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Speech: Introduction

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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

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