

Japanese Radio Broadcasts &
EXCERPT FROM TAMIE TSUCHIYAMA'S LETTER OF MARCH 27, 1943 Summers

"Bob sent me a short excerpt from a Tule Lake report yesterday concerning the "possible influence of Japanese radio broadcasts on the reaction of people here" and informed me that you were anxious to see what I could collect in Poston. I have already touched upon this subject in several instances in my reports -- e.g. the report on the Spanish consul, page 6; and that on Alien Registration, page 6 -- and have the following on file which I had intended to incorporate eventually in a study of change in sentiments from Dec. 7, 1941 to say the summer of 1943.

According to my Issei friends Japanese radio broadcasts may be heard at 2:00 A.M. in Poston either through the long wave band (in which case it must be stronger than five tubes) or through the short wave system. There seems little doubt that there are several short wave radios in existence in Poston. The point of origin for these broadcasts is claimed to be Kiska or submarines emerging in the dark of night to broadcast off the Pacific Coast.

As far as Poston is concerned these "broadcasts" have a great effect on the relocation program. During all of October and November of last year when the sugar beet harvesters were going out in droves the broadcasts continuously advised the people in the centers not to go out. At that time they claimed that the war would soon be over -- probably about May or August of 1943 -- and that there was no necessity for relocating themselves. Shortly after November 15, 1942 these broadcasts became very specific and warned the people under no circumstances to leave the centers during the following two weeks. Interestingly enough this critical period

coincided with a rumored attack on Hawaii sometime in early December.

This aversion to going out is directly traceable to the famous speech Premier Tojo made on Dec. 9, 1941 which had a profound effect on the Japanese in America. The substance of his speech was: "I am very sorry for you but this had to take place as you may well realize. I expect you will have to go through many hardships but please endure the ordeal even if you have to sustain yourselves on wild roots and leaves. We will see to it that you will be amply compensated at the end of the war. Please do not concern yourselves with the post-war period." According to my Issei informants this speech gave the Japanese in California a renewed determination to carry on. Japan had not forgotten them. Even today whenever the occasion arises, his speech is quoted at great length to bring some obstreperous individual into line.

More recently -- to be exact on December 24, 1942 -- it was reported by someone who had presumably tuned in at Rowher, Arkansas, that Aoki, chairman of the Kikakuin or Planning Board, had announced that the Japanese government had just completed a tentative plan for the colonization of Japanese Subjects in America after the war which had been approved by the Cabinet. This was interpreted to be a reassurance to the people in the relocation centers that they had not been forgotten -- that Japan would take care of them in the post-war period. This "rumor" which originated in Rowher has been common knowledge in Poston since January.

These so-called "broadcasts" have given rise to the following widespread attitudes in Poston:

"The Japanese government is going to take care of us after the war. Why should we bother to get relocated now?"

"I'm not going out. Japanese broadcasts have repeatedly warned us not to go. Their advice is good enough for me.

"Japanese broadcasts tell us not to go out of these centers. There must be some good reason back of them."

These broadcasts have other far-reaching implications. Thus the Housing Department is at present encountering some difficulty because of them in reshuffling apartments to insure more equalization of room-space. Now that May is almost upon us many Issei become irritated when the Housing Department suggests their moving elsewhere. They complain: "Why shuffle around apartments at this time? The war will be over soon." Their deep conviction that Japan will win and will compensate them for their sufferings frequently results in attributing great significance to some rather trivial event. Thus the failure on the part of the administration to allot a clothing allowance to an evacuee might well bear international complications. For example, the other day I overheard an Issei who had failed to receive his clothing allowance for the month of October retort: "If they don't want to give it to me now it doesn't matter. After the war I'll ask the Japanese government to take care of that for me. I have my plans all made." A similar event occurred at the last block managers' meeting on March 23 when an elderly Issei attacked Evans at the close of the meeting with a volley of incomprehensible pidgin English. Since Evans appeared not to understand him one of the block managers offered to interpret for him. It turned out that

the Issei had failed to receive his January pay and was greatly indignant about it. He had worked so hard and had not been compensated. He threatened: "If you don't pay now, you'll have to pay the price when the peace treaty is signed." Tragically enough, all this is uttered in utmost seriousness. This attitude that Japan will avenge any mistreatment of her subjects finds further outlet in statements such as these:

"If the M.P's should kill one Japanese, the Japanese government will retaliate by killing five Americans interned in Japanese concentration camps." (This was uttered during the November strike).

