

Unreasonable Expectations: Canadian Immigration Agents and the Canada-U.S. Border, 1914-1918

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The First World War changed the Canada-U.S. border forever. From the beginning it placed incredible pressure on a fledgling immigration apparatus weakly supported by the Canadian federal government. This article carefully examines how the government and immigration agents stationed along the actual border responded to new threats to national security between 1914 and 1918.

In May 1917 Albert Kaltschmidt, a successful Detroit businessman, stood accused of conspiring to disrupt the Allied war effort by organizing attacks on the nearby community of Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Appearing before Judge Arthur J. Tuttle in a Detroit courtroom, Kaltschmidt was described by a local newspaper, the *Detroit Free Press*, as “defiantly erect, his face denoting all the veiled insolence and cynical pride of Prussianism.” The *Free Press* went on to describe Kaltschmidt’s “square, hewn face, with its huge jaw and tight clamped mouth,” and his “arched nose and sloping brow.” The trial concluded in December 1917 with a guilty verdict, which followed with Kaltschmidt being sentenced to a four-year prison term to be served at Leavenworth federal penitentiary.¹

In reading the *Detroit Free Press*’s vigilant description of Kaltschmidt, one would have to wonder how this “menacing” representative of the “Prussian military caste” was able to cross the Detroit River and organize attacks on Canadian military and industrial facilities.² The most shocking of these attacks, planned by Kaltschmidt but carried out by several paid underlings, was the June 1915 bombing of Windsor’s Peabody factory, which had been producing uniforms for the Allied armies, and the attempted bombing of the Windsor Armouries, the Canadian border city’s primary drilling and recruiting facility. Those attending or reading about Kaltschmidt’s trial learned that the man – who was owner of the Marine City Salt Company and a member of Detroit’s social elite – had repeatedly crossed the border after the British declaration of war on Germany, which brought Canada into the conflict on August 4, 1914. Those living in both Windsor and Detroit must have been left wondering how this well-

known member of the Detroit business community, with his distinctive “Prussian” features, could have so easily passed through inspection at the international boundary.³

This paper – which is based primarily on newspaper research and correspondence between Immigration Department superintendent W.D. Scott, traveling inspectors, and inspectors based in border communities like Windsor, Ontario, during the First World War – seeks to answer that question. It finds that Kaltschmidt, like many other enemy aliens attempting to cross the Canada-U.S. border, faced little threat of being apprehended during the period of U.S. neutrality, which lasted from August 1914 until Congress’ declaration of war in April 1917. The task of restricting the movement of enemy aliens proved an almost impossible one for a neophyte Canadian immigration staff that suffered from chronic staffing problems and the absence of coherent national or international inspection strategies.

Given the amount of current discussion about invasive inspection policies at the present-day international boundary, historical examinations of immigration inspection at the Canada-U.S. border are surprisingly rare. That said, since 9/11 a number of historians have pointed to the early twentieth century as a critical moment in the formation of immigration policy, which helped turn the traditionally permeable Canada-U.S. border into a recognizable barrier that divided as much as connected two nation-states. In *The Passport in America: The History of a Document*, Craig Robertson shows how the threat posed by enemy aliens and saboteurs during the First World War changed the way U.S. citizens thought about official documentation. Until that time passports were seen as invasive by travelers who felt that their “respectable” appearance and language should be all that was needed to bypass inspection at the international boundary.⁴ Canadian historian Steve Hewitt provides a similar finding in his article “‘Strangely Easy to Obtain’: Canadian Passport Security, 1933-1973.” Hewitt finds that the First World War led to “dramatically tightened documentary requirements” as nations like Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States scrambled to protect their citizenry against the German threat. Although these documentary requirements loosened ever so slightly during the interwar period, Hewitt shows that the rise of Bolshevism led to the introduction of a comprehensive passport system in Canada.⁵ The state’s response to external threats during the Great War era is also the concern of historian Gregory S. Kealey, who in a series of articles examines the emergence of Canada’s “surveillance state”. He argues that the Canadian government’s approach to security changed dramatically during the war as a result of new threats posed by German-Americans and radical labour groups inspired (or thought to be inspired) by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.⁶ Valerie Knowles, Bruno Ramirez, Randy Widdis, Michael J. Trebilcock, and Ninette Kelley have also focused on how the war

affected Canadian immigration policy, though rarely do these – or any – historians focus on how this policy affected the border-crossing experience or the way immigration inspection was carried out at the actual Canada-U.S. border during the period 1914-1918.⁷

As a Dominion in the British Empire, Canada was automatically committed to support the Mother Country when Britain declared war on Germany in early August 1914. But across the boundary most Americans supported President Woodrow Wilson's policy of neutrality, for several reasons. First, Americans feared this new European conflict would be just as barbarous and cruel as the U.S. Civil War, which continued to resonate throughout U.S. society.⁸ There were also concerns that an ethnically diverse United States would be rent by participating in a conflict that pitted England, France, and Russia against Germany and Austria-Hungary.⁹ Finally, there was a general feeling that this was a distant, foreign war that simply did not, and should not, concern peace-loving Americans.¹⁰

