

The story of how these Nisei language personnel became available for field duty is an interesting one. Even in this phase of military intelligence work, the army had set up a systematic training system to prepare these Japanese-Americans for their manifold duties as interrogators, interpreters, translators, radio announcers, propaganda writers, and cave flushers. This training has been carried on at the Military Intelligence Service Language School, situated since May 1942 in the Twin Cities area, first at Camp Savage and later at Fort Snelling where the school is still running at peak load training language personnel for duties incident to the occupation of Japan.

The sneak attack on Pearl Harbor found the United States largely unprepared to deliver the full weight of our power against the Japanese. Fortunately, thanks to the foresight of the War Department Intelligence Division the Fourth Army intelligence School teaching the Japanese language and combat intelligence work already was operating at the Presidio of San Francisco on Pearl Harbor day. Former language officers in Japan, then on duty with the General Staff, had foreseen that qualified Japanese language personnel would be essential for the successful prosecution of any war against Japan.

The War Department General Staff recognized the gathering clouds of war in the Pacific and knew the difficulties which our Army would face in combatting an enemy whose orders and messages would be in a language which is a complete mystery to the average American Army officer. Japanese officers had boasted that the security of Japanese military documents was no problem at all as Westerners could never learn to read and write Japanese, especially the abbreviated styles of writings known as "gyosho" and "sosho". These forms are about as similar to the printed Japanese character as a short-hand symbol is to an English word.

American Caucasian personnel of military age qualified in the Japanese language were dishearteningly few. With the crisis rapidly approaching,

there was little time to train additional Caucasian personnel. The War Department then made its decision to use Nisei Americans to solve the linguistic problem against Japan. It was admittedly a gamble for the United States for many believed then that the Nisei could not be trusted to stand the acid test of battle employment against their own race and blood. The decision to employ Nisei personnel in military Japanese language work certainly has proved to be a master stroke. The record of achievement by Nisei during the prosecuting of the war has been outstanding.

The use of Nisei linguists was not only militarily most shrewd quickly to provide our armed forces with adequate numbers of linguistically qualified personnel but was also politically far-sighted. Out of this group of Japanese-Americans in the army intelligence service has come American Nisei whose loyalty has been proven under fire in every theater in the war. Notwithstanding the evacuation and other hardships forced upon their relatives and friends in certain areas, they patriotically gave America all they had in her time of crisis. Before the formation of the 100th Infantry Battalion <sup>HAWAII</sup> (Nisei) or the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the Nisei engaged in Japanese language work for the Army intelligence were practically the only Nisei members of the armed forces. They were the test case which proved to the Army and the United States not only the loyalty and personal integrity of the Nisei but also the combat value of their linguistic services in the Pacific area.

It was thought at first that there would be enough Japanese speaking Nisei so that only a few weeks' review in general Japanese vocabulary and a little instruction in military Japanese terminology and combat intelligence would be required to fit them for field duty. These hopes did not materialize. After a survey of the first 3,700 Nisei, it was found that only 3 per cent were accomplished linguists, only about another 4 per cent were proficient, and a further 3 per cent could be useful only after a

prolonged period of training. The Americanization of the Nisei on the Pacific coast had advanced more rapidly than the United States public was aware. Japanese language schools created and encouraged by the Japanese Government to maintain ties with the homeland had not achieved the results with which they were credited. It quickly became evident that a special training school would be required to make the Nisei reasonably useful to the armed forces as Japanese linguists. Even Nisei well qualified in general Japanese had to be trained in Japanese military vocabulary and forms of writing.

The mustering of loyal Nisei qualified in the Japanese language became the primary difficulty. The screening of all of the Nisei personnel processed through the Selective Service stationed at the various army units on the Pacific Coast was accomplished. A personal interview and examination was given to each Nisei soldier in service. It was on one of these screening tours that the present Nisei Director of Academic Training at Fort Snelling, Major John F. Aiso, was found in the capacity of a "greasemonkey" in Company "D" of the 69th LM Bn (Light Maintenance). On the same screening trip Colonel Kai E. Rasmussen, the present Commandant, located in the 237th CA (AA) Pfc Arthur Kaneko who had had extensive Japanese language training in Japan. These two were ear-marked as potential instructors. Kaneko ever since has rendered superior service and is now a Lieutenant on duty in Military Intelligence research work.

Two Nisei civilian instructors, Mr. Akira Oshida of Berkeley and Mr. Shigeya Kihara of Oakland, were added to the staff. These four Nisei worked feverishly preparing the text books and classroom exercises for the Japanese language courses.

