

LITTLE KAUAI IN THE WAR

By Stella M. Jones

When the news of the Pearl Harbor attack reached the northern Hawaiian island of Kauai at nine-thirty on that Sunday morning, the island sprang into action. By noon the Red Cross announced itself ready for emergency; the Provisional Police had assembled at the County Court House awaiting orders. All that night men watched for enemy planes, for the landing of parachute troops. The harbors were watched for enemy ships. Boy Scouts kept lonely virgils scanting air and sea, running errands through the dark, carrying messages between men on duty. In hastily blacked-out kitchens, women brewed coffee and made sandwiches for the workers.

A year's preparation lay behind this night's work and that of the months to follow. Japanese citizens served alongside the others. But the inter-group adjustment which permitted such cooperation had been decades in the making.

Into this scene of highly organized cooperation came martial law. The right of habeas corpus was rescinded, provost courts were established. Though many orders applied only to enemy aliens and their descendants, the field laborer and the plantation manager alike were required to submit to a new rhythm of life, hitherto unheard-of restrictions. "The Military" became a force to be reckoned with.

Government officials and men of the service from the United States mainland were conditioned to regard the Japanese population as potential if not active enemies. But of necessity they soon looked to the haoles, or whites, for guidance in their activities. And the haoles, while serving as coordinators, depended upon the prewar defense organization and the natural leaders of the communities. Under the military censorship, the local newspaper and the local radio were effective not only in announcing military regulations, explaining them to both Japanese and Filipinos in their own languages, but in turning energies into useful channels. Of major importance during the first trying days was their service in quashing false rumors.

Engrossed in adjustment to life under the new orders, suddenly the island realized a cleavage between its two major groups, the Japanese and the Filipinos.

The hopes of the Filipinos became identified with General MacArthur's stand. With the fall of Bataan, the taking of Manila, and finally the fall of Corregidor, they became increasingly moody and restless. They could no longer send money home to alleviate possible suffering. Filipinos did not want to work; they wanted to fight. Authorities were beset by requests to make up a battalion of Filipinos. Unrelieved, the mood was directed against the island Japanese.

In the meantime, sights real and fancied that they had endured at Japanese hands in the past were magnified; smoldering dislikes became hatreds. Many Japanese had been overbearing and superior as overseers in the fields. Filipino policemen commissioned to search Japanese homes for arms and ammunition handled the situation rudely; as blackout wardens, they enjoyed startling Japanese households. They spied upon actions of the Japanese, seeking evidence of sabotage. Taunting of Japanese by Filipinos was a common. "There was much talking but little touching," is the island's way of expressing the situation.

Emboldened by military regulations regarding alien property and money, Filipinos refused to pay their accounts at Japanese stores. During blackout evenings, Filipino dwelt upon their unhappy state. They sharpened their cane-knives and the "bolos" which

Since December 7, attention has been so focused upon Honolulu that the rural islands of Hawaii have been lost sight of. Yet it is only by taking a small unit of Hawaii, a cross-section of the racial and cultural composition of the island group, that the social significances of the war can be studied at close range.

Such a unit is the island of Kauai, the northernmost of the group, encompassed within a coastline of one hundred and six miles

and with a mean diameter of twenty-four miles. Its rich acres are giving over largely to the growing of sugar cane and pineapples. Roughly three quarters of its population have been living on the plantations, the remaining quarter serving the agricultural workers in merchandising, small farming and fishing, the Japanese dominant in all three occupations. The population of 36,000 roughly consist of 27 per cent Japanese, 26 per cent Filipinos (mostly male adults), 12 per cent Caucasians, or American whites, 9 per cent Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians, 2 per cent Chinese, 7 per cent Portuguese, 2 per cent Puerto Ricans and 1 per cent Koreans; the remaining 6 per cent are of varied ancestry.

they had long cherished. They made new ones from old automobile springs. The attempt of the military authorities to collect these weapons met with doubtful success.