It was a situation that presented significant challenges for Prime Minister Robert Borden's government in Ottawa. Initially, the main concern was not that Germans and Austro-Hungarians would attack Canadian military, government, or civilian facilities, but that these "enemy aliens" would flee Canada for the United States, from where they could catch a ship back to Europe and join the powerful armies of Germany and her allies.¹¹ However, by late August there were already many rumours suggesting that U.S.-based German-Americans were planning to raid, invade, or even occupy parts of Canada.¹² These rumours prompted the federal government to invoke the War Measures Act, giving Borden and his Cabinet the power to authorize orders and regulations without the usual debate in Canada's House of Commons. In effect, it turned Canada's parliamentary system into an autocracy – an ironic shift given how the war was portrayed in Canadian newspaper propaganda.¹³

Ottawa wasted little time in using the War Measures Act. The federal government invoked orders-in-council that allowed for the censorship of any enemy publications. The government also gained the ability to arrest, detain, or deport any individual who appeared to pose a visible threat to Canadian citizens. By October 1914 the Canadian government had given law enforcement and immigration officials the power to restrict the trans-provincial and international movement of Canada's enemy alien population, which included roughly 400,000 people of German descent and 130,000 people of Austro-Hungarian origin.¹⁴ By war's end in November 1918, the government had interned more than eight thousand enemy aliens in isolated work camps where they performed menial labour for pennies a day.¹⁵ Ottawa forced an additional 80,000 Germans and Austro-Hungarians to register with local law

enforcement agencies, which kept close tabs on the movement of enemy aliens and forced most to surrender any arms, ammunition, or explosives they might have owned.¹⁶

Much of the Canadian government's concern about the activity of enemy aliens centered on the Canada-U.S. border, which had only recently been seen as a tool for monitoring the movement of "undesirables". Prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 both the Canadian and U.S. governments sought to weed out criminals, hoboes, lunatics, the physically ill, and anyone else who might place a burden on state-run prisons, hospitals, and mental institutions. Both governments also sought to restrict the entry of Asians, and particularly Chinese immigrants, who were considered a significant threat to white incomes and Anglo-Saxon culture.¹⁷

But there were comparatively few controls on Austro-Hungarians, while Germans were deemed a preferable immigrant group. Often characterized as hard-working, loyal, and well-educated, Germans easily passed through inspection because their perceived values and attributes (indeed, everything but their language) so closely reflected those of most Canadians and Americans.¹⁸ This attitude towards Germans and Austro-Hungarians was reflective of the general approach to immigration in the years before the First World War. Although there had been security scares in earlier years – such as raids by the Irish-American Fenian Brotherhood in the 1860s or the cross-border movement of Sitting Bull's followers in the 1870s – the Canada-U.S. international boundary was rarely treated like a filter during the nineteenth century or even early twentieth century.¹⁹ Most residents of upper North America viewed this border no differently than a state or provincial line and gave little thought to moving temporarily or permanently across the line.

But that all started to change in August 1914. For one, just days after the declaration of war, Canadians began expressing a newfound opinion of both Germany and Germans. At the University of Toronto, the school's administration arranged for the immediate removal of German professors. The university's Canadian professors, meanwhile, told students that German *Kultur* was the product of a militaristic society bent on making "the world sit obediently at its feet."²⁰ One of Canada's most widely read newspapers, *The Globe*, added to this discussion by suggesting that "military despotism in Germany is the decisive factor in making inevitable the present war horror of the world."²¹

With opinions of the German people rapidly changing, the Canadian government moved to protect its citizens by demanding immigration agents stationed at busy land border crossings bar any enemy aliens from leaving or entering the country. Ottawa also sent secret agents to spy on German-Americans in U.S. border

communities, like Detroit. However, these agents' reports suggested that few U.S.-based Germans were interested in helping their former homeland cause trouble in Canada. In fact, most showed little interest in the war at all.²²

Indeed, many enemy aliens were completely uninterested in disturbing the status quo. Many Germans living in Canada appear to have recognized that fighting for their homeland in their adopted countries would negatively affect their privileged status within society. As a result, many chose to keep their heads down as others celebrated the declaration of a war that Canadians of British heritage felt would help the still-young nation show its worth on the global stage.²³

But it soon became clear that not all Germans, and particularly those living across the border in the United States, were so committed to pacifism. For its part the German government was very active in the U.S. during the war. The main point of contact for U.S. residents of German descent hoping to support the Fatherland from abroad was Franz von Papen, German military attaché to the United States. With the full support of his home government, in secrecy von Papen organized several attacks on Canadian and American military and industrial facilities during the period of U.S. neutrality.

The first of these attacks to make headlines across North America took place at sleepy Vanceboro, Maine, where a railway bridge crossed the St. Croix River and the Canada-U.S. border. Von Papen's original plan was to attack several railway bridges deemed critical to the Canadian war effort, but his scheme fell apart when most of the (rather amateur) Irish and German saboteurs he contacted withdrew their support. In fact, von Papen actually cancelled the operation but failed to alert one of the saboteurs, a German reservist named Werner van Horn. As a result, van Horn made his way from New York City to Vanceboro in early February 1915, planted explosives on the bridge, and set the charge. Unfortunately for the Germans, van Horn was no demolitions expert and the bridge received only minor damage. Within hours trains were crossing the railway bridge and van Horn was in custody.²⁴

