

**Rhonda L. Hinthér and Jim Mochoruk, eds. *Civilian Internment in Canada: Histories and Legacies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 424 pp., ISBN 978-0887558450.**

Prisoners of war are interned. So are refugees by many countries. These same countries may even intern their own citizens. Canada during World War I and II did all three. The most notorious of these events in our country was perhaps the internment and forced relocation of Japanese Canadians from 1942 to 1945. That story is covered in four essays: an overview in chapter 9 by Aya Fujiwara, a deconstructionist essay about Japanese Canadian “quietism” by Mikhail Bjorge in chapter 10, a personal account in chapter 11 by Grace Eiko Thomson, and a consideration of that internment as a human rights violation – which it certainly was – in chapter 20 by Art Miki whose grandparents came to Canada at the end of the nineteenth century and whose parents were born in Canada. Art Miki was removed from kindergarten and, with his parents and grandparents, transported from B.C. to Manitoba to work as “forced laborers” on a sugar beet farm.

As with all internments, the story does not end with their release from incarceration. It took three more years after WWII to get the voting rights of Japanese Canadians restored and another year to lift all restrictions allowing them freedom of movement in Canada. That did not help the 4,000 members of the community that had been sent back to Japan after the war. It took four more decades for the Government of Canada on 22 September 1988 to apologize for that gross miscarriage of justice and to agree to individual redress of \$21,000 for each of the 60,000 members of the community whose rights had been so egregiously violated. This exercise in token compensation was \$1,000 more than the Reagan government a month earlier had awarded the Japanese Americans who had been incarcerated in that country, a symbolic admission that the Canadian mistreatment of its own citizens was even more severe than the American one.

The process took place accompanied by the increased political consciousness of the Japanese Canadian community and overcoming of a Japanese cultural propensity to ritually insist on “shikataga nai,” “it can’t be helped. They proved to their own community, and to all other Canadians, especially others who had suffered much longer and much worse, indigenous peoples, that such calamities can be helped. Errors of the past can be admitted, given both formal and material recognition and memorialized for the education of future Canadians.

Japanese Canadians were not the only Canadian citizens interned. Serbian Canadians were interned during WWI (chapter 7). So were Canadian Ukrainians in both wars. In chapter 4, Kasandra Luciuk offers a revisionist narrative of how the community

itself had to come to the full recognition of what had happened to them, just as the Japanese community had to develop as a self-conscious and critical political community. In chapter 13, Myron Momryk looks at the Ukrainian internment during WWII focused on the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) and the Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA). Jim Mochoruk in chapter 4 looks at the whole process of dealing with both ethnicity and racism from the point of view of Canadian debates over regulations and policies.

But the Japanese and Ukrainian narratives were radically different. Of 170,000 Canadian Ukrainians, only 4,000 were interned. It is a tale more about the red scare than about ethnicity and racism. But it was also a narrative of both, of state persecution of ethnic radicals characterized as “enemy aliens.” Most may have been Ukrainian Canadians, but the 8,579 so classified came from other ethnic leftists as well. Only 3,128 were genuine prisoners of war who were actually interned. The other 5,411 were sent to Canada’s Siberia to work in remote mining and forestry operations for a wide variety of alleged “offences”: travelling without permission, registering under a false name, even writing to relatives in an enemy country. Rhonda Hinthner also tells the story of the persecution of leftist ethnic women in Canada during WWII. Of most interest to Canadian Jews is the treatment of a very different kind of enemy aliens, internees who were indeed aliens from Nazi Germany but who were not enemies at all, but 100% aligned with the war against Nazi Germany. Yet 2,284 “camp boys” who had escaped Nazi Germany were interned in Canada during WWII. 966 of them remained in Canada until the end of the war. Others volunteered to serve in the British Pioneer Corps, became scientists working on top-secret military intelligence technology and others were released for war work because they were machinists or had other skills needed for the war effort.

Paula Draper, who wrote her PhD thesis on these internees, contributes a succinct and excellent account of what they endured, why they were persecuted and yet how many subsequently achieved great success and renown: the writer and English professor, Henry Kreisel, Dr. Walter Igersheimer, the famous photographer, Marcell Seidler, and the just as famous architect, Harry Seidler. Several were awarded the Order of Canada, including Rabbi Erwin Schild.

It is a story that begins before WWII in the tale told by Irving Abella and Harold Troper in *None Is Too Many*, when the Deputy Minister of Immigration, Frederick Charles Blair, and Prime Minister Mackenzie King deliberately raised obstacles to the efforts of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany from entering into Canada. They continued to express their prejudices during the war and refused to recognize the “camp boys” as friendly aliens deserving our protection as refugees from persecution, as Charles Ritchie and Vincent Massey tried to convince them. Instead, Canadian authorities added to their suffering by interning them in prison camps

surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by military officers lest they gain entry through the back door into Canada via internment. The efforts of many important gentiles on behalf of those internees – of indefatigable people like Dale Brown, Senator Cairine Wilson and Alexander Paterson, His Majesty's Commissioner of Prisons – eventually helped turn the tide of public opinion, a shift enhanced by the stories of atrocities against the Jews coming across the Atlantic from Europe.

Broad-based alliances on behalf of the Jewish internees, a practice subsequently followed by other groups, such as the Japanese Canadians described above, were crucial in bringing about a change in policy. One debate that continues until today is the efficacy of “quiet diplomacy” in pushing for policy changes, the position of Saul Hayes of the Canadian Jewish Congress who worked persistently and diligently on behalf of the internees. Running a public campaign on behalf of the victims of human rights abuses was the alternative option. The essays in the book seem to come down on the side of open public advocacy.

Some of the officers in charge were blatantly antisemitic. Major Ellwood, commandant of Camp N in Sherbrooke, Quebec, commented that these Jews had the same perfidious instincts they had 1,940 years ago combined with the German habit of breaking every pledge they made. Director of Internment Operations, Colonel Hubert Stethem, characterized them as “self-centred.” In fact, the Jews interned were Jews. They protested against the humiliations and abusive language to which they were subjected. They organized educational seminars. That is what I first heard about them when I was an undergraduate. That is an addendum that I can add about two members of the UofT faculty who had been Jewish internees in New Brunswick, but about whom Paula Draper does not write in this edited collection.

Emil Fackenheim was my professor in the philosophy department at the University of Toronto. Gregory Baum had become a friend after he gave me a lift to UofT when he was driving down to St. Michael's College from the seminary at St. Mary's and I was hitchhiking to university. He was a priest and theologian at the college. Fackenheim and Baum had spent the early war years after escaping Nazi Germany in the only internment camp in New Brunswick. They were part of a movement organizing their own self-directed university education. As students and admirers of both men, we students offered what we considered a humorous twist to their joint history. Fackenheim, a trained rabbi, converted Gregory Baum, a secular Jew, to Catholicism. Of course, this depiction was a caricature, for Baum was only ethnically Jewish and was totally ignorant of Jewish practices. Given Baum's intellectual interests, Fackenheim had encouraged Baum to continue his studies in St. Michael's College which then had the foremost concentration of medieval studies in the world. During his studies, Gregory became enamoured with Catholicism and converted. Fackenheim simply recognized Baum's intellectual propensities, not his religious ones.

Fackenheim became a renowned Hegelian scholar and Jewish theologian. Baum became a leader in the development of liberal theology and primary author of the reform document, Vatican II, of the Catholic Church. It might be said that the Canadian policy of repressing and interning Jewish refugees from Europe in the early years of the war indirectly had the unintended effect of making historically important contributions to both philosophy and theology and certainly both Jewish and Catholic history.

**Howard Adelman**

Emeritus Professor, York University