

Participating in Canada's victory: The Finnish community in Canada during World War II



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A little known event of World War II, Canada's declaration of war against Finland on 6–7 December 1941 and the impact of this decision on its resident Finnish community, makes for an interesting case study. The 1941 Census of Canada listed a total of 41,683 residents of Finnish origin living in Canada; more than half had arrived during the 1920s. Documentation shows that these immigrants had been adapting to life in their new homeland – many quite readily, others with varying difficulties. At the start of the war in 1939, Finnish immigrants had been in Canada at least 9 years and many much longer.¹ Significant wartime events in Finland affected the Finnish community in Canada, namely when the Soviet Union attacked Finland in November 1939 precipitating the Winter War, and, later in June 1941, when Finland, in alliance with Nazi Germany, invaded the Soviet Union as part of the Bar-

barossa Plan. Yet, while large segments of the Finnish community in Canada were concerned about the situation of families and friends in their former homeland, their overwhelming loyalty was to Canada. Approximately two thousand Finnish Canadians (whether Canadian or Finnish-born) enlisted in the Canadian armed forces – many serving overseas. Thousands of other Finnish Canadians (men and women) served Canada through employment on the home front in war industries and in other occupations deemed essential to the war effort.

The wartime experience of different minority groups in Canada has attracted the attention of academics. One recent study, *From Heroes to Enemies, Finns in Canada 1937–1947*, by Varpu Lindström, a professor in women's studies and history at York University, represents a first attempt at some kind of comprehensive analysis of the situation faced by Finnish Canadians.² While this monograph represents a revisionist outlook on Canada's conduct of World War II and, to this reviewer, has considerable shortcomings, it can serve as a starting point for an examination of this period in Finnish Canadian history.

Other publications will also be referred to.³

The main theme of *From Heroes to Enemies* is that Finnish Canadians had been persecuted by Canadian authorities for left-wing activities undertaken by many of its members during the Great Depression which branded Finns with a less than desirable image but that this changed when the Finnish community in Canada was conferred with the status of hero when Finland resisted the Soviet Union invasion during the Winter War of 1939–40. Lindström goes on to describe new difficulties that arose with the Canadian government when Finland allied with Nazi Germany in 1941 to invade the Soviet Union and Finnish citizens resident in Canada were required to register with the police in Canada and be finger-printed. The theme of this monograph is that Finns in Canada were transformed from "heroes" into "enemies" as implied in the title, and that much of the reputation of the Finnish community was dependent upon events in Finland. This seems far too simplistic and ignores initiatives undertaken by Finnish Canadians themselves to adapt to changing. Rather than passive victims of events in Finland, a

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counter-argument could be made that Finnish Canadians actively supported the Canadian war effort, participating as fully as any other ethnic group in Canada's victory.

Lindström's study examined available records on Finnish Canadians in archives located in Ottawa, Toronto and Thunder Bay, and conducted numerous interviews with members of the Finnish community. Her monograph features a very large section on the assistance given by Finnish Canadians to Finland during the Winter War period and an extensive analysis of a collection of materials at the National Archives of Canada on the experiences of Finnish enemy seamen who, as a result of a state of war existing between Canada and Finland, were taken off captured Finnish ships to spend several years as internees in Canada before returning to Finland. Some of Lindström's most compassionate and compelling writing relates to these subject areas. Her text contains lengthy passages on the participation of Finnish Canadians in the Spanish Civil War and obstacles that veterans of this conflict encountered when trying to serve Canada during World War II. However, the research for *From Heroes to Enemies* has notable shortcomings:

1. Since Canada was involved in a state of total war, a dominant theme for any social history of its Finnish community would be the enlistment of some two thousand of its members in the Canadian armed forces. Yet *From Heroes to Enemies* makes not a single reference to the publications and newsletters of the Royal Canadian Le-

gion and its many local branches in Canada, particularly branches located in areas of significant Finnish population – records that might describe the experiences of Finnish Canadian enlistees and on their re-settlement after the war.

2. While *From Heroes to Enemies* presents extensive interview data to complement its archival research, Professor Lindström seems to have interviewed only one veteran of Finnish Canadian origin who served in the Canadian armed forces during World War II. The only comments offered by this individual is not related to his service for Canada, but rather to problems faced by Spanish Civil War veterans in enlisting for the Second World War. This issue may have affected a few potential enlistees but was hardly typical of the overall Canadian war effort in which most Finnish Canadians were functioning whether overseas or on the home front. Many World War II veterans, especially those who served overseas, would be surprised at why this particular individual has been made the sole spokesman for two wars. Surely other Finnish Canadian veterans were available. Saarinen (1999), for example, in his strictly regional history of Finns in the Sudbury area, interviewed more Finnish Canadian war veterans than Lindström for her national study.

Before offering a detailed review of *From Heroes to Enemies*, this paper will outline Finnish Canadian participation in Canada's war effort and examine the impact of Canadian government policies on its Finnish community after Canada had declared war on Finland on 7 December 1941.

