

9. The Azorean contingents from 1954 to 1957

10/30/1953: At the Conceição Palace, the governor of the Ponta Delgada district met with the inspector of the Junta da Emigração, Ferreira da Costa, and other people, to present a plan to solve the problem of the demographic surplus of that district. It was thought that a total of 300 men would leave at the beginning of the following year, since the experience of the first 18 who arrived in May of that year had already been done, and they were succeeding, earning 50 Canadian dollars a month with bed and board included, and could still work overtime. However, "the entities in Canada called 800 "micaelenses" to the service" along with another 100 from the other Azorean islands. These 800 were to be prepared for "hard" jobs, in the words of the Canadian committee, with 200 of them going to lay railroad tracks. The process for emigrating would still take some time, since the families of the married men who signed up (wives and children over the age of 10) would have to be inspected, because Canada assumes that the emigrants would then call their families to join them.

10/31/1953: News in the newspaper *Correio dos Açores* where the subject of emigration to Canada and the meeting with the inspector of the emigration board is discussed.

03/01/1954: The Canadian Review Committee (composed by Odillon Cormier, Percy Colville and Dr. Pierre Belanger) arrives in São Miguel, and 3 days later, they start choosing the emigrants. Few were excluded, and 365 were approved to emigrate as early as the end of that month.

03/22/1954: On Monday, aboard the ship *Homeland*, a contingent of 330 Azoreans set sail for Canada. At 12 o'clock, the district chief received the 330 emigrants that were leaving, along with the others who would be on the next trip, the Canadian committee, the president of the Junta da Emigração and other figures and entities in the main hall of Conceição Palace. The civil governor greeted the Azoreans who would be leaving, and urged them to fulfill the "traditional" virtues of Azoreans and Portuguese in Canada, such as work, he appealed to patriotism and fidelity to regional beliefs (especially Senhor Santo Cristo dos Milagres). On this day of departure, from Molhe Salazar in Ponta Delgada, there were not only the 330 Azoreans who would emigrate, but hundreds of other people, relatives and friends of the emigrants. The first speedboat left at 2:30 in the afternoon, with many tears, handkerchiefs waving. When the third speedboat left, the official entities also entered the *Homeland*.

04/23/1954: The second contingent of 450 Azorean and Micaelense men leaves this Friday, in the afternoon, bound for Canada, aboard the ship *Homeland*.

04/27/1954: The last contingent of Azoreans of 1954, totaling 171 men, leaves on the ship *Nea Hellas*. The newspaper *Correio dos Açores* indicates that in those 3 contingents there were a total of 950 men.

1955: In this year, there is no record of Azorean emigrants officially emigrating to Canada.

1956: There are news of better living conditions, the arrival of Canadian dollars to the Azores in the amount of thousands of contos, making it possible to pay the land rents on time, debts paid, houses cleared, houses repaired, children better fed and clothed: lives with better conditions. By the end of this decade, 17 thousand Portuguese would emigrate to Canada. Family reunification and sponsorship by emigrants who were already in Canada accelerated the process of Azorean emigration to Canada, through the famous "letters of call".

On March 21st, in São Miguel, the migration officials from Portugal and Canada were received by the district governor at the Conceição Palace in the city of Ponta Delgada, in order to select the Azoreans who would emigrate to Canada. This year, the total number of Azoreans destined to emigrate was 900 people. A total of 79 emigrants left on March 26th, 1956 aboard the ship *Cedros* to Santa Maria Island and from there to Canada by plane. It's also funny to mention that emigrants from the "islands of the West" (possibly from the district of Horta) made an excursion on the 18th of the same month in a Varela bus, passing through Vila Franca do Campo and heading to Furnas, where they had lunch at the Terra Nostra Hotel and visited the park.



Picture: Emigrants of the «Ilhas do Oeste» (Western islands) next to the bus from which they made the excursion to Furnas.

Source: *Correio dos Açores*: March, 22nd 1956.

