One important difference between the situation in Hawaii and the mainland is that if all the Japanese on the mainland were actively disloyal they could be corralled or destroyed within a very short time.

—Curtis B. Munson, November 7, 1941

By fall of 1941, war with Japan appeared imminent. For well over a year, coded messages going in and out of Tokyo had been intercepted and decoded by Washington cryptoanalysts. With relations between Tokyo and Washington rapidly deteriorating, a desperate sense of national urgency was evidenced in messages to Ambassador Nomura, then carrying on negotiations in the nation’s capital. On July 25, Japan had seized south French Indo-China. The activation the following day of the Morgenthau-Stimson plan, calling for the complete cessation of trade with Japan and the freezing of her assets in America—Great Britain and the Netherlands following suit—had resulted in the strangulation and near collapse of the island economy.

By late September, Tokyo’s coded messages included demands for data concerning the Pacific Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor. Of great implication for U. S. Army and Naval Intelligence was the September 24 dispatch directed to Consul Nagao Kita in Honolulu:

Henceforth, we would like to have you make reports concerning vessels along the following lines in so far as possible:

1. The waters of Pearl Harbor are to be divided roughly into five sub-areas. We have no objection to your abbreviating as much as you like. Area A. Waters between Ford Island and the Arsenal. Area B. Waters adjacent to the island south
AND WEST OF FORD ISLAND. THIS AREA IS ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF
THE ISLAND FROM AREA A. AREA C. EAST Loch. AREA D. MIDDLE Loch.
AREA E. WEST Loch AND THE COMMUNICATING WATER ROUTES.

2. WITH REGARD TO WARSHIPS AND AIRCRAFT CARRIERS WE
WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU REPORT ON THOSE AT ANCHOR (THESE
ARE NOT SO IMPORTANT), TIED UP AT WHARVES, BUOYS, AND IN
DOCK. DESIGNATE TYPES AND CLASSES BRIEFLY. IF POSSIBLE, WE
WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU MAKE MENTION OF THE FACT WHEN THERE
ARE TWO OR MORE VESSELS ALONGSIDE THE SAME WHARF.¹

With all signs pointing to a rapid approach of war and the
Hawaiian naval outpost the probable target,² a highly secret intelli-
gence-gathering was immediately ordered by the President.³ Mand-
dated with pro forma investigative powers as a Special Representative
of the State Department was one Curtis B. Munson.⁴ His mission: to
get as precise a picture as possible of the degree of loyalty to be found
among residents of Japanese descent, both on the West Coast of the
United States and in Hawaii.

Carried out in the month of October and the first weeks of
November, Munson’s investigation resulted in a twenty-five-page report
of uncommon significance, especially as it served to corroborate data
representing more than a decade of prodigious snooping and spying
by the various U.S. intelligence services, both domestic and military.
It certified a remarkable, even extraordinary degree of loyalty among
this generally suspect ethnic group.

Yet, for reasons that still remain obscured, this highest level
“double-checking” and confirmation of favorable intelligence con-
sensus—that “there is no Japanese problem”—was to become one of
the war’s best kept secrets. Not until after the cessation of hostilities,
when the report of the secret survey was introduced in evidence in the
Pearl Harbor hearings of 1946, did facts shattering all justification
for the wartime suppression of the Japanese minority come to light.

What is more remarkable, perhaps, is that to this very day, the
unusual significance of these findings has been strangely subdued.

Evidence would indicate that the Munson Report was shared
only by the State, War, and Navy departments; yet, paradoxically,
Cordell Hull, Henry L. Stimson, and Frank Knox, who then headed
up these Cabinet posts, were to end up being the most determined
proponents of evacuation. Researchers and historians have repeatedly
—and with justification—leveled an accusatory finger at Stimson’s
War Department cohorts as being the Administration’s most indus-
trious evacuation advocates. The question naturally arises: Were aides
of the Secretary kept in the dark regarding the “bill of health” given
the vast majority of the Japanese American population?

On February 5, 1942, a week before the go-ahead decision for
the evacuation was handed down, Stimson informed the Chief Execu-
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tive in a letter sent along with the President’s personal copy of the Munson Report: “In response to your memorandum of November 8 [see Appendix 10], the Department gave careful study and consideration to the matters reported by Mr. C. B. Munson in his memorandum covering the Japanese situation on the West Coast.” This meant that the General Staff had had fully three months to study, circulate, review, and analyze the contents of the report before it was returned to the President.5

Owing to the wartime concealment of this important document, few, if any, realized how totally distorted was the known truth in pre-internment hysterics emanating from the military, with the exception of those in naval intelligence and the FBI, whose surveillance of the Japanese minority over the years had been exhaustive. Both services, to their credit, are on record as having opposed the President’s decision for evacuation.6

To the average American the evacuation tragedy, well shrouded as it remains in tidied-up historical orthodoxy and in the mythology spawned by the “total-war” frenzy, remains no more than a curious aberration in American history. Only during the civil rights turbulence of the sixties, when personal liberties of unpopular minorities were once again in jeopardy, was interest sharply rekindled in this blurred-out episode in America’s past. A generation of the nation’s youth, who had grown up knowing nothing or little of so colossal a national scandal as American-style concentration camps, suddenly demanded to know what it was that had happened. Noticed also was an upsurge of interest among the “Sansei” (the children of the second-generation “Nisei”), some of whom had been born in these camps, who now wanted to be told everything that their parents and grandparents, the “Issei,” had tried so hard to forget.7

Yet the enormity of this incredible governmental hoax cannot begin to be fathomed without taking into consideration the definitive loyalty findings of Curtis B. Munson, especially in relation to the rationale that in 1942 “justified” the sending of some 110,000 men, women, and children to concentration camps: namely, that an “unknown” number of Japanese Americans presented a potential threat of dire fifth-column peril to the national security, that it would be difficult to sort out the dangerous ones in so short a time, so to play it safe all should be locked up.

II

Behind it all was a half century of focusing anti-Asian hates on the Japanese minority by West Coast pressure groups resentful of them as being hyperefficient competitors. An inordinate amount of regional anxiety had also accompanied Japan’s rapid rise to power.
Years of media-abetted conditioning to the possibility of war, invasion, and conquest by waves and waves of fanatic, Emperor-worshiping yellow men—inevitably aided by harmless-seeming Japanese gardeners and fisherfolk who were really spies and saboteurs in disguise—had evoked a latent paranoia as the news from the Pacific in the early weeks of the war brought only reports of cataclysmic Allied defeats.

In 1941, the number of Japanese Americans living in the continental United States totaled 127,000. Over 112,000 of them lived in the three Pacific Coast states of Oregon, Washington, and California. Of this group, nearly 80 percent of the total (93,000) resided in the state of California alone.

In the hyperactive minds of longtime residents of California, where antipathy toward Asians was the most intense, the very nature of the Pearl Harbor attack provided ample—and prophetic—proof of inherent Japanese treachery. As the Imperial Army chalked up success after success on the far-flung Pacific front, and as rumors of prowling enemy submarines proliferated wildly, the West Coast atmosphere became charged with a panicky fear of impending invasion and a profound suspicion that Japanese Americans in their midst were organized for coordinated subversive activity. For the myriad anti-Oriental forces and influential agriculturists who had long cast their covetous eyes over the coastal webwork of rich Japanese-owned land, a superb opportunity had thus become theirs for the long-sought expulsion of an unwanted minority.\(^8\)

By enlisting the support of civic leaders, politicians, and their powerful mass-media allies, with special emphasis on those important in the military, the tide of tolerance which had surprisingly followed the news of attack was reversed by what soon appeared like a tidal wave of cries for evacuation. In the more inflammatory journals, the switch-over from tolerance to mistrust had been as simple as juxtaposing news of the bestial, despised enemy with that of "Japs" in their own backyards. The public became totally confused in their hatred.

Because little was known about the minority which had long kept itself withdrawn from the larger community in fear of rebuff, it was possible to make the public believe anything. The stereotype of the Oriental of supercunning and sly intent was rekindled and exploited in such a manner that Chinese Americans and other Asians began wearing "I am a Chinese" buttons in fear of being assaulted and spat upon. The tactics used in manipulating public fears were hardly different from those used to achieve the cutoff in Chinese immigration in 1882 and in bringing a halt to all Japanese immigration in 1924.

Significant for those maximizing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity was that although the Japanese minority comprised only a
invasion, prospering our garrets—the early defeats. the conquered and California, the smallest minority group in the state, had a history of success prowling the atmosphere of a pro-reorganizational and a superb illusion of... and their important followers: a tidal wave, the "juxta-faps" in their ad long rebuff, of type of and ex-Ana assaulted ours were Chinese immigration—only a minuscule 1 percent of the state’s population, they were a group well on their way to controlling one-half of the commercial truck crops in California. Centuries-old agricultural skills which the Japanese brought over with them enabled Issei farmers not only to turn out an improved quality of farm produce but also to bring down prices. The retail distribution of fruits and vegetables in the heavily populated Southern California area was already a firmly entrenched monopoly of Japanese Americans.

And it was in the name of the citizen Nisei that much of the rich growing acreage belonged to the immigrants.

Like the Chinese before them, the immigrant Japanese were denied the right to become American citizens. Because they lacked this right of naturalization, they could not own land. Even the leasing of land was limited by a 1913 land law to three years. But the Issei found ways to get around such laws devised to drive Orientals away from California, the most popular of which was for the Issei to purchase property in the name of their citizen offspring.

It was a common practice among the Issei to snatch up strips of marginal unwanted land which were cheap: swamplands, barren desert areas that Caucasians disdained to invest their labor in. Often it included land bordering dangerously close to high-tension wires, dams, and railroad tracks. The extraordinary drive and morale of these hard-working, frugal Issei who could turn parched wastelands, even marshes, into lush growing fields—usually with help from the entire family—became legendary. In the course of the years, notably during periods of economic crisis, a hue and cry arose of "unfair competition" and accusations that "the Japs have taken over the best land!"

Then, with the wild tales of resident Japanese perfidy that Pearl Harbor unleashed, rumors flew back and forth that Issei landowners had settled in stealth and with diabolical intent near vital installations. Their purpose: a "second Pearl Harbor." At the Tolan Committee hearings, then ostensibly weighing the pros and cons of evacuation, impressive documentation was unfurled by the top law officer of California, Attorney General Earl Warren (later to become the Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court), purporting to support his theory of a possible insurrection in the making: that, with malice aforethought, Japanese Americans had "infiltrated themselves into every strategic spot in our coastal and valley counties." Substantiation of this county-by-county penetration read, in part, as follows:

Alameda County
Japs adjacent to new Livermore Military Airport.
Japs adjacent to Southern Pacific and Western Pacific Railroads.
Japs in vicinity of Oakland Airport.
Japs in vicinity to Holt Caterpillar Tractor Co., San Leandro...
San Diego County

Thirty miles of open coast broken by small water courses with a Jap on every water course.

Thirty miles of main railroad and highway easily blocked by slides, etc., with Japs throughout their entire length.

Japs adjacent to all dams supplying water to San Diego and vicinity.

Japs adjacent to all power lines supplying the city of San Diego and vicinity.9

There was no possible way of separating the loyal from the disloyal, insisted the Attorney General: “... when we are dealing with the Caucasian race we have methods that will test the loyalty of them... But when we deal with the Japanese we are in an entirely different field and we cannot form any opinion that we believe to be sound.” Warren urged speedy removal.

Unfortunately for the Nisei and Issei, it was an election year. The tide of “public opinion”—the ferocity of the clamor, at least—indicated total unconditional removal, citizen or not. And all politicians were falling in line.

In a desperate last-ditch effort to halt the mass uprooting, Nisei leaders proposed the formation of a volunteer suicide battalion, with parents as hostages to insure their good behavior. Just one opportunity to demonstrate the depth of Nisei integrity, implored Mike Masaoka, the mystic mainspring behind the audacious proposal. How else could they disprove Attorney General Warren’s outrageous assertion that “there is more potential danger among the group of Japanese who were born in this country than from the alien Japanese who were born in Japan”?

Though Masaoka’s brash proposal was summarily rejected at the time, it would later be reconsidered and implemented by the military, notwithstanding their initial insistence that America did not believe in the concept of hostages or of a segregated battalion—except, of course, for blacks.

Being one of the outstanding members of the xenophobic brotherhood of the “Native Sons of the Golden West” and not having access to Munson’s intelligence summation, Attorney General Warren may have been merely vociferating some widely held concepts of supremacist groups as he readied himself for the gubernatorial race in the fall. But the Army, which did have the facts, went on to interpret the surprising lack of disloyal activity among the Japanese minority as proof positive of intended treachery: “The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.”

Because the decision for concentrating the Japanese American population was one made in total isolation from the American people,
the justifications given for it were often conflicting, varying from author-
ity to authority. Humanitarian groups and civil libertarians who sharply pro-
tested the stamping out of due process were assured that it was merely a “protective custody” measure deemed necessary to shelter “these admirable people” from mob action. Yet when violence and intimidation were encountered by families who attempted volunta-
arily to relocate themselves in the “Free Zone” of California (the eastern half) and in intermountain areas of the American interior, not one move was made by federal authorities to help stem the harass-
ment and vigilantism so that an orderly resettlement might have been made possible. The proven failure of this voluntary movement, halted by a military freezing order on March 27, 1942, was given as one more justification why “drastic measures” were called for. The Nisei who pleaded to be allowed to remain free, and Caucasian friends who attempted to aid them, were reduced to helplessness, since Washington and the military insisted they had knowledge of certain facts not known to the average person, that only the authorities were equipped to know what was best for the “Japanese.”

