

# Ever Loyal, in Spite of Injustices

—By HAROLD L. ICKES

**N**EW YORK.—I hope that those who disposed to be indifferent about our treatment of alien strains will read "Citizen 13660," written by Mine Okubo, and published by the Columbia University Press. Both the illustrations and the short text tell, without the rancor that would be understandable, of the treatment of the Japanese who were living in this "land of the brave and home of the free" at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

As a member of President Roosevelt's administration, I saw the United States Army give way to mass hysteria over the Japanese. The investigation of Pearl Harbor disclosed that the Army in Hawaii was more intent upon acts of anticipated sabotage that never occurred than in being alert against a possible surprise attack by the Japanese.

**O**N THE mainland, the Army had taken no precautionary measures. Then suddenly, it lost its self-control and, egged on by public clamor, some of it from greedy Americans who sought an opportunity to possess themselves of Japanese rights and property, it began to round up indiscriminately the Japanese who had been born in Japan, as well as those born here.

Crowded into cars like cattle, these hapless people were hurried away to hastily constructed and thoroughly inadequate concentration camps, with soldiers with nervous muskets on guard, in the great American desert. We gave the fancy name of "relocation centers" to the dust bowls, but they were concentration camps nonetheless, although not as bad as Dachau or Buchenwald.

**W**AR-EXCITED imaginations, raw race-prejudice and crass greed kept hateful public opinion along the Pacific Coast at fever heat. Fortunately, the President had put at the head of the War Relocation Authority a strong and able man who was not afraid to fight back. Later, the President transferred the agency to the Department of the Interior. I claim no credit for the result that was finally attained except that I stood shoulder to shoulder with Dillon Myer and let my own lists

fly on occasion. Mr. Myer fully deserved the Medal of Merit which he was later awarded.

It was to be expected that some native-born Japanese would have to be watched closely. Some wanted to go back to Japan and help has been given them. But, generally speaking, the Japanese, particularly those who had been born in this country and were therefore American citizens, have settled back into American communities and there is no reason to believe that they will not continue to be loyal Americans.

**I**F WE Americans, with the Army in the lead, made fools of ourselves, for which we should be ashamed, it must be said that the American Japanese, with very few exceptions, gave an example of human dignity by which all of us might profit. However, they have not had returned to them the property that was rifled from them, or its equivalent.

A bill was introduced in the recent session of Congress setting up a commission to pass upon the claims of these dispossessed American-Japanese for property of which they were despoiled. This bill should pass and no time should be lost in making restitution for property that was lost or misappropriated.

**I**F THE Japanese had been permitted to continue their normal lives, they would have occasioned slight concern. They did not in Hawaii where the proportion of Japanese is much larger than in any state on the mainland and where the temptation to favor Japan was necessarily much greater.

No soldiers wearing the American uniform gave a better account of themselves than did the American-born Japanese. Japanese troops, both from Hawaii and the mainland, as the Army records will show, were outstanding for bravery, intelligence, endurance and daring. Their loyalty was not only unimpeachable, but remarkable, considering the affronts and injustices that had been put upon them and their people.

This whole episode was one in which we can take no pride. To understand just what we did to many thousands of our fellow Americans, we should read "Citizen 13660."

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