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Colonel E. F. Cress

May 27, 1942

Commander K. D. Ringle

Subject: Factors making the Kibei a dangerous group

The one basic consideration is that of potential danger to the country and to the war effort. Those so classified should be those persons whose background and history would logically make them at least sympathetic to the Japanese ideology. Who are these people? If you were a member of the Japanese forces, seeking undercover agents, saboteurs, spies, fifth column agitators, or propagandists, who would be the people whom you would approach? If you were planning to place agents in a peaceful country for possible future use in case of war, whom would you educate and train in your own country and place in the peaceful country during peace for such future use?

It seems logical to assume that if the peaceful country already had a large nucleus of citizens or inhabitants of your own race and nationals, the young people of that group would be ideal. They come or are sent back to the home land in their youth, attend schools there, are young enough to be susceptible to training, can be fired to almost fanatic zeal, and could then be returned to the peaceful country as agents.

~~This is the basis for considering the kibei as suspect.~~ It seems logical to assume that any child of Japanese parents, who was returned to Japan at an early age, grew up there, studied in Japanese schools, possibly did military service in the Japanese army or navy, and then as an adult returned to the United States, is at heart a loyal citizen of Japan, and may very probably have been deliberately planted by the Japanese government.

Now, what ages are persons susceptible to such indoctrination? To be on the safe side, the writer has considered such years to be from the age of thirteen to the age of twenty. How many such years are necessary for such indoctrination? Again to err on the safe side, the writer has considered three years to be the minimum time.

If then, the above assumptions are accepted as logical and as a basis for classification, we must assume that any American citizen of Japanese - or if the test is carried to its logical conclusion, any enemy - ancestry must be suspect as potentially dangerous to the internal peace and security of the country if he falls within the category outlined. It is my considered opinion that such persons must be considered

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guilty until proven innocent beyond a reasonable doubt. He, therefore, should be segregated from those not in that classification, not allowed his liberty, not be eligible for enrollment in the WRA work corps, and should really be treated almost as an alien internee. Furthermore, the parents or guardians who sent him back to Japan must have done so for a reason. What is that reason? They must have wished him to grow up to be at heart a Japanese subject. Are not they then equally suspect? It appears to me so.

There is another reason for such segregation. There are a number of people, both alien and citizen, who if given an opportunity and assurance that such an admission would not result in bodily harm, would frankly state their desire to be considered as Japanese nationals and would like to return to Japan either in exchange for American nationals or after the war. Such people should be given the opportunity to announce this choice, and be interned, have their American citizenship revoked, and be returned to Japan as soon as possible with no opportunity of ever reentering this country as a citizen. The country would be well rid of them.

Of course in the operation of such a classification, some injustice would probably result to some individuals. Some perfectly honest and loyal persons would fall into this category. Such persons could well be given opportunity to make application for a change of status. On the basis of information submitted by such applicant, a thorough investigation as to background, reputation, employment, associates, etc., could be made to determine - not entirely loyalty - but degree of probable menace to the country. I would recommend that groups or committees of nisei of known loyalty and integrity also pass on the applicant, and that such group or committee state in writing whether or not they would be willing to sponsor the applicant. If the result of such investigation indicated beyond a reasonable doubt that the applicant was trustworthy, he could be released and take his place among the non-suspect group.

Similar grouping or tests could be made among the issei. Determining factors could be the age at which he came to America; the number and lengths of trips made back to Japan; whether or not he is a member of any nationalistic Japanese society; the strength of ties with Japan including the degree of kinship with any relatives there; whether or not contributions were made in the past to the Japanese war funds; reputation among his Caucasian American friends, neighbors, or employers; and most of all, he should likewise be passed upon by the same committee of loyal nisei as in the kibel procedure outlined above.

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It is my belief that the identity of the kibe mentioned above can be readily ascertained from US government records.

(THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH TO BE CONSIDERED CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE TIME BEING.)

