient not to believe the contents. In at least one case the "tone" of the letter stood out as false, in this case overly propagandistic: "I received a letter from my daughter written in a way no daughter would ever write to a father."[18]

Such letters were not only unconvincing to the recipients, they were counterproductive; the implied intervention by Soviet authorities was itself threatening. The fact that private addresses were being mysteriously obtained and misused clearly demonstrated the long arm of the committee and the co-operation it received from police such as the MVD or the KGB.

On the other hand, letters describing the real state of the Soviet world with warnings not to return never arrived. Jim Lenko gave the example of a letter from his sister:

> She and her husband and two children had gone a month before us, and when they arrived in Leningrad [St. Petersburg] they knew exactly what was happening, knew it was all wrong. She wrote us a letter immediately, telling us not to come. But that letter never arrived. You know, the KGB in those days. They would have read it. She tried to tell us.

Personal and propagandistic shortwave-radio broadcasts supplemented the letters and publications. Broadcast schedules were contained in letters written by the committee. An example, signed by committee president Mikhailov, was reprinted in the *National Review* as part of Walter Dushnyck's article exposing the duplicity of the committee:

> *Dear countryman:*
> *The Committee has been sending you the newspaper "For the Return to the Homeland" for quite some time now. It would give us pleasure to know how the contents of the newspaper suit you and others of our countrymen. In all probability you and your friends know of the amnesty order of the Presidium of the ... Supreme Council. Write us how the views and attitude of people have changed in connection with this order. We will be very grateful to you for that.*
>
> *Do you listen to the Committee's broadcasts, broadcast every day from 10 to 20 o'clock, Mid-European time, 332 meter wave length (of 904 kHz)? What is the reception where you are? What suggestions do you have for these broadcasts?*
>
> *If you have not as yet decided to return to the Homeland, tell us what are the objections: we will answer all questions. The Committee can also help you find friends and relatives in the Soviet Union so that you can correspond with them.*[19]

The Nemov family, who had the experience of actually meeting Mikhailov at his headquarters, said they had been influenced to return to the USSR by the "Spirit of Geneva" and the amnesty, as well as by the committee's newspaper appeals and radio broadcasts. They were shocked to find that during their interview with Mikhailov their own voices were being recorded for broadcast. They were handed prepared texts and given no say in the contents

of their statements. A Soviet intelligence officer dictated a letter for Mrs. Nemov to write to her mother in West Germany pleading with her to join them. The poor living conditions they observed in East Berlin and the rough manner in which they were interrogated combined to disillusion them completely, so that they fled to West Berlin on the day they were to have been escorted by a senior lieutenant of the MVD back to the USSR. Convinced that the committee was a trap and a front for Soviet intelligence, they were determined to warn others to avoid making what they considered would be an almost fatal error. The distribution of their story as a press release by the US Information Service was a major step in that direction.[20]

In addition to bombarding potential repatriates with propaganda through publications and broadcasts, the committee had agents working directly within the local émigré communities. In Canada one organization that offered the possibility for such interaction was the strongly pro-Soviet and pro-communist Federation of Russian Canadians (FRC), with branches in cities across Canada and its own Russian-language weekly newspaper, *Vestnik* [*The Messenger*]. The federation had its beginnings in Russian Workers' and Farmers' Maxim Gorky clubs, which in turn grew out of meetings at the Ukrainian Labour Temple in Toronto in 1930. Branches had quickly formed in London, Brantford, Hamilton, and Montreal. Its primary goal had been the creation of a Russian-language newspaper. The organization was banned in Canada during the period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact (1939–41), but was recreated under its new name in 1942, having joined forces with the Russian Committee to Aid the Fatherland, which had been established after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. Membership in the FRC peaked during the war years, with more than 3,000 members being reported in branches in major cities across Canada. With the inclusion of families and the collaboration of some White Russian émigrés and Doukhobors in support of the Soviet war effort, sympathizers were said to have numbered about 10,000. The majority of members appear to have been Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian, although anyone who considered herself to be Russian could join. The Ukrainians to a large extent come from the regions of Volhynia and Polisia, which along with western Belarus had been part of the Russian Empire before 1914. The Ukrainians of these regions were mainly Orthodox by religion, as were many Belarusians and the majority of Russians.

A special celebratory edition of *Vestnik* in 1961, on the occasion of the federation's thirtieth anniversary, editorialized on the paper's political stance:

> The coming period is bound to prove the absolute superiority of socialism over capitalism. Socialism will graphically illustrate it can better feed, house and clothe, better satisfy all the material and spiritual needs of man than can capitalism. The socialist states will be so powerful that no country will be able to start a war. The end of the present decade will see us living in a new and different world.... This is something every Russian Canadian and every organization of Russians in Canada — the FRC, church, religious, cultural and even anti-Soviet — must consider deeply and seriously.... If our eyes are turned toward the future, then we must meet and welcome this challenge![21]

The AUUC, incorporated 16 November 1946, had grown out of the Ukrainian Labour Temple Association, founded in 1918 in Winnipeg. It published two newspapers, *Ukrainske slovo* (*The Ukrainian Word*) in Toronto, and *Ukrainske zhyttia* (*Ukrainian Life*) in Winnipeg. It had close ties with the FRC, being described as a fraternal organization by George-Yuri Moskal, who in later years became its president.[22]

The involvement of the FRC and the AUUC in return-to-the-homeland activities was confirmed by several interviewees for this study. The niece of Volodymyr Marushchak reported in Ukraine in 2002 that her uncle had told her of "agents" in Toronto telling people how good it was in the Soviet Union and trying to persuade them to go back to their homeland. The father of a family from Niagara-on-the-Lake told officials at the Canadian Embassy in Moscow in 1956 that he had received considerable prodding from the FRC. "He was told by officials of this organization that there was great prosperity in the Soviet Union and that he would receive all possible help and encouragement in establishing himself." He had also been greatly influenced by the glowing accounts of life in the Soviet Union appearing in *Ukrainian Life*.[23]

The Canadian Embassy in Moscow reported to Ottawa an encounter between an agent and a woman from Hamilton who had come to the embassy seeking help:

> *She and her husband, and many others, had been strongly urged to come back by a Hamilton man called ——, a Communist who had been here for a visit and who works for the newspaper* Vestnik. *Mrs. —— was convinced that this man was paid by the Russians for his efforts on their behalf among Russian and Ukrainian Canadians.... When Mr. —— was in this country recently, Mrs.*

—— came to Moscow to see him. She told him that he must not advise Canadians to come here to live. He replied, according to Mrs. ——, that he had never given such advice. On the contrary, he usually advised Canadians that, if they have been long in Canada, it might be hard to adjust to the new conditions in the Soviet Union.[24]

Jim Lenko remembered that some members of the pro-Soviet community in Toronto travelled to the Soviet Union and returned with stories about how good life was: "Those people had to be being paid by somebody because it was impossible to be in the Soviet Union and have a good opinion of it if you had your eyes open."

Lenko's reference is probably to Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking members of the FRC and AUUC, but could also have pertained to English-speaking "fellow travellers," members of the Canadian Soviet Friendship Society. No direct connection has been found between it and the return-to-the-homeland movement, but Canadians such as James Endicott, Frances and Libbie Park, and Dyson and Charlotte Carter, wrote glowing accounts of life in the USSR after trips there in the early to mid-1950s. Their relationship with the Soviet Union was primarily through the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations Overseas (VOKS), which distributed English-language propaganda to pro-Soviet organizations throughout the world.

Valerie Wolchuk, on the other hand, did not believe that the positive stories she heard in Canada were motivated by financial incentives:

> We knew people who were going back and forth, friends of mine from Winnipeg. They were going on all kinds of delegations to the Soviet Union while we lived there [in Winnipeg]. No one said that it was a bad place to go, that life was very difficult. No one. They saw only what they were allowed to see, and we'd ask, "How is it there?"
>
> "Everything's fine. Oh, it's great." So that was another part of the propaganda. You know, you really don't know until you live there.

An internal memorandum to the undersecretary of state of External Affairs in December 1955 was titled "Return to the Homeland — Part played by Canadian Communists." The department and the RCMP seemed to agree that the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) was not directly involved in the campaign:

The foreign-language newspapers which are under Communist control among the Eastern European groups have given some support to the repatriation campaign.

The Canadian Tribune [*the English-language publication of the Communist Party of Canada*] *which is currently being extremely loyal to old Canadian traditions and to what it defines as Canadian national interests, has almost completely avoided any reference to the 'return to the homeland' movement.*[25]

Attached to the memorandum is a copy of a letter to External Affairs from the RCMP. In it an RCMP officer describes what he heard at the convention of the Polish Canadian Mutual Benefit Society in Toronto, 8 October 1955. Delegates were told "to become friendly with immigrants to this country; to describe the faults of the Canadian Government to them; and attempt to have them return to Poland."[26] Similar messages may well have been delivered at FRC and AUCC meetings regarding the return of Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking immigrants to the USSR — at which RCMP officers may also have been in attendance.

An unsigned secret report dated 6 April 1956, quite possibly written by the RCMP, is titled "Soviet and Satellite Repatriation Campaigns." Part 3 of the document, headed "Communist Party Activity Regarding Repatriation," reports concern within the FRC about the return-to-the-homeland campaign:

There is some evidence of a reluctance [*on the part of the Communist Party*] *to enter wholeheartedly into the repatriation campaign. In February 1955 the National Secretary of the Communist-controlled Federation of Russian Canadians spoke as follows of the adverse effect of repatriation on the Canadian Communist movement: "What will then become of our organization when eventually they all go to the USSR?"* [27]

Vestnik felt obliged also in April 1956 to carry an editorial clarifying the FRC's position. It reported that Ukrainians and Belarusians were returning from many countries, approximately 800 from Argentina alone. The position of *Vestnik* and the FRC was not to wage a campaign for or against the movement: "That is a decision for the individual," the editorial said. Not only were Soviet citizens returning from Canada and the United States, the editorial continued, but also Italians, Swedes, and Germans were returning to their homelands, "for various reasons." Individual immigrants to Canada experienced good and bad times; but the editors of *Vestnik* expressed satisfaction that there was no government effort in Canada to stop the return, which would have constituted direct interference in a natural process.[28]

Whether or not the federation directly supported the campaign, it maintained a strong pro-Soviet program in its halls. The fact that some of its

members responded individually to the appeal encouraged others to do the same. The nature of the propaganda films that were shown and the literature that was distributed, although not directly the product of the committee, strongly supported the committee's message, "All is well. A beautiful life awaits you." *Vestnik* regularly published letters to friends in Canada from recent returnees. None mentioned problems of accommodation or adjustment, or the impossibility of returning to Canada. On the other hand, none urged others to join them directly, a perfect solution to the policy dilemma the FRC faced.

For the younger generation, as opposed to their parents, the organizations were social and cultural rather than political. Nadia Golik Demidenko described her experiences as a child at the FRC in Toronto:

> When we moved to Toronto ... my father joined the FRC as many of the members of that federation came from western Ukraine and villages in western Belarus.
>
> As soon as my parents joined the club, they took me along with them. They put me in the children's dance group and in the music class. I sang in the children's choir. I did everything everyone else did. I was immersed completely. I took Russian and Ukrainian folk dancing, mandolin lessons, and later on I started playing mandolin in the orchestra. It was fun and it involved children in the cultural life of Ukraine — not Canadian culture, but Russian and Ukrainian culture. It gave them something to do. It kept the kids off the streets.

Of her parents' activities at the club, Nadia said:

> That organization was a Soviet propaganda tool, I think, because they showed movies, Soviet-made films, many of which were about World War II. The old folks liked heroic films like that, but later on they began to show how the Soviet Union was being rebuilt, how wonderful it was there, and how happy the Soviet people were, how everything was being done for the working man and his family. My parents started to soak that up, and that's what led to what happened [the family's return to the homeland.] Whenever they showed these Soviet movies at the club, whenever Stalin appeared on the screen in his white coat, everybody would start applauding, and some would even stand up and give him a standing ovation. That was how people reacted to him. And, of course, when he died, you can imagine that these people who applauded him were sad.

Valerie Wolchuk spoke of her family's involvement with the FRC in Winnipeg:

> My mother had a social life because she went to the hall every week. I don't know if it was a communist nest. It was a Russian hall where people gathered and had banquets and parties, and also there was a youth club. There were choirs; it was a busy life. There were clubs all across the country and every so often they had a conference in Toronto that I used to come to. The choirs and dance groups used to travel across the country. So I grew up in this environment. I belonged to the choir. I played in the orchestra.
>
> *Moscow Nights* and that kind of movie showed a beautiful life. There were others that were portraying life after the revolution, how wonderful everything was, even the agriculture. It was just one happy life, so it must be true. People were certainly influenced by the movies and the literature.
>
> I think it was everything that she read in the papers, in *Vestnik*, that persuaded my mom that it would be a good idea to go back. It had all the news. It had a very important influence on all the Russian people.

Nikolai Petrov, the Soviet defector in Australia, described how, after the Directorate of Repatriation was closed in 1953, the work abroad was carried on by consuls. "They, however, belonged to either the MVD [Ministry of Internal Affairs] or the GRU. [Military Intelligence Service]." The distribution of personnel at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa has been described by Aleksei Makarov, formerly an officer there. He revealed that the number of "clean" diplomatic officers — ones reporting to the MID (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) — was outnumbered by those responsible to the MVD, KGB, and GRU. He claimed that in Ottawa the latter made up more than 50 per cent.[29] Some of the non-foreign-affairs officers would certainly have been involved in duties related to repatriation of Soviet citizens.

During the late 1950s the name of Alexei Selivanov, third secretary of consular affairs at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, recurs several times in return-to-the-homeland files. In September 1956 he and another embassy official were involved in an attempt to buy data on the CF 105 (the Avro Arrow, "Canada's super jet," then in development) from a junior RCAF employee at the Rockcliffe (Ottawa) airbase whom they had met at the Civil Service Recreational Association chess club. The other official, Gennadi F. Popov, a second secretary at the embassy, was expelled by the Canadian government

for "engaging in activities incompatible with his continued presence in Canada." The *Toronto Star* article on the case suggested the government would have preferred not to make the matter public so as to avoid another Gouzenko-period spy hunt that would disturb the Soviet-Canadian relationship. The *Star* presumed there was insufficient evidence to warrant asking for Selivanov's recall.[30]

Certainly External Affairs was investigating Selivanov at about that time with regard to the limits of consular activities. His name became prominent in accusations of blackmail made against the Soviet Embassy by Pavlo Hlushanytsia. Although he was divorced from his wife, who was still living in Ukraine, over the years he received occasional letters from his daughter, Oksana. The nature of the letters from her changed in the summer of 1956. He received a signed letter from her appealing to him in the language of the Return to the Homeland Committee. As he described in a letter to Lester B. Pearson, secretary of state for External Affairs, Oksana's letter was "written in a way no daughter would ever write to a father." Her letter was followed by one from Selivanov informing Hlushanytsia that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR had received a request from Oksana to give her father help in returning. Selivanov requested that Hlushanytsia visit the consulate to read the letter from his daughter, that being desirable for the discussion of questions connected to his return to the "Fatherland."[31]

After receiving the letter from the Soviet Embassy Hlushanytsia wrote again to Pearson. He did not believe that Oksana's letter had been written of her own free will, but had been extracted from her by the MVD. He declared that he would hold Selivanov responsible for Oksana's safety. On 5 September Hlushanytsia held a press conference repeating publicly the same accusation of blackmail. His story received wide coverage and was featured not only on the front page of the *Toronto Telegram,* but in the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Toronto Star* editorial page, the *New York Times,* and in the ensuing weeks in various Canadian foreign-language publications.[32] In a third letter to the minister, he requested assistance in bringing his daughter to Canada and was referred to the immigration office in Toronto.[33]

Had Selivanov contravened consular practice in asking Hlushanytsia to come to the Soviet Embassy to read his daughter's letter? The question was picked up by the press. Harold Morrison of the Canadian Press inquired whether External Affairs was going to demand Selivanov's recall. An opinion was ventured on 7 September 1956 in an internal memorandum to the minister that the Soviet Embassy seemed to be getting very close to

improper pressure or even intimidation, and its participation in the campaign was not to the liking of the Canadian government and people. A hand-written note on the memorandum suggests Selivanov's letter was skilful and chiefly objectionable on the grounds of withholding the daughter's letter, which may or may not be an improper activity.[34]

Possibly related to the assessment of Selivanov's behaviour was a request on 5 September 1956 from External Affairs, which asked the Canadian Embassy in Washington to obtain from the US State Department full details of two cases: the recent expulsion by the Americans of a Soviet diplomat and a warning to another about his participation in the return-to-the-homeland campaign, as had been reported in the *New York Herald Tribune* on 30 August. In particular the Canadian government was interested in details of any general warning given in advance to the Soviet mission of the grounds on which the decision to expel was made, and of the manner in which the decision was conveyed and explained to the Russians. The embassy was authorized to say that Canada might have a similar case under consideration and would like to benefit from the United States' experience in reaching the decision.[35] On 13 September Ambassador Arnold Heeney and his staff met with the US State Department officers in charge of Soviet and Eastern European affairs. Heeney reported that the diplomat who had been expelled had been a member of the Soviet mission to the United Nations and had attempted to recruit a Columbia University student of Russian extraction for espionage purposes. There had been a general warning that the United States would not tolerate such activities after an earlier incident. Difficulties in the case against the diplomat arose in that the student was not technically yet an American citizen and had not at first discouraged the overtures of recruitment. The question of coercion was therefore uncertain; but the final decision to expel the diplomat was made on political grounds. The State Department was apparently under pressure to adopt a firmer attitude to non-diplomatic activities by Soviet officials, perhaps still in the shadow of the McCarthy era.[36]

Also in September 1956 a doctor of Latvian origin reported to External Affairs that he had been approached by a Soviet official who had tried to persuade him to return to the USSR. The official had also suggested that the doctor should give the Soviet Embassy information about other refugees in Canada: "—— [the Soviet official] is apparently well involved in the repatriation campaign."[37]

After much consideration External Affairs apparently decided not to expel Selivanov — he was still carrying on consular activities at the Soviet

Embassy in July 1957.[18] These included issuing citizenship papers, travel documents, and one-way tickets to those who responded positively to the appeal. His duties also included informing returnees that if they did not wish to stay in the Soviet Union, they could choose to leave. Whether through purposeful misrepresentation or ignorance of the rules that would be applied to the Canadian immigrants, his assurance led a number of trusting young Canadians to accompany their families when they might not otherwise have done so. Intended short visits in some cases became life sentences. The doors of the Soviet Union were barred, just as they were to all Soviet citizens.

Three | *Counterattacks*

THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT LEARNED EARLY OF THE RETURN-TO-THE-HOMELAND movement through an application for transit visas from the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa to the passport office of the United Kingdom. On 12 April 1955 the British forwarded the request to the Department of External Affairs. Twenty people were in transit on Soviet passports or Soviet certificates of repatriation through Britain to the Soviet Union. Some had been in Canada for as little as four years, but most of them for closer to twenty-eight years, which means they were predominantly pre-Second World War immigrants.

Another indication of the campaign came from the Czechoslovak and Hungarian amnesties proclaimed in May 1955 on the tenth anniversary of the war's end.[1] In the same month, the *New York Times*, an always-careful observer of Soviet activities, noted the formation of the Return to the Homeland Committee in two articles.

In addition Canadian individuals and organizations began sending concerned letters to the government in April 1955. The Slovak Legion was one of the first. It was a member of the anti-communist Mutual Cooperation League, which was composed of fourteen other organizations: the National Committee for Free Albania, the Bulgarian National Front, the Byelorussian National Association, the Cossack National Liberation

Movement, United Croatians of Canada, the Estonian National Committee, the Canadian Hungarian Association, the Latvian National Federation, the Canadian Lithuanian Federation, Macedonian Organization "Victory," the Canadian Polish Congress, the Rumanian National Association, the Slovenia National Federation, and the Ukrainian Canadian Committee. The strongest objection raised was that members felt threatened by the material they were receiving — appeals to return in letters from families still behind the Iron Curtain and unsolicited return-to-the-homeland newspapers and literature. First-class mail was being sent to addresses that the recipients often felt should not have been known to strangers. The fact that the Return to the Homeland Committee knew the whereabouts of an immigrant was evidence of his location having been betrayed by a relative at home under duress, or by a Soviet agent hidden in his local ethnic organization or even in his church. One interviewee believed that someone in Canada's immigration department had given his guarantor's address to the committee because his family received the unwanted literature at an address that could only have been taken from his family's immigration application. The fact that the Soviet Embassy occasionally forwarded mail or notified the recipient that a letter was being held was found particularly threatening. The Canadian government was asked to prevent the delivery of such letters — in effect to censor the mail before its delivery — and to challenge the Soviet Embassy on the grounds of inappropriate diplomatic behaviour.

As with Pavlo Hlushanytsia's letter from his daughter, the Soviet Embassy's intervention in family communications is evidenced in a letter sent in October 1955 to a blanked-out recipient:

> *Your son, ——, residing in USSR, asked us to help you in returning back to your homeland. Taking in consideration your son's wish, we are writing you this letter to inform you that we can give you the necessary assistance in your repatriation. For this purpose you have to visit our Consulate at the Embassy where we can discuss all the details in connection with your journey home. If you cannot visit the Consulate, we can send you all the necessary Application Forms for a Visa and settle this matter in writing. No doubt, you know that at the present time, the Soviet Citizens who as a result of war are living in foreign countries have a right for a free repatriation to join their families and relatives.*

The letter went on to quote portions of the amnesty decree of 17 September 1955. Finally it said:

As you see, all Soviet citizens have now the possibility to return to their homeland and work honestly for the prosperity of their land and their people. We ask you to consider all the above mentioned and to let us know your decision in order that we can inform your son about it.[2]

A copy of the letter was brought to External Affairs by the national commissioner of the Canadian Red Cross Society, who had been given it by the recipient, a postwar immigrant. A letter from her son had been enclosed. An internal departmental memorandum recorded the opinion of the European and protocol divisions that they did not think the letter could be regarded as improper, and that the Soviet Embassy had remained within the bounds of normal consular procedure. The Defence Liaison (2) division, known as DL(2), was the division of External Affairs responsible for intelligence and security. It cautioned:

What we normally do not know in a case like this is the extent to which Soviet authorities have put pressure on relatives in the Soviet Union, or have used improper methods to ascertain the addresses of former nationals now in Canada.

A further reason for not challenging the Iron Curtain missions was suggested:

Since we have some Canadian citizens in each of the Iron Curtain countries who have difficulty leaving because they are dual nationals, we should preserve our right to contact them through our missions on the basis of their Canadian citizenship and of appeals from relatives in Canada. If the 'Return to the Homeland' campaign produces a movement of more Canadian citizens to these countries, there may well be an increase in consular problems created by those who have second thoughts after getting there or who still wish to maintain contact of various kinds with Canada.[3]

DL(2) frequently took the lead in return-to-the-homeland matters, along with the European and consular divisions and the Special Branch of the RCMP. On 13 June 1955 it circulated a memorandum, "Pressure on Soviet and satellite refugees to return to their homelands," in which it stated that DL(2)'s interest was limited to the light the campaign threw on communist aims and activities. With regard to the returnees who had required British transit visas, it stated that "a good number of them had connections with subversive organizations in Canada," meaning possibly the FRC or AUUC or the Communist Party itself, all of which would have been under surveillance by the RCMP. The document summarizes the "bits of information obtained from a wide variety of sources over the past month or so [that] indicate that some sort of co-ordinated effort is being made by the Soviet

Union and the satellite states to induce their nationals abroad to return to the homeland." A further "bit of information" has been blanked out from the document for reasons of security. The author opined that any warning to be conveyed to Canadians should be done by the consular division through the Department of Citizenship and Immigration's contacts with editors of Canadian foreign-language publications.[4]

The government's position initially, as reflected in replies from the minister and other Canadian officials on his behalf, became one of non-intervention. One less-than-convincing justification for this stance was that according to the government, the campaign was being carried out not by Soviet-bloc governments themselves, but by a private committee of volunteers in East Berlin.

On 15 June 1955, a question in the House of Commons from Erhart Regier, member of Parliament for Burnaby-Coquitlam, brought the Czechoslovak amnesty to public attention. He complained about an advertisement placed by the Czechoslovak legation in the *Montreal Gazette*. Lester B. Pearson, secretary of state for External Affairs, replied that the advertisement "is addressed to Czechoslovak citizens and therefore cannot, as such, be considered officially as improper as it would undoubtedly be if it were addressed or directed to Canadian citizens of Czechoslovak origin or former nationality." He issued a warning, however, to anyone who would consider returning in response to the amnesty:

> *I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that any Czechs or Slovaks in Canada who have escaped from Czechoslovakia since the communist coup in 1948, and who may see this advertisement, will not be misled by it and will examine carefully what this amnesty does and does not promise before deciding to return. There is no amnesty at all for political prisoners and the amnesty afforded to those who merely left the country illegally is both limited and ambiguously worded. Furthermore, anybody who returned to Czechoslovakia on the strength of this amnesty and did not like what he found out there about its application would doubtless find it very difficult — to the say the least — to leave again.*[5]

Faced with the increasing need for a detailed policy on consular relations with the USSR and its satellite countries, in December 1955 DL(2) announced its intention of preparing, in consultation with other interested divisions (European, consular, legal, and protocol), "a report defining what the Department would regard as the limits of legitimate consular activity to be undertaken by foreign missions in a repatriation campaign." The memorandum suggested an initial list of activities that could be considered "improper" unless they were given the specific approval of the Canadian government:

appeals to Canadian citizens to leave Canada, or attempts to influence non-Canadians whom the foreign mission regarded as nationals but who had no desire for contact with the mission. Admitting that there would be difficulties in making this distinction effective, the officer in DL(2) queried if such limits could be justified by international law or usage, how limits had been defined in the past, and whether the government had previously permitted foreign missions to engage in such activities. Relevant files were being researched and letters were being sent to London and Washington asking for their comments. It was hoped that there would be "some substantial information within the next couple of weeks. Parliament will be meeting early in January and it is very likely that there will be questions asked then about the Government's attitude towards the 'return to the homeland' campaign."

A detailed and lengthy opinion on the above questions was eventually circulated by the legal division in July 1956; and it became the basis of Canadian policy insofar as international law was concerned.

> *It would be well nigh impossible to establish by reference to international law only, a working rule in abstracto as to what are "proper" and "improper" activities in this field. The particular circumstances of a foreign agent's acts would have to be fully taken into account in each case to determine with any certainty whether they may be considered objectionable with regard to international law.*

The document then examined the regular functions of consuls. Propaganda was not one of them, and therefore it could be considered improper if it was inconsistent with certain fundamental precepts — that is, if it ran counter to the security, order, and sovereignty of Canada, or if it contravened Canadian laws or regulations as established by Canadian authorities:

> *It may be that we would consider as objectionable for political reasons some propaganda activities which would not be illegitimate according to these criteria. A study of state practice might well indicate that serious curbs have been put to miscellaneous activities of diplomatic missions by receiving states where these activities might not have been actually deemed to be irregular under the precepts of international law.*

In the matter of communications with foreign nationals, the memorandum continued:

> *It would appear that Iron Curtain missions are perfectly entitled to communicate with their nationals in Canada since their so communicating is in itself part of the mechanism involved in the extending of protection to their nationals. They*

ought not, however, to direct to their nationals such communications as could by their nature constitute a breach of Canadian law.

An example of such a communication would be one that contained a threat. The Criminal Code, Section 316, levelled a penalty against anyone

who sends, delivers, utters, or directly or indirectly causes any person to receive a letter or writing that he knows contains a threat to cause death or injury to any person, or to burn destroy or damage real or personal property. However, it should be kept in mind at the same time that a number of the foreign nationals who are likely recipients of Iron Curtain missions' letters have left their countries illegally, and are subject to the penalties provided for such acts under the law of their country of origin. A communication from their Embassy or Legation in Canada informing them of this situation might not be considered by a Canadian court as a threat under Section 316.

With regard to Canadians of dual nationality, the memorandum stated that the acquisition of Canadian citizenship under Canadian laws did not thereby terminate a previous bond with another country:

It might be that, under the provisions of the nationality laws of "Iron Curtain" countries, a number of Canadian citizens still retain the nationality of those countries. In those circumstances, the missions of these countries in Canada would be justified in treating these dual nationals as their own nationals in so far as Canadian laws do not restrict this practice; (for instance, under the Foreign Enlistments Act, the sending by foreign agents of call-up notices to Canadian citizens is forbidden, be they dual nationals or not.)

In a final section the author of the document suggested that Canadian authorities might be justified in requesting that activities in the nature of the return-to-the-homeland campaign be restricted in given circumstances. A state could legally prohibit emigration altogether. Thus the Canadian government might be said to be acting within its right if it imposed certain restrictions on the campaign, or if it asked to be kept fully informed by Iron Curtain countries of the activities they intended to carry out in furtherance of this campaign. Iron Curtain countries, on the other hand, had certain rights as far as repatriation was concerned:

The absolute competence of every state in emigration matters also implies that a state can, at any moment, request those who have emigrated to return to their former home provided the emigrants have retained their former nationality.[6]

With respect to the matter of return-to-the-homeland materials being received by individuals or organizations in the mail, in January 1956 Jules Léger, undersecretary of state for External Affairs, received replies to the department's request for rulings from W.J. Turnbull, the deputy postmaster general, and from D. Sim, the deputy minister of National Revenue, Customs and Excise. The latter took up the question of the prohibition against publications of a "seditious" character, saying that his department had limited its interpretation of the word to the standard definition, "the overthrow of government by force." Mr. Sim continued:

We are of the opinion that a test before the courts would indicate that we had acted beyond our powers should we prohibit straight repatriation invitations under the wording of the tariff item.

If the results of these appeals, however, are proving to be injurious to the public interest, then it may be that certain administrative measures should be taken to see that this material keeps within the provisions of the law....

Normally first-class mail of this type would go through without being referred to Customs for examination as there would be little reason to suspect it of coming within the dutiable or prohibited class unless its bulk or some other unusual visible characteristic indicated the contrary.

If the present problem is of sufficient gravity, the postal officials might be specially alerted for letters from certain countries where the appearance of the letters suggest that they contain literature suspected of seditious content or purpose. These he would turn over to Customs for examination. The individual addressee would of course be protected by the fact that his letter could only be opened in his presence....

If certain countries are using the mails for campaigns of this kind, bordering on the seditious, it is not beyond possibility that they might well go beyond the law at some time.... Short of an amendment to the law or a court decision declaring such appeals to be of a seditious nature, I see no action that could be taken by us other than that outlined above.[7]

A DL(2) memorandum sums up the situation:

It does seem to me, however, that Mr. Sim's letter does not give us much hope. The real problem does not seem to be so much that of intercepting the material (complicated though this may be) but rather that of deciding that it is really "seditious." A pamphlet in the style of old time revolutionaries calling on the oppressed to rise and slay the oppressors is one thing. A pamphlet which says rather, "In view of your present insecurity, why not rejoin your old mother and

have a steady job in well-loved surroundings?" is another thing again so far as any definition of "sedition" is concerned.[8]

In a letter received a few days later, the deputy postmaster general held the same opinion: "There seems to be very little this Department can do towards denying the use of the mails to this particular type of literature."[9]

On the strength of these reports, G.G. Crean, head of DL(2), suggested that in addition to keeping Sim and Turnbull informed of External Affairs' responses to the matter and giving them copies of each other's letters, they should be asked "to watch for repatriation propaganda which could be intercepted and examined from time to time, simply to give us an idea of the methods being used by the Iron Curtain nations."[10] That is, External Affairs (or the RCMP) authorized intercepting the mail "from time to time" in the interest of security.

In October 1957, in fact, the postmaster at Massey, Ontario, sent a letter to the department that had been refused by the addressee on the grounds that it was communist propaganda. It was forwarded to the RCMP director of security and intelligence, who declared, "The literature contained the usual propaganda on repatriation which emanates from the 'Committee for the Return to the Homeland' in East Berlin." It was returned to the postmaster at Massey at his request for appropriate disposal.[11]

Throughout 1956 individuals and organizations continued to complain to their members of Parliament, to the secretary of state for External Affairs, and to the prime minister, Louis St-Laurent, about receiving return-to-the-homeland materials. To assist the recipients in writing responses and to ensure continuity of policy, in March 1956 External Affairs circulated to twenty-seven members of Parliament and two senators a model letter, a copy of one that Pearson had sent to a Romanian Canadian. It was meant to be used for replies to constituents from any Soviet-bloc country, but could be changed according to particular circumstances. The members of Parliament were all Liberals with ridings in central and northern Ontario, except for one from Vegreville, Alberta. Of the two senators, one was from Winnipeg, the other from Edmonton, areas with large ethnic Ukrainian populations but no Liberal member of Parliament. The note does not say whether these particular members of Parliament had forwarded letters from constituents to the minister; but, based on other correspondence, two or three of them certainly had.

Pearson's letter begins by thanking the writer, and notes with approval that the propaganda material has been destroyed. It continues:

I can understand why there should be uneasiness and resentment among the people who receive this material, particularly if they cannot determine to their own satisfaction how their addresses became known to the Committee which sends it out. Unfortunately, as the material in question does not appear to be seditious in Canadian law, there is no way to stop it reaching people in Canada through the mails. I can assure you, of course, that the Government would certainly prevent any attempts to follow up this propaganda campaign with any kind of intimidation.

Any evidence of intimidation of individuals or of improper methods used to secure addresses is certainly of concern to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I hope that any information which you may have on these subjects is being reported to them. Even in the field of propaganda, if you receive material from any foreign mission located in Canada, I should be interested to know of this.

I appreciate the assurances of your loyalty to Canada and of your love for freedom. I am confident that the attempts being made through the 'return to the homeland' campaign to undermine the contribution which you are making to this country will fail. May I suggest that one way by which you can help to render this campaign ineffective is to make known publicly, not only to people of Roumanian origin but to Canadians generally, the truth about conditions in Iron Curtain countries which lies behind the propaganda.[12]

In replying to organizations that had sent him particularly militant anti-communist opinions, the secretary of state was advised to send "something more than an assurance of our interest in very general terms." Beginning 10 May 1955 Milan Jakubec sent letters about the campaign, sometimes in his capacity as president of the Slovak Legion and sometimes as secretary general of the Mutual Cooperation League. His letter of 24 May 1955 told of the beginning of the campaign in Czechoslovakia when the amnesty had been announced on Radio Prague on May 9. He believed the greatest pressure was being exerted on Ukrainians who had been receiving newspapers and pamphlets from East Berlin, indicating that a well-organized campaign was already in progress.

Jakubec vividly describes the situation of the anti-communist organizations: "I can assure you, Sir, that the Red masters can extract and utilize more propaganda against the West from 5 'repatriates' than the West can utilize from 500 genuine political refugees."[13] The Mutual Cooperation League, he allowed, also represented relatively few individuals. Referring to Pearson's trip to the Soviet Union in October 1955, he wrote:

While invitations, tours, smiles and parties were prepared for you and other leading Western statesmen, a direct annihilation campaign is in full swing against us.... NATO may be a good deterrent to Soviet aggression, but against world communism it is as effective as fire precautions and guns are effective against termites in a house.... Through such a great amount of attention that they are paying the refugees, the communists are well on their way to get rid of us. Thus within a year or two, should the need come to use us in a wiser manner for safeguarding Western interests, there shall probably be very few left possessing any trace of idealism. Especially for those who spilled their blood during the war against Nazism, or spent long years as political prisoners, the bitter communist cold war pills are hard to swallow and do not cause a strengthening of hope.[14]

A special reply from the secretary of state, Lester B. Pearson, was drafted by DL(2), sympathizing with Jakubec's anxiety on behalf of the group he represented about the implications of "co-existence" between East and West.[15]

I agree that the knowledge, experience and idealism of those who have suffered under Communism can contribute greatly to the defence of the free world. I assure you that in dealing with communist countries and in forming plans to ensure the security of this country, the Canadian Government is aware of the record of Communism. I am sure that we must maintain our armed defensive strength against Soviet expansion, and carry on an unremitting campaign against Communist subversion within the free world. In this connection I think that you perhaps underestimate the effort which NATO Governments both collectively and individually are making against Communist subversion.