To explore such facts not then known to the U. S. citizenry, in-
deed, to cut through the morass of long-nurtured, still-persisting myths, is therefore the primary objective of this chapter.

III

Apart from occasional brief references to the Munson Report in works of scholarly research, the eye-opening loyalty findings of Curtis B. Munson have yet to receive merited exposure in the pages of his-
tory. As it is a document which brings into better perspective the often grievously misunderstood and misinterpreted 1942 federal action, its more pertinent passages have been excerpted for examination in the pages which follow. For readers interested in studying the report in its entirety, a reprint of the document may be found in the Pearl Harbor hearings of the 79th Congress, 1st session. The original copy of the report may be found at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. A duplicate copy may be found in the files of the Assistant Secretary of War, National Archives.

A far greater portion of the allotted investigatory time had been spent by Curtis Munson in probing the West Coast Issei and Nisei; for the three naval districts (11th, 12th, and 13th) covered in Munson’s coastal survey encompassed the full length of the West Coast—Southern California, Northern California, Washington, and Oregon. The report on the findings of the Special Investigator began as follows:

JAPANESE ON THE WEST COAST

Ground Covered

In reporting on the Japanese “problem” on the West Coast the facts
are, on the whole, fairly clear and opinion toward the problem exceedingly uniform. . . . Your reporter spent about a week each in the 11th, 12th, and 13th Naval Districts with the full cooperation of the Naval and Army Intelligence and the FBI. Some mention should also be made of the assistance rendered from time to time by the British Intelligence. Our Navy has done by far the most work on this problem, having given it intense consideration for the last ten or fifteen years. . . .

Opinions of the various services were obtained, also of business, employees, universities, fellow white workers, students, fish packers, lettuce packers, farmers, religious groups, etc. The opinion expressed with minor differences was uniform. Select Japanese in all groups were sampled. To mix indiscriminately with the Japanese was not considered advisable chiefly because the opinions of many local white Americans who had made this their life work for the last fifteen years were available . . .

In other words, long before the bombs began to fall on Pearl Harbor, efficient counterintelligence activity along the West Coast of the United States had resulted in all necessary loyalty-disloyalty information on Japanese Americans being evaluated, correlated, and catalogued—an impressive amount of amassed data representing more than a decade's worth of surveillance and intelligence-gathering. What is equally impressive is that this vast accumulation of military and domestic intelligence estimates (including opinions of private organizations, individuals, and informers) was, "with minor differences," in the estimation of the presidential sleuth, "exceedingly uniform."

Yet, with amazing aplomb, the Army, whose own intelligence service had been an integral part of the investigative teamwork, was to maintain boldly throughout that the loyalties of this group were "unknown" and that "time was of the essence." If the time factor had, indeed, been so critical as to prevent holding hearings to separate the loyal from the disloyal, it is curious that some eleven months were to elapse before the last of such men, women, and children constituting a special menace were removed from restricted areas.

For the benefit of executive officers deficient in knowledge of the "Japanese background," historical and sociological background data "as [they have] a bearing on the question" were then briefly summarized by Munson. "No estimate of the elements characteristic of the Japanese is complete without a word about 'giri,'" explained the Special Investigator, displaying a keen power of observation for a non-specialist working under obvious pressure:

There is no accurate English word for "giri." The nearest approach to an understanding of the term is our word "obligation," which is very inadequate and altogether too weak. Favors or kindnesses done
to a Japanese are never forgotten but are stored up in memory and in due time an adequate quid pro quo must be rendered in return. . . . "Giri" is the great political tool. To understand "giri" is to understand the Japanese.

Individuals aware of this ingrained character trait of the Japanese were even then attempting to convince the President that the strategy of tact and civility would prove more constructive than threats, sanctions, and affronts to Japan's pride. Among such individuals concerned for peace was the eminent theologian E. Stanley Jones, who sought repeatedly in the months preceding the attack to convince the President that if America were to revoke its punitive protectionist stance and accord discretionary treatment to a "have-not" nation vexed by problems of an exploding population, Japan would not only doubly reciprocate but also might possibly end up as an ally.

Severely damaging then to the Nisei was the habit of being lumped as "Japanese," or the pejorative "Japs," which also meant "the enemy." Munson was careful to point out to policy makers that "in the United States there are four divisions of Japanese to be considered." A brief definition of each followed:

1. The ISSEI—First generation Japanese. Entire cultural background Japanese. Probably loyal romantically to Japan. They must be considered, however, as other races. They have made this their home. They have brought up children here, their wealth accumulated by hard labor is here, and many would have become American citizens had they been allowed to do so. [The ineligibility of Orientals to acquire citizenship through naturalization had been determined by a Supreme Court decision: Ozawa v. U.S., 260 U.S. 178(1922).] They are for the most part simple people. Their age group is largely 55 to 65, fairly old for a hard-working Japanese.

2. The NISEI—Second generation who have received their whole education in the United States and usually, in spite of discrimination against them and a certain amount of insults accumulated through the years from irresponsible elements, show a pathetic eagerness to be Americans. They are in constant conflict with the orthodox, well disciplined family life of their elders. Age group—1 to 30 years.

3. The KIBEI—This is an important division of the NISEI. This is the term used by the Japanese to signify those American born Japanese who received part or all of their education in Japan. In any consideration of the KIBEI they should be again divided into two classes, i.e. those who received their education in Japan from childhood to about 17 years of age and those who received their early formative education in the United States and returned to Japan for four or five years Japanese education. The Kibei are considered the most dangerous element and closer to the Issei with special reference to those who received their early education in Japan. It must be noted,
however, that many of those who visited Japan subsequent to their early American education come back with added loyalty to the United States. In fact it is a saying that all a Nisei needs is a trip to Japan to make a loyal American out of him. The American educated Japanese is a boor in Japan and treated as a foreigner . . .

4. The SANSEI—The Third [sic] generation Japanese is a baby and may be disregarded for the purpose of our survey.

One of the gross absurdities of the evacuation was that a preponderance of those herded into wartime exile represented babes-in-arms, school-age children, youths not yet of voting age, and an exhausted army of elderly men and women hardly capable of rushing about carrying on subversion. The average age of the Nisei was eighteen. The Issei’s average age hovered around sixty.

The Nisei generation, the American-born and -educated, had appeared relatively late on the scene, for only after years of saving up from his meager earnings did the early male immigrant send back to Japan for a bride. “Between these first and second generations there was often a whole generation missing,” notes sociologist William Petersen in a January 9, 1966, New York Times Magazine article, “for many of the issei married so late in life that in age they might have been their children’s grandparents.” Owing largely to this generational chasm which separated the Issei from their fledgling offspring, the Nisei suffered not only from a serious communication gap—neither group speaking the other’s language with any facility—but from the severe demands of an ancestral culture totally alien to the Americanizing influence of the classroom: a culture which emphasized strict conformity as opposed to individuality, duty more than rights.

The Kibei, the return-to-America Nisei, were an extreme product of this paradox. Some 8,000 of these native-born Americans had received three or more years of schooling in prewar Japan, often a desperate and sacrificial move on the part of parents at a time when even the highest level of educational preparation could not break down white employment barriers on the West Coast. Severe maladjustment problems were usually the lot of the Kibei on their return to a Caucasian-dominated society, causing some to withdraw into a shell of timidity. Ostracized not only by whites but also by their more Americanized peers as being too “Japanesey,” the Kibei (often the older brothers and sisters in the family) suffered in angry isolation, feeling contemptuous of the Nisei as being a callow, culturally deprived generation whose “kowtowing” to whites they found distasteful. Marched into concentration camps before many had had a chance to readjust to the culture shock, and where the Kibei were subjected to stricter security surveillance, the more strident camp firebrands and disruptive deviants were inevitably to emerge from this group of misfits.
The factor of ethnicity, or "racial guilt" for the crime of adhering to old world cultural patterns, had been another of the bizarre arguments advanced by the military in justification for the preventive detention of a minority. In the words of Colonel Karl Bendtsen, the Army architect-to-be of the racial uprooting, it was highly suspect that Japanese Americans were then part of a "national group almost wholly unassimilated and which had preserved in large measure to itself its customs and traditions." In the event of a Japanese invasion, he determined, the Issei and Nisei would hardly be able to "withstand the ties of race."

And for Secretary of War Stimson, mere racial identification with the fiendish Asiatic foe, whose military might had been woefully miscalculated, was cause enough to have little confidence in the American-born Nisei: "Their racial characteristics are such that we cannot understand or trust even the citizen Japanese." 10

In striking contradiction to such insinuations and untruths fabricated of prejudice, a far kindlier assessment of Issei and Nisei acculturation, aspirations, and value priorities had been documented for the President in the weeks prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Munson's prewar assessment had been strongly positive; his commendation of the Nisei was glowing:

Their family life is disciplined and honorable. The children are obedient and the girls virtuous. . . .

There are still Japanese in the United States who will tie dynamite around their waist and make a human bomb out of themselves. We grant this, but today they are few. Many things indicate that very many joints in the Japanese set-up show age, and many elements are not what they used to be. The weakest from a Japanese standpoint are the Nisei. They are universally estimated from 90 to 98 percent loyal to the United States if the Japanese-educated element of the Kibei is excluded. The Nisei are pathetically eager to show this loyalty. They are not Japanese in culture. They are foreigners to Japan. Though American citizens they are not accepted by Americans, largely because they look differently [sic] and can be easily recognized. The Japanese American Citizens League should be encouraged, the while an eye is kept open, to see that Tokio does not get its finger in this pie—which it has in a few cases attempted to do. The loyal Nisei hardly knows where to turn. Some gesture of protection or wholehearted acceptance of this group would go a long way to swinging them away from any last romantic hankering after old Japan. They are not oriental or mysterious, they are very American and are of a proud, self-respecting race suffering from a little inferiority complex and a lack of contact with the white boys they went to school with. They are eager for this contact and to work alongside them.

Noting the "degrees to which Americans were willing to believe almost anything about the Japanese," Professor Roger Daniels (Con-
In 1941, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) was still a politically unsophisticated neophyte organization preoccupied with the problems of how to better the status of their own minority in the United States; most Nisei were not yet old enough to belong to it. In an eagerness to gain white approval, by moved by the deep and unselfish ideals of the Republic, the League had early taken the route of superpatriotism, leading in time to a near-systematic disavowal of things Japanese. This marked compulsion on the part of the minority’s youth generation to demonstrate an extraordinary allegiance may have accounted for the excellent bill of health given the Nisei, generally, and the Investigator’s positive recommendation to policy makers: “the Japanese American Citizens League should be encouraged.” Which military and civilian authorities proceeded to do to such a discriminatory degree that the manifest partiality shown JACL leaders in the stressful removal and adjustment period was to later become the fundamental cause of intracamp ferment.

Contradicting widely held assumptions to the contrary, Munson’s following assessment of the immigrant group reveals the personal esteem in which many Issei had been held as individuals, even in the face of mounting prewar feelings:

The Issei, or first generation, is considerably weakened in their loyalty to Japan by the fact that they have chosen to make this their home and have brought up their children here. They expect to die here. They are quite fearful of being put in a concentration camp. Many would take out American citizenship if allowed to do so. The haste of this report does not allow us to go into this more fully. The Issei have to break with their religion, their god and Emperor, their family, their ancestors and their after-life in order to be loyal to the United States. They are also still legally Japanese. Yet they do break, and send their boys off to the Army with pride and tears. They are good neighbors. They are old men fifty-five to sixty-five, for the most part simple and dignified. Roughly they were Japanese lower middle class, about analogous to the pilgrim fathers.

A strong factor in the Issei’s ability to adapt to their inhospitable environment was that most of the immigrants had come from the lower rung of the social and economic ladder of their highly class-conscious homeland, thus were inured to inequalities in rights. Their self-effacing, uncritical admiration of America despite obvious repudiation was something “short of miraculous,” recalls the Reverend Daisuke Kitagawa, an Episcopal priest from Japan who had worked among degree TI thei ac be indu Father Whe knew even him woul inva pain for lon e Japa but:

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among them in the less populous Pacific Northwest, where a lesser degree of discrimination was experienced than in California.

The Issei’s admiration of, and ever-increasing attachment to, their adopted land was profoundly reinforced as the Nisei began to be inducted into the Army under the Selective Service Act of 1939, Father Dai notes discerningly:

When he saw his son standing proudly in a U. S. Army uniform, he knew that he had been wedded to the United States for all these years, even though there had been many in-laws, as it were, who mistreated him. . . . At that moment the Issei was in a frame of mind that would easily have led him to fight the Japanese forces, should they invade the Pacific Coast. Emotionally it would have been an extremely painful thing for him to do, but he would have done it just the same, for he saw quite clearly that it was the only thing for him to do as one who had been “wedded” to the United States. The traditional Japanese ethic, when faithfully adhered to, would not only justify, but more positively demand, his taking the side of the United States.\(^{11}\)

The Nisei “show a pathetic eagerness to be Americans,” had been Munson’s perceptive summation, and it was an apt one; for it described the state of mind of a substantial majority of draft-age Japanese Americans then pridefully answering their nation’s call to arms as a heaven-sent opportunity to prove that, first and foremost, they were Americans—that their love and loyalty were for the Stars and Stripes.