Japanese Relocation Papers
Bancroft Library

The Naval Intelligence service has underway a project of combing the passenger manifests of all ships entering the country at west coast ports for the last six years, and extracting therefrom the names and other identifying data of all American citizens of Japanese ancestry who:

- (a) were sixteen years of age or over at the time of their re-entry into the United States and who
- (b) had spent three years or more in Japan.

This project had been completed in San Pedro before my departure from there with the result that 2064 people had been listed, of whom 56% were male. I do not believe that there will be the slightest difficulty in securing these lists from the navy for the purpose of segregation. It is my opinion that the navy would be very glad to see this job done. Application for copies of the lists should be made in personal conversation or confidential letter by Mr. Eisenhower to the Director of Naval Intelligence, Rear Admiral T. S. Wilkinson. I am not certain as to whether any other agency, such as FBI or Military Intelligence, possesses such lists; but doubt if theirs are as complete or compiled from such an official or authentic source as the Navy list. Based on the above figure, I estimate that there are between eight and nine thousand such persons in the United States. These, together with their parents and dependants, plus the suspect issei, will make an estimated total of not over twenty-five thousand persons.

(END OF CONFIDENTIAL PARAGRAPH)

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As an adjunct to the above program, it is felt that a large number of the persons now held in internee detention camps could be released to this issei-kibei project and their wives and dependents be permitted to join them there if the wives and dependents so desire.

An additional, and I think very forcible, argument in favor of the segregation of the kibei and potentially dangerous aliens; is the effect such a segregation would have on the American populace as a whole. If they could be assured that some step of this nature had been done, and that those persons permitted to accept private employment or to be members of the WRA work corps were only those persons whom, after sifting, the Federal government personified by the WRA, considered non dangerous; I believe much of the hysterical resentment against these people would disappear and that work opportunities and resettlement opportunities would be easier to obtain. Furthermore, people would have far less hesitancy about accepting such people for such work as harvesting crops, or even doing direct war production work.

In short, I believe that such segregation and consequent statement that the WRA considered these people safe for relocation in normal communities would infinitely assist and speed the work of the Authority, and in the long run be a very appreciable saving of government funds and effort.

I do not feel that there is the slightest objection to staging Japanese folk dances, classes in Japanese flower arrangement, or other purely artistic or cultural pursuits; provided the camp authorities are satisfied that the activity is purely artistic or cultural in nature; after all, the Japanese have a culture and art that is recognized all over the world. Would you forbid the waltz because of the German origin of much of its music, or ban the production of an opera just because its original composer was Italian? What is the difference?

There need be no apprehension whatever felt concerning the wives and dependents of men in the internee camps. After all, many of the fathers of some of the best nisei are there. The attitude of the nisei will be one of consideration and help toward such wives and children.

There is likewise no need to be concerned about intermarried couples of different races or Mestizas. The population will be very tolerant toward such cases.

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Colonel E. F. Cress

6/4/42

Commander K. D. Ringle

Subject: Americanization of Nisei

In considering the degree to which the Nisei has become Americanized and the factors bringing this about, I agree that the attitude of the Issei parents has a great influence. It has been conceded generally that there are a great many Issei who are at least passively loyal to the United States. It must be remembered always that the last Issei to enter the United States did so in 1924 - eighteen years ago. It should likewise be recognized that American influences have affected these Issei, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, constantly since that time. Furthermore, it must be remembered that one of the chief factors affecting this Americanization of Issei has been the children themselves, in the reports they bring back from their school life, their play, or from their association with white American children.

These factors have worked to a greater or less degree on the individual Issei. The real conflict between the two ideologies, American and Japanese, is in the Issei for they have their background of life in Japan and must struggle to reconcile these two very different phases of their lives.