In the weeks that followed, many Canadians and Americans dismissed the Vanceboro incident as little more than a farce. However, the Canadian government took the issue much more seriously, fighting for van Horn's extradition and warning immigration agents that similar attacks could take place at other points along the border.²⁵ Ottawa also contacted the Wilson administration in an attempt to formulate a cohesive international plan for preventing similar incidents from occurring. But the United States government was uninterested in cooperation, with Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan – who was not aware that von Papen and the German government had been involved – insisting that the Vanceboro incident was insignificant

and that arming the border was not the business of a neutral nation.²⁶ Indeed, at the time of the Vanceboro attack the U.S. government was actually scaling back spending on immigration inspection. For example, the eighteen immigration agents stationed at Detroit, the land border's busiest crossing, were told in January 1915 they must take an entire month of unpaid vacation.²⁷ Overall, in early 1915 the U.S. government showed little concern that Canadians would be targeted by German-American saboteurs.

This attitude placed an enormous burden on Canadian immigration officers stationed along the Canada-U.S. border. Canada's Immigration Department, which had only been expanded to allow for immigration inspectors at critical border crossings in 1908, already faced a variety of challenges in 1915.²⁸ For one, the Canadian government, like its American counterpart, was reticent to spend taxpayer money hiring a large force of immigration agents. In Windsor, a very busy port, only twelve agents were on the staff in 1916.²⁹ On the west coast the immigration staff based in the border county of Surrey, British Columbia, was about half that size.³⁰ Meanwhile, in the quieter Maritimes, immigration offices were even smaller, with inspection often performed by customs inspectors paid a higher wage to perform both duties.³¹

This reticence to spend taxpayer money also meant the Canadian government paid most of its inspectors a relatively low wage, \$900 per year, to carry out a job that required critical thinking and intermediate communications skills typically acquired through a high school education – still a rarity in First World War Canada.³² When inspectors stationed at the Windsor port complained about their low pay in the summer of 1915, they were told there was simply no money available for a wage increase. “Instructions were issued ... some time ago to the effect that the most rigid economy was to be practised this year and in pursuance of this policy very few [wage] increases have been granted,” noted Superintendent of Immigration, W.D. Scott, in a July 1915 memorandum. In attempting to quell opposition to this policy, Scott pointed to the United States government's practice of forcing inspectors off the job for a month – the idea being that things could be worse for Canadian immigration officers.³³ Surely, this was little consolation for agents who not only worried about their pay, but the dangers associated with the job. Many immigration officers stationed at the border would have learned of the October 1914 murder of White Rock, B.C., customs officer Clifford Adams by bandits attempting to evade inspection.³⁴

In concluding on the pay situation, Scott told Windsor's Inspector-in-Charge, J.S. Austin, he hoped the local immigration staff would “realize that the very best is being done which can be done at this time.” But few inspectors appreciated this sentiment. Some left their jobs at the border for safer, less stressful positions in Windsor's growing manufacturing sector, which boomed during the war years. There,

uneducated men could earn a comfortable wage, particularly if they worked at the growing Ford of Canada plant, which paid men \$4 per day in 1915.³⁵ The result was a high turnover rate in the Windsor immigration office, meaning men were often hired and placed on the job with little training. This, in turn, made it easy for enemy aliens like Albert Kaltschmidt to cross the border several times during the war's early stages. Simply put, the men staffing ports like Windsor were overworked and undertrained; it was ludicrous to suggest that they had a hope of preventing enemy aliens – most of whom looked a great deal like their native-born Canadian and American counterparts – from crossing the international boundary.

Nevertheless, Canadian immigration inspectors at Windsor were excoriated by Scott for their failure to prevent Kaltschmidt's cross-border travels. In fairness, the inspectors had been warned in April 1915 – two months before the Peabody attack – by the Immigration Department that Kaltschmidt was to be treated as suspicious and detained if sighted. In fact, that month the department attempted to lure Kaltschmidt to the border by sending him a letter which promised “to refrain from interfering in any way with your entry to or departure from Canada.”³⁶ The Dominion Police, Canada's fledgling secret service agency during the war, then dispatched agents to Windsor to apprehend Kaltschmidt the moment he stepped foot on Canadian soil.³⁷ Unfortunately, the trap was spoiled when Austin, who had been made aware of the plot but evidently forgot about it entirely, told Kaltschmidt's wife he knew nothing about the department's plan to allow her husband into the country. Kaltschmidt then suspected that something was afoot and refrained from crossing the border in the months that followed.³⁸

Eight months after the June 1915 attack on Windsor organized by Kaltschmidt, Canada's Superintendent of Immigration was still furious, and understandably so. “If our Inspector-in-Charge at Windsor had carried out the Department's instructions of the 9th of April last, one Albert Kaltschmidt, a prominent German in Detroit, who is alleged to have been the moving spirit in the destruction of the Peabody factory at Walkerville, would have been arrested by the Dominion Police,” Scott wrote in February 1916. Scott went on to criticize the Windsor immigration staff for allowing other undesirables into the country. This included the deaf, ill, and destitute 49-year-old Elizabeth Gructer and 38-year-old Bert Harris, who Scott found to be “feeble-minded” and “afflicted with venereal disease”. Both entered the country in 1915, and while Gructer was deported, Harris – whose U.S. citizenship could not be established – was eventually sentenced to a six-month prison term, the charge vagrancy. Some undesirables, like Gertrude Robeson Sykes, violated Canada's strict moral code. According to Scott, Sykes was a “palmist, mind-reader, and prostitute.” She entered

