

Countries Can Be Judged By Their Internments
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During the 20th century, a number of nations engaged in expelling populations or internment of those deemed \342\200\234dangerous.\342\200\235 Turkey was the first with the expulsion and internment of their Christian Armenian population, an action that resulted in the first of the century\342\200\231s genocides. Their World War I ally, Germany, was horrified and told the Turks that this was awful.

Then, Germany did the same in the late 1930s and in the 1940s, where the supposed \342\200\234resettlement\342\200\235 of Jews deemed sub-human in Nazi theology morphed into genocide carried out in murder camps. They kept this quite secret because even they knew that the rest of the world would find this repulsive.

The Soviets under Joseph Stalin took this policy literally. Their intention was not necessarily genocide, but they did move troublesome ethnicities (such as the Chechens) to the far reaches of Siberia, planting them among hostile populations. This kept them under control. But then they did the same for all political dissidents, real or imagined, as well as ordinary thugs, moving them into concentration work camps in Siberia that resulted in the death of many. These \342\200\234gulags\342\200\235 were notorious. They may be still operating in Russia. Where have they sent the little rock musician who offended the Orthodox Church? Nobody knows.

Fear and greed motivated the internment of America\342\200\231s West Coast Japanese population after Japan\342\200\231s December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. We are still, quite correctly, hand-wringing over this unnecessary roundup of people, including native born Americans, based on the unfounded fear of disloyalty. The authorities were responding to ill-informed public fear by people who did not understand that our Japanese immigrants had no loyalty toward Japan.

China is currently moving whole populations of Han Chinese into their western territories so that they will become a majority over the natives. This is deliberate national policy, and the Tibetans and Uighurs are getting the brunt of this. Rather than removing the troublesome tribes, just overwhelm them with your own Han ethnicity.

America\342\200\231s internment differs from the rest. The Japanese relocation camps were not \342\200\234concentration camps.\342\200\235 There was no starvation, torture, deprivation of medical care or education, and no intention of genocide. When the camps were closed and the inmates free to return to their homes, it was fascinating to see the differences of their homecomings. Scores of people in Monterey published welcomes to the returning Japanese Americans because, from the first, they were horrified by the internment of those who were their friends and neighbors.

There were others, however, who published broadsides against this return primarily because Japanese property (farms, homes, etc.) had been grabbed and they had no intention of giving it back.

But before we get on our high horses to condemn the United States for setting up Japanese \342\200\234concentration camps,\342\200\235 we would do well to note that even when we do something unconscionable, we have the capacity to undo it and make good. We are not a people without prejudice, but there are enough of us with the better angels who can make a difference. There are no Japanese ghettos in the United States; as a matter of fact, the Japanese communities worry that there is so much out-marriage that Japanese Americans may lose their identity entirely.

Jews released from Nazi concentration camps did not recover their homes and property in Poland, Germany, and Lithuania. They were not welcome, and they went where they could restore their lives: to the United States or Israel. Those who remained in Russia soon regretted that choice too. Russia was never a pleasant place for even the most integrated Jews to live.

The Chechens and other Muslim groups returned to their native lands after the

collapse of the Soviet Union, which had settled other ethnicities there. The whole Caucasus region has been in turmoil and ethnic hostility ever since, to this very day. We experienced a little piece of it when a couple of Chechen brothers attack-bombed the Boston Marathon. What did we ever do to the Chechens, I wonder?

No, not all internments are equal.

672 words

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