

April 22, 1942

Dearest Larry and Guyo,

What in the devil kind of an address is that, anyway: 866 East 17th South Street? It's enough to convince anybody that what they said about the Mormons was right. Anyway, I'm ~~back~~ back and glad to hear from two of the people I love the most in the world, etc. The reason I'm back? If it didn't sound so goddam silly, I'd say it was love of country, love of people, love of America (though love of New York is most like it), and that sort of crap; but since it would sound very silly, let's leave it at I'm back and to hell with my sanity. The trouble with you, Larry, is that you mistake this country for what it claims to be, what it should be, what it could be, and what it's got to be. Me, when I left for B.A., I said to hell with the country for what it claims to be and what it is, which isn't all that it claims to be. The trouble with me is that ~~I/abt/tpplpa/ltp~~ my terrific crush on New York fooled me into thinking that the country that should be was at war, not the country that is. Hence I come back with love in my heart and a glint, a resolute glint in my eye, only to get ~~slapped~~ slapped across the face with a stab in the back, meaning the evacuation. There I've gotten back my senses, and I've a personal war on my hands to make the country what it ought to be. To hell with the war the country that is is fighting. They'll have to give me an Atlantic Charter for the Pacific with ~~no~~ none of that existing-obligations crap before they can get me interested in driving the Japs out of the Southwest Pacific. So far as China is concerned, I'm still for the Chinese, and you know how I feel about Nehru. So the question is: is this a racial war? Not yet, but it's getting closer to it. So my faith in the Soviet Union hath reached an all-time high. (I won \$200 Arg from José and Immy on the Moscow-before-the-end-of-1941 situation.) The people, yes. A People's war. Yes. But it isn't a people's war when it could be a people's war. Survival War, my

eye. That, I say, is the worst kind of a stab in the back. Delivering the Japanese people from the fascist warlords is all right, but delivering them into the hands of Wall Street is out. And that's the picture as it appears to me. Hence, I am sitting still. I more or less approve of the American program in Europe (France, Norway, Belgium, Holland, etc.), ^{though} ~~but~~ I'm scared of what the American program in Germany will be like. The American program in Asia, I definitely disapprove of, for the simple reason that no program exists. Or if it does, it's that same old Singapore Muzzer Goddam, No Dogs and Chinese Allowed variety.

Anyway, how are you? And you, Guyo? The bugs are well under control, so don't worry. The old saying about children would describe my bugs well if it had been written by Milton: The bugs are not seen, neither are they heard. Or something. Anyway, I'm fine. I notice those bastards in the JACL turned quisling when the invasion ran over 'em. What the hell's the matter with you guys out there on the coast. The fact that you had to evacuate you can't deny, of course; and it would have been sheer~~y~~ folly not to cooperate with the the fascist military boys to make the evacuation as nice as possible. But the JACL boys didn't ^{just} cooperate; they actually went and kissed the army's ass. Not even a single protest, be it to the nisei's everlasting shame. By the fact of not protesting (not that it would have done any good, of course) you actually gave recognition to the necessity for evacuation when you knew damn well that no such necessity existed. What the JACL should have done was this: We recognize no necessity for evacuation, and we say to you plainly that we are following your orders under duress (whatever duress means). Then the JACL should have gotten busy to try to get that phoney military order revoked. Because as long as that military order hangs over the heads of the dumb nisei, it's going to mean that the nisei have been guilty of what the military boys said they were guilty of. Worse, the order is going to hang like a sword of Damocles over the heads of the nisei, poised to come down this time like

a ghetto-system, this time like slave-labor, this time like hostages for the white-American prisoners of the Japs, ad infinitum. I know that safety from West Coast mob-rule was one of the arguments used in favor of the evacuation by the JACL quislings-in-effect, but moving inland from the West Coast hasn't meant safety; they've just hung that sword of Damocles over their heads. Anything can happen as long as sword hangs there. Hell, the JACL didn't cooperate with the army. In France, they call that kind of thing collaboration. The invasion has come and the invasion has gone, but what the hell is everybody doing? I think what the Pacific Citizen should start campaigning ~~for~~ to get that military order revoked. I think it's pretty clear to you and to me and to every nisei that it wasn't the nisei that failed in the crisis, it was the U.S. govt and the other Americans who failed the nisei. 'Twasn't that the nisei hadn't been educated to consider themselves as Americans; it was that the other Americans hadn't been educated to consider the nisei as Americans. Do you get my point? As long as the nisei acquiesce to this evacuation, it means that the nisei are lying down and watching a great big flaw in the American capitalist democracy crack open and threaten that old capitalist democracy's chances of ever getting on with the people's democracy. And that sort of thing. If ever a war had a chance of turning into a people's war, this is it. And if ever a war had a chance of turning into a racial war, this is it. Whether the nisei like it or not, they've joined the parade of people, both Asiatic and European, who've been kicked around here and there by this goddam war, which I shall call this fantastic grave-digging of the part of the capitalist system. The others are doing all right, let the nisei do something, too. Whether they like it or not and whether they know it or not, the nisei have had a tradition thrust upon them. They ought to start getting some sense. All of which sounds solemn as hell, but I can still be cute. Just a few seconds ago, for instance, I went into the next room to beg a ~~please~~ guy please give me another cigarette.