Canada via Windsor “some time during 1915” and was deported in October. An even worse situation involved 56-year-old Mary Elizabeth Allen, who was later deemed “helpless,” suggesting she suffered from mental or physical problems, or both. Scott reported that Allen was “liable to be a public charge during the remainder of her life.” These were precisely the people the Canadian Immigration Department wanted to keep out of the country at this time. All became burdens for a government that was trying to limit spending while fighting a costly war in Europe.³⁹

For their part, Windsor’s inspectors felt the local immigration staff’s problem was the office’s high turnover rate. In a March 1916 letter to Scott, 31-year-old inspector Eccles J. Gott provided a list of items that would help keep men from leaving the job while also increasing morale among the staff. The suggestions included one day off each week (meaning the inspectors often worked seven days a week); overtime pay and higher salaries, “especially during war time”; proper telephone communications for the Windsor immigration office; consistent shifts; more sanitary offices and detention areas; and raiting that would arrange travelers in a neat line, making it easier for inspectors to process them. Finally, a frazzled Gott asked for “strong backing by the department of their inspectors,” meaning officials like Scott would “assist [inspectors] in the discharge of their duty and not pound them unmercifully when mistakes are made (all people make mistakes).” Gott insisted this would give the inspectors “more confidence” and “a strong desire to always do what is right in the interests of the service and themselves.”⁴⁰

Scott, however, appears to have largely disregarded this passionate and desperate plea. Instead, he waited for the report of Percy Reid, a special investigating officer dispatched by Scott to Windsor in the spring of 1916. Reid’s task was to determine how so many undesirables, including dangerous enemy aliens like Albert Kaltschmidt, could be crossing the border at Windsor on a regular basis.

Reid’s final report on the matter was relayed to Scott just two weeks after Gott sent his letter. The report included a careful evaluation of each and every member of Windsor’s immigration staff, from 63-year-old Inspector-in-Charge J.S. Austin to 23-year-old inspector Orval G. Adams. Reid started by tearing into Austin, of whom there were “numerous complaints...against his carelessness and lack of judgment.” Like Scott, Reid slammed Austin for allowing Kaltschmidt, “a highly dangerous criminal”, to enter the country and “commit dynamite outrages.” In conclusion, Reid found that Austin lacked “ability to control or command his men,” which Reid believed meant Windsor’s Inspector-in-Charge was “absolutely incapable” of continuing to hold his position.

Reid was similarly critical of some of Austin's subordinates, including 32-year-old inspector Charles R. McKee. "He is incompetent, lacking in good judgment, and extremely careless in examinations," Reid wrote of McKee. "He is uncouth in his manner and extremely untidy in his appearance." Aside from these issues, Reid also pointed to McKee's decision to allow Anna Giese, "an immoral and mentally defective woman," to enter the country in December 1915. This woman, a German citizen, was permitted entry to Canada by McKee. Reid found that, had McKee barred this enemy alien from entering Canada, the government could have saved itself the cost of monitoring her activity. Unfortunately, because Giese now resided in nearby Walkerville, Ontario, and was married to a Canadian citizen (also of German heritage), the government could not deport her. Eccles Gott also received his fair share of criticism from Reid. While the latter insisted Gott was "intelligent," he also noted that the inspector was "lacking in ability to conduct investigations or examine passengers in a proper or gentlemanly manner". All in all, Reid suggested that Gott, who had also been fined \$25.00 for drunk and disorderly conduct by Windsor police, was expendable.

Not every inspector received such scathing reviews, however. Reid praised several other inspectors, including 66-year-old William Englander, who could speak eleven different languages. There was also plenty of praise for the young Orval Adams, who Reid found to be "conscientious, intelligent, [and] faithful". Reid also liked the work of 29-year-old Vincent Bryrne, who, like Adams, had recently completed an education at the Windsor Business College. Overall, it appears the department wanted officers who were well-educated, professional, and willing to work seven days per week for a meagre wage (go figure).

Reid's most critical task involved explaining how so many enemy aliens were able to cross the border at Windsor during wartime. His finding: there were simply too many travelers leaving from and arriving at the city on a daily basis. Estimating that roughly 300,000 people traveled one-way across the border each month, Reid suggested that "every ten minutes from 25 to 30 passengers pass our inspectors...This means the inspectors must be extremely keen of eye and quick of foot; consequently, none but the cleverest and most competent officers should be on duty there."⁴¹

As for dangerous undesirables like Kaltschmidt, Reid found that "an alien enemy [has] no more difficulty leaving Canada via Windsor ferry than they would have in going from Hull to Ottawa." Reid estimated that at least fifty people of German extraction, many of them "highly dangerous", had fled Canada for the United States since January 1916 alone – a period of just three months. As for those enemy aliens attempting to enter Canada from Detroit, Reid found the border very permeable. Of

those who were actually apprehended, Reid said most were simply turned back, while the dodgiest were handed over to the Canadian military authorities.