Finnish Canadian War Service

Canada declared war on Germany in September 1939 and later on Italy in 1940 and Japan in 1941. Canadian airmen, seamen, and soldiers played a significant role in the European theatre during the Battle of Britain, the War of the Atlantic, the invasion of Italy, D-Day and the liberation of Holland. Moreover, the Canadian home front was transformed into a huge military-industrial-agricultural complex that supported the Allied war effort in Europe at every level.

For a country with a population of only 11,400,000 at the start of the war, the Canadian Parliament enacted legislation early in 1940 to effect a huge mobilization of males, aged 18 to 45. By the end of hostilities in 1945, a total of 1,029,510 had enlisted in one of the Canadian Armed Forces – 41.2% of those within this extensive age group.⁴ With respect to enlistment of Finnish Canadians in the Canadian military, the 1941 Census enumerated a total of 12,437 males of Finnish origin between the ages of 15 to 44; this would have been the maximum number eligible for enlistment in the Canadian armed forces (1941 Census of Canada; III: 128–29 & 524). However, while there were provisions for enlistment up to age of 45 and a number of older Finnish Canadians did volunteer for service overseas, there was a greater likelihood for exemptions due to health, marriage, family obligations and jobs related to wartime priorities. One could safely estimate that the total number of Finnish Canadians eligible for national enlistment (whether born in Cana-

da or in Finland) during the course of the Second World War would be in the range of between 4,500 and 5,500. One could further estimate that as many as 2,000 of these did enlist. Lindström estimates (p. 177) that almost 5,000 Finnish Canadians were of enlistment age and about 1,500 did enlist in the Canadian armed forces. This would be a good approximation although a bit conservative; enlistees would also have included Finnish Canadians whose names were not readily identified as Finnish possibly because of name changes or that their fathers were of non-Finnish origin.

An enlistment ranging from 35 to 40 per cent from the eligible Finnish Canadian community – possibly even higher – indicated that Finnish Canadians were just as committed to the war effort as other ethnic groups in Canada. Moreover, for each Finnish Canadian male who served in Canada's armed forces, members of his family who remained on the home front would be concerned for his well-being.⁵ A very large proportion of the Finnish community (perhaps 50–60% or even more) would have had a direct personal interest in the success of the Canadian military effort.

While young Finnish Canadians enlisted readily, thousands of older Finnish Canadians found employment in jobs related to the war effort. After the economic uncertainties of the Depression, many Finnish Canadians welcomed steady employment in lumbering, nickel mining, and farming, which were deemed essential to the war effort, or they found employment in various aspects of

wartime construction that was needed throughout Canada. Still others found work in top priority industries such as munitions factories and manufacturers of machinery and equipment directly related to the war effort. These were not, of course, uniquely Finnish occupations but rather these sectors of the Canadian wartime economy attracted employment from a wide cross-section of the Canadian workforce and Finnish Canadians participated as readily as those of other ethnic groups. Moreover, with so many Canadian males enlisted in the armed forces, a wide range of industrial jobs were available, for the first time in history, to Canadian women (J. Bruce, 1985); Finnish Canadian women found work in the Canadian war industry (N. Sillanpää, 1994).

Canadian Wartime Policy on Finland and Finnish Canadians

When the USSR attacked Finland in November 1939 precipitating the Winter War, public opinion in Canada saw the Finnish war effort as a clear-cut example of a small nation resisting aggression and was almost unanimously in favour of Finland. Furthermore, the Winter War drew large sectors of the Finnish Canadian community together. More than half of the community had been born in Finland and were concerned for the welfare of family and friends in their home country. Finnish communities scattered across Canada undertook numerous Aid to Finland projects featuring plays, choirs,

concerts, dances and many other forms of social activities to raise funds for Finland. These activities became increasingly co-ordinated. This culminated in the summer of 1940 with a Finnish Canadian summer festival being held in Sudbury to raise support for Finland (Lindstrom, 2000; Saarinen, 1999; N. Sillanpää, 1994; and R. Toivola, 1984 cover this period). A number of Finnish Canadians volunteered to serve in Finland during the Winter War. A few saw action but others arrived too late.⁶ Some volunteers stayed in Finland while others returned to Canada. *From Heroes to Enemies* describes this in considerable detail.

Although people in Canada and Great Britain admired how Finland had resisted Soviet aggression during the Winter War, this changed in June 1941 with the Feno-German invasion of the Soviet Union which Finnish historians have termed the Continuation War. This Finnish military initiative was not supported by Finnish expatriates living abroad. Few, if any, Finnish Canadians volunteered to fight for Finland in the Continuation War. When Finland entered into its co-belligerency with Nazi Germany, most of the Finnish community in Canada turned to focus on the war effort of the country they were living in.

What was unusual about Canada's formal declaration of war on Finland (as well as on Hungary and Romania) on 7 December 1941 was that the Canadian government at the same time decided to revise its policies on the treatment of enemy aliens with respect to citizens from Finland, Hungary and Roumania residing in Canada.⁷ It had

been established wartime practice in Canada that enemy aliens could expect to be interned under the provisions of the existing *Defence of Canada Regulations* (DOCR).⁸ The definition of enemy alien included all residents of an enemy state residing in Canada naturalized after 1 September 1922. If the Canadian government had applied the existing DOCR uniformly with its declaration of war against Finland, this would have had a devastating effect on the Finnish community since most of the Finnish born were either still citizens of Finland or, being such a recently arrived group, had been naturalized after 1 September 1922. For many Finnish-born, this could have meant loss of employment and internment. Even Finnish Canadians who had enlisted by December 1941 could have been discharged from military service.