The report continued: “Now that we have roughly given a background and a description of the Japanese elements in the United States, the question naturally arises—what will these people do in case of a war between the United States and Japan?” In other words, could Japanese Americans be trusted to withstand the ties of “blood” and “race” in the ultimate test of loyalty, of being pitted against their own kind? Would there be the banzai uprisings, the espionage and sabotage long prophesied and propagated by anti-Oriental hate exploiters? “As interview after interview piled up,” reported Investigator Munson, “those bringing in results began to call it the same old tune.”

The story was all the same. There is no Japanese “problem” on the Coast. There will be no armed uprising of Japanese. There will undoubtedly be some sabotage financed by Japan and executed largely by imported agents . . . In each Naval District there are about 250 to 300 suspects under surveillance. It is easy to get on the suspect list, merely a speech in favor of Japan at some banquet being sufficient to land one there. The Intelligence Services are generous with the title of suspect and are taking no chances. Privately, they believe that only 50 or 60 in each district can be classed as really dangerous. The Japanese are hampered as saboteurs because of their easily recognized
physical appearance. It will be hard for them to get near anything to blow up if it is guarded. There is far more danger from Communists and people of the Bridges type on the Coast than there is from Japanese. The Japanese here is almost exclusively a farmer, a fisherman or a small businessman. He has no entree to plants or intricate machinery.

Despite the restrained intelligence estimate that “only 50 or 60 in each district can be classed as really dangerous,” the ferocity of the sneak attack which followed provided apparent justification for a ruthless sweep for suspects, made possible by the blanket authority given the Attorney General by Presidential Proclamation No. 2525, of December 7, 1941. Over 5,000 Issei and Nisei were pulled in by the FBI, most of whom were subsequently released after interrogation or examination before Alien Enemy hearing boards. Over 2,000 Issei suspects bore the anguish of having businesses and careers destroyed, reputations defiled in being shipped to distant Department of Justice detention camps for an indefinite stay.

Herbert V. Nicholson, a former Quaker missionary to Japan who then headed up a Japanese American congregation in Los Angeles, recalls the haphazardness of the indiscriminate pickups—that the FBI, with the help of law enforcement officers:

... picked up anybody that was the head of anything. The same thing they did when Lenin and the Communists took over in Russia. ... Anybody that was a cho—that means “head”—he was picked up. Heads of prefectural organizations were picked up. Just because we come from the same country, we get together occasionally, see, and just have a social time and talk about our friends back in Japan. But everybody that was head of anything was picked up, which was a crazy thing. ... Because of public opinion and pressure, others were picked up later for all sorts of things. Buddhist priests and Japanese language schoolteachers were all picked up later ... because of public opinion, they picked up more and more.\textsuperscript{12}

Since it was assumed that years of social and legislative slights had hopelessly estranged the Japanese American minority, little did authorities then realize that with all their zealotry, not one instance of subversion or sabotage would ever be uncovered among the Issei, or a single case involving the Nisei. James Rowe, Jr., then second-in-command at the Justice Department as the Assistant Attorney General (today a prominent Washington attorney) recently admitted with candor that “we picked up too many ... some of this stuff they were charged on was as silly as hell.”\textsuperscript{13}

The four-week probe of the West Coast “problem” had ended up putting the Nisei entirely in the clear. Munson was positive the enemy would look elsewhere for agents: “Japan will commit some
sabotage largely depending on imported Japanese as they are afraid of and do not trust the Nisei."

There will be no wholehearted response from Japanese in the United States. They may get some helpers from certain Kibei. They will be in a position to pick up information on troop, supply and ship movements from local Japanese. . . . [Another salient passage that may have alarmed the President.]

For the most part the local Japanese are loyal to the United States or, at worst, hope that by remaining quiet they can avoid concentration camps or irresponsible mobs. We do not believe that they would be at the least any more disloyal than any other racial group in the United States with whom we went to war. Those being here are on a spot and they know it.

IV

A total of nine days were spent by the Special Investigator in Honolulu. As had been done in the Pacific Coast probe of the Japanese minority, an independent check was made with "the full cooperation of Army and Navy Intelligence and the FBI" on intelligence estimates of each agency, culled from years of accumulated surveillance data. Munson's assessment of the Hawaiian-Japanese problem began as follows:

The consensus of opinion is that there will be no racial uprising of the Japanese in Honolulu. The first generation, as on the Coast, are ideologically and culturally closest to Japan. Though many of them speak no English, or at best only pigeon-English, it is considered that the big bulk of them will be loyal. . . . The second generation is estimated as approximately ninety-eight percent loyal. However, with the large Japanese population in the Hawaiian Islands, giving this the best interpretation possible, it would mean that fifteen hundred were disloyal. However, the F.B.I. state that there are about four hundred suspects, and the F.B.I.'s private estimate is that only fifty or sixty of these are sinister. . . .

Following the Pearl Harbor assault, 980 suspects from the Hawaiian-Japanese community were to be pulled in by authorities and penned up at the Hawaiian Detention Center before their removal to mainland Justice Department camps. It is worth noting that the Honolulu-based FBI appears to have exercised far more restraint than its West Coast counterparts, considering that twice as many mainland Issei were to end up in Justice's custody.

A marked difference between the kind of discrimination being practiced on the Islands as compared to that on the mainland caught the attention of the Special Investigator. On the West Coast, there was no mistaking that racial attitudes were at the root of the animosity
against the Issei and Nisei: "there are plenty of ‘Okies’ to call the Japanese a ‘Yellow-belly,’ when economically and by education the Japanese may not only be their equal but their superior.” On the other hand, discrimination as practiced in Hawaii (where the Japanese “fit in” because “the bulk are dark-skinned of one kind or another”) struck Munson as being based more on one’s financial standing—on whether one fitted in on a social and economic basis.

The result of this is that the Hawaiian Japanese does not suffer from the same inferiority complex or feel the same mistrust of the whites that he does on the mainland. While it is seldom on the mainland that you find even a college-educated Japanese-American citizen who talks to you wholly openly until you have gained his confidence, this is far from the case in Hawaii. Many young Japanese there are fully as open and frank and at ease with a white as white boys are. In a word, Hawaii is more of a melting pot because there are more brown skins to melt—Japanese, Hawaiian, Chinese and Filipino. It is interesting to note that there has been absolutely no bad feeling between the Japanese and the Chinese in the islands due to the Japanese-Chinese war. Why should they be any worse toward us?

More than a few Nisei and Kibei detained by Hawaiian authorities were to end up, with family members, in mainland “relocation centers,” where the breezy outspokenness of Hawaiian youths and their uninhibited tendency to be openly resentful of insult was to come as a shock and special vexation to administrators—accustomed, as they were, to the docile, more taciturn mainland Nisei.

However marked the difference in personality makeup, the compelling need to demonstrate love of country and loyalty to the flag was a character trait shared in common by both the Hawaiian and mainland Nisei, or one might gather as much by their positive attitude toward Army enlistment—no doubt a moral imperative—“country before self”—passed on to them by their duty-conscious parents. Noted the Investigator:

Due to the preponderance of Japanese in the population of the Islands, a much greater proportion of Japanese have been called to the draft than on the mainland. As on the mainland they are inclined to enlist before being drafted. The Army is extremely high in its praise of them as recruits. . . . They are beginning to feel that they are going to get a square deal and some of them are really almost pathetically exuberant.

Postwar statistics were to dramatize this remarkable esprit de corps more tellingly. A higher percentage of Americans of Japanese ancestry ended up serving in the U. S. Army during World War II than any other racial group, divided almost equally between the mainland Nisei (13,528) and those in Hawaii (12,250). “The final count of 11,970 killed and Japanese.
count of Hawaiian war casualties revealed that 80 percent of those killed and 88 percent of those wounded throughout the war were of Japanese descent,” states Andrew Lind, writing in Hawaii's Japanese.

Los Angeles, California: December 20, 1941 (or some two weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack).

Munson offered no comments or post-mortems on the “surprise” attack which finally came—in obvious anticipation of which he had warned Washington from his Hawaiian vantage point in the early part of November: “The best consensus of opinion seemed to agree that martial law should be proclaimed now in Hawaii.”

From his post-Pearl (December 20) Los Angeles vantage point, Munson volunteered some strong private opinions on a fast-developing situation which augured no good for the Coastal Japanese.

We desire respectfully to call attention to a statement of the Secretary of the Navy evidently made to some reporter on his return to Washington after the Pearl Harbor attack as printed in the Los Angeles Times of December 18 . . . We quote, “I think the most effective Fifth Column work of the entire war was done in Hawaii with the possible exception of Norway,” Secretary of the Navy Knox said. . . . Fifth Column activities, such as in Norway, impugns [sic] the loyalty of a certain large proportion of a population. Your observer still doubts that this was the case in Honolulu. . . .

Some reaction of an undesirable nature is already apparent on the West Coast due to this statement of the Secretary’s. In Honolulu your observer noted that the seagoing Navy was inclined to consider everybody with slant eyes bad. This thought stems from two sources: self-interest, largely in the economic field, and in the Navy usually from pure lack of knowledge and the good old “eat ‘em up alive” school. It is not the measured judgment of 98% of the intelligence services or the knowing citizenry either on the mainland or in Honolulu. . . .

Knox’s allegations of foul play were providing the opening wedge for racist forces to begin reactivating slumbering anti-Oriental prejudices along the Pacific Coast. Subsequently, the climate was to take an abrupt turn toward intolerance, notably when the Roberts Commission Report on the attack, released on January 25, 1942, reinforced the misleading impression that the aid of resident traitors had been received by the spy operation then centered in the Japanese Consulate: “. . . some were consular agents and others were persons having no open relations with the Japanese foreign service.” Yet Washington was to remain remarkably silent about it. By the time official denials reached the mainland public, the developing fear hysteria had become irreversible.
Even as Munson sought to set the record straight, the President and his Cabinet had agreed, as early as December 19, 1941, to concentrate all aliens of Japanese ancestry on an island other than Oahu. Navy Secretary Knox doubted that the measure went far enough and sought, from the outset, to convince the President that citizens, too, should be included. In a memorandum of February 26, a supremely confident President assured Knox that there would be no problem in removing “most of the Japanese”: “I do not worry about the constitutional question, first because of my recent order [West Coast evacuation], second because Hawaii is under martial law. The whole matter is one of immediate and present war emergency. I think you and Stimson can agree and then go ahead and do it as a military project.”

Had the island roundup involved only aliens, as originally agreed upon, the Hawaiian evacuation might have proceeded swiftly, without hindrance. Approximately 20,000 aliens and 98,000 citizens then lived on the island of Oahu, the Japanese minority then making up one-third of the total island population. The small Issei population might have been readily replaced by an equivalent work force.

But because of Knox’s stubborn insistence on a large-scale evacuation, which would have involved some 100,000 Nisei and Issei (recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on March 11, 1942, and approved by the President on March 13, 1942), the project was to end up becoming unwieldy and unworkable, especially since the Joint Chiefs of Staff ruled on removal to the mainland “utilizing empty ships returning to the west coast” at a time when shipping facilities were being taxed to their utmost.

The Hawaiian evacuation, to begin with the removal of 20,000 of “the most dangerous” aliens and citizens, was vigorously opposed—later thwarted—by island Army and Navy authorities closer to the problem as being too costly, logistically complex, and self-defeating. As Munson had prophetically forewarned in his pre-Pearl Harbor report, “it would simply mean that the Islands would lose their vital labor supply by so doing, and in addition to that we would have to feed them . . . it is essential that they should be kept loyal.”

Accordingly—and paradoxically—it had become a veritable military necessity for authorities to retain, not detain, Hawaii’s Japanese population in a battle zone thousands of miles closer to the enemy mainland than the jittery state of California and to do everything possible to encourage their loyalty so that all would stay at their tasks.

It was in sharp contrast to the policy pursued on the West Coast in reference to a people then posing an increasing threat to the prosperity of native farmers and merchants though still an infinitesimal percentage of the population—thus expendable, both politically and
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economically. Should the “Japanese” on the mainland “prove actively disloyal they could be corralled or destroyed within a very short time,” the Special Investigator, in his prewar assessment, had dramatically punctuated this expendability.

But on the basis of the highly favorable impression he had gained during the hurried survey, Munson was moved to submit to the President his own well-considered recommendations with the reassurance: “Your reporter, fully believing that his reports are still good after the attack, makes the following observations about handling the Japanese ‘problem’ on the West Coast.”

A. The loyal Japanese citizens should be encouraged by a statement from high government authority and public attitude toward them outlined.

