

A Privilege for Few
German-speaking migration to Canada under the Shadow of the National Socialism

by Annette Puckhaber

Between 1933 and 1945 the right to asylum did not exist. The decisive factor for a successful escape from the National Socialism was finding a country offering refuge. Although Canada had a long history of immigration from German-speaking regions to look back on, it generally kept its doors closed to these refugees.

This thesis focuses on the German-speaking refugees who did find refuge in Canada; some Jews, about 1000 Social Democrats from the Sudetenland and those refugees deported from Britain in 1940. Annette Puckhaber addresses the question of the circumstances under which they came and settled in Canada.

Three biographical accounts illustrate the experience of the flight from a subjective viewpoint. As a contrast, the author discusses the reasons for the Canadian immigration policies which led to the admittance of the refugees: They extend from economical considerations to protection of its international reputation.

In summary, for the refugees, acceptance into the country was a matter of survival. The government in Ottawa however considered immigration to Canada - regardless of its circumstances – as a privilege in itself: a privilege extended to the few.