The Canadian government, instead, adopted a different approach. Acting on advice from his officials, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, in a radio broadcast to the Canadian nation on the evening of 6 December 1941, announced the government's decision, in accordance with Canada's obligations to its allies, to formally declare war on the minor allies of the Axis (Finland, Hungary and Roumania). He then went on to stipulate that the citizens of these three countries resident in Canada would not be subject to the DOCR measures currently in practice, that the Canadian government was confident of their loyalty, and that it expected that these people would continue to support the war effort. The signing of the Order in Council by the

Governor General declaring war took place the following day. The Order in Council implementing the policy, PC 9543 enacted on 23 December 1941, stated:

And whereas it is recognized that most persons of Roumanian, Hungarian or Finnish nationality residing in Canada are law abiding, well disposed and loyal inhabitants of this country, contributing to its war effort and disavowing any allegiance to the Nazi controlled puppet governments of their countries of origin; And whereas it is deemed expedient that such persons should not be generally subjected to the *Defence of Canada Regulations* relating to enemy aliens..."

The key clause was that the draconian provisions of the DOCR did **not** apply to Finns. Instead, citizens of Finland over the age of sixteen would be required to register with the police and in almost all cases would be granted certificates of exemption. They would need to report annually on their residency in order to have their exemption certificate renewed. Even while imposing these restrictions, the top priority of the Canadian government remained the least disruption to enlistment. Every effort was made to ensure the continued service of nationals from these three countries already in the armed forces and to facilitate the enlistment of other nationals from these countries once they had been granted an exemption certificate. Any inconveniences suffered by Finnish citizens residing in Canada could be conveniently blamed on the "Nazi-controlled puppet government" in Finland cited in PC 9543. Instead of internment and more victims on the home

front, the Canadian government altered course and called on immigrants (in this case Finnish immigrants) to remain active supporters of the national objective. It would seem that in almost all cases the community response was positive.

In most cases, the restrictions prescribed by the Canadian government for its resident Finnish citizens were purely routine. This is not to minimize the initial fear many felt when they realized they had to report to a police station to be registered as a citizen of an enemy state and fingerprinted. Although world events had forced this unwelcome change to their status, many Finns came to realize that their lot consisted of minor inconveniences compared to that of, for example, Japanese Canadians who suffered seizures of all of their property and relocation to internment camps. Registration as enemy aliens did cause inconveniences and some Finnish individuals may have found it personally degrading but overall, these wartime procedural requirements did not result in insurmountable problems in their day-to-day lives. They continued to work at their jobs and reside in their homes.⁹

PC 9543 constituted a remarkable change in wartime policy for a nation after more than two years of war and historians from today's perspective see this as a very remarkable document. The war was not going well for Canada and its allies in December 1941. There was no possibility that Britain by itself would be able to launch any kind of invasion of Europe for the foreseeable future. The Soviet Union, in whose interests Canada was making this declaration of war, was

on the brink of military collapse even as the Canadian government was trying to get used to the idea of the Soviet Union as an ally. Yet even as the war progressed well into its third year and even as a new theatre of war was about to open on the Pacific with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the fall of Hong Kong with its Canadian military presence on Christmas Day 1941, the Canadian government had become increasingly sensitive to the contributions to its war effort by Canadians of different ethnic origins and began to develop new policies to adjust to changing wartime circumstances. Finnish Canadians were among the first beneficiaries of this new approach.

The Canadian government decision was also practical since, by December 1941, many of its Finnish-born residents (both male and female) were employed in the very occupations deemed essential to the war effort. This action addressed certain practical political considerations as well since the Liberal government of Mackenzie King held a number of seats across Northern Ontario with a significant Finnish population, including the riding of Port Arthur held by C.D. Howe, the Minister of Munitions and Supply, who was responsible for Canada's war production program. All of these Liberal MP's were re-elected in the 1945 Canadian General Election.

A review of *From Heroes to Enemies*

From Heroes to Enemies addresses an important theme in the accul-

turation of the Finnish community in Canada but unfortunately there are far too many uneven qualities in this monograph that serve to nullify it as a considered social history of a small Canadian ethnic group at critical point in its history. It is difficult to determine whether *From Heroes to Enemies* is a study of Finns in Canada during World War II or a narrative of how different factions in the Finnish Canadian community and of Canadian society in general reacted to the situation of Finland during the course of the war. Varpu Lindström focuses far too much on the situation in Finland, particularly in describing the impact of newspaper coverage of the Winter War on Canadian public opinion and on Canadian efforts to aid Finland. That the host country of these Finnish Canadians was itself at war tends to recede into the background.

