

R.R.B.
~~Mr. Best~~
Mr. Schmidt

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY
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THE SIGNIFICANT FACTORS IN REQUESTS FOR
REPATRIATION AND EXPATRIATION

During the past few months there has been an increase in requests for repatriation and expatriation. At Manzanar, for example, on January 1, 1944 there were on record 684 requests, which had not been cancelled. These requests were from persons scheduled to go to Tule Lake as soon as housing was ready for them there. In February almost all of them were transferred to the segregation center. Between January 1 and April 15, approximately 377 more individuals signed with the Spanish Consul and later with the WRA for repatriation. The total number of requests by people of Manzanar thus rose to more than 1000. This continuation of requests after the segregation process had supposedly been completed has by no means been confined to Manzanar. It may be stated that it has been a general trend in the relocation centers. It poses the question of just what asking for repatriation means to evacuees. In what follows the Community Analyst at Manzanar has tried to explain the trend by showing the motives of those who have requested repatriation.

During the last weeks I have given considerable attention to the upsurge of requests for repatriation and expatriation. I have discussed the matter with expatriates and repatriates and also with those who have toyed with the idea of repatriating or expatriating but who have rejected it. I have consulted the records of segregation hearings, leave clearance hearings, and have brought together other records which bear on the situation. The significant factors involved, as I have come to understand them, are as follows:

1. The Rumors of the Closing of Manzanar. Segregation, with the decrease in population of the center which it brought, led to an increase in rumors that Manzanar was to close. There was an air of certainty and conviction about these rumors which had been lacking before. Persons who feared relocation or "a move that will just be one of a series of further moves" began to feel that they had made a mistake by remaining in the "yes" column. The one avenue leading to Tule Lake which was now open to them was that of expatriation and repatriation, and some of them took this route. It is not likely that many would have expatriated or repatriated for this reason alone. But the panic engendered by the conviction that the center would close, together with other motivations that will be cited, exerted considerable influence. The assurance that the center will not be abandoned came after the wave of expatriations and repatriations had been in full swing for some time. In other words the sequence of events was unfortunate.

2. The Length of the War. By the time the segregation movement was a reality, the war had already entered its third year. Those who had

hoped for a quick decision one way or another were now reconciled to a long struggle. Among the old are many who, although they have said "yes" to the revised alien question 28 for religious, family, or sentimental reasons, wish to end their days in Japan. Tule Lake now seemed to them the only place from which they could return to Japan during the war. Then there are others who feel responsible for relatives in Japan. Sometimes this responsibility has been an economic one. As the prospects of a long conflict increased, these persons grew determined to seek a reunion with relatives in Japan or to resume responsibilities in Japan at the earliest possible moment. Repatriation and expatriation were seen as the only means of accomplishing their aims at this time. The segregation program and the over-optimistic insistence of many of the segregants that they would be on their way to Japan in a few months had considerable influence on the group in question.

3. The Kibei Myth. Because Kibei, even though they had given "yes" answers from the beginning, were required to have leave clearance hearings and were closely questioned concerning their loyalties and attitudes, the story arose that Kibei could not secure leave clearance on any terms. A garbled version of what Mr. Myer said on one occasion was passed around to prove that WRA and the government were hostile and unsympathetic to Kibei and intended to find excuses for segregating them all. As a result a good many of the Kibei who had survived the segregation hearings became discouraged, assured that they would never be accepted in America and decided to expatriate. Also, when they had convinced themselves or had been convinced by others that they were doomed to segregation and deportation to Japan, they decided that the safest way to make their peace with the Japanese government and assure their acceptance at the other end was to relinquish American citizenship.

The most serious aspect of the Kibei myth is that it has affected the fate and fortunes of many who are not Kibei. When a Kibei decided that he was being persecuted, "would not be given a chance," and might as well expatriate, his parents and his siblings, (and often the latter were not educated abroad) had to choose between letting the family member head for Japan alone or keeping the family together by following the same path. Thus we have a continuation of the pattern of family action which swelled the total of those who went to Tule Lake at the time of segregation.