B. Their offers of assistance should be accepted through such agencies as:

1. Civilian Defense
2. Red Cross
3. U.S.O., etc., etc.

This assistance should not be merely monetary, nor should it even be limited to physical voluntary work in segregated Nisei units. The Nisei should work with and among white persons, and be made to feel he is welcome on a basis of equality.

C. An alien property custodian should be appointed to supervise Issei (first generation-alien) businesses, but encouraging Nisei (second generation-American citizen) to take over.

D. Accept investigated Nisei as workers in defense industries such as shipbuilding plants, aircraft plants, etc.

E. Put responsibility for behavior of Issei and Nisei on the leaders of Nisei groups such as the Japanese American Citizens League.

F. Put the responsibility for production of food (vegetables, fish, etc.) on Nisei leaders.

In essence, Munson’s power-to-the-Nisei policy was to involve federal control:

In case we have not made it apparent, the aim of this report is that all Japanese Nationals in the continental United States and property owned and operated by them within the country be immediately placed under absolute Federal control. The aim of this will be to squeeze control from the hands of the Japanese Nationals into the hands of the loyal Nisei who are American citizens. . . . It is the aim that the Nisei should police themselves, and as a result police their parents.

Munson’s suggested course of governmental action, which would have catapulted the Nisei into a position of leadership and control, might have proved sound had both the Issei and Nisei been permitted to remain at liberty as in Hawaii. But the power-to-the Nisei policy
was to become the root cause of resentment and conflict, when imposed behind barbed wire, in abortively speeding up the process whereby the still fledgling Nisei were taken out from under the control of elders, a generation to whom they owed unlimited deference and obedience.

Regrettably ignored was Munson’s strong recommendation that the public’s attitude toward the minority be positively led with a reassuring statement by the “President or Vice President, or at least [someone] almost as high”—as was the adopted policy in Hawaii, where the newly appointed Military Governor acted swiftly to squelch fifth-column rumors while assuring justice and equitable treatment to aliens and citizens alike, if they would remain loyal.

But on the U. S. mainland, where other pressing considerations apparently outweighed justice for so inconsequential a minority, fear and fiction were allowed to luxuriate as part of the total war propaganda. And for reasons that defy easy explanation, Secretary of the Navy Knox was to further crucify a powerless minority by reporting to the Tolan Committee in a letter of March 24, 1942:

... There was a considerable amount of evidence of subversive activity on the part of the Japanese prior to the attack. This consisted of providing the enemy with the most exact possible kind of information as an aid to them in locating their objectives, and also creating a great deal of confusion in the air following the attack by the use of radio sets which successfully prevented the commander in chief of the fleet from determining in what direction the attackers had withdrawn and in locating the position of the covering fleet, including the carriers. ... 17

It can only be assumed that Knox’s tissue of fallacies impugning the fidelity of the resident Japanese was meant merely to divert, to take political “heat” off himself and the Administration for the unspeakable humiliation that Pearl Harbor represented. By the convenient redirection of public rage, a nation on the verge of disunity and disaster was finally—and purposefully—united as one.

The actions of Knox and the wartime suppression of the Munson papers, like the more familiar Pentagon Papers, once again make evident how executive officers of the Republic are able to mislead public opinion by keeping hidden facts which are precisely the opposite of what the public is told—information vital to the opinions they hold.

In the case of Japanese Americans, data regarding their character and integrity were positive and “exceedingly uniform,” the facts clear cut. But as once observed by Nobel Peace Prize recipient Sir Norman Angell: “Men, particularly in political matter, are not guided by the facts but by their opinions about the facts.” Under the guise of an
emergency and pretended threats to the national security, the citizenry was denied the known facts, public opinion skillfully manipulated, and a cruel and massive governmental hoax enacted. According to one of the foremost authorities on constitutional law, Dr. Eugene V. Rostow: “One hundred thousand persons were sent to concentration camps on a record which wouldn’t support a conviction for stealing a dog.”
(2)
Hostages

I'm for catching every Japanese in America, Alaska, and Hawaii now and putting them in concentration camps . . . Damn them! Let's get rid of them now!

—Congressman John Rankin, 
Congressional Record, December 15, 1941

I

Since much of Munson's documentation for the President reads more like a tribute to those of Japanese ancestry than a need for locking them up, the question remains: Had the President, having perceived the racist character of the American public, deliberately acquiesced to the clearly punitive action knowing it would be rousing effective for the flagging home-front morale?

Or could factors other than political expedience, perhaps a more critical wartime exigency, have entered into and inspired the sudden decision calling for mass action—made as it was at a time when the Allied cause in the Pacific was plummeting, one reversal following another in seemingly endless succession?

A bit of personal conjecture: Shocked and mortified by the unexpected skill and tenacity of the foe (as the Administration might have been), with America's very survival in jeopardy, what could better insure the more considerate treatment of American captives, the unknown thousands then being trapped daily in the islands and territories falling to the enemy like dominoes, than a substantial hostage reserve? And would not a readily available reprisal reserve prove crucial should America's war fortune continue to crumble: should the scare propaganda of "imminent invasion" become an actual, living nightmare of rampaging hordes of yellow "barbarians"
overrunning and making "free fire zones" of American villages and hamlets—looting, raping, murdering, slaughtering . . .

In an earlier crisis situation which had exacerbated U. S.-Japan relations to the near-breaking point, the very sagacity of such a contingency plan had been forthrightly brought to the attention of the President by Congressman John D. Dingell of Michigan. On August 18, 1941, months before the outbreak of hostilities, the Congressman had hastened to advise the President:

Reports contained in the Press indicate that Japan has barred the departure of one hundred American citizens and it is indicated that the detention is in reprisal for the freezing of Japanese assets in the United States of America.

I want to suggest without encroaching upon the privilege of the Executive or without infringing upon the privileges of the State Department that if it is the intention of Japan to enter into a reprisal contest that we remind Nippon that unless assurances are received that Japan will facilitate and permit the voluntary departure of this group of one hundred Americans within forty-eight hours, the Government of the United States will cause the forceful detention or imprisonment in a concentration camp of ten thousand alien Japanese in Hawaii; the ratio of Japanese hostages held by America being one hundred for every American detained by the Mikado's Government.

It would be well to further remind Japan that there are perhaps one hundred fifty thousand additional alien Japanese in the United States who will be held in a reprisal reserve whose status will depend upon Japan's next aggressive move. I feel that the United States is in an ideal position to accept Japan's challenge.

God bless you, Mr. President.¹

Within two months after the crippling blow dealt by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, a fast-deteriorating situation in the soon untenable Philippine campaign moved Stimson to call for threats of reprisals on Japanese nationals in America "to insure proper treatment" of U. S. citizens trapped in enemy territory. On February 5, the very day when mass evacuation-internment plans began to be drawn up and formalized within the War Department,² Stimson wrote Hull:

General MacArthur has reported in a radiogram, a copy of which is enclosed, that American and British civilians in areas of the Philippines occupied by the Japanese are being subjected to extremely harsh treatment. The unnecessary harsh and rigid measures imposed, in sharp contrast to the moderate treatment of metropolitan Filipinos, are unquestionably designed to discredit the white race.

I request that you strongly protest this unjustified treatment of civilians, and suggest that you present a threat of reprisals against the many Japanese nationals now enjoying negligible restrictions in the
United States, to insure proper treatment of our nationals in the Philippines.  

If a reprisal reserve urgency had indeed precipitated the sudden decision for internment, the emphasis, as the tide of the war reversed itself, switched to the buildup of a “barter reserve”: one sizable enough to allow for the earlier possible repatriation of American detainees, even at the price of a disproportionate number of Japanese nationals in exchange. Behind this willingness on the part of the State Department to give more than they expected back may have lurked profound concern that unless meaningful concessions were to be made in the matter of POW exchanges, the whole procedure would get mired in resistance and inertia to the jeopardy of thousands subject to terrible suffering in enemy prison camps.

As revealed in a letter from the Secretary of the Navy to President Roosevelt, the Secretary of State, in Knox’s estimate, was being overly disconcerted by the belief that German authorities intended to hold on indefinitely to American detainees “as hostages for captured Germans whom we might prosecute under the war criminal procedure.”  

A similar alarmist concern may have been entertained by Secretary of State Hull as to the intent of Japanese authorities.

The use of the Nisei as part and parcel of this human barter was not totally ruled out in the realm of official thinking. By curious circumstance, such intent on the part of U. S. authorities became starkly evident in the latter part of 1942 and early 1943, when numerous Nisei, to their shocked indignation, were informed by Colonel Karl Bendetson in a form letter: “Certain Japanese persons are currently being considered for repatriation [expatriation] to Japan. You and those members of your family listed above, are being so considered.”

II

The removals in the United States were only a part of forced uprootings which occurred almost simultaneously in Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Central America, parts of South America, and the Caribbean island of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Canada’s decision to round up and remove its tiny (23,000) West Coast minority, 75 percent of whom were citizens of Canada, preceded America’s by about a month and may have had a decisive influence on the War Department’s decision to proceed similarly (see p. 290, fn. 4); but, in many ways, discriminatory measures imposed on the Canadian Japanese were more arbitrary and severe. An order of January 14, 1942, calling for the removal of all enemy alien males over sixteen years of age from the area west of the Cascade Mountains resulted in men being separated from women in the initial stage of
the evacuation. But a follow-up decree of February 27 demanded total evacuation, citizens as well as aliens, most of whom were removed to work camps and mining “ghost towns” in mountain valleys of the Canadian interior. Property and possessions not disposed of were quickly confiscated and sold off at public auctions since evacuees were expected to assume some of the internment expenses from the proceeds. Canadian Japanese were not permitted to return to British Columbia and their home communities until March 1949, seven years after the evacuation.

Of the 151 Alaskan Japanese plucked from their homes and life pursuits under color of Executive Order 9066, around fifty were seal- and whale-hunting half-Indians and half-Eskimos (one-half “Japanese blood” was the criterion in Alaska), some of whom were to associate with Japanese for the first time in the camps. Except for a “few fortunate ones with second-generation fathers,” 7 families were left fatherless since male nationals suffered mass indiscriminate internment in various Justice Department detention centers. Most ended up in the camp maintained exclusively for Japanese alien detainees in Lordsburg, New Mexico. Remaining family members were airlifted to the state of Washington (following a short initial stay at Fort Richardson, Alaska) and penned up temporarily in the Puyallup Assembly Center near Seattle. In the mass Japanese American exodus out of the prohibited military area during the summer of 1942, the evacuees from Alaska wound up in the relocation center of Minidoka in Idaho.

In Mexico, the Japanese residing in small settlements near the American border and coastal areas (along a sixty-two-mile zone) were forced to liquidate their property and move inland, some to “clearing houses” and resettlement camps, a number of them to concentration camps in Pahote, Puebla, and Vera Cruz.

Even less selectivity was exercised in the case of the Japanese then scattered throughout the Central American republics. Many were simply “picked up” by reason of their “hostile origin” and handed over to U. S. authorities, who, in turn, arranged for their transportation by sea or air to the U. S. mainland.

Such gunpoint “relocations” to American concentration camps became quite commonplace on the South American continent in the days and months following the Pearl Harbor attack. The reason: Considerable pressure had been applied by the U. S. State Department on various republics of the Western Hemisphere to impound, with the option of handing over to American authorities for care and custody, persons who might be considered “potentially dangerous” to hemispheric security, with special emphasis on the Japanese. More than a month before the war’s outbreak, plans for this unusual wartime action began to take shape. On October 20, 1941, U. S.
Ambassador to Panama Edwin C. Wilson informed Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles:

My strictly confidential despatch No. 300 of October 20, 1941, for the Secretary and Under Secretary, transmits memoranda of my conversations with the Foreign Minister regarding the question of internment of Japanese in the event that we suddenly find ourselves at war with Japan.

The attitude of the Panamanian Government is thoroughly cooperative. The final memorandum sets out the points approved by the Panamanian Cabinet for dealing with this matter. Briefly, their thought is this: Immediately following action by the United States to intern Japanese in the United States, Panama would arrest Japanese on Panamanian territory and intern them on Taboga Island. They would be guarded by Panamanian guards and would have the status of Panamanian interns. *All expenses and costs of internment and guarding to be paid by the United States.* The United States Government would agree to hold Panama harmless against any claims which might arise as a result of internment.

I believe it essential that you instruct me by telegraph at once to assure the Foreign Minister that the points which he set out to cover this matter meet the approval of our Government. [Italics mine.]

Funds which would be immediately needed, as in the construction of a prison camp which would serve as a staging area for transshipments to U. S. detention facilities, were to be provided by the Commanding General of the Caribbean Defense Command. And from Chief of Staff General George Marshall came the suggestion that a more liberal interpretation of persons to be detained be considered. On October 28, 1941, he wrote Under Secretary Welles:

It is gratifying to know that Panama is prepared to intern Japanese aliens immediately following similar action by the United States.

I suggest, however, that the agreement be enlarged to provide for internment by the Panamanian Government of all persons believed dangerous, who are regarded by the United States as enemy aliens, under similar conditions.