If the above is conceded, it must therefore be conceded that the Americanization of the Nisei has proceeded with at least the tacit consent, if not the active cooperation, of many of the Japanese born parents. In fact, it is such a natural thing that it has proceeded and will proceed to a greater or less degree in spite of the active opposition of the parents. The degree to which the parents oppose it is a measure of the strength of the loyalty to Japan of the parents. That there are factors in America tending to strengthen that loyalty is conceded. These factors are the Japanese associations, the Japanese consular system, and most of all, the fact that the parents cannot become citizens of this country although they may have the status of legal residents. That some of the Nisei are more Americanized than others is not so much a measure of the success of an Americanization program as it is a measure of the strength of the opposition to such a program, usually on the part of the parents. Unless there is conscious, active, continuous opposition, the child will absorb Americanization as naturally as he breathes.

It is, I think, a Japanese characteristic to have a very great reverence for and thirst for knowledge and education. As I have said before, the teacher is a person of importance in the Japanese mind and the words and teachings of the teacher are greatly respected. Therefore, the fact that the teacher said thus and so not only affects the children but by being reported by the children to the parents affects the parents likewise. Furthermore, I do not believe it can be said that the school influence ceases with the dismissal bell. Quite the contrary. The school influence carries over into the home and to the hours outside the school through such mediums as school books, school magazines, extracurricular school activities such as games, sports, contests, hygiene, diet, dress, and so on.

I have stated previously that the Japanese is a great conformist. To a certain extent he likes reasonable amount of regimentation. Therefore, remembering that the Nisei children have always been in the minority in schools and community life, they have naturally and very conscientiously striven to conform to the standards of the majority, which are the American standards. This conformity, I believe, is far more than a surface conformity. The expression so common in England of "that thing is or is not done" is fully as applicable to the Nisei as it is to the Englishman and applies in a far greater degree than would be the case with the average American. I think this idea of conformity can best be illustrated by a story told me by Fred Tayama of Los Angeles. In discussing the evacuation program, Fred stated that the greatest concern on the part of his wife and himself was the inevitable loss of Caucasian American teachers and playmates for his children. Fred said, "My parents came over here many years ago. They desired quite earnestly to adapt themselves to the ways and customs and life in this new country. They were poor and had to work very hard for long hours in order to provide a living for themselves and for us children. They were anxious that we attend American schools; that we children who were born here and were citizens of this country should have every opportunity to make our own place in this country. Nevertheless, we suffered somewhat in that our parents could not fully bridge the gap, largely because of language, and were not able to take effective part in such American activities as Parents and Teachers Associations, consultation with the individual teachers, community meetings and projects, and other normal community activities in which the Caucasian American participates. We, the nisei, feel that we have bridged that gap. My little girl is 10 years old. She plays the violin in the school orchestra. She has a job in the school library on a volunteer basis. She belongs to a number of school associations. We are members of the Parent-Teacher Association, and freely and frequently consult with our daughter's teacher. As far as we are able to

tell, she mingles with her Caucasian schoolmates on terms of absolute equality. She can understand a very little bit of Japanese which she has picked up from her grandmother, but can not and will not speak the language at all. We have no intention of ever sending her to any language school. We value her association with her teacher and playmates above everything else, and those are the things which we are being asked to give up by this evacuee program. I deeply hope that some method can be worked out whereby contacts and friendships between the two racial groups can be maintained and most of all whereby Caucasian American ~~teachers~~ teachers can be employed on the projects to further the Americanization influence and keep alive American outside contacts." I believe that this is a typical sentiment with these people.