4. Delay in Leave Clearances. Formal segregation hearings actually began in April 1943 at Manzanar with the Kibei review. The larger number of segregation hearings took place in August. Leave clearance hearings began in October but the majority of them were heard in November 1943. Despite the months which have elapsed hundreds of persons have not yet received final clearance and live in fear that leave clearance will be denied and that they will be forced to go to Tule Lake and thence to Japan. These people have their minds directed toward Tule Lake, consequently, since it may be their future home. They are receptive to the arguments and the tales of grievance of those who have gone to Tule Lake because they appreciate the possible parallel between those people and themselves. The human mind reaches out for answers and certainties. The answers do not necessarily have to be logical, correct, or good. In human thinking and behavior, if knowledge and truth are not available, superstition and illogicality are

substituted, as long as they are emotionally satisfying. The failure to give thoughtful and prompt decisions in these cases has been a standing invitation to reactions and actions based on rumor, frustration, and emotionalism. For instance, the fact that leave clearance decisions have not been rendered in the order in which the hearings were taken has led to many misunderstandings.

Persons whose cases were heard early but who have received no word of the outcome, assume the worst when friends whose hearings were held much later receive leave clearance. At the very least they suppose that they are under grave suspicion for something and think that they may as well cease trying to maintain their place in this country.

5. The Tule Lake Magnet. It has become clear from other studies that there is no vast gulf, in background, in attitudes, in experience, between the residents of Manzanar who went to Tule Lake and those who did not. Those who went to Tule Lake left neighbors, friends, and relatives at Manzanar. Those who remained in Manzanar are intensely interested in the experiences of those who have segregated. One of the main topics of discussion in Manzanar is the message carried by the daily load of mail that comes from Tule Lake. People here are trying desperately to get copies of the March 20 issue of Life which carried pictures of Tule Lake. In a sense those who went to Tule Lake are considered heroes. More than once lately I have heard the expression, "I guess the really loyal ones went to Tule Lake!" Those who say this are not thinking about pro-American or pro-Japanese political sentiment particularly. All evacuees have some sense of being abused and betrayed by the United States government. The Tule Lake contingent, in the eyes of most, is the group which took a stand against "being pushed around" or "being pushed here and there."

From this point of view, those at Tule Lake are the ones who have done something decisive; who have acted. At the time of segregation I saw the amazing spectacle of a girl who was to leave for Tule Lake bidding farewell to her friends and urging them to join her soon. "What are you going to do?" she asked them with spirit. "Are you going to stay here and rot?" The fact that they were infinitely more free than she was never occurred to her or to her hearers. Psychologically she had made a decision and was therefore, at least temporarily, "free" -- free from the doubts and misgivings which had perplexed her during the long train of crises which the months in the center had brought. The others, to her mind and apparently to theirs, had settled nothing and were simply floundering; they had not relocated, they had no definite assurances of their future, they had all the trials to endure which would confront those of Japanese ancestry who tried to make an adjustment in post-evacuation and post-war America. To a population to whom evacuation has brought such change and flux in status, in holdings, in location, in living conditions, Tule Lake can easily be conceived of as the stable element in the situation, and the magnet which draws when anger or doubt or disillusionment strike. The friends there, the "better housing", the promise of permanency during wartime -- all act as convenient rationalizations for the step of expatriation or repatriation.

6. The Effects of Center Life. The linguistic handicap, the difficulty in appreciating and understanding the customs of a land in which they are a tiny minority, have always been a source of worry and concern to

a great many Japanese immigrants. Stories have been told to me of how Issei have tolerated injustice and unfair treatment at the hands of Caucasian neighbors rather than appeal to the law, so uncertain were they about their rights and their ability to present their case adequately.

A large number of old people, then, have inevitably settled down into a comfortable, Japanized existence. Many of them freely admit that it is a relief not to have to struggle with an unfamiliar tongue, not to be forced to worry continually about diversity in appearance and customs between themselves and those with whom they must necessarily come in contact at some plane or another. "It's so nice to be where everyone is like you and understands what you say," frankly admitted an Issei to a Japanese-speaking Caucasian church worker the other day. And this is not atypical. This was one of the great attractions of little Tokyo, of course. And a relocation center is, by order of the Fourth Defense Command and of necessity, a Japanese community with a vengeance.

The Issei are loath to bring this center interlude, so restful to them on this particular score, to a close. The prospect of being scattered all over the country gives them no pleasure. To break away from the convenient world of language, practice, thought, activity, and understandings which they have rebuilt and now attempt to carry forward the difficult march toward assimilation and Americanization, particularly when they are enemy aliens, seems too dismal and trying a task. Some of them have come to believe, particularly in the light of what has happened to them and to their property, that the endeavor to remain in this country all these years has been a mistake and a failure. There are two places where they feel that the life to which they have been returned and which is most congenial to their declining years, may be carried on without criticism, reproach or objection, namely Tule Lake and Japan. Consequently, a number of Issei have sought to escape any pressure from American authorities and to guarantee their future existence in a Japanese community, by repatriation.