Reid believed his stay at Windsor had served to make the local inspectors more aware of the Immigration Department's expectations and reported that "I feel sure that very few alien enemies will waste the time of our inspectors from Windsor...in future by asking for permission to come to Canada". However, Reid also noted that "it is unreasonable to expect that Windsor will ever be a credit to the [immigration] service," primarily because "the staff at present is too small for the work expected of them".⁴²

Thus, special investigating officer Reid believed the main problem facing Windsor's immigration service was understaffing and the office's practice of hiring unqualified inspectors. The clear solution to these problems involved paying inspectors more money (to prevent them from leaving the job), hiring more well-educated inspectors, and replacing Inspector-in-Charge J.S. Austin.

However, while Scott promised to take "immediate action" based on Reid's recommendations, the only major change at the Windsor port was the replacement of Austin with 23-year-old Orval Adams.⁴³ Meanwhile, Eccles Gott, the man who had laid out many of the Windsor port's problems and recommended pay increases, a day off each week, and respect from the Immigration Department's top officials, was fired.⁴⁴

Windsor's immigration inspectors were hardly the only agents to face an uphill battle during the war years. Out west, a complete absence of geographical boundaries – like the Detroit River – made it even more difficult to monitor the movement of enemy aliens and other undesirables. In White Rock, British Columbia, which shares the border with Blaine, Washington, a team of half a dozen Canadian immigration agents had to monitor automobile, foot, and train traffic. That made it easy for prostitutes, Asians, Germans, Austro-Hungarians, and other undesirables to cross the border. Any undesirable wishing to cross by automobile merely had to find a quiet roadway; those crossing by foot waited until nightfall, then sprinted along forest paths; and those traveling by train simply paid off the porters that immigration agents relied upon to tell them if an undesirable was trying to enter the country.

This made it difficult for the authorities to find, let alone detain and intern, enemy aliens. Immigration and law enforcement officials also faced challenges prosecuting those Canadians accused of assisting enemy aliens in moving in and out of the country. Take, for example, the case of Ernst Hamel and David Kitzel, two farmers living in Hall's Prairie, B.C., a tiny community located near the Canada-U.S. border. In 1915 they were accused of helping enemy aliens leave Canada by a forest path that led to nearby Blaine. Immigration officials and British Columbia police officers worked together to crack the case by using an undercover agent who claimed to be an Austrian

reservist and in need of assistance reaching the neutral United States, from where he would find transportation back to Austria-Hungary.⁴⁵

The plan worked splendidly: both Hamel and Kitzel helped the agent, whose real name was Stephen Raymer, reach Blaine using a secret path. However, when the case went to trial, the attorney hired by Hamel and Kitzel tore into Raymer's character. The problem was that Raymer was Croatian, meaning he too was born under the flag of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and had even served as a lieutenant in the Austro-Hungarian navy. And while Raymer insisted he felt little love for his homeland, his birth hardly endeared him to a white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant B.C. jury. Ultimately, the case boiled down to a he said/they said scenario that pitted one enemy alien against two enemy aliens. With little other evidence forthcoming, two separate trials ended in hung juries. By the end of 1915 both Kitzel and Hamel were free men.⁴⁶

An even higher profile case involved Alvo von Alvensleben, a native of Westphalia, Germany, who settled in British Columbia ten years before the war began. By 1914 von Alvensleben, who allegedly arrived in B.C. with just four dollars in his pocket, had built a successful business based on several industries, including lumber and mining. But his real success was in real estate, and specifically in organizing the sale of B.C. property to prominent German political and military officials, including Field Marshal August von Mackensen, Reich Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, and even Kaiser Wilhelm II. In the years before the war this earned Alvensleben praise from his British Columbian neighbours, with *BC Magazine* crediting him for improving relations between Canada and Germany, a rising economic power.⁴⁷

But British Columbians' opinions of Alvensleben and his work underwent remarkable changes after the British declaration of war in August 1914. It certainly did not help that two of Alvo's brothers, who had also moved to B.C. in the early 1900s, immediately returned to Germany to enlist in the army. Soon, there emerged rumours suggesting Alvensleben was using his wealth to help enemy aliens flee Canada. No charges were brought against Alvensleben; instead, the Canadian government simply barred his re-entry after Alvo visited Seattle on business. And so, after years of attracting foreign investment, Alvensleben found he was no longer welcome in his adopted homeland. For the next three years he lived with his family in a new home in Seattle. But the heartache would not end there: following the U.S. declaration of war in April 1917 Alvensleben was sent to a Utah internment camp, where he spent the rest of the war. He was released from the camp in 1920, but the experience ruined his business and reputation.⁴⁸ He attempted to re-build his empire in the postwar years but never recaptured the fortune he originally established as a lumber and mining tycoon and B.C. real estate agent to Germany's elite.⁴⁹

Alvensleben was officially barred from returning to Canada until 1926 – an incredible eight years after the war ended. However, correspondence by immigration officials suggests he continued to visit friends, family, and colleagues in British Columbia by using the night train (popularly known as the ‘Owl’ service) between Vancouver and Seattle. In a letter to immigration authorities in February 1916, superintendent of B.C. police Colin S. Campbell claimed to have learned that Alvensleben repeatedly took the night train and paid an elderly, “rather dark” porter two silver dollars to look the other way. Campbell even said he had learned that Alvensleben – whose remaining property in British Columbia was then being confiscated by the Canadian government – had entered the country “dressed in woman’s clothes.”⁵⁰ Despite these rumours, Alvensleben was never caught trying to cross the Canada-U.S. border during wartime.