Some mention has been made of the influence over and on women. It is granted freely that the position of women is far, far higher in America than it is in Japan. This fact is fully as apparent in the Issei mother as it is to any other person, probably more so. The Issei mother in nearly all cases desires this higher position not only for herself but for her daughters. Even in opposition to the father, she will encourage her daughter to adopt the American standard and encourage her sons to accord women the position they occupy in American life. Furthermore, co-education proceeds to a far greater degree in this country than it does in Japan. There the boys and girls are separated into separate schools at a very early age and there is very little association between the sexes. Here coeducation proceeds through college. Boys and girls learn to know and understand each other to a degree that is completely impossible in Japan. In this manner, the girls themselves demand and receive from the boys the deferential treatment accorded to American women in general. This difference is best exemplified by the breakdown on this account of the Japanese marriage system. In Japan, marriages are arranged by family contracts, usually by means of a marriage broker or "go-between". The parties to the marriage very seldom, if ever, know one and other before the marriage. Often, they have not even seen one and other before the marriage service. In America this system has been among the first Japanese customs to be broken down. The forms still persist to some degree, largely as a sentimental concession to the parents, but in nearly all cases the boys and girls are well acquainted and in love on their own, and they themselves as a rule arrange the formalities of "go-between" and contact between families. Furthermore, so far has the Japanese custom broken down that if a marriage is attempted on the old system, the children themselves can and often do refuse to have anything to do with it unless and until a genuine acquaintance-ship and affection has developed between the two parties. It is quite customary that if the girl decides to refuse, the parents no longer insist.

This difference will be noted also in dress. The Issei women have universally adopted western costume. The Nisei, both boys and girls, despise the Japanese dress since it is confining, uncomfortable, and most of all does not conform to customary American standards. The girls in particular have taken enthusiastically to the American customs in the use of such items as cosmetics, makeup, silk stockings, methods and styles of hair dressing, and the like. It is true that on certain ceremonial occasions they do occasionally resort to the Japanese kimono. This, however, is a sort of fancy dress costume and even on these occasions the American style of hair dressing and the use of American cosmetics and makeup still persist. I have never seen in the United States a Japanese girl use the Japanese style of hair dress or the Japanese style of makeup even on the most ceremonial occasions.

Religion has likewise played its part. The Christian religion as practiced in the United States is predominate and powerful influence toward Americanization. The Buddhist religion, being very adaptable, is to a large degree conforming to the American thought and way of life. It has had to in order to persist. It has streamlined itself so that it now includes such American customs as young peoples associations in which both boys and girls participate; there are Young Men's and Young Women's Buddhist Associations, modeled on the YMCA and the YWCA. Many other customs and innovations have been introduced so that at the moment the Buddhist religion itself as a religious belief is not contrary to the American way of life. That many of the priests are alien importations who have deliberately used their influence in favor of Japan, and who may have been deliberately planted here by the Japanese government for that very purpose, is freely admitted and must always be borne in mind. Also it is conceded that most of the pro-Japanese Issei are members of the Buddhist faith and therefore may have been instrumental in the introduction of alien priests, is also conceded. Nevertheless, the tenets of the faith are perfectly acceptable and cannot be classed as anti-American.

The effectiveness of religion to me is best exemplified by the conditions on Terminal Island before the evacuation. Even in that very Japanese community, the Baptist Church was the center of community life. The Sunday School at that church was the social center of all Nisei activities. The church was far more than a place of worship. It conducted cooking and sewing classes; had church suppers, socials, baseball games, picnics and the like, all on the American way. The Pastor of that church was himself a Nisei educated in the United States and being ordained in an American Theological Seminary. There was also attached to the church a Caucasian American missionary who was a member of the Baptist Board of Home Missions. The contrast between the activities surrounding the Baptist Church and those surrounding the Buddhist Temple, which was less than a block away, was startling. The Christian Church always had at least five times as many people participating in their activities as did the Temple.

An inquiry has been made concerning the caste system among the Japanese in America. In general, it did not exist for a very good reason. Practically without exception, all of the Issei who came to America came from the same social group. Hence the caste lines were not imported. There did and do exist social distinctions, but these social distinctions as a whole are essentially the same as those in any American community. They are based on the business success, the degree of education, religion, and so on, the same as in any American community. This complete breakdown of the caste system is best exemplified by the case of Walter Taukamoto, a very brilliant young Nisei attorney from Sacramento, who has been voted the outstanding Nisei in the United States and who is admired as a speaker and as a lawyer. Taukamoto came from the "Eta" class which, as has been pointed out in a previous memorandum, were the "untouchables" who are almost pariahs in Japan.