This can best be shown through an examination of the three tables presented in *From Heroes to Enemies*. Table One (pp. 90–91), listing the names of 248 Finnish Canadian volunteers in the Winter War, anchors two chapters encompassing the Winter War period and how many Finns in Canada initiated projects in support of the Finnish cause, the most dramatic being the decision of numerous young Finnish Canadians to volunteer to serve in the Finnish military. Table Two (p. 180), appearing in a sub-section entitled "Enlisting in the Canadian Armed Forces," lists the names of 46 Finnish Canadians who enlisted in the Canadian armed forces during World War II and died in the service of their country. The names in this table are compiled

from obituaries found in Finnish-language newspapers published in Canada.

Table Three, in the penultimate chapter, entitled "Enemy Alien Seamen," lists 102 Finnish nationals serving on ships based in Canada at the time that a state of war was declared between Canada and Finland. These Finnish alien seamen were never members of the Finnish Canadian community but, rather, unfortunate bystanders; none remained in Canada after the war ended. While their plight was a sad one, that surely is not reason for devoting to them a chapter of 26 pages, and then featuring them in both the 4-page prologue and a 3-page epilogue. Their tale takes up 33 pages out of a total of 257 pages of text – or almost 13 per cent of the book; the five-page subsection (one with pictures) on Finnish Canadians who enlisted in Canada's war effort comprises only 1.5 per cent.

In juxtaposing these three tables, a Canadian would observe that Finnish Canadians who volunteered for Finland in the Winter War are lauded, the plight of enemy Finnish seamen becomes a cause for anguish, while service by Finnish Canadians for Canada receives little more than a cursory pat on the head.

The most confusing aspect of this monograph is that its title constantly begs the question as to who are "heroes" and who are "enemies." A Canadian observer might find it difficult to understand why the sub-section on enlisting in the Canadian armed forces is found in the section entitled "Enemies" and in a chapter entitled "Silencing the Nationalists." Was

service to Canada by Finnish Canadians during World War II an enemy activity? This is not a moot question since a state of war existed between these countries. Depending on whether one is taking the Finnish or Canadian perspective, the answer could be yes.

Since an entire chapter was dedicated to the plight of enemy-alien seamen, why did the author not examine the materials available on the Canadian war effort to write a chapter or more on the role of Finnish Canadians in that endeavour? A third section might have nullified the "heroes vs. enemies" dichotomy of the title but would have produced a more comprehensive and balanced history. Furthermore, it would draw a more accurate relationship to the subtitle of this monograph, *Finns in Canada 1937–1947*, rather than marginalizing the war service of Finnish Canadians. In one passage, Lindström (2000; 99–102) describes that, on 28–29 June 1940, prior to their return to Canada, Finnish Canadian volunteers for service in the Winter War were celebrated in Helsinki as heroes by various organizations in Finland, including a salutation from Finland's great military figure, Marshal C.G.E. Mannerheim himself. Would a Canadian be rude in asking if the only heroes among Finns living in Canada during World War II were those who volunteered for Finland?

This reviewer is especially surprised there is so little in this study about the service of Finnish Canadian women on the home front in Canada. There are anecdotes on working conditions for women at Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie

(p. 155) and war industries in Windsor (p.156), but these are rather brief. Historians on women's studies in Canada, the United States and Europe have seen World War II as a crucial turning point for demonstrating the effectiveness of women in the industrial labour force. Lindström herself notes (p. 136) that there were some 1,104,000 people working in munitions factories and, of those, 240,000 were women.¹⁰ Why again could this not have been developed into perhaps a separate chapter to demonstrate how Finnish Canadian women contributed to Canada's war effort? This is an inexplicable oversight since, as Nelma Sillanpää's memoirs demonstrate, Finnish Canadian women were employed in Canada's war industry.

It is disappointing that Canadian patriotism plays only a minuscule role in *From Heroes to Enemies* underscoring another weakness. One wonders why the subsection on enlisting in the Canadian Armed Forces opens with this statement: *One powerful way to prove one's loyalty to Canada was to enlist in the Canadian armed forces* (p. 177; my italics). This seems a patronizing, if not an outright insulting, way to describe the motivations of young Finnish Canadian men and one wonders what evidence substantiates this statement. Lindström's argument could, instead, be turned on its head by asking if Finnish Canadians would have felt that they had "to prove" anything. Most young Finnish Canadians had been in Canada all of their lives (if they were not Canadian-born) so it would have been only natural for

them to enlist in the armed forces of the country they called their own during a time of national crisis. Serving Canada would have been part of the normal course of action for young Finnish Canadians, just as it was for young men of every other ethnic group (immigrant, non-immigrant or aboriginal) across Canada.¹¹ One could suggest that the 248 Finns who volunteered to assist Finland in the Winter War were the exceptions.

This lack of appreciation for Canadian patriotism can be seen again in the final chapter that describes post-war suffering in Finland. No mention is made of Finnish Canadians returning from a victorious war in Europe before demobilizing and returning to civilian life in Canada yet surely this would have been of more direct personal concern to most of the Finnish Canadian community at this time.