It is true that even where a Communist party is not strong numerically, as in this country, it is still capable of a dangerous subversive effort against the country as a whole and against democratic organizations like your own. I assume from what you say that whatever information you may possess about Communist efforts to subvert organizations with which you are in touch is being given to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

You also mention the repatriation campaign being conducted by the Soviet Embassy and the Polish and Czechoslovak Legations in Canada. It would be helpful to us if any specific evidence you may possess about improper pressure exerted by these missions on people with whom you are in contact could be brought to our attention.

I am glad to know that the organization which you represent and others like it are active in counteracting the Communist threat.[16]

Similar letters from the same correspondent are on file through to 12 October 1956, although the replies from the department are generally briefer. A final departmental document describes Jakubec's consultation with the US House Committee on Un-American activities. "[Jakubec's] report purports to deal with communist propaganda activities in Canada. It is a question whether this subject really comes within the terms of reference of this Congressional Committee.... Jakubec makes a number of statements about the strength and organization of the Communist party in Canada and its propaganda activities, which seem to be quite out of line with information available to us." The matter was referred by External Affairs to the RCMP.[17]

On 17 April 1956 the undersecretary, Jules Léger, recommended to the minister that he say something on the return-to-the-homeland campaign to the standing committee on External Affairs if he should have a suitable opportunity to do so. "It would be greatly appreciated by the various ethnic groups in Canada who have been subjected to the campaign, and who have been showering Members of Parliament and this Department with their protests."[18]

The prepared statement was made two months later to the standing committee on 21 June, read by the undersecretary in the name of the minister:

> *The chief reason for this campaign seems to be that the Communist governments concerned are afraid of the considerable influence which the refugees from their regimes have won for themselves abroad. They are seeking by every means to discredit the testimony given by these refugees as to the true nature of Communism. Above all, they wish to lure them home again where they can more easily be silenced by one means or another.*
>
> *Fortunately, not many new Canadians have succumbed to their blandishments. While we have no means of telling exactly how many have gone, we believe that no more than a handful has returned to each country. The committee will be interested to know that some of these people have already turned up at our embassy or legation, expressing disillusionment with the conditions they have found at home, and asking if it would be possible for them to return to Canada.*
>
> *I have been asked whether the Government could not put a stop to the "return to the homeland" campaign in this country. After very careful consideration, I have concluded that there is not very much which we can do. [The arguments about the censorship of first-class mail and the volunteer nature of the committees were noted.] ... I do not think it would be wise to dignify the efforts of these committees or to give them useful publicity, by making formal protests to the governments which are lurking behind them.*

The policy therefore remained; it was up to new Canadians to denounce among themselves and to the public the repatriation propaganda. The Canadian government would only intervene in the case of an "attempt by foreign governments to intimidate Canadian citizens or residents, or any improper behaviour by foreign representatives in this country." Despite a number of perceptive questions from members of the committee, Léger did not add further details.[19]

The statement to the standing committee proved effective in eliciting some interest from the press gallery, and one journalist, Anthony J. Wright, was given the names of the three organizations and their respective contacts who had written to the department within the preceding six months. In addition to Jakubec were I. Serdiuk, president of the Ukrainian Association of Victims of Russian Communist Terror (SUZERO), and A. Svenne, chairman of the Latvian National Federation in Canada.[20]

A letter from Pearson to Svenne had been published in the Toronto-based Latvian-language periodical *Latvija* on 18 April 1956, stating the department's standard position on the campaign.[21]

SUZERO, the Canadian associate of the World Federation of Ukrainian Former Political Prisoners and Victims of the Soviet Regime (FUP), monitored the return-to-the-homeland campaign in Canada closely. This information was passed to External Affairs via the RCMP. SUZERO and the FUP were both founded by Semen Oleksandrovych Pidhainy. His personal history helps us understand his strong opposition to the campaign. He witnessed the execution of his father and brother by the Bolsheviks in a Kuban Cossack uprising; he was sentenced to eight years of forced labour on Solovky Island in the White Sea, an experience he described in his book, *Islands of Death*; and he spent time in a displaced-persons camp in Germany where he organized resistance to the forced repatriation of Ukrainians. Asked if he had ever fought against Soviet power, he declared: "I have fought, I am fighting, and I will continue to fight as long as I am alive and free." In 1949, with his wife and fifteen-year-old son, Oleh, he was sponsored to come to Canada by the Ukrainian Presbyterian Church. By 1956 Oleh was a student at the University of Toronto, and it was he who gathered together the material for a pamphlet, *Mr. Khrushchev Goes Slave-Hunting*, which was SUZERO's response to Anthony Wright's request for information.[22]

The preface to the pamphlet was written by Igor Gouzenko, with whom the Pidhainy family had a special relationship. Gouzenko had defected from the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa in 1945 with evidence of a network of Soviet spies in Canada and abroad, an event that came to be known as the

Gouzenko affair. According to historians Jack Granatstein and David Stafford:

> The impact of the whole Gouzenko affair was substantial in creating the atmosphere of crisis, betrayal, and fear that heralded the coming of the Cold War.... During the war, a majority of Canadians had expressed the belief that the Soviets could be trusted to co-operate with the West; after the Gouzenko affair, however, larger numbers now thought the Soviet Union sought world domination. The Cold War had come to Canada with a vengeance.[23]

Igor Gouzenko spent the rest of his life under an assumed identity. In July 1956 the *Globe and Mail* announced, "Igor Gouzenko, the former Russian code clerk who touched off the 1945 Soviet spy trails, has proclaimed himself to be a Ukrainian."[24] That, combined with his introduction to *Mr. Khrushchev Goes Slave-Hunting*, which was published a month or so later, gave the Ukrainian anti-Soviet community in Canada and abroad a valuable ally in combating the return-to-the-homeland campaign.

Igor Gouzenko wrote in his introduction that the pamphlet should serve as a good reminder for those who had forgotten in the excitement of happy co-existence the real aims of the Soviet leaders. *Ukrainski visti* wrote of the pamphlet:

> *The brochure in English merits the full support of the Ukrainian community, including for the reason that the author of the foreword, Ihor Hudzenko [Igor Gouzenko] unequivocally stands in the position of independence for the enslaved nations that are today in the Soviet-Russian empire.*[25]

The pamphlet also contains material by Ivan Bahriany, reminding the readers of his refusal to be repatriated to the Soviet Union from Germany in 1945, and his publication in 1946 of *Why I Don't Want to Go Home*. In 1956 the FUP published a book of satirical verse against repatriation by Bahriany. Titled *Anton Bida — heroi truda [Anton Bida — Hero of Labour]*, the poem was in reply to one that had been published in the Russian version of *For the Return to the Homeland* in 1955 by Ihor Muratov, laureate of the Stalin prize and a member of the Mikhailov committee. In one part of his verse Bahriany wrote that from "Berlin to the Kremlin" the whole land resonated with song, all about love, and the love that Khrushchev himself had for Anton Bida. "Hurry, Anton, go! ... Without you, socialism here is not socialism."[26] Months later the Return to the Homeland Committee published an appeal to return from his son in reply to Bahriany's book of satiric verses.[27]

Mr. Khrushchev Goes Slave-Hunting reproduced many letters of appeal that had been received in Canada and exposed the duplicity of their authors. Oleh Pidhainy's conclusion argued that the Canadian government was not doing enough to stop the campaign. Argentine intelligence officials were investigating the campaign in July 1956, and the United States had directed protests to the Soviet embassy in Washington. "Canada, on the other hand, prefers to see no violation of internal laws and no improper diplomatic action in the activities connected with the Repatriation campaign. This view, expressed by one of the most respected statesmen in Canada, Hon. L.B. Pearson, Sec. of State for External affairs, brings the Minister no honour, or the Government the reputation of regard for its sovereignty." The presidium of the FUP asked for support from its member organizations for a special commission on the Mikhailov committee, with donations to be applied to the newspaper *We Will Yet Return*. The publication concluded with Semen Pidhainy urging the establishment of committees to investigate complaints against the communists for repatriation.[28] Oleh Pidhainy not only assembled and wrote the pamphlet, he arranged its distribution to other émigré organizations, university and public libraries, embassies, and government ministries in Canada and the United States.

The dangers of the campaign described in the pamphlet were specifically rejected in a letter published in the AUUC newspaper *Ukrainske slovo* from Mykola Zahaiko, who had lived for many years in Canada and in March 1955 returned to his village in western Ukraine. He asked a friend in Winnipeg to let others know that they should disregard what Pidhainy had to say because it was false.[29]

The Byelorussian Alliance in Canada met with its American counterpart in Toronto in the summer of 1956 and adopted resolutions concerning the return-to-the-homeland campaign. These were sent in September 1956 to Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent and passed to the office of the secretary of state for External Affairs for reply.[30]

The Ukrainian National Federation, established in 1932 and having branches across Canada, was a key member of the Winnipeg-based Ukrainian Canadian Committee (UCC), which was in turn a member of the Mutual Defence League. In its publication, *Novyi shliakh*, it questioned the sincerity of the campaign: "When the campaign literature attacks Ukrainian nationalists as bourgeois servants of the Vatican, it is clear that the Kremlin has not altered its attitude toward the 'captive nations.' Who would consider 'returning to the homeland' after reading such attacks?"[31]

In the Canadian federal election of June 1957, the Liberal government was defeated. John G. Diefenbaker, Progressive Conservative member for Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, became prime minister of a minority government and appointed Sidney Smith as secretary of state for External Affairs. The UCC wrote to both of them in August, perhaps with the hope that the western, pro-immigrant prime minister might enact a different policy for dealing with the return-to-the-homeland question. The UCC also issued a press release titled "Long Arms of Soviet General Michailow [Mikhailov]," describing the committee's methods and proposing that the Canadian government demand that the USSR terminate its subversive actions against Canadian citizens. The proposal was rejected in a reply from the secretary of state, marked "Seen by prime minister, September 12," to the UCC's president, Rev. Dr. S.W. Sawchuk, and its secretary, John Syrnick. In November W.S. Kochan, executive director of the UCC, asked Smith whether there was any possibility of changing the government's attitude. The minister was advised that Kochan's letter contained no information not brought to the government's attention previously, and so the reply followed the same lines.[32] According to Tom Delworth, who worked in the minister's office, there was always a page on Return to the Homeland Committee in the minister's briefing book

The Canadian government's position on the return-to-the-homeland campaign was clearly considered too passive by members of the anti-Soviet Ukrainian community and other Eastern European communities in Canada. An editorial of 19 May 1956 in the Polish-language *Glos Polski* titled "Ottawa's Turn" contrasted Canada's policy with steps taken by the United Nations against a Soviet diplomat, and it came with a warning from the US State Department to the Soviet Embassy in Washington against overstepping the bounds of diplomatic activity. The editorial urged the Canadian government to take action to stop the circulation of "Communist subversive literature," to uncover its "mysterious distributors," and to supervise closely the activities of legations representing communist countries.[33] Other anti-Soviet organizations such as SUZERO undoubtedly agreed with the Polish paper's criticism of the Canadian government's stance of non-intervention in return-to-the-homeland matters in Poland and other countries of the Mutual Cooperation League.

Four | *Introducing the Returnees*

WAS THE CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS? NOT IF THE MAIN SOVIET/KGB MOTIVE WAS TO reduce the number of refugees who might join Western armies against the Soviet Union should the Cold War turn hot, as Alexander Yakovlev reported. A *New York Times* article of May 1956 said only 333 individuals in camps for displaced persons in West Germany and Austria had chosen repatriation. One refugee, a Soviet army deserter to the Vlasov army living in the Huehnkaserne refugee compound in Bavaria, West Germany, was one of the few who responded positively to the propaganda. "Why shouldn't I [go]?" he was quoted as saying. "I will go to Russia, and they will put me in a labour camp. It will not be any worse than what I have here. And if I die, at least it will be among my own people — not in a foreign country where everybody outside this place is my enemy." Notices about the return-to-the-homeland campaign were posted on bulletin boards in refugee compounds in 1956, outlining the necessary steps for anyone who desired repatriation, and face-to-face salesmanship was also carried out by Soviet agents. Respondents described by "certain [camp] officials" as "malcontents, misfits and those without sufficient character to build a new life in a foreign land" represented only a minute fraction of the remaining refugee population.[1]

The response to return-home propaganda on the part of post-Second World War immigrants to Canada also was relatively limited. Serge Cipko compiled a list of the names of more than 300 returnees from various sources, principally from the FRC and AUUC newspapers, the Russian and Ukrainian versions of *For the Return to the Homeland*, and from individuals. Limited and varied data are available for each returnee. Although original sources did not include the date of arrival in Canada for almost half of the returnees, it is possible to analyse the other half by dividing them into three groups by arrival date in Canada: pre-First World War, interwar (1925–1939), and post-Second World War.

In the postwar group of sixty-five, there were twenty-eight single men, three married couples without children, one couple with a single child, and seven couples with two children. With respect to the wartime history of the men, two are mentioned as having been members of the anti-communist Vlasov army, that is, the Russian Liberation Army, which fought for the Nazis. One had been in Dachau prison camp, another had been conscripted into the German police, and another had fought for the allies in General Anders' Polish army. Having refused to return to the USSR at the end of the war, many had moved from West Germany to work in coal mines in Belgium or as labourers in Austria before immigrating in the early 1950s to Canada, where they initially worked in the mines or forests of northern Ontario. It is recorded that some had families in the USSR. Where the place of origin or resettlement is included, only eight of twenty-six family groups had roots in Ukraine and two in Belarus, while the remaining sixteen showed places either of origin or return throughout the whole Soviet Union of the time (e.g. Moscow, Georgia, Gorkii, Bryansk, Urals, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Rostov, Novosibirsk, Stavropol, Krasnodar). This geographic distribution is quite unlike that of the pre-war immigrants to Canada, and of the 145 people on the list for whom the date of arrival is not given. A large proportion of both of these two groups either left or returned to Ukraine, a few to Belarus and a very few to other republics of the Soviet Union.

A Montreal correspondent for *Vestnik* shed light on the motivation of returning postwar refugees in a 1956 article. He interviewed the refugees just before they boarded ship in Montreal and asked them why they were leaving Canada. He was given the counter-question, "Why don't you join us?" He replied that he had been living in Canada for thirty years, since the mid-1920s, more than half his entire life. Although he was attached to Ukraine, his birthplace, Canada was his home. One of the postwar refugees then explained that whereas the correspondent's family had left for Canada

voluntarily, he had been forced to go to Germany. There, agitation had been conducted against the USSR. Seduced, he had moved to Canada; but in doing so he had left behind his loved ones. He was an engineer, but couldn't find work in Canada in his profession and was too old to return to school. He was optimistic about his chances of finding work worthy of his qualifications in Ukraine. A Kazakhstan-born refugee was a graduate from the Petropavlovsk Faculty of Physics and Mathematics who had been a forced labourer in Germany during the war. After the war he had worked in the forests around Fort William (now Thunder Bay), and then as a typesetter for émigré newspapers. Now he was returning home, "never having to endure the indignities of working for fascists again." A couple in their sixties from western Ukraine also had been forced labourers in Germany during the war. They had eventually settled in Bradford, Ontario, but were returning to spend their final years in the homeland. Another interviewee from the region of Lviv was a veteran of the Polish army. Mobilized in 1941 he served under General Anders in Iran, Palestine, Egypt, and Libya, where he fought against the German Africa Corps under General Erwin Rommel. In 1951 he moved to Canada and worked in Toronto and Montreal. He had left behind his father, two brothers, five sisters, and his wife. He had decided to return to his family. Two other returnees were from Khrushchev's home region of Kursk, one of whom had served in the Vlasov army. A native of the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine had crossed the border illegally in 1947 to Romania, and by way of Yugoslavia and Italy had arrived in Canada where he had worked as an electrician. He had become homesick and was now returning. The article explained that the acceptance of people who had been previously denounced as traitors for not having returned immediately after the war was a matter for the Soviet populace to judge, since it was they who had been affected by the war.[2]

These post-Second World War immigrants, like many before and since, did not manage to establish roots, professional or familial, in Canada in the few years since they had arrived. Beginning with the death of Stalin the situation was clearly changing in the USSR, and they were now prepared to believe that an amnesty would be honoured. The stories of their successful returns were told in return-to-the-homeland publications distributed by the committee from East Berlin to encourage others to follow suit. According to the committee's publication, the very fact that these displaced persons were returning showed that they were "moving forward" and that their "love for the homeland was stronger than their love for the [Canadian] dollar."[3]

Perhaps surprisingly, nine returnees — one couple, a family of five, and two single men — had left their homelands before the First World War. After almost fifty years, working in Vancouver, northern Ontario, Winnipeg, and Toronto, these nine individuals left for villages and collective farms, four of them in Ukraine, one in Tadzhikistan.[4] Two were mentioned as having been particularly active members of the FRC. How different was Soviet reality from their expectations based on their memories of the pre-war czarist and Hapsburg worlds of their youth? Now of retirement age, they or their families had come to Canada early in the twentieth century in search of land or answering the call for labourers from the Canadian Pacific or Grand Trunk railways that had set up recruiting offices in Russia.

Did these immigrants later regret leaving Canada? We know that some did. The immigration to Canada in 1912 of the father of the family of five, his Canadian-born wife, and three sons, ages twenty-three, seventeen, and eleven, matches reports written by the Canadian Embassy in Moscow, which we call "the Vancouver family." In October 1958, after three months in the USSR, the two older brothers sought assistance in leaving. They were reported as being disillusioned with everything they had seen. The parents and youngest brother were still adjusting.

The third group came to Canada between the late 1920s and the beginning of the Second World War. During this period, state control of the USSR's borders was already complete, and it was almost impossible to leave without official approval. It is therefore not surprising that Ukrainian and Belarusian immigrants to Canada did not originate from the USSR, but rather from areas that were then in eastern Poland, and in the case of Ukrainians, from the regions of Bukovyna in Romania and Subcarpathian Ruthenia in Czechoslovakia. In 1939 the Polish territories were re-allocated to the USSR by Nazi Germany in secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact.[5] These areas were the homelands of all the parents of the returnees interviewed for this study. Their experiences provide substantial detail to our understanding of the return-home phenomenon, but unfortunately a limited one in terms of experiences in Canada and the USSR.

The list of 1925–1939 immigrants who returned to the Soviet Union between 1955 and 1960 contains the names of twenty-three single men and eleven couples with a combined total of twelve children — fifty-seven individuals in all. Of the places of origin or return in the USSR twenty-three locations are now in Ukraine, six in Belarus, and one in Lithuania. Unlike post-Second World War returnees, none returned to regions that were part of the Soviet Union between the two world wars. For a fourth group of 149

individuals, those for whom we have "no arrival date," many have Belarusian and Ukrainian origins as opposed to Russian; therefore it is likely that most of them, too, came to Canada in the 1925–39 period. Only two couples, one single woman, and six single men were from Russia — eleven in total. Ten single men, one couple, and one family with two children came from what is now Belarus — sixteen in total. Forty single men, seven couples, and ten family groups with a total of eighteen children came from Ukraine — ninety-two in total. For 30 of the 149, no place of origin is known.

Because the families of the interviewees originated in eastern Poland and because emigrants from this area make up a large proportion of known Canadian returnees, it is important to examine the conditions that led to their emigration to Canada.

In *Russkie v Kanade* (*Russians in Canada*), G. Okulevich, longtime president of the FRC, described the situation of Ukrainians and Belarusians who lived in eastern Poland after the 1921 Treaty of Riga had divided Ukraine and Belarus between Soviet Russia and Poland:

> Hemmed in by lack of land, unemployment and oppression of the Polish pan [landlord], people fled to Canada in search of fabulous wages. Most went to make some money and return ... few thought of staying.... Most were not radical in their ideas and they did not dream of an organization of their own. They came in search of dollars, a quiet life and a sure crust of bread.
>
> But these people had lived through the stormiest period of European history. A world war had thundered over them and at first hand they had seen the great October Revolution and civil war. They saw and fought the interventionists. But this was all past. Their lands fell under the control of the Polish landlords ... people who had seen the Russian workers throw off Tsarism returned to the mediæval social and national oppression of Poland. Thousands tried to tear themselves out of this and to get to Canada.... Immigrants were herded to Canada without contracts and not knowing rates of pay. Many worked long hours, under terrible conditions on the railways and in the forests for $25 and $30 per month. The alternative was unemployment.[6]

In *Khrushchev Remembers*, Nikita Khrushchev assessed the source of the "bad attitude" Ukrainians felt toward Poles at the time that the Polish general, Berling, was assembling a Polish army in Ukraine:

You've got to remember that the Western Ukraine used to be part of the Polish state, and the Warsaw government conducted a highly unreasonable nationalities policy here: it oppressed and discriminated against Ukrainians. And the problem goes back further than that. Remember your history: the Ukrainians have been fighting against Poland ever since the days of Bogdan Khmelnitsky ... a seventeenth-century Ukrainian leader who went to war against the Poles and [united] Ukraine with Russia.[7]

Simon Schama vividly summed up the region's history in one phrase: "the north-eastern corner of Poland, a country where frontiers march back and forth to the abrupt commands of history."[8]

The tension between Poland and its minorities, in addition to the economic and political pressures of the times, resulted in an ongoing exodus in the 1930s to the Americas, Canada, and Argentina in particular. First-hand interviews offer glimpses of family lives, the homeland's tangled history, and the rigours of life in a new land that was suffering from the Great Depression.

Nadia Golik Demidenko described her family's experiences:

My father, Boris Golik, was born in August of 1900 in a village called Hyshyn, in the Kovel district, Volyn region, which was part of Poland at that time. When my father came to Canada in 1929 he was actually leaving Poland. Why did he come to Canada? In search of a better life. Times were hard. They lived under Polish rule and Ukrainians were considered to be second-class citizens. Jobs were hard.to come by. The Polish people got the better jobs. My parents were not professionals or skilled workers. They were peasants and worked their plot of land, but it was still difficult to make ends meet. So that is why my father left.

I don't think there was what you would call a movement to Canada. My father did mention that he heard others were leaving and he wanted to try his luck. He packed a few things, and he left with just the clothes on his back, perhaps a few coins in his pocket.... He had a younger brother who two years later left for Argentina, also in search of a better life, and the two never saw each other again.

My father lived in Canada nine years without Feodosia, my mother. He arrived in Canada during the Depression, 1929, and he couldn't get a job. He used to hop on freight cars going from place to place looking for work. He couldn't bring my mother over because you

had to have some money in your savings account to bring your family over. By 1938 he had saved up enough to bring my mother to Canada. My mother had lost two children when my father was still at home. A son died when he was only six months old, a second son died at the age of one, one-and-a-half. After my father left for Canada their daughter, Nadia, died of meningitis at the age of seven, so when my mother joined my father in 1938, she had no one to bring with her. When my father arrived in Canada and started looking for work, he met up with people from his village who had gone before him. From them he learned where he could find work, and that is how he ended up in Kapuskasing. He heard they were building a railroad up north, that there were jobs there for people like him, for people who really had no formal education. There were others from his homeland working there. When my mother joined him, they rented a room in the home of Ukrainians who were also from the Volyn region until they moved to Toronto.

And even in Toronto for the first few years we rented one or two rooms in other Ukrainian homes. It was only in 1949 that we could afford our own home. When my father first moved to Toronto, he got a job as an unskilled laborer at a lumberyard. After that, he got a job at Canadian General Electric, first as a manual labourer, and later, after some training, as a crane operator. My mom was a stay-at-home mom at first, and then she did seasonal work for a fur-cleaning company, during the summer when people weren't wearing their fur coats.

My parents never really learned the English language. They couldn't communicate well. They knew enough English to go into a store to buy food and clothing and other necessities. Even when my mother worked for the fur cleaners it was with Ukrainian and Polish women. That's who her boss hired – immigrants who all spoke their own language and hardly any English. Ukrainian and Polish are very similar. A Polish person could understand a Ukrainian and vice versa, and I guess they felt there was no need to study English. If you're working and you're always with Russians or Ukrainians, why bother? So they never really learned the language. That made life in Canada more difficult.

What might have seemed at the time a bureaucratic detail, but was for many families a date that dramatically changed their lives, was the passing on 31 July 1945 of a Soviet decree regarding the right of former Polish

citizens to register as Soviet citizens. The Soviet Embassy in Ottawa informed the Canadian government of its intention to announce the decree in Canadian foreign-language newspapers. It also sent out consular officials to register persons wishing to become Soviet citizens under the terms of the decree. The Canadian government made it clear to the Soviet ambassador that there must be no obligation on the part of any Canadian resident to register, to which he replied that the text of the announcement indicated that the registration was voluntary.[9] As a result of this decree the families of many interviewees turned in their Polish papers for Soviet passports in the late 1940s and applied to leave Canada for the USSR, although it was some years before they were permitted to do so at the beginning of the repatriation campaign.

In a document discovered in the Russian archives dated 2 November 1946, the chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa reported to his minister of foreign affairs, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov:

> *As a result of the registration as Soviet citizens of immigrants from the western regions of Ukraine and Belorussia which was conducted at the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, we currently have in Canada 2000 new Soviet citizens.*
>
> *A significant majority of them had come to Canada in 1926–1939 to work, having left their families in old Poland. Without having professions, they had worked as unskilled workers upon their arrival in Canada. The economic crisis soon after that, and then the War of 1939–1945 did not give them the chance to return home.*
>
> *They have recognized the registration in Soviet citizenship as a first step in the return home. On receiving their Soviet passports, the majority right away submitted their applications with the request to come back to their families.*
>
> *Taking into consideration their natural desire to return to their relatives, and also that they have survived all the difficulties of unemployment and hard work for low pay, it is possible to hope that they will be good workers after their return to the Soviet Union. Proceeding from that, I would consider it appropriate to let these newly registered Soviet citizens go to the Soviet Union as soon as possible, and to grant them appropriate discounts in trip fares and transportation of their belongings.*[10]

In a further letter on this matter, the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa reported to the authorities of the Ukrainian SSR in 1947 that it had registered 1,628 Canadian residents as Soviet citizens in 1946 and was processing more than 1,400 additional applications. The embassy noted that many of these applicants were settlers from western Ukraine. Having emigrated in the interwar

period, some now expressed a desire to be reunited with their families in the homeland and to assist in postwar reconstruction. The applicants were also said to be inspired by the fact that many Poles, Czechs, and Yugoslavs were already returning from Canada to their countries of origin.

The reply from Kyiv to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa recommended against repatriation at that time on the grounds that it would cause pressures on available housing and provoke social tensions with the local population — highly valid reservations in themselves. There was also concern that because the applicants were Canadian Ukrainians sympathetic to the Soviet regime, their departure from Canada could only strengthen "the position of the nationalist Ukrainian organizations in Canada."[11] No mention was made that at that time even pro-Soviet returnees may well be arrested and sent to camps in Siberia, as were the White Russians who returned in the late 1940s from France.

The Soviet policy of discouraging "re-emigrants" at least from Canada in the late 1940s was confirmed in a number of interviews for this study, including that with Nadia Golik Demidenko:

> The first time they [my parents] applied for visas was after the war, I think in 1948. They applied to the [Soviet] embassy, but the embassy said it wasn't a good idea. They said times were hard, the war had just ended, there was a shortage of food, there was no place to live because most of the buildings had been bombed, destroyed, and they discouraged them from going in '48. I must have been around nine or ten, judging by the passport photos with my mother.... If I had gone at that time, I probably would never have returned to Canada. At such a young age you become acclimatized to your new life. That would be it. You'd be too Soviet to do anything about it [pause]. But maybe not....

Valerie Wolchuk remembered:

> Right after the war — I think it was 1948. When my father came to Canada [in the 1930s] it was just until things were better. So all this time I suppose they were thinking about returning. After the war my mother wanted to go with me to Belorussia [Belarus]; but it was devastated. My mother's mother had stayed in the village, and then my mother got a telegram that her mother had died. My mother had a Polish passport. She didn't have a Canadian one. So she went to the Soviet Embassy and they told her it would be better if she waited because there was no place to live and no food at that time.

The parents of Jim Lenko and George-Yuri Moskal also visited the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa in the late 1940s. Although they exchanged Polish documents for Soviet ones, the families were prevented from returning.

The first recorded entry visa granted by the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa was for the Watt family in 1951, well before the official return-to-the-homeland campaign began in 1954. Father, Stepan Dinysovich, and mother, Evdokiia, had left Poland, from the area near Brest in 1927 and 1929 respectively. Carl was born in Winnipeg in 1930 and his brother, George, two years later. In 1939, after Poland collapsed and western Belarus became part of the Soviet Union, Carl's father applied to return to his homeland; but the process was interrupted by the Second World War. Carl's father traced the movements of the Allied and Axis armies, particularly the Red Army, with coloured pins on a big wall map. He was excited by the stories he heard about the modern society being built by Stalin, and he always dreamed of returning home. In 1941 the family moved to Hamilton, where the boys finished school and George entered McMaster University. They were involved with the FRC and the AUUC. The family had applied for and received Soviet passports in 1945. More than three years before other families, and before the beginning of the return-to-the-homeland campaign, they received entry visas in late 1951. They all left Canada for the Soviet Union in March 1952, even though the boys were twenty and twenty-two. It was a close-knit family and they wanted to stay together.

Their story is significant because the Watts were well known in the FRC community and the family's departure was a major event. They set a pattern for others who followed them: not just to the Soviet Embassy and across the ocean initially to disillusionment in their native village, but to jobs in the industrial city of Luhanske, at that time called Voroshylovhrad. Eventually the boys attended an institute of foreign languages and made a profession in radio broadcasting, as did the children of several other families:

> We got a hell of a big send-off. It's something I'll never forget as long as I live. The news of our leaving was in the papers in Hamilton, and when we got to Toronto about five hundred people must have come to see us off. I can see it now as if it happened yesterday.[12]
>
> Before us, the only people permitted to come were single Russian men who had gone abroad before the war. Every one of them was immediately sent to Siberia. I don't know why that didn't happen to us. I guess maybe because we were kept in a small provincial city where it was easy to keep an eye on us.

The Bilous family — father, mother, three brothers, and a sister — also returned relatively early. In September 1955 the *Toronto Star* picked up their story. The following article, which exposed a rivalry between two factions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, was published in the Return to the Homeland Committee's *Za povernennia na Batkivshchynu*.

> Among the devotees of soccer in Toronto were the three well-known Bilous brothers who played for the Melnykite team Tryzub. One day the Bilous brothers did not show up for a match. This brought forth consternation in the team.... At that time the Bilous [sic.], fortunately, were already on the ship that was taking them to the Soviet Union. This event stunned the local OUNites [members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists] who look at Ukraine with hostile eyes. Not noticing dissolution in their ranks, they could not imagine that anyone could love Ukraine so much as to return to the native land. The Bilous brothers will soon be playing soccer in Ukraine, a sport which has thousands of participants and millions of aficionados.... The Ukrainian nationalist press, in order to delude their readers, began to circulate various false rumours to the effect that ... M. Bilous was a former member of the NKVD and took the children to Ukraine by force. This is a typical despicable lie of the Ukrainian nationalists: the sons of Bilous are already adults, and no one would be able to take them "by force" from Canada.

The article describes the family's successful adaptation to their new lives, including the older brothers playing for the Leningrad Zenit and Kyiv Dynamo teams, and the youngest with Leningrad Avangard.

> In a conversation with a correspondent of our newspaper, Valentyn Bilous spoke of the wild habits in the emigrant soccer teams in which he played until his departure to Ukraine. "In our 'Melnykite' team," V. Bilous recalls, "the trainer and sports master Oleksandr S. was attacked. In that season we encountered the 'Banderite' squad. This was a terrible game. As soon as we scored a goal, the Banderites rushed to the field and threw at us bottles wrapped in newspapers. They beat up Oleksandr S. so much that he spent two months in hospital....
>
> When we embarked on the ocean liner *Nomerik* in Quebec, we were brought telegram after telegram from the Melnykite yes-man Rebryk. "What are you doing, do not deceive yourselves, stay here. We will help you as much as we can. It still is not late." To these provocations

in Rebryk's telegram we have one reply: We knew what we were doing when we decided to go to the Homeland. Currently we are living happily in our land and we experience no necessities in anything. We did not delude ourselves, but you deluded yourselves if you thought that your telegram would influence us, and as for the help you are proposing us, we do not need it. We were brought at state cost from Canada to the city of Zaporizhzhia and were assisted in establishing our lives.[13]

The Bilous family apparently had their transportation paid for, and efforts seem to have been made to help them adapt. As their return was still early in the campaign, the Return to the Homeland Committee may have thought that publicizing these aspects would encourage others to follow the family's example.

Another family to depart early and whose members were strong supporters of the FRC was the Savich family. Nadia and Ivan, with their three children, left Montreal aboard the *Empress of France*. They arrived in Liverpool 15 May 1955 with nineteen other returnees, including many displaced persons. After meeting with Soviet representatives they boarded the *Vyacheslav Molotov* bound for Leningrad. Each returnee was given 500 rubles and the expenses for their room and board were covered. On 27 May the family arrived in its final destination, Dnipropetrovsk. In a letter published in *Vestnik*, Nadia Savich wished her friends well and said she hoped their dream of returning to the homeland would be realized; to those staying behind, she wished luck in their lives and success in the progressive movement.[14]

When the Goliks arrived in Dnipropetrovsk, Nadia Savich was said to have exclaimed, "What have you done? You fools. Why did you come here?" From this it would appear that in the summer of 1956 the Savich family was disillusioned with its situation. However, the letters and articles in August and November in the pro-Soviet press with the signatures of Nadia Savich and her teenaged daughter, Valentyna, do not give this impression. They are generally positive, extolling in particular the educational system, the care of children, and the accessibility of medical treatment. Between the lines are some reservations, such as still sharing an apartment with the Vukelich family a year after their arrival. When they did receive their own apartment they bought such furniture as a bed, chair, table, and cupboard. After seeing the Golik family, Valentyna reported, "Nadia [Golik] said that it was difficult for her to adjust to the new life, though it was difficult for all of us at the beginning." No mention was made of the impossibility of travel abroad or of returning, the major issues for most returnees. Readers in Canada received a

favourable impression of living conditions in the USSR through the Savich letters, but they were not urged to return. If "things are improving literally before one's eyes," they were not necessarily all that good initially, a subtle criticism that might have evaded a watchful censor's eyes.

In her lengthiest and most wide-ranging article, Nadia Savich undertook to describe to readers conditions of life in the Soviet Union under the title "Ten Answers to Questions from Canadian Friends." It was published in 1957 in *Slaviane*, a substantial journal sponsored by the All-Slavic Committee in Moscow rather than the Return to the Homeland Committee in East Berlin. In more than 3,000 words she answered questions her friends and acquaintances had asked. Is it possible to obtain work in the Soviet Union according to one's specialization? Who pays for the visits to the doctors and the hospitals? How do villagers live in the collective farms? Is it possible to have your own house? Is it possible in the USSR to buy a car? Do you and your children have friends? May Soviet people often visit the cinema and theatre? How do Soviet people spend their free time? What language do they speak in Dnipropetrovsk? Is it possible to travel freely across the Soviet Union?