There exists among the Nisei a desire to rise above their environment and to separate themselves, if possible, from a purely Japanese community. This was shown to me more plainly by two young men from Terminal Island, both college graduates and both young men of considerable ability. One of them asked me point blank what I thought his chances were of getting employment as a machinist in the ship building plants developing in Los Angeles harbor. He stated that he was a college graduate having a degree in engineering; that he was a good machinist with a considerable knowledge and experience in diesel engines; that in the last few years he had made his living as an engineer of a fishing boat. He stated that he could see no future in his present employment and that as long as he remained living on Terminal Island and engaged in the fishing industry, he was classed as "just another damn Jap". He thought he saw in the demand for skilled laborers in the ship yards an opportunity to separate himself from this Japanese environment, to do a patriotic service for his country, and to establish himself in a recognized trade or industry. I told him that I thought his chances were very slim, not because of his race, but merely because he belonged to a minority group in the American population of whose loyalty and integrity to the United States the people at large were not sure. He replied, "Well, thanks for the answer. It's at least an honest one and nobody can stop me from trying." But he did not get the job.

The other case is somewhat similar. The boy had made and invested a certain amount of money in the fishing industry and had profited thereby. He immediately retired from going to sea and was engaged in furnishing fishing supplies, such as nets, floats, hooks, provisions, and the like. He married the girl of his choice who had gone through high school with him and immediately purchased a lot with a most attractive house in the near town of Lomita, and removed from Terminal Island.

A third case, which to me is quite typical, is that of Harvey Hanamura. Harvey was educated in Los Angeles and was a graduate of the University of California. He likewise was engaged in the fishing industry. In the course of conversation one day he told me that he and his younger brother were the only two members of his family in the United States; that his parents had returned to Japan. He stated that his father had returned reluctantly but from a sense of duty since he, the father, was the eldest son of the eldest son, and as such, was in line for the legal position of "head of the family" in Japan; and that he had returned in response to the pleas and demands of Harvey's grandfather. Harvey further stated that his father in Japan was growing old and that he in turn was writing Harvey urging that he take up his duty and legal obligations as "head of the family" and that he, Harvey, should return. I asked Harvey if he intended to do so. He said, "Not at all, Mr. Ringle, I have been there. I went over when I was about 18 and took two years of college. I don't want any more! Furthermore, my wife was born and brought up here and is American and would be utterly miserable in Japan. Again, my son who is now only two was born here. He is the third generation. I intend to do everything I can to bring him up completely and entirely in the American way, and to sever all ties and connections between myself and him with Japan. I will never see my father or my mother again, and it is rather difficult at the moment to resist my father's pleas, but he will not live many more years and if I can hold out that long the connection will be permanently broken."

I have mentioned previously that as a rule, I believe, loyalty to be a rather predominant characteristic of these people. I still believe that. However, because of that predominant characteristic, loyalties are rather slow in being given, but once conferred are conferred without reservations. I think this hesitancy to confer loyalty accounts for a great deal of the apparent suspicion and unwillingness to accept individual leadership which has been noted in your previous memorandum. I do believe, however, that by and large, the Nisei and many of the Issei have definitely made up their minds and conferred their loyalty to the United States. I think that by and large, we are justified in counting on that loyalty.

Another feature which is commonly not realized is that the Nisei is not welcome in Japan. He is completely "fish out of water" and no one feels it more keenly than he. In making this statement, I refer to the Nisei who grow up in the United States to the age of about 17 or more and who then goes back to Japan either to finish his education or to seek employment. In Japan he is looked upon with far more suspicion than a white person. He is laughed at for his foreign ways. He is called an American spy. In other ways he does not conform and finds himself unable to do so. He can not live on the Japanese standard of living, on the Japanese diet, or accustom himself to Japanese ways of life. It is my firm belief that the finest way to make a pro-American out of any Nisei is to send him back to Japan for one or two years after he is 17 or more. Often a visit of only a few months is sufficient.

