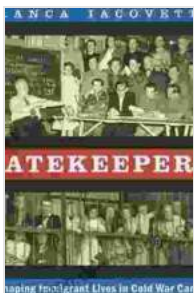


# Gatekeepers Reshaping Immigrant Lives In Cold War Canada: A Historical Analysis of the Immigration and Refugee Board

During the Cold War, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) emerged as a crucial gatekeeper institution, shaping the fate of countless immigrants and refugees seeking entry into the country. The IRB's decisions had a profound impact on individuals' lives, families, and communities, and its policies reflected the evolving political, social, and economic context of the time. This article delves into the historical development of the IRB, its role in managing immigration and refugee flows, and the impact of its decisions on immigrant lives during the Cold War era.

## The Origins and Evolution of the IRB

The IRB traces its roots to the Immigration Appeal Board established in 1968, which handled appeals related to exclusion and deportation orders. In 1978, the Immigration Appeal Board was expanded and renamed the Immigration and Refugee Board, with the mandate to adjudicate immigration and refugee claims. The IRB operated independently of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, ensuring a degree of impartiality and separation of powers in immigration decision-making.



## Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War

**Canada** by Franca Iacovetta

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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## **The Cold War Context: Political and Ideological Influences**

The Cold War had a significant influence on the IRB's policies and procedures. The rise of communism and the fear of Soviet infiltration led to a heightened focus on national security and a stricter screening of potential immigrants. The Canadian government sought to limit the entry of individuals who were perceived as potential communist sympathizers or security risks.

In addition, the IRB's decisions were shaped by Cold War ideological debates about human rights and humanitarian obligations. Canada's commitment to supporting refugees fleeing persecution was tempered by fears of increased asylum seekers exploiting the system. The IRB had to navigate the complex balance between maintaining national security and upholding humanitarian principles.

## **Managing Immigration Flows: Quotas and Selection Criteria**

During the Cold War, Canada implemented a quota system to regulate the number of immigrants admitted each year. Quotas varied by country and were based on factors such as economic needs, political alliances, and perceived security risks. The IRB was responsible for administering the

quota system, determining which individuals met the eligibility criteria and would be granted entry.

Selection criteria used by the IRB included factors such as education, skills, language proficiency, and previous employment experience. Preference was given to individuals who were deemed to have the greatest potential to contribute to Canada's economic and social development. This emphasis on economic self-sufficiency reflected the country's desire to select immigrants who would quickly integrate into society and become productive members of the workforce.

## **The Role of Refugee Claims**

The Cold War also witnessed a significant increase in the number of refugees seeking asylum in Canada. The IRB played a crucial role in adjudicating refugee claims and determining who would be granted protection. Refugee claims were assessed based on the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which defines a refugee as someone who has been forced to flee their country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, political opinion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group.

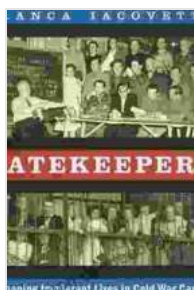
The IRB's refugee determination process faced numerous challenges during the Cold War, including the difficulty of verifying claims in distant countries, the potential for false claims, and the political pressure to limit asylum seekers. The IRB had to develop procedures to assess claims fairly and consistently while balancing national security concerns with humanitarian obligations.

## **The Impact on Immigrant Lives**

The decisions made by the IRB had a profound impact on the lives of immigrants and refugees. Those granted entry were able to start new lives in Canada, contribute to the country's economy and society, and reunite with family members. However, those denied entry or refugee status faced deportation, separation from loved ones, and the prospect of returning to potentially dangerous situations.

The IRB's policies also affected the demographics and composition of the Canadian population. The selection criteria favored certain groups of immigrants over others, influencing the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. The focus on economic self-sufficiency led to a higher proportion of skilled and educated immigrants entering Canada.

During the Cold War, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada emerged as a powerful gatekeeper institution, shaping the lives and destinies of countless immigrants and refugees. The IRB's policies and procedures reflected the complex political, social, and economic context of the time. The board's decisions had a profound impact on individuals, families, and communities, influencing the demographics, diversity, and fabric of Canadian society. The historical analysis of the IRB provides valuable insights into the role of gatekeepers in immigration and refugee management, as well as the ongoing debates and challenges in balancing national security concerns with humanitarian obligations.



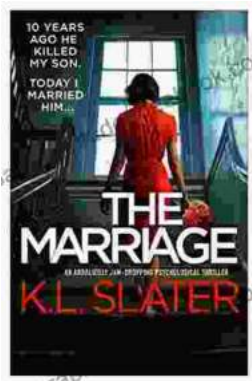
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