It is highly unlikely that any of the thousands of Finnish Canadians who enlisted in the Canadian armed services or worked in war industries on the home front, ever really thought of themselves as enemies of Canada. Nor, as seen by its actions of 6–7 December 1941, did the Canadian government, which was not only grateful for their contribution to the war effort to that date, it revised its policies to facilitate their continued service to the cause. Rather, these Finnish Canadians would have a very good reason for thinking of themselves as being heroes because they belonged to a Canadian generation that participated in the destruction of fascism in Europe and the Pacific – events that even today, some sixty years later,

resonate in Canadian history as an heroic national achievement.¹²

Finally, some comments are offered on Professor Lindström's rather puzzling methodology:

(1) Access to Information: Much is made in *From Heroes to Enemies* that many Canadian government archives are still censored leaving the impression that, if the author had been able to obtain unrestricted access to every record sought, she would have produced an even more complete history of the period. Does she expect to find some particularly juicy tidbits on a number of Finnish Canadian individuals from RCMP records and other confidential sources? Access to Information officials of the Canadian government make for rather easy targets but one must remember that much of the information Lindström seems to be seeking would be of a private and personal nature and, therefore, protected under provisions of the *Privacy Act*. Instead of spending hard-earned research money on Access to Information requests that the author herself admits led to negligible results, would not a Canadian historian's time be better invested in a more thorough analysis of information already available to the public? An examination of Royal Canadian Legion records, for example, might have identified some Finnish heroes on the Canadian front.

(2) Interviews: This reviewer has some concern about the historical context of the oral testimony cited in *From Heroes to Enemies*. For example, the underlying premise in the anecdotal data being pre-

sented by Varpu Lindström on the problems some Finns had in registering with the police as required by PC 9453 can lead a reader to assume that these people felt they were being victimized by the Canadian government. It is not apparent in Dr. Lindström's text whether her respondents actually blamed the Finnish or Canadian governments ("Mannerheim or Mackenzie King?") for any indignities. Yet over the years when this reviewer has talked with Finnish Canadians who were required to register and be finger-printed, they blamed their plight on the Finnish government's alliance with Germany – that is, Finnish Canadians felt that they were being victimized in Canada as a result of actions by the Finnish government. In other words, Finnish Canadians blamed the wartime policies of the Finnish government for their predicament in Canada. As always, these Finnish Canadians managed to adapt to their situation and get on with their lives.

(3) Balancing of Sources: While this is a somewhat specialized point, this reviewer would question the applicability of some of the sources listed in *From Heroes to Enemies*. For example, Dr. Lindström points out in her Prologue that there were two Finnish-language commemorative albums published in Canada, one for the Finns who served in the Canadian Army and the other for those Finns who served in the Finnish Army, thereby giving both publications equal recognition among sources cited. While both have indeed been published in Canada, there are wide discrepancies as to their relevance

to this time period. *Canadian suomalaisten sotilaiden muistoalbumi* (Finnish Canadian Military Commemorative Album), published by Vapaus Publishing Company, is an excellent reference source on how many members of the left-wing Finnish Organization of Canada contributed to the Canadian war effort. It features photos and brief biographies of some 700 Canadian servicemen of Finnish origin. Many Finnish Canadian war veterans would not have wanted to be featured in this booklet because the FOC was considered pro-communist so this Vapaus publication should not be considered as a complete listing of Finnish Canadian war service. The Vapaus album does demonstrate, however, that more than 30 per cent of the Finnish Canadian veterans eligible to join the Royal Canadian Legion would have had some sort of affiliation with the FOC.

It is difficult to see how the Vapaus publication can be equated with *Suomen Aseveljet Kanadasa/Finnish War Veterans in Canada*, edited by Erkki Kuutti (no date), which is about Finns who lived in Finland for the entirety of World War II and only later moved to Canada. These future Finnish Canadians presented no problems for Canadian authorities in the 1940s because they were still in Finland. Rather than illuminating the period under study, its inclusion causes confusion. This publication on Finnish war veterans in Canada could have led Lindström to make the obvious conclusion of how tolerant a society postwar Canada is to have allowed veterans of a country with which it had

been at war to later settle in Canada and establish a fraternal order for themselves. But no such praise is offered.

(4) Spanish Civil War: *From Heroes to Enemies* describes the participation of one hundred plus Finnish Canadians in the Spanish Civil War (pp. 13–20) and later makes several critical comments on ostensible problems faced by Spanish Civil War veterans when attempting to enlist in the Canadian armed forces. Among these alleged problems are that the Canadian government was at first suspicious of Spanish Civil War veterans who tried to enlist in the Canadian armed forces in World War II and moreover, when, at a later point in the war these Spanish Civil War veterans could enlist, it was Canadian government policy they would not be sent overseas. However, there is, in fact, much evidence of Spanish Civil War veterans enlisting in the Canadian armed forces and serving overseas – quite often in war zones distinguished by some of the most intensive fighting of World War II (M. Momryk, 1995). Service in World War II is even acknowledged on the plaque on a monument in Ottawa unveiled on 20 October 2001 by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson honouring Canada's Spanish Civil War veterans which reads: *Despite suffering heavy losses, many of the survivors continued the fight by serving in the Canadian Armed Forces in World War II.* Since many Spanish Civil War veterans enlisted and even served overseas, perhaps there could be more considered analysis as to why the situation may have

differed for those of Finnish origin.

