

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Community Analysis Section

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Registration at Manzanar

I arrived at Manzanar the evening of March 26 and began work on March 27. I have felt that my first task is to become familiar with the history of Manzanar and have endeavored in various ways to acquaint myself with the flow of past events. The reading of the files of the MANZANAR FREE PRESS, the perusal of the reports of a number of divisions, combined with what I knew of Manzanar from published articles and newspaper files, have given me at least a beginning of background and perspective.

I was not long at Manzanar, however, before I discovered that a most important problem requiring social analysis and interpretation exists, one that requires understanding and social intelligence, both because of the unhappiness it has created within the Project and because of the damage and repercussions which can result from a mechanical or shortsighted reaction to it from the outside. I refer to the large number of "no" answers returned by both aliens and citizens to the so-called "loyalty" questions (Nos. 27 and 28) during the registration and application for leave clearance which began February 13.

Accordingly I have thus far devoted much of my time to an investigation of these "no" answers, and to the question of whether they can be accepted as an indication of actual disloyalty toward the United States and of active loyalty toward Japan. I have talked the matter over with a substantial number of persons of Japanese ancestry, some aliens, some citi-



zens, in an endeavor to learn what was in their minds when they made their response. Many of these people, I may add, are greatly troubled over the answer they felt it necessary to give at the time, and have either asked to be allowed to change their answer or would like to do so.

My conclusions and interpretations on the basis of this preliminary survey are as follows: For all realistic purposes and in spite of the intentions of the framers of the questions, it is very doubtful whether these questions should be called "loyalty" questions at all. In a good many cases (the great majority, I suspect) the final decision had relatively little to do with affection for Japan or disaffection for the United States.

The crux of the whole problem is that the aliens were asked a question to which they felt they could not, in safety to their future and conscience, say "yes". On the original form (659 Rev. A) the aliens were asked not only to swear unqualified allegiance to this country, which refuses them naturalization and citizenship, but to forswear allegiance to Japan, the country of which they are nationals. It is true that this question was withdrawn and another substituted for it, but the very fact that it appeared on the form created great uneasiness. It must be realized that these aliens are well aware of the resolutions of legislatures and of group and individual demands that they be returned to Japan as soon as possible. Many, despite an earnest desire to end their days in this land, have been led by circumstances to the conclusion that they will never again be able to earn a livelihood in this country, and assume that they will therefore be forced to seek a refuge in Japan. Naturally they wondered whether such a renunciation of Japan would not jeopardize their Japanese



citizenship or subject them to punishment or disability at the hands of the Japanese government should they come within its jurisdiction, and they reacted accordingly. A negativistic attitude sets in.

The substitute question, formulated at Manzanar, while it did not call upon the aliens to forswear allegiance to their national government, did inquire whether the aliens would defend the United States from attack, including attack by Japan. Unfortunately, the Japanese character by which the words "to defend" was translated, has a much more aggressive and militaristic connotation than the English equivalent. To many Japanese aliens, a "yes" answer seemed equivalent to an agreement to take up arms against the country in which they hold citizenship. Such an agreement or action, according to the laws of most nations, including those of the United States and Japan, is considered treason, and is punishable by the loss of citizenship and worse. Although the purpose of the question was primarily to expedite leaves from the centers, upon reflection and in view of the total situation, it is not difficult to see how the very presence of the question evoked resentment or was received as a fresh attempt to persecute and disconcert.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the question 28 for non-citizens which came from Washington as a substitute for the first and unsatisfactory version, though it was the question answered at all other centers, is markedly different from the question which the Manzanar residents faced. Registration at Manzanar was virtually completed by the time the substitute question arrived and it was too late to make the change.

The final Washington question, which all centers except Manzanar had the privilege of using is an eminently just and reasonable one. It



calls upon the enemy alien to abide by the laws of this country and to take no action which would impair its war effort. But it does not imply any responsibility on the part of the alien for bearing arms against the country of his origin and citizenship. As I understand it, this is all that can and should be asked of an enemy alien in time of war under international law. And I am convinced, had this question and not the other been submitted at Manzanar, the record of the residents would have been as affirmative as that of other centers. In other words, I think it is safe to assert that the difference in percentage of "yes" and "no" answers between Manzanar and other centers is largely a function of the difference in the question asked rather than a reflection of variation in basic loyalties.