As the war progressed, the Canadian immigration authorities authorized the use of new schemes designed to limit the number of enemy aliens crossing the border. Most, however, were piecemeal tactics introduced at the local level and were not part of a national strategy to firm up a traditionally permeable international boundary. For example, on the west coast, each night two immigration officials were placed on the Owl train between Vancouver and Seattle. This removed the problem of porters being paid by undesirables to ignore their presence. In Windsor, immigration officials worked out a plan with the local military authorities that saw soldiers returned from Europe assist inspectors stationed along the Detroit River. Unfortunately, these soldiers were undertrained, often insubordinate, and even corrupt (with at least one veteran accepting a bribe in exchange for allowing people to cross the border uninspected). Eventually the Canadian government placed Dominion Police agents at the busy Windsor border, and this helped to reduce the flow of enemy aliens.⁵¹

By this point the U.S. had entered the war, somewhat limiting the need for muscle at the boundary. Simply put, the United States, which had shown so little interest in border security earlier in the war, took the matter much more seriously after April 1917.⁵² In fact, both the United States and Canada introduced several measures designed to restrict the movement of enemy aliens and men of military age seeking to avoid their nation’s military draft (and by late 1917, both countries had taken such actions). In Canada, Order-in-Council P.C. 1433 barred men of military age from crossing the border without photo identification – an alien document to most residents of Canada, and particularly Windsorites used to working and playing in Detroit. The United States, meanwhile, introduced two measures to restrict cross-border movement, including the 1918 Passport Act, which required aliens and U.S. citizens provide a passport when crossing the border.⁵³ The U.S. government also introduced a special

“border-crossing card,” which became required for aliens (including Canadians) working within ten miles of the international boundary. Like the passport, the card required a photograph.⁵⁴

As one might expect, reactions to these measures varied depending on the border community in question. In Windsor, where people often crossed the border to visit Detroit bars, restaurants, baseball diamonds, and factories, there was a great deal of opposition. Windsorites were particularly upset with the Canadian government’s use of the Dominion Police to patrol the boundary. These federal agents, most of whom would have been from outside the Windsor area, were extremely strict and carefully enforced government protocols. “The appointment of the Dominion Police is strongly resented by local people in Windsor,” W.D. Scott noted in an April 1918 letter.⁵⁵ This is supported by a letter written to the Immigration Department on behalf of the City of Windsor, in which city officials asked for “a less rigid enforcement of the immigration rules at the border” in the hopes of preserving “the very friendly relations that now exist between Canada and the United States”.⁵⁶

Of course, this was not the feeling everywhere. On the west coast, residents of White Rock, B.C., and Blaine, Washington, who had not shared years of intense cross-border relations, showed less opposition to new border controls.⁵⁷ In this part of the continent, the passport measures were deemed an appropriate tool for preventing the cross-border movement of enemy aliens, Asians, and other undesirables – such as members of the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) labour organization, which threatened to destabilize the social and economic situation in the Pacific Northwest in 1918.⁵⁸

And so, by 1918 the Canada-U.S. border was on its way to becoming an effective tool for checking the transnational movement of people deemed a threat to the white, Anglo-Saxon peoples in control of upper North America. But, as this paper has shown, the process was a slow one. Early in the war the border remained largely permeable, even to enemy aliens like Germans and Austro-Hungarians. The reasons: first, the Canadian government was relatively new to administering the border (only placing inspectors there in 1908) and remained reticent to spend taxpayer money training effective immigration inspectors. Second, there was little cooperation between Ottawa and the U.S. government, which cut back spending on border security before it entered the world war. Finally, despite the meticulous description of Albert Kaltschmidt by the *Detroit Free Press*, enemy aliens did not always look a great deal different than their native-born Canadian and American counterparts. The result was a situation in which enemy aliens like Kaltschmidt were able to cross the border on a frequent basis before the U.S. declaration of war in April 1917.

NOTES

¹ “Kaltschmidt in New Charge,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 23, 1917; “Kaltschmidt Sentenced to Four Years in Prison,” *Windsor Evening Record*, December 22, 1917.

² Ibid.

³ “Lefler Blocks Respa’s Alibi in Dynamiting,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 16, 1915; “Kaltschmidt in Jail, Accused as Bomb Plotter,” *Detroit Free Press*, April 7, 1917; “Kaltschmidt in New Charge,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 23, 1917; “‘Serve Kaiser’, Kaltschmidt’s Rallying Call,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 12, 1917; “Kaltschmidt Faces 8 Years at Term’s End,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 23, 1917.

⁴ Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 12.

⁵ Steve Hewitt, “‘Strangely Easy to Obtain’: Canadian Passport Security, 1933-1973,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 23, Issue 3 (June 2008).

⁶ Gregory S. Kealey, “State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914-20: The Impact of the First World War,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 72, Issue 3 (September 1992); and “The Surveillance State: The Origins of Domestic Intelligence and Counter-Subversion in Canada, 1914-21,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 7, Issue 3 (1992).