Similarly encouraged to undermine in advance any possibility of Japanese sabotage, subversion, or fifth-column treachery was Panama’s neighbor republic of Costa Rica. On December 8, 1941, upon America’s declaration of war on Japan, the U. S. Legation in Costa Rica wired the State Department: . . . ORDERS FOR INTERNMENT OF ALL JAPANESE IN COSTA RICA HAVE BEEN ISSUED.  

At a Conference of Foreign Ministers of the American Republics held in Rio de Janeiro in January 1942, a special inter-American agency (the Emergency Committee for Political Defense) to coordinate hemispheric security measures was organized, with
headquarters subsequently established in Montevideo. The Emergency Committee adopted, without delay, a resolution which had been drafted by the U. S. Department of Justice in conjunction with the Department of State which stressed the need for prompt preventive detention of dangerous Axis nationals and for the “deportation of such persons to another American republic for detention when adequate local detention facilities are lacking.”

States interested in the collaborative effort were assured that not only detention accommodations but also shipping facilities would be provided by the United States “at its own expense.” The State Department offered an additional incentive: It would include any of the official and civilian nationals of the participating republics in whatever exchange arrangements the U. S. would subsequently make with Axis powers.

More than a dozen American states cooperated. Among them: Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. Three states, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay, instituted their own detention programs (Paraguay, for one, promptly arrested the two Japanese residing within her borders). Since Argentina and Chile held back breaking off diplomatic relations with the Axis powers until much later, both nations took no part in the hemispheric imprisonments.

In time, the State Department was able to claim that “the belligerent republics of the Caribbean area have sent us subversive aliens without limitation concerning their disposition”; but four republics—Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico—exacted “explicit guarantees” before turning over internees. Panama liberally granted the U. S. “full freedom to negotiate with Japan and agrees to the use of Japanese internees . . . for exchange of any non-official citizen of an American belligerent country.”

The concept of hemispheric removals had its origin in the State Department, but responsibility for the success of the operation was shared by the Departments of War, Navy, and Justice. With the safety of the Panama Canal a veritable life-or-death matter after the near annihilation of the Pacific Fleet, it appears that all concerned acted on the conviction that the threat to continental security was so grave as to outweigh the momentary misuse of executive, military, and judicial power.

As a direct result of the hemispheric nations’ agreement to “cooperate jointly for their mutual protection,” over two thousand deportees of Japanese ancestry were to swell the already impressive U. S. barter reserve by ending up in scattered mainland detention camps, whose existence was virtually unknown then to the American public (see Appendix 3). Though the deportees were legally in State
Department custody, the custodial program for them was supervised by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the U. S. Justice Department.

III

As for persons of Japanese ancestry residing in the democratic republic of Peru, racial antagonism fed by resentment of the foreign element as being exceedingly successful economic competitors had more to do with the Peruvian Government's spirited cooperation than its concern for the defense of the Hemisphere. The steady economic encroachment of the resident Japanese and their alleged imperviousness to assimilation had aroused increasing nativist hostility; and anti-Japanese legislation and restrictive ordinances of the West Coast type had been copied through the years, culminating with the revocation, by executive action, of citizenship rights of Nisei possessing dual citizenship. Racial feelings against the Japanese minority, abetted by the press, had burst into occasional mob action even before the Pearl Harbor attack. And much of the blame for the cut-off of Japanese immigration in 1936 had been attributed to the "social unrest" stirred up by the unwanted minority because, in the words of Foreign Minister Ulloa, "their conditions and methods of working have produced pernicious competition for the Peruvian workers and businessmen."

Accordingly, 80 percent of the Latin-American deportees of Japanese ancestry was to be contributed by the government of Peru, an enthusiasm stimulated not only by the opportunity presented to expropriate property and business (Law No. 9586 of April 10 authorized seizure of Axis property) but also to rid the realm of an undesirable element. On July 20, 1942, Henry Norweb, the U. S. Ambassador to Peru, informed the State Department of President Manuel Prado's manifest fervor in this regard:

The second matter in which the President [Prado] is very much interested is the possibility of getting rid of the Japanese in Peru. He would like to settle this problem permanently, which means that he is thinking in terms of repatriating thousands of Japanese. He asked Colonel Lord to let him know about the prospects of additional shipping facilities from the United States. In any arrangement that might be made for internment of Japanese in the States, Peru would like to be sure that these Japanese would not be returned to Peru later on. The President's goal apparently is the substantial elimination of the Japanese colony in Peru.18

Pressure in the name of "mutual protection" had obviously paid off. Only three months earlier, a dispatch from the American Embassy in Lima had underscored the gravity of the subversion potential in

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Democratic foreign visitors had operation on steady alleged hostility; the West with the fisei pos-minority, an before cut-off of the "social words of working folk and deportees of Peru, sent to il 10 au-lm of an the U. S. President.

In light of such concerns among Embassy officials of the Lima Legation, the Peruvian President's unexpected eagerness to cooperate to the fullest came as a welcome turn of events and as an instant go-ahead for the core of U. S. advisers to assist in widening the scope of Peruvian expulsions. An intradepartmental State Department memo noted ways in which the operation might be expedited:

President Prado has officially stated his willingness to have this deportation program carried through. . . . The suggestion that Japanese be removed from strategic areas should be followed and this should be carried on by well-paid police; even if this necessitates a loan from this government. All police charged with supervision of Japanese should be well paid. [Legation had warned that Peruvian law officers "are susceptible to Japanese bribes . . . their alertness cannot be depended upon."] The suggestion that Japanese be expelled whether they are naturalized Peruvians or not might be met by a denaturalization law.

Arrests were made in swift, silent raids by the Peruvian police, who first confined detainees in local jails, then turned them over to the custody of U. S. military authorities. Then began the strange odyssey which would take them northward to the United States mainland: "We were taken to the port of Callao and embarked on an American transport under strict guard and with machine gun pointed at us by American soldiers." As it was found that immunity from deportation could be "bought" by a generous bribe unless the removal was swiftly expedited, Army Air Transport planes were used in a number of cases involving the "extremely dangerous," usually the wealthier and influential Peruvian Japanese considered high-priority trade bait. After a short stopover in the Panama-based internment camp used as a staging area, deportees were shipped on to various Department of Justice detention centers in the States, after landing at a Gulf Coast or West Coast port.

More fortunate prisoners enjoyed reunion with family members at the Crystal City Internment Camp in Texas, the only "family camp" operated by the Justice Department where detainees were
dealt with as "prisoners of war." Even the voluntary prisoners. The latter were mostly women and children. A total of 1,094 of them, officially designated as "voluntary detainees," answered the State Department's "invitation" to place themselves in war-duration voluntary incarceration with the 1,024 men who had been seized and spirited to the mainland by the U. S. military.

The question of whether the reunion program had been undertaken as a direct means of swelling the U. S. barter stockpile or whether the entire procedure represented a "humanitarian" concession on the part of the State and Justice departments is a matter still shrouded in mystery.²²

By late October of 1942, fears concerning hemispheric security had greatly diminished. A pounding U. S. counteroffensive in the Solomons had finally begun to check the thrust of the Japanese juggernaut in the Pacific. And with the mass transportation of the coastal subnation to the inland camps nearing completion, Hull hastened to advise the President of what, to the Secretary of State, were still overriding reasons why there should be no setup in the hemispheric removals—at least of "all the Japanese . . . for internment in the United States."

There are in China 3,300 American citizens who desire to return to the United States. Many of them are substantial persons who have represented important American business and commercial interests and a large number of missionaries. They are scattered all through that part of China occupied by the Japanese. Some of them are at liberty, some of them are in concentration camps, and some of them have limited liberty, but all of them subject to momentary cruel and harsh treatment by their oppressors. Under our agreement with Japan which is still operating, we will be able to remove these people. It will take two more trips of the Gripsholm to do so. In exchange for them we will have to send out Japanese in the same quantity. . . .

In addition, there are 3,000 non-resident American citizens in the Philippines. We have no agreement for their exchange but it has been intimated that Japan might consider an exchange of them. It would be very gratifying if we could obtain those people from Japanese control and return them to the United States. But to do so we would have to exchange Japanese for them. That would take two more round trips of the Gripsholm.

Still, in addition, there are 700 civilians interned in Japan proper captured at Guam and Wake. It is probable that we might arrange for their return. But in order to obtain them we would have to release Japanese. . . .

With the foregoing as a predicate, I propose the following course of action:

. . . Continue our exchange agreement with the Japanese until the Americans are out of China, Japan and the Philippines—so far as possible. . . .
Continue our efforts to remove all the Japanese from these American Republic countries for internment in the United States.
Continue our efforts to remove from South and Central America all the dangerous Germans and Italians still there, together with their families . . . 23 [Reparaphrased by author]

In the Secretary of State’s recommended course of action, the precise wording of the directive is significant: Note the qualifying prerequisite, dangerous, in reference to hostages-to-be of German and Italian nationalities. In Hull’s implied suggestion of more discriminating treatment of non-Oriental Axis nationals, while calling for wholesale removal—dangerous or harmless—of “all the Japanese,” evidence again lies tellingly exposed of racial bias then lurking in high and rarefied places in the nation’s capital.

IV

By early 1943, the Justice Department, in its custodial role in the hemispheric operation, had become greatly alarmed at the number of internees being sent up. Worse, it had come to its attention that many being held under the Alien Enemies Act were not enemy Japanese but Peruvian nationals, thus aliens of a friendly nation; and that little or no evidence supported the Peruvian Government’s contention that their deportees were dangerous. “Some of the cases seem to be mistakes,” Attorney General Biddle wrote the Secretary of State on January 11, 1943.24

Biddle insisted on more conclusive proof that the deportees were in fact “the dangerous leaders among the Japanese population in Peru,” and he proposed sending his own representative to Peru and other donor nations to help sort out the people to be sent up. Since barter negotiations between Washington and Tokyo had then come to a standstill, Biddle balked at going along with the indiscriminate internment of bodies being sent up in ever-growing number from Peru, insisting that his department had merely agreed to “expediting temporary custody” pending repatriation.

The State Department’s primary concern was that the competence and sincerity of the donor states would be impugned if Biddle were to challenge the veracity of their criterion of “dangerousness.” But the State Department finally gave in, and Raymond W. Ickes (of the Central and South American division of the Alien Enemy Control unit) of the Justice Department was permitted to make on-the-spot reviews of all pending deportee cases. Ickes found little evidence anywhere to support the claims of the participating republics that individuals being held—or targeted—for deportation were “in any true sense of the word security subjects.” On turning down the deportation
from Venezuela of thirty Japanese, he advised the U. S. Legation in Caracas:

This is the very thing that we have to guard against, particularly in the case of Peru, where attempts have been made to send job lots of Japanese to the States merely because the Peruvians wanted their businesses and not because there was any adverse evidence against them.\textsuperscript{25}

All deportations to the United States thereafter ceased.

With the coming of peace, the once felicitous relationship between the U. S. and Peru suffered another setback. While the State Department proceeded to return various ex-hostages to their respective homelands, the government of Peru refused to allow reentry in the case of Japanese. Only a few select citizens were permitted readmission, mostly native-Peruvian wives and Peruvian-citizen children.

The Justice Department thereupon pressed ahead with an extraordinary piece of injustice on the onetime kidnappees no longer needed to ransom off U. S. detainees. With certain hierarchal changes in the Department (FDR’s death on April 12, 1945, had resulted in Tom Clark, a Truman appointee, becoming Attorney General on September 27, 1945), all were scheduled for removal to Japan despite vigorous protest that a sizable number of them had no ties in a country many had never visited; wives and children of many were in fact still living in Peru.\textsuperscript{26} The grounds for the second “deportation” of the Peruvian kidnappees was that they lacked proper credentials: they had entered the U. S. illegally, without visas and without passports.\textsuperscript{27}

From despair arising from their prolonged detention without the possibility of return to their homeland or release, a contingent of some 1,700 Peruvian Japanese (700 men and their dependents) allowed themselves, between November 1945 and February 1946,\textsuperscript{28} to be “voluntarily” unloaded on Japan. Many had acquiesced to this drastic federal action in the belief that reunion with families left behind in Peru could not otherwise be achieved.

Awaiting a similarly grim fate were 365 remaining Peruvian rejects, whose desperate plight came to the attention of Wayne Collins, a San Francisco attorney then conducting a one-man war against the Justice Department in trying to extricate thousands of Nisei caught in their “renunciation trap” (see Chapter 12), another one of the extreme consequences of the evacuation tragedy.

To abort U. S. plans to “dump” this residual Peruvian group on a defeated, war-pulverized enemy hardly able to care for its own starving masses, Collins filed two test proceedings in habeas corpus on June 25, 1946, in a U. S. District Court in San Francisco after the Immigration Department contended that suspension of deportation
on a like basis as Caucasians was not permitted, and a subsequent appeal directly to the Attorney General and the President came to no avail. With the removal program brought, by court action, to a forced halt, the detainees were placed in "relaxed internment"—many of them at Seabrook Farms, New Jersey, the well-known frozen food processing plant where the labor of German POWs had been utilized during the war years, and where evacuee groups from many camps were given employment.