The current reaction of the residents tends to bear out this analysis. As a result of correspondence with friends and relatives in other centers, residents of Manzanar have learned that the question they answered was much more perplexing and formidable than that which was put to aliens elsewhere. They have inquired of the Project Director concerning this, and, at the present writing, the inhabitants of 17 blocks have met and have passed resolutions asking for the privilege of answering the Washington version. It is difficult to see how this request can be refused or why the results, if the request is granted, should not replace the old statistic. Only in this way can a reliable comparison between Manzanar and other centers be attained, and if these answers are to be in any way used as a basis for future dealings with the residents, only in this way can equitable treatment be accorded the evacuees in Manzanar.



While the character and unfortunate sequence of the questions concerning loyalty were an important factor in the negative response of aliens, other elements were at work in the complex situation. To a certain degree the greater hardships through which many of the residents have passed are reflected in their responses. Many of the Manzanar residents are from Terminal Island. Even before the outbreak of war they were the butt of a certain amount of discrimination and suspicion. When war came they were the first to suffer a total work stoppage and loss of income, while farmers and persons in other fields of endeavor were able to continue for a time. They were not a prosperous group and so suffered hardship almost at once. Their work had taken them close to naval and defense installations, and so they received more than average attention from the F.B.I. Their leaders were taken into custody and their community crumbled under dislocation and fear. After being assured that they would have 30 days to vacate their premises, they were suddenly informed that they had but 48 hours in which to evacuate. They bear the scars of the suffering and property loss that compliance with this order entailed. No response to an important question can be dissociated from recent, bitter experiences. It is naive to expect it; it is cynical to pretend to expect it. The negative response to a question that was deemed unfair then, was reinforced by a protest over harsh conditions to which these people had been subjected. In my judgment the element of protest dominated any element of affirmation. It was not interest in Japan, but blind resentment over discriminatory treatment which entered prominently into the decision.

There is still another factor which has very little to do with loyalty or disloyalty toward the United States, but which motivated a good



many "no" answers from aliens. This is the loss of confidence in themselves and in the American public which evacuation has entailed. The form on which question 28 is found is an Application for Leave Clearance. There were those who assumed that if they answered all questions, and particularly question 28, in a manner satisfactory to the authorities, they would be sent out to face the competitive system in the outside world at this time. Many of these aliens have seen the stakes and fruits of a life of toil disappear in a few turbulent months. They are now in average well past their prime in years. Their total discouragement at their dispossession and insecurity is a reaction from their past thrift and industry. This loss of faith and confidence is and will continue to be one of the most appalling consequences of evacuation. This is particularly serious because it is contagious; the old reflect bitterly that they have not been able to establish security for themselves or their children in a lifetime of toil; the young read their future in the light of their parents' plight. At any rate I have found that a good many answered "no" or were influenced toward a negative response simply because they could not again face the responsibility of an independent economic existence in or near white communities. Obviously this has little to do with loyalty as such. It does have a great deal to do with an assault that has been made on the psychological integrity of a group. I hear rumors that the "no" answers are likely to act as a basis for repressive action against those who gave them. No policy could be more unwise. In these cases it would only increase the hopelessness of the individual and make his rehabilitation virtually impossible. Certainly a sympathetic and constructive policy is required, one which penetrates beyond the verbalisms of "yes" and "no" to basic motivations, fears, and uncertainties.



It is my considered opinion that the answers of the non-citizen group to question 28 are far more an index of their faith in their future and rehabilitation in America than of loyalty. The renewal of faith and confidence in themselves and in America is not an automatic or speedy process. It takes time; it proceeds against obstacles. Enough time had not elapsed by February 13 to give a picture undistorted by disillusionment and despair. The obstacles to the "settling down" process, to the calm and adjustment which generate confidence and new faith, have been particularly marked at Manzanar. To begin with, Manzanar was first an assembly center, and the shock and grief of first dislocation is in some measure associated with it. Secondly, Manzanar is one of the smaller projects in size and, being in the Western Defense Zone, is subject to close military surveillance. Thus the barbed wire, the guard towers, and soldiers, with their grim implications, are all too evident. Finally there is the unnerving attitude of the outside population of the area, from which the center cannot be insulated. In no other part of the country is the feeling so hostile against those of Japanese ancestry. Nowhere else does the radio and newspapers carry so many threats against the future and civil rights of those of Japanese antecedents. These inevitably have their effect; they evoke anger and promote pessimism. They revive fear and uncertainty. They act as the basis for rumors and throw suspicion on questionnaires such as the one under discussion. It seems to me necessary and justified that the Federal Government, which has established relocation centers and is responsible for the maintenance of order and the well-being of the residents, should attempt to exercise some control over the dissemination of colored and inflammatory statements and "information" calculated to create restlessness and resentment among the residents.