The Japanese, too, were in a highly emotional state. Having been gaining steadily in political prominence, in leadership and in economic importance in the community, they felt this as a special blow to their pride. From all that could be ascertained, including a statement for publication by a former commanding officer of the district, the Japanese of Kauai had no part in nor preknowledge of the Pearl Harbor attack. As stated by one of their leaders, and a trusted Japanese, "Because it was an event abhorred by the Japanese, they could not face it the same day. Fear gripped the majority on Kauai." Women and children hid in their homes, not knowing what to expect from their neighbors, the government nor from the attacking forces. That many, both alien and citizen, felt a deep sense of shame of Japan cannot be doubted.

One of the first orders of the military closed the language schools, another prohibited gatherings in numbers in which the Japanese language was spoken. Checking accounts of the enemy aliens were frozen beyond the withdrawal of fifty dollars a week. Then, on Dec. 11, announcement were made of the detention of forty-one Japanese, alien and citizen, who had been placed in the County Jail. On Dec. 22, a series of restrictions specified enemy aliens; prohibition against having firearms, or other weapons, ammunition, short-wave radios, telescopes or cameras, signal devices, enemy flags and the like. Though travel was permitted within a district during daylight hours, the alien must be at home during blackout hours; others were permitted to be abroad longer. The alien must not move his residence or travel by plane without special permission. Use of the Japanese language in public was discouraged.

The Niihau incident added to the discomfiture of the Japanese. One of the attacking planes had been forced down on the islet of Niihau on December 7. Unaware that there was a war in progress, the community treated the pilot as a visitor and in island-fashion placed him in the care of the Japanese residents, an alien and a citizen. How the pilot used the Japanese as accomplices and, suspected by the Hawaiians, attempted to take the island by use of his machine gun, is well known; also that a husky Hawaiian and his wife attacked the armed flier and killed him. The perfidy of the Niihau Japanese was keenly felt by the Japanese on Kauai, for it raised the question as to whether this incident might be considered in miniature the reaction of the Japanese population in event of landing of enemy forces on Kauai. Suicide by the Japanese citizen of Niihau was followed by suicide of a Kauai relative. The shelling of Nawiliwili Bay, Kauai, on the New Year's Day, though ineffectual, heightened the tension. News of the interment of Japanese in California was disturbing.

The interment of a few leaders not only intensified the fear of the Japanese but tended to break their solidarity. It left the way open for leadership of the younger generation who had long sought to turn Japanese more wholly to American ways and effect a clean break with Japan.

Kauai had a serious internal problem to solve. A morale committee was formed of a Filipino personnel worker on a plantation, a Catholic priest especially popular with Filipinos, and two Christian ministers, haoles, who had long been interested in the Japanese. They served during trying times and did much to avert trouble. The work was so coordinated that, should difficulties arise between a Filipino and a Japanese, each was approached by a member of his own group and an understanding attempted.

The Filipino problem appears to have been met at least temporarily by incorporating a large number of Filipino into the Provisional Police and Home Guard, of which they compose of 85 per cent. The remainder are 10 per cent Portuguese and 5 per cent haoles. They have been promised incorporation into the army proper should the need arise.

Sporadic trouble with the Japanese still arises. The plantations have had to make a few changes, replacing with their own countrymen Japanese overseers of Filipino laborers. Personnel workers say that they can feel an undercurrent, but overt expression of animosity is surprisingly rare. The influence of the churches, both Protestant and Catholic, has been effective in averting trouble. The wife of a Filipino minister remarked: "We can tell how they feel by how they pray. They put great faith in President Roosevelt and they pray for his health and guidance. They remember MacArthur also in their prayers and ask that he be spared to drive out the Japanese from the Philippines."

But the Japanese situation was considered in need of further attention. In May, the commanding officer of the Kauai District approved a morale committee, the work to be carried on under the Military Department of Intelligence. The advisers are local haoles, but the actual contacts are made largely by progressive Japanese.