Walter Savich, the four-year-old who was taken by his family to the USSR in 1955, spoke to Glenna Roberts in Canada in 2006. With regard to the articles by his mother and sister about their living conditions, the facts are true. His mother was optimistic and thought things were improving. Health care especially was already better in the USSR than in Canada, and the family could afford it there when they could not in Canada where the health-care system only came into effect in 1966. Education was also available at a higher level than the family could have afforded in Canada: Walter's sister became a doctor, Walter achieved his doctorate in metallurgy before coming back to Canada, and his mother graduated from the University of Dnipropetrovsk in English. She began as a teaching assistant and gradually moved from assistant professor to associate professor to head of the English department. She died at age fifty-five in 1976. Walter's father was in hospital for long periods and died in 1972 at age sixty-four. Walter's parents wanted the best for their children. Walter's mother discouraged some friends from returning in a private letter. They had written that they were going to make a pie and the two families would eat it all together. His mother replied that the friends should eat the pie in Canada. The letter got through; the friends did not return and are still grateful for her advice.

Accounts of farewell parties for departing members of the FRC and the AUUC fill the 1955 and 1956 issues of *Vestnik* and *Ukrainske slovo*. The descrip-

tion of a banquet for 300 thrown to honour thirty returnees from Toronto, Hamilton, and Niagara-on-the-Lake in the FRC hall almost gives the impression of a form of "mass hysteria." Most had probably been in Canada for twenty-five to twenty-eight years, and a strong display of support and the company of others on the voyage would have helped counteract any last-minute misgivings.[15]

The parents who led their families "home" seemed confident of their decisions. A Norwegian study on the general topic of emigration has found that the majority of respondents listed nostalgia as the primary reason for their return. One member expressed it thus: "An emigrant has always one foot in each country, but his heart is in the mother country."[16]

With regard to Canada, a reporter from the *Toronto Star* offered an eyewitness account of a group departure on 25 June 1956:

> [Seventeen] Russians who fled the Soviet Union and prospered in Canada were en route back by ship today as a result of a Soviet "come home" propaganda drive. The group sailed aboard the Cunard liner *Saxonia* during the weekend. Most were in their late 60s.
>
> An eighteenth member of the group who was younger said he was going only as far as Britain where he would visit relations and then return to Canada. "The young people are not fooled by letters and pamphlets being sent from the old country urging us to return. A few of the old folk have a sentimental desire to return. They feel they have nothing to lose and would like a chance to see how things are in the old country before they die."[17]

In an interview with Richard Longley, Larry Black saw the motivation for returning as more complex than simple nostalgia. "People from overseas, like so many people in the mid-1950s, were suffering more from amnesia than from nostalgia, because the war had changed so much and they went back on a promise, rather than on a memory."

The accompanying children lacked the nostalgia, and generally the ideology of their parents, and sometimes they protested strongly. Nadia Golik Demidenko spoke of the effect on herself and her brother of her family's decision to leave Canada:

> My father actually didn't want to go much. My mother kept pushing him. "Come on. Look at all the people who are going. The Breshkos [parents with two daughters] have left. The Watts have left. The Sakharuks [parents with one daughter] have left." She'd push and

push, and then my father said, "Ah, OK." He gave in, and they started to apply. I had nothing to do with it. They didn't actually tell me they were applying until February '56, and we left July '56. I wasn't that disappointed because a lot of my friends had gone, and I thought it was a temporary thing. I thought, "I'll go over with them, see them settled, and then I can leave any time I want to. I can come back, why not? What's the problem?"

My brother was going to run away. He was fifteen and he said, "I'm not going anywhere. All my friends are here." He never went to the "club." He never joined in anything. He was out in the streets getting into trouble all the time. And my mother said, "You know why I'm doing this? I'm doing it for you. If you stay here, you're going to end up in jail. I'm taking you over there to make a good person out of you."

He was going to run away and I talked him out of it. I said, "Billy, you know what? This isn't a permanent thing. We'll go over, see what it's all about. See our parents settled. Then when we're a little older, old enough to fend for ourselves in Canada, we'll come back." I was so naïve. I was seventeen at the time.

There was actually a family that said, "Let Nadia stay behind. You go over first and you have a look at what it's like and you can always bring her over. OK?" This person came to Canada right after the war from Germany, a Ukrainian, and he married a Ukrainian here. Very close friends of ours. He said, "Don't go there. I know what it's like because I just came from there. Don't take her. Let her stay. She'll live with us. She'll go to school." My father said, "Oh no, I'm not going to leave my daughter behind by herself," and of course he refused.

Another thing, when we were passing through Ottawa and we stopped in at the [Soviet] consulate at 52 Range Road to pick up our passports, I asked one of the embassy officials if I would be able to return a couple of years down the road, if I wanted to. "No problem. Of course you can return. This is your country. Canada's your country. You were born here. No problem." So I didn't hesitate.

The Soviet official was correct in advising Nadia that she would have no trouble re-entering Canada; but he did not mention that she would have a hard time receiving an exit visa to leave the USSR.

Bill Golik, Nadia's younger brother, tells a somewhat different version, especially with regard to which parent took the lead in the decision to

leave. His comments may reflect more on his father's mood after the decision had been made. Bill suggested that nostalgia was too simple a word to explain his father's determination to return, describing him as being what might be termed "gullible":

> My father, he was a plain, ordinary guy; he didn't have any education – you could talk him into buying a horse with his eyes closed. That's the sort of person he was. I won't say he was stupid. He had brains in his head, but he took everything people said for the real thing. He believed everybody.
>
> My father used to go to the Russian Club, 6 Denison, near Queen and Bathurst [in] Toronto, and we lived not far away. Back in the beginning of the fifties, these communist brainwashers used to come in. In other words, they brainwashed him. They told him, "Oh, it's so nice in the Soviet Union. Everything is going to be for free almost," and so, of course, my father, he took everything for the truth and he got ready, sold the house and everything, and we're leaving. I didn't want to leave. I ran away from home five or six times, but I was caught by the police and brought back. I thought, "I've got to get out of this," so I stole seven cars, and the seventh car, they caught me. I went to court and my father told the judge, "Don't put him in prison. We're leaving for the Soviet Union." The judge just said, "Leave faster." There were a lot of people – when they found out I was going to leave for the Soviet Union with my parents, they wanted to adopt me. My friend's mother wanted to adopt me. Father, he locked all the doors. I couldn't go anywhere. That's the funny thing about it. I stole the cars so as not to go, to get into some kind of reform school, but then in that time I was desperate. I didn't want to leave. That's the funny thing. He paid his own way, because he sold the house, he sold everything we had, he bought about ten trunks, filled them with all kinds of merchandise.
>
> That's the old bringing up.... The wife goes wherever her husband goes, without asking questions. She may not be satisfied, she may be very displeased, she goes and she doesn't say a word. My mother had her own opinion, of course, but she didn't say it, because it was useless. Father, when he got something into his head, he was going to do it, no matter what.

Just as Bill Golik's mother claimed the family was returning for his sake, so Valerie Wolchuk's mother felt about her:

I think the main reason for my mother going back was because of my future. She thought I would have an excellent future there. She thought that for young people there were more prospects. If you read *Vestnik*, this is what you would think. It had a very important influence on all the Russian people. They would read everything in the newspaper. The type of movies that were made in the early fifties, that were made about people in the collective farms, about how wonderful it was — everybody's happy, singing. They were trying to tell you that socialism is great, and that people are happy and working. That's what they were trying to portray....

Selling the store wasn't a trauma for me. I imagine it was for my mother, not really knowing what she was getting herself and everybody else into. She was convinced she was getting into something pretty good, otherwise she wouldn't have gone. Well, for me, it was just like going on a trip. We got on the train and went to Toronto and lived there about two months. Then we went to Ottawa to get the passports, and then we went to Montreal and got on a ship, the *Seven Seas*, a German ship. [You paid for your own tickets?] Definitely, we paid for everything.

A large extended family from Bradford, Ontario, was led back by a Ukrainian-born immigrant grandfather, who had never really intended to stay in Canada. A Canadian-born daughter-in-law expressed her concern about leaving, not for herself but for her daughter and the other children in the group:

The one thing that bothered me the most was taking those kids over there. "Why?" I kept thinking. I felt so guilty taking my daughter's heritage away. She was Canadian, I was Canadian, so why? But, at the time when I was leaving Canada, I just kept thinking, "Well, if I don't like it, I'll just come back. If my husband wants to stay there, that's up to him."

The story of the Moskal family differs dramatically from the others in that it was the political convictions of the son that led his parent to follow — his father only, who had separated from his mother. Seventeen-year-old George-Yuri Moskal, immersed in his experiences in the AUUC and as a youth leader in the organization, decided to study in the Ukrainian-speaking city of Lviv:

In 1953 the AUUC founded a youth division, and I was elected a representative. I was about sixteen, but I was already marked and working

in a leadership capacity. In 1954 I attended a three-month leadership course at Camp Palermo, the AUUC Ukrainian Children's Camp. In 1955 we had a delegation of forty-eight Canadian members who attended the Fifth World Student and Youth Festival in Warsaw, Poland. As staunch and very pro-progressive believers, the largest contingent in that delegation [from Canada] were members of the AUUC. There was a parade through downtown Warsaw.... I felt very proud because I carried the Canadian flag and the delegation walked behind me. We competed in the folk-dance category and, believe it or not, we won fifth prize. This was a first for Canada, a first for us, a first for anybody actually from this side of the ocean, so I am a laureate or a prize winner of the Fifth World Youth Festival.

After the festival the different delegations were invited to various Eastern-bloc countries. The Canadian delegation was invited to Bulgaria.... It was quite an experience. We saw the benefits of socialism, we saw the benefits of, not control, but government supervision; but of course these were all, we later realized, just showcase activities which actually paid off. All those who attended were believers, and they returned to their respective countries as stronger believers in socialism and socialist statehood.

Three of those that were at Camp Palermo were sent to continue studies in the Soviet Union or, more precisely, in Soviet Ukraine. I was jealous of them. I made up my mind that I wanted to go there to study. We were thinking of moving. In 1954 my mother and father broke up, and I stayed with my father because I thought my father was more correct. He was pushing for the Soviet Union as well. Maybe that helped, too. Therefore, in 1957, I got the OK, and I went to Lviv to study.

Did returning emigrants from the interwar period make up for the poor response from displaced persons in the refugee camps from the committee's point of view? A mass exodus from the West to behind the Iron Curtain might have provided ammunition in the ongoing propaganda battles of the Cold War. This Soviet point of view was stressed by Nikolai Petrov in his debriefing in Canberra, 1954:

The Government of the Soviet Union would like to show the rest of the world that the Russians are a united people, living together in their homeland. The return of large numbers of people to the Soviet [Union] would in itself be a propaganda weapon to be used against other countries. (Equally, the refusal of large numbers

of people to return to the Soviet [Union] is a propaganda weapon to be used by other countries against the Soviet [Union].)[18]

In Argentina an exodus of 30,000 had been predicted by a *New York Times* reporter; but by August 1956, in fact, the number reached approximately 5,000 for all of South America. No prediction was made for Canada. Initially in 1955–56 the response was strong, owing to residual interest from the late 1940s, but that quickly faded. Just as the Watt family set an example for fellow members of the FRC, positive articles such as those written by Nadia Savich were meant to encourage others to follow; but such material preached only to the converted. Anti-Soviet nationalist organizations such as the Mutual Cooperation League pointed out the dangers of being lured by the Return to the Homeland Committee, but their readership also was already fully aware of them. The general media only occasionally noticed the disappearing East Europeans, and the Canadian government did not undertake any counter-campaign, despite pleas from the embassy in Moscow that it should do so. Perhaps the Canadian government had its own agenda, not to discourage the departure from Canada of members of subversive organizations such as the FRC and AUUC. In any event, what was needed was not counter-propaganda about the low material standard of living or the misery of living in a police state. What was needed was exposure of the fact that exit visas and external passports were restricted to returnees as much or even more than they were to other Soviet citizens. Once admitted, in the eyes of the Soviets, the immigrants were no longer Canadians. The children's dreams of returning to Canada whenever they wished were just that — dreams. The door was shut.

Five | *Disillusionment*

THE PROCESS OF LEAVING CANADA FOR THE SOVIET UNION ENTAILED SEVERAL steps. It included at least two visits to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa: one to apply for readmission and to fill out all of the necessary applications; and a second, frequently on the eve of departure, to pick up travel documents. For many it may have been a relatively easy process. They had earlier, beginning in 1945, exchanged their Polish documents for Soviet passports. It remained to register children and issue entry visas. A great many had never acquired Canadian passports, but some who had done so turned them over to the Soviet officials who had explained that it was necessary to travel with Soviet papers. A few held on to their Canadian passports, believing that would ease their return. A family who tried discovered on arrival that to qualify for an internal Soviet passport and employment in Kyiv, they were required to turn in their Canadian documents and apply for Soviet citizenship.[1]

A copy of a certificate of repatriation for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics remains in the files of Library and Archives Canada. The Soviet Embassy in Ottawa had sent the original to the Netherlandish Embassy for a visa because the holder was planning to return to the USSR via the Netherlands. The name has been erased, although not the photograph of the middle-aged male owner. As the Canadian passport office had no record

of a passport application from him, it was assumed he was not a Canadian citizen. The modest card is emblazoned with the hammer-and-sickle crest and the motto, "Workers of the world unite," in Russian and French. After the name of the issuing consulate and date there are spaces for the name, citizenship, place of birth, profession, and persons accompanying the one to whom it was issued; in this case, a Russian teacher born in the village of Orlovo, Voronezh province, travelling alone. Issued 6 June 1956 the document was valid until 6 September and was signed and sealed by Consul G. Repov. The accompanying Russian-language visa offers the three options of "Entry," "Entry and Departure," and "Transit." The latter two are crossed out. Entry point is written in as Moscow (Airport), i.e. no exit, but a line again crosses out the point of departure. Presumably similar documents also excluding departure were issued to all the other returnees.[2] Upon arrival in the Soviet Union, the repatriation certificate would be replaced by an internal passport, which every Soviet citizen was required to carry at all times.

The meeting of departing families with officials at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa may have been difficult at times, given that the younger members of the party were frequently reluctant to undertake the trip. Nadia and Bill Golik were not the only ones who asked for and were given reassurance that they could return to Canada if they did not adjust well to their new lives. A member of the Vancouver family reported to the Canadian Embassy in Moscow that not only had he and his brother been told by a Soviet Embassy official that they had the right to return to Canada (in answer to a direct question), but they could earn 2,000 rubles per month and would not become Soviet citizens for a year.[3]

The fact that returnees frequently travelled in groups indicates that the tickets were handled by the Soviet Embassy, even when paid for by the returnees themselves. The Bilous family is the only one for whom it is recorded that they received free transportation and considerable assistance in settling on arrival. Some families reported being met by Intourist, which arranged their initial hotel accommodation and onward transportation to their native towns. In one Canadian case reported in *Vestnik* each individual received 500 rubles. All of the interviewees were sure their families had paid for their own tickets from Canada to the USSR. The Canadian High Commission in Australia reported that, according to the Soviet consul in Canberra, the Soviet government paid the fares of those who could not afford to pay for themselves. In addition, free transport was provided within the Soviet Union, and also accommodation,

employment, and interest-free loans to those who returned. The Australian government regarded these as "inducements."[4]

When the shopping and paperwork were finished, across the ocean and across the continent travelled the returnees to their villages of origin with their trunks in tow. They knew the importance of gifts and seemed to know, despite the propaganda, that simple day-to-day items might be hard to come by, and the quality would not be up to the standard to which they were accustomed. The contents of the trunks were frequently sold to sustain the families when they needed extra cash. According to Bill Golik, his father's monthly salary as a crane operator was enough to support the family for three weeks. They sold items they had brought with them to pay their expenses for the fourth. The trunks also carried their dreams: one of the ten Golik trunks contained an outboard motor with which father Boris intended to go fishing on the Dnipro River; inside another (unknown to her) was a wedding dress for Nadia.

The shattering of expectations began even before the families reached the Soviet Union. The Golik and Lenko families travelled with several others across the Atlantic to Southampton on the *Castel Felice*, then to Le Havre and Paris, where they had to wait for their trunks. They took the train through Germany to Prague, where they waited for two or three days for a connecting train. Nadia Golik Demidenko reported:

> As we travelled through Czechoslovakia, it was awful. Looking out the windows you saw the poverty the people lived in there. I thought to myself, "Will it get better or worse?" But as we went toward the Soviet border it got worse and worse, and more frightening. The houses, the clothing, the people! At each stop people would come up to the train and ask for something. I remember we had oranges with us, and this was something amazing. They had never seen oranges, or that was the way it looked. People would come up to the train and ask for food or drink or whatever, and you could see that they were very, very poor. We got to Chop [on the Czech-Soviet border] and it was even worse. We walked around the town, all of us kids. People living in houses with mud floors, and it was very hot at the time because this was July, and the doors were wide open — chickens, pigs, other domestic animals walking in and out of the house. Why not? There was no floor in the house anyway, might as well.... So it just kept getting worse and worse.
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> Chop was where we parted. The Lenkos went in one direction because they were going to their village first, and we went off toward

Kovyl because that was where we had to unload to see our relatives in the villages. There was a frightening time on the train going to Kovyl. We were travelling at night and we were dressed differently. My father had his fedora hat on and his suit. My father put all his stuff in a money belt, we all took off our watches, nobody wore any jewellery. But, closer to Kovyl, a man kept looking at us, kept sidling up, asking questions all the time. We got to the station before he could do anything. He was contemplating something for sure. I know that.

We spent a night at the station. The following day we took a local train to Hyshyn, to the village, to see our relatives, leaving our baggage in Kovyl because we didn't know where we were going to settle. Our ten trunks just stayed there in storage.

My father made the biggest mistake of his life, and he saw that as soon as we arrived in his village. That was horrible. It was the first time I ever saw my father cry. What hurt him was the way people lived at that time. They lived in poverty. You knew they had next to nothing to eat. It was a hard life. The thing was that my relatives didn't think they were so poorly off. It was that my father had just sold his property in Toronto and all the things he had worked for all his life. The contrast, that's what did it. The chairman of the *kolkhoz* — they had a collective farm in that village — he came right away, and he said, "You can stay in the village. All the villagers will get together and we'll help you build a house. We'll give you a job in the collective farm, and you'll live like everybody else does." There was no way that my father was going to agree to a thing like that.

A Ukrainian-Canadian who went back before us settled in our village, but he was single. He went back to a girlfriend or a wife he'd left long ago and he was happy and he was fine with everything.... But, oh no, not our father. He saved and scrimped to buy all these things we had in Canada, and then he sold them for next to nothing and ended up in the village. I think he felt worse for us, his children, than for himself, because he thought, "What are my children going to do?" He thought I was going to become a doctor in Canada, or a lawyer or something. He had high hopes for me, but he brought me to this village, and it looked like there was nothing there for me, not even a school. I would have to travel elsewhere to go to school. He was really upset about that, and he said, "There's no way we're staying. I didn't bring my children over here to live on a collective farm. We'll

look for another place." We stayed there with our relatives for just a few days. Everybody had a party for us, every house. Half of the village were relatives, or close. Everybody was somehow related.

I think they had electricity. The water had to be brought in, and of course there were outdoor toilets. Had we stayed we would have gotten the same kind of house. Alcohol, oh dear, that was a really big problem. Everybody drank, even the children. It was terrible. The parents didn't care. I wouldn't touch the stuff. They made their own so they had plenty of it. My cousin, named Nadia also, said to her son, "Come here, Volodia, come show your aunt how to drink." She'd pour in the *stohramovka,* it's called, one hundred grams, about four ounces of moonshine made from sugar or beets. He'd drink it up in a gulp. Just downed it like a man. I'm told he died early in life. So this is what alcohol does to people over there. And a lot of smoking. It's not this filtered stuff, or anything. The real *makhorka* [dark tobacco]. Terrible. Lots of people died early in the village also from alcohol, just like my cousin. He died when he was about 38. I believe that his wife is still alive.

To make things worse, another family that came in '55 came to see us. Life was really difficult for them and that discouraged my father even more. He became so depressed! They mentioned, "If you're not staying here, why don't you go to Voroshylovhrad." The Breshkos, the Wolchuks, the Watts, and packs of people from Argentina, all Ukrainians, they all lived there, one huge community of immigrants. "Go there. Life will be more cheerful for you, anyway."

Father said, "No, I'm going to go to Dnipropetrovsk. They have a big river there, and I brought an outboard motor with me, and I want to make use of it."

So we went to Dnipropetrovsk, on the Dnipro River. It's quite a large city – industrial, too: full of smog. But there was a river and that's what my father wanted. We found out that the Savich family lived there. Nadia Savich had been an officer in the FRC in Toronto and it's amazing that she decided to return.... People would say, "Look, even Nadia Savich went back, then we should. She's right up there. She should know." When we got to Dnipropetrovsk we went to her house. When she saw us she started to cry. She threw her arms around us. She said, "What have you people done? You fools. Why did you come here?"

My father went to the *Horsoviet* [city council] to get permission to stay in Dnipropetrovsk. They said "No, we're not taking any more people, it's a closed city. We can't give you accommodation, nothing."

By that time the Breshkos had come to see us, and they said, "Why don't you come to Voroshylovhrad. Our father is working there at the locomotive plant. They need workers. You can stay at our place while you apply for a job and are looking for an apartment." [So we went to Voroshylovhrad] and lived with the Breshkos for about a month. And I enrolled in school, and my father got a job immediately as a crane operator. He didn't work for very long. He was fifty-six when we arrived in there. He worked until he was sixty, and then he got his pension, forty rubles a month. My mother never worked in the Soviet Union. They lived on the money they'd brought with them until it was all gone, then they exchanged apartments with somebody in Kovyl, their home town, who wanted to live in Luhanske. They never liked it there, it was a dangerous city. That was a mining town and it had a huge prison. Many of the released prisoners stayed there and worked in the mines. It had a big problem, that town. It was dangerous to go out at night. Rapes, murders, muggings. Many times you were walking along the street and you ended up coming home in your underwear. They undressed you. *Razdevat*, that was a really popular thing. They would see a person walking down the street, if that person was well dressed they would take everything. Strip you right down to your underwear. They would even take away your shoes. That never happened to me or my father. We were very careful. It was scary.

We went to dances, movies. We went to parties that were put on by the Canadian-Argentine society, a closed community. Christmas parties, New Year's parties. I was there for only two years while I went to school. I didn't go to a regular school because the kids were too young. So I went to night school where the students were all people who worked at the locomotive plant. I finished the two years, nine and ten, which you needed before you went to university. School was good. I had difficulties with the language, but I knew a bit of Russian because I went to Russian school in Toronto at the club. I could read, so I picked things up. I graduated with good marks in physics, math, and chemistry. My Russian was not quite what it was supposed to be, but they made allowances for me. Then I went to Kyiv.

I made my first trip to the embassy in Moscow on the second of January, 1957. I knew Moscow was a huge city and I wouldn't know how to get to the embassy, so I wrote to this fellow, Vita, whom I met when he was visiting in Dnipropetrovsk. He met me at the railroad station and he showed me how to get to the embassy, and he waited around the corner until I got out again. After that I knew my own way.

I couldn't even speak Russian. Whenever I went to the embassy I spoke only English to the guard, using my hands. He said, "Go, go." I knocked on the door and told them who I was. I met Mr. Houzer [Len Houzer, third secretary at the Canadian Embassy] and his wife, and I told them I wanted to go back to Canada. "I just arrived, I don't like it, I don't want to stay and I just want to go back, by myself. My parents, they came to their homeland. Let them stay, but I'm leaving."

"It's not that easy," he said, "You know, you have to fill in some documents, some applications. They may never let you out, but you can always try." So we did the paperwork and then he asked me to stay for lunch. They still had the Christmas tree up; it was such a nice thing to see. We talked and then I left, and nobody stopped me. I just left like I was a foreigner. I had my foreigner's boots on, I was dressed like a foreigner, so why would they stop me? People didn't dress like that in the Soviet Union at that time. I went to a New Year's dance with Vita and his friend, they saw me off on the train, and I went back to Luhanske.

In the summer we were out of school and I was going to go to Moscow again, to the embassy. Also I wanted to go to Moscow because '57 was the year the World Youth Festival was going to be held in Moscow, and a lot of my friends from the club, from the AUUC and the FRC, were going to be attending that festival. I wanted just to tell them the way things were. I wasn't writing this in letters, because I knew the letters wouldn't get through anyway. I just wanted to meet some of my old friends from Canada and tell them about my life in the Soviet Union, and the fact that I wanted to return to Canada. I thought that at the same time I would go to the embassy and see how things were moving along. I needed a place to stay, and I asked Val to meet me. Now Valerie [Wolchuk] tells me she never got the letter. I was expecting her to meet me at the airport, at Vnukova, and the plane was supposed to arrive about eleven at night, but when I got off the plane she wasn't there.

Anyway, I took a taxi to the National Hotel, which is where foreigners usually stay. It's smack in the centre of town. I thought it would be good to stay there because it's not too far from the embassy. The woman at the desk said, "You know, we're expecting guests for the festival and all the rooms are booked. The best I can do is let you stay this one night and tomorrow morning you have to leave." I agreed and I signed the register and everything, but she was surprised when I handed her a Soviet passport because I wasn't speaking proper Russian, and I said I came for the festival. She asked where I was from; I said Canada, but then I handed her a Soviet passport.

The next morning I took my suitcase, went outside and caught a taxi, and I told them 23 Starokonyusheniy Pereulok [Old Stablehouse Lane], which is where the embassy is located. And the guy said, "OK, just a minute. You get into the cab and I'll be right with you," and I saw him go over to a phone, and he phoned somebody, and he came back and he got into the taxi. So we drove along these little winding streets, and all of a sudden he slowed down, and two guys got into the cab, one behind and one beside me. And the other one behind me was holding me back as if I would jump out over the taxi driver. We drove to the KGB. I gathered it was that because I was interrogated there for six hours, and they tore my suitcase apart. They took all my things out. Then they ripped the lining out completely, and they found a letter written in Spanish by a friend of mine from Argentina who lived in Voroshylovhrad. She was trying to write to her grandparents in Argentina to tell them about the miserable life in the USSR, and she wrote about this in the letter, hoping that, if I gave it to somebody in the Canadian Embassy, they could somehow get it through to the West, and then have it mailed to Argentina. They saw it wasn't in English, and he started interrogating me in Spanish, and I was kind of scared, but I started to laugh because it was really funny, and I said, "I don't speak Spanish."

He said, "Then how come you have this letter in Spanish?"

I said, "I was just going to mail it in Moscow. I was going to drop it in the mailbox here because my friend thought the mail would travel more quickly from Moscow than from a town like Voroshylovhrad."

He said, "You know what? This is anti-Soviet propaganda. Do you know you could get two years for this?"

I said, "I didn't know," playing sort of dumb. I didn't really know, but I started to cry, and I made him feel sorry for me.

He said, "No, no, calm down." For six hours they asked questions: Why were you at the embassy? What were you doing there? Why do you go there? I told them the truth, that I wanted to go back and I had handed in my papers and filled in applications, and I was applying for a Canadian passport. And he said, "You're not supposed to do that."

And I said, "I can do that if I want to because I'm a Canadian citizen. I can go to the embassy as often as I want."

And he said, "You can't," and I said, "Oh yes I can." We sort of bickered back and forth. And it ended with them taking me to the train station, purchasing a ticket for me, with my money of course. They put me on the train and they stood guard until the train left because they thought I might get off.

I didn't get to the embassy that time, but I did get there later in the fall of '57. I handed in my application for a passport. They said there was no progress being made in getting exit visas. They said that somebody was putting in a petition of some sort and spoke to Gromyko, and Gromyko didn't want anything to do with it. It looked kind of hopeless. But they said keep trying.

I made one more trip to the embassy in '58. That's when Peter Roberts was there. I don't remember him, but he remembered me. That's when he told me it wasn't going to work. Unfortunately they weren't letting people out. All I had left to do was to go back to Voroshylovhrad, finish my final year, enrol in some university, and just live my life. What was I supposed to do?

Bill Golik, Nadia's brother, was two years younger. He did not attempt to return to Canada for several years, by which time he had a daughter and was told he would have to stay in the USSR to support her until she was eighteen.

My father got me a job at the locomotive factory where I worked as an apprentice torch-welder. I stayed on that job for about a year, but I didn't like it. I saw a poster saying that there was a school for truck drivers. I finished that truck-driving school and in '59 I started working as a driver. First I worked on taxis, then I went on the big trucks.

Anyway, I met a girl, we got married, we had one daughter, and at that time I wanted to come back because I was of age. Nothing was holding me there. My wife was Ukrainian from Argentina. When I said, "Let's go back to Canada," she said, "What am I going to do there? Where am I going to work?" She was pumped through with that propaganda, too. She became one of those *komsomols* [member of the Communist Youth League], and she refused to come to Canada. Well, you refuse me, you're not my wife anymore.

In '60 I went to the Canadian Embassy in Moscow and said, "I want to leave." I told them I was divorced, and they explained to me, "Sorry, you have a kid. Until she's eighteen you must pay for her. If your wife signs a paper saying that she has nothing against your leaving, then you can leave. If she doesn't, you have to stay here eighteen years to bring up that child, financially, of course."

The Lenko family had travelled with the Goliks on the *Castel Felice* and on into Ukraine by train. Jim Lenko was eighteen. A sister and a brother remained in Canada and a second sister had gone ahead a month earlier with her family. He described the train journey to Mike Trickey:

The quality of life declined visibly; villages became shabbier, the people poorer. We stopped in Prague, our first stop in a country controlled by Moscow, and we could see that things were quite grim. We saw queues for food. The toilets were, well, like you might expect. My father kept telling us that things would get better as we got farther east; but of course it just kept getting worse.

The worst came when the train pulled into Chop, on Ukraine's border with Hungary and Czechoslovakia. For the first time we had to face reality. It was far from *Volga, Volga*. It was a very tragic thing. My father's dollars were confiscated and replaced with rubles. They said he'd be better off with rubles, but of course that was not true. We stood looking at the town and saw the grim picture of how people lived. The poverty! It was very heart-rending to see how the people were dressed, how they got about with horse and buggy. It was so different from Toronto.

My father's face was tragic. He was struggling to encourage us, to convince us that it would be different further inside, but he knew. We all knew a terrible mistake had been made.

The Lenkos had been told by Soviet diplomats in Canada that they could live wherever they chose in Ukraine; but they quickly discovered that was

not true. First directed to their ancestral village, now an impoverished and grimy western Ukrainian town, they headed for the capital, Kyiv. "The authorities told us we couldn't live in Kyiv and that's final."

Worst of all for the Lenkos was the destruction of their ideals:

> Stalin was a hero to my father — more than that, a god. While we were in Kyiv the loudspeakers were all broadcasting Khrushchev's speech where he denounced Stalin as a cult personality, as a criminal [February 1956]. Of course we had heard this sort of thing in Canada, but to hear it in the Soviet Union was a shock. To learn that the capitalists had been telling the truth, that millions and millions of people had been killed and tortured and died of hunger in the concentration camps.

The family then took refuge along with the community of Canadian and Argentine returnees in Luhanske. Jim attended school, graduated from the Institute for Foreign Languages in Kyiv, and worked for Radio Kyiv. He married, had children, and applied to leave in 1969. His parents moved to Mukachevo, near the Hungarian border.

> My father decided to live as far west as possible. He had two sisters in Poland and had an idea that if he could get there that he might have a chance to get out from behind the Iron Curtain. Of course, it never happened. He died over there.

Valerie Wolchuk, Nadia Golik's friend, left Canada with her parents a year before the Golik family, in the summer of 1955, when Valerie was twenty-four. They travelled on a German ship, the *Seven Seas*, to Leningrad via Southampton, then by train to Moscow. In Southampton British authorities warned them that they would not be able to leave the Soviet Union. Nevertheless they continued their journey. In Moscow Valerie and her mother, Anastasia, stayed at the Metropole Hotel for two weeks, while her father, Vasily Pavlovich, returned to his village. He came back to Moscow visibly shaken saying, "We have made a terrible mistake."

> I always wanted to return to Canada, since day one. We were in Moscow the first days. I phoned the embassy and spoke to a receptionist. I asked if I could talk to someone who speaks English. She said, "Well, I speak English."
>
> I said, "Yes, but you have an accent."
>
> And she said, "There's nobody here right now, everybody's out to lunch. Could I have your name?"

And I just hung up.

We ended up in Luhanske because of the Watt family, who had come earlier. We got in touch with the two sons in Moscow and we met them in a restaurant. I remember saying, "Where are we going to live? Maybe we should stay in Moscow."

They said, "The best place for you would be to go to live with our parents. They have a two-bedroom apartment." Their father was working in a factory, and their mother stayed at home.

Voroshylovhrad — it was like going from heaven to hell. They used to send convicts there. After the war, it was a scary place. The weather was awful. In the summer the climate was terribly hot, with sand blowing in your face. I can't remember the winters there, but the summers! But we had a bit of a community there of Canadians and Argentinians, and we used to have parties and dance to records from Canada.

We didn't have a place to live when we were in Voroshylovhrad. We lived for two years with another family in an apartment, in a room that was very small, three of us. It was unbelievable. We kept going to the city council, and they kept saying "soon, soon, soon," and the "soon" ended up being when I was leaving for the Foreign Language Institute in Moscow in 1957. Just before, we went to the city council and said to them, "We're going to Moscow and taking all our stuff." They offered us an apartment in Luhanske. My mother was debating, "We're not going to get anything else. We should take this room."

I said, "If we do, then we're sunk, because they're going to say, 'We offered you this apartment and you refused.' Better not to take it." We got on the train, and we went to Moscow.

We had a place to live in Moscow — a *dacha*. [A guide at the Exhibition of Economic Achievement in Moscow lent the Wolchuks her family *dacha* outside Moscow.] It was really something for these people at that time to offer that. It was about a twenty-minute train ride from the centre of the city. So that was where we lived for two years. [Valerie attended the Foreign Language Institute, her father worked as a cook at the Praha restaurant.]

I came to the [Canadian] Embassy in 1959. I spoke with [Jacques] Montpetit. I went with a friend from Luhanske and filled out papers for my passport. We knew how difficult it was to get out, through Nadia Golik. I thought to myself, "I'm going to try to go for a visit."

> You couldn't go anywhere. You had to make a life for yourself. If your job was OK, then life was OK. But the part that I couldn't travel! It was quite something when I was refused permission to travel to Canada.

A letter was published in *Vestnik* in November 1958 under the name of Valerie's mother, A. Volchek. Although it contains basically the same story and impressions as Valerie described in her interview of almost thirty years later, including Valerie's difficulty in learning Russian and the family's problems in obtaining good housing, the tone is strikingly different — almost apologetic. There is no mention of the initial shock the family suffered, or the impossibility of returning to Canada, even for a visit.

The preceding interviews describe the reactions of both the parents and the children. All of them "got on with their lives," the former settling in to modest jobs, the latter continuing with their education and acquiring jobs in which their English-language skills were an advantage. In addition the younger and Canadian-born returnees contacted the embassy in Moscow and endeavoured unsuccessfully to obtain exit visas from the Soviets. Carl Watt and Olga Breshko, however, did not pursue these initiatives and were two of the interviewees in a Moscow-published book of positive stories of immigrant experiences, *They Came to Stay: North Americans in the USSR*.[5] The author, Paula Garb, was an American who married in the Soviet Union in 1969 and remained to work for Radio Moscow even after her divorce. She returned to live in California in the 1980s. Quoting Carl Watt, she wrote:

> We had watched all the Soviet movies like *Volga, Volga*, which showed these big beautiful collective farms where everybody was prosperous and there was plenty of everything. But we stayed three days on a farm with Father's relatives, and it was awful. Dirty. Nobody had anything. If they did have a cow or apple trees, they would have to pay such high taxes that they couldn't afford to keep them. It was awful. It was a tremendous shock.[6]

The Watt family would have liked to settle in Kyiv. It had been greatly rebuilt since the war, but the Council of Ministers of Ukraine said there were no apartments available at that time, the same advisory given to officials in the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa in the late 1940s. They were advised to try Voroshylovhrad.