⁷ Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007); Bruno Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Randy Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880-1920* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999); Ninette Kelley and Michael J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

⁸ “The Horrible Cost,” *Detroit News*, August 1, 1914; “The Veteran Scans the European News, But His Mind is Centered on a Certain day, Fifty Years Ago,” *Detroit News*, September 1, 1914.

⁹ “What War Will Do,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 3, 1914; “The Higher Neutrality,” *The New York Times*, August 19, 1914.

¹⁰ The best demonstration of American pacifism may have been the Anglo-American Peace Centenary, organized by Americans but spread to Canada and Britain as a celebration of one hundred years of peace (1814-1914) between the three countries. Brandon Dimmel, “Trouble Over Bridged Waters,” *Canada’s History*, Vol. 94, Issue 1 (February-March 2014).

¹¹ Bulgaria, which entered the war on the side of the Central Powers in October 1915, would later be added to the list of enemy alien nations. Circular to Boundary Inspectors from W.D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration, October 19, 1915. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

¹² See Martin Kitchen, “The German Invasion of Canada in the First World War,” *The International History Review*, Vol. 7, Issue 2 (May 1985).

¹³ Newspapers frequently referred to the war as a fight for civilization and against Germany's autocratic Kaiser, Wilhelm II. For more on the War Measures Act, censorship, and Canadian newspaper propaganda, see Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 23.

¹⁴ Perhaps 10,000 people of Turkish and Bulgarian descent were also affected by the regulations. Donald Avery, "Ethnic and Class Relations in Western Canada during the First World War: A Case Study of European Immigrants and Anglo-Canadian Nativism," in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David Mackenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 276.

¹⁵ Not all internment camps were the same. Austro-Hungarian-Canadians, and specifically Ukrainian-Canadians, were sent to more isolated camps where they performed gruelling manual labour. In contrast, German-Canadians were often sent to less remote camps where they were rarely, if ever, asked to work. See Bohdan S. Kordan, *Enemy Aliens, Prisoners of War: Internment in Canada during the Great War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); James Farney and Bohdan S. Kordan, "The Predicament of Belonging: The Status of Enemy Aliens in Canada, 1914," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Volume 39, Issue 1 (Winter 2005).

¹⁶ Avery, "Ethnic and Class Relations in Western Canada during the First World War," *Canada and the First World War*, 276.

¹⁷ Concerns about rising crime rates and miscegenation (or the mixing of races) resulted in the Canadian and U.S. governments placing immigration agents at the international boundary. By 1910, most busy land border crossing points were covered. See Thomas Klug, "The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Making of a Border-Crossing Culture at the US-Canada Border, 1891-1941," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 40, Issue 3 (Autumn 2010); Marian Smith, "The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) at the U.S.-Canadian Border, 1893-1993: An Overview of Issues and Topics," *Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 26, Issue 2 (Sept. 2000).

¹⁸ W.D. Scott, "The Immigration by Races," in A. Short and A.C. Doughty (eds.), *Canada and Its Provinces*, vol. 7 (Toronto: Glasgow, 1914).

¹⁹ For more on Sitting Bull's travels across the Canada-U.S. border, see Beth LaDow, *The Medicine Line: Life and Death on a North American Borderland* (Toronto: Routledge, 2002).

²⁰ Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War*, 23.

²¹ "Why This War is Inevitable," *The Globe*, August 5, 1914.

²² See Brandon Dimmel, "Sabotage, Security, and Border-Crossing Culture: The Detroit River during the First World War, 1914-1918," *Social History*, Vol. 47, Issue 94 (June 2014).

²³ Art Grenke, "The German Community of Winnipeg and the English-Canadian Response to World War I," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 20, Issue 1 (1988).

²⁴ Kitchen, "The German Invasion of Canada in the First World War".

²⁵ "Expects Long Legal Fight," *New York Times*, February 3, 1915; "Demand for Van Horn," *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1915.

²⁶ Circular to Border Inspectors from W.D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration, February 6, 1915. LAC, MF C-10632, File 805189; Sir Cecil Spring-Rice to Duke of Connaught, Governor-General, February 8, 1915. LAC, RG25, 1160, File 312; W.J. Bryan to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, February 27, 1915. LAC, RG25, 1160, File 312.

²⁷ “Immigration Men Forced to Rest,” *Detroit News*, January 2, 1915.

²⁸ For more on the creation of Canada’s Immigration Department, see Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates*, 105-119.

²⁹ Letter from Percy Reid to W.D. Scott, March 29, 1916. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

³⁰ Letter from M.R.J. Reid to W.D. Scott, April 5, 1917. LAC, MF C-10429, File 774004.

³¹ “S.N. Hyslip, H.M. Customs Officer, St. Stephen, New Brunswick, appointed as Immigration Border Inspector,” LAC, MF C-10632, File 804947.

³² Most officers received \$900 per year, but each port’s Inspector-in-Charge was paid \$1,200 per year. This was not substantially more than what a factory labourer – who did not require an education and faced less stress and danger on the job – earned at the time. LAC, MF C-10632, File 805189; “Employment, Earnings, and Hours of Work (Series E41-135)” Statistics Canada, accessed December 11, 2013, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-516-x/sectione/4147438-eng.htm#2>.

