

The Tokyo Trials and the Truth of “Pal’s Judgment” — Summary

Radhabinod Pal was one of the judges at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (the “Tokyo Trials”) held in Japan in 1946 to judge those Japanese officials and officers charged by the Allies as Class-A War Criminals. Pal, unlike his colleagues on the bench, was a specialist in international law — and his views on the accused, the charges, the prosecution, and the trial itself, were marked by his unique specialization.

Unlike his colleagues, Pal questioned the very legitimacy of the trial itself, and found himself forced to conclude, “I would hold that each and everyone of the accused must be found not guilty of each and everyone of the charges in the indictment and should be acquitted of all those charges.”

Pal wrote his own dissentient verdict wherein he explained his position, meticulously documenting each and every point of disagreement and providing a detailed history of the War back through Japan’s involvement in China in the 1920s. For his pains and efforts, after the trial his views were censored by SCAP, his verdict lay unpublished, and his arguments went unheard.

In this book, *The Truth of “Radhabinod Pal’s Judgment,”* author Watanabe Shôichi condenses Pal’s lengthy and occasionally complex arguments down to an easily digested and quick read. Prof. Watanabe explains Pal’s points and explains how the prevalent viewpoint today — a “Tokyo Trials viewpoint” — came to be the accepted and dominant school of thought. He suggests that Japan’s postwar history has been one that developed in the shadow of the Tokyo Trials, with an acceptance even by the Japanese themselves that everything that had been said in them was true. Even Japan’s postwar relations with her neighbors has been colored by that acceptance.

Through reading *The Truth of “Radhabinod Pal’s Judgment,”* another side Japan’s history may be seen, and much of the accepted conventional wisdom becomes suddenly suspect.

Only in the past few years has *Pal’s Judgment* come to be disseminated, though it is still virtually unknown in the West. It is possible that, with a judicious reading of Watanabe’s book, readers having an unbiased eye and a mind willing to accept that not all may have been as we were told may even come to acknowledge the same thing that none other than Douglas MacArthur himself admitted when he spoke before Congress in 1951 that, “Their purpose ... in going to war was largely dictated by security.”

As Pal himself said, “It has been said that a victor can dispense to the vanquished everything from mercy to vindictiveness; but the one thing the victor cannot give to the vanquished is justice.” Prof. Watanabe’s book eloquently demonstrates the truth of Pal’s observation and the rightness of his position.