For nearly a year the family lived in one room, using their trunks as beds, before being assigned their own apartment through the factory where the father worked. Carl and his brother, George, completed ninth and tenth grades at night school to improve their Russian, then attended the Foreign Languages Institute, first in Leningrad, then in Moscow. By the time they graduated, there does not seem to have been any question of trying to go back to Canada. The brothers made their careers as interpreters and announcers for Radio Moscow, now known as the Voice of Russia, and continued working there until retirement.

Olga Breshko added realistic detail to her story as told by Paula Garb when, having returned to live in Toronto, she was interviewed by Glenna Roberts in 2005.

The Breshkos — father, mother, and their two-year-old daughter, Nina — had left western Ukraine for Saskatchewan in 1938, where Olga was born in 1940. In 1946 the family was forced to sell their farm and move, first to St. Catharines, Ontario, then to Toronto. The parents spoke Ukrainian at home and the sisters spoke English to each other and Ukrainian or English to their parents. At the FRC the girls learned Russian songs and the alphabet:

> I loved listening to my parents speak Ukrainian and didn't want to ruin it by speaking it myself. So I never spoke Russian or really much Ukrainian before I came to the Soviet Union.
>
> The main reason why my parents wanted to go back was because they wanted to return to the land of their birth. The decision to move to the Soviet Union was a family decision. We're leaving? OK, we're leaving.[7]

In 1955 the family travelled by boat to Leningrad with six other families, then went on to her grandfather's village in the Volhynia region of Ukraine. All but three of their relatives there had been killed during the war. Olga told Paula Garb:

> I had come from a big city, Toronto, and ended up in a Ukrainian village. I was so used to modern urban living that it was all strange for me at first. They just had cobblestone roads then. In 1955 we rode in a horse-driven cart. It was exciting, though. I liked it. It was interesting because it was all so new to me. My mouth and eyes were wide open.[8]

Olga Breshko's conversation with Glenna Roberts in Toronto twenty years later added some less positive details about her initial impressions of her new life:

> Coming to a country that had really nothing from Canada, where we had everything, that was devastating for us. Even when we came to the city people were looking at me. We were dressed differently, we had better clothes on. People would come up and sort of feel your clothes. It was sort of surprising, but you get used to it. One lady had her trunks stolen in the village.
>
> The first words I learned were the bad words. You know, you're standing in line, you have to go to the washroom, you come back, and, "You weren't standing here!" People could go to their villages or were limited to six cities.

The family chose Voroshylovhrad because the Watt family was already there. Olga and her sister, Nina, found they could understand, but not speak, Russian: "It was really frustrating. We wanted to say something, but couldn't."

The negative side of the Breshko family's return to the homeland went unmentioned in an article in a 1957 issue of *Za povernennia na Batkivshchynu*. The publication used the opportunity to lecture its readers on the democratic process now available to the fortunate returnees:

> In 1938, when Volhynia was part of seignorial Poland, Adam Mykhailovych [Breshko] went to Canada to look for a better life and luck. He wandered abroad for seventeen years. A year and a half ago, Breshko, together with his wife and two daughters, returned to the native land and decided to work in Voroshylovhrad. The workers of the factory received him warmly. In one of the new buildings he received an apartment, and at the October Revolution Factory, a job. His wife works at a brewery; daughter Nina is in the tenth grade and Ol'ha in grade eight.
>
> On Sunday 3 March elections to the local Council of Workers' Deputies of the Ukrainian SSR were held. The city factory of October Revolution lies in electoral division no. 15. A steady stream flowed to the polling station. The family of Adam Mykhailovych Breshko also obtained ballot papers, voting for the first time for deputies in the Council.
>
> March 3rd will remain for a long time in the memories of people who, after many years of wandering abroad, have returned to the homeland, having become citizens with equal rights, and together with all Soviet nationals have taken part in the elections of local organs of state authority.[9]

Life in Voroshylovhrad was hard for everyone. The younger returnees gradually left for opportunities in Kyiv and Moscow, but also in Kazakhstan and farther east. Their parents toiled until retirement from the locomotive factory, then moved within the USSR closer to family and friends where life may have been more pleasant. Some died in their homeland, as perhaps they had wished, while some, such as the Goliks and Wolchuks, joined their daughters after they eventually returned to Canada.

Six | *The Canadian Embassy, Moscow*

While external affairs and the RCMP in Ottawa were dealing with individuals, organizations ("subversive" and otherwise), and officials of the Soviet Embassy, Canadian diplomats in Moscow were meeting the disillusioned and desperate returnees face to face. From 1956 until the end of 1958 forty family groups totalling seventy-three people had applied to the embassy for help in repatriation.[1] Of these cases partial histories for six families have survived in the archives, with only brief mention of two or three others. No records remain either of Nadia Golik's visits or those of the others who have been interviewed. For reasons of privacy individual names were blanked out before access was granted to Library and Archives Canada files, and so the six families are referred to throughout this text as the Bradford, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Hamilton, and Pinsk families (no Canadian place of origin is mentioned for the latter). The most salient parts of the first four family's files are summarized here. The latter two are discussed in chapter eight.

The Canadian Embassy took particular interest in the Bradford family beginning in February 1956, partly because it was among the first to come to the embassy's attention. An initial message to Ottawa dealt with consular questions regarding the family's readmissibility to Canada.[2] The second, signed by the ambassador at the time, John B.C. Watkins, describes the

family's experiences, which "are of interest for the light they shed on the treatment received by those who are returning to this country as a result of the current 'Return to the Homeland' campaign."[3]

As it was still early in a campaign that was only beginning to be understood in Canada and elsewhere, the ambassador's version of the story was edited slightly into a case history, which was distributed by the head of European division to the high commissions of the United Kingdom and of Australia, and to the American Embassy.[4] It was regarded as the best-documented case to date of a family's disillusionment and its treatment by Soviet authorities. The recipients of the case history were asked to treat it as confidential and to ensure that no propagandistic use was made of it lest doing so jeopardize the chances of the family obtaining exit visas:

A Polish family consisting of the father, mother, four sons and one daughter, emigrated to Canada from Poland in 1939 and settled in a prosperous market gardening area in Ontario, where their fortunes prospered. The parents never applied for Canadian citizenship themselves, nor did they allow their children to do so, for they hoped to return to their native land some day and feared that taking out Canadian citizenship might jeopardize that possibility.

Early in 1955, the father visited the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa to discuss his own and his family's return to his native town which is now in the Soviet Ukraine. Encouraged by his reception there, he bullied his sons into selling the market garden farm.... In August, the father and mother, four sons, three daughters-in-law (two of them born in Canada) and five grandchildren (all born in Canada) proceeded to Ottawa, declared at the Soviet Embassy that they recognized their Soviet citizenship and were given a travel document with a group visa on which they flew to Leningrad....

The family was met by Intourist who arranged their hotel accommodation and onward transportation to rejoin remnants of the family in their native town. Shortly after their arrival there, the couple with three children had been provided with a government apartment for 20 rubles a month. No other accommodation had been available and the rest of the family moved in with their already overcrowded relatives. At one stage, five adults and three children had been living in one small room. Finally, after having spent weeks accosting strangers on the streets, another couple had rented one room in a privately owned cottage at 250 rubles a month.

No attempt had been made by the local authorities to provide any member of the family with work. The brothers were considering applying for second class taxi drivers licenses ... but they were hesitating because the pay would only amount to

400 rubles a month. The standard of living this would permit could not be imagined — not even enough food and clothes to exist could be bought on this wage. Meanwhile the whole family has been living on the capital brought with them, which would last for another two years at their present rate of expenditure.

All the people in the region lived in a continual state of fear and oppression. "Siberia" was the word voiced most often and one member of the family was told by her relatives that she might be sent there if she dared to apply for return to Canada. The agricultural "Plan" was a farce and everyone knew that the targets set were never achieved even though it was claimed that they were. Acres of corn had gone unharvested this fall, mainly because no one had any desire to work, and resisted all efforts that were made to make them. A woman in charge of milch cows only received 2½ days' wages per week, since these wages were dependent on the delivery of a daily target quota, which it unfortunately took the cows three days to produce.

No attempt was made by the receiving authorities either to facilitate the family's adaptation to Soviet life or to capitalize on the skills they had acquired in Canada.

As a result of his experiences since last August, the head of the family is now a completely disillusioned and broken man, and he, along with the entire family regrets the move to the Soviet Union. All would like to return to Canada if possible. The two Canadian-born women, accompanied by one of their husbands, recently called at the Canadian Embassy in Moscow to ask for help in returning to Canada. They had travelled somewhat surreptitiously from their present residence in the Ukraine. The husbands realize that they may not be re-admissible to Canada and, in addition, may never be able to get exit permits from the Soviet Union, but they have agreed to allow their wives to go back without them, but with the children, if they can possibly do so.

The question of re-admissibility to Canada of those members of the family without Canadian citizenship, and also the matter of exit permits from the USSR, are now being thoroughly examined.[5]

An interviewee from Bradford, Ontario, told Glenna Roberts that the case history probably represents her family and expanded on their experiences:

From Leningrad we took the train to Lutsk. My goodness, that was an experience in itself. It was a very slow train. It stopped at every little station. It's quite a way from Leningrad to Lutsk, and there was no food on the train. There were five children. Of course my sister-in-law had canned milk with her for the little baby, so he was OK, but the

other ones wanted to eat on the train. At one of the stops there was a lady out there selling chickens. So we got a chicken but when we looked at it, it was almost green. There was no refrigeration and it was summer time. I thought that was unbelievable. So many things.... People over there, they understood that if they went travelling they had to take food with them. We didn't understand that. We thought that we could get everything along the way.

A lot of things we had to learn. And you know, even our children, who were ten, seven, six, five, and just a baby when we arrived, had to learn to cope.

Before we left Canada the Soviet Consulate in Ottawa told us to go to the local authorities when we arrived in Ukraine and they would assign us living quarters in Lutsk. But when we arrived the authorities told us to go to live in the village my husband's family had come from because there were no quarters available in the city. But, naturally, we wanted to stay in the city. It was very bad for the people over there, too. A lot of the young ones, as soon as they got a bit of schooling, didn't want to stay in the village.

It's just such a different life. Even for people who were used to it, it was bad for them, so for the Canadian-born it was even worse. Even for the others from Canada who had lived in Ukraine before, it was just as difficult. I never thought I'd see a grown man cry, but they cried, believe me, because they were so disappointed when they got there. I didn't know one man or one lady who came from Canada to Ukraine who didn't cry their eyes out for weeks or months. Especially we, the Canadian-born, although we thought we were going to be able to come back to Canada. There's no way they could keep us there. We didn't know when, but we knew that eventually we would be able to come home. But the non-Canadians weren't so sure.

Of course you don't forget the main things, you don't forget how you felt when you went there in the first place. That was, ugh, indescribable. We met a lot of nice people there. It's not the people, it's the system and the living, too. When you're used to Canada you can't go back. Even the older folks, they can't go back again.

The case history of the Niagara-on-the-Lake family was also distributed to other countries. The letter from the mission in Moscow in June 1956 was sent to the acting high commissioner for Australia "about a similarly

unhappy family from Canada [that] suggests that the experience [described in the earlier case history] is typical."

A Mr. —— who lived in Canada for 27 years and returned to the Soviet Union in May of this year [1956] with his wife and daughter to take up permanent residence, called at the Embassy last week to apply for the re-admission for himself and his family to Canada.

He and his wife, ——, were married in 1925 and emigrated to Canada in 1929. After a year of farm work at Elgray, Saskatchewan, Mr. and Mrs. —— moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake and sold the property this spring before leaving Canada.

Mr. and Mrs. —— came to Canada on Polish passports. In the following years they made no attempt to acquire Canadian citizenship. In 1946 they read a notice in a newspaper stating that persons who had come to Canada from the USSR on Polish passports could turn them in for Soviet passports. They applied to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa and —— [were] issued with Soviet passport[s].... The passports were renewed yearly on receipt of notice from the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa.

When Mr. —— came to see us he was in a highly nervous state. A few weeks in the Soviet Union appear to have completely disillusioned him and the wife is equally dispirited and anxious to return to Canada. The desire to come back to his homeland appears to have been a strong factor influencing ——. This was whetted by glowing accounts of life in the Soviet Union appearing in the paper Ukrainian Life, *published in Toronto, which —— subscribed to. This paper is apparently in the habit of printing letters from persons who have returned to the USSR from Canada. According to —— all these letters give a very favourable picture of conditions in the Soviet Union. Since coming to Kyiv —— has been approached and asked to write similar letters to send to Canada. Although —— ascribes the present predicament of his family to his own ignorance and stupidity, he seems to have received considerable prodding from an organization called The Federation of Russian Canadians. He was told by officials of this organization that there was great prosperity in the Soviet Union and that he would receive all possible help and encouragement in establishing himself. To date —— has been offered only one job — on a collective farm — which he refused to accept.*

We explained to Mr. —— that his daughter was re-admissable to Canada by right as a natural-born Canadian citizen. So far as his own status and that of his wife was concerned, the question of their readmission to Canada was a matter for the Immigration authorities in Canada to decide. We undertook only

to refer the case to Ottawa and suggested to Mr. —— that he call again at the Embassy some time in September.

This report may concern the Makaruk family, FRC members from Niagara-on-the-Lake. The statement that returnees were asked to write letters giving a favourable picture of conditions in the Soviet Union corresponds to the fact that letters signed by Iakov Makaruk were published in *Vestnik* in August and December 1956.[6] The letters are rather touristic in their emphasis on the scenic delights of Leningrad, Moscow, and Kyiv; of course, they never suggest that at the time they were being written the writer was visiting the Canadian Embassy with the hope of leaving.

The wife in the Winnipeg family made visits to the embassy in July, August, and September 1958. The following paragraphs from a letter to Ottawa after a visit on 11 October 1958 describe the couple's difficult living conditions, which were compounded by surveillance and interrogation by the Pinsk police. In this and the following embassy document the writer urges External Affairs to try to discourage further returnees:

Mrs. —— told us that she was finding life in the Soviet Union very difficult indeed. Her husband, she said, was "almost mental" and at times threatened suicide. He is now working in Pinsk [Belarus] in what she described as a "power house," at a salary of 500 rubles per month (he had apparently been promised 600 rubles and she now thinks his wages will be raised to that amount.) The ——s have still not found any accommodation of their own, and are sharing two rooms and a kitchen with three others (her husband's sister, her husband and a daughter). The authorities in Pinsk have promised on numerous occasions to get them a room for themselves, but have not done so.

Mrs. —— says that her husband has been approached in Pinsk by individuals whose identity is not clear to her, but who have asked her husband questions about Canadians and Argentinians who have returned to live in the Soviet Union, about which of them might be unreliable in case of a war, and so on. She said that her husband and another friend of hers have been offered money to provide information of this kind. Mrs. —— is, in general, very much afraid of police surveillance and the possibility of being arrested. On several occasions she asked whether making approaches to the militia about permission to leave the Soviet Union might not result in her or her husband being sent to jail. We tried to assure her that so far as we knew it would not, but when she left the office she still appeared to be very anxious.

Mrs. —— again spoke of the return-to-the-homeland propaganda of which she and ... her husband had been the victims in Canada. One publication

which she mentioned in particular is called Vozvrashcheniya na Rodinu*; it is printed in Berlin and apparently paints a very rosy picture of life in the Soviet Union. Her husband, she said, had been an avid reader of this newspaper. She also spoke of the impact which films they had seen in Winnipeg had had on them. Finally she mentioned the name of an individual, —— of ——, Winnipeg, Manitoba, which we pass on to you for what it is worth, since Mrs. —— insisted that he had encouraged her husband to go to the Soviet Union and, when he found that her husband intended to go, egged him on to go as soon as possible.*

Our general impression of our latest conversation with Mrs. —— is that she is quite distraught, but still has herself under control. If her description is accurate, it would appear that her husband is in an even worse condition.... Our interview this morning with Mrs. —— lends further support, in our opinion, to the belief that firm representations to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, and in particular a publicity campaign throughout Canada, are the only methods which are likely to have any success in preventing more Canadians from returning to the homeland and in obtaining the release of those who are now here.[7]

The Vancouver family, a couple with three sons, was earlier introduced with other pre-First World War returnees, the father having arrived in Canada in 1912. They returned to the Soviet Union at the end of July 1958:

—— told us that he and his brother had never been eager to leave Canada and that they had done so only under pressure from their father, and because they did not wish to be separated from the family. The father, on the other hand, had apparently wanted to return to the Soviet Union for some time. He began corresponding with the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa in this connection quite some time ago, but it was not until the Second Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Victor A. Selivanov, was in Vancouver on the occasion of a Soviet naval visit that things began to move more quickly.... —— had no contact with the embassy in Ottawa until he saw them immediately prior to their departure from Canada. He admitted, however, that he had "signed a piece of paper" at his home in Vancouver. He said that he had not known the contents of this document because he could not read Russian, but his father had told him that everything was in order and that it was all right to sign it. Since both brothers are described in their passports as Soviet citizens, it is probable that the form referred to was an application for Soviet citizenship.

—— said that had he received a warning about returning to the Soviet Union, it is likely that he never would have left and furthermore, that his parents

would not have been willing to leave without him and his brother. In any case, when they were at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, —— told us that he asked the member of the Soviet Embassy who gave them their passports for clarification of his citizenship status and whether, if he did not like life in the Soviet Union and was unable to adjust, they would be free to return to Canada. He was told that he would not become a citizen for a year, and he was also definitely told (this he repeated to us several times) that if he wished he could return to Canada.... You will notice that the passports are signed by Selivanov, and also by someone whose name appears to be Tsvetkov.

Although they had been told by the Soviet Embassy that there were "unlimited opportunities" in the Soviet Union and that they would be able to make two thousand rubles a month, they found very soon after arriving that this was not so and, in fact, that life was quite unsatisfactory....

In Moscow, the ——s went to the Foreign Ministry to request permission to leave but were told there that they could not begin to make such arrangements before they were settled in a town, at which time they would have to see the local militia. Even then, they were told, it would be a long process (six months to a year) before they would be able to leave. Although they twice returned to the Ministry, they made no further progress. They then attempted to locate our Embassy and finally, after some time during which they were unable to find anyone who would tell them where it was, they managed with the assistance of a student to locate the British Embassy. On calling there, they were given our address.

Both —— and —— made it quite clear to us that they themselves were determined to get back to Canada as soon as possible. The mother is also definitely set on returning, as is the father, who apparently now realizes that he has made a mistake and in particular, regrets having brought his family here....

When we asked —— whether his family had been in contact with Doukhobor groups in Canada, he said that they had not.

We told them that they should tell the Soviet authorities as often and as strongly as possible that they were misled by the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, and that they are, in fact, Canadian and not Soviet citizens, and that they have had a look at the country and now wished to return home. This they promised to do. They also asked us whether it would be wise for them to ask friends in Canada (whom they claim they are able to contact) to make representations on their behalf at the Soviet Embassy, write to the newspapers and so forth. We suggested that any publicity of this kind they might be able to arrange might well be of assistance to them.

In our telegram under reference we recommended that firm action be taken in Ottawa on the ——s' behalf.... If it were a question of judging these

young men, it might, of course, be said that they were gullible in the extreme. However, in our view at least one major source of their gullibility is one which is very much to be expected. In the absence of clear warnings to the contrary, Canadian citizens who are far from aware of the practices of countries other than Canada are likely to take officials of foreign governments at their word when they are given information about their citizenship status and right to return to the country of their birth. Indeed, it is just because they, and others like them, are completely naïve and because their naïveté is being seized upon by Soviet Embassy officials that we have in the past recommended the value of a publicity campaign in Canada on this subject. It was for similar reasons that we also suggested in our telegram under reference that this question might be taken up with the Soviet Embassy. We feel that they might be informed in no uncertain terms that a continued policy of deception in regard to Canadian citizens would not be welcome in Canada, either on the part of the government or the Canadian people at large.[8]

The mention of "Doukhobor," the only one in the return-to-the-homeland file, implies that the family belonged to this sect, members of which had earlier immigrated and re-immigrated in groups to Canada. The Vancouver family clearly returned on its own.

An opportunity to implement a "Don't Go" campaign presented itself when Blair Fraser, a prominent Canadian journalist with *Maclean's* magazine, visited Moscow. His regular "Backstage" column had a Moscow placeline on 30 March 1957, with an article titled "The Canadians whose home is Russia." As far as warning people not to go, Fraser pointed to the message then inserted into the back of Canadian passports:

> Canadian citizens born abroad, or whose parents were born abroad, are warned that they may be considered by the governments of the countries of their origin to be nationals of those countries, although by Canadian law they are citizens of Canada. They should bear in mind, therefore, that when they are within the boundaries of those countries, it may not be possible for Canada to give them effective protection.

Fraser cited a figure of 300 people having applied to come to Canada the previous year (1956), 10 of whom had been permitted to leave the USSR. Those 10 were probably not returnees, as the first re-return was reported by the embassy in 1960. They were more likely to have been family-reunification cases, i.e. Soviet citizens with relatives in Canada. Of the 290 remaining on the list, "Canadian officials can do nothing for these unfortunates, some of

whom tell very moving and pathetic stories. All that can be done is to pass on the warning to others in Canada who may be thinking of the same move. Don't come to the Soviet Union unless you are sure you'll want to stay."

The effectiveness of Fraser's warning was somewhat diminished for anyone who read past the initial dozen paragraphs of the article, as the next dozen were about Canadian students in Kyiv and Moscow (approximately ten), whose major complaint was that they were required to work too hard at their studies, even though they were treated leniently in matters of Russian language and Marxist-Leninist ideology. One student, Bill Biley, had moved two years earlier from Sir George Williams College in Montreal to study journalism at the University of Kyiv. His role as a student inspired George-Yuri Moskal to follow in his footsteps. Biley remained in the Soviet Union to become the founder of the English-language service of Radio Kyiv, according to Nadia Golik Demidenko and others who subsequently worked there.

A later attempt by the Canadian government to make use of the press is recorded beginning in February 1959, by which time the flow of returnees had almost ceased and the problem was clearly that of helping the disillusioned to return to Canada. The embassy in Moscow requested permission from Ottawa to brief Donald Gordon, a CBC correspondent who was visiting Moscow and intended to write for the *Globe and Mail* on the subject of Canadian families who had returned to the homeland. The consular division cautiously suggested to the undersecretary, Norman A. Robertson, that in view of the government's continued frustration at not being able to persuade Soviet-bloc governments to permit Canadians to re-return, an article in the press might be a way of warning dual citizens not to travel behind the Iron Curtain. Not only had the embassy in Moscow been recommending similar action, but apparently so too had the RCMP. The consular division was concerned that a departmental press release or statement "would probably provoke a strong reaction from the Soviet Bloc Governments." It recommended that the department find a way to issue a warning under the guise of responding to an inquiry from the public. It favoured providing a briefing for Gordon when he visited Ottawa using anonymous case histories, such as that of the Bradford family. An article in the press might prompt a question in the House of Commons to the minister from one of several members of Parliament who had written to the minister about individual cases. A background paper that the minister or acting minister might use in preparing a reply for the House was attached. This same memorandum had been sent in early March to Sidney Smith, secretary of state for

External Affairs in the Diefenbaker cabinet, who had died suddenly on March 17. The new Conservative minister, Howard Green, was probably not familiar with the return-to-the-homeland question, although Norman Robertson, still undersecretary, certainly was.

The memorandum, titled "Refusal of the USSR to allow Canadian citizens and close relatives of Canadians to come to Canada," describes how for several years consular relations between Canada and the USSR had been adversely affected. Forty family groups totalling seventy-three persons are cited as having applied to the Canadian Embassy in Moscow for repatriation to Canada:

The [Soviet] Foreign Ministry continues to insist that all of them became Soviet citizens voluntarily and must now be treated as such. The implication would appear to be that (perhaps according to the forms which were used) their applications for Soviet passports or for visas of indefinite duration not valid for exit from the USSR represented the assertion by them of their status as Soviet citizens; in April 1958, the Soviet Foreign Ministry formally stated that the "acceptance" of USSR citizenship by certain persons (who were dual nationals under our law) brought about under Soviet law the loss of their former citizenship, so that the competent Soviet authorities "cannot consider them to be citizens of Canada and [cannot] look upon them as foreigners." ... Unfortunately, it follows that those with whom we are primarily concerned are now subject to the same inflexible restriction as apply to all other Soviet citizens within the jurisdiction of the USSR.

Those who have appealed to our Embassy to help them to come back to Canada explain that they have become disillusioned with life in the Soviet Union. If, however, as our Embassy considers, their disillusionment may be regarded as effective counter to Canadian security objections to their return, it may with equal validity be taken as a formidable consideration in the eyes of the Soviet authorities against allowing them to leave....

Appeals for assistance continue ... on behalf both of would-be repatriates and of Soviet citizens wishing to emigrate to close relatives in Canada.... Because of the formal legal position taken by the Soviet Union any approach we may make in reality must take as its point of departure our disapproval of the Soviet Union's general policy of denying freedom of movement to its own citizens, and proceed upon humanitarian grounds.

There is no doubt that by forcing them to remain in the USSR serious wrong is being done in particular to the Canadian children of parents who voluntarily returned to the Soviet Union. However, to argue that children should be allowed to come back to Canada without their parents would undermine the

accepted principle that families should not be divided (and also create problems concerning their support here), and to maintain that parents should therefore be allowed to leave and bring the children with them would invite the response that, as the parents are not allowed to leave, the children must stay in the Soviet Union with them.... Suggestions that relations between our two countries are harmed by Soviet policy on this question have been met with the rejoinder that there are more important matters to be considered by our two countries than a few individuals who are, in any case, Soviet citizens.[9]

In the covering letter Robertson concluded: "Technical considerations ... make it difficult for us to do more than seek favourable consideration on humanitarian grounds for many of those affected."[10] Despite the briefing, there is no evidence either of a subsequent question to the minister or an article by Gordon in the *Globe and Mail*.

The last sentence of the memorandum regarding the unimportance of "a few individuals" could well have been taken from a report on a call paid by Canadian Ambassador David Johnson to the newly appointed Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, in the fall of 1957. Peter Roberts, then the newly arrived third secretary, accompanied the ambassador and described the exchange from memory in 1992:

> Johnson spoke as instructed by Ottawa, ending with an appeal to the Soviet government to let these miserable people, guilty of nothing but bad judgement, return to their friends and families and jobs in Canada. Gromyko sighed. "Why, Mr. Ambassador," he said, "must your first call on me as foreign minister be on such a trivial subject? Our job, as foreign minister and ambassador, is to deal with the great issues of war and peace, and to save the world from destruction. I am ready to talk to you about disarmament and the United Nations and about how Canada can help us in our dangerous relationship with the United States. We have the atomic bomb; so has the USA. We have just proved that we have a ballistic missile as good as the American one. (The Russians had shortly before put Sputnik into orbit.) But I'm not interested in talking about a bunch of professional malcontents."
>
> Johnson was rattled by this homily, as Gromyko had intended. Gromyko then went on to do what he had just said he would not do, discuss the problem we had come about. "Look, Ambassador. These people you are so worried about left our country fifty or sixty years ago because they were dissatisfied with our life. They went to try your

life, and were equally dissatisfied with that. Now they're back here, and again they're dissatisfied, and again they want to move. Let's put an end to this. They all have good jobs here in the Soviet Union. They're living well and comfortably. Let them stay where they are, and let you and me get on with our real responsibilities."

The Soviet stumbling blocks to departure were not merely due to an apparent lack of interest in the problem or to their emigration policy, but extended on occasion to blocking physical access to the Canadian Embassy in Moscow. Finding its location was not easy, and in Nadia Golik's case at least once the KGB intervened to prevent her visit. The father of the family living in Pinsk

had some difficulty entering the embassy. When he rang at the door, the militiaman stationed at the gate ran up to him and told him that he should go through the back entrance. The militiaman then walked Mr. —— back to his sentry box where he asked him to produce his documents. By this time, the third secretary of the embassy, Mr. Montpetit, had gone to the door and, finding nobody there, opened it and stepped into the street. When Mr. —— saw Mr. Montpetit, he came back to the door without the militiaman trying to stop him.[11]

Kathleen Berton Murrell was a junior officer at the Canadian Embassy, Moscow, in the early 1960s. The "malcontents" were still trying to leave and the Canadian government was still endeavouring to influence the Soviets to let them go:

While I was at the embassy a large number of these people presented themselves in the hope the embassy could help them; I believe there were in excess of 2,000 names on the embassy list [not all returnees]. In the end all they got was a sympathetic ear to their problems although the ambassador, Arnold Smith, periodically raised the matter with the Soviet government. I was present on one occasion, about June 1962, when he visited [Ekaterina] Furtseva, minister of culture, and presented the list to her.

I particularly remember one family soon after I arrived who arrived one afternoon and were invited into the embassy waiting room. The family was composed of six members – mother and father, daughter and son, and the brother with his wife. They were all extremely large people and completely overwhelmed the small waiting room. When I appeared to interview them they told me their papers had been taken

from them by the Soviet authorities at the border, but they had money and jewellery. They were living on a collective farm somewhere near Uzhgorod [Uzhhorod]. They now realized their mistake and wanted to return to Canada. Furthermore, they had decided to do a sit-in and remain in the embassy until such time as we could put them on a plane to Canada. They were adamant about this. I didn't know what to do, and so I went to see Bert Hart, a more senior officer, to ask his advice. Bert told me bluntly that it was my problem and I should sort it out. So I spent the rest of the day trying to persuade the menacingly large Ukrainians that the embassy would do all it could on their behalf, but it was the Soviet authorities who were the problem and to whom they should direct their complaints. Happily, after six hours of persuasion they finally saw the logic of this and departed, but rang me up or came to see me often after that. Miraculously, after many approaches to the Soviet authorities agreement was finally obtained, just before the end of my posting, to allowing a group of Ukrainians to return to Canada. Among the group was the large family, and I was terribly pleased. However, on submitting the list to Ottawa, it seemed that the family concerned had offended in some way against Canadian law and were not welcome back. I felt very frustrated. And what a pity no one in Ottawa had thought to mention it before. However, in the end the Canadian authorities relented and they did return.

Another case concerned a man of about forty and his son who wanted to return to Canada, a nice person and more deserving than the folk above. He used to ring me and I would arrange to meet him on the street in front of the door of the embassy. Otherwise, of course, the militiaman on duty would not let him in. Once, when I met him in front of the door, the militiaman tried to detain him but I escorted him firmly inside into the main foyer. To my astonishment the militiaman followed, coming right inside the embassy where he tried to grab the man and drag him back out onto the street. Somehow I prevented this from happening, principally by giving the militiaman a hefty kick on the shin. He retreated, I am happy to say, but next day we received a note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs complaining that I had violently attacked and injured their militiaman whose only interest was in guarding the embassy from undesirables. This incident and the note were received, as you can imagine, with great hilarity in the embassy and raised my standing there enormously. Even when I returned many years

later as a British-embassy spouse, the said note remained on the files as too good to be shredded and was a source of fun for succeeding vice-consuls who never failed to mention it to me at dinner parties. The subject of the encounter, the man and his son, did not, I believe, get permission to return to Canada during my time at the embassy.[12]

A letter from the embassy in Moscow to the undersecretary cites Ambassador Smith having made representation to Furtseva and V.V. Kuznetsov, first deputy foreign minister, on 6 June 1962, presenting a list of persons seeking permission to leave the USSR.[13] On at least two earlier occasions it is recorded that Canadian officials had brought the problem of exit visas to highly placed Soviet authorities. Lester B. Pearson paid an official visit to the Soviet Union, 6–12 October 1955. At the last minute the Soviets agreed to a visit to the Crimea where Pearson would be received by Nikolai A. Bulganin, chairman, Council of Ministers, and Nikita S. Khrushchev, first secretary of the Communist Party. In preparation for the visit, Ambassador John Watkins met with Professor Alexei Gorbunov, the facilitator who had arranged the high-level meeting. Gorbunov, or "Alyosha," was later identified as Oleg Mikhailovich Gribanov, the second-highest ranking official of the KGB's Second Chief Directorate, who was responsible for intelligence operations within the USSR. Gorbunov subsequently entrapped Watkins in a homosexual relationship with an Uzbek student, then offered to protect him from the KGB if he supported policies favourable to the Soviet Union, and, in particular, befriended Soviet Ambassador Chuvakhin in Ottawa.

Ambassador Watkins reported:

> *He [Alyosha] wanted to know if there were any particular subjects that Mr. Pearson would like to raise with Messrs Bulganin and Khrushchev. I said I thought he would like to give them our view of NATO and would appreciate a frank discussion. Otherwise I did not think that he had any particular question in mind. As Alyosha knew, he had already exchanged views on a number of questions with Mr. Molotov. Alyosha wondered if he would wish to bring up any of the cases of relatives to be traced or people wishing to emigrate from the Soviet Union to Canada. I said that he would not. He had merely raised the question with Mr. Molotov in a general way and Mr. Molotov had replied that all cases brought forward by the Canadian Government would be considered in accordance with Soviet law. Mr. Pearson would not wish to go into further detail. Alyosha looked relieved.*[14]

Gorbunov may well have understood it would be awkward to bring up the

question with Bulganin and Khrushchev of disillusioned Westerners finding conditions in the Soviet Union less than satisfactory. In the fall of 1955 more returnees were arriving in the USSR than had yet tried to leave. It is also clear that "the list" was not given high priority by the Canadians.

In the March 1959 memorandum to the minister, Secretary of State Howard Green, quoted previously, reference is made to the prime minister's letter of 18 January 1958 to the chairman of the Council of Ministers in Moscow. It is possible there is a typographic error in the date, a frequent problem for typists in January, in which case the letter could well be the one referred to in the *London Times* on 22 January 1959. Diefenbaker, it was reported, had replied to Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin's letter of 13 December 1958, saying, "Canada would welcome a sign of Russian willingness to permit freedom of movement for people who wish to leave the Soviet Union and join relatives in Canada, as well as for persons in Russia who hold Canadian citizenship."[15]

The tradition of ministers and prime ministers presenting lists likely continued until emigration regulations were changed under Gorbachev. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau reported to the House of Commons on the question of exit permits on the day after his return from a trip to the USSR, 28 May 1971:

> I expressed to Premier Kosygin the widespread concern in Canada over the alleged refusal of the Soviet government to permit its Jewish citizens to emigrate to Israel or to other countries of their choice....
>
> I seized the opportunity to urge Mr. Kosygin to permit persons of all ethnic origins with relatives in Canada to come here and thus reunify the many families which have been split tragically for many years.
>
> He assured me that his government would not place unjustifiable barriers in the way of those persons and he promised that he would give personal attention to the list of names of such persons which I took with me to Moscow.

Also referring to this visit to Moscow in his autobiography, *Memoirs*, Trudeau described presenting a list to Brezhnev:

> I did use the occasion to give him [Brezhnev] a list of nearly 300 family reunification cases, of Canadians who were attempting to get exit visas for relatives still living in the Soviet Union. Within a few months, most of these cases had been solved, and hundreds of Soviet citizens had been allowed to emigrate to Canada.[16]

In the case of Nadia Golik Demidenko, whose name we know was on Trudeau's list, the case was not solved so quickly.

Seven | *Dual Citizens, Dual Homelands*

MAX YALDEN, AN OFFICER IN MOSCOW FROM 1958 TO 1960, REMEMBERS ongoing debates within External Affairs, and between it and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, about the status of the returnees who came to the embassy for help. From the Canadian government's perspective, there were no problems for children who had been born in Canada; they were eligible for Canadian citizenship and passports. The argument about the undesirability of separating children from parents did not take into account the fact that the "children" were frequently in their late teens or twenties. Had they stayed in Canada or been allowed to return, most of the children would have been old enough to be independent and self-supporting. As the seventeen-year-old Nadia Golik said when she first visited the Canadian Embassy, "I just want to go back, by myself. My parents, they came to their homeland. Let them stay, but I'm leaving." The Soviets thought otherwise.