First, a series of meetings was held in each district, one in Japanese for the old folks, another in English for the younger generations. At the forty-three meetings, attendance was estimated at almost 100 per cent of the young and adult population, with many repeaters. Here military orders and their reasons were explained and the situation was frankly stated. Japanese insistence upon language schools, contrary to the best interests of Americanism, was given as one reason for differentiation of Japanese in military orders; their affiliation with worship of the imperial family of Japan necessitated the closing of the Buddhist and Shinto temples, it was explained. These factors naturally placed the Japanese under suspicion, which they in fairness should recognize.

Response to the leaders was gratifying. "We are willing," "We did not understand before," and "Hawaii is our home," were reiterated.

Young people were exhorted to show their loyalty, to "get off the fence." But it was not easy to silence their question in many phases, "Why are we not trusted?" Discussion sometimes lengthened into hours. Exclusion from active participation in certain defense work, both paid and voluntary, brought tears and confusion.

The Japanese morale committee went even further. A printed questionnaire was circulated to secure not only a numerical census of the Japanese but their political status, expatriated or not, and age grouping. In attempt to measure their psychological reaction to the war situation, every family was asked to state what war work had been done, how much had been invested in war bonds, to what sect each member belonged and how many had donated to the blood bank.

Though it was not the intention of the committee that military pressure should be used, misunderstandings were inevitable. Some investigators used the terms "military" and "F.B.I." to gain the information they sought. There was a rush to buy war bonds so that families could report their purchase. By June, 1942, the Japanese population of Kauai had purchased over a half million dollars' worth. Social pressure was rampant, but as one alien smilingly remarked, "Japanese are used to social pressure and they are afraid." He continued, "The schools have exerted pressure, and the Japanese community has exerted pressure, and they give and do things because they are afraid not to do them. They sent their children to language schools because they were afraid not to send them. And now this fear persists but in another form. They are afraid not to do the things they are called upon to do, whether it is humanly possible or not." The extent of their participation bears out the statement. On the other hand, the morale committee did much to allay fear, to help them in problems peculiarly Japanese and to bring them out of their self-imposed isolation.

This is a Typical Speech to the older generation: "We came to Hawaii forty or fifty years ago and we brought our picture brides. We have raised our children here and this is our adopted country. We have profited here. Even in time of war like this, we are in most ways treated equally, like other nationalities. We are provided with gas masks, we get our food, our rice, the same as any others. Gasoline rationing is the same for everybody. That is why aliens appreciate what the United States is doing for us. We must respond to that appreciation by doing

what we can to win the war for America. We must buy war bonds, help with the work for defense. We can do civilian defense work on Kauai, volunteer service, give to the blood bank. You women can help with the Red Cross work.

"Should any of you older people feel that you should do something to help Japan, think first what the result would be on other Japanese on the island-it would reflect on the whole group. How many of you want to be sent to Japan? (No answer.) Then you consider Hawaii your home. Do what you can to win this war for America! If any trouble comes to Hawaii, see that it cannot be traced to any (name of community) home."

The work of the committee was followed by organization of Japanese in a voluntary group called the Sons of Mohihana, name for the vine symbolic of the island. They gave generously to various community funds for the entertainment of soldiers and promoted the sale of war bonds. The building of evacuee camps and the cutting of brush were left largely to them, under military orders. Each Sunday hundreds of Japanese in every community labored to accomplish the work assigned. That the work was supervised by the military authorities appears to have given them satisfaction. Furthering of relationships between the military forces and the Japanese was accomplished by assigning soldiers to work alongside.

At first, efforts of the Japanese community to add to the entertainment and comfort of mainland soldiers were misunderstood, and hurt feelings resulted. But a better understanding of island customs on the part of military authorities has brought about an adjustment.

Still another force in aligning the Japanese of Hawaii with the war effort is the presence of soldiers of Japanese ancestry in the American armed forces. Both drafts of Hawaiian youth included Japanese boys. The satisfaction of the boys at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, as reflected in their letters home, their acceptance in the midwestern cities as loyal Americans, did much to break down old relationship with Japan. When news was received that a Kauai soldier of Japanese descent was engaged in the battle of the Coral Sea and had been removed to Australia, a group of older Japanese in the community called upon the family and, with much bowing, congratulated the parents upon their son's bravery, saying, "We must stand behind our boys fighting for America." The Japanese young men are glamoring for an opportunity to enlist. The desire for adventure and longing to escape from an uncomfortable situation no doubt are factors, in addition to a need to demonstrate their loyalty to America.