(5) Analysis of Canadian Government Policy: It is disappointing that *From Heroes to Enemies* did not undertake a more thorough analysis of the provisions of PC 9543, especially as this Order in Council is directly related to the Finnish community in Canada. Having just declared war on Finland, the Canadian government stated, as publicly as possible, that it recognized the overall loyalty of most persons of Finnish nationality to the Canadian cause and that it was prepared to waive the *Defence of Canada Regulations* relating to enemy aliens in the case of Finns. While Lindström quotes this cabinet document in its entirety, no additional analysis is offered as to its significance. Instead, Lindström seems to prefer looking for victims and lists a number of innocuous anecdotes related to inconveniences some Finnish Canadians experienced. Viewed from the perspective of sixty years later, as N.F. Dreisziger (1997) does in his innovative analysis of which Lindstrom cites only the most descriptive parts, Canadian government policy towards its resident Finnish population was a remarkable example of social engineering. That *From Heroes to Enemies* fails to expand on Professor Dreisziger's thesis is the most disappointing aspect of this monograph.

To Summarize: *From Heroes to Enemies* contains both a wide variety of anecdotal testimony and lengthy descriptions of factionalism within the Finnish Canadian community (and there was plenty),

although the author tends to reveal too much in the minutiae of these old quarrels.¹³ While this monograph contains many interesting stories, these have not been placed into any context leaving its analysis muddled and incoherent. The events of World War II comprised a state of total war involving many nations spanning the length and breadth of the globe. Canada, after great effort and human sacrifice, emerged as one of the victors in the destruction of Nazism. Finland was not on the winning side. However, viewed from the perspective of half a century later, nor was it a loser; it emerged, as Jakobson (1984) describes, a survivor.

Of what there can be no doubt is the fact that the Finnish Canadian community of the time period in question participated in the victory. Should not Finnish Canadians of this generation, therefore, be allowed simply to enjoy their role in Canada's achievement rather than be confronted by some contrived "heroes vs. enemies" dichotomy? Canada won. Why do winners have to explain? Each year, the destruction of Nazism and the more than five years of sacrifices associated with it are commemorated in Canada. As a Finnish Canadian born and bred, this reviewer feels like a proud Canadian when his family's service during World War II is being celebrated. *From Heroes to Enemies*, on the other hand, has the unfortunate effect of making me feel like some kind of ethnic.

Most Finns had left Finland for a reason and, by 1941, newcomers had been in Canada for more than a decade. Despite a number of prob-

lems, the Finnish Canadian community was well on its way to adapting to the mainstream Canadian social fabric. When Canada entered World War II on 10 September 1939, two generations of Finnish immigrants and their descendants, dating back to the turn of the twentieth century, were ready to serve Canada. The events of wartime may have tested their loyalties, but all evidence would indicate that the Finnish community, through enlistment and employment in wartime industries, had participated in the Canadian war effort at least as fully as any other ethnic group in Canada. Moreover, large sections of the Finnish community, both in 1940 and again in the 1946–48 period when the Canadian government permitted concerned Finnish Canadians to establish an umbrella aid organization known as the Canada Finland Aid Society Fund, took time to raise funds and assistance for Finland's postwar recovery. These instances of assistance, however, were peripheral to the main focus of their lives in Canada. It was possible to do both – participate in the Canadian war effort and, at the same time, assist the homeland they had left behind. Where I differ from Professor Lindström is that the perspective and interest of the Finnish community in Canada remained primarily attached to the country they had chosen to live in and to the cause for which many committed the best years of their lives.¹⁴

From Heroes to Enemies may be a trial run for a more all-encompassing study to be published by a firm specializing in refereed academic studies on Canadian histo-

ry. If that is the case, a fundamental re-think is required that conveys a better understanding of Canada's wartime experience and the pro-active role Finnish Canadians themselves played in said events. The collective achievements of this World War II generation of Finnish Canadians were truly remarkable, benefiting both Canada and Finland, and deserve far greater consideration than this monograph offers.

Postwar Developments

After the war, millions of people migrated to Canada from Europe seeking employment in the booming Canadian economy. Many thousands came from Finland in the 1950s, attracted by an expanding Canadian economy. Of those from Finland, it was only natural that many of them had served in the Finnish armed forces or on Finland's home front during World War II. The war was over, life went on and people sought new opportunities, but the memories of wartime events for its participants will last for the rest of their lives. Soldiers served with bravery and distinction for many national causes and it is natural that they would want their service periodically recognized and honoured. With respect to today's Finnish community in Canada, there are two distinct military traditions. One is sanctioned by the Canadian government which, in partnership with the Royal Canadian Legion, commemorates Armistice Day on 11 November and V-E Day on 8 May. The Finnish War Veterans in Canada, on the other hand, honour Finnish Independence Day on 6

December and Finnish Armed Services Day on 4 June. While those two traditions respect each other, they march in different parades and to different tunes.