I have dealt with the underlying meanings of the "no" answers of the non-citizens because the decision of the older people was so central for the response that the younger people felt impelled to make. Once their parents, for any of the reasons listed above or for a combination of them, determined that they would answer "no", the children were faced with a grave problem. The older people assumed the worst, that a "no" answer would bring segregation and eventual forced return to Japan. They appealed to their children to return a comparable answer so that, whatever happened, the families might remain together and inviolate. The pressure upon the children was intolerable. They had seen their parents uprooted and humiliated. A good many, resolved to spare their elders any further worry and sadness, suppressed their own desires and voted "no". Others resisted parental pressure for some time, only to give in at the end. The movement to have all members of the family reply in the same general way, so that a like fate and destination would be shared by all, precipitated an endless number of quarrels and misunderstandings within families. No more unfortunate and disorganizing event could have occurred. Ill-feelings and family disruptions which were occasioned then still persist. I believe that this has materially contributed to delinquency and gangsterism, and I propose to investigate the point. There is much evidence that these internal disputes have greatly affected personal happiness and family life, and it is therefore imperative that the issue be settled as sensibly as possible and as soon as possible.

The feeling of loyalty to the old people and the resolve to share their fortunes and keep the family united was the dominant factor in "no" answers of citizens. In part this loyalty was volunteered; in part it



was exacted. Where it was exacted, a note on the attitude of the elders is in order. It must be remembered that the non-citizen group has very rapidly been reduced from a position of leadership in the Japanese community to a position of impotence. Since the Nisei as a group were young and untried, financial and community control was in the hands of the first generation. And, of course, their positions as family elders left the parents, particularly the fathers, in the ascendancy. No group has been more rapidly deflated. Their assets and jobs were swept aside. The more prominent they had been in community life, the more likely they were to be investigated, detained, or interned. Criteria of prestige were suddenly rendered void. When self-government for assembly centers and relocation centers was instituted the Issei were barred from office. The family was the last as well as the strongest refuge of this older generation, the only spot where the word and advice of the elders still carried weight and authority. Both aliens and citizens sensed this, and because of it, the former were more insistent and the latter more pliant than would otherwise have been the case.

Like the "no's" of the non-citizens, those of the citizens were a compound of many influences. The citizens shared the resentment of the aliens over what they considered to be discriminatory and arbitrary treatment. In fact, they felt their grievances to be even greater, for they had assumed that their citizenship would protect them from evacuation. Then, too, many of the young people reacted against the lot of their parents. There are those who believe that their parents have been interned for reasons and on evidence which would not suffice to hold an Italian or a German.



Much more repugnant to the male citizens was question 28. Over two-thirds of the male citizens are not and have never been dual citizens; they have never been registered at a Japanese consulate within the required 14 days of birth. Legally they do not exist for Japan. When these young men were asked in question 28 to "forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor", their reaction can be imagined. Many of them interpreted it as an attempt to force dual citizenship upon them, and as an indication that our government was making race and not national or international law the criterion of their status. They did not fail to note that they were being asked to assent to a loyalty oath such as is ordinarily administered to foreigners when they naturalize. They took this as added proof they "were not wanted or trusted" and it reinforced their determination to answer in the same spirit as their parents.

It is true that some answered question 28 in the negative because they wished to avoid being inducted into the armed forces and believed that such an answer would insure their continued civilian status. Even in the majority of these cases, however, I do not think that the motivation was cowardice or regard for the Japanese emperor. More important was the feeling that they were being expected to assume the responsibilities of citizenship without being able to exercise the full privileges of citizenship. It is inevitable that different treatment will result in different response. Over 10,000 male citizens of Hawaii volunteered for combat duty. The ratio at Manzanar was far different. The state of mind that makes for the difference can be overcome. A fair handling of the alien loyalty question and the consequent bolstering of the morale of the older people will not fail to have its effect on the younger genera-



tion. Time, a successful relocation program, and favorable reports from those who have joined the armed forces, will stem the tide of bitterness and awake interest and faith in democratic principles to the point where these young men will be as enthusiastic as any to defend them.

This is a preliminary report and a hastily written one. It by no means does justice to the complexity of the situation. But it indicates, I hope, that the "no" of a resident of Manzanar, like that of some young ladies, should not always be taken at face value. It suggests, I hope, that a complex situation cannot be properly described by a word of limited meaning, such as "loyal" or "disloyal". Most of all, I trust I have made clear my conviction that the problems of Manzanar are not to be settled with an adding machine.

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Manzanar Relocation Center