More troublesome for the Canadian government was the status of the parents. With regard to those who had become naturalized Canadians and held Canadian passports, the question was whether they had given up their citizenship by choosing to travel to the Soviet Union on Soviet documents. Many had handed over their Canadian documents to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, and those who kept them for a future return to Canada were refused work, housing, and internal Soviet passports until they gave them up. The relevant

paragraph of the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946, which was in force at that time, Chapter 15, Part 3, Loss of Canadian Citizenship, reads:

> A Canadian citizen who, when outside of Canada and not under a disability, by any voluntary and formal act other than marriage, acquires the nationality or citizenship of a country other than Canada shall thereupon cease to be a Canadian citizen.

Max Yalden recalled:

> With some of our consular cases, the department said that they had lost their citizenship because of a "voluntary and formal act," and therefore there was little the Canadian government could do for them as citizens. As a result, they would have to hunker down, like any other Russian, and wait for a visa, which of course was not forthcoming.
>
> I also seem to remember that there were some who may have signed a paper requesting Soviet citizenship at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, and that there was an argument back and forth between us and the department as to whether this was "outside Canada," given the extraterritoriality of embassies. In any event we of course argued that, "outside Canada" or not, it certainly had not involved a genuinely "voluntary" act. If they had signed something in Ottawa, they had probably done so without being fully aware of its significance; and the ones already in the Soviet Union had in effect been coerced by threats about jobs, lodging and even adequate rations, if they did not take Soviet citizenship.
>
> How it all turned out, I do not recall. I think it was still going on (the argument with Ottawa, that is) when I left Moscow. Incidentally, the act was changed in 1997 to make it more difficult to lose one's citizenship.[1]

As for those who had never applied to become naturalized Canadians, in August 1956 the department addressed the question in reply to an inquiry from the Argentine government. The Argentine Embassy in Ottawa asked if the Canadian government had adopted or planned to adopt measures by which the eventual return of citizens from the Soviet Union could be avoided, as they might have been indoctrinated in the Soviet Union and might be sent back to Canada as communist agents. An *aide-mémoire* signed by Jules Léger answered the points that were raised:

> *i) The Department is aware that some persons born in the Soviet Union and resident in Canada, who have not acquired Canadian citizenship, have in recent*

months returned to the Soviet Union. Some of them have taken their Canadian-born children with them. Since no exit permit is required for departure from Canada, it is impossible to tell how many persons have left Canada in these circumstances.

2) The Canadian Government does not plan to introduce new measures to deal with the problems which might be created by the desire of such persons in the future to return to Canada. The existing provisions of the relevant acts and the procedures now in effect to carry out the provisions of these acts are, at present, considered sufficient.

3) Under the provisions of the Immigration Act, a person with the status of a resident alien in Canada, who takes up residence outside of Canada with the intention of making his permanent home abroad, is not re-admissible to Canada as a returning resident (Immigration Act, Section 4(3) and 4(4)). If he later wishes to return, he must apply again as an immigrant. The various factors affecting the decision of the Canadian authorities on this application would then, in accordance with the terms of the Immigration Act, be considered (Immigration Act, Section 5, and Immigration Act Regulations). One of these factors would be that of security. A child with the status of natural-born Canadian citizen would be admitted to Canada as a matter of right. A person who had acquired Canadian citizenship by naturalization under the Citizenship Act might lose that citizenship on the acquisition of another nationality by a voluntary and formal act, as a result of continuous residence abroad for a specified period, or for other reasons, but he would be admitted to Canada for permanent residence as a matter of right at any time prior to that loss of Canadian citizenship (Citizenship Act, Sections 15 to 19 inclusive). If that person lost his Canadian citizenship, he could re-enter Canada for permanent residence only by applying again as an immigrant in the manner indicated above. Where Canadian citizenship had been lost through 10 years absence from Canada (Citizenship Act, Section 18(1), he would be permitted to apply for resumption of Canadian citizenship (Citizenship Act, Section 18(4).

For the convenience of the Argentine Embassy, copies of the Immigration Act and of the Citizenship Act are attached with the passages relevant to the points mentioned above marked in the margin.[2]

The mechanism whereby citizenship might be lost was discussed in a letter from the deputy minister of citizenship and immigration to the undersecretary of state for External Affairs in October 1955:

As far as the Registrar of Canadian Citizenship is concerned, if your Department could advise him that some of the naturalized Canadians have returned to their country of origin and remained there for a period in excess of two years, he would then give consideration to the advisability of initiating proceedings in revocation.[3]

Many of the original immigrants had intentionally never taken out Canadian citizenship fully intending to return to their homelands eventually. Some just never saw the need for a Canadian passport. Others may even have applied and met a problem that the Canadian Slav Committee claimed some immigrants were having in obtaining Canadian citizenship. That matter was brought up in light of the Canadian Bill of Rights (1960) guaranteeing the principles of political liberty. An article in *Vestnik* stated:

> Many immigrants who came here in the '20s and '30s and earlier, and many of whom gave forty and more years of their life to their adopted land, have been repeatedly and vindictively denied citizenship papers because of political prejudice by those in authority.... Those discriminated [by denial of citizenship] are people who earned the displeasure of the powers-that-be because of their progressive or radical ideas and associations, or because the RCMP attributed this to them. Some of them are people who held membership, at one time or another, or participated in activities or supported them of progressive and left wing labor groups, fraternal or cultural societies, or frequented certain labor halls, or were readers of progressive and left wing newspapers.... What are the consequences of this discrimination? What is evident immediately and obviously is the drastic curtailment of a person's rights and privileges. All through life such a person is forced to occupy a second-rate status, and is subjected to police surveillance and intimidation from time to time. He cannot vote in a federal or provincial election. He cannot be a candidate for public office.... He cannot visit foreign countries, including the country of his birth and kin. He can neither leave the country for foreign travel, nor re-enter it, should the authorities decide to bar his return — unless he can obtain a special permit from Ottawa.... It must be said here that not only immigrants from Slavic countries have suffered persecution. Other immigrant people have also been victimized by it. The difference is in number rather than degree.[4]

In October 1962 the National Conference on Citizenship Rights held by the Canadian Council of National Groups met in Ottawa and sent delegations to meet with the minister of citizenship, Richard Bell, and other mem-

bers of Parliament. They protested against what they regarded as a long-standing policy of denying citizenship on political grounds. Minister Bell assured the members of the delegation that, henceforth, careful attention would be given to all applications and renewals with a view to their protests, a not-insignificant statement to be made at the height of the Cold War and the Cuban missile crisis.[5]

Whether applying to return as someone who had lost Canadian citizenship or someone who had never acquired it, the applicant required not only normal documentary proof of birth, marriage, dates of immigration, places of residence, evidence of good health, etc., but RCMP security clearance, which meant checks on his or her political affiliations and the dependability of the guarantors. Many applicants were considered suspicious, having been members of "subversive" organizations before leaving Canada, including the FRC, the AUUC, and the Labour Progressive or Communist parties. The Communist Party of Canada took the name "Labour Progressive" at the beginning of the Second World War and kept it until approximately 1958.

Security clearance was neither assured nor speedy, and until it was received by the embassy in Moscow, a name could not be added to the list, nor could particular representation be made on the person's or family's behalf. At the end of a three-page letter of 29 March 1959, much of it deleted presumably on the basis of it pertaining to a particular individual case, the RCMP director of security and intelligence states:

> *It is very important to establish the following principles of security:*
>
> *That the Return to Canada Campaign be subjected to continuous security scrutiny to ensure that the security of the country is not being adversely affected;*
>
> *That Canadian passports should not be issued until such time as negotiations with the USSR for the return of a Canadian citizen have proceeded to the extent of the issuance of an Exit Visa. This would undoubtedly avoid Canadian passports falling needlessly into Russian hands.*[6]

In early 1957 the consular division in Ottawa brought up the fate of Canadian passports with the Soviet Embassy through the consul, Demtchenko, and his subordinate, Selivanov. The latter called twice on Paul Malone of that division and assured him the Soviet Embassy would return any Canadian passports it received when a Soviet passport was issued, but that to find the passports it needed the names of the persons involved because the passports would be found in individual files. Selivanov clarified that Soviet citizenship could be granted in the embassy following approval of an application by the appropriate authorities in Moscow. Similarly an

application to surrender citizenship submitted to the embassy would be effective after approval of the Soviet government. He admitted that the USSR did not recognize dual nationality. He turned the tables somewhat by suggesting that the Soviet Embassy needed to obtain death certificates of Soviet citizens dying in Canada so that it could recover the Soviet passports of the persons concerned.

Paul Malone offered some insight into the personality of Selivanov, whose role in recruiting possible returnees and engaging in inappropriate consular activities was previously discussed:

> *Many of the persons proceeding to the USSR for settlement, he [Selivanov] admitted unashamedly, were "very ignorant," and stupid in regard to documentation. As substantiation, he cited the case of a family in Canada which had received transportation tickets and baggage labels from the Soviet Embassy for their trip to the USSR. They had thrown away the tickets and kept the baggage labels. Later they had lost their replacement tickets in London. [The inference was that they might have been equally careless with their Canadian passports.]*

Later Malone ends a memorandum on consular inquiries from the Soviet Embassy by remarking:

> *You may be interested in our impressions of Mr. Selivanov. He appears to be glib, self-assured, inquisitive and insistent. He is more effective in negotiations than his senior, Mr. Demtchenko, and his understanding of English is far superior.*[7]

Clearly little progress was made on the return of confiscated Canadian passports as evidenced in a comment by DL(2) to the consular division in October 1958 with regard to a letter from the embassy in Moscow the previous month:

> *We have seen evidence over the past year that the Soviet intelligence services have come to attach increasing importance to the collection of Canadian passports through the "Return to the Homeland" campaign. Some 50 are estimated to have fallen into their hands over the past two years. It is therefore our view that every possible effort should be made to recover Canadian passports seized by the Soviet authorities from victims of this campaign.*

On 15 December 1958 the Canadian Embassy, Moscow, was informed that, in spite of the information above, the undersecretary doubted that the embassy could formally justify a request for the return of Canadian passports unless it were able to establish that the passports were in the possession of the Soviet authorities, or that the holders had relinquished Canadian

citizenship, or that the Soviet authorities had refused the holder's permission to return to Canada. Having established these facts the embassy should proceed in endeavouring to retrieve passports:

> [*It should be emphasized*] *to the Soviet Foreign Ministry that a request for an individual's passport does not mean that the Canadian Government has decided to drop all negotiations for the return of the former holders of these passports to Canada. In addition, it is suggested that in the next Note you might state again that Canadian passports are the property of the Canadian Government and point out that it is expected that any Canadian passport which comes into the hands of the Ministry will be returned to the Embassy as a matter of normal routine.*[8]

The department's concern over the possible misuse of the passports turned over to the Soviet government may not always have been justified, given George-Yuri Moskal's rather surprising story of his Canadian passport:

> When I got to Lviv and settled at the dormitory and lectures began, officials and certain local "activists" kept asking for my Canadian passport, which I refused to surrender. Finally, I guess after about six months or so, because as a foreigner I couldn't attend certain classes, I was talked into it: "You just give it to us, we will keep it in safety for you, and you will still be a Canadian, OK?" So I gave it to one of the guys from the Komsomol. I didn't see that passport, that very same passport, until 1990 or 1991.
>
> I re-applied to the Canadian government and Canadian Embassy in Moscow later on, when I started to make arrangements to visit or to return to Canada, and I did receive another Canadian passport in Moscow. The Canadian ambassador was Geoffrey Pearson at the time. So I did receive an official citizenship card and a passport at the Canadian Embassy at 23 Starokonyushenny Pereulok in Moscow. Mind you, the Soviets were displeased with that. You know you feel proud being a Canadian, and I was always like that. I was a Ukrainian-Canadian, but I was a Canadian. When they took that first passport away, I felt that I was missing something. It was only a passport, it is something that you can re-apply for and get a new one. But without a passport you can't get into the Canadian Embassy, and so I pulled strings when I went to Moscow. Because of the guard outside, there was no way you were going to get in. You play stupid, you play dumb, you play as a Canadian, you don't understand Russian, and you just barge your way through. I was quite successful at that.

> Some of the guys who worked for state security, I considered them as being patriots of Ukraine in their own way. They had a job to do, but they could be mean about doing their job or they could be helpful. And if it's not them doing it, that means that the guy next door is going to do it. It was one of those helpful guys who pulled out my passport and gave it back to me in the period just prior to independence.

Discrimination against communist sympathizers, an unsurprising feature of the Cold War and one that was brought to the attention of Minister Bell, is reflected in the Canadian Embassy's lack of sympathy for the family from Hamilton. The couple was the subject of a lengthy case history, signed by the ambassador, possibly written by Peter Roberts:

> *In 1954, Mr. and Mrs. —— who were Communist sympathizers, and had been members of the Labour Progressive Party until 1947, decided to return to the USSR, where, they believed, workers lived better than in Canada. They filed applications with the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, but nothing happened for two years. In 1956 they again filed applications and this time were told they could go. Their present address is Kiev. Mrs. —— did remember that the [Soviet] Embassy had advised them to tell the Department of External Affairs, when they applied for passports, that they were going to Western Europe, since they would not be given passports if they said they were going to a Socialist country.... When they arrived in Kiev, they were told that there would be no work for them until they accepted Soviet citizenship. They therefore surrendered their Canadian passports and signed applications for Soviet citizenship, which was conferred upon them together with Soviet internal passports. ("received into Soviet citizenship October 15, 1956.")*
>
> *Mrs. —— was in a strangely muddled state of mind. Her disillusion with the Soviet Union was, as far as it went, strong and genuine. But it only went as far as her personal experience.... When our conversation turned to international questions, she parroted the line which she had probably learned at her Hamilton cell meetings: the Socialist camp is peace loving, Western governments want war because the armaments industry controls their policies, members of the Canadian Government own shares in munitions companies and therefore are not opposed to war.... When she got back to Canada, she said, she would have nothing more to do with the Communist Party, we need have no fear about that. But she would join the Canadian Congress of Women and fight for peace. She did not believe us when we told her that the CCW was controlled by the Communist Party. Impossible, she said. Many of its members go to church.*

Like so many others in the same position Mrs. —— seemed to know personally many of our repatriation cases.... All of them desperately want to return to Canada; some of them, including herself and her husband, are in a suicidal state of mind.

Her disillusion with the Soviet Union was, as far as it went, strong and genuine. She had been told and had read in the Soviet and Canadian Communist press that workers lived better here than in Canada, but when she got here and found that she and her husband must live in one room instead of six, [unlike] in Canada, and could have no car, and could not live on the husband's earnings alone, she realized that she had been misled. About some other aspects of Soviet life she was equally disillusioned.... At first she and her husband had shared a single room with another family. But since the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa had promised that they would have a one-room flat to themselves, Mrs. —— went to the Kiev City Soviet and demanded this accommodation. Ten days later it was produced, in a new apartment block. But that was their last piece of luck. They soon found that the 800–1000 roubles per month which the husband was able to earn as a carpenter would not support them both, and they were forced to eke out this salary by selling their Canadian clothing, piece by piece, on the black market. Mrs. —— is unable to work because of bad health. Her husband's Canadian-learned skills turned out to be a positive disadvantage, because it is impossible here to fill production requirements if one works thoroughly. Buildings are thrown together with no regard for quality or workmanship. As an example, Mrs. —— said that during a certain period last week her husband had made 16 wooden doors against 21 or 22 made by each of his fellow-workers. The reason for this was very simple: the doors were held together by screws, which Mr. —— screwed in in the proper way with a screwdriver. The Russian workers bashed them in with one blow of a heavy hammer, saving time at the expense of the unlucky consumer.

Their lives, said Mrs.——, were very lonely. There is only one way to make friends in this country — with a bottle of vodka. If the vodka bottle is missing from the table, nobody is interested in coming, and since the ——s do not drink (she is epileptic and he has had most of his stomach removed) and cannot afford vodka, they have to get along without friends.

Mrs.——, herself a Jewess, said she was shocked to find wide-spread anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. We gathered that she was not referring to any official persecution, but only to social ostracism. She said, in fact, that she had had no trouble with the police since returning to this country.

The ——s, if they are still Canadian citizens, are obviously among the least deserving of our repatriation cases. Mrs. ——, when she learned that her chances of returning to Canada were slight, asked us not to appeal on her behalf to the Soviet Government; even if she had not asked this, we should be little inclined to do more for her and her husband than our consular obligations require. They have belonged to and worked for a subversive organization, they deliberately tried to deceive the government when they applied for passports, they support the Communist point of view on many issues (though it must be said that it is stupidity rather than conviction that prevents them from dropping the official line) and there are no children who must suffer for their parents' folly. Our moral obligation to them is very small indeed. On the other hand, they are probably still Canadian citizens, because their acceptance of Soviet citizenship was not a voluntary act, but was forced upon them by the threat of hardship and want. You may therefore consider that we have some obligation to give them minimal assistance.

In a separate note based on the same visit, Peter Roberts reported:

Since her first visit, she had been to the Supreme Soviet but had obtained no satisfaction there. We did not give her any reason to hope that she would be repatriated to Canada and she left, we think, with the idea that she might never leave this country again.[9]

The term "suicidal" was used several times both by embassy officials and the returnees themselves to describe the sense of entrapment that many felt. One returnee suggested that another one felt "suicidal" on account of having misled others by sending positive reports about their family's situation. As far as is known, however, no suicides took place as a result of the severe disillusionment suffered by many returnees.

A ray of hope appeared in September 1958 when the Canadian Embassy reported to Ottawa that for "the first time" an American returnee had been granted an exit visa:

Mr. [David] Mark, Head of Chancery at the United States Embassy, has told us of one of their repatriation cases, identical in most respects to many of ours, which has been closed as a result of the family's being permitted to return to the United States. This is the first time we have heard of anyone who came to this country under the Return-to-the-Homeland Campaign being allowed to leave....

Mr. Mark said that they were extremely persistent with the Soviet authorities, concentrating particularly on organizations for the promotion of cultural relations with foreign countries. They were careful, however, not to tell the Soviet

authorities that they were disillusioned about the Soviet Union. They simply said that they wanted to go home and should be allowed to do so. They even went so far as to pretend to buy a bookshop in San Francisco which, they told the Russians, would handle only "progressive" literature. They had a relative in the United States make a down payment on this shop.

After many months of this kind of agitation, they were one day called to the Visa Department of the militia and given exit visas. They left at once for the US.... We might advise some of our own people ... that vigorous appeals to the Soviet authorities might help them to get exit visas.[10]

Finally, in early 1960, the Soviet government did eventually "give way" for a Canadian, the first exit visa being granted to one member of the Vancouver family:

One Canadian citizen who returned to the Soviet Union with his family, ——, recently has been granted an exit permit by the Soviet authorities and arrangements are being made for his return to Canada within the next few weeks; representations to the Soviet authorities had been made by the Canadian Government on his and his family's behalf.[11]

The embassy was interested not only in why the visa had been granted, but also in the day-to-day particulars of the Vancouver family's life, which were reported in detail to Ottawa. Having arrived in July 1958, in October of that year the whole family had wanted to leave the Soviet Union. By March 1960 the intentions of some members had begun to change. A letter signed by the ambassador shows concern about this aspect of the case:

You will note ——'s assertion that his family was now well settled in Rostov [Rostov-on-Don] and reasonably contented there and that they might decide to stay on in the Soviet Union even if they were given the opportunity to go back to Canada.... His parents' decision was largely influenced by the adequate flat which they now occupy.... He expressed the view that it would be better to omit the names of his parents and brother until (a) we had further word from them direct or (b) he writes to the Department about them. He thought that his father and mother before making a final decision would be guided by his advice after his return to Canada.

It would be embarrassing if we made strongly worded representations and later discovered that some of those on whose behalf we made them were happy to stay in the Soviet Union. From correspondence and from visits by them to the Embassy, we know that a number of these persons are still very anxious to return

to Canada. Others we have not heard from for a fairly long time. In drafting any note to present to the Soviet authorities on this subject, we should, I think, not include the names of any who definitely do not wish to return to Canada or whose wishes are doubtful, such as the ——s. Our note should, I think, make it clear that our list only includes those who at one time or another had made representations to the Embassy for assistance to return to Canada, and who we have no reason to believe have changed their minds. I think we should make the point in any note that we certainly do not want anyone to go back to Canada against his will and only wish that everyone on our list be given the free choice of remaining in the USSR or returning to Canada.[13]

In a memorandum attached to the letter, Blair Seaborn, who had replaced Marshall Crowe at the embassy, reported on the family's change of circumstance for the better as discussed in conversation with the eldest son:

Since their arrival in that city [Rostov], the family has been sharing a small five-roomed house with three other people, but very recently Mr. —— was allotted an apartment into which the family will move within a few weeks. It is a new one consisting of two bedrooms, living-dining room, kitchen and bathroom. The family expect to be very comfortable there. The rent will be 70 rubles per month, including gas, water and electricity.

Mr. —— is working in a large factory in Rostov (there are about 20,000 employees) which specializes in agricultural machinery of all sorts. Although he had not worked as a plumber for many years, he was better qualified than most Soviet workmen, and has, as a result, gone through the various grades of plumber at the factory until he is now at the level of plumber Grade 4, with a present salary of 1200 rubles per month. He hopes soon to be put in charge of a "brigade," when his salary will rise to 1600 rubles, and he has every expectation of passing the examinations for plumber Grade 5 within another few months, a grade which will allow him a salary of about 2000 rubles per month. This puts him in the category of a highly paid worker, as most of the semi-skilled labourers in the plant earn from 800 to 1000 rubles per month. Almost all sections of the factory are now working on a seven-hour day, six days per week.

The second brother, aged 19, is on alternate days studying at an institute and working at the same factory as his father. As far as I could make out, he is being trained as a pattern maker for the factory. He has been told that when he has completed this course he will be able to go on to the Foreign Languages Institute in Rostov, which would open a much wider range of job possibilities to him. The next member of the family, aged 13, is still going to school.

There is a special club in Rostov for students who are studying the English language at high schools and higher institutes. They have club activities every two weeks in which the boys have been able to participate. All conversation on club evenings is supposed to be in English and the two younger ——s in particular, who are both completely bilingual by now, are highly respected members of the club.

—— realizes that his father and indeed the whole family have been given quite special treatment since they settled in Rostov and that the authorities have gone out of their way to persuade them that they have good prospects in this country. He thinks it quite possible that the rest of the family will decide to remain here even if they are given the chance to return to Canada, but he himself feels that he belongs in Canada and could only be happy there....

—— has no idea why the exit permit has finally come through and can only assume that it is his persistence which has won the day for him. Apparently he has spent almost all his time since his return to the USSR one and a half years ago in going from office to office in Rostov, Moscow and other centres pressing his case, and he thinks that perhaps his request was finally granted only because the officials could not stand the sight of him any longer.

It was nevertheless interesting to note that he spoke neither bitterly nor very critically about life in the Soviet Union.[14]

The officials in Rostov would have qualified for George-Yuri Moskal's label of "helpful." Rostov, in Russian territory, received fewer returnees than cities in the Ukrainian or Belarusian territories, which had been more recently acquired by the USSR. Nevertheless, as elsewhere, the returnees were clearly caught between the Soviet foreign ministry and the local militia. Similar buck-passing is revealed in embassy reports about the Winnipeg family's experiences in Pinsk. In this case it is evident that letters between the family and the embassy and the family's relations abroad were systematically intercepted. Pinsk officials were distinctly involved and unhelpful. In October 1958 the embassy reported:

Mrs. —— called at the Embassy today to enquire whether any progress had been made with respect to the return to Canada of herself and her husband. They had received no mail from us, and, as a result, did not know where they stood.

We gave Mrs. —— copies of our two most recent letters to her and we asked whether they had made any progress at their end.

She said that she had written four times to her brother, but had received no answer. She had also written to her lawyer that same number of times, and

had received only one non-committal reply through a third party. She had with her her letter to her lawyer, which she apparently would have liked us to send for her, but we advised her to send it in the normal manner, and to keep on writing to her brother and lawyer until she received an answer. We also said that we would see what might be done to get in touch with the brother and lawyer in Canada with a view to having them write to her. Mrs. —— believes, and we would be inclined to agree, that it would assist their return to Canada if she could have "the call" from her lawyer and brother, that is a definite statement from her brother that he wants her to return to Canada and, in the case of the lawyer, a statement that she is needed to run their farm in Canada.

Mrs. —— also had with her a draft statement addressed to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, in which they say that for various reasons they are unable to adjust to life in Russia, that they consider themselves to be Canadians, and that they wish to renounce their Russian citizenship and return to Canada. Mrs. —— hoped to send this letter to Mr. Voroshilov [Kliment Yefrenivich Voroshilov, chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 1953–60]. We told her that it was most unlikely that it would be read by this gentleman, but that it would not hurt to send it off. We pointed out to her, however, that if she did receive a reply, it was most likely that it would say that she should make application to the local militia, who were the appropriate authorities in such matters.

In May 1960, the Embassy reported that Mrs. —— had called at the Embassy and told them that she had submitted all her documents to the militia authorities in Pinsk and was waiting for their reply. Again there was concern about missing correspondence. She reported on the interest of local authorities in the problem of returnees in their community.

Recently, the City Mayor of Pinsk had called a meeting of all the repatriates living in Pinsk. During the meeting, he had asked them on what conditions they would agree "to stop making trouble and to stay in the USSR." Mrs. —— told us that a few repatriates from Argentina had replied that if they were given decent housing, food and working conditions, they might think things over. Mrs. —— told us that both she and Mr. ——, a Canadian repatriate also, had replied that they wanted to return to Canada, no matter what the Soviet authorities would do.[15]

The embassy had already received a report of the concerns of the Pinsk authorities from another source, possibly the Mr. —— referred to in the embassy memo, whom we identify as a member of "the Pinsk family" as their place of origin in Canada is not known:

On November 30, 1959, the Mayor of the city of Pinsk, a man from security ... (the MVD or the KGB), and one from the Party called in both Mr. —— and his father. All three tried to convince them to forget about their intended return to Canada and to try to settle down to live in the USSR. The MVD man said that he knew they had been visiting their relatives in neighbouring villages and he accused them of having used these visits for spreading propaganda hostile to the USSR. This man added that he had enough witnesses and material evidence to arrest both Mr. —— and his father and to charge them with anti-State activities.

The MVD man asked Mr. —— how many times he had gone to Moscow and why. When Mr. —— replied that he had come to Moscow to visit his Embassy in order to straighten out his documents, the MVD man said that he should no longer do so or else he would be classified as a spy. He told Mr. —— that he should know better than to go to Moscow to visit foreign embassies which are nothing else but "nests of spies working against the Motherland". Mr. —— replied that he could not care less and insisted that he had every right to visit his Embassy; he added that when he was in Canada he could visit the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa as he pleased and that nobody ever tried to stop him from doing so.

The Mayor of Pinsk insistently asked Mr. —— why he would not get married here, settle down and work. Mr. —— said that he could not work as long as his parents and his children were sick. He spends all his time looking after them and has no time to do anything else.

On December 1 or 2, 1959, Mr. —— was called in at the Militia Headquarters of Pinsk. He went with his father, although he alone had been called in. He was received there by a Major and a civilian. They did not try to frighten the ——s, but merely "lectured" them on the good life they could lead here, if only they would make the necessary effort. They repeated the accusations of propaganda and their menaces to arrest and charge the ——. After this, they again tried to convince Mr. —— to forget about returning to Canada, to get married and to work. Mr. —— replied that he would not work as long as he was in the USSR.

On December 10, a Militia Major came to Pinsk from Brest. Mr. —— and his father were called to the passport desk of the Militia Headquarters of Pinsk. They were received, Mr. —— said, politely; they were asked how they felt and why they wanted to return to Canada. After Mr. —— told the Major why, the Major told the ——s that, in order to leave the USSR they would have to submit a "call" from relatives in Canada, two pictures, a biography and a birth certificate of each person wishing to go back.

The Militia Major said that after these documents are submitted, they would be allowed to return to Canada as Soviet citizens. Mr. —— replied that he had not the slightest intention of going back to Canada as a Soviet citizen because he was already a Canadian citizen. The Major said that, since the ——s had Soviet passports, they were obviously Soviet citizens. Mr. —— replied that he and all the members of his family would renounce their Soviet citizenship.

The Major then replied that if the ——s did not want to return to Canada as Soviet citizens, they did not need a "call" from their relatives in Canada, but they should pay 500 roubles for each adult wishing to return and they should have a certified letter from the Canadian authorities attesting to their Canadian citizenship. The Major added that since the Supreme Soviet only was empowered to grant Soviet citizenship, it alone had the power to take it back and requests for withdrawal of citizenship should be addressed to it.

On December 12, 1959, both Mr. —— and his father went to Brest where they were received by an MVD Colonel who repeated what the Major had told them in Pinsk on December 10.

When he visited the Embassy, Mr. —— still had with him the certificates attesting to Canadian citizenship for himself, his children and his father, which we had given to him on October 3, 1959. In view of your letter C-602 of October 7, 1959, we gave him a similar certificate for his mother, Mrs. ——.[15]

The documents on file at LAC do not record whether this family was eventually permitted to leave, but their continued agitation and strong stance on Canadian citizenship would have given them good prospects.

The initial visit to the embassy of members of the family from Bradford, Ontario, in February 1956 had formed the basis of a case history distributed by Ottawa to other governments (see chapter six). At that time Robert Ford (then in the European division of External Affairs, later ambassador to the USSR) recommended that for political considerations the division hoped the Department of Citizenship and Immigration would consider the readmissibility of the non-Canadian members as favourably as possible:

Should we manage to get the whole family back to Canada, the propaganda possibilities in showing up the 'Return to the Homeland' campaign as a snare and a delusion would be very great. On the other hand, if the Soviet Union proved uncooperative in providing exit permits, we would be in a much better position to bring pressure and publicity to bear if we were able to say that we would welcome the whole family back....

This case offers a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate in these days when the Soviet leaders are at such pains to show the advantages and superiorities of their system over ours, just where the balance of advantage lies when it comes down to the lives and fates of individual members of the two societies.[16]

The two Canadian wives in the family visited the embassy a number of times, but records remain of only two visits, made in May 1958:

On May 20, Mrs. —— and Mrs. —— called at the embassy. They said they had written four times to Voroshilov seeking to renounce their Soviet citizenship, but had received no reply although they knew the letters were delivered since they had the postal receipts for them.

They said that the local Militia had refused to issue them exit visas because they were Soviet citizens. They were, therefore, determined to renounce their Soviet citizenship and go to Canada as Canadians. They said they were unable to sit still and do nothing and had come to Moscow for a few days to see us and make all the calls possible on the various Soviet offices concerned. They seemed to be under no illusions as to anything coming out of these visits and we did what we could to discourage them without being unnecessarily cruel.

On May 23 they called again at the Embassy to tell us that they had visited the Supreme Soviet and the head Militia office in Moscow, only to be told their case could not be decided immediately and that they would learn of the final decision through the local authorities in Lutsk in three weeks' time. If this decision is unfavourable, the two ladies intend to return to Moscow to take up the question once again.

The ladies enquired whether we had received the medical and x-ray forms for their parents. We were able to tell them that these had been sent on to Ottawa.

They asked us if we could forward a letter through the bag to Mr. and Mrs.——, Bradford, Ontario. We said that we were not "permitted" to use the bag for transmission of private correspondence. They said they would leave the letter anyway, and if it could not be sent we should destroy it. We attach the letter for your disposal.[17]

Although the files in LAC do not record whether this particular Bradford family received exit permits, a member of a family interviewed in Bradford in 2004 confirmed that all of her family had gradually been permitted to leave in the early to mid-1960s:

We kept going to the Internal Affairs in Lutsk and saying, "When are you going to let us have our exit visa? [In Moscow] they would say,

"Deal with your local," and we went there so many times. I think they were kind of hoping that we would be able to return to Canada. There were a lot of sympathizers over there, they were not for the Soviet system, especially in Lutsk (western Ukraine). Wherever you went there were people who knew what they were saying about life in other countries, that the Soviets were the best off, wasn't true. Western Ukraine had been under Poland in earlier days, in depression times. And they said, "People didn't have money in those days, but there was everything in the stores to buy." They knew there was a better way of living.

I think they kind of sympathized, but they couldn't do anything. Once there was a Russian man there when we went to one of the government buildings in Lutsk, and he said, as if he didn't know at the time that we were not Russian, my sister-in-law and I, "You say you're not Ukrainian, but you are Ukrainian. It doesn't matter where you were born. I could be born in Africa and I'd still be Russian, or Ukrainian."

And the other man, the one from Lutsk, just turned to them and said, "They aren't Ukrainian."

They didn't split up the families, Khrushchev said. If one went, they all could go; if one stayed, they all had to stay. I think they decided that they would let us out, but they weren't going to let us come all at once. It would make too much propaganda against them. My family was the first one to get permission to leave, my husband and I at the end of October 1960 with our one daughter. One day I phoned [the officer at the embassy] and I asked if he had heard any more about our case, because we kept in touch all the time, and he said, "You've got your exit permit and you can come to Moscow." Just out of the blue. I couldn't believe it. My daughter and I went running down the street to tell everybody. When we got to Moscow there was still a lot of paper work to do, so I think we stayed about four or five days in a hotel in the Olympic village.

I think it was Mr. McLaine and his wife [Alan and Tudy] who invited us for supper along with Mr. Montpetit. We were talking to them about our experiences in Ukraine. We used to have a radio over there and we listened to the Voice of America. Sometimes they'd jam it, sometimes they'd let it through, from Switzerland. We got a lot of information from their programs. But we found out about the episode with Khrushchev from Mr. McLaine and Mr. Montpetit, how he went

to the United Nations and he was banging his shoe [September 1960]. Anyway, he evidently met a lot of people in America [in October 1959], and they said to him, "Why don't you let my people, my family, come home? Why is it that they want to come home and you won't let them?" Evidently there were quite a few people asking him, and he said, "Nobody wants to leave. We don't know of anybody who wants to leave. If anybody wants to leave, they can come home if they want." Then just after he went back, it all started opening up a bit. Families from Canada were allowed to leave. He had the influence to do it, because he didn't want that to happen to him again. It would have been embarrassing, if he had gone back on his word. Evidently there were a lot of people who protested from Canada, too.

Although Nikita Khrushchev's relationship to the beginnings of the return-to-the-homeland campaign remains unclear, his intervention in opening the doors can be confirmed, beginning at least a year and a half before the UN shoe episode and the release of the family from Bradford.

In early May 1959 a group of seven American veterans of the Second World War had visited the USSR for a reunion with Soviet soldiers they had encountered when their two armies met at the Elbe River. In a meeting with Khrushchev in the Kremlin they asked whether Soviet Jews would be permitted to go to Israel if they wanted. He is quoted in the *New York Times* as having replied, "In general, we are playing with the possibility that in some future time we shall allow any person of any nationality to leave." He continued, "Generally speaking the Soviet Union already has begun to ease restrictions on travel abroad by Soviet citizens." The flamboyant mood in which these statements were offered may be judged by the fact that the interview contained the statement that many Jews were finding themselves in difficulty in Israel and were asking for visas to return, even though the Soviet Union had not yet allowed emigration to Israel. Further, he pointed out to his guests that they were wrong to say that Americans were free to leave their country whenever they wished, as Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Dubois, a "Negro" singer and a writer, had waited several years for passports so as to be able to go abroad.[18]

In September and early October 1959, on a trip across the United States, Khrushchev made several commitments when confronted with individuals pleading the case of exit visas for their relatives in the USSR. To a tearful mother with two children trapped in Lithuania he promised, "Don't cry.