This is the first group of Azorean emigrants to emigrate to Canada by plane, a trip that naturally had to be made through the Santa Maria's airport and not the Santana airport in São Miguel, which only had flights to Santa Maria and Terceira. These emigrants, arrived at midnight of March 27th in Santa Maria on the mentioned ship *Cedros*, and arrived in Montreal at 10:53 a.m. (local time) after traveling on a K.L.M. airplane, so in less than 24 hours they arrived in Canada, while on the ships it took about a week, and on March 29, it was the turn of the ship Arnel to take 79 more Azorean emigrants to Santa Maria, so they could take a K.L.M. flight to Montreal.



Picture: In the foreground the ship Arnel and behind it the Carvalho Araújo. Although the photograph dates from 1955, it is a photographic testimony of this ship, owned by Empresa Insular de Navegação, which was launched to the water in 1954, and that played an important role in the transport of inter-island people, including emigrants as mentioned.

Source: Instituto Cultural de Ponta Delgada/Coleção Fotográfica Digital: PT/ICPD/CFD.02554

These K.L.M. planes arrived at Dorval, Montreal on March 27 and 30 of that year, with 158 Azoreans, bound for British Columbia, with the exception of 7 of them, who were to be employees at the Portuguese Consulate in Ottawa. At the airport there were representatives of the Portuguese Association of Canada to assist these Portuguese emigrants.

From the central station at the Canadian National in Montreal, the Azorean emigrants would leave for British Columbia, but on March 30th, 1956, a particularly serious incident occurred, which would upset the Azorean emigrants in Canada, because they, on the island of Santa Maria, Azores, had paid 30 dollars extra to travel by sleeping car from Montreal to British Columbia, and the car they had been assigned, according to them, was not fit for such a long trip, which made the Azoreans extremely frustrated with the situation, leading some to call the Canadians and also the emigration inspector, São Romão, scoundrels and thieves.

It turned out that the consular officials threatened to repatriate the Azoreans, which calmed the situation down, but after studying the situation, it was deduced that the islanders were actually right, and the company that would transport them, agreed to return the 30 dollars but to buy the food, which had not been included in the price of the trip, but which the emigrants had not asked for either, and the reality is that, in the consul's calculations, 30 dollars in food for 4 days was a very expensive price, yet, nothing was done to protect the Azoreans from this situation.

The Azorean revolt in Montreal was not to the consul's liking, but according to Moura and Soares, this episode shows that Azorean emigrants and other Portuguese were very afraid of being deceived and falling into fraud, regarding the conditions of the jobs, transport, and among other topics, so they did not think twice if they had to resort

to aggressiveness and the strength of their fists to expose their discontent, something that surprised the Portuguese consul, because under the watch of the Estado Novo the Portuguese people were orderly.

On April 4th, the transatlantic ship of Panamanian nationality, the *Columbia*, arrived in Ponta Delgada, taking with it a total of 230 Azorean emigrants bound for Montreal, leaving the ship at 1:30 in the afternoon, the trip to take a total of 6 days, but arriving on April 11th.

Those who arrived by boat in Quebec City, had no member of the Portuguese authorities to receive them and speak for them with the Canadians. On April 11th, 1956, another ship arrived in Quebec, and then the Minister of Foreign Affairs ordered the Consul General in Montreal to go to Quebec to receive them and guide them until they left for the regions they were destined for, and at the same time, to meet with the Canadian officials who had complaints against the Portuguese authorities.

In the same month, more specifically on April 5th and 8th, another set of 158 Azoreans would arrive in Montreal, again by plane, and as in March with the other 158 Azoreans, both members of the Portuguese consulate in Montreal and of the Portuguese Association of Canada were there at the airport to help them with whatever was needed.



Picture: It is considered the last group of Azorean emigrants to leave for Canada from Santa Maria, but in May of the same year, another group would leave for Canada. This was the 5th flight made by K.L.M. in freight. In the photo are a total of 79 Azoreans.

Source: *Correio dos Açores*: April, 15th 1956.

On May 11th, 1956, another 72 Azorean emigrants left on the ship *Arnel* heading to Santa Maria Island to catch a plane to Canada. It should be noted that in that year, from the total of 900 emigrants that went to Canada, 394 went on K.L.M. planes, 288 on Air France, and 218 from the ship *Columbia*.

In 1957, a few hundred more Azorean emigrants would emigrate to Canada. From then on, Azorean emigration to Canada would be, in particular, emigration by sponsorship for family reunification.

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