World War II had a major impact on every aspect of Canadian society, including the ethnic groups comprising the Canadian mosaic of that time. The Finnish community of that period and how each Finnish Canadian came to terms with his/her situation makes for an interesting case study. Most Canadians of Finnish origin considered themselves Canadian first and overwhelmingly served the Allied cause. The decision of the Canadian government to declare war on Finland did cause difficulties within its resident Finnish community – but not victims. The participation of the Finnish community in all aspects of the Canadian war effort – a participation that was already well established when the Canadian government made its declaration of war in December 1941 – can be seen as a major turning point in their acculturation into mainstream Canadian society. This was especially the case for younger Finns whether Canadian- or Finnish-born. World War II accelerated a transition already well under way.

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Endnotes

- ¹ There have been two major periods of Finnish migration to Canada: the lengthy period stretching from 1870 to 1930, with which this article is primarily concerned, and the decade of the 1950s. Many Finns left when Finland was still a part of the Imperial Russian Empire; others in the period after Finnish Independence in 1917. Up to 1914, most Finnish emigrants went to the United States; about 10 per cent settled in Canada. The main motivation was economic; many Finns experienced severe economic difficulties in their homeland and sought new opportunities in "America." Most Finnish immigrants lacked formal education, did not speak English, and gravitated to unskilled labour and farming occupations. With the closing of the US border to European migration in 1923, Canada became the main destination for Finnish (and other European) migration until 1930 and the advent of the Great Depression. Finnish emigration to Canada continued from the same areas and social groups as before World War I. The *1941 Census of Canada* (I:211) indicated that more than half (53 per cent) of the 24,387 who had been born in Finland had acquired Canadian citizenship; since so many had arrived in Canada only a decade earlier and had gone through the hardships of the Depression, this would indicate that Finns were acculturating readily to Canada.
- ² Varpu Lindström (2000), *From Heroes to Enemies. Finns in*

Canada, 1937–1947, Beaver-ton, Ontario: Aspasia Books. Aspasia Books, a small publishing house that specializes in publishing English-language translations of Finnish literary works, is owned by Varpu Lindström and her husband, Börje Vähämäki, a professor in Finnish studies at the University of Toronto. In her Acknowledgements, Varpu Lindström writes that she arrived in Canada with her parents in 1963 and that her father, to whom her book is dedicated, was a veteran of the Finnish army in the Continuation War.

- ³ Other useful narratives that touch on the Finnish experience in Canada up to and including World War II, are: O.W. Saarinen (1999), *From a Rock to a Hard Place. A Historical Geography of the Finns in the Sudbury Area*; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press; Nelma Sillanpää (1994), *Under the Northern Lights. Memories of my Life in the Finnish Community of Northern Ontario*, edited by Edward W. Laine; Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilisation, Mercury Series No. 45; and Raija Toivola (1984), *Sisulla ja Sydämellä: Lempi Johnson*, New York Mills, MN: Parta Printers. Arja Pilli (1982) has an excellent analysis of the 1920–40 Finnish Canadian immigrant generation in her study, *The Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 1901–1939. A Study in the History of Ethnic Journalism*; Migration Studies C6; Turku: Institute of Migration. There is also considerable statistical data available both in

Finland and in Canada on the background of these Finnish migrants, including: *Siirtolaisuustilastot/ Emigration Statistics 1893–1945*. Series XXVIII; Helsinki, 1905–1946; and the Census of Canada 1921, 1931 & 1941. Accounts of the activities of the Finnish Organization of Canada, its banning and struggle to overturn this ban, can be found in *The Illegal Finnish Organization of Canada, Inc.*, by P. Mertanen and William Eklund; Sudbury, Ontario: Vapaus Publishing Company, Limited, 1942.

- ⁴ C. P. Stacey (1970, 590), *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939–1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer). Appendix R. Intake into the Canadian Armed Forces, Second World War (By Provinces). Other useful Canadian studies referred to in this article are: E. L. M. Burns (1956), *Manpower in the Canadian Army 1939–1945* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited); Jean Bruce (1985), *Back the Attack. Canadian Women During the Second World at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada); and Myron Momryk (1995), "The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion," in *A Country by Consent: A Political History of Canada from 1500 to 1996* (CD-Rom for West/Dunn Productions, 1995).

- ⁵ One enlistee was my Canadian-born father, Paul Sillanpää, who, together with a number of other Finnish Canadians from the Timmins area, enlisted in the Canadian army in the spring of 1940. Paul Sillanpää's unit arrived in Britain on June 20, 1940, his

birthday. It was then that he and other Canadians learned France had surrendered and realized how vulnerable Britain was to a German invasion. Paul spent a total of five years and three months overseas, moving from his initial assignment as a sapper to the military police, and then into army intelligence. He was there for the Battle of Britain, participated in the invasion of Italy, and was with the Canadian forces that liberated Holland. Being a Canadian of Finnish origin did not prevent Paul from obtaining the highest levels of security clearance within Canadian military intelligence. N. Sillanpää's (1994) memoirs contains a chapter on Paul Sillanpää's war service ("Paul – 29308"), including his association with other Finnish Canadian enlistees in the Canadian Army.

⁶ One such volunteer for the Winter War was a Canadian-born uncle of mine, Valter Sillanpää. By the time he arrived, the war had ended. Being a foreign national, Valter remained in Finland until his papers were processed and he could return to Canada later in 1940. Valter Sillanpää did not return for the Continuation War.

