

PRESSURE GROUPS AND THE WARTIME DISPOSITION OF THE
JAPANESE-AMERICAN COMMUNITY ON THE WEST COAST

The bombs which airplanes of Japan dropped on Pearl Harbor on that "day of infamy" in December 1941, had special consequences for those humans with Japanese faces who were then residents of the three states along the Pacific Coast of the United States. Within nine months 110,000 such people, two-thirds of them American citizens, were compelled by the United States Army, under authority granted by the President, to remove from California, Oregon and Washington. At first the Army ordered evacuation from only small areas surrounding strategic installations. The few thousand people affected moved outside the proscribed areas to destinations of their own choosing. Within a few weeks, however, and in the face of an apparently disintegrating military situation in the Pacific, aroused regional opinion and an harassed Commanding General forced upon the War and Justice Departments a policy of, first, mass evacuation and then mass detention. The detention began in so-called Assembly Centers and passed from them into ten semi-permanent Relocation Centers, two of which were in California, two in Arizona, two in Arkansas, and one each in Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming.

Early in 1943 the War Relocation Authority, the agency charged with the administration of the Relocation Centers, launched a policy of resettlement. Individuals who fulfilled prescribed conditions were permitted and encouraged to leave the centers to re-enter normal American life anywhere outside the Western Defense Command. Approximately one-third of the evacuees eventually took this path out of confinement.

On December 18, 1944, the War Department rescinded the order limiting Japanese and Japanese Americans from the Western Defense Command.

By November 15, 1945, all Relocation Centers were empty and closed. Approximately one-half of this American minority returned immediately to the Pacific Coast; an as yet undetermined number of others have returned since.

Americans Betrayed (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1949) by Morton Grodzins is a history of the pressures, events and thinking which led to the government's decision to order mass evacuation and detention. Mr. Grodzins is currently preparing a history of the War Relocation Authority which will continue the emphasis of the above volume on the sociology of the decision-making process in government. Professors tenBroeck, Matson and Barnhart of the University of California have prepared a study (presently at the publisher) of the policy developments of evacuation, confinement and resettlement and an analysis of the constitutional character of the litigation arising therefrom.

The effects of evacuation, confinement and resettlement on the evacuees have been the object of intensive study by social scientists. Simultaneous with the evacuation process an Evacuation and Resettlement Study group was organized at the University of California under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Swaine Thomas. Their day-by-day on-the-spot researches from 1942 to 1946 resulted in interdisciplinary studies by Dr. Thomas and her associates of two distinct groups of the evacuees. Undertaken as a study in sociology, social anthropology, social psychology, political science, and economics, The Spoilage (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1946) treats that portion of the immigrant generation which returned to Japan after the war and that group of second generation evacuees who renounced their American citizenship. These were the inhabitants of

Tule Lake. The second of Dr. Thomas's studies, The Salvage (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1952 ?), analyses in the same interdisciplinary terms the experiences of those detained evacuees who left the centers to resettle in the East and Middle West before the Army revoked the exclusion order in December 1944.

On the initiative of John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and Oscar Chapman, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, the Navy, the Office of Indian Affairs, and the War Relocation Authority jointly operated a research and advisory project group at the Colorado River War Relocation Center at Poston, Arizona. Alexander H. Leighton, director of this enterprise in applied social science, has synthesized its results in The Governing of Men (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1945).

Leonard Bloom and Ruth Riemer in the book, Removal and Return (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1949) have made a substantial start at analyzing the impact of the evacuation episode on the occupational and social status and the economic role of Japanese and Japanese Americans in California, Oregon and Washington.

Bradford Smith has written a history of Americans from Japan (J.B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 1948), including those in Hawaii, which focuses on the evacuation-detention-resettlement phenomenon. The first book published on the Japanese and Japanese American minority after evacuation was Carey McWilliam's Prejudice, Japanese Americans:

Symbol of Racial Intolerance (Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1944).

