The Acadian fate was sealed 40 years before "the exile that sent them from their homeland 250 years ago this year," but they thought everything would turn out just fine.

The Treaty of Utrecht of April 11, 1713, took old Acadie and Newfoundland from the French and gave them to the British.

This was the result of one of the interminable wars between France and England as they fought for supremacy in Europe and in the New World.

But the Acadians of the era weren't particularly worried. Their fathers had no problems when the English occupied Acadie from 1654 to 1667, and that had turned out all right. Eventually, Acadie was given back to France, that's what the Acadians thought would happen this time.

But this time it would be different. This time, the British wanted the Acadians to take an oath of allegiance to the British crown - promising that they would not take up arms against the British when trouble between France and England arose again - as everyone was sure it would.

The Acadians didn't want to take the oath. They thought that if they did the government in Paris would think that they'd gone over to the other side, and would not press to make Acadie French again.

They also feared that if they took the oath they would not only give up the right to bear arms against Great Britain, but, on the other side of the coin, that they could be forced to fight against France, for which they still held some distant allegiance (even though after 150 years in the New World they considered themselves Acadians, not Frenchmen).

Closer to home, the Acadians were afraid that if they took the oath they would become the victims of the Indians of Nova Scotia, who were the sworn enemies of the British.

"Unless we are protected from them," the Acadians wrote to the British officers in Nova Scotia, "we cannot take the oath demanded without exposing ourselves to have our throats cut in our houses at any time, which they have already threatened to do."

On Dec. 26, 1720, the Colonial Office in London wrote to Col. Richard Phillips, governor in Nova Scotia: "We are apprehensive that [the Acadians] will never become good subjects of His Majesty. [We are of the opinion they ought to be removed as soon as the forces which have been proposed be sent to you shall arrive in your Province]."

That outcome was still many years in the future, but the seed had been planted, "but, they ought to be removed."

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