Collins, with the aid of the Northern California office of the American Civil Liberties Union, also sought to bring to public attention what both contended was a "legalized kidnapping" program masterminded by the State Department and sanctioned by the nation's chief guardian of decency and legality, the Attorney General, whose office and the State Department now disclaimed any responsibility for the plight of the unfortunate people.

Interior Secretary Harold Ickes (father of Raymond W. Ickes), the only high-level officer of the FDR Administration to speak out in criticism of the State and Justice departments' highly clandestine proceedings, took issue with Attorney General Clark, then seeking the U. S. Vice-Presidency spot by paying glowing homage to the nation's democratic ideals of human rights and individual liberty. This did not sit well with former Cabinet officer Ickes, who knew, through and through, the wartime injustices perpetrated on the Issei and Nisei throughout the Western Hemisphere, which, even then, were being perpetuated by Attorney General Clark's zealous pursuance of post-war deportations of "disloyals" and scores of defenseless aliens under arbitrary classification as "dangerous."  

Ickes was sharply outspoken:

What the country demands from the Attorney General is less self-serving lip-service and more action. . . .

The Attorney General, in the fashion of the Russian Secret Police, maintains a top-secret list of individuals and organizations supposed to be subversive or disloyal. What are the criteria for judging whether a person is disloyal? . . .

I cannot begin . . . even to call the role of our maimed, mutilated, and missing civil liberties, but the United States, more than two years after the war, is holding in internment some 293 naturalized Peruvians of Japanese descent, who were taken by force by our State and Justice Departments from their homes in Peru.

The resolution of the Peruvian-Japanese dilemma was to take years of unprecedented legal maneuvering on the part of lawyer Collins to untangle the mess in which so many charged with not one specifiable offense found themselves—their lives often mangled beyond repair through the prolonged splitting of families.

Changes in U. S. laws eventually enabled the Peruvian Japanese
to apply for suspension of deportation if it could be shown that deportation to Japan would result in serious economic hardship and if "continued residence" in the United States of at least ten years could be proved—with years spent in various concentration camps counting also as "residence."

Peru finally permitted reentry of the deportees in the mid-1950s, but less than one hundred returned. By then the job of reconstructing their lives had begun elsewhere.

Three hundred of the 365 rescued by Collins chose to remain in the United States. An impressive number became American citizens under the amended U.S. naturalization law of 1952, which finally gave immigrants of Asian ancestry the right to become Americans.³²
The barbed-wire stockade surrounding the 18,000 people there was like that of the prison camps of the Germans. There were the same turrets for the soldiers and the same machine guns for those who might attempt to climb the high wiring . . .

The buildings were covered with tarred paper over green and shrinking shiplap—this for the low winter temperatures of the high elevation of Tule Lake. . . . No federal penitentiary so treats its adult prisoners. Here were the children and babies as well.

. . . To reach the unheated latrines, which were in the center of the blocks of fourteen buildings, meant leaving the residential shacks and walking through the rain and snow—again a lower than penitentiary treatment, even disregarding the sick and the children.

So also was the crowding of the 18,000 people in the one-story shacks . . . In the cells of a federal penitentiary there is no such crowding.

—CHIEF JUDGE WILLIAM DENMAN,
Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, August 26, 1949

The story of the relocation camps of World War II would not be complete without thrusting deeper into the dark, hushed chapter that was Tule Lake, the relocation center turned into a segregation center, ultimately ending up as a “resegregation center” for democracy’s discards. As was the entire experiment with concentration camps on American soil, Tule Lake was an extraordinary monument to the high cost of racism: an incredible waste of once highly industrious human lives on the inside and shocking military might squandered on the outside. Its maximum-security paraphernalia included a half-dozen tanks patrolling its outer perimeter and a guard contingent of campaign-equipped troops at full battalion strength.¹
Had equally impressive preparations been made in the area of housing, sanitation, mess operation, health care, and other more human considerations, those forced to undergo another uprooting and resettlement might have been spared the debacle on debacle that followed. But a situation ripe for upheaval was set up in the "benign neglect"—or woeful miscalculation—which found over 18,000 seg-rengants of widely divergent loyalties jammed into space meant for 15,000.

To recapitulate: It was some four months after the trauma of the bungled loyalty registration that consequences for actions then taken were finally disclosed: the war-duration incarceration of all evacuees believed to be disloyal at Tule Lake. Disloyalty with regard to descendants of the Japanese had been defined by Washington as follows:

Those who had answered "no" to Question 28 or had failed to or refused to answer the loyalty question. (Conditional responses also failed to fulfill the stringent requirement of "unqualified allegiance.")

Those who had applied for repatriation or expatriation to Japan. Those whose loyalty was questionable in the opinion of the Project Director "because of previous statements or because of other evidence."

Those who had been denied leave clearance due to some unexplained adverse information found in dossier; also parolees from alien internment camps recommended for detention.

Except for repatriates and expatriates summarily denied review privileges,² mitigation hearings were permitted persons who wished to change their original answers. But the reexamination procedure, to determine whether or not petitioners were still adhering to "pro-Japanese views," merely reopened wounds; and the feeling of having been tricked and violated was irreversible among many who appeared before the hastily improvised hearing boards manned by junior camp functionaries often grievously prejudiced against the Kibei and Buddhists. Impassioned outbursts against a country which had jailed them, slandered them, and stripped them of rights had little to do with the petitioners' disloyalty to America or loyalty to Japan. Though generally interpreted as a dereliction of allegiance, it was a registering of grief, disappointment, anger, and sometimes rage, against what the Nisei and Kibei considered disloyalty on a mammoth scale—America's disloyalty to them.

Numerous Issei held to disloyalty as a means of "getting back to California" (Tule Lake was still within its borders), or because of the pervasive fear that declaring themselves loyal would mean being turned loose without resources. The top-security camp for disloyals, where leaves reportedly were to be strictly prohibited, appeared to
offer a wartime haven for evacuees whose economic base had been shattered and for families worried over the possible reactivation of the draft.

Many Kibei chose Tule Lake imprisonment because of an overwhelming sense of frustration generated by obvious official distrust of the group, which clouded their hopes of ever being accepted in America. Segregation opened up the possibility of reunion with loved ones in Japan and of a future in the Orient, "where I won't have to live on the wrong side of the tracks just because my face is yellow." The hearings actually resulted in an increase of inmates requesting transfer to Tule Lake.  

Also undergoing their third relocation within a year were individuals "who wish to accompany family members." Many who fell in this category had no choice. There were grandparents, close relatives, the old, the young, the enfeeled, who could not be left behind. There were youths resignedly accompanying elderly parents who wished to end their days in Japan. There were school-age children by the thousands. Only those over seventeen years of age were given the right to defy parental pressure and stay behind.

In the months of September and October 1943, the mass re-shuffling took place. While the shipment of 9,000 "disloyals" to Tule Lake got under way, about the same number of Tulean "loyals" were ordered out and redistributed among the other centers.

This left approximately 6,000 original settlers remaining in Tule Lake, many of whom had quickly embraced the disloyalty stigma merely to avoid being evicted. Over 1,000 of them were "loyals" who simply refused to be expelled, who decided to take a stand against being forever pushed about. Some balked at subjecting the sick, the old, and infirm in their family to another grueling move to distant, unfamiliar surroundings. And at a time of sharp cutbacks in employment, individuals with fairly decent means of earning their $16 a month were unwilling to give them up. Many quickly stepped into even better jobs, which opened up with the mass eviction.

Only much later did these technically loyal residents legitimatize their "disloyalty," to placate authorities, by signing up for repatriation.

II

Called in as administrator of this troubled and undoubtedly most fortified city then in the Western Hemisphere was a former Southern Californian, Raymond R. Best. Educated in Los Angeles, a veteran of the Marine Corps in World War I, and father of a son in the Air Corps, Best had had ample experience in dealing with "troublemakers" of the Japanese variety. Moab, and later Leupp,
the Stalinist-style citizen isolation camps for political dissenters, had been set up by Raymond Best.5

Being one in whom distrust of the “Japanese” was perhaps more than slightly ingrained (in the wake of his initial evacuee involvement), Best was an unhappy choice for a position requiring infinite tact and understanding, considering that only a small minority could be considered disloyal in an ideological sense—when half the population were children under eighteen years of age.

Doubly lamentable was the fact that to Washington decision makers suffering ever-increasing pangs of a “constitutional conscience,” the wretched multitude corralled at Tule Lake represented, at long last, impressive justification for the harsh preventive detention measures heretofore taken.6 Segregation had finally resulted in the concentration of “bad apples” to be conveniently expelled at war’s end from American soil.

Unaware of this pervasive bureaucratic assumption, transeree activists and center politicians had no idea of the drastic consequences which would follow attempts to organize for better conditions. In voting in so many “no-no” transferees to head the “Negotiating Committee” of the hastily formed protest faction, the Daihyo Sha Kai,7 inordinate apprehension of local and Washington administrators had been aroused. Dossiers were already in Best’s possession on most Kibei activists voted into office, including that of George Kunitani (pseud.), a twenty-eight-year-old transferee from Jerome chosen as head spokesman.

Kunitani’s “first impressions” of deplorable center conditions and of the tactless, surprisingly testy Project Director are worth noting as a preface to events to follow. Since evacuee mail underwent lawless snooping and scrutiny at times of heightened tension, raw material for analysis (such as Kunitani’s letter to a Community Analyst acquaintance back in Jerome, which follows) was often sent on surreptitiously to WRA headquarters. More than likely, Kunitani’s letter had ended up back in Tule Lake—on the desk of Project Director Best.

On my second day here I went to see Mr. Raymond R. Best, the Project Director, with Rev. Kai, and Messrs. Kimura and Kobayashi. We were more than disappointed in him. Therefore a call from Dr. Opler [Tule Lake Community Analyst] coming at the heel of my unimpressive meeting with Mr. Best was certainly welcome. If I may say so, Dr. Opler seems to be just the type of a man needed in a center such as this. Of course, it is too premature for me to comment extensively about Dr. Opler as yet. My skepticism about Mr. Best lies in the fact that he does not seem to understand the Japanese at all. To understand the residents will have to be the prerequisite for Mr. Best especially when he has been bestowed with the responsibility to
operate a center of this nature, the likes of which does not exist in this country. Unless he makes the right start, his task will become unnecessarily strenuous. He certainly has left us with an unforgettable bad impression when he started his conversation by saying, “I don’t recognize any group activity, I don’t care what you have done in the past, but as far as this center is concerned you shall represent no group or groups of people; I am not interested in your demands.” Imagine, a project director speaking in that tone!! We went there to meet him, not to make demands or even a request! It was very rude of him to receive us in that manner, especially in view of the fact that Mr. W. O. Melton, the Assistant Project Director for Jerome who accompanied our train to Tule, was the one who introduced us to Mr. Best. I don’t know the real reason for his hot-tempered behavior, but if he thinks that he can employ such high-handed methods in administering us, I’m afraid he is making a big mistake. Well, so much for Mr. Best. If you can make any suggestion to him, I deem it wise for you to do so, not only for us but also for Mr. Best so that he may have less difficulty in running this unique center.

The conditions existing at this center are a mystery to me. The facilities, the sanitations, the administration, in fact, much as I would like to appraise favorably in at least one phase ... I can’t find a thing ... And I thought Jerome was a hell hole! Even the set-ups among the residents such as the co-op seem to be corrupted. There is a definite clean-up job to be done and I think the newcomers will do the work. The most pressing item appears to be dust control. Next should come sanitation work in showers and lavatories. It would be a disgrace for the State of California which claims such a high standard of living to let an unsanitary condition such as this exist within its own borders. The filthy condition of shower-rooms and toilets are beyond words. ... The over-crowdedness of this center should be cared for as soon as humanly possible. It was really a crime to induct so many people without proper facilities. Every recreation hall is filled with bachelors. In some instances, two separate families are grouped up in one unit.8

III

It was Project Director Best’s mishandling of a farm accident which had first spurred Kunitani and a number of concerned Kibei into furious activity.

A truck carrying farm hands had overturned, seriously injuring five of the twenty-eight occupants, killing a seigelee from Topaz. When it was learned that an inexperienced minor had been the driver of the truck, all were quick to blame the WRA. A work stoppage ensued.

Best’s first mistake was to abort, by making the public address system inoperable, a massive public funeral for which he had de-
t exist in me.

"I don't think I'll ever forget that day."

There was no need to force the issue, for the community was already well aware of the situation. The protest committee had, nevertheless, pressed ahead with their plans; and thousands had turned out for the ceremony to honor the memory of Mr. Kashima, whose tragic end symbolized the suffering and injustice which had befallen them all.

When it was learned during the same day that the monthly compensation for the widow of the deceased would be a scant two-thirds of the small $16-a-month salary of a farm worker, shock waves of anger and disbelief reverberated throughout a community already overwrought by what they considered a callously inhuman act on the part of the Project Director.

At this point, even the "old Tuleans"—the more conservative element in the community—fully backed the spirited young activists who sprang to the ramparts to organize and take action against the fast-accumulating abuses and injustices, unimpressed by the power arrangement which had them chronically pushed around, inured to deplorable conditions. Though it was unheard of to speak sharply or defiantly to Caucasians in demanding one's rights, most agreed that it was high time for new tactics.

