

Kohlhoff, Dean: *When the Wind Was a River: Aleut Evacuation in World War II*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995, ISBN 0-295-97403-6 Cloth CDN \$34.95.

Imagine Germans landing at Chappaquiddick Island in May, 1942, six months after hostilities were declared. A few dozen denizens are taken captive back to Europe since they know too much about the invaders' operations. Nine hundred inhabitants of Martha's Vineyard are evacuated by American authorities for safety's sake. At war's end, most citizens can return home but some territory is cordoned off to simplify public administration. Still, 40% of the European captives have died. More extraordinarily, some groups of American evacuees have died at three times their normal rate owing to the appalling conditions in which they were housed just outside Boston. Further, many homes have been destroyed along with the local environment and economy through the American military's scorched earth policy and both military and civilian vandalism. Finally, it takes forty years for these hapless citizens to obtain modest compensation and an apology from their government.

Impossible, you say? Dean Kohlhoff reveals just such a remarkable, little known, bitterly sad episode in the war that happened but has remained obscure because the evacuees were not from Nantucket, but Aleuts who inhabited several Alaskan islands threatened by the Japanese. Kohlhoff has assembled a well researched, sensitive, balanced account... as far as he goes. Figuring strongly are various branches of government, including the military, together with Aleut observations recovered primarily from testimony in the compensation case. Contemporary views of Whites on the islands and in communities near the evacuation camps and even a few Japanese impressions of the Aleuts all help to develop the picture. What emerges is a fascinating tale of personal idiosyncrasies, dysfunctional organizations, cross-cultural misunderstandings, racism, and of course war and peace. Sub-plots swirling around government efforts to preserve the seal hunt (a lucrative monopoly employing cheap Aleut labour) and a White businessman's influence in the selection of evacuees will tease passing neo-cons and socialists alike. Meanwhile the tragedy of burning homes watched at night from the sea, the overcrowding, the isolation, the sewage, the disease, the deaths, and the prejudice are astonishing.

Given the complexity of the players, not least the five groups of islanders under way to different destinations decided upon by a mixture of government employees, some narrative choppiness, especially in Chapter Six, is forgivable. Awkward writing in something less than two hundred pages is less forgivable. Narration and quotations need to blend better,

especially on pages 64, 90, 140 and 161. Paragraph transitions are confusing on pages 35, 94, 105, and 158. Colloquialisms such as "dramatic flap", "whisper against a williwaw" and "jolted... off dead center" diminish the seriousness of the author's point.

At length, Kohlhoff tenders his account as an instalment in what is no doubt a larger Aleut history remaining to be told. But there is more to this specific evacuation episode, to which Kohlhoff provides curious glimpses, which cries out for interpretive development between these covers. The author's sense of balance no doubt prompted the helpful narrative device of regularly comparing the condition of the nine hundred evacuees in the Alaskan Panhandle to that of the forty captive Aleuts in Japan. Kohlhoff then goes so far as to call the captive Aleuts "evacuees" and misleadingly furnishes the dust jacket with a photo of a captive child, not an evacuee to the Panhandle. Surely there is a difference between these two kinds of departures which "evacuation" cannot compass, and surely the injustice shown the Aleuts in Alaska would resonate more clearly with an appropriately despairing portrayal of the American sojourn. Citizens have much higher expectations about their safety and comfort in the care of their own state, as opposed to a belligerent enemy's care. The failure of American custodians to measure very well against the World War II Japanese military is an embarrassment which Kohlhoff merely implies and about which he is evidently ambivalent. The best synthesis he can marshal, tucked midway in the book, is that, "All Aleuts were tested, and what happened to them was enabled not so much by sympathy but by their resilience in overcoming an unfortunate fate" (p.111).

The difference between captive Aleuts, evacuees, and other citizens cries out for discussion. Kohlhoff shows that both the Americans and the Japanese readily included the Aleutian Islands in their official and imagined national geographies. Yet the Aleut people earned scant reckoning from the military brass, from soldiers, teachers, townfolk, politicians and administrators in either country. Kohlhoff does not discuss the patently imperialist statecraft, which the evacuation story highlights brilliantly. Neither country remotely extended the same citizenship to the Aleuts which their majority populations enjoyed. Kohlhoff owes readers a chapter outlining his interpretive theory and some discussion of the unusual judgements both within, and just beyond, his narrative. Lest anyone detect here a smug Canadian, comfortable behind his own border; not at all. Several times the Canadian government "relocated" Native communities across Canada's north, with devastating effects, without even the pretext of war-time emergency. Kohlhoff's book tells a thought-provoking story and belongs with the recent

Canadian literature in the libraries of North American colleges treating Native/White relations and governance.

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Mandell, Daniel R.: *Behind the Frontier: Indians In 18th Century Eastern Massachusetts*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996, ISBN 0-8032-3179-2 Cloth USA \$40.00.

In the preface to this book the author writes,

This study takes a new look at the century between the terrible (King Philip's) war and the American Revolution, and develops a picture of the internal dynamics and external pressures that led Indians in eastern Massachusetts to redefine their communities, transform their loyalties and forge a regional ethnic network (p.2).

In the course of this book, Mandell provides an account in great detail of the changes experienced by a few Native communities in a small geographic area in a limited space of time, and in so doing touches upon a large number of issues that are still relevant to the situation of Native people today. The role of missionaries, the effects of disease and alcoholism, mortality rates, the loss of men in the community, the influx of Afro-Americans, the problems brought by poaching and trespassing and the continuous need for land by White settlers are all effectively brought into the foreground.

The account is divided into two main sections. The first ends with the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Before this time the Native communities enjoyed a fairly successful degree of autonomy and independence, living in towns modelled along the "praying town" system that had existed for some generations. Many villages were left largely to their own devices, and documentation shows that Native residents of these villages frequently worked for or sold their produce to the White colonists who were their neighbours.

The second section highlights the problems that developed following 1713. Once the conflict with France was ended, the White settlers could turn their attention to the need to obtain more land to accommodate their expanding numbers and to provide a land base for their growing economic enterprises. At the same time, disease and alcoholism were spreading