Their American-born children constitute a more serious problem, but the children too, have been influenced, often unconsciously, by the atmosphere in which they have spent over two years. The children have become used to being exclusively with those of Mongoloid physical type. They have been separated from their Caucasian friends and from the former locale. They consequently magnify the difficulties of adjustment in predominantly Caucasian communities. Like most mortals they look no farther than the present situation to which they have made some type of adjustment. When the parents propose expatriation, though many children protest and even rebel, they do not put up the struggle which they would have precipitated if they were on the outside and if they had continued in meaningful contact with normal American life.

7. The Parent-Child Relationship. The Japanese family is strongly patriarchal. The children, like all children of some oriental cultural background, have been taught filial obedience. When evacuation brought economic and social insecurity to the Japanese community and to the individual, there was an attempt to gain some kind of strength and assurance by emphasizing family solidarity. Moreover, at the time of evacuation the

children were on the average quite young and were used to the supervision that family heads ordinarily exercise over minors. It is true, also, that children of Japanese ancestry feel a special responsibility for remaining with parents and in aiding them. They are used to acting as the "ears" and "mouths" of the parents, interpreting the American business and political world to the elders and representing them in their contacts with the English-speaking community. They feel the obligation to help and watch over their parents particularly keenly at this time. Their parents are old, they are "enemy aliens", they are under press and political attack, and most of them have been impoverished. The youngsters therefore feel an obligation to shield them from further emotional and moral hurt, and to stay by them at least until this grave crisis in their lives is past. Thus we have a possessive attitude on the part of the Issei and more than ordinary compliance on the part of the Nisei.

The Issei tend to think in family, not in individual terms. When they decide that the family fortunes have been so seriously depleted that rehabilitation in America is unlikely or that prejudice is so great that social and economic adjustment in this country will be impossible, their impulse is to repatriate and expatriate all family members. Since they feel that their age and family position entitles them to make such a move, and since they believe that what they are doing is best for the entire family, the children are often not consulted or are simply advised of a course on which a decision has already been made. Pathetic tales are told, for instance, of children who did not know until the time for departure was approaching that they were to leave for Tule Lake.

A few days ago a 16 year old boy came to ask me whether his parents had expatriated him. He knew they had been discussing repatriation for themselves and the expatriation of an older brother, but he had no idea of what had been done in his case, and he was afraid to ask. It turned out that the parents had repatriated, the older brother had been listed as an expatriate, and nothing thus far had been done about this 16 year old boy. Presumably he will go to Tule Lake with the others as a family member. My guess is that if the family have the opportunity to return to Japan during the war, they will convince this youth that he should expatriate and accompany them.

Another case is that of a boy who learned from me that he had been listed as an expatriate in a letter sent by his father to the Spanish Consul. He greeted the news with a long string of eloquent oaths. He had heard his parents discussing the wisdom of such a letter but he did not know that they had actually written and sent it. "You can't argue with the old folks about these things," he said in explanation of his inability to prevent the action. However, he has felt strongly enough about the matter to request cancellation of expatriation for himself. But others in a similar position are more pliant. Whatever their own feelings, they finally accept the parental decision rather than cause family conflict or family separation. Once the deed is done, appeals to family loyalty, and descriptions of filial obligations, parental needs, the past sacrifices of the elders, etc., are usually effective.

Then there are those young people who are, after a fashion,

"consulted" by the parents. But the "consultation" is mostly a matter of pressure tactics. Thus, one Nisei of my acquaintance for some time resisted the appeals of his parents that he sign up for expatriation. Finally, when he had suffered personal unhappiness and his moral resistance was low, he yielded. Now he is trying to extricate himself and the family from the morass in which his momentary weakness has involved them.

Not long ago a young man visited me who admitted that he came less because he sought my company than because he dreaded to go home. His parents were "after him all the time to agree to expatriation", and he knew that as soon as he entered the apartment "the argument would begin all over again." So far, he has held out against this parental pressure, but he admits that he has thought at times of "giving up and having some peace."