The farm work stoppage was now deliberately calculated to bring matters to a crisis stage. The 2,900-acre operation supplied tons of produce to the Army and Navy, to various relocation centers and their military garrisons. The saving of the crops depended on negotiating a swift settlement.

On October 26, the Daihyo Sha Kai leaders squarely confronted administrators with the complaints of the community. The no-nonsense intensity of spokesman Kunitani and others comprising the Negotiating Committee caught the Project Director completely off guard. Withering under the barrage of charges—of overcrowding, deplorable sanitation, wretched living and working conditions, insufficiency of milk for children, deficiencies in the diet—the Project Director could do little but acknowledge the validity of many of the grievances, blaming Congress for the disastrous speed-up in segregation. But Best did not take kindly to being presented with "demands" which, among other things, included the WRA's recognition of a prisoner of war status (under the Geneva Convention) for all Tuleans; their accepting the responsibility for the farm accident; the confinement of farm production to only Tule Lake needs; and the "completion" of segregation by a physical separation of the loyal and "fence-sitters" in an area separate from those desiring to make their future in Japan.

As for the crucial farm impasse, hot words were exchanged over more decent compensation for the injured, safeguards against accidents, and over the ten-day work stoppage then jeopardizing some
$500,000 worth of vegetables. But even as he went through the motions of negotiations, Project Director Best had already arranged for the importation of strikebreakers.

Not until a few days later did some 800 “retroactively” terminated farm workers discover through a San Francisco newspaper the real reason behind their summary layoff: Quartered outside the camp were “loyals” from other relocation centers working for a dollar an hour, making in two days what Tuleans normally made in a month!

IV

On November 1, 1943, the National Director, Dillon Myer, visited Tule Lake. The protest group quickly organized a demonstration involving over 5,000 men, women, and children, hoping this would impress the Director with the community-wide extent of its discontent. With Kibei youths in charge, a human barricade encircled the administration building for three hours while within, Myer and administrative heads were confronted with charges of widespread neglect, incompetence, and corruption. A list of eighteen demands were made for an immediate redress of grievances, including retroactive restitution for farm workers terminated “in bad faith,” the upgrading of food allowed per person from twenty-seven cents to forty-five cents per day; the establishment of an evacuee governing body, and the resignation of Best and other staff workers accused of being imperious, inept, and harboring feelings of racial superiority.\textsuperscript{10}

As strong-arm squads prevented the Caucasian personnel from taking leave of the building, the more excitable among the staff members viewed the sudden surly and disrespectful behavior as a prelude to massacre. Troops were alerted and “tanks in the military area were warmed up” to charge in at a moment’s notice.\textsuperscript{11} But lacking sufficient provocation, the meeting had ended in orderly Japanese fashion—following a brief address by Myer—climaxd by the thousands of milling demonstrators being commanded to respectfully bow to the National Director before being allowed to disperse.

Yet, the mammoth demonstration had thrown those of uneasy conscience into a paroxysm of unreasoning terror. Some fled to a nearby town. A rash of resignations followed. Construction of a man-proof fence separating the “white” quarters from the colony was immediately begun, and sweeping police powers, including the authority to call in the Army, were given WRA security officers. Macabre rumors soon had the surrounding countryside horror-struck.

Not all papers and news services sought official verification of the rumored camp insurrection, which had been immediately picked up by the media. Wildly distorted stories proliferated, some of them no doubt given by the

MEMORANDUM

Serious concern exists regarding the treatment of evacuees at the Tule Lake War Relocation Authority camp. The problem is being addressed, but measures are needed to ensure the welfare and dignity of the evacuees. The Director of the camp is being asked to take necessary steps to improve conditions.

For what it's worth, I recommend that we consider requesting federal intervention to address the situation.

I am glad you are doing this investigation.

The scuffle was not as intense as expected.

Truax, who was suspected of being a strikebreaker, was hit by a crowd of evacuees running to his aid.

One of the evacuees, who was hit by Truax's gun, was reported to be in critical condition.

The incident occurred near the entrance of the camp.

It is possible that the situation could escalate further.

Might it be necessary to take immediate action?

The premises were on fire just like a fit of lights at the—soon
doubt giving rise to the grotesquely garbled version given the President by the Attorney General:

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Serious disturbances have recently taken place at a relocation center of the War Relocation Authority at Tule Lake. . . . Five hundred Japanese internees armed with knives and clubs shut up Dillon Myer and some of his administrative officers in the administration building for several days. The Army moved in to restore order.

The feeling on the West Coast is bitter against the administration for what they think is its weak policy towards the Japanese. I believe that we should make an immediate FBI investigation, and indict if any crimes have been committed. . . . Hoover, however, hesitates to make the investigation on account of the presence of the Army, and because the War Relocation Authority has heretofore made it difficult for the FBI agents to get the facts.

I suggest that it would make for better cooperation if you direct that the investigation be made. I enclose a memorandum which you may wish to send to me. 12

V

The Army invasion of Tule Lake actually took place three nights after the protest demonstration, triggered by a relatively minor scuffle.

Trucks driven off by Caucasians had sent a swarm of evacuees racing toward the "white" area, determined to prevent what they suspected was the clandestine loading of food "belonging to us" for strikebreakers. In the National Director's own words: "The advance of this crowd was resisted by several WRA internal security officers, one of whom tripped, struck his head on a stone, and was then struck by evacuees with clubs. No other persons were injured." 13 Seeing the crowd then headed toward his residence, the Project Director instantly ordered in the Army—tanks, jeeps with mounted machine guns, and a swarm of campaign-equipped troops—the swift, keen precision with which it happened giving substantial indication that it might have been planned.

"Most pathetic individual in the area was a San Francisco news photographer who had not been allowed to take his camera into the premises," reported Portland's Oregonian of November 6, 1943. "It's just like Salerno and my box is outside," the newsman kept raving in a fit of frustration, as eighteen startled evacuees trapped by floodlights and challenged by guns and bayonets became the first prisoners—soon afterward, the first of the casualties. 14

Among them was a baffled sixteen-year-old who later recounted
the circumstances surrounding his arrest and three weeks’ incommunicado detention:

On the night of November 4, 1943, we were, as usual, in the Motor Pool for we were working from 3:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. on that night-shift. About 8:30 P.M., Mr. Jarrett, Mr. Zimmer, and a few other Caucasians came in with requests for farm trucks. . . . when they presented the requests, the signature of the Motor Pool head was missing. I told them that we could not issue trucks without the proper papers and signatures . . . so I turned and asked my fellow workers in Japanese what I should do. The head dispatcher came and took care of the matter.

Nothing more happened until about 9:15 P.M. About that time, we noticed a commotion outside and we saw the army coming in. Everyone thought it was nothing until the soldiers began to charge. A few of the workers thought it better to leave but one of the older fellows said that we would not be in any danger for we worked in the Motor Pool and should be there. But the soldiers came in and told us to get out or suffer the consequences. We left, and as we ran towards the colony (for they were making us run), Captain Archer came up and stopped us. Without a word, we were taken into the Administrative building and lined up. We were forced to keep our hands above our heads until they took us individually for questioning. This was difficult since you couldn’t link hands. Some of the fellows we saw in there were bloody.

When I was being questioned, Mr. Jarrett came up and said that I was the one who spoke in Japanese and told them not to give him a truck. After my questioning, we were taken to the hospital and kept there under guard for four days. On November 8th, we were taken into the Army compound and kept there with no trial or anything until we moved into the Army Stockade. I was questioned a few times during my stay there. On November 28th, I was released.

At the time of this incident and my stay in the Stockade, I was 16 years of age. But when I told the authorities they would not believe me, and insisted I must be older . . . While I was in, some men were questioned or third-degreeed and some were hurt or physically injured. I didn’t know what the “politics” was all about, but it struck me as a big mistake. The only reason I was stuck in there was because I had a night-job in the Motor Pool . . .

Throughout the nation, the “Jap rebellion” received spirited media coverage, wreaking havoc upon WRA relocation efforts. “For a week or so in early November, Tule Lake displaced the battlefronts in top news interest with the West Coast press,” the WRA noted. Lurid accounts of the uprising, based largely on imaginings of Caucasian ex-employees, served as fodder for the racist press, inspiring such editorials as the following:

It’s something of a relief to learn that Army forces—“some of whom are veterans of the fighting in the Pacific area”—have taken over at
the Tule Lake internment center for disloyal Japanese and, presumably, "have the situation well in hand."

The War Relocation Authority policy of coddling and kid-gloving these treacherous, fanatical, insolent monkey men finally has resulted in an incident which promises to clean up the whole mess.

Protecting the Nation from the thousands of disloyal Japanese rounded up after Pearl Harbor is a military policing job, not a welfare worker's tea party.16

VI

With the Army seizure of Tule Lake, fear, regimentation, and mass repression became the dominant theme. Effectively wiped out was the "weak policy toward the Japanese" troubling coastal patriots. The segregation center was soon an armed camp, crawling with troops, security patrols, and FBI agents.

A 7 P.M. to 6 A.M. curfew was strictly enforced, and arrest followed arrest of marked men. Tear gas was used on crowds which failed to disperse when ordered. Schools closed. Recreational activities ceased. Work crews were slashed to a minimum.

Though mute, the community response was angry and impassioned. Especially resented was the wholesale purge of suspected dissidents from work crews, a program vigorously pursued by the Commandant as a means of cutting the payroll and getting more intensive work per man. The residual work force soon found itself in the embarrassing position of being categorized as "proadministration." As time went on few, if any, reported for work for fear of being considered inu. Outside of hospital and mess operations, all services soon ground to a halt.

Meanwhile, the Negotiating Committee attempted to bridge the widened gap between the community and the administration, unaware that political rivals were busily making discrediting reports to the Commandant that they were a "Jerome faction" and not representative of Tule Lake residents. Attendance at a November 14 Army-WRA mass outdoor assembly had been earlier ordered by the Commandant, during which the committee, along with Army and WRA administrators, was to make its report to the community. But since a day earlier, Kunitani and his liaison team had been abruptly informed that the Army refused to recognize them as representatives of the entire community, they failed to get the people out.

Not one evacuee, in fact, showed up for the impressively staged rally, an insubordination which was to bring on staggering consequences. The zero attendance was witnessed by a lone WRA official:

Colonel Austin . . . arrived at the scene a little before the set time with a detachment of M.P.'s. Armed guards were stationed around
the stage and armored cars made a cordon around the ground where an audience was supposed to gather. . . . At two o’clock, no one came and there was no sign of anyone coming to hear his speech. Like an Army man, true to his tradition, Austin began his speech. No one was there. Not a single soul! Colonel Austin spoke to the air. . . . It was a pitiful sight which I cannot forget. 17

Suspect insurgents were speedily dealt with. Arrest orders quickly went out for all members of the Negotiating Committee, leaders of the farm group, and others suspected of having a hand in the movement of noncooperation. Word of the roundup raced through the project and many men went into hiding.

Almost immediately, martial law was declared to give the military unchecked powers of search and seizure; and in the days to follow, terroristic night raids reminiscent of the Gestapo’s midnight knocks snared one suspect after another. On November 26, a camp-wide dragnet was instituted as a result of the community’s refusal to betray their hidden leaders. The deployment of a vast army of soldiers enabled two teams to work from each side of the camp toward the center firebreak. Squads of MPs made a thorough search of the grounds, barracks, living quarters, and personal possessions, with WRA security officers assisting in the assault. To justify this massive intrusion of privacy, a wide variety of personal property was seized as contraband, such as wooden canes, binoculars, hatchets, short wave radios, rice, homemade sake, etc. 18

In this all-out drive to crush the resistance, Kunitani and three of his Negotiating Committee members proved too elusive for the Army dragnet. Ninety other men were pulled in during the sweep—mostly “no-no” Hawaiians from Jerome and Topaz, whose role as strident social critics and fist-swinging antiadministration “toughs” was no longer being tolerated.

The violent expansion of arrests led to the building of a prison setup within the fenced-in “white area.” High barbed wire fencing and four guard towers impressively set apart the six detention barracks, referred to by the colony as the “stockade.” Washington, however, did not recognize it as a prison within a concentration camp. Officials scrupulously referred to it as the “segregated area,” “Area B,” or the “separated area” in their correspondence. 19

Within the stockade, human rights were all but stamped out in order that the community might be kept in ignorance of what was occurring within. Mail was censored and held up for long stretches at a time. As inmates were kept in strict incommunicado detention, medical attention and access to the base hospital were denied, as were visits from family and friends. Authorities eventually stopped the daily waving to wives and children when inmates were found weeping on the wire wall was bu

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on the wire gate of the compound. A twelve-foot-high beaverboard wall was built to obstruct the view.

VII

As a protest against the Army’s suppressive tactics, Tuleans were to persist for more than two months in their stubborn adherence to the Daihyo Sha Kai policy of “status quo” calling for unconditional release of stockade victims, passive noncooperation with the military, and absolute noncapitulation to official demands that they select a new set of community leaders. Even in hiding, the dissident delegation managed to keep the spirit of resistance amazingly buoyed by channeling directives through a satellite “Communications Committee,” the Renraku-iin.