³³ Letter from W.D. Scott to J.S. Austin, July 23, 1915. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

³⁴ After robbing several banks on both sides of the British Columbia-Washington border that summer, the bandits engaged in several shootouts with Canadian and American law enforcement, customs, and immigration officials. Eventually, most of the bandits were killed, but not before snuffing out the life of 25-year-old Adams. “Four Bandits Shot,” *Blaine Journal*, October 30, 1914.

³⁵ For more on Ford’s impact on Windsor’s economic development, see David Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit: Gordon M. McGregor, Ford of Canada, and Motoropolis* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006).

³⁶ Letter from Percy Reid to W.D. Scott, March 29, 1916. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

³⁷ The Dominion Police was created in 1868, following the assassination of D’Arcy McGee by a member of the Fenian Brotherhood, an organization dedicated to separating Ireland from the United Kingdom. The agency’s initial mandate was to protect government buildings, investigate federal crimes (like mail fraud), and carry out political policing activities. However, they soon expanded their operations to include intelligence, providing prime ministers like John A. Macdonald with detailed reports about possible threats to Canada (like the Fenian Brotherhood) or the Mother Country (like East Indian rebels intent on liberating their homeland). The Dominion Police’s duties were then expanded further during the Great War, with the agency taking responsibility for monitoring and registering enemy aliens. They were still tasked with protecting government property, a tall order following the introduction of conscription

and the Bolshevik Revolution, both of which emerged in 1917. It was a lot to ask of the small and underfunded Dominion Police, which remained dependent on the intelligence work of others, including the New York-based Pinkerton Detective Agency. This would eventually change as fears of class war emerged after 1917, resulting in the Dominion Police being expanded and then folded into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1920. For more on the Dominion Police, see Reg Whitaker et al, *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada from the Fenians to Fortress America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Letter from W.D. Scott to W.W. Cory, February 28, 1916. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

⁴⁰ Letter from Eccles. J. Gott to W.D. Scott, March 18, 1916. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

⁴¹ Reid specifically reported that an estimated 270,000 people crossed the border each month during the winter, with roughly 340,000 crossing each month in the summer. Letter from Percy Reid to W.D. Scott, March 29, 1916. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Letter from W.D. Scott to W.W. Cory, March 31, 1916. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

⁴⁴ Letter from D.H. Reynolds to W.D. Scott, June 20, 1916. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

⁴⁵ “Charge of Treason Against Two Hall’s Prairie Farmers,” *British Columbian*, July 13, 1915; “Charged with Aiding Alien Enemies Across Border,” *British Columbian*, July 20, 1915; “Hamel-Kitzel Trial Opens,” *British Columbian*, October 26, 1915.

⁴⁶ “Freed on Own Recognizance,” *British Columbian*, November 9, 1915.

⁴⁷ Janet Nicol, “Alvo von Alvensleben: I am not ‘an enemy to the people I have lived among,’” *British Columbia History*, Vol. 41, Issue 1 (2008).

⁴⁸ “Spy of Germany Loses Property,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 25, 1917.

⁴⁹ Joerg A. Nagler, “Enemy Aliens and Internment in World War I: Alvo von Alvensleben in Fort Douglas, Utah, a Case Study,” *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 58, Issue 4 (Fall 1990).

⁵⁰ Letter from Colin S. Campbell to Malcolm R.J. Reid, February 4, 1916. LAC, MF C-10429.

⁵¹ Letter from W.D. Scott to W.W. Cory, April 5, 1918. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

⁵² The devastating attack on Black Tom Island by German saboteurs acted as a wake-up call for many U.S. officials. “Aliens Escaping Tests at Border to be Run Down,” *Detroit News*, January 6, 1916; Letter from M.J. Reid to W.D. Scott, April 10, 1918. LAC, MF C-10429; Max Schwab, “Sabotage at Black Tom Island: A Wake-Up Call for America,” *International Journal of Intelligence & Counterintelligence*, Vol. 25, Issue 2 (Summer 2012).

⁵³ S. Deborah Kang, "Crossing the Line: The INS and the Federal Regulation of the Mexican Border," in *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories*, eds. Benjamin Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 177.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵⁵ Letter from W.D. Scott to W.W. Cory, April 5, 1918. LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

⁵⁶ Letter from N.A. Dickinson to J.A. Calder, June 12, 1918. MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3.

⁵⁷ Unlike Windsor and Detroit, where settlement began in the early eighteenth century, Blaine and White Rock were first settled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For more on the history of these four communities, see Neil F. Morrison, *Garden Gateway to Canada: One Hundred Years of Windsor and Essex County, 1854-1954* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1954); Robert E. Conot, *American Odyssey: A History of a Great City* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986); Lorraine Ellenwood, *Years of Promise: White Rock, 1858-1958* (White Rock: White Rock Museum and Archives, 2005); Marie Arbuckle, *A Symbol of Our Heritage, the Old Fir Tree: Blaine Centennial History, 1884-1984* (Blaine: Profile Publications, 1984).

⁵⁸ For more on the activity of the IWW in the Pacific Northwest, see Robert Ficken, "The Wobbly Horrors: Pacific Northwest Lumbermen and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1917-1918," *Labor History*, Vol. 24, Issue 3 (Summer 1983); Letter from M.J. Reid to W.D. Scott, April 10, 1918. LAC, MF C-10429.

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