There are other acts of sincerity by the Japanese. The Commanding officer of Kauai had ordered all symbols of Shintoism removed from the temples. A movement spread from one community to another in the destruction of the home ancestral shrines. Even a statement in the local press that this was unnecessary failed to stop it. Then followed the voluntary destruction of two Shinto buildings, and plans to demolish others.

There are some, who cannot make this psychological adjustment. Two suicides occurred the first week. A young Japanese was tried in the Provost Court for expressing sympathy with Japan. He pled guilty and asked for leniency on the grounds that he was under the influence of liquor at the time. Many old people prefer to stay at home rather than risk the uncertainty of outside contacts. Other old and middle-aged Japanese, however, find that their long residence in Hawaii has prepared them more than they were aware for acceptance of American culture. One of the most difficult changes is the substitution of English for Japanese. Those who cannot converse in English are uncomfortable outside the home.

Gradually, the Japanese are adjusting their finances to the new situation. The tanomoshi, a popular Japanese financing method, is practically frozen. For it not only involves handling money in large sums, prohibited by the government, but requires meetings of members in numbers, also prohibited. It is generally accepted that the language school is a dead issue. Properties are being liquidated and the money is being placed in war bonds to finance scholarship for Japanese youths after the war. Deep sea fishing, in prewar days almost wholly controlled by the alien Japanese, no longer exists. Their boats were beached by presidential proclamation. A company of Hawaiians and Filipinos combined to purchase the sampans and tackle of one Japanese group, to fish within the narrow limits allowed citizens and nationals. There remains much to be done to straighten out the economic tangle of Japanese finances.

and the custodian of alien property is acting in their behalf. Meanwhile, families who have deprived of their incomes of war conditions, families of internees, language-school teachers, fishermen and the like, are being cared for by public funds, if needed.

What should the Japanese do about politics? This question was being debated during the summer of 1942. Complete withdrawal might reflect upon their loyalty, their courage. On the other hand, any racial turn the election might take might be interpreted by Washington as indicating a dangerous situation. Four candidates of Japanese ancestry were slated for the primary, but withdrew their candidacy before the general elections.

It is significant that, though leadership among the non-haole had been deliberately fostered by the plantations of Kauai, haole leadership has come to the foreground in the crisis. The seriousness of the situation is recognized, and the haole is generally accepted as the best equipped to deal with outside forces.

Hawaiians, Chinese, Portuguese, the loyalty of none of them questioned, are profiting in defense jobs. Filipinos and Koreans, as "nationals," fall into this category. It is natural that they should look with complacency upon the discomfort of their former rivals, the Japanese, whose prewar position was one of ascendancy in economic competition. Old animosities between Portuguese and Filipinos are fading in the light of common effort. A new cohesion is being engendered between the various non-white, non-Japanese groups, which will no doubt serve as a check upon any tendency of Japanese to resume ascendancy in postwar Kauai. But the young people of all groups, especially those who attended high school together, are standing firmly by their Japanese friends.

Thus the little island of Kauai, a unit in the Hawaiian experiment in human relations, is in the process of solving its problems. No violence has occurred. No wholesale internment has been found necessary. Where precautionary measures have been taken, their need is recognized and accepted. A house-cleaning of affiliations with Japan has been prosecuted fearlessly and thoroughly, leaving not a disgruntled Japanese population, but a people shocked into appreciation of the land of their adoption or birth and of their rightful position in it.

The main factors contributory to this situation are: first, along program of community cooperation and tolerance of cultural differences; second, the acceptance of democracy by a strongly nationalistic foreign people; third, the willingness and ability of the military powers to analyze the local complex and to temper their actions accordingly. There are still many problems, but in the light of the present situation, Kauai may continue to expect the exercise of intelligence and sympathy in their solution

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