You will get your children," saying to Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, "Take care of this." In an Iowa cornfield, in discussion with Adlai E. Stevenson and Marshall MacDuffie, a former United Nations relief and rehabilitation official, he agreed to permits for "compassionate" cases. About forty cases were apparently discussed, and Khrushchev suggested the State Department make a list. In Los Angeles he also met with two brothers, members of the veterans group who had visited Moscow. In Wykliffe, Ohio, a woman sought aid in obtaining exit permits for her mother and brother, and on his last day in the United States a Roman Catholic priest asked for a permit for his seventy-one-year-old mother. "I will do that," Khrushchev replied. Based on these commitments the State Department was compiling a list expected to exceed 200 names to submit to Moscow.[19]

On 22 March 1960 the *New York Times* marked a momentous day for a number of returnees with a small Associated Press item in the back pages under the headline "1,000 Said to Leave Soviet":

> Western diplomats said today that the Soviet Union had quietly allowed about 1,000 citizens to emigrate during the last six months and rejoin their families abroad. This emigration is in addition to the half dozen persons allowed to go to the United States because of Premier Khrushchev's promises on his American trip.[20]

Clearly the promises were not primarily directed toward the victims of the return-to-the-homeland campaign. The lists contained a variety of other would-be emigrants: Jews, wives who had married Western men, family members with relatives already abroad, such as the parents and children who had appealed to Khrushchev in the United States. Nevertheless, several Canadian families benefited from this brief period during which restrictions were relaxed. Khrushchev's confidence in the Soviet Union's superiority over the United States — such that he told President Richard Nixon, "We will bury you" — would overcome, from his point of view, any bad propaganda resulting from people wanting to leave the country. Khrushchev's pride did not permit him to back away from a public commitment.

We do not know how many Canadians benefited from Khrushchev's grand gesture. We do know that three of the six families for whom case histories have survived were allowed to leave in the early 1960s. Perhaps they all did, which is why their records were kept. This window of relative opportunity did not stay open past the demise of Khrushchev's power in

1964, after which the old system of total restriction prevailed once again. High-level visitors continued to present lists, but iron-fisted emigration policies remained substantially in effect until May 1991 and were among the last of Gorbachev's reforms.[21]

Eight | *The Last Days of the Committee*

Because the return-to-the-homeland campaign was a worldwide phenomenon and was regarded as an aggressive act on the part of the Soviet Union and its satellites, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) created in 1955 the Special Committee on the Soviet and Satellite Repatriation Campaign, with a view to exchanging information among NATO members. In September 1956, in its regular semiannual report, members of the committee gave the numbers of those who had returned from their respective countries since the beginning of the campaign: Netherlands, 165 of 10,000 residents of Soviet and satellite origin; Belgium, 59 of 40,000 Poles; Germany, 350 of 13,000 of Russian origin; United Kingdom, 187 out of 112,000 Poles; United States, 125 Soviet and satellite nationals of an unspecified number. Canadian figures were not included in this particular document.[1]

In April 1957 the Department of External Affairs distributed to its NATO colleagues two documents prepared by the RCMP. The first estimated that by October 1956, "814 persons of Soviet or satellite origin had left Canada in response to the 'return to the homeland' campaign. Half of them returned to the Soviet Union."[2] In the second document, dated 21 March 1957 and titled "Soviet-bloc Repatriation Activity," an estimate of another 84 people is given for the period between October 1956 and February 1957.

Other destination countries (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania) that had received approximately 407 in the first period added only 5 between October and February, for a total of 412. Thus there were an additional 79 returnees to the Soviet Union (including the Ukrainian SSR) from October 1956 to February 1957 for an estimated total of 486. The second document notes:

> *These figures are close approximations only, as was the figure of 814 given in a previous report for the number of persons known to have returned to Soviet-bloc countries from the beginning of the "Return to the Homeland" campaign to 1 October 1956.*
>
> *No Soviet-bloc country is known to have issued exit visas to immigrants once repatriated who wished to return to Canada.*[3]

Canada also exchanged information and reports with various countries on a bilateral basis. The Argentine ambassador to Canada reported to his minister, "The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has an exchange of information on this matter with all the countries that are members of NATO and with the corresponding office in Washington, the centre for information from countries that make up the Organization of American States, which ... makes up for the lack of direct exchange of information with the police in our country."[4]

The campaign was seen increasingly as a front in a broader worldwide communist conspiracy to undermine the West, one that included infiltration of the media, espionage, and the unrestrained activity of an ever-enlarging Soviet diplomatic corps in Western capitals and major urban centres. The American Senate subcommittee on internal security concluded in its report on the campaign of 24 May 1956, "The whole episode represents probably the boldest activity entered upon by Soviet officials here in this country."[5]

The United States, the report continued, was even the recipient of return-to-the-homeland material from China. It was believed that the intention was, in part, "to gain acceptance for Red China's hope for UN membership." The Chinese used similar techniques as those of the campaign from Eastern Europe, such as appeals from family members who sometimes used codes to disguise their real message. Canadian files do not allude to appeals being made to Chinese-Canadians.

In February 1957 the RCMP stated that with regard to Poland, return-to-the-homeland operations had dwindled to a trickle, the failure of the campaign being cited as the reason for its cessation.[6] In June 1957 the RCMP director of security and intelligence reported to DL(2): "Repatriation to the

USSR still continues, but to a far lesser degree than it did when the campaign first commenced. Furthermore, publications originating from 'Return to the Homeland Committee' in East Berlin are still being received by displaced persons living in various parts of Canada. However, this propaganda is apparently having little effect on the recipients."[7] The departures continued to some degree, as evidenced in September 1958 by an embassy employee travelling to Moscow on the *Baltika* who reported, "a Canadian couple with two children on board who were returning to the Soviet Union to live."[8] Based on the RCMP figure of 487 up to March 1957, and assuming a diminished flow of new returnees thereafter, it is possible to estimate that a total of about 500 but fewer than 600 individuals took up the call to return to the Soviet Union in the two years that the campaign was pursued by the Berlin-based committee.

Corroboration of these numbers may be found in the list of names of returnees compiled by Serge Cipko, referred to in chapter four. The list identifies 144 individuals without family, some single and some married, but without evidence of whether their spouses were in Canada or the USSR. Four individual returnees were women. There were fifty-seven families, either couples or parents with children representing 178 individuals (i.e., an average of 3 individuals per group.) The total number of returnees on the list who left Canada between 1955 and 1960 is 322, only about thirty-three per cent fewer than the number reported earlier by the RCMP.[9]

A desire for secrecy regarding the number of Canadians involved is evident in a telegram from European division in Ottawa to the embassy in Moscow. The long-standing *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow, Max Frankel, was apparently writing an article on the subject. The embassy was told:

> *If ... you tell Frankel how many repatriates have been permitted to leave or how many remain, you should do so on condition that the figures be used only for arriving at a total for all countries and not be published separately. Canada should in no way be mentioned.*[10]

Frankel was well known to Canadian diplomats and well acquainted with the problems of the returnees. According to Marshall Crowe, minister at the embassy in 1957–58, it was Frankel who coined the phrase, "the flypaper society," meaning, "Once you're stuck there, you can't get away."

Although the RCMP judged that the number of returnees leaving Canada was greatly diminished in 1957, material from the Return to the Homeland Committee continued to be distributed. In the spring of 1957, however, the nature of the appeal took on a different, somewhat-sinister direction — a

direct request for personal details about their compatriots to the recipients of the letters asking that they expose those conducting anti-Soviet work. Dated 29 March, a letter went out on committee letterhead, signed by the president of the committee, N. Mikhailov, and sent from a new Berlin address, Schadowstrasse 1B.

Dear Countryman,

Many inquiries regarding the Amnesty Law have recently been received by the Committee "For the Return to the Homeland" which attests to the indubitable interest in this question, and, on the other hand, also proves the existence of some vagueness in the understanding of the provisions of this law.

We draw your attention to Paragraph 7 of the Ukaz of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 17-9-55. The Ukaz reads: 'To release from responsibility also those Soviet citizens abroad who were drawn into anti-Soviet organizations in the post-war period, if they have redeemed their fault by subsequent patriotic activity in favour of their native country.'

In clarification of this paragraph the legal branch of the USSR Embassy in Berlin wrote the Committee as follows: 'The so-called old emigrants are also held responsible for anti-Soviet activity; however, the provisions of Paragraph 7 of the Ukaz in regard to release from responsibility also apply to them.'

What patriotic activity can an individual abroad engage in?

The Soviet state is encircled by enemies who spurn no means to undermine its might. They have organized numerous espionage and diversion organizations under orders of various foreign intelligence organizations. These organizations are systematically spreading lies and slander about the Soviet Union and block the return to their homeland of the true patriots.

It is the duty of every honest patriot — to fight these intrigues of the enemy. Everybody must watch the mood and attitude of his compatriots around him, and expose those who are conducting anti-Soviet work. Information about such persons must be collected and handed over to the nearest Soviet representatives.

The following must be reported: family name, address, occupation, membership in organizations, what assertions the person is making in open meetings and in private conversations/, does he write to the press/what publications/, does he associate with foreigners, etc.

Anyone living abroad who is honestly working for the benefit of his native country will be given amnesty and even before his return to his native country will receive a written advice to this effect from the proper Soviet Consulate.[11]

Six days later, 4 April 1957, another letter was sent with the same heading and signature, written on what was later established to be the same

typewriter. On one hand this letter disowned responsibility for the first letter and denied that the committee had any involvement with espionage work; on the other it repeated the appeal for information on the work of anti-Soviet organizations and about "particular immigrants."

Esteemed countryman:

The Committee for the Return to the Homeland notifies our countrymen abroad about the following. In the last days many of our countrymen have been getting provocative letters. Despite the fact that these letters are written on the letterhead of the committee and bear my signature, their contents are the result of the intrigues of the enemy which is trying to give a blow to our work. In the provocative letters mentioned above, our countrymen are called in the name of the Committee to carry on spy activities and inform on their own countrymen. We most categorically declare in regard to this that the Committee has no relation to espionage work and never has called for it. Our aim is to give assistance to all countrymen living abroad and who are striving to return to the homeland.

The Committee has been established by an order of the Soviet Government only for the care and task of keeping track of our countrymen living outside of the borders of our Soviet homeland. But our Committee, of course, is interested in preventing further such provocative actions regardless from what side they are coming. Therefore we are asking that in case of receiving further letters they be sent to the address of the nearest Soviet representative, for the future safe transportation to our Committee. About the fact itself of receiving the provocative letters on the letterheads of our Committee, we are asking that this be reported directly to us.

Besides, the Committee will appreciate any report concerning the work of anti-Soviet organizations and also the lives and behaviour of particular immigrants.[12]

Three months later, 3 July 1957, the committee resumed sending its standard letter of poetic exhortation, mentioning "enemies acting according to the instruction of the overseas lords and their henchmen," but without an appeal for espionage work.[13]

The two letters of 29 March and 4 April were received by a resident of London, Ontario, who passed the first letter on to the *London Free Press*. The story was taken up by the *Globe and Mail* on 1 August 1957. The story was expanded with an interview with Milan Jakubec, secretary of the Mutual Cooperation League:

> "I cannot understand why the government does not take more action in this matter to protect people," said Jakubec.... "I think many would even welcome censorship for protection."

Do many succumb to threats and spy on their fellows?

"I would not say many, but certainly I have no doubt some do. If they have relatives in the Old Country or when they start to lose hope they are subject to very heavy pressure."

The same article said External Affairs "was very interested in reports of the Mikhailov letter, but further comment would have to await study of the letter and its implications."[14]

On 13 August John Watkins, then assistant undersecretary, met with the Soviet ambassador Dimitri Chuvakin to discuss the Mikhailov letters:

The Soviet Ambassador said this morning that he wished to inform us officially that the 'so-called' letter from Gen. Mikhailov ... referred to in the Canadian press was "a sheer forgery."

The Soviet authorities had established that the letter had been fabricated by an organization called "The American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism.'...

The Soviet Government expressed the hope that the Canadian authorities would take measures to prevent in the future the publication of such fabrications designed to harm relations between our countries.... Mr. Chuvakin thought that the Canadian authorities could say that the letter was a forgery.

When I mentioned the matter to Mr. [John] Holmes he said ... that we should first check to see what information DL(2) might have on the subject.[15]

The RCMP reported on 16 August 1957 to the undersecretary, "the authenticity of these documents and their contents is questionable."[16] At the end of September, however, DL(2) received a document submitted by the Danish delegation at NATO. A person of Russian origin residing in Denmark had received the same two letters as had the resident in London. The document concluded that the two letters were probably written on the same typewriter, and that it seemed most likely that both emanated from the same source.[17] In October European division gave its opinion:

On the face of the facts now available, it is by no means unlikely that both letters received in Canada and in Denmark were mailed by General Mikhailov's organization, and that this body is directly controlled by the Soviet Government.

b) The formulations used by Mr. Chuvakin (a "sheer forgery") and in the second letters ("intrigues of the enemy") are typical of those which have long been used within the USSR to characterize either opposition to a new line or continued adherence to an old line which has been changed. The use of these

formulae in connection with this incident would be consistent with a situation where an "out-station" such as Mikhailov's office has simply been slow to change its line along with that of Moscow.

c) The appeal to the recipients in the second letter to report the first letter to the nearest Soviet representative could be a typical but clumsy effort to keep the "dirty linen" within the family household, and may be highly significant of Mikhailov's connection with the Soviet Government.

d) The quibbling about what constitutes espionage, coupled with a persistent appeal to report on emigrants, are typical Soviet practice. If we are one day satisfied of the authenticity of both letters, then I think that we have grounds for a stiff protest and I think that this might be more effective if it were made to Chuvahin in person, whether we also deliver this in Moscow or not.[18]

In the documents released by Library and Archives Canada relating to this matter, the critical paragraph that might indicate the reason the RCMP still questioned the authenticity of the letters has been blanked out. Despite European division's analysis and the Danish report, no protest seems to have been registered with the Soviet Embassy against what was a clear invitation to the recipients to spy on organizations and individuals in Canada.

Having apparently decided not to pursue the matter with the Soviet government, External Affairs was still under pressure to give a reply to the press. A letter from DL(2) to the undersecretary, dated 15 October 1957 and signed by G.G. Crean, summarizes the situation:

I told the London Free Press *correspondent when he phoned that we had not yet completed our full study of the letter but expect to do so shortly. We clearly cannot give such a reply much longer.*

I should like to recommend therefore, that the next time the press approaches this Department on the subject we state that the Soviet Ambassador informed us that the Soviet authorities disclaim any responsibility for this letter; in fact they consider it a forgery. We can then add that the Canadian authorities made a careful study of this letter and that we have no information which either proves or disproves the Soviet Ambassador's statement that it is a forgery....[19]

No further inquiry was made by the press until a year later, July 1958, from Bob Needham of the *London Free Press*. He asked "whether the Mikhailov letters were finally judged genuine; and whether we have had any additional complaints about the receipt of such letters." To the first question, he was given the reply prepared the previous October. To the second:

We have checked with the RCMP and have ascertained that while some repatriation propaganda is still being received in Canada from East Berlin there has not been, to the knowledge of the RCMP, any further letters from the Mikhailov committee which have sought to enlist informers.[20]

G. Hamilton Southam, on behalf of the undersecretary, informed the commissioner of the RCMP (with attention to the directorate of security and intelligence):

Our Legation in Prague has reported that the amnesty for émigrés who had escaped was cancelled in December, 1956; they understand that the Soviet amnesty has also been withdrawn; and that therefore any former national who now returned would be convicted....[21]

On 8 July 1957 Southam, having received additional information on the campaign from the RCMP, summarized the state of the return-to-the-homeland campaign:

They [the RCMP] reported —— repatriation to the Soviet Union still continues but to a far lesser extent than when the campaign first began. They also stated that publications such as "Za Vozvrashenie [sic] Na Rodinu" originating from the "Return to the Homeland Committee" in East Berlin are still being received by displaced persons living in various parts of Canada. The volume of this propaganda has, however, markedly diminished and its effect continues to be negligible.[22]

Nevertheless the Ukrainian Canadian Committee in August 1957 wrote to Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker, referring to its letter to the Liberal government written two years earlier, which had requested that the government intervene and stop the campaign:

Since that time, however, the work of General Mikhailov and his committee did not diminish but, in recent months, it has increased in volume and intensity. We strongly feel that there is some breach of international law whereby Canadian citizens are exposed to molestation by an agency of a foreign power.

An aspect the UCC had not previously mentioned was, "the prospective victims of such repatriation are not only our citizens who came here after the second world war, but Canadians of long standing, and even, in some cases Canadian born." The letter does not mention the problem of those who had succumbed to the propaganda being unable to return to Canada.[23]

The prime minister's reply to the UCC included the usual statements about non-censorship of the mails and the difficulty of defining "seditious

materials." It requested that any evidence of intimidation or evidence that the East Berlin Committee operates through a conspiratorial network of agents, as mentioned in the letter, be sent to the RCMP.[24]

Mikhailov continued in an aggressive tone in March 1957 in an article published in *Soviet Russia*, which linked the return-to-the-homeland campaign to a "Vigilance Campaign" under way at the time in the Soviet Union. He described the aims and activities of the Return to the Homeland committee in some detail. The article was analysed and forwarded to the undersecretary in translation from the Canadian Embassy, Moscow. The embassy commented:

> [*The committee's*] *activities are said to include assisting Soviet citizens in their efforts to locate their relatives in other countries; replying to inquiries from displaced Soviets with descriptions of life in the Soviet Union and clarification of "questions pertaining to repatriation"; and forwarding letters from Soviet citizens to their relatives abroad "bearing tidings from home which help displaced persons, befuddled by slanderous propaganda, to gain a better understanding of what is happening in the world ..."*
>
> *The remainder of the article is taken up with a description of the manner in which displaced Soviet citizens are being exploited by foreign, particularly United States subversive agencies for activities directed against the Soviet Union and the "cunning" methods used in the West to prevent Soviet citizens from returning home. This linking of the "return to the homeland" and "vigilance" campaigns into a unified propaganda theme, although a recent development, is now being given wide currency for home consumption....*
>
> *The vigilance campaign has of course been whipped up by full coverage in* Pravda *of the press conference held in East Berlin on April 2 [1957] by the Return Home Committee. There was a reference ... to "numerous facts of subversive and wrecking activities by organs of American intelligence against the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist camp", and the conference then settled down to first-hand accounts by five repatriate Russians describing their involvement with United States intelligence activities [described in chapter three].*
>
> *Also enclosed are translations of articles [from]* Izvestia *of... April 6 ("Espionage and Subversive Groups under Guise of 'Émigré Political Organizations,' " which complains that the Western press did not report the Berlin press conference mentioned above: and "eloquent silence," showing, "that the sponsors of subversive actions against the Soviet Union have been caught red-handed.")*[25]

In 1958 Mikhailov was "retired," probably because of the lack of success of the campaign, the mishandling of the "letters" issue, and the

ensuing backtracking required by the Soviet ambassador. Certainly he must have been held responsible for the lack of success in the return-to-the-homeland campaign itself. His name does not appear again. Neither it nor the name of the committee is included in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* or Soviet government files, an indication of the depth to which his reputation had sunk, or a purposeful attempt to wipe the whole campaign from Soviet history — not the first time a person or program had been dealt with this way.

In September 1958 the Toronto-based Latvian-language publication *Latviia* announced that Mikhailov had "fallen from grace, the reason being that he has had little success in luring immigrants back to their communist-dominated home countries." *Latviia* further reported:

> It was deemed necessary to "recall" and have him [Mikhailov] replaced by a character known as Maj.-Gen. Sergey Vishnevsky [sic] who has made himself a name with a good deal of ruthless and [unreadable]. In view of this and events in the past [unreadable] immigrants and their organizations are warned to be alert and "prepared."[26]

The change in committee leadership appears to have coincided with the change of name, although not of function, of the committee as listed in the State Archive of the Russian Federation from Committee for Return to the Homeland (1955–1958) to Committee for Return to the Homeland and Development of Cultural Ties with Ex-Patriots (1959–1962).[27]

By November 1958 Vishnievsky was already in full swing on the vigilance aspect of the committee's activities. A press conference was called by the Soviet Embassy in the German Democratic Republic, Berlin, but at the request of the Soviet Committee for the Return to the Homeland.

> *Two Soviet citizens who had returned from the West today once more unmasked the émigré organizations maintained by the United States as instruments of the cold war.... The Chairman of the Committee for the Return to the Homeland, Major General Vishnievsky, stressed that the purpose of the press conference was to uncover new facts concerning the undermining activities of the US secret organizations.... Under the mantle of various organizations such as* NTS *[a Russian émigré organization, the National Labor Alliance], the US secret service recruited for espionage Soviet citizens from among so-called displaced persons.... The grandiose successes of the* USSR*, Vishnievsky continued, particularly after the 20th* CPSU *congress and the launching of the first earth satellite, showed the world that the socialist system is winning the competition*

with capitalism. Khrushchev's theses for the 21st congress foreshadowed new grandiose successes in the most varied fields, arousing sympathies for the USSR throughout the world.[28]

The press conference was well attended and reported by the *New York Times* under the headline, "Soviet Portrays US Berlin 'Spies'." Vishnievsky was described as "a benign-looking elderly soldier." The paper noted that the activities of NTS and another anti-communist émigré organization known by the initials ZOPE — the Central Association of Politician Emigrants from the Soviet Union — included running an anti-Soviet radio station, printing and distributing anti-Soviet pamphlets, and launching balloons carrying propaganda material for Soviet troops in East Germany. Such propaganda techniques, with the possible exception of the balloons, were the same as those used by the Return to the Homeland Committee itself; but by encouraging East Europeans to flee to the West, the US-backed organizations were conducting a "Leave the Homeland" campaign.

Vishnievsky was replaced after two years by V.I. Kirillov, who was in charge from 1960 to 1963 and is the first director mentioned by name in the subject listing of the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF).[29]

Another change in return-to-the-homeland policy was noted in July 1958, when the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa altered its response to applicants for visas to travel to the USSR. The Canadian Embassy in Moscow observed in a letter to Ottawa:

The Soviet Embassy, instead of issuing Mr. Kicz with a Soviet passport or with an entry visa only, issued him an ordinary tourist's entry-exit visa. It may be that the return-to-the-homeland campaign has come to an end.[30]

Almost two years later the Canadian delegation to NATO, at Paris, sent a telegram to DL(2) Ottawa, copied to Canadian embassies in Paris, Bonn, Warsaw, Berlin, and Moscow with the heading, "The USSR attitude to their émigrés":

We understand [the] Soviet Government has established new procedure by which former Soviet Citizens residing abroad can return to USSR for visits on [the] same basis as other foreigners. Forms are now reported being widely distributed by Soviet government to be used by applicants for formal renunciation of Soviet citizenship, thus enabling émigrés to visit with foreign passports. If stateless, we understand émigrés may apply for Soviet consular passport good for entry and exit from USSR.[31]

The demise of the committee as originally constituted was confirmed in a letter from consular division in Ottawa to the embassy in Moscow:

We have been informed through recent correspondence with our NATO Delegation in Paris that the activities of the Soviet Committee for repatriating immigrants has taken a different direction during this year. The new emphasis appears to be to create good-will among émigrés in place of a continuing pressure on them to return to the USSR for permanent residence, to re-assure them that if they visit the Soviet Union, they will not be detained there. The Committee has begun to describe Soviet life more attractively and sentimentally and to project Soviet strength. The name of the Committee's newspaper was changed in January 1960 from Return to the Fatherland *to* Voice of the Fatherland, *thereby reflecting the new orientation. Towards the end of January, the name of the Committee was changed from Committee for Return to the Fatherland to Committee for Return to the Fatherland and for the Development of Cultural Links with Compatriots.*

I should be grateful if you could find out from the Soviet authorities whether the facts laid out in the attached story [Latvija *of 27 April 1960*] *are correct, because we would then be in a better position to advise people who were born in Eastern Europe about the possible hazards of visiting the Soviet Union.*

In July 1959, in the case of a stepson in Moscow arranging a visit from his stepfather in Canada, the following advice was offered on behalf of the undersecretary:

Your stepson has been informed that Canadian citizens or residents of Canada are free to travel to any country at any time and therefore you would be able to visit him, if you wish, providing you could obtain a visa from the Soviet authorities.

I should draw to your attention, however, that some individuals born in the Soviet Union who have gone back to visit relatives in the USSR have not been able to obtain permission to leave that country to return to Canada. Your stepson did not mention whether you had become a Canadian citizen. In case you have, I enclose a copy of the "Notice and Warning" attached to Canadian passports. If you travel on a Canadian passport with a Soviet tourist visa which guarantees exit as well as entry, there should be no difficulty. If, however, you travel on a Soviet passport you cannot, of course, obtain a tourist visa, and if you accept a visa which does not guarantee exit from the Soviet Union, you may find yourself unable to return to Canada.

In considering whether to accept your stepson's invitation, therefore, you may wish to bear in mind that if you are anxious to return to Canada you should ensure that you obtain a Soviet visa which guarantees your exit from the USSR.[32]

An editorial in *Svoboda* [*Liberty*], a Ukrainian-language newspaper published in 1960 in Jersey City, New Jersey, reflects well the reaction from various national groups to the changing policy. It forms an appropriate obituary to the original committee:

> Five years ago with great energy, spending a lot of money, Moscow began an action to encourage the return of its citizens to their homeland. Even those that left for political reasons were promised absolute forgiveness and amnesty, and were advised to return home. They have established for this action the whole net of offices and had published a special paper in several languages in Berlin. The whole action was directed and supervised by the Soviet Secret Police.
>
> This whole enterprise, despite all efforts, has utterly failed. Only an insignificant number of misled individuals, most of them old immigrants, were persuaded to return. Failure of this action has caused Soviet authorities to make certain changes in the whole setup. Their paper that until recently was called "For the return to Homeland" is now called "The Voice of Homeland." The Committee which bore the same name as the previous paper is also to have its name changed soon. Their strategy will be altered, instead of enticing their compatriots to return to their Homeland, they will try to cultivate among them "Soviet patriotism"; this will be done with a slogan: "You can serve your country well even abroad." From now on the purpose of red patriots will be to praise Soviet achievements, work with their fellow travelers in promoting the "Soviet Brand" of peace and peaceful co-existence. It is also expected that they will relax their rules on social contacts with their countrymen and thus collect information about anti-communist groups and organizations.
>
> This new Soviet strategy requires watchfulness and prudence on our part, but also it calls for appropriate counteraction.[33]

In 1963, under a new director, V.M. Malyaev, "Return to the Homeland" was dropped from the committee's title; the new name, the Soviet Committee for Cultural Ties with Ex-patriots Abroad, was adopted. In 1975 the committee became the Soviet Society for Cultural Ties with Ex-patriots Abroad (the Homeland Society). This "Rodina" Society appeared to be a transformed body, not just in name, but in most of its aims and activities.[34]

Nevertheless, the following passage exposes continuing links between the Russian Orthodox Church, "homeland" activities, and the recruitment

of agents. It is taken from *The Mitrokhin File*, an exposé of KGB activities published in 1999:

> Russian Orthodox priests in the West were also used by FCD Directorate S [First Chief (Foreign Intelligence) Directorate, KGB] to collect material for use in devising the well-documented legends of KGB illegals. In the early 1970s, for example, two KGB agents in the Moscow Patriarchate were sent to carry out detailed research on parish registers in Canada. Ivan Grigoryevich Borcha (code-named FYODOR), who worked as a priest in prairie parishes of Ukrainian and Romanian communities, studied registers in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Viktor Sergeyevich Petlyuchenko (PATRIOT), who was assigned to Orthodox parishes in Edmonton, carried out further research in Alberta.
>
> The Russian Orthodox Church, both at home and abroad, took a prominent part in the Rodina ("Motherland") Society founded as a front organization by the KGB in December 1975 to promote "cultural relations with compatriots abroad," and thus provide new opportunities for agent recruitment among émigré communities.[15]

Although the appeals to return ended, it would appear that the Soviet Society for Cultural Ties with Ex-patriots Abroad continued with its links to the KGB, Cold War espionage, and the recruitment of agents, at least into the 1970s, and possibly longer.

Nine | *Return Ticket*

How are the returnees who remained remembered in their homeland? In 2001 Jennifer Anderson Fockenier talked with a number of their relatives who had replied to ads placed in Ukrainian newspapers. (No returnees from Canada replied.) The returnees were remembered sympathetically, albeit with overtones of surprise at their decision to return and at their naïve expectations of life in the Soviet Union. These two interviews in particular offer insights into the living conditions the returnees encountered and how they dealt with them.

Lidia and Demian Skorbatiuk
As told by grandnephew Ievhen Iaroslavych Smalko

Were they rich here? It's hard to say. They had a social pension from the Soviet government. But when they arrived here they had everything, from thread up to the stove and the washing machine. On their arrival they bought a car, a Volga. They had enough money for that and they had enough for thirty years of their life here. They didn't buy things for luxury. They only had the necessary things.... They weren't given their money [in dollars] from the bank account. The official exchange rate was one dollar to seventy rubles, but the actual rate was much higher; but the Skorbatiuks couldn't have their money to

exchange. Their relatives here were quite poor. They wanted their wealthy relatives to help them live better.

The Skorbatiuks were given only a little sum, say $500 every six months, and they had very small pensions.

They were watched by the KGB — where do they go and why? Mrs. Emily [a Canadian niece] came to visit us and she was "accompanied" by a KGB man from Lviv. Having come once, she said, "I'll never come to visit you anymore. I don't want this shame." He followed her everywhere, even to the bathroom!

People showed respect to them and they were invited to people's places. They kept in touch with the Canadian Embassy in Moscow. They were often invited to meetings or receptions there. They could behave decently. Demian wore a tie, though in those days only the first secretary of the Regional Party Committee (Obkom) wore one.

Did they like it here? Paraphrasing a famous Soviet song, Lidia would say, "I don't know a country where a person cries so much." That's the USSR. They understood fairly quickly how false the propaganda was, and they hurried to go back to Canada while they were still able to work, but they were refused permission. Their bank account was blocked, and having no money how can one leave? They tried several times.

Volodymyr Vasylovych Marushchak
As told by niece Anna Dmytrivna Kozma

He decided to return. Everybody was surprised: "What is he going to do here? Why is he coming back?" The uncle kept sending parcels and boxes. He told his wife to put up a new house. So she did it, bought bricks and built a small hut, even smaller than ours. There was a front line in our village [during the war]. People lived in horrible conditions. When she put up a hut it was a bit better.

He arrived and asked, "Where's our field?"

She answered, "In the collective farm."

"And how much have they paid us?"

"Nothing. Besides that, I have to work every day for free." She told him to keep silent and not to tell anyone anything.

When he returned from America [Toronto], ... he brought a lot

of shirts with him, silk and other ones, and said he needed a different shirt every day — a clean one. And he wanted a cup of coffee served every morning. We were working in the collective farm then, as our own land had been taken away from us.... The uncle's wife was working hard every day, too. She had no time to wash those shirts. She used to say, "The shirt is white, why change it?" But at first everything was like that — a cup of coffee and a clean shirt every morning. Later, he understood that the best things of what he had sent had been sold. The worst things were left and nobody wanted to buy them.

I remember when he arrived from America and called in at our place. I put the radio set on the table and turned it on. We were proud that we had a radio. The uncle was sitting and looking at us, and suddenly said, "We keep such a radio in the shed."

"Why?"

"Chickens give more eggs then." How's that? There's no radio at home but there's one in the shed? And he said they had a TV at home. We had no clue what that was.

"It is something similar to the cinema," he said. "People are walking, talking.... " How was it possible that you could hear and see at home what people were saying. We were illiterate, didn't know anything. And we thought, "When are we going to have such things?"

It was spring when he came. His wife was digging out potatoes. He took a bag and went to the collective farm to help his wife. There were no machines and everything had to be done by hand. He dug potatoes out, and when it was time to go home people tried to put some potatoes into their bags to take them home. People were working all day long and took several potatoes home. Stole them. And what could be done? The head of the collective farm was Ivanenko. He had been in the war. He came to the field where we were working and said, "I am not going to promise you any money because I don't have any. But there's a good crop of buckwheat, so I will give you some." After the war there was famine. We had forgotten when we last saw any cereal. I thought it would be great if he gave us some buckwheat.... Everyone had to do thirteen rows of potatoes. The old woman was the last one, much behind the rest of the people. The uncle said, "I've been to America to earn money. I sent it to my wife to buy some land. She did that. Where is it now? Taken away for free."

He was told that it was in America that the rich lived, so-called capitalists, while in our country it was different. The land belonged to all the people, and if we worked well, we would live better. Of course he was against that. Why? The land was taken away and not paid for and people were working without being paid. And what was the result? No result at all. The old man took his spade, his bag (either with potatoes in it or without any, I'm not sure), and went home.

In America he worked in a cement plant, chopped down trees, bought a farm, but when he came home he didn't receive a pension.... It was a pity to see him living in such poverty. My husband wrote a letter on behalf of his uncle to Moscow. He wrote that so-and-so returned from America broke and was asking for some help. He was given either fourteen or twenty-four rubles. I can't remember. He received that money until he died in 1971.

Anna's granddaughter, Iryna Goffman, said Marushchak's situation was not unique: "In our regional town, they said there were more than a hundred people like our uncle." This number may well have been exaggerated and would have included returnees from other countries, particularly South America.

BASED ON KHRUSHCHEV'S PROMISE, THE TIES TO THE HOMELAND WERE loosened somewhat for the two or three years following 1959, a period of relative East-West détente, at least on the emigration question. A number of returnees, as well as family-reunification cases, were able to leave the Soviet Union for Canada or the USA. Some Canadians, however, remained in the Soviet Union at that time. In the years since their arrival, they "got on with their lives." The following interviewees who arrived as relatively young people eventually returned to Canada. Here they describe the varied aspects of their education, marriages, children, jobs, encounters with the police, and, finally, their tickets to depart. The stories appear in order of the returnees' dates of departure.

Nadia Golik Demidenko · USSR 1956–1973

Having given up hope of being able to leave the USSR, Nadia Golik Demidenko asked Peter Roberts to send a message to her boyfriend in Toronto explaining that she would not be coming back. She, along with Jim Lenko, set her sights on attending the Institute of Foreign Languages in Kyiv.

Jim and I found out that we were accepted. They announced that everyone was going to help the collective farmers bring in the crop before starting class, and I met Tolya [Anatoly Demidenko] there. We needed an accordionist and he accompanied Jim and myself. When we got back to Kyiv, Anatoly and I continued seeing each other for another year, and then we got married. It happened pretty quickly.

Anatoly Demidenko described how he quickly discovered the disadvantages of a relationship with a foreigner:

It was OK to date a foreign girl, though the dean talked to me about this connection. He said, "You have your future ahead of you, and you have to think before you really become seriously involved with Nadia. I give you good advice because it can affect your career." In about third year of university many students got jobs to work in Ghana or Congo for a year. Everybody wanted to go there so much, because everybody saved all his money and bought a car when he came back, the ultimate dream. I wanted to go too, but I was never allowed to go, because of Nadia. It was the same when I applied to go to India as a translator, to work with Soviet specialists in construction or as military advisers. It was only when I started showing signs that I wanted to leave for Canada that things got tough, but before that it seemed to be OK.

Nadia continues their story:

We got married in Kyiv, at his parents' place. My father had brought over a wedding dress for me from Canada, so I had that and a veil. We got married on the 29th of September 1959. Tolya's parents worked at the experimental farm of the Ukrainian Agricultural Academy and his mom worked in the greenhouses, so I had a nice big bouquet.

