

Geoffrey Cameron. *Send Them Here: Religion, Politics, and Refugee Resettlement in North America* (Montreal, QC; Kingston, ON; London; Chicago: McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2021), 241 pp., ISBN: 978–0–2280–0550–6.

Geoffrey Cameron’s *Send Them Here* traces the fertile and frequently contentious interplay between grassroots religious groups, politicians, and bureaucrats in the evolution of Canadian and American refugee resettlement policy in the decades after the Second World War. Since 1945, no two countries have allocated greater financial, material, and bureaucratic resources to addressing the tidal rhythms of postwar refugee crises, from the waves of Hungarian migrants triggered by revolution in 1956, Czechs in the aftermath of the 1968 Soviet invasion, Chileans following the Pinochet coup d’état of 1973, and the list goes on. In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, nearly 80 percent of the world’s refugees found safe harbour in Canada and the US, and in 2018 and 2019 Canada alone resettled more asylum seekers than any other nation, primarily through private sponsorship programs steered by faith-based organizations. The fact that religious groups now make up the majority of private refugee sponsors in Canada and the US has much to do with a shared (and unassailable) moral and ethical humanitarian impulse. But as Cameron demonstrates in his carefully researched and theoretically nuanced study, this astounding contribution is just as powerfully connected to a long history of advocacy and engagement carried out by Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish organizations. It was their shrewd political lobbying, dogged public pressure campaigns, and mobilization of vast human resources employed to resettle displaced peoples caught in the shatter zones of post-1945 Europe that contributed directly to the landmark private sponsorship schemes eventually codified in Canada’s Immigration Act of 1976 and, to the south, the Refugee Act of 1989.

Cameron, a political scientist, begins his study by brushing aside a tendency among scholars to understand the road to refugee policy reform as the result of top-down policymaking. Governments in both countries, Cameron makes clear, did not craft refugee policy unilaterally. Not only that, he shakes free from several received wisdoms about the evolution of postwar refugee resettlement: that it was propelled by forces such as labour market demands, Cold War geopolitics, or a newfangled postwar liberal internationalism premised on the inviolability of human rights. Cameron’s work, which consistently emphasizes the critical role of grassroots advocacy in policy development, stands as an impressive corrective: those tenacious explanations “ignore or underestimate the importance of domestic groups in processes of decision making and policy implementation” (16).

Cameron writes with a historian’s eye for textural detail and oscillates skillfully be-

tween the American and Canadian contexts, charting religious groups' successes and frustrations as they poked and prodded their way into refugee policy structures in their respective countries. It was a slow-burn development, to be sure, and in Canada especially progress unfurled in fits and starts. Cameron narrates how with the demise of the Mackenzie King government's Close Relative Program in the late 1940s the newly formed, four-member Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees stepped into the breach. The coalition's willingness to take the reins of a broad refugee-sponsorship arrangement, as well as ongoing private sponsorship efforts by the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) and Catholic Immigrant Aid Society, signalled to federal bureaucrats an enthusiastic partner in the expensive and logistically complex work of identifying and relocating refugees. By 1953, the role of religious groups had been enshrined in the Approved Church Program, which all but offloaded government responsibility for refugee resettlement to yet another quartet of faith-based associations, which despite its name included the CJC. Yet as Cameron explains, immigrant authorities challenged the program from the start, fixating on the coalition's reluctance to sponsor refugees based solely on the country's economic needs. In one of the book's more devastating moments, Cameron cites an internal memo sent to Immigration Minister Walter Harris in early 1954 complaining that the Approved Church Program seemed to target only "undesirable immigrants," or "the final, ultimate dregs, the scrapings of the very bottom of the barrel" (82). (Cameron conducted assiduous research in a dozen government and institutional archives but far too rarely gives voice to the faith-based activists and government bureaucrats at the heart of his study.)

The tension between humanitarian concerns and economic utility hovered over the Approved Church Program until its cancellation in 1958, and that same divisiveness remained a stubborn feature of relations between Canadian faith-based groups and immigration bureaucrats well into the next decade. In the 1960s, religious groups stood on the sidelines as efforts to resettle refugees from Czechoslovakia and Uganda "were principally motivated by foreign policy and designed around the acquisition of 'good material' for the Canadian economy" (166). Only in the 1970s, the focus of Cameron's engrossing final chapter, did this "climate of distrust" give way to full-on cooperation in the run-up to sweeping immigration reform under Pierre Trudeau's Liberals (126). Public consultations in the wake of a Green Paper released in 1974—a strikingly cynical take on Canada's responsibilities as an immigrant-receiving nation—created opportunity for religious groups to speak out with greater force in favour of a more open-handed refugee policy. The Jewish Immigrant Aid Society (JIAS), for one, argued that the forthcoming legislation should allow for "individuals, or responsible voluntary social agencies to offer sponsorship or co-sponsorship" on humanitarian grounds—a tactic JIAS had used to resettle Soviet Jewish refugees earlier in the 1960s and 1970s (150). As Cameron points out, that long history of private sponsorship made legislators more amenable to its final inclusion in the Immigration Act. "The new law was not going to create a policy framework on a blank slate,"

he writes. Instead, “it looked to the past” (152).

Readers searching for additional examples of Canadian Jewry’s entanglements in the dynamics of postwar refugee policy might find themselves disappointed. Although the campaign for Soviet Jewish emigration was a front-burner issue for Canadian Jewry in the 1960s and 1970s, it receives scant attention—notwithstanding a fascinating albeit brief mention of the Department of Employment and Immigration’s marshalling of B’nai Brith (initially) and JIAS (ultimately) as an influential “test case” for the new private sponsorship program (152). The US wing of the Soviet Jewry movement, arguably American Jewry’s most effective political lobby of the second half of the twentieth century—and one, as Fred Lazin’s recent book on the US-based National Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry details, which attracted considerable ecumenical collaboration, likewise receives short shrift as an important example of the marriage between human rights discourse and refugee advocacy in the second half of the twentieth century. When Cameron does highlight Canadian Jewry’s involvement in refugee resettlement advocacy, he preferences its two most prominent players, the CJC and JIAS; while it is difficult to fault this decision, smaller bodies such as the left-leaning Canadian Jewish Labour Committee, which regardless of its baldly political nature fits the author’s capacious definition of “religious group,” also played an active role in negotiating on behalf of Jewish refugees in the 1940s and 1950s. Even still, the CJC and JIAS appear sparingly once the narrative moves on from postwar displaced people. Cameron identifies the CJC as one of the “main advocates” of including private sponsorship in early 1970s immigration reform yet its agenda in those years remains frustratingly opaque (134).

Cast in a different light, these minor elisions gesture instead to an abundance of future research avenues for scholars interested in Canadian (and American) Jewish domestic political activism, interfaith political coalition building, and the nexus between government policy, public opinion, and late-twentieth-century communal priorities. With *Send Them Here*, Cameron should be commended for integrating Canadian Jewry (however implicitly) into the scholarship on Jewish internationalism and global humanitarianism in the 1950s–1970s—growing subfields that remain heavily Euro- and US-centric. Perhaps most intriguingly, his broad-strokes coverage of Jewish refugee advocacy invites deeper inquiry (comparative or otherwise) into the intra- and intercommunal policy dynamics of refugee resettlement in Canada and the US across a range of woefully understudied postwar Jewish migrations—Cuba, Ethiopia, Iran, Syria, and the Soviet Union, to name only a handful—that have transformed the demographic makeup of Jewish life in both countries over the past seventy years.

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