

Introduction

Roger Daniels[†]

While most readers of this Journal will be familiar with the history of Japanese Americans, few will be familiar with that of Ukrainian Canadians. Most of the 170,000 Ukrainians, the majority of them first generation immigrants, who were living in Canada in 1914 came from territories that were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although some 60 percent were naturalized British subjects, their status as citizens was ignored; many thousands were obliged to register as enemy aliens and report regularly to the police while some 5,000 Ukrainians and other “Austrians” were incarcerated in twenty-four internment camps where they were forced to do hard labor while poorly housed and ill fed. Although the war ended in 1918, the camps did not all close until 1920.

Little noted even during World War I, the Canadian government’s granting of redress to Japanese Canadians in 1988 following and in emulation of what the American government had done, inspired Ukrainian Canadians to press for redress, which finally achieved success in 2008 with the passage of Bill C 331—The Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act by the Canadian Parliament. As the last known survivors had died in the 1990s, there were no payments to survivors, but funds were provided for appropriate public commemoration and for educational campaigns and enterprises.¹

† Roger Daniels is Charles Phelps Taft Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Cincinnati. He has published widely on Asian Americans and other ethnic groups, most recently PRISONERS WITHOUT TRIAL: JAPANESE AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR II (2d ed., 2004) and GUARDING THE GOLDEN DOOR: AMERICAN IMMIGRATION POLICY AND IMMIGRANTS SINCE 1882 (2004). His public policy efforts include service as a witness and consultant for the Presidential Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (1978-83) and membership on the History Committee which helped plan the Immigration Museum on Ellis Island (1982-2010).

1. See generally BONDAN S. KONDAN, ENEMY ALIENS, PRISONERS OF WAR: INTERNMENT IN CANADA DURING THE GREAT WAR (2002); LUBOMYR Y. LUCIUK, IN FEAR OF THE BARBED WIRE FENCE: CANADA’S FIRST NATIONAL OPERATIONS AND THE UKRAINIAN CANADIANS (2001); Can. First World War Internment Recognition Fund, <http://www.internmentcanada.ca> (last visited Nov. 28, 2011) (providing further literature on the internment of Ukrainian Canadians).