Talking about the Pacific Citizen. Don't change the name. Even if they kick you out of Salt Lake City and you have to print the stuff in Chicago, call it the Pacific Citizen. The tradition, you know. The Rafu Shimpo, even if it's published in New York City should be called the Los Angeles Japanese Daily News. Ditto with the Nichi Bei, Seattle Courier, Sangyo Nippo (Southern California Japanese Daily News), Japan-California Daily News. The streets of concentration camps (know as reception centers) should be given Californian, Oregonian or Washintonian place-names--example: San Francisco St., Portland Street, Terminal Island Street, etc. Nisei clubs should retain their old names or adopt names that clearly place them in California, Oregon or Washington--example: San Francisco Protos (in Manzanar). The Manzanar Free Press (if the Army boys that runs it should call itself something like the Evacated Free Press, Evacuee Free Press, Pacific Coast Free Press. You get the idea? The Nisei Week Festival should be called-- Anyway, you get the idea? Everything done up cute. Capture the American people's imagination. Make 'em love you. The folk side of the protest is cute. The official side of the protest is dignified. But I say that the folk side of the protest, if publicized correctly, will do more than any hot-airing the JACL could do. And for Christ's sake, tell the JACL boys to cut out some of that flag-waving, will you? It's really disgusting. Carl Crow came back and told Shiro: "That ^{sure} Make Masaoka is some flag-waver, isn't he?" Waving the flag and yelling holy patriotism isn't going to stop the resentment that's getting bigger and bigger in the hearts of the nisei dopes. The thing to do is to find some way of letting that resentment out where it doesn't do any harm. The nisei have still got some of their corny humor left. Let the resentment out that way. (See above stupendous idea for an organized campaign of cute protest.) Waving the flag won't interest the nisei not one whit, simply because the invasion has come and the invasion has gone and the flag just doesn't mean a goddam thing any more so far as they're concerned. See

what I mean? Let that resentment grow, and despite the fact that it was provoked by US govt action, ~~#####~~ when it blows, it's going to be holy hell. Nisei delinquency's going up, I bet. That thing about the five kids ganging up on a cop somewhere in Salinas, wasn't it, gives you an idea of what the hell I mean? That, let me tell you, was a thing called an inkling of the shape of things to come. Protest, I think, is absolutely necessary--not just JACL protest, but a protest in which every evacuee can take part. You gotta keep 'em busy, thinking about this protest with good humor. Start a chalk-the-wall protest. A sword, for instance, it's easily drawn. An American newspaperman gets suspicious, asks what is it, expecting the worst, is told that it's the sword of Damocles, representing what can still happen since the evacuation actually happened. That sort of thing. You know, fun. Cute fun. But with this object in mind: The Army must revoke that order against the nisei! Note the exclamation mark. You'd think I was excited.

My book? Act of God is good for laughs now. Am thinking of doing a ~~factual~~ factual evacuation book. Gathering material. In general, preparing. After I get the thing straight (if I get it straight) I hope to hit the Rockefeller or Carnegie Foundation or some such creature to hand over some dough. This is as yet just a whim. I'm admittedly all emotion right now. But it's just possible that out of all this emotion may emerge some sense. This about the book is news only to the Tajiris, Guyo and Larry. At least, you two won't take it seriously.

South America? Wonderful, ~~from~~ this distance. The most charming people in Argentina were the French. (God, how I love the French! One thing this war proved: I'm a damn good Frenchman and a damn good Russian.) Padilla's Free Man of America really exists in Latin America--at least, so far as I'm concerned. I had only to mention that I was a North American. From then on, I was never a Japanese to these refugee Europeans and the Latin Americans. I was a North American. Not even an eyebrow raised.

For the first time in my life, I was an American--with nobody to question or doubt that fact. I tell you it was terrific. Can you wonder that I consider North Americans the worst kind of dopes? These refugee Europeans and Latin Americans never spoke to me as a Japanese. They always spoke to me as an American. They never doubted my loyalty to the United States. (Dangerous word, that loyalty. But not now.) I mean I won't go into why that word's a dangerous one. What I mean is in all this hullabaloo about loyalty this-and-that, disloyalty this-and-that in the evacuation business, no one from DeWitt and Roosevelt down to the least of the JACL quisling's quislings exactly described what they meant by loyalty and disloyalty. What I mean is I am definitely against turning the Japanese people over to Wall Street and the No-Dogs-And-Chinese-Allowed boys? Is that disloyalty? I traveled eight thousand miles through submarine-infested waters to come back to the United States from a more or less good life-time job in B.A. with the Asahi. Does that constitute loyalty? Etc. See what I mean? Johnson's loyalty and disloyalty, JACL loyalty and disloyalty, DeWitt loyalty and disloyalty. Nobody could say whether or not the nisei were loyal or disloyal simply because of the fact that nobody made clear what the hell he was talking about.) Anyway, to Latin Americans, Padilla, and the whole French people, my love. Sao Paulo is still a wonderful city to me. Did I tell you about my Turkish girl, 22-years-old, educated in France, widow of a French infantry lieutenant, with whom I was on tu-terms, Spanish and halting French? Lovely. I should have fallen in love with her. And so forth. sighted two submarines, dodged two torpedoes in the night, didn't even so much as get excited, and the navy gunnery crew was given orders by the ensign in command to shoot me on sight if they caught me signalling to any ship, the damn fool (the kind of thing that makes me despair for America.)

A long letter, but a well-meant one. I love you both, and thanks for the letter. ~~It~~ it was most touching. now guess what i'm doing now. I'm

on Long Island, stuffing dirt into pots at the Japan Nurseries, Inc.,
\$50 a month ~~with room and profit for dogs~~ with room and fish-diet, 11 hours
a day. You should see me. Positively boorish. A muzhik, a muzhak--the
Russian for peasant. Am getting my unemployment insurance soon, however.
Then to work.

Love,

George

P.S.: WATERMELONS, EH?

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EXTRA STRONG

MADE IN NORWAY