Gagarin [Yuri, the astronaut] went up in '61. I always remember that event because Slava was born that year. I got pregnant when I was still a student, and I didn't have to quit my studies at all. About a week after the baby was born I was back in school, because we were living with Tolya's parents. I'd rush home, feed the baby and go back if I had to. After I had him, I said, "I'll never have another child in the Soviet Union." It was a horrible experience. They didn't change the sheets. You had to wear hospital issue worn by previous patients. I wouldn't put on the slippers. No visitors were allowed. My husband used to climb a tree to look through the window. If I held the baby

up, he might be able to see it. When you're finally home with the baby, they send a nurse to see you every week to make sure everything's OK for the first month or so. They do have that service, but the conditions in the hospital were not good at all, and I thought, "No, I'm not going through this again."

Women who didn't want to have kids had abortions. There was a woman who worked with me who had fifteen abortions because her husband wouldn't use a condom. Abortions cost hardly anything. I think she said five or ten rubles. I guess they were safe. They were done in the hospital.

Overall, at that time, there were plenty of things in the stores, and if you had the money you could always get something. You wouldn't starve to death. There was always a shortage of something. You couldn't get some things, like orange juice. Whenever I heard they were selling orange juice somewhere, I'd dash for that orange juice as fast as my legs could carry me, because I had a kid at home who needed it. Sometimes they got a shipment and it would be gone in an hour. Long lines of people would form and there wasn't enough to go around. The same with other products, too. It was different for us because my in-laws lived in the Goloseyevo forest, and so she kept chickens, planted vegetables, potatoes, etc. They had apple trees, apricot trees, strawberries, and she would preserve all these fruits, so we always had preserves during the winter. She kept a pig, too. The slaughter would take place, I think towards the end of winter, and then they would put the meat in the freezer. So that made life a little easier.

People from other countries were rather privileged, I would say. I worked at Radio Kyiv, and I put in an application for an apartment. Usually you would have to wait years to get a government-subsidized apartment. I think we waited about two months. A building was going up and they had already set aside apartments for the Lenko family, for us, and for two other people who worked for Radio Kyiv. It was the same thing for appliances. I got my fridge through my boss at work. He wrote a letter to the store saying, "She needs a fridge." I went to the store the next day and picked it up. That's the way it works. So we were sort of privileged. We were treated all right — until you got out of line. That's when it all begins. But otherwise it was OK.

We didn't celebrate Canada Day, but one holiday we always celebrated with Nina Breshko was Christmas. For one thing, the villagers,

the old people, the traditional people, they celebrated it on the 7th of January. Even now, they go by the old calendar, the Julian calendar, but Nina and I always went out, had coffee or drinks on December 25th. We told everybody, "We're celebrating Christmas."

I heard that they needed an announcer for the Kyiv fashion house at Expo 67 in Montreal. I wanted to make a visit to Canada, but the only way I could go would be with a delegation. So I put in an application and they turned me down. They said, "It's dangerous for you to travel to Canada because someone might try to subvert you." I don't know what they were really afraid of. I said, "What can happen to me? I'm going with a group of people." I wasn't going with my husband. They'd never allow that. Another time both my husband and I applied to go to work in India. We were turned down because I was his wife. He married a foreigner, so we weren't allowed to go.

I had a well-paying job, but my husband made next to nothing. He worked for a publishing house as a proofreader. When you go to the Institute for Foreign Languages and your education is free, they place you upon graduation, and you have to go wherever they tell you to. If you don't go you have to look for your own job, but you have to pay back the money spent on your education. My husband and I were separated for a while because he had to go to a village in Belarus to teach English in a village school. He'd come back on weekends to see me, who was still in school, and his infant son. He worked there for a while, and he said, "No, I can't do this, because I have a wife and child and I have to look after them." But then they said, "In that case, go find your own job," so he took whatever he could. There was an opening at the publishing house as proofreader and the salary was sixty-eight rubles a month. That was next to nothing. I made good money by Soviet standards. It was about 350 a month. A minister's salary at that time was about 350 to 500. Not so much higher than mine. Maybe they had some hidden privileges I didn't know about. You had to be a party member and you had to be at a higher level before you had the right to shop at an exclusive store. I had none of those privileges. I had to stand in line like everybody else. But at the radio committee they would sometimes bring in products, like foods that you couldn't get elsewhere. They'd tell us, "OK, come and get yours." It was a special ration for radio employees.

The only way you could win their trust was to show that you were willing to become one of them. Little by little, you won their

trust. Anatoly joined the party and could go to England after that. He went for two weeks with a student delegation. When they were leaving, they had to go through Moscow, and they were briefed there before they left, and given all sorts of warnings. How to behave at a hotel, what not to do, what not to eat, what not to try. After they returned, they were debriefed. Where were you? What did you see? What did you do? Who did you meet? Whose house did you visit?

At Radio Kyiv they would tell me who to interview, like a tourist or visiting artist. I interviewed Van Cliburn, who performed in Moscow and Kyiv, and Leon Bib, an American singer. I also interviewed businessmen who came to town and wanted to see how things worked in the Soviet system. They were taken on tours to the right plants, at the right time. You would ask the usual questions. "What are your impressions of the city? What are your impressions of the place you visited? What do you think of the way the workers do their job?" Sometimes I was given the questions to ask them, or I could ask my own, but it was all edited. Besides being edited, there was also a censor, upstairs. All the programs had to be taken to her before being aired. She hated Lenko and me with a passion because we were foreigners. She was very high up in the party ranks. She read those programs. If there was something amiss, a word or a sentence, I would say, "That's the Ukrainian. The English isn't like that. The English translation is different." She couldn't read English anyway. But there was another person who could. After the program was all done, music, everything, when everything was ready to be broadcast, there was another person in our section who did know English, a party member, and he sat down and listened to the whole program. Everybody listened to it. If everything was to his liking, he signed it, and it was ready to go. The programs were broadcast to Canada, USA, Great Britain. We got letters from New Zealand, Australia, all over. I used to get so much fan mail, you can't even imagine. I even got a couple of love letters!

When I was working full time at Radio Kyiv somebody came to talk to my boss about getting someone from the station to teach at the School of the MVD, the Ministry of Internal Affairs school. My boss said, "Demidenko, here." It was during working hours, and he allowed me to go for two hours twice a week. It was right across from the Institute of Foreign Languages. Internal Affairs is the militia. If you

have a class full of people but they're not dressed in uniforms, they're all in plain clothes, you don't know who is there and you don't ask their names. I started to ask once. It was a conversation class, and I think I asked them, "How do you use English in your job?" Someone in the back row said in Russian, "Comrade Demidenko, please, don't do that," and I never could ask them again. It was just conversational English and it had to be strictly on everyday topics, like going to the store, shopping, public transport, vacations, things like that.

Everyone knows the Soviet Union was a police state. There's nobody who comes over from a foreign country who is not watched. I felt that I was watched when I was at the Institute of Foreign Languages. It was because I was a foreigner. There were three others, Jim Lenko and two from Argentina. They treated us well, but they watched us as well. I don't know who it was. It could have been a teacher who reported on us. I know a student once did. It was my first year and I was still at the hostel. A group of British students were visiting at that same hostel. I ran to their room and I started talking to them, because it was somebody from abroad. In came this guy, and he just stood there staring at me angrily. "What have you been talking about?" He reported to the school that I was there talking to British students. What were they going to do? They couldn't put me in prison. They watched me after that, you can be sure of that. You're not supposed to associate with foreigners unless you're told to.

We didn't have a car or *dacha*. For vacations, we went to the Black Sea or to western Ukraine to visit my parents.

In Kyiv when I got an apartment from the Radio Committee, it was a two-room [one-bedroom] apartment, but that was considered great because we only had one kid. Others had more children, like the Lenkos, who had three children and they had the same kind of apartment we had.

Eventually I got out for a visit. What helped me was that an associate of mine said, "You know, Nadia, you're never going to get out of the country to do any travelling unless you join the party."

I didn't like that idea, but I had a plan. I put in an application to join the party. I got my character references from three or four people at work. Everybody said only good things about me: hard working, diligent, trustworthy, reliable, all the things you usually say. And in a couple of months I applied to go to Canada for a visit. This was a

private visit to my parents' best friends. They had to send an affidavit of invitation and I handed in my application and got permission to go.

I spent two months in Canada and I figured to myself, "Wow, look at all my friends prospering, living the good life, why can't I?" They all had jobs, they all had their own homes. Their children were doing well in school. No problems, and maybe I'd be doing my son a favour. I thought that maybe he'd get a good education, get a good, well-paying job. The pay in the Soviet Union wasn't very high and the standard of living was low.

I returned and I withdrew my application to join the party. The people who gave me character references really got into a lot of trouble. Not that they were sent to prison or anything like that. They were reprimanded for giving me a character reference. They'd recommended a person whom they didn't really know. If you're giving a recommendation, a character reference, you're supposed to know this person.

Joining the party for a Soviet citizen meant more freedom, more privileges. And a lot of people joined just for that. It was not easy to get in because you put in your application with your character references, then after a few months you only become a party candidate. After that, you had to pass a review board, and then wait a whole year before again appearing before the review board. Only then did you become a full party member. I didn't even get to the candidate stage; I withdrew my application immediately, because I told my husband when he picked me up at the airport in Moscow, "We're leaving this place." Those were my first words.

That's when it all started. We applied to leave, we put in our papers. At first, getting into the Canadian Embassy in Moscow had been easy. Later, after the authorities learned what my intentions were, it became much more difficult. Towards the end, I got in by just pushing through. Once, Marie Hyndman, who was the second secretary at that time, had to pull me in past the guard. The militia was trying to push me away, and I pushed him back. I knew somebody would be waiting for me when I left, and they were. You know where they caught up with me? At the subway station. The KGB officer following me grabbed me by the arm when I got off the escalator and took me into a room under the stairs. "What were you doing at the embassy?"

"I was talking to embassy officials because I'm planning to leave this country and go back to Canada."

He said, "You can't do that."

And I said, "Oh yes I can."

"What's your name?

I said, "Demidenko."

He said, "That's Russian."

I said, "It's not Russian, it's Ukrainian."

He said, "It's the same thing."

I said, "No, it isn't, it's different." We had this stupid conversation.

"Now listen here, you get out of here and I don't want to see you back at the embassy again because I'll be watching out for you." So they let me go. I went back to the train station, home to Kyiv.

When my husband was still working at the publishing house they approached him and said, "Look, what are you doing? You're messing up your life. You could do better. We won't let your son out of the country because he was born here. We'll just punish her. She can leave by herself. You'll find yourself another wife, you'll keep your son, and we'll give you an apartment. All the joys of life. Let her go by herself." I think his wanting to leave was such a shock for everybody where he worked. A person like that, a former member of the Communist Party and all. But what can you do? He did what he had to do.

You always have to have a character reference from work, no matter what you apply for, a *kharacteristika* it's called. They made a deal with my husband. "You want this paper, so that you can hand in your documents and leave? You have to resign. We're not going to fire you. Just resign. Leave." So he had to resign. What choice did he have? He got a job as a translator at the Institute of Botany. He worked there for a while until they found out what his plans were, then he went to work as a loader at a factory where they make candy, chocolates, cakes, Kyivska Konditerska it's called. He was unloading trains with all these heavy sacks. He's always had a back problem and that just made it worse. He worked as a loader until it was time for us to leave. What they did with me was a little different. Because I was a foreigner, they didn't treat me that way. I kept on working for Radio Kyiv doing translations, but they took me off announcing. I don't know, maybe they thought I would say the wrong thing. Everything's pre-recorded so it didn't make any difference, but it was sort of as if they didn't want anyone to hear my voice anymore.

My parents weren't Canadian citizens. They had Polish papers when they came to Canada. They had to apply for Soviet passports when they went to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa. I didn't apply. I got the officials on this technicality. They said, "But you applied for Soviet citizenship." I said "Never in my life. You show me my application." My parents had handled all the paper work before then and, when we got to the embassy I was issued a travel document with my picture in it. When we arrived in the USSR, they took those away and they gave us internal passports. Nobody applied for anything. They just took the travel documents away and handed us the others. I kept telling them this each time. They said, "But you applied. Why are you thinking of going back to Canada? You came here of your own free will."

I said, "But I asked at the embassy if I could return whenever I wanted to and they said I could, and now I want to, so you let me out."

"But you applied to become a Soviet citizen?"

"Never. Not once."

At the consulate in Ottawa at 52 Range Road, I asked one of the embassy officials if I would be able to return a couple of years down the road, if I wanted to.

"No problem. Of course you can return. Canada's your country. You were born here." So I didn't hesitate. I feel really bad that no Canadian official warned us that this could happen. There was an embassy in Moscow. People were not being let out at that time and you'd think that they would at least warn us, that you travel at your own risk. I'm talking about people leaving with Canadian-born children. I think they should have at least told those people that there was this danger of just being trapped and not being able to come back again. That would have been appreciated, I tell you.

You needed an internal passport all the time there, so of course I accepted one. You had to have it. But I never applied to be a Soviet citizen.

Anatoly Demidenko added his perspective on the problems he encountered after they applied to leave:

It was a troubled time for me at my work. Of course, since I was a party member, I had a lot of conversations with people in the committee and at work. My boss was an editor and he was also party boss in

the publishing house. He talked with me privately, because probably he talked to somebody else. The KGB didn't contact me directly. Later on when we applied we had to go and see them, but before that they approached me through the people working with me. This fellow said, "Just think hard, whatever you need, just look around, we can help you to even find a new wife, and of course you'll get a big apartment and don't worry, just let her go. You will have your son with you. You were born here. You are our citizen. She is kind of fifty-fifty. She is Ukrainian, but at the same time, she has those Western ideas which are not good."

Nadia described how her duties changed at Radio Kyiv:

We translated the programs that were written in Russian or Ukrainian into English, then we read them. We put them all together, we added the music, we did everything from beginning to end. Sometimes we used radio operators, or sometimes we'd do it ourselves because they didn't know the language. Anyway, they took me off announcing, but I continued to do the translation. Sometimes when I was working I'd just bang my fist on the table because I couldn't take the lies any longer. This propaganda, this bloody propaganda, I couldn't translate it anymore. It was all political stuff, praising themselves and putting everybody else down. When they saw my attitude changing and heard my different comments, the snide remarks I was making, they took me off translation, so I was just sitting there doing nothing. When I returned from the hunger strike at the Canadian Embassy, they took me out of foreign broadcasting completely and put me in the reference library upstairs, just to keep me away from everybody.

By this time Jim Lenko had also decided he was going to leave. He handed in his application, and we tried and tried, but it didn't turn out right away, neither for him nor for me. So we thought, "strength in numbers" — not many numbers, there were only two of us Canadians, plus our families. We decided to stage a hunger strike, to attract some attention to our plight. We went to Moscow first. The ambassador, Robert Ford, knew that we were planning a hunger strike. He didn't discourage us. He said, "I'll be away at that time, I'm leaving on vacation, but you go ahead and do what you have to do." When we showed up at the embassy for our hunger strike, the embassy personnel didn't know what was happening because the

ambassador hadn't informed them, and Mr. Trottier [Pierre Trottier, chargé d'affaires] was very upset because he was left in charge. He tried to talk us out of it. He would come in, then he'd leave. Ten minutes later he'd be back again. "You're doing the wrong thing, you shouldn't be here, you won't do a hunger strike here. Take it outside." Can you imagine taking it outside? We'd end up in jail. In the embassy we would at least be protected. We were staging the hunger strike just to attract the attention of the media, and those who helped a lot with this were Bob Evans, Moscow correspondent for CTV, and David Levy, from the *Montreal Star*. They wrote many articles about us for different newspapers, and a lot of people knew what was happening to us. Otherwise they could have put us away. No one would have known anything about our situation, so you see they helped us a great deal. Anyway, we were in there for about three days, just drinking water, no food. During the three days of the hunger strike, the Canadian media were not allowed in to speak to us. When we left, Bob Evans picked us up and we had a press conference at his place, and more articles appeared in the newspapers, on TV, radio. After that we went back to Kyiv. Of course we were escorted by the KGB to the train station. I overheard one of them say, "If I had my way, if I had the authority, I would hang them right here, at the train station for all to see."

Anyway, we got back home to Kyiv, and of course the next day they took me out of the foreign section of Radio Kyiv and put me in the reference. Of course they had someone looking after me there, too. I knew he was KGB because he was phoning in all these messages, "Ya, she's here, she's here."

Once when I went to OVIR (Office of Visas and Registration), which was handling our papers, they informed me that there was a new rule. "If you're leaving the country, you have to pay back the government for your education. When you're staying in the country, you're working for the benefit of the state, in its interests, and you're sharing your knowledge with all our people," so on and so forth. "We paid for it and you have to pay us back, and so does your husband," and they gave the sum of $6,800 each.

I said, "I don't have that kind of money, in rubles or in dollars. I'm not going to pay this kind of money because I've been working here for over ten years. I don't owe you a thing and neither does my husband, because he's worked it all off." And they kept talking about

this education money. I called Evans and Levy. Somehow people in Canada got wind of this. All of a sudden I got a call from Edmonton, from the Ukrainian community saying,"Don't worry about that, because if they make you pay for your education, we're going to pay for it." It wasn't long after when OVIR called me up. They had heard that conversation because the phone was tapped. They said, "That's OK, no education money." They didn't want to get the Ukrainian-Canadian community involved because they were Ukrainian nationalists. The people offering to pay for our education were considered to be the enemy. The nationalists were the people who were fighting for a free Ukraine, a liberated Ukraine, an independent Ukraine without the Russians.

I know that people were sent to the gulag or were shot, but mostly I wasn't scared. Bob Evans wondered about that. He visited us in Ottawa a few years after we got back. He said, "You know I always wondered about you people, about you in particular. Either you were very stupid or you were very courageous. One or the other." But I was doing this in the seventies, not in the forties. I understood why Bob said that, but I wasn't thinking about the danger, and maybe that's why I didn't feel threatened. When they reprimanded me, or when they shouted at me, I would shout back. I just showed that I wasn't afraid of them, so I didn't feel threatened until we were leaving.

Through the Canadian Embassy Jim Lenko and I received letters of support from Pierre Trudeau, the prime minister, in December 1971. The letter assured me that as a Canadian citizen by birth I was entitled to re-enter Canada at any time, and that Tolya and Slava had been authorized for permanent residence. He said he had sought the co-operation of Premier Kosygin in granting exit visas on humanitarian grounds, both when he had visited the USSR in May 1971, and when Premier Kosygin was in Canada in October. In addition my family's names were on a list that the embassy had presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June. When we showed this letter to the authorities in Kyiv, they said, "Just toss that in the garbage. That doesn't mean anything to us. When we're ready to let you go, you'll go."

It was two more years before we finally got our permission to leave. Our actual departure was in August 1973. Everybody was at the Kyiv railway station seeing us off to Moscow to catch our flight for Canada. My close friend Nina Breshko got on the train to warn us

that the person travelling in the compartment with us was KGB. She was seeing a guy who used to work for the KGB and he recognized him. She warned us to be careful. This guy had the lower berth across from me and he had a really terrible knife scar all the way from his ear down to his throat. My husband, Tolya, slept with a knife under his pillow, but he didn't really sleep, he just lay there the whole night. In the evening, they served tea on the train. As soon as we said we were going to have some tea, the guy in our compartment got up and he brought in our tea. I drank it, and the next morning I was sick to my stomach. On the way to the embassy I was vomiting all the time. That was the first hint that I had been poisoned. The taxi had to stop several times. I ran into an alley, again and again. We finally got to the embassy. We got all our papers together, and they told us we could stay at the Kolos Hotel near the agricultural exhibition because it was the least expensive. We had our tickets for the Air Canada flight to Canada. They wanted us to fly Aeroflot, but I told them after the train incident that I wasn't getting into an Aeroflot plane. So Marie Hyndman gave me a letter of reference so that we could get Air Canada tickets.

It's such a long way by subway out to the hotel that we decided to go to the Metropole and have a nice supper. It was early in the afternoon and the restaurant wasn't crowded. In fact we were about the only ones there. We sat down at a table. A waitress asked, "Would you mind sitting at that table over there?" We didn't know why she was requesting this. All three of us ordered the same thing: salmon, I think. We ate and again I became violently ill, so ill that you can't even imagine. The Kolos Hotel doesn't have a bathroom in each room. It has one for the ladies and one for the men on each floor, with rows of sinks. When I went into the bathroom, my husband followed me, because I was already so weak, I couldn't walk straight. He heard me fall onto the floor. I was just lying there, completely unconscious. He picked me up and carried me to our room. I was so sick that my husband was tempted to call the ambulance to take me to the hospital. I said, "You can't call the ambulance. If they take me to the hospital, you'll never see me again. You won't even know what hospital they take me to. You'll be looking for me for a month." The chambermaid kept coming into the room to see how things were moving along, if I were still alive. She kept coming in for whatever reason she could think

of. Either a towel, or something else, or soap, or do you need a glass of water. So I called Valerie Wolchuk and I asked if we could stay at her parents' place until it was time for us to leave. They had an apartment separate from hers. She said, "Why not?" and took us there by taxi. We left the hotel because it was dangerous for us to stay there at that point. We stayed at her parents' place until it was time to leave. I ate nothing. I just drank water. Water, water, water, until I cleansed my whole system. I don't know, it was probably arsenic or something, different doses, just to make you sick enough to want to go to the hospital. That was the worst experience. I phoned Marie Hyndman and said, "I'm really afraid. I don't know how I'm going to get to the airport." She had an embassy car pick us up. She came, too, and waited until we were on the plane.

When we boarded the plane, we got a grand welcome. The pilot came out, offered us drinks, congratulations. It was the best sort of greeting I'd had in a long time, and I was so glad to be on that plane. So, do you understand why I'm afraid to go back? In Canada I had nightmares, over and over again, about trying to get out, that I was trapped there, thinking, "But I was out of there, how come I'm still there. Why did I come back?" I kept having these recurring nightmares all the time. I used to wake up in a cold sweat.

The whole experience was an eye-opener, that's for sure. I've lived in both worlds, which is a good experience. I know both sides of the story. Some of it was good. I can't say it was all bad. There were good experiences, too, fun experiences. I met my husband and my son was born there. I had an interesting job and I learned a lot.

You know what I regret, if we were allowed to come back without all this difficulty, without all this persecution, it would have been much better. You would have had a better feeling about everything. I don't know that I would have stayed. Who knows? I might have gone back more often and I wouldn't be afraid to go back now, either. I can't tell you when I last had the nightmare. I used to have a lot at first but they haven't come back. I would have liked to have left the country without all that trouble, that's the only thing I wanted changed, that I regret. I think every person should be allowed to travel back and forth freely like they do now.

The poisoning — I think that was the most frightening part. That's the worst thing that happened. We weren't afraid living there.

Nothing really bad happened to families we knew. All people have tragedies occur in their lives, but I don't want to talk about other people. Nobody went to the gulag. Nothing like that.

Jim Lenko · USSR 1955–1974
Adapted from an interview by Mike Trickey

Jim Lenko ended up working for the Soviet propaganda machine, his native English landing him a job at Radio Kyiv, which broadcast the Soviet Ukraine view of the world to English-speaking Ukrainians, with some emphasis on reaching the large numbers of émigrés in Canada and throughout the world.

I worked there for twelve years and I read things that I knew were false. There should be some guilt there, but there's not. If you wanted to live a relatively decent life, you had to do what they told you. I decided to do it because I wanted to be able to provide for my family. Maybe it was hypocritical, but it paid more than other jobs.

By 1968 Lenko, thirty years old and married with children, decided that he had had enough. "I couldn't take it any more. I had found out from the Canadian Embassy that I was still considered a Canadian citizen, but of course, it wasn't that easy. I worked for Radio Kyiv and as an instrument of the state, there were complications." He was demoted at his job, and the police routinely harassed him and his wife:

It was a pretty rough ride. People I thought were friends stopped talking to me, would cross the street if they saw me coming. You can understand why. They were afraid of being seen with me, but it was hard. The OVIR told me flat out they would not allow it. "You'll never get out. Your bones will rot here," they told me.

The Canadian Embassy was of little help. "They were trying to establish a relationship with the Soviet Union and I wasn't helping. In fact they did everything they could to discourage us in our fight." The embassy did help obtain a letter of support for Lenko from Prime Minister Trudeau, in May 1971, but to no avail, as with a similar letter for Nadia Demidenko.

Eventually Lenko and Nadia Demidenko decided to stage a hunger strike inside the Canadian Embassy. They remained inside the embassy for three days at the end of July 1972, drawing international attention before the Canadian officials convinced them to leave.

Lenko returned to Kyiv in deep despair, convinced that he had lost:

> I thought about suicide. Two or three times I really wanted to kill myself. It seemed there was no way out of this iron vice, that it didn't matter what you did, what you said. You shout, you cry, you bang your head against the wall. It didn't matter. There was this giant bureaucracy and you are nothing.

In February 1974 he was told by the Soviets that his application had been shelved indefinitely:

> I was enraged. I went to Moscow and saw the ambassador (the late Robert Ford) and we had a big argument. I told him that he's either powerless or doing nothing. He told me he was "sick and tired" of me.

While in Ford's office, on 24 February 1974, a phone call came from Kyiv. The OVIR had decided to let Lenko out. "It was unbelievable. I was just stunned. I don't know why or what changed their mind. Maybe I was just too much trouble."

On 21 February 1974 the *Edmonton Journal* reported that Trudeau was again interested in the Lenko case, that External Affairs was making representations to the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, and that Canadian officials in Moscow were talking with the Soviet foreign ministry.

Less than a month later, on 19 March 1974, Lenko, his wife, and their three children arrived in Montreal. His mother and sisters returned to Canada in 1976. He says he harbours no resentment toward his father, though there were times he "hated him" as a young man.

> Towards the end I would try to comfort him. He was a victim, too. He wanted what was best for us and, unfortunately, he believed their lies.

Valerie Wolchuk · USSR 1955–1976

After a five-year course at the Institute for Foreign Languages in Moscow Valerie Wolchuk got a job with Radio Moscow and a new apartment where her parents continued to live. Her father cooked at the Praha restaurant.

> I was sent to Khabarovsk in the Russian far east by Radio Moscow because they needed someone English-speaking quickly, and I volunteered. I was there for a year. I liked it so much there that when they needed someone later to go for a few months, I volunteered again for

two months in the summertime. I worked for four hours in the morning, then I went down to the beaches. Khabarovsk was very much like Winnipeg. The climate is nice, but it's too far away from civilization. It was like another country. It was so remote that I always had this feeling that I would never get back to Moscow. I was afraid because the people there, although they were very nice, their way of thinking was still under the influence of Stalin. If something happened in Moscow, a year later it happened in Khabarovsk. That's how far it was.

I married Igor when I worked for Radio Moscow in Khabarovsk. I was sure Igor was going to get a job in Moscow because it stands to reason that if he worked for the same radio that he would have a job there. At that time they needed someone to work in the Spanish section and I went to the personnel department (he was broadcasting in Spanish) and I suggested that I had someone that could fill this position, and they said, "Who is he?" I told them that we were going to get married and then they said, "Does he have a *propiska* [an internal passport] in Moscow?"

I said, "Being married to me he will have one."

They said, "Tell him to come." But they didn't give him a job. So that fell through. He had a heart attack and died in 1973.

When I next applied to go to Canada, they told me they wouldn't give me a visa for a visit. I knew too much. What did I know? Not because of my job at Radio Moscow, but because of my husband. His family were White Russians and he had been in a camp and knew about all that. Later, it was in the seventies after my husband died, I went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and I applied for permanent residence in Canada. I didn't want to go for a visit. I was going and that was it. When they had the Helsinki agreement it wasn't so difficult. I expected the worst. The authorities tried to persuade me that I didn't want to leave, saying that I had no family in Canada and conditions were bad. I thought I knew better than they did. I don't think the job I was doing with Radio Moscow made it harder to be let out. I know people who worked with Radio Moscow with the American section, they were let out. I left in June 1976.

My parents had a problem leaving. Although they had the documents to leave, they had to get medical certificates and x-rays, and getting these, the doctors were dragging things out, telling them, "This isn't good enough, you'll have to have another document." They were

stalling. I had no problems, but my mother did for some reason. It was more difficult for my parents. My mother died in 1985, my father in 1994.

George-Yuri Moskal · USSR 1957–1987

Having watched other members of the AUUC youth movement leave Canada to study in Ukraine, George-Yuri Moskal was finally granted his dream of following in their footsteps.

After settling in Lviv, while my dad was still in Canada, I could have gone haywire because I saw many things that somehow did not match up to my expectations. But I believed in socialism, I believed in the system; I was brainwashed to do that.

I had a problem with Ukrainian and Russian.... I didn't go to English classes, but I had special private classes with professors who taught me Ukrainian or Russian or would translate, and in return I would teach them English. We had exchange classes.... We used to have military training, two lectures a week, but it was all in Russian; it was the Soviet army. I couldn't attend those at first until they grabbed my passport, then I could attend. But I didn't understand any Russian, so one of my professors, who was a military interpreter during the war, helped me translate everything.

I was very active in the amateur arts group. I loved dancing. First of all I began just attending, then I organized our faculty's own dance group. They wanted to criticize rock 'n' roll. We danced a spoof, but it was a hit, and we got an encore. The dean reprimanded me. "You were supposed to have done a cut-up on it, not make it into a beautiful dance presentation for students to admire!" Mary Horodechna, another Canadian student at Lviv University, organized a girls' choir, and they sang old Canadian or English folk songs.

I started looking for an apartment because my dad was planning to come. After about a year we finally got one. You have to know the structure of the Soviet government administration, and you have to know who to hit and who to bypass. I joined the Communist Party of Canada in 1956, one year prior to going to the Soviet Union. In Lviv, at the university, I got three recommendations, and I joined the Komsomol (Young Communist League). I was a member from 1957 to 1960. In 1961 I applied to join the Communist Party of Ukraine on the

recommendation of the rector of the university, Ievhen Kostiantynovych Lazarenko. He was my "godfather." He had a soft feeling for Ukrainian-Canadians, and he looked after me at the university. Mind you, later on he lost his job at the university and was transferred to Kyiv. They assigned him director of the Institute of Geology of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences for a couple of years, and then he was "retired." He was one of the top geologists in the Soviet Union. He discovered a mineral and named it Tarasovit after Taras Shevchenko. He introduced the policy that all lectures had to be in Ukrainian. Even if you wrote an application, it had to be in Ukrainian. Some of the Russian professors who were in Lviv and at the university had a hell of a time. They had to get someone to translate for them or check their Ukrainian. Even though Lazarenko was a geologist by profession, he was a philologist who supported Ukrainianization.

In Lviv there was quite a Ukrainian-Canadian community. They were all from the AUUC or the FRC and that's what kept them more or less together. There was no organization per se, but for the different holidays they would meet or have a party. A difficult period for all the Canadians was Christmas. The Canadian students in Kyiv would always have a Christmas party. They wouldn't go to classes on the 24th or 25th. It was like a protest, and the lecturers, the universities, and the institutes knew that the Canadians would not show up on those days. The dorms had one or two blocks for Canadian or American students, and they would invite their Soviet friends. We would have a Santa Claus, Christmas tree, everything. But that was the most difficult time of the year.

You have to give credit to some of the business people in Lviv. As soon as they found out about these Canadians, they would approach them to sell things, anything foreign. If you had a watch, a Seiko or whatever, they paid big bucks. These guys would go to the Canadians to buy anything — women's clothes, men's clothes — because that was prior to imported stuff coming in. Occasionally I would receive parcels from my mother, at least once or twice a year. We never went to the black market or even to those guys who used to come hunting around. I tried to keep away from them. I would take what wasn't needed to the commission stores. You got an average price or a good price for it, and you paid the store or the government seven-per-cent commission. But sometimes they tried to put the pressure on you.

Once I had a few receipts, and I guess they did a check-up and they put a stop payment on me. They hauled me in. "You're not supposed to sell these things."

I said, "You want me to go to the black market? You want me to get somebody else to sell? This way is official." And they backed off. You had to know how to talk to some of these officials.

Some of the Ukrainian-Canadians went through hard times. I mean, you needed someone to comfort you, especially those guys who were strong, but they were single. It depended on what approach you took. You could start complaining, "Why the hell did we come here," but then if you kept hammering away.... For example, with apartments. Everybody got an apartment eventually. But it was not, "You came, here is your apartment, you are going to live here." That's why many went to villages. But in the villages life was much more difficult.

My uncle, William Krochmaluk, went back to Berestechko. He saw that it was the same as when he left for Canada. Well, he had a head on his shoulders, he was a handyman, a jack of all trades. He purchased a *finskyi domyk*, a Finnish house, pre-fabricated. He put it together, he built it. He moved to just outside of Lviv, bought another pre-fab, and built it with indoor plumbing, a toilet, bath, hot and cold running water. This was on the outskirts of Lviv and the administration of the city would come and ask with amazement, "Where does the water go?" He had a septic tank. Well, they didn't have a clue about septic tanks. He had a pump, and he had a big, huge container in the attic. He would pump the water up there and he would have pressure. He had many people coming to tour his house. "Well, how can that be? How can you have water?" Or they would say, "Where does your toilet waste go?" But he didn't like certain things, and he made a point of returning to Canada. He went to Moscow, he went everywhere, and he finally got the OK, permission to leave the USSR.

I think it was in 1958 or 1959 that Diefenbaker made a claim at the United Nations about Ukrainians in general. In the Lviv newspaper, *Vilna Ukraina*, there were four or five articles written against the Canadian government. "Why don't you guys write an article saying that you left for Ukraine because you couldn't make ends meet in Canada?" They had a whole page on us, everybody wrote something. That was when the pressure was put on from the Soviet side. You go along, or you don't go along. If you don't go along, they can put other

pressures on you. You could easily be framed. They would get you for something or other.

I lectured at the university and taught English for five years. I took a post-graduate course, took all my candidate exams and I was working on my dissertation. In 1967, when the *Soviet Ukrainian Encyclopedia* [*Ukrainska radianska entsyklopediia*] was putting out the seventeenth volume on Soviet Ukraine in English, I was transferred to Kyiv, with the idea that I would still take my post-graduate courses. I worked on the encyclopedia with John Weir and Abe Mystetsky. Then John Weir returned to Canada. As a result, our names were kicked out of the publication, but they did appear in some promo reviews.

In the meantime I was invited to work at Ukraina Society, in the newspaper *News from Ukrain*e, an English-language supplement to *Visti z Ukrainy*. I was a founder, along with another former Canadian from Montreal, Bill Biley. I started out as a proofreader, and then I eventually ended up being the departmental head in charge of production and publishing. All the translations and everything went through me. Even today, for foreigners I believe that there should be an organization to bring people together. The Friendship Society of Tovarytstvo Ukraina [Association for Cultural Relations with Ukrainians Living Abroad, or the Ukraina Society] was meant partially to do that. It brought Ukrainians to one centre. That was part of the government way of trying to exercise influence. I tell you, I worked wonders there. I was at all the receptions. Every foreigner, Ukrainian-Canadian or foreigner of Ukrainian extraction, had to go through the Ukraina Society. That was part of the game plan. Sure, they gave them souvenirs, they gave them books, and I was part of that. I knew the whole setup. I knew also who was who in the system. For instance I think to this day that any assistant to the president is in state security. It is one of these things you learn as you progress. I had the opportunity to meet every delegation from the AUUC that came. Mind you, later on, when I was making applications, I was sort of tossed to the side. But the leadership, a lot of the guys who used to come, we would meet privately and we would talk. I got one of my first job offers with Heritage Tours, back in 1972, I believe. I was also offered a job to return and to take over the leadership of the Workers' Benevolent Association. I shook it off, because I said, "Look, I've been trying for a good number of years

to get over to Canada, and have received rejections from the Central Committee and from other agencies." Not until I got back to Canada did I realize that they could pull strings through the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada and, in turn, through Moscow.

My first contacts with the Canadian Embassy in Moscow were in the early 1970s. There were to be twelve back-to-back chartered flights of Air Canada from Canada to Kyiv. I was acquainted with about three general managers for the Soviet Union from Air Canada and I received a freebie since I worked for *News from Ukraine*. The Soviet authorities, the guys at Tovarytstvo Ukraina, the KGB guys, said, "No bloody way." I mean, here I had a free flight, both ways, and I couldn't use it!