⁷ N. F. Dreisziger (1997), "7 December 1941: A Turning Point in Canadian Wartime Policy Toward Enemy Ethnic Groups," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 32:1, 93–111. An historian at the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, Professor Dreisziger analyzed the events of 4–7 December 1941 within the Cabinet office of the Canadian

government that led Canada to declare war on Finland and the policies it adopted toward its resident Finnish citizens.

⁸ During the first two years of the war, the Canadian government had already applied this procedure to members of the German, Austrian and Italian ethnic groups and to a number of activists in the Communist Party of Canada (as a result of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement). The ban on the Communist Party, in fact, had a significant impact on one faction of the Finnish community in that it also banned the Finnish Organization of Canada, confiscated its property, and interned several of its key spokesmen. Its newspaper, *Vapaus*, continued publishing in Sudbury, Ontario. Although the number of FOC leaders interned was small, without its property the FOC lacked the means to provide social activities for its members. The FOC launched a protracted campaign for re-instatement (Mertanen & Eklund, 1942) that culminated with Order in Council PC 8022, 14 October 1943, whereby the Canadian government lifted its ban on the FOC and returned its property.

⁹ One of those fingerprinted was my maternal grandmother, Matilda Jarvis, who, for reasons of her choosing, remained a Finnish citizen until her death in 1977. While being registered as an enemy alien was not a comfortable episode in her life, she also recognized that this was a cost one had to pay when one lived in another country and a state of war suddenly existed with her former homeland. My grand-

mother never thought of herself as an "enemy of Canada."

¹⁰ In his study *Manpower in the Canadian Army 1939–1945*, E.L.M. Burns (1956; 3) listed a number of priorities on employment in wartime: (1) armed forces which are divided into fighting and supporting corps; (2) civil labour force that manufactures munitions and equipment for the use of armed forces; (3) employees in industries supporting the manufacture of munitions construction, extraction of fuels and minerals, metallurgy; (4) transportation services and public services essential to national life including agriculture. Each of these priorities included women and Finnish Canadians participated in each. *From Heroes to Enemies* provides examples on priorities three and four but is weak on Finnish Canadian input on Burns' top two priorities.

¹¹ Edward Laine, in his Introduction to N. Sillanpää, 1994; xxv–xxvi, differs sharply from Lindström's "heroes and enemies" cleavage. Dr. Laine expanded on this theme in a paper, entitled "As Friend and Foe: The Finnish Community in Canada During World War II," delivered at The Making of Finnish America: An Ethnic Culture in Transition, a conference hosted by The Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, November 1991. This conference is sometimes known as Finn Forum IV.

¹² Lindström's revisionism can be contrasted with this eye-witness account of V.E. Day celebrations in Hamilton: *On May 8*,

1945...the long awaited announcement came that peace had been declared in Europe! The war there was over! Hallelujah! We were told to go home to celebrate! How could anybody work? The excitement was overpowering! Everyone was on the streets, cheering, crying, laughing and hugging each other. Bands were marching and playing. The soldiers in Hamilton were parading up and down the streets. It was an exhilarating time! We went to the church next to the YWCA. It had a special service e – like all the other churches were having – to thank God that the war was over (N. Sillanpää, 1994; 61)

¹³ The first chapter of *From Heroes to Enemies* describes problems faced by Finnish immigrants in adapting to their situation in Canada during the 1930s, highlighting many internal political divisions and personal rivalries. It is my contention, however, in contrast to that espoused by Dr. Lindström, that Finnish immigrants on the whole

had adapted quite well to their new homeland by 1939. When one compares the situation of Finnish immigrants to that of other ethnic groups in Canada as recorded in Census of Canada data for 1921, 1931 and 1941, one can see that the acculturation of Finns was well under way. The factionalism that Lindström describes, while special in some ways to the Finnish community, has been typical of problems that all recent immigrant groups have faced in Canada. This is further supported by the Finnish historian, Arja Pilli (1982; 133–47), who has examined this pre-1940 Finnish immigrant period, balancing data from Finland and Canadian immigration statistics. While recording colourful examples of problems faced by newly arrived Finns, Dr. Pilli effectively demonstrated that these were not unique to Finnish Canadians.

¹⁴ In August 1945, Paul Sillanpää returned from more than five years of service overseas with the Canadian army. He married his girlfriend, Nelma Johnson, in

October of that year. Nelma's mother, Matilda Jarvis, who had been registered as a Finnish enemy alien in 1942, hosted a huge Finnish Canadian wedding reception in Timmins. Paul found work with the post office, first in Timmins and then in Elliot Lake, Ontario. He became involved in community work with the Royal Canadian Legion and later the Kiwanis Club; he served a term on the town council of Elliot Lake. The war had proved hard on Paul's health. Despite having literally sacrificed his health for his country, Paul Sillanpää remained truly proud of his wartime service. When he died in February 1975, the Canadian flag flew at half mast at the Royal Canadian Legion Park in Elliot Lake, Ontario. The local Legion conducted a special memorial service at his funeral – a moving ceremony honouring service to Canada during wartime that the Legion performs for every Canadian war veteran.