It is a general historical account of the coming of the Japanese, their place in West Coast life, the growth of hostility against them, the decision to evacuate them, the policies of the War Relocation Authority, and the mounting regional agitation against the minority after its evacuation.

These studies of the evacuation decision, of the War Relocation Authority, of Poston, of "Salvage" and "Spoilage," of constitutional and legal implications, and so on, leave two outstanding aspects of the evacuation-detention-resettlement phenomenon largely unexplored. An interdisciplinary comparative investigation might be made, beyond that done by Bloom and Riemer, of the pre-war and post-war status of these evacuees who have returned to the Pacific Coast. The other untold story, one which I wish to tell, concerns the activities of West Coast pressure groups from 1942 to 1946 relative to the "Japanese problem." Its telling would be significant as a chapter in the political and social history of the West Coast, as a chapter in the history of "race" relations in the United States, as a chapter in the history of war on the home front in the United States, and as a case study in the techniques of opinion mobilization and political lobbying.

Parts of this history have been written. Morton Grodzins in Americans Betrayed partially covered the period up to November 1942. His forthcoming study of the War Relocation Authority will touch upon the topic in the subsequent period through War Relocation Authority archives and in reference to the formation of War Relocation Authority policy.

where? A Co?

(I'm just curious)

[How about files of related agencies? "Office files" are a good bet, perhaps.

in Washington? (pressure or administrative policies & decisions?)
I am uncertain whether you are interested in pressure group activities leading to evacuation, or to detention, or both. Perhaps you should think of narrowing the thesis-area.

The major West Coast private organization which worked toward a restoration of the evacuees to normal American life was the Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play. I have written the history of the work of that committee in my masters thesis, "The Fair Play Committee." It was accepted by the Claremont Graduate School in 1952.

The list of other pressure groups whose activities were significant *vague to me* in the working out of a solution to the problems raised by evacuation includes the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Native Sons of the Golden West, the California Joint Immigration Committee and a host of less prominent professionally patriotic organizations, the Communist Party, chambers of commerce, civic clubs, agricultural and marketing associations, organizations of state law enforcement officers, legislative committees, councils of churches, the American Friends Service Committee, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the American Civil Liberties Union, labor organizations, the Los Angeles County Committee on Human Relations, local councils for civic unity and the California Federation for Civic Unity. Certain politicians, public officials, radio commentators, and other individuals who were unconnected with any specific pressure group will figure prominently in the study.

The study of these and other pressure groups and individuals, as it is presently contemplated, will consist of an analysis of their *organization?* activities, membership, financing, methods, social position, philosophy, aims, motives and influence on one another and in the determination of government policy.

pertinent

*Where was the focus of the top policies?
What were the chief policies?*

The pivotal theme will be the conflict among three groups of organizations, radical left, moderate conservative, and radical right, and the ultimate victory of the middle group.

*but these are
of superficial
categories.*

Initial research will be done in the archives of the War Relocation Authority, in the Congressional Record and the files of individual lawmakers, in reports and hearings of Congressional committees, and, if possible, in pertinent files of the Justice and War Departments. *which are? Engineers?* Wherever feasible the research materials gathered from these archives and records by Morton Grodzins will be used. They are available to me in Chicago. Conferences have been promised by ex-officers of the War Relocation Authority, and interviews with other key people will be solicited. *These will be useful, but be careful.*

The main body of the research must be done in California, Oregon, and Washington. Several of the organizations to be studied have already pledged the availability of these records. I shall negotiate with the others for similar privileges. In those instances in which such files are unobtainable, I shall rely on newspapers, interviews and the publications, if any, of the organizations in question. Systematic research will be conducted in the Seattle Post Intelligencer, the Portland Oregonian, the San Francisco Examiner and the San Francisco Chronicle, the Sacramento Bee and the Fresno Bee, the Los Angeles Times and the Los Angeles Daily News. The local press will have to be consulted for coverage of and expression of opinion about many specific developments.

A fine project.

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