Loyal Citizens Should Be Received on Their Merits

ARMY orders under which Japanese were evacuated and excluded from the Pacific Coast states have been revoked, the War Department having decided that mass exclusion is no longer a matter of military necessity.

The Supreme Court Monday rendered two opinions bearing on the question. The first was to the effect that as a military necessity persons of Japanese ancestry, even though American citizens, may be excluded from the Pacific Coast states. The second held that a loyal American citizen of Japanese ancestry was entitled to unconditional release from a War Relocation Authority center in Utah.

The revocation order applies only to persons of Japanese ancestry who have been investigated from the standpoint of loyalty to the United States. The particular application would seem to be to the native-born; to those who, under our Constitution, are American citizens or will qualify for that status when they come of age.

The revocation order makes no specific mention of the evacuees who were born in Japan, and are ineligible for citizenship. It is, however, specific on the point that any who have been found to indicate a pro-Japanese attitude; that is to say, who are loyal to Japan, rather than to the United States, "will continue to be excluded on an individual basis." Obviously, this provision applies without respect to place of birth.

Immediate regional reactions are various. They reflect preferences and prejudices. There are those who resented the presence of so many Japanese in this area long before the war began. There are many others who found the Japanese easy to get along with; law-abiding, industrious and serviceable to the general public in many ways.

The margin for such differences of opinion narrowed sharply after Pearl Harbor. Evidences of long collaboration between some Japanese in this country and the war lords of Tokyo could not be disputed. It was inevitable that those previously prejudiced should at once regard all Japanese as potential, if not actual, enemies. Even some theretofore disposed to think well of Japanese neighbors could not help but be more or less shaken in faith.

In such circumstances, and while public feeling ran high, evacuation and relocation of Japanese seemed best for all concerned. It was accomplished in orderly fashion; and it cannot be doubted that a great deal of trouble, and of possibly very serious disturbance, was thereby averted.

There was then no time nor any dependable means of segregation. The complete sweep of this area included thousands of American citizens and thousands of youngsters whose right of citizenship is inherent. In this, as in earlier wars, there has been much rounding up of enemy aliens and native-born traitors; but never before have men, women and children been herded away without chance to prove their loyalty.

The injustice of this in thousands of cases has been recognized from the start by right-thinking Americans of other ancestry—all alien, if one goes back far enough. At the same time most such Americans realized there was no other reasonable way to prevent friction and insure the safety of the Japanese, both native-born and alien.

There has been much criticism of the War Relocation Authority; but, on the whole, it has been doing a good job. Disturbance at its centers and camps has been held at a minimum. Credit for this is largely due to loyal Japanese-American citizens. They have borne their burden of injustice and indiscriminative odium with commendable fortitude. In this, as well as for fighting as Americans on various fronts, they have well earned the right to consideration on their individual merits.

The reversal of exclusion is not to be attended by any rush. The Japanese who gradually return will have been fully tested as to loyalty. They should be received without rancor; and be permitted, without prejudice, to resume their places among other loyal and law-abiding citizens.

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