controlled by the Boer (Dutch/Africaan-British elite’s access to diamonds and gold. During the Boer War (1899-1902), 1,000 troops of the Royal Canadian Infantry Regiment, during the Boer War (1899-1902). This war was fought to secure the British elite’s access to diamonds and gold controlled by the Boer (Dutch/Africaaner) regime in South Africa. During this siege of empires, British troops forced 116,000 Blacks into concentration camps. They also herded 118,000 Boer women, children and elderly men into deadly prison camps. Of these civilians, more than 42,000 died from preventable diseases in the camps, including 28,000 Boers and over 14,000 Blacks. In addition, 26,000 Boer men were shipped to British prison camps in India and Caribbean colonies.

In 1914, Otter was brought out of retirement to be appointed Director of Internment Operations. His qualifications included collaboration in two imperial conflicts that involved the mass internment of civilians. In 1913, Otter was made a Companion of the Most Honourable Military Order of the Bath. For what service to Empire did he receive this title? Was it his role in the North West Rebellion of 1885 when he led a battalion of British troops against a Cree and Métis uprising led by Poundmaker and Big Bear? His role in crushing that revolt led the Montreal Daily Star to urge that “Otterism” be used “as a synonym for merciless repression.”

Otter had dutifully served as an imperial weapon to smash resistance to Canadian land plunder and the genocidal herding of Indians into mass captivity on reserves. (See pp.15-21.) But this crime was only one step on Otter’s journey to knighthood. Otter’s next major opportunity to serve imperial conquest came when he led 1,000 troops of the Royal Canadian Infantry Regiment, during the Boer War (1899-1902). This war was fought to secure the British elite’s access to diamonds and gold controlled by the Boer (Dutch/Africaaner) regime in South Africa. During this contest of empires, British troops forced 116,000 Blacks into concentration camps. They also herded 118,000 Boer women, children and elderly men into deadly prison camps. Of these civilians, more than 42,000 died from preventable diseases in the camps, including 28,000 Boers and over 14,000 Blacks. In addition, 26,000 Boer men were shipped to British prison camps in India and Caribbean colonies.

In 2014, to honour the Canadian army, Captain Morton “was anxious to slaught of spellbinding stories that pull at our collective heart strings and build nationalist feelings that support the armed forces. The government, corporate media and mainstream civil-society groups have memorialised Canada with poignant tales of soldiers who lost their lives in WWI.

Official WWI narratives have also been used to justify Canada’s military and foreign policies. “Nothing has changed,” said then-Prime Minister Harper at a 2014 ceremony marking WWI. Continuing with what the Canadian Press called a “veiled reference to Canada’s tough stands in support of Ukraine and Israel,” he went on to say that “Canada is still loyal to our friends, unyielding to our foes,” and stands “once

Empire and Sons: From Sir William Otter, to the NDP...

By Richard Sanders

Canada’s Major General Sir William Otter is revered as the “father” of Canada’s Army. His family tree is laden with archdeacons, bankers, barons, a British Governor of Bermuda, a chief justice of Nova Scotia, and his grandfather was the Anglican Lord Bishop of Chichester, England.

With the war’s outbreak in 1914, Otter was brought out of retirement to be appointed Director of Internment Operations. His qualifications included collaboration in two imperial conflicts that involved the mass internment of civilians.

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In 2014, to honour the Canadian army, Captain Morton “was anxious to
again beside allies whose sovereignty, whose territorial integrity—indeed, whose very freedoms and existence—are still at risk.” (Canada’s “tough” support for the Ukrainian and Israeli governments continues apace under the Trudeau Liberals.)

The October 22, 2014, murder of an army reservist at Ottawa’s National War Memorial (built to commemorate our WWI military losses), was used to justify the deployment of troops and warplanes to Iraq. On the next day, Harper told Parliament that “laws and police powers...in the area of surveillance, detention, and arrest...need to be much strengthened.” On October 24, then-Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney said the government was “eyeing the thresholds established in Canadian law for the preventive arrests of people thought to be contemplating attacks that may be linked to terrorism.” (Emphasis added.)

The pre-emptive jailing of those thought to be thinking about actions that might be “linked to terrorism,” requires extreme paranoia. Ironically, Canada’s current war against IS—framed as a humanitarian attack on ultraconservative religious fanatics—was begun by evangelical neocons keen on restraining domestic civil liberties.

Missing from the militarised human-interest stories of WWI are historical narratives about Canada’s harsh attacks on domestic civil rights. In 1914, when Tories and Liberals passed the War Measures Act, Cabinet was given unlimited powers to restrict and control communications, travel, manufacturing, property and trade. The Act also gave them absolute powers to arrest, detain and deport anyone, without trial. Cabinet was soon using this power to wage war against a specific set of immigrants. Many of them—not coincidentally—were sympathetic to anticapitalist ideas and radical, labour actions.

While official stories of Canada’s WWI internment now critique the ethnic profiling of Ukrainians, they usually ignore the role of economics, class and politics in targeting them. Such renditions of history are common among Canada’s nationalist Ukrainians. For example, on Remembrance Day 2010, the ultraright Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) said that: “Thousands of Ukrainian Canadians were jailed in Canadian internment camps....not because of anything they had done, but only because of where they had come from.”

The “Waffle Manifesto” set out a socialist policy of independence from US wars and hegemony. Its platform included nationalising “the essential resources industries, finance and credit, and industries strategic to planning our economy.”

Morton’s 1972 success in ousting the Waffle from the NDP, is similar to when Rev.J.S.Woodsworth led the purge of radicals from the party’s forerunner, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in the 1930s and ‘40s. Ousting the Waffle kept radical economic, antiwar and anti-imperialist ideas from infecting the NDP. The Royal Commission into RCMP crimes, said that because of their concern “that Trotskyists and Communists were joining the Waffle,” the Mounties “volunteered information to one leader of a provincial New Democratic Party” to make him “aware of subversives within his Party.”

Besides being spied on by the RCMP and expelled from the NDP, Waffle organisers were also targeted for internment during the Cold War. This top secret Canadian program was called Operation Profunc. (See pp.35, 49.) From 1950 until the 1980s, the RCMP created annual lists of thousands of radical leftists who—in case of a war, or some vaguely-defined emergency—were to be interned. In the 1950s, the first generation of this program targeted communists like Edna and Robert Mendel Laxter. The latter was a WWII veteran who became a paid organiser for the Communist Party, and later a clinical psychologist. Under Profunc, their children, Jim and Gord, were also to be rounded up. Jim, now a York University political science prof, was a leader of the Waffle, which he and his father helped to found.

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