This is exemplified by the story of a maid who worked for me. Her parents had taken her back to Japan to a small farming village when she was 16. She was utterly miserable. She did not speak the Japanese language any too well - which is the case with most Nisei. She was forced into Japanese dress which was uncomfortable and in her eyes appeared ridiculous. She was laughed at and talked about and ridiculed by the entire village for her American way of thinking and her American mannerisms. She was called forward, immodest, and fresh. She was so utterly miserable that she finally prevailed upon her parents to allow her to return to the United States alone which she did. She was under the nominal charge of an Aunt, a sister of her father, who lived in Los Angeles. This charge was only nominal, however, since there was not too much money in the Aunt's family, and the Aunt had two daughters of her own. Since the girl, who was a high school graduate in the United States, had a talent for home economics, she entered domestic service where she was most happy and contented until the evacuation. At that time she was forced back into the family of her Aunt where she is none too contented, and is at the moment interned in the Santa Anita Assembly Center.

Another feature bearing on the loyalty of the Nisei is the fact, well known to me, that the Japanese themselves do not consider the Nisei loyal to Japan. This has been reflected in many of the official acts of the Japanese Consul at Los Angeles. It is a fact well known to me that the Japanese Consulate was considerably alarmed at my apparent and open friendship with the Nisei.

It may well be asked why the views expressed herein are not more common. This is attributable to the extreme youth of the Nisei, and to date as a class, to their economic dependence on the Issei. This dependence is very real, and forced many Nisei to do things which they would otherwise not have done. For instance, the holding of jobs was sometimes made contingent upon regular contributions by Nisei toward the purchase of Japanese war bonds; upon Nisei joining some Japanese Society, and the like. Also, the Caucasian Americans of power and influence whose opinions and decisions carry weight are the same people who - rightly at the time - brought about the exclusion act, and who therefore see in all Oriental faces, Issei and Nisei alike, the very alien and incomprehensible type of peasant who was entering the country twenty-five or thirty years ago. The white contemporaries of the Nisei, the young people who were their school mates, are not yet in positions of influence in politics or business. Ten to fifteen years from now when both groups have matured, these conditions would no longer obtain, and they would meet on grounds of mutual acquaintance and understanding.

To summarize the above, it is my belief that the Americanization process is a very natural one; that had not this war come along at this time, in another ten or fifteen years there would have been no Japanese problem, for the Issei would have passed on, and the Nisei taken their place naturally and without comment or confusion in the American community and national life.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
Washington

D2.01
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APR 17 1944

Honorable Harold Ickes
Secretary of the Interior

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I have your letter of 7 April 1944, in which you urge the Navy to reconsider its position with regard to the admission of American citizens of Japanese extraction in the Naval service.

This question has been raised and discussed several times, both within the Department and with the Fleet Commanders. It is recognized that the action of the Navy Department creates a morale problem among the thousands of loyal American citizens who happen to be of Japanese extraction. At the same time, it is felt that their rights and interests cannot be recognized without grave risk to our military operations.

If Japanese were permitted to enter the Navy at this time, necessarily it would be for general service, since personnel are no longer required for limited service duties. This means that these Nisei would be sent to sea or to foreign bases or navy yards. While they might be wholly loyal, it would be quite possible for disloyal Japanese to impersonate these naval personnel with highly damaging results. Furthermore, one disloyal person could do tremendous damage aboard a naval ship, while his capacity for sabotage in an Army unit, with the type of organization and employment in that service, would be very limited indeed.

The factors which prompt your suggestion are well recognized by the Navy Department, and it is regretted that so many people must suffer because of the grave potential risk which would be involved if the Navy were to make them eligible for general service.

Sincerely yours,

FRANK KNOX