8. The Delicate Balance That Exists. Studies and case histories of individuals and of groups that have been segregated as a result of past repatriation or expatriation requests or because of the maintenance of "no" answers to question 28; of those who, although they did not give an unqualified "yes" answer in the February registration, changed to "yes" before the segregation board; and of those who have said "yes" from the beginning indicate that the majority of persons in these three groups have much the same grievances, complaints, and basic attitudes. They are all deeply wounded by the implications of evacuation and detention, they are angered over property losses, they are bitter over press attacks and hostile legislation. The reason why one family or person said "yes" or changed to "yes" while another maintained the "no" is often scarcely definable. A little property in Japan when all holdings in the United States have been lost; the age of the parents; a fairly recent pleasant visit to Japan; personality differences which enable one individual to throw off property losses and blows to prestige while another continues to burn with resentment -- these are the things which tip the balance one way or another. The division in thinking between the "yes", the "no", and the doubtful, is often narrow and is none too stable. A significant personal experience or any important shift in the national policy toward evacuees is certain to upset this delicate balance and to throw uncertain individuals in one camp or another.

9. The Draft. In my opinion the draft has figured so prominently in this picture because it did precisely that, because it upset the delicate balance of attitude toward their future of a substantial section of the evacuee population which is in an uncertain and perplexed state of mind.

The centers are now crowded with Issei who look to the future with foreboding. They have not found it difficult truthfully to say "yes" to the revised alien question. But they are not sure that they will not be deported at the end of the war, and, because of their age and reduced circumstances, they are not sure that they can make a living if they are permitted to stay. They cannot believe that the antagonism toward Japanese which has been fed by this war will not lead to post-war social and economic retaliation. In short, though they did not go to Tule Lake and

though, until the Nisei draft was announced, they did not request repatriation, they look upon a future in America with doubt and with reservations. They had come to feel that their ultimate destination depended on the length, course, and outcome of the war, the intensity of feeling that it generated, the legislation that may be passed, the willingness of the United States government to allow them to remain, the resources left at the end of the war, the comparative economic conditions in Japan and the United States after the war, and a number of other factors about which they felt there was little use speculating at the present time.

The draft forced a crisis and an unwelcome decision upon them. They are frank to say that they have not wanted to see their sons fight or die for a country in which their own position is so untenable and in which they may not be able to continue to live. They fear, and this is most important, that if their sons fight in the army of an enemy of Japan and if then the family is forced to go to Japan because Congress so rules or because of economic necessity, they and their children will be persona non grata in Nippon and will be harried by all the difficulties that "disgraced" families face in that country.

This feeling that they do not wish to see their sons fighting for a country in which they cannot be sure of a stake and a future, though it is basic, is reinforced by other objections to the draft, such as the dislike for segregated units, the reluctance to be drafted from centers, and the many other elements which have been discussed in previous reports of this section. The unfortunate letter of the Spanish Consul to a Manzanar resident did not help matters.

The young men were not slow in reflecting the mood of their elders. With segregation barely over, they felt trapped. After two years of crisis and uncertainty they felt that they had been cleared finally just to make them available for warfare. Those who had hoped to relocate and recoup their losses felt cheated once more. All the deprivations in regard to citizenship, opportunity, freedom, and property were rehearsed. They were much more congenial to plans of their parents for repatriation and expatriation.

I believe that in respect to this center at least, the tide of expatriations and repatriations has been arrested and even reversed. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. Prompt action to correct the misunderstanding that arose from the letter of the Spanish Consul.
2. The announcement that requests for expatriation filed after the notice of the Nisei draft would be considered draft-dodging.
3. When it became apparent that feeling was rising and that it would be expressed in expatriation and repatriation requests or in some real explosion unless an outlet were found, Nisei were encouraged to meet to draft a petition which the Project Director might carry to Washington.

That he was able to return with what are considered some real concessions has eased the tension somewhat.

4. Also it is my opinion that Registration was made the real demonstration of feeling in this center. Coming so soon after the riot here, the impact was terrific and the opposition flamed. Consequently the segregation process here was particularly thorough and many of those who would have been candidates for expatriation or repatriation at this time are already at Tule Lake.

While the situation seems to be under control at the present time the crisis of the first actual induction is not yet past. And there will continue to be individual requests for repatriation or expatriation even if the mass movement subsides. As long as some of the factors which I have mentioned are operative, cases of expatriation and repatriation may be expected.