But the price of noncooperation began to take its toll on the embattled community. Along with the futility of jobless and hopeless days, young and old suffered acutely from the constant disruption in services: from sudden cutoffs in the milk supply, shortages in food, hot water, fuel, warm clothes. In the freezing cold of midwinter, according to a Tulean, “many people with children had no shoes, no money, no clothing. Some of the children were beginning to go bare-footed.”

As the health of residents became imperiled, the Army made its first major concession: Whether suspected of antiadministration behavior or not, every worker in the coal and garbage crew was restored to employment. Jeeps and armored cars were also pressed into service to accelerate delivery of the desperately needed coal and foodstuffs.

Quiet despair within the distraught community soon erupted into fault-finding and recriminations. Although Kunitani and his fugitive colleagues had enjoyed wide approval at the outset as men with mettle enough to stand up for evacuee rights, the hardships of Army rule enabled the opposition—“old-timers” who made up the moderately inclined, administration-favored minority—to spread the seed of disaffection. They blamed the Army’s regressive tactics and the misery of prisoners in the stockade on Daihyo Sha Kai lack of diplomacy and extremist ardor. The tension and conflict sharpened, more than ever, the differences between “loyals” and “disloyals.” Even among the ranks of the once passionately loyal Renraku-iin retainers, growing public cynicism raised troubling doubts; and a few among the team of seven soon lost total interest and enthusiasm for their thankless—and dangerous—role as liaison for sought-after leaders in hiding.

Stung by the mounting wave of criticism, and fearing a complete loss of prestige, Kunitani and others turned themselves in to FBI
agents on December 1, 1943. On the assumption that the agents from Justice would grant them a fair hearing, a complete record of Daihyo Sha Kai activities was also handed over to the FBI. But the webwork of tyranny was absolute. The FBI men promptly marched the activist leaders over to the Commandant, who immediately incarcerated them in the “little stockade,” which was made up of flimsy isolation tents devoid of heat. After surviving eleven freezing days and nights under heavy guard, Kunitani and others were thrown in with the main stockade population.

The desperately awaited visit to Tule Lake on December 13 of the San Francisco-based Spanish Consul found supporters and relatives of stockade detainees in a thorough state of imbalance—many furious that the Consul had not come sooner. The high-handed treatment, the searing humiliations, the unbridled invasion of rights had heightened their emotional ties with Japan. Citizen wives and relatives hysterically implored the Consul to report the outrage without delay to Tokyo, insisting that with the total abrogation of citizenship rights at Tule Lake, they had a right to be considered “Japanese” and were entitled to the intercession of the Japanese Government.

The Consul raised grievous doubts that the Embassy would, in any way, interfere in matters involving citizens of the United States; but the emissary felt he had succeeded in urging the Commandant to permit the selection of an evacuee arbitration team to help in resolving the stockade issue. After the Consul’s departure the following day, seven block representatives were selected to negotiate with the Commandant. But, without warning, these men also ended up in the stockade.

Pulled in, likewise, by order of the Commandant—now determined to make a clean sweep of all vestige of leadership—were many of the remaining block representatives. A mere handful were to escape this second dragnet.

VIII

The first of three hunger strikes to be undertaken by stockade inmates in a fit of desperation was begun on New Year’s Day, 1944—a move triggered by a run-in with guards. In Kunitani’s words: “... the detainees in the front row were asked by the soldiers to remove the foodstuffs [cakes, fruits, and cigarettes sent in over the holidays] from the barracks to the truck. Some detainees hesitated and, being slow in their actions, were kicked and prodded with bayonets. This was the direct reason which started the detainees on the hunger strike...”

Notwithstanding Army efforts to keep news of a situation capable...
of triggering international repercussions from going beyond the stockade walls, rumors swiftly circulated throughout the colony.

Meetings were held at the Mess Halls almost every day to determine what to do to save the people in the stockade. Block 20 decided to send women and young girls to see if any negotiations could be made in releasing of the representatives of its block. Men did not go because they might be detained. . . . Different women went on three different days and talked with the lieutenant, but it was very definite that the block Daihyosha could not be released . . .

In face of administration efforts to keep all stockade happenings confidential, daredevil Kibei youths were taking the risk of carrying on yelling conversations with inmates whenever the sentry was found not to be at his post. A letter from underground activists, dated January 5, 1944, finally reached the Spanish Embassy in Washington:

Dear Excellency,

May we be as selfish as to request your Excellency's attention concerning the incident at Tule Lake Center, Newell, California.

When your representative, Consul de Amat, was here on December 13, 1943, Lt. Colonel Austin, Commanding officer at the Tule Lake Center took a very kind attitude and requested the Japanese internees to send seven elderly persons to negotiate with him for the release of the then 169 persons confined in the army guard house. Consul de Amat was pleased with Mr. Austin's attitude, and left for Manzanar. Immediately after the Spanish Consul's departure, Mr. Austin's attitude turned icy cold and when he attempted to force the Japanese internees to accept his wishes and failed, he arrested the seven elderly persons mentioned above as well as approximately thirty more people.

At present more than 200 Japanese, including our nine representatives and delegates of the Negotiation Committee, are confined in the army barracks. Furthermore:

1. Japanese people who are detained in the stockade are being inhumanly treated from the military authority.
2. The food and coal situation of the people held in custody in the army guard house is very acute.
3. The army is ordering Japanese held in custody to forced labor at the point of a gun.
4. There have been cases where Japanese in custody received brutal beating and serious injury without any reason (as in the case of Mr. Nogawa and others, who are now confined to the hospital).

For the reasons above, all the two hundred people held in custody have gone on a hunger strike since January 1, 1944. . . .

Consequently may we request of your Excellency two favors, namely:

[Page 169]
1. To report to the Japanese government the facts mentioned above...

2. [To investigate] the lives and health conditions...

Almost immediately, a second letter reached the Spanish Ambassador. This one is significant in that the dispatch is dated January 6, 1944. The mass hunger fast had been terminated on that very afternoon—"after six days and two meals"—as tempers flared in close-packed conflict.

Dear Excellency:
Two hundred and seven Japanese leaders, including all the representatives of the Negotiation Committee, of the Japanese residents at the Tule Lake Camp held in the army prison have been on a Hunger Strike from January 1, 1944. Without food for a week, they are now weak and many cannot stand up... Relatives and residents are anxious about the lives of these 207 Japanese. Should they or any of them die, there may be a serious resentment on the part of the Japanese here and elsewhere toward those who were in a position to prevent but failed to prevent such deaths.

Therefore, may we humbly but urgently appeal to Your Excellency two favors:
1. Please send to Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, Tokyo, Japan, at once the following wireless message:

TO: FOREIGN MINISTER SHIGEMITSU
TOKYO, JAPAN

207 JAPANESE LEADERS, INCLUDING ALL REPRESENTATIVES, OF JAPANESE RESIDENTS AT TULE LAKE SEGREGATION CAMP HELD IN ARMY PRISON HAVE BEEN ON HUNGER STRIKE FROM JANUARY 1, 1944 STOP WITHOUT FOOD FOR A WEEK, THEY ARE NOW WEAK AND MANY OF THEM CANNOT STAND UP STOP THESE JAPANESE ARE LEADERS OF JAPANESE LOYAL TO JAPAN IN THE INCIDENT WHICH BEGAN NOVEMBER 4, 1943 STOP PLEASE MEDIATE IMMEDIATELY IN BEHALF OF JAPANESE IN TULE LAKE INCIDENT BEFORE MANY JAPANESE LEADERS DIE OF HUNGER STRIKE.
TEMPORARY TULE LAKE JAPANESE COMMITTEE

2. Please send a Spanish diplomatic representative immediately to Tule Lake...

These and other emotion-laden communications spurred the following appeal to the State Department from the Spanish Embassy. It was delivered by hand on January 11, and read in part:

URGENT MEMORANDUM... TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT
For a better understanding of the complaints of these internees, the Spanish Embassy enclose herewith copy of two of the many similar letters which this Embassy has been receiving...

The Spanish Embassy is inclined to believe, in view of reports from its R would be the aforesm among th citizens, Spanish.le.. dulgence with the... ariideo the int.. of the gr...
from its Representative, that the discontent and unrest of the internees would be greatly relieved if the "Committee for Negotiations" and the aforementioned group were to be granted their freedom. No doubt among the 204 detainees there are many Japanese who are American citizens, Second Generation who are outside the protection of the Spanish Embassy. Nevertheless, this Representation kindly asks indulgence for all in said group, entreating the Department of State, with the utmost urgency, to use its good office with the corresponding authorities that they may exert their usual benevolence and humanitarian spirit, to avert major disorders which threaten for the near future, and release not only the Japanese proper, but the Japanese American citizens . . .

The Spanish Representative in San Francisco can serve as arbiter if the American authorities should so desire, to obtain from the internees at Tule Lake their formal promise that once the release of the group in question is granted, they will return to complete normality.28

In a memo written and sent off the very day the appeal from the Embassy had been received, the Secretary of State alerted Stimson to the "vital nature of this problem arising from the desire of this government to keep open negotiations with the Japanese Government, looking toward future exchange operations through which Americans in Japanese hands may be repatriated and to do its utmost for the relief and protection of Americans under Japanese control . . ." 29

Misjudging the seriousness of its international implications, the Secretary of War remained resolute in championing the Army-WRA handling of the Tule Lake malcontents. Historically known for his strong anti-Japanese prejudices, Stimson may have readily been persuaded by the local Commandant that incommunicado detention was no more than a mild form of pest control. For it was Stimson, himself, who had insisted upon a policy of rigorous precautionary confinement for all dissidents whose basic aim and purpose, the Secretary firmly believed, was "to cause U. S. authorities as much trouble as possible." He therefore advised Secretary of State Hull in the strongest of terms:

. . . the Spanish Embassy suggests the advisability of permitting the internees now held in the separate area, numbering slightly over 200, to rejoin the main body. I have already stressed the fact that this element is vicious. To restore them to the main body would only serve to bring once more a reign of terror, under which the more peacefully inclined would be driven by threats and by force to an attitude of non-cooperation. In the interests of the majority of the residents, as well as to facilitate an orderly administration free from incident, the Spanish Embassy's proposal must be rejected. . . .30
Charges of abuse were categorically denied by the Secretary of War:

Japanese in the stockade, so-called, are not being inhumanely treated. They are being treated in the same manner as those in the main area, with the exception that they are more closely confined and are subject to two daily roll calls. The food and coal situation for those in the stockade is identical with that of the main area residents. No person in the stockade or elsewhere has been forced to labor at the point of a gun. . . . No internee in the stockade or elsewhere has been brutally beaten by any representative of the United States Government.31

The mass demonstration of November 1, involving an immense number of Tulean residents, had brought on a series of governmental probes of the local administration, much of it substantiating Daihyo Sha Kai charges of mismanagement and neglect—leading Stimson, himself, to advise the Secretary of State that “certain irregularities in the distribution of food were uncovered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and . . . curative steps were immediately instituted.” A WRA memo of December 7, 1943, to headquarters recounted other instances of administrative malfeasance:

At Tule Lake there had been considerable comment regarding stealing and mishandling of property, particularly food stuffs. . . . Our investigation which was conducted by myself, the Project internal security, and members of internal security of other projects detailed for that purpose, revealed very conclusively that some stealing had been carried on. Every case, however, pointed to the activities of one individual who was killed in a railroad accident in his car prior to the conclusion of the investigation. . . .32

It should be noted that although several persons appointed to the head property position at Tule Lake appeared qualified on paper, they were incapable of administering the work and relieved of their duties. There had been three changes in this position within a year’s time.

Mr. [Tom Nash] was requested to resign because of his unreliability as a direct result of excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages. On two different occasions within as many weeks, Mr. Nash appeared in the center in an intoxicated condition. . . . Mr. Nash further proved his inability to administer the operation of mess management particularly during the segregation program primarily because of his excessive “drinking” which resulted in his inability in handling the personnel under his direction; his inability to carry out orders and conform to established policies.

Regarding Mr. Tom Nash and others who were either requested to resign or transfer from the center because of their inability to administer their positions . . . such as, Mr. Lee in the Accounting, Mr. Weiss in Property, Mr. Kallam, Mr. Slattery and several others,
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[Reparaphrased by author]

The Tule Lake “riot” had exploded into headlines at the very
moment when the lives and safety of over 6,000 American detainees
in Japanese prison camps hung precariously in the balance as they
awaited exchange ships. In two years of war, fewer than 3,000 persons
had been exchanged; and extremely delicate negotiations had been
carried on by the State Department to accelerate the fullest possible
repatriation of U. S. citizens and to enable food, clothing, and medical
supplies to be speeded to Americans in enemy hands.

From data no doubt gleaned from the sensationalist media
coverage in the coastal area, Radio Tokyo announced on November
8, 1943: “The American Army has entered the Tule Lake Center
with machine guns and tanks, and is intimidating the residents.”

With the follow-up report from the Spanish Embassy concerning
the stockade, the 200 men being held therein, and the extraordinary
Army seizure of a camp full of civilian detainees, Tokyo called an
abrupt halt to prisoner-exchange negotiations. The cutoff proved
permanent.