When I started getting rejections, that's when I renounced Soviet citizenship. There is a Soviet law that stated that if you were a foreigner and you received Soviet citizenship, you could reject your Soviet citizenship and return to your original citizenship. Had I not learned about that law, as one of the guys from OVIR said, "You would be in Siberia. Everything you did, you did according to law." I didn't realize at the time what he meant. I used to say when I wrote my protests, "I want to go for a visit." Well, I figured if I go for a visit, maybe I will stay. I've got to get out somehow. My wife and I had no kids, so we realized that there was no way they were going to let both of us go. So we sort of agreed that I would go, visit my mother, visit relatives, and stay a month, and then come back. When I found out about that law, I started quoting "according to law number so-and-so, paragraph two, item six, it states...." I knew that it was the KGB, and the Central Committee, and the National Department who were basically in charge and who gave you the "OK" or the "not OK." When I went on business trips to Moscow, since I was a party member I delivered these applications directly to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. They had a box there for complaints or suggestions, and I used to drop them in there. After several visits I realized that they wouldn't even be considered. It goes back to the Central Committee in Kyiv, and you've got the same old guys who called the shots before calling the shots again. So what is the use of writing to Brezhnev in Moscow? I could write to Shcherbytsky in Kyiv.

There was a special person from our department and he hauled me in, all because I wanted to go to Canada. He wanted me to sign a certain document, a certain permission. He said, "If you sign that,

you're allowed to read the Ukrainian nationalist newspapers, everything they have in their local library." He didn't say, but I had good friends who told me that if I had signed that document I would not be allowed to leave the country for a period of five years after I quit my job, or was "fired" at the Ukraina Society. I said, "You know what? I'll sign it – when I come back from Canada." I played that game and that sort of put them off guard.

After that, when I started making applications to visit Canada I wasn't kicked out, I wasn't disgraced, but I was offered a different job at Dnipro publishers. Higher pay, better conditions, so I took the hint. I knew why that was being done. When I was at Dnipro I was the head of the trade-union committee of the organization. I did everything possible so that English publications or translations into English would be published. We also did German, Spanish, and French. I had top-quality translators, or at least top quality for the Soviet Union, to work for us. We would always put out ten or twelve books a year. One of them had to be a counter-propaganda publication, an exposé, against the "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists." That was in the plan. So I used to talk to the friends from the Ukraina Society who had access to the KGB, and they used to give me material. What bugs me today is that some of these people who served the old system hook, line, and sinker, when independence came they turned around 180 degrees and they are super-Ukrainian patriots or nationalists now. You have to have some kind of beliefs, or you have to live by some kind of standards for your own self. These guys earned top bucks; they had money to burn left, right, and centre under the Soviets. They had access to those materials against their fellow Ukrainian-Canadians and nobody would ever question them whether it was authentic or not authentic. Today some of them are in top positions serving all kinds of agencies, so when did those guys sell out? But that's philosophy already.

The Canadian Embassy was aware of a lot of my problems; they couldn't do anything. My mother on this side, through Senator Paul Yuzyk and others like Ramon Hnatyshyn when he was justice minister, had it raised with the Soviets. They raised a number of cases with Mykola Pidhirny, who was chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet presidium, and with the head of the KGB also. Senator Paul Yuzyk brought it up in one of the NATO meetings. My name got around. I didn't realize it at the time.

A letter to Senator Yuzyk from Joe Clark, secretary of state for External Affairs, confirmed that the Canadian ambassador in Moscow made representations on the Moskals' behalf to the Soviet deputy foreign minister on 15 January 1985. Peter Roberts was ambassador at that time. In addition Clark wrote that he intended to raise his concerns about George-Yuri Moskal and other deserving cases when he met with Soviet officials on his forthcoming trip to the USSR.

When Joe Clark visited Kyiv, spring 1985, one of the reasons was to talk to me. I did not know about that. I was working for Dnipro publishers. It was [approaching] the fiftieth anniversary of Kazakhstan becoming a full constituent republic of the USSR, and the publishing house was putting out a book on Kazakhstan. A single copy was made and the director called me in and said that there was a decision for me to go to Alma-Ata to deliver the single copy to the president of Kazakhstan. I thought this was really something. I jumped at the opportunity. I got a seat up at the front of the plane to Alma-Ata, I was met by a bureaucrat, he took me to the Central Committee hotel, he gave me a suite of rooms, and I had an excellent three or four days. I only found out three or four months later at the Canadian Embassy that Joe Clark came to meet with me (and others, of course) to help me get out and back to Canada. The answer to the Canadian officials about me had been, "He's out on a business trip," which was a bunch of bunk. If I had known, I would not have gone, but at the Canadian Embassy, nobody informed me.

I was expelled from the Communist Party, from all public organizations, even the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. I was a member of the Union of Journalists. Mind you, I still have my membership ID card, because I refused to give it up and I refused to resign. I was condemned, there was a vote taken, they had an open party meeting. It was a showcase trial. They quoted Symonenko there, "You may choose anything in the world, except your homeland." I said, "How do you understand *batkivshchyna* [homeland]? My homeland can be Canada, it can be Ukraine. I love Ukraine and I love Canada. So I have dual loyalties, as well as dual citizenship." But all kinds of negative things were quoted about me. When the expulsion happened, of course there were people selected to speak, party members who were told what they had to say. They said, "He could have," "He should have," and so on, but then there were a few enthusiasts who

wanted to get brownie points for themselves. I believe there is some kind of guardian angel upstairs. It helps you: "Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you." A lot of those guys who weren't supposed to speak, they suffered or were booted from their jobs. There was some kind of external force that did this. I was expelled but remained on the job until I left for Canada. Many of those that spoke lost their positions, or lost their jobs.

After that open party meeting I tended to believe that psychologically you could break a person, that they could in the 1930s during the purges make a person condemn himself and sign his own death warrant – that he was to blame, that he was an enemy of the state, that he was no good and deserved to be punished. I believed that that could be done because they keep working on you psychologically. There was a period right as that meeting was ending that I felt like committing suicide – I would just jump out of the fourth-floor window (where our office was) and to hell with everything. But then I thought better of it. My colleague from the office, the French editor (her husband was a dissident who died locked up in the KGB jail on Volodymyr Street), she and a few others said, "Don't pay attention, let them talk." After the meeting, after being expelled, I went downstairs to the propaganda-distribution department of the publishing house where I had the support of some others. They pulled out a bottle of vodka. "*Dai vypiem*" [let's drink], and that was a release of everything that happened. Mind you, all of them suffered also, because they were hauled in for supporting me.

I never rejected my Canadian citizenship. When I finally got the OK to leave on 20 February 1986, I was the third to go into Soviet customs, and I was the last to board the plane. I had nothing. I just had clothes with me, I had souvenirs, I didn't have any notebooks, I didn't have a single telephone number. I kept a couple of phone numbers in my head. I didn't take anything because I felt that I was going to be searched. I got caught because I worked for Dnipro publishers. We were putting out a big collection of Ukrainian folk tales, and we were short two or three folk tales for the book. The director said, "Instead of us sending the Ukrainian text, you take it with you to give to the translator in Canada, and so we save time." And so I had these three crazy fairy tales, not hidden or anything, in my suitcase. I was the last guy to get on the plane and even held up the plane a little bit.

What were they looking for? I don't know. Well, I can guess. I had a Canadian passport and I have Soviet documents:

"How come?" As if they didn't know.

I said, "Because I am a Canadian citizen." I stuck up for my rights.

Secondly, they found those fairy tales. "What's this?"

I explained.

"Confiscated."

I had a bandura musical instrument with me. It cost about 300 rubles in the Soviet Union, but if you brought it to Canada you could sell it for a thousand or twelve hundred Canadian bucks. So I figured it would be a nice gift, either to one of my relatives or if I had to sell it, at least I'd have twelve hundred bucks. That was confiscated. He said, "You haven't got the permission from the Ministry of Culture."

"OK."

So I let it stand.

Thirdly, I had exchanged $800 US just prior to leaving, and since I was in Moscow and had the money, I went to the Beriozka, the dollar store, and I bought my wife a pair of earrings, food, and things like that. I went to the post office, and I sent her a gift package to the house. My mistake was that I kept the receipt. I put it in my pocket. When they went through my stuff, they saw this. I had gold. "Where is it?" They couldn't find it. That didn't really bother me, but the fact was that I had over eight hundred bucks with me. If they started counting your money, they could stop you on the charge of bringing money out of the country, or having foreign currency. "Where did you get it?" I mean, there were ways and means of stopping a person.

Finally, they checked me through and when I got on the plane, I had tears in my eyes because those guys still did not trust me. We got to Canada, to Montreal, Dorval airport. We came to customs. He looked at my Canadian passport: "When did you leave?"

"1957."

"Geeze, you've been away for quite a while. Welcome home," he said.

And then I was through, and that's it! I mean, ask me some questions! That was the difference, the Soviet customs and the Canadian customs.

I don't know when the turning point came when I wanted to

return to Canada. I was in the Soviet Union for twenty-nine years and I'd say after ten or eleven years. You see, the Soviets goofed basically. I was making a good living in translation. I was more or less satisfied. I had all the benefits — in the context of the Soviet system, it was much better than average. Then I said that I wanted to return to Canada, but just for a visit. After two or three refusals, it's the principle of the thing: "You guys don't want to let me go, then to hell with you. I'm going back for good." It builds in you, and as a result, that's what really happened.

When I finally did get permission to leave the country it was on a special request through Peter Krawchuk, through the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada, a special letter signed by William Kashtan, which was delivered to Moscow and then to Kyiv, to the international department, with a request for me to return or for them not to hinder my return to Canada to work, because they were short of cadres, to work on the *Ukrainian Canadian* magazine and in the AUUC.

When we [my wife and I] had to break up for me to go, it was tough. I mean, here you are married from 1960 up to 1985, for twenty-five years, and you have to divorce. But again, you have to know the Soviet system. We understood it. Mind you, when I got back to Canada and was working for the AUUC, and the Soviet Embassy guys came in, I made a demand. At the first convention I was elected vice-president of the organization. I started putting pressure on the Soviet Embassy. Sure enough, they gave their permission. When we went to New York we met with Volodymyr Kravets, the Ukrainian minister for foreign affairs, that was another stage of how we got Luba here. As I said, it was the principle of the thing, mostly. If the Soviets were a little bit smarter and had opened up their borders, I don't think that many people would have left — if there had been more democracy. Right now, people are travelling, going both ways, which proves that there was something wrong with the old system. Now Canada is putting down clamps on people coming from Ukraine or the former Soviet Union.

In 2001 George-Yuri Moskal received the Za Zasluhy [For Merits] Order, third level, from President Leonid Kuchma. On 18 August 2006 he received the Order of Kniaz Yaroslav Mudryi (Prince Yaroslav the Wise), fifth level, Ukraine's highest award to foreigners, from President Viktor Yushchenko.

Olga Breshko · USSR 1958–1993

To get her high-school diploma and to learn Russian Olga Breshko went to a night school attached to the locomotive factory where her father worked. After a year she began work there as a laboratory technician and became a soloist in the factory's amateur folk-dance group. She wanted to become a doctor specializing in pediatrics, but the Russian language remained a problem. She was advised to major in English at Kharkiv University. In 1965 Breshko married and moved with her husband, a graduate from mining school, to Kazakhstan, where she taught English at a secondary school. When the marriage failed, she returned to Luhanske and then to Kyiv, where she built a career as a translator from Russian and Ukrainian into English for the magazine *Ukraine*.

Somewhere in my third year I wanted to become a member of the Komsomol. I approached the teacher who was the party boss, and I asked him, "I've been here three years, I want to join the Komsomol. I want to be like everybody else."

He said, "What do you want to do that for? Have you nowhere to put your money?" This coming from the party boss? "Fine, if you have extra money, join!" From that time on I didn't want to be a party member, I didn't want to be a Komsomol member, I didn't want to be anything. This just turned everything around. Later on I found out that they wouldn't have taken me because I came from Canada.

Another time I was hurt by being from Canada was when I was working at *Ukraine* magazine. There were two tickets to Bulgaria, to a spa. I applied with another girl. They took her, not me. I learned later that they said, "She's from Canada. What if she never comes back?" OK, if it's not this time, next time, but next time never came. But I thought, "I'm a Canadian citizen. I can leave any time I want."

I never encountered anything with the KGB. When I started working at the magazine I got clearance. I could read anything that came in, but I couldn't talk about it or mention it anywhere. The less I knew the better it would be — but I heard it anyway on the BBC.... I stayed as far away from them [the KGB] as I could.

The magazine was distributed in Canada, Australia, Netherlands, India. We translated articles from magazines or newspapers about Ukraine.... We had to give the whole magazine to a certain department. They would read it and cross out what we couldn't say,

especially about the western part of Ukraine. During the war it was devastated, the standard of living wasn't good. A lot of people who came wanted to visit their villages and we couldn't say anything about them. About people, we couldn't mention the names of certain artists and couldn't say the reason why.

When interviewed in the mid-1980s by Paula Garb, Breshko spoke positively about Ukraine and did not foresee leaving:

Gradually a lot of changes have been made. Even now, with every day, you see the people are changing, they're getting more open-minded and their standard of living is improving. If I wanted to leave, I would have gone long ago. I could leave for good now if I wanted to; but what would I do there? Who needs me there? All my family and friends are here. But I would like to visit Canada, see all the places where I spent my childhood and meet some of my old teachers and friends.[1]

Breshko's life changed in the early 1990s, as did her thoughts on returning to Canada, which she expressed to Glenna Roberts:

I could have come back earlier, but what would have happened to my parents, to my sister? She would have lost her job. Then my mom got sick — she died of breast cancer in 1989 — and my dad passed away three years later in 1992. I made a visit earlier and again in 1993. I lost my job (the magazine was closed) and everything was changing.

I can't say anything bad about Ukraine. I really did learn a lot. Coming back to Canada, with people throwing things away. If you're saving and you're sending things back to Ukraine, you have to economize — I had good schooling in that. I had a chance to travel a lot, to Moscow, all over the Soviet Union. I met a lot of people.

That country [Ukraine], they think everything is going to change overnight. They don't know how to invest money. Prices change suddenly. I try to help Nina, my sister. I send parcels, Halloween things for the kids. When I was there two years ago there was everything, pizza, sushi. Opening up is something they should have done long ago. I overheard some Russians talking on the Toronto subway, complaining. I looked at her, "If you don't like it here, why don't you go back!" It's an absolutely different place. Here you have to pay your taxes.

A car here isn't a luxury, it's an absolute necessity. You have to learn that. It doesn't come easy. They expect that the government has to give them this, has to give them that — why?

Bill Golik · USSR 1956–1993

With minimal Ukrainian and no Russian, Bill Golik lived in Voroshylovhrad/Luhanske initially with his parents and sister, then with his Argentinian-born wife.

I knew Ukrainian the way my parents knew it. It was kind of mixed up with Polish, with Czech, with Slovak. I didn't have to study Ukrainian because they gave me a break, "You're going to have a hard time learning Russian. So stick to Russian. Don't bother with Ukrainian." After finishing nine grades here I had to go back to grade seven because I didn't know the language very well. I was in that public school for about three or four weeks until the principal said, "Either quit smoking or we're going to transfer you to a night school." So, of course they transferred me. When I got to the night school, I saw everyone was older than I was. Everybody was working, and I started learning the Russian language with the working people. Well, first of all you learn the coarse parts of the Russian language. Over there if you've learned the skills of swearing, you're the coolest guy there. I quit school after grade eight because I started going to the truck-driving school. Later I signed up for grades nine and ten when I was in the army. Later, when I re-enlisted, when I was working on an officer's job, I finished my eleven grades; it's the same thing here as finishing high school. It didn't come in handy, but, you know, if you're trying to get a job somewhere and you say you've got your eleven grades' education, they'll give it to you faster than to someone who only has eight grades. So that's all I ever needed it for.

At sixteen my father got me a job at the locomotive plant. I was only allowed to work six hours because I was under age. Just before turning eighteen I went to driving school. I got my licence, and from then on I was working as a driver. It was a good job.

I got drafted. I was supposed to go into the sport section in the army. I raced on cross-country motorcycles. Me and a couple of friends had a drink or two. When we got back to where all the new soldiers were gathering, they were gone. We missed the train. So, what

are you going to do? The colonel said, "No sports section for you. You guys are going into infantry."

We got into the tank battalion and there were six months of training. They teach you how to drive, how to use the gun. Real tanks. T54, then they switched to T55. Then I got into the division at Zhmerinka, a railroad junction in Ukraine. I served two years there and our unit was moved to the west, to the Beregova. We had another year to serve. It was beautiful there, a different country. Hungarian people were living really well, and something reminded me of Canada. Those Hungarians, they didn't like the Soviets. They hated them. I decided to re-enlist for another three years. I thought, "They're going to give me an officer's uniform, the pay is going to be like an officer's pay, and they will give me an apartment so that I can get married and have a place to live."

You don't have to have a lot of skills to know those tanks and guns and all those things. You just have to work with them day after day, year after year, and it comes to you. It gets stamped into your brain. I got on pretty well with my fellow soldiers. I was their commander and I treated them fairly. I was the oldest there now because I was on my second term; and the rookies, they counted on me as if I knew everything. I could take a gun apart in thirty seconds, and for them that was something extraordinary, but they didn't know then that in three months' time they would be doing the same thing. I wasn't so popular when they knew what I knew. But that's the way army life is.

I don't think most of the people knew I was Canadian. I told them I was born in Canada and all, but it was good enough for them. that I had a Soviet passport in my pocket. Then came Czechoslovakia in 1968. I was commanding three tanks. There weren't enough officers, so sometimes sergeants were put on officers' jobs. They were paying me an officer's salary.

We were sleeping with our guns all ready, waiting for the general to give the command to move forward to knock Czechoslovakia. I thought, "This doesn't look good. I've got to get out of here." So I started bucking. First of all I said, "I want to resign."

"No," he said, "you still have to serve another year." So I came back to our company and had a quarrel with our captain, and one thing led to another and I gave him a punch in the face. First they wanted to court-martial me, but then they just gave me a dishonourable discharge. And I said, "That's all I was waiting for, man."

After that I got a pretty good job, in a wine cellar. I was driving a tanker. I'd go to the *kolkhoz* and I'd fill up the tank, then bring it into the city, to the wine factory.... I had all the wine I needed. I thought I'd be drinking a lot, but when you work there and you smell a lot of it you don't want it. My second wife was born in Beregova. It was a small town on the Hungarian border, and her mother was a waitress in a restaurant, her father was a POW in the war. When he got back to the Soviet Union they persecuted him, in Stalin's time. He had to go to prison there, too. Then he got out. At that time he met her mother; they got married and they had two kids. My mother-in-law was working as a waitress right after the war. She didn't get paid a lot, and when I met my wife she was getting about sixty-five rubles a month. That's nothing, but they know she's going to steal a piece of meat from that restaurant, or something else that's needed at home. That's why they get so little.

So I got married to my second wife while I was still in the army, and we had two kids, two daughters. One got meningitis. She died. I was in the army then and they let me go from the army for the funeral. My first daughter, I spent time with her when we were living in Beregova. She was in the second or third grade. Then came this thing with my second wife. We had to separate because she was making money on the side selling herself.

I was in the Ukraine in the Transcarpathian region working at another job when I met my third wife. I didn't have any kids with her. We were living at her parents' place. Then my wife's brother came from the army. Two families were going to be living in two rooms and a kitchen, so we decided to rent a house, but it was too much. We saw this invitation to migrate to the far east. We'll give you money to start up there, we'll give you a house, cattle, chickens and eggs, and all that. So we thought, "Why stick around here, the west is overpopulated, let's go where there's not too many people." They're offering you a beautiful life if you just move there.... I said, "It's not going to be any worse than it is here, so let's go." So we loaded up the things in the container and we got on the train and we left.

They gave us a house right away a couple of miles from the Chinese border. It's a very small place, about 350 people, Alexandr Platonovskaya, but they don't use the Alexandr any more, they just

call it Platonovka. It's half of a big state farm, a *sovkhoz*. The main office was in the next village, not far from us. It was right where the train ends, because further was China. So, that's where we lived for eighteen years.

I was a tractor operator, a big tractor, a monster. One wheel was taller than I was. I worked in the fields, ploughing, seeding, cultivating. That's what I chose. I like tractors and all that, fixing them myself, rebuilding them. I can rebuild my own engines.

The land was developed when the tsar was alive. The border guards, the old Cossacks, were guarding the border against the Chinese, so they wouldn't smuggle anything in or out. There was Lake Khanka, not a very big lake, at the deepest it is about twenty-three metres. You can walk out a kilometre and the water's going to be up to here. But there were a lot of fish and the place was full of game, pheasant, wild boar. I didn't hunt, I just shot a few pheasants. If they didn't have that system you could build wonderful resorts on this lake. There's fishing, hunting, a lot of people come there to rest on vacation. I had my own cow, my own pigs, my own chickens and eggs. So that's how we lived. We had to work a lot – twelve, sixteen hours a day – because when the weather's good, when it's not raining, you can get out on the field, you can do your cultivating, your seeding, your ploughing. But when it rains you can't get on that field, not for a hundred bucks. I left a good pair of boots out there. I sank right up to my knees. There's that kind of soil there. It turns into quicksand when it gets wet.

I had all this livestock and I couldn't feed all that by myself. I had to steal from the farm. Grain and straw for the bed for the cow, the hay. I'd go out in the field and get some turnips, pumpkins, this and that, otherwise I couldn't manage. I had my own garden, potatoes, carrots, things I needed for the winter. Everybody was stealing.

In the village half the people were already retired, and one-third were kids and the rest, about 120 people, were working. They were living there a long time. They migrated back in the 1950s maybe. They weren't sent, they just migrated by themselves. They built their own houses. I came to an already-built house, but they had to build their own houses, and then they built a log cabin, a shack; then, little by little, they started getting richer, they started living better, and ninety per cent in the village where I lived were Ukrainians not Russians. They were living better than

in Ukraine. Ukrainians are hard-working people, and especially the people working on the land. That's the way they were brought up, and that's the way they're going to live till they die. They're forced to do that. The government isn't thinking a damn about them. So they have to think for themselves

They gave us a job, and we got good money there. If the harvest was a real good harvest and the farm made a lot of money, they gave you a good bonus. The last year when the old ruble was still around, I got something like twelve thousand rubles, just bonus, plus we were getting paid twice a month. Like any ordinary place, they'd give you an advance and then at the end of the month when it's pay day you line up at the office and everybody wants to get their cash to go to the store to buy vodka and forget the hardships of life.

I wouldn't say it was a hard life; I'd say it was more just dull. People didn't know where to go, what to do. I was quite fond of the library. I probably read every good book there, except for all those volumes of Lenin and Marx. I didn't touch them. No, I was reading police stories, mysteries, things like that. Historical things. I read all of Dumas in Russian, I read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, six volumes of his in Russian. That reading really helped me with my language, so I was speaking without any accent in Russian.

About the library, [the leaders of the farm] said, "We have a good club here."

But we were all yelling, "Why don't you build a new club? They did it in the other village."

Well, it was an old, wooden building. It was there since the Cossacks in the time of the tsar. It was called a house of prayer. When the Soviets took power, the church was thrown out and they made a library there, and a club. They had seats for showing motion pictures and so forth, but somebody burned the place down, thinking, of course, that they're going to have to build a new one. But they're going to have to wait a long time till they get a new club, especially now.

So there was nothing to do, after work, I mean. You're working in the field, especially the men, the young people, you leave your house at six o'clock in the morning. Seven you're out on the field already, you're ploughing, or you're seeding the fields, or harvesting, or whatever. And you don't get home until the sun goes down, and

that's your working day. When the rains start, you won't get a tractor into that field. So, we were working without any days off. But when the days off came, people just didn't know what to do with themselves. They go to the store and buy vodka. And if there's no vodka in the store, they buy moonshine from the old people who make it. I made my own moonshine sometimes when I had the patience to do so. It's a very slow process, it's dripping all night. You're not going to make it in the daytime. Somebody's going to come walking by the house and [sniffs] you can smell it. It's illegal. The police chief in the next village, his wife made moonshine, too, but if he catches you, he's going to give you a good fine for that. People are used to working. People know for what they're working, for what they're going to get at the end of the year, all that money. But when winter comes there's nothing to do. The tractor drivers, they're in the shop, repairing their tractors, the combines, the seeders, the ploughs, and so forth. Spring comes. They've got everything ready. They've got everything working, but in the wintertime, the days are very short. Eight o'clock you come to work, five o'clock you're going home. Five o'clock! You don't want to go home. So the guys get together. They buy the booze. And we're sitting there in the blacksmith's place and looking for moonshine, because there's nothing else to do. If they had a movie theatre there or something to keep people kind of happy, they wouldn't be drinking so much. That's the way life goes in the villages. They drink [because of] what? Because there's nothing else to do.

The Soviets weren't very enthusiastic about letting me out. In the far east, before they gave me a passport, they called me out to their office in Karminabelo and started asking me why I wanted to go and all that, and I just said, "I was born there, I'm a Canadian citizen," and so he started talking loud and I said, "Listen, I'm not afraid of you. I know that you've got surveillance on me." And who did they put to look after me? My friend, my next-door neighbour, who is a drunk of drunkards, and when he was drunk he told me all about it. The KGB told him to watch me, so I told this to the KGB colonel, "So why are you playing with me? Those days are gone. I'm not afraid of doing anything illegal." I was talking to that colonel, and there was this captain sitting next to me and he wanted to laugh. He was covering his mouth, because he thought the colonel was stupid, too. There were still those old "Stalin Days," one of those. Before I left on vacation

in 1991 the lady at the embassy said, "Don't think of staying in Canada illegally, because it'll be bad for me, it'll be bad for you. If you want to go there permanently, come back, apply and we'll give you a visa for permanent residence." In 1991 it was easier to get there than it was earlier. Everything was changing over there, the government was different from what it was before. I came and I took a look around. I stayed at my sister's place in Ottawa; I came to Toronto. My vacation was coming to an end. I had to get back as I was still working there. Nadia and Tolya said, "Oh, don't go, don't leave, to hell with them there."

I said, "No. When I was leaving there I promised somebody in the Canadian Embassy. She warned me." So I went back and applied for an exit visa, and it was pretty simple. I worked there for about another year. And in '93 I got my permission, and this is when the money just jumped down. I was supposed to get about 8,000 with the good rubles, but they gave me 180,000. That's how much the ruble went down. I came to Vladivostok by train and I got a ticket. I wanted to fly to Moscow, but the ticket was up to a million rubles already. I didn't have that money, so I paid the 180,000 on the train and I got to Moscow in seven days and I had in my pocket just enough money to pay the cab driver to get to the embassy. It's a good thing that Nadia sent me some money through the embassy, because I was broke. They really took a lot of money for that visa. It's a lot easier now to get out, as long as you have the money.

If I wasn't lazy, I could write a book about myself. It would be a bestseller. I've had a very interesting life. I've seen everything. I've lived in dirty places, I've lived in clean. I've lived with bad guys, I've lived with good. I've lived with bums, I've lived with decent people. I've been all around, and I know how to talk to every one of them. I've finished five universities on all that.

I got out. I don't regret it. I'm kind of back where I belong. The only thing I regret is, I never will know what would have happened to me if I had stayed here in Canada, if I'd never left Canada. Who would I be? I'll never know that. That's the lousiest part of it. But, as we say, "*Que sera, sera*."

Ten | *Not The End*

BLAIR FRASER'S ARTICLE IN MACLEAN'S MAGAZINE OPENED WITH THE comment: "Among the sorriest people in the Soviet Union, a country that has no shortage of sorry people, are some of the repatriates who have come here from Canada during the last few years."[1] The older members of this "sorry" group frequently did not take the steps necessary needed to receive exit visas — establishing their Canadian citizenship, agitating their local authorities (and subsequently being harassed by them), appealing to the Canadian Embassy to be put on a list. Disillusioned, they settled into their new lives. They took low-paying jobs and meager pensions, which they supplemented by selling off the goods in the trunks they had brought with them, all the while haunted with guilt and remorse for what they had done to their children. The younger generation, usually Canadian-born, was remarkably forgiving of their parents and, with the resilience of youth, generally made the best of a bad thing. They took advantage of the educational opportunities that were offered, found uses for their language skills, and worked at somewhat-privileged jobs. They learned to be good Soviet citizens by keeping their heads down, and only ran into trouble when they finally realized that they would never really be good Soviet citizens, in their own eyes or in the eyes of their communities and the authorities.

Many eventually returned to Canada, the country of their birth, tougher and wiser. Some, however, chose to remain in the USSR — it is

now a matter of choice. Almost every family is split in some way. Bill Golik's daughter and granddaughter live in Luhanske; Olga Breshko's sister, Nina, her son, and his family live in Kyiv. Relatively low-cost flights and the availability of visas facilitate the maintenance of family connections. The interviewees expressed few regrets, perhaps because of the passage of time.

How do the stories of returnees relate to Mikhailov and the Return to the Homeland Committee? Whatever the committee's sinister purposes, they were not well served by these families. Propaganda extolling the superiority of the Soviet way of life was unconvincing in the West, where it was generally rejected, and in the homeland, where cynical Soviet citizens knew the harsh reality only too well. Similarly, the fact that relatively few returned, and were usually dissatisfied, was an embarrassment. The KGB agent who was relieved that Pearson would not bring up the matter with Khrushchev and Bulganin in October 1955 understood his leaders well. When Khrushchev was personally confronted on his tour of the USA in October 1959 he instructed that lists of names be submitted. From that point on the nature of the campaign, its leader, its title, and even its location changed, from East Berlin to Moscow. Soviet consulates began to offer exit visas along with entry visas to visitors. As a public-relations exercise the committee was definitely not a success, as Khrushchev must have been aware.

During the campaign, organizations and individuals in Canada put minimal pressure on the Canadian government to tackle the question of exit visas with the Soviets. The chief demand was that return-to-the-homeland materials should be intercepted before reaching the addressee. Perhaps these mailings were the committee's one success. The knowledge that police could extract letters from relatives in the homeland may have been meant to discourage displaced persons from speaking out against the horrors of communism, the camps, and the famines of which many were too well aware. Oleh Pidhainy called this "silencing the tongues." For these immigrants the appeal to return served not as an invitation, but as a reminder of a history the USSR did not want exposed. Thus the power of the committee to reach them was particularly threatening. Igor Gouzenko understood this, as would Alexander Yakovlev, whose book in 2000 exposed much of communism's grim history. If it did silence the tongues, the work of the Committee for the Return to the Homeland might be considered partly successful, irrespective of the number of returnees. But this assessment is speculative as long as RCMP and KGB files remain closed.

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A FOREIGN LAND IS A WICKED STEPMOTHER. I DIDN'T KNOW ONE MAN OR ONE LADY WHO CAME FROM CANADA TO THE UKRAINE WHO DID NOT CRY THEIR EYES OUT FOR WEEKS OR MONTHS. BEFORE YOU IS A WHOLE LIFE, BUT YOU CANNOT SEE IT IN A STRANGE LAND. I NEVER WILL KNOW WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED TO ME, IF I HAD STAYED HERE IN CANADA, IF I'D NEVER LEFT CANADA. WHO WOULD I BE? I'LL NEVER KNOW THAT. LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, FACE THE FUTURE BOLDLY: IT IS STILL NOT TOO LATE. I DON'T KNOW A COUNTRY WHERE A PERSON CRIES SO MUCH. RETURN DEAR COMPATRIOTS! THE HOMELAND REMEMBERS YOU! THE HOMELAND BECKONS YOU! QUE SERA SERA.

THE RESULT OF DECADES' worth of interviews and archival research, *One-Way Ticket* collects the stories of those who heeded the call of the Return to the Homeland Committee, a highly organized propaganda machine enticing displaced Soviet citizens and their families to return to the motherland in the 1950s and 1960s.

In this major work of Cold War-era history, Glenna Roberts and Serge Cipko throw the reality and rhetoric of the Soviet return-to-the-homeland campaign into sharp relief — from the committee's seemingly harmless early days to its sinister twilight in the 1960s.

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HELL, NOT HOME

Canadians who returned to the U.S.S.R. felt duped

Life back home was a nightmare for the Goliks, shown in Ukraine before they first came to Canada

AT THE height of the Cold War in 1955, the Soviet Union unleashed a propaganda campaign urging expatriates to return to their ancestral homes. Between 3,000 and 15,000 Canadians responded to the emotional appeal before it ended around 1960, with most of them finding themselves trapped, some for the rest of their lives, in a homeland they painfully learned was no longer a home.

Among the victims was Boris Golik. In 1956, Golik, then 56, was enjoying a life of modest prosperity as a crane operator in Toronto, 27 years after leaving his Ukrainian village. But like many immigrants, he was self-conscious about his halting English, while his wife, Feodosia, suffered chronic homesickness. Encouraged by the "Return to the homeland" propaganda and promised by Soviet diplomats in Ottawa that they could always go back to Canada, the Goliks sold their house, packed their things into 10 steamer trunks and left Canada on July 7.

Reality blindsided them immediately. "He was completely shattered," says Golik's daughter, Nadia, a federal civil servant now living outside Ottawa. Anxious to return to Canada, Golik discovered it was difficult to exit his nightmare. It took him 17 years.

Others had similar experiences. Valerie Wolchuk was 24 when she left Winnipeg with her parents in 1956 to return to the Soviet Union. "It was like going from heaven to hell," she later told Peter Roberts, who served in the Canadian embassy in Moscow in the late 1950s. Another naive returnee was Toronto's Daniel Lenko, who raged at the deception. "The image of the Iron Curtain became very real, and I realized we were behind it," Lenko's son Jim, who accompanied his father at age 18, told Roberts, who died last November in the midst of compiling the homeland stories.

Back in Canada, the returnees were soon forgotten. In a rare contemporary account, Blair Fraser, visiting Moscow, described them in a March 30, 1957, *Maclean's* article as "among the sorriest people in [a country] that has no shortage of sorry people."

BETWEEN 1955 and 1960, thousands went back to Russia and Ukraine, then desperately struggled to leave again

Meanwhile, Nadia Golik, who was 17 when her parents took her to the Soviet Union, began fighting to return "home." Over several trips to the Canadian embassy, she was followed, snatched by the KGB, interrogated in isolation and warned to abandon all efforts to leave. Nadia's parents, resigned to their own fate, supported her. Canadian diplomats were sympathetic, but powerless. Then as now, Canadians abroad were subject to the laws of their host country. "I could do nothing for Nadia or for the trickle of other unfortunates who somehow got past the police to see us," Roberts told *Maclean's* before his death. The final word—*nyet*—belonged to the Russians. In 1957, Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko called the returnees "chronic malcontents," effectively ending all discussion of their potential return for 15 years. Jim Lenko recalled that Soviet immigration officials told him: "Your bones will rot here. You'll never go back."

Fluency in English eventually landed Jim, Nadia and Valerie good jobs as interpreters and translators. But they remained outsiders. "We spoke with accents," says Nadia. "We were always foreigners." In 1972, Nadia, Jim and their Soviet spouses forced their way into the Canadian embassy and staged a three-day hunger strike, a month before the fabled hockey series, which helped draw media attention in Canada. Nadia finally received her coveted exit visa in 1973. Her parents, the Wolchuks and the Lenkos soon followed. They were the fortunate ones.

According to Roberts, many returnees died of malnutrition, committed suicide or simply vanished. And the homeland return movement seemed fated to remain a lost chapter in an old war—until Roberts went to work. The Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations at Carleton University is continuing that effort. As Roberts put it: "I couldn't do much for the returnees back in the 1950s, but I never forgot them and their stories. More than that, they are a part of history and they shouldn't disappear from that."

COURTESY OF NADIA DEMIDENKO