On November 1, 1941, about six weeks before Pearl Harbor the Fourth Army Intelligence School had started operations in an abandoned airplane hangar on old Crissey Field adjoining San Francisco Bay at the Presidio

of San Francisco. The first course at the school was opened with ~~eight~~<sup>4</sup> instructors and 60 pupils. Fifty eight students were Nisei and two were Caucasians who had studied Japanese either at the University of California or the University of Washington.

After Pearl Harbor day, it became evident that Japanese language personnel would be needed as never before, but other currents militated against the use of Nisei personnel. Most of the army personnel of Japanese ancestry not resident at the school were discharged or furloughed to enlisted reserve and relieved from active duty. Then followed the evacuation of all Japanese residents, aliens and citizens alike, from the Pacific Coast. The task of finding additional instructors or students from civilian life and in the army became more difficult.

The War Department then decided to place the school under its direct jurisdiction and reestablished it at Camp Savage, Minnesota, as the Military Intelligence Service Language School. The selection of Camp Savage as the site for this school was dictated by several factors: (1) the school was outgrowing its facilities at the Presidio of San Francisco; (2) Japanese evacuation from the Pacific Coast made it necessary to remove both faculty and students inland away from the excluded areas, (3) Japanese language instruction was so specialized that it would be difficult to fit it into the training program of any established military training center, and (4) a training center had to be found in a community which would accept the oriental faced Americans for their true worth -- American soldiers fighting with their brains for their native America.

The greatest problem which faced the Military Intelligence Service Language School after its removal to Savage was the recruitment of adequate numbers of students for the school to carry on an expanded program. Evacuation from the West Coast had been completed. The loyal Nisei and pro-Japanese elements were in conflict in the various Relocation Centers.

When the War Department adopted volunteer recruiting of Nisei language personnel, pessimists freely predicted that the school's quotas would never be met. Pro-Japanese elements apparently dominated the Relocation Centers and the loyal Nisei were reluctant to volunteer for army service because they felt that their rights as American citizens had been ignored in placing them and their families in the Relocation Centers which were barbed wire enclosures patrolled by armed soldiers.

Enough students volunteered to meet the school's requirements. In some cases they suffered beatings from pro-Japanese elements in Relocation Centers when they volunteered for language instruction at Camp Savage. Some were disowned by their pro-Japanese Issei (first generation) parents. Nevertheless, they reported by the hundreds. Many of the first groups of students were well over thirty, generally well qualified in the Japanese language and burning with a desire to vindicate themselves of any suspicions of disloyalty to America. So eager were they to finish their training as early as possible that it became necessary for the Duty Officer at Camp Savage to search the school area for burning electric lights in order to prevent students from extra study after lights out at 11:00 P.M. Many succeeded in extra hour study in spite of a long school day of seven hours instruction plus two hours study in the evening in the classrooms. Many requested that their training be accelerated so that they could get into the field as soon as possible "to get their hands on those dirty Japs that caused all the sufferings and hardships of evacuation" (of the Japanese from the West Coast.)

In G-2, War Department it became apparent that the Camp Savage school must be expanded. In August 1944 the school was removed to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, where it is presently located. The school today has a student body of nearly 3,000 composed principally of Nisei students, although there are Caucasian officer candidates, many of whom lived in Japan as children or young men, and a few enlisted men of Chinese and Korean ancestry. There are 125 classrooms.

Besides classroom facilities, there are the usual administration buildings and barracks. To these may be added a very modern short wave radio station where there are facilities for training students to become expert clear text wireless interceptors and radio monitors of Japanese broadcasts and wireless stations. In addition to the undergraduate training section, there is also a translation section and research and liaison section.

The teaching staff of 162 is composed entirely of Nisei Americans born in the United States and the Hawaiian Islands. Twenty-seven of the instructors are Nisei federal civil service employees, but the balance are Japanese-American Master Sergeants, Technical Sergeants, and Staff Sergeants.

From the Military Intelligence Service Language School have gone thousands of Nisei interpreters, interrogators, translators, radio interceptors, censors, radio announcers, and propaganda writers. They have been working quietly with American combat teams at Guadalcanal, Attu, New Georgia, the Philippines, and Okinawa; in Burma, India and China; and now in Tokyo itself. Their work has saved countless American lives and speeded victory. Many Nisei lie where they fell including Staff Sergeant Hachiya in Leyte, Captain Laffin in Burma, and Sergeants Shibata and Fukui on Okinawa. These Japanese-American heroes are alumni of the Military Intelligence Service Language School.

Major General Clayton Bissell, Chief of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department General Staff, after reviewing the exploits of the graduates of the MISLS in the field said in effect at a recent commencement of the school: "If you Japanese-Americans are ever questioned as to your loyalty, don't even bother to reply. The magnificent work of the graduates of the Military Intelligence Service Language School in the field has been seen by your fellow Americans of many racial extractions. Their testimony to your gallant deeds under fire will speak so loudly that you need not answer."