"I tell those ketos that if anything happens to me those Americans interned in Japan will be placed on the firing line and they shut up." (This boast is attributed to Nagai, chairman of the C.E.C.)

Usually after an American broadcast announcing a great naval victory in the southwest Pacific people say: "Oh, oh, tomorrow we'll see 'Twenty Jap Ships Sunk' again." Whenever the headlines scream "20 Jap Ships Sunk" the reaction is: "Something must have happened to the U.S. Navy."

Nowadays when the Issei open their newspapers they glance first at obscure items in the back pages or at the bottom of the front page. They no longer place any credulity in the main articles of the day. Their comment to announcements of Allied losses in the Pacific is: "All those news are at least three months old. The Japanese radio broadcast them long ago." This attitude was most prevalent at the time of the announcement of the sinking of the Lexington. They claimed: "That was announced by Japan three months

ago. The Lexington is gone, the Saratoga's gone, the Ranger is gone, the Yorktown is gone, the Wasp is gone, the Enterprise is gone -- they haven't got any carrier left. Others continued: "They still haven't announced that they lost everything at Pearl Harbor. I wonder how long they are going to keep it secret." (This feeling was widespread until Dec. 7, 1942, when a lengthy article on the extent of the disaster appeared in the Los Angeles Times. Even then some skeptics were maintaining that the real extent of damages had not been revealed.)

From the time of the announcement of a great naval victory at Bismarck Sea to the time they conceded some success to the Japanese Navy, people were going about saying that according to the Japanese radio broadcast their loss was negligible and that the convoy had safely reached its destination. Contrary to the American press, the Japanese version claimed 75 flying fortresses shot down. Since these so-called "Japanese radio broadcasts" give news which in three or four months are usually verified by the U.S. press the people here have come to attach great credulity to them. Because of so many seeming contradictions in announcements made by the OWI they generally question the authenticity of war reports in local newspapers. Thus when MacArthur pleaded for more planes and Curtin claimed danger of imminent attack on Australia shortly after the announcement of a great Allied victory at Guadalcanal and the Bismarck Sea, people were snorting: "If the Japanese fleet were completely wiped out, why should MacArthur plead for more planes and why should Australia be afraid of an invasion?" It just didn't make

sense to them.

In any study of rumors in the relocation centers we must not overlook the great role of inter-center correspondence in disseminating rumors. Important events that occur in ~~in~~ one center are usually common knowledge in other centers within a week. To give you an example of interchange of rumors between centers I shall cite the case of a letter received by a resident in Unit II from a Hawaiian evacuee now located at Rowher. According to him on his way to California his ship had been stopped by a Japanese submarine. Its captain boarded the American vessel and assembling the evacuees made a stirring speech advising them to remain quietly in the relocation centers because Japan would soon rescue them from their plight. Meanwhile the American captain stood at one end of the deck trembling all over. When the speech was completed, the Japanese officer clambered down, gave a salute to the Keto captain, and the submarine sank out of sight. People in Poston have swallowed this story completely and are pointing to it as another indication that Japan will take care of them in the post-war period.

One type of rumor very popular at Poston is the supposed attack on American soil by the Japanese which the U.S. government refuses to divulge for fear of lowering morale on the home front. Thus toward the end of June there was a rumor that Terminal Island had been bombed on June 15th and that everything had been completely demolished. Terminal Islanders in Poston exclaimed: "Gee, that's swell. That's what they get for shoving us out like that." There was a rumor afloat in July that Hawaii had been severely crippled

simultaneously with Dutch Harbor. Again toward Christmas time of last year it was reported that Hawaii had once more been attacked.

Another fruitful source of rumors is the innumerable speculations as to the probable close of the war. When I first moved into Santa Anita people were planning to celebrate their fourth of July on Brighton Beach. When I arrived in Poston people were talking of "going home for Christmas." Around October of last year it was rumored that they were circulating a petition in Los Angeles for a negotiated peace with Japan and that a number of people was signing it. Subscribers to the rumor were exclaiming: "People in the outside must be wary of the war already." The newest rumor regarding this subject emerged about a week ago when the Japanese radio is reported to have broadcast on the evening of March 19 that Russia was negotiating for a separate peace with Germany and that the war would end in a month.

I have a great collection of rumors of this sort but have been saving them to write a systematic report on the change in sentiments for a certain length of period. If you wish I can start sending them to you as they crop up."