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AN ENEMY AMONG FRIENDS

By Kiyooki Murata

Kodansha International. 241 pp. [plus 8 pp. b&w photos] \$19.95

On the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, with Americans growing increasingly hostile to Japan's economic power and policies, Kiyooki Murata's account of his seven years as a Japanese citizen living in America during World War II is a timely gift of good will, an appealing testament to "the importance of the individual as the basic element of humanity—not a member of a category of people."

As a teenager in prewar Japan, where Confucian asceticism was revered, Murata believed honor came by seeking arduous challenges and overcoming them. So in early 1941 he chose an education of *kugaku*, "learning by hardship," and decided to work his way through college in America. He arrived in San Francisco on June 18, 1941.

An Enemy Among Friends relates Murata's initial culture shock (hot running water, coeducational classrooms), his internment in an Arizona relocation center, his grilling by the F.B.I. as an enemy-alien and his tenacious pursuit of degrees from Carleton College and the University of Chicago.

This memoir describes wartime propaganda, a two-year forced internment, labyrinthine red tape, the author's menial jobs in 140⁰ kitchens and in mental hospitals, and a Japanese-American community "shaking in their boots" over what their own government might do to them. What it does *not* contain is one word of bitterness.

Murata reveals his charitable posture immediately: "If you expect ... outbursts of grief and fury by a victim of prejudice, you will be disappointed.... The fact is that I spent seven delightful and fruitful years in America, including the war years, and found myself among friends wherever I went." These friends range from family members to his first English teacher to a Chicago benefactor to classmates.

Murata does not refute the charges of mistreatment many interned Japanese-Americans have made. He merely states that was not his experience at his Poston camp. He does not deny that virulent anti-Japanese racism existed during the war. He simply refused to let it wound him: "I was never annoyed by insults meant for the Japanese people as a group, which I viewed as totally irrelevant to me as an individual. I used to smile, saying to myself, 'Me, "treacherous"?"'

Treacherous? No, the word for Murata is "guileless," impervious to bigotry, as if it occurs on a plane of behavior he cannot take seriously. He remains at all times the Confucian man: calm, respectful, cognizant of duty and gentle-humored, despite what war shows him about the baseness possible in both his native Japan and adopted America.