

ENEMY FIFTH COLUMN IN HAWAII PROVES MOSTLY MERE RUMOR

(Robert J. Casey, veteran war correspondent for The Chicago Daily News and a captain in the Field Artillery in the First World War, has filed his dispatches from several fronts in this war. His articles have included vivid descriptions of the fall of France, the battle of Britain and desert warfare in Africa. This is another in his series of articles on the Battle of Midway.)

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It will be a long time before the experts of the so-called intelligence sections operating in Honolulu figure out what happened to the Japanese fifth-column.

Nobody who ever saw Honolulu ever will blame them for looking for it—nor anybody who heard the first hysterical radio reports from the islands December 7. Hawaii, June 30, 1940, had a population of 156,849 Japanese, 33.6 per cent of the total, a mass outnumbering any other single racial group. Of these, 122,188 were citizens, 34,661 aliens. And while these people might have lived years in peace and amity with their neighbors in business and more recently in politics, their part in the social life of the community was virtually nil.

You always could hear a lot of conversation about Honolulu's great melting pot, about the absorption of numerous Asiatic strains, about the effect of education and kindness and, no doubt, reflections on the political and economic philosophies of these people. But such agencies as the police knew that these inspiring comments were more or less bunk.

Eyes On Skies, Alleys

The social system under which the Japanese-American of the Hawaiian Islands was brought up insured that, no matter what else happened to him, he remained culturally a Japanese. If one got to be an American, it was because the Japanese essentially are a pretty smart people and sometimes hard

to fool, even with the best intentions and equipment.

The result of Hawaii's attempt at the Americanization of its local Japanese was demonstrated when after December 7 all of them abandoned their adopted tongue. In spite of their association with one of the most expensive school systems in the United States, 90 per cent of them talked a brand of English that no Occidental could understand and that they probably couldn't understand themselves.

Well, there they were when the bombs fell on Pearl Harbor—their "racial purity," about which ethnologists had written so lyrically, a disturbing factor in the problem of

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JAP FIFTH COLUMN IN HAWAII MYTH

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what was going to happen to Hawaii. As the panic increased during that terrible afternoon, it was natural that the Caucasian populace should keep one eye on the skyways and one on the alleys whence the fifth-column might presently be expected to move.

But there was no fifth-column—a highly organized espionage system undoubtedly, but a fifth-column such as that which took over the roads and communications in Luxembourg and Norway, no.

It always will be amazing to one who has had to do with the press-relations departments of most of the countries involved in this war to note the ballyhoo that gets by the censor while, no doubt, he is engaged in blocking something else. When the book is written a chapter can be assigned to the Honolulu fifth-column.

We got acquainted with it when we got down on a dock in Pearl Harbor a little more than a week after the attack. A couple of naval officers, still a little dazed at what had happened to them, volunteered the information that the man hunt was still on.

"All these people were in on the plan," said one. "They went out in the fields and cut swaths in the cane with vees at the end like an arrowhead pointing toward Pearl Harbor." We considered that one with a skepticism of which we had later some reason to be proud.

Tokens And Rings

"To what end?" we asked. "If a pilot were able to navigate across a few hundred miles of the Pacific and hit the Island of Oahu wouldn't he be able to find Pearl Harbor without further directions?"

The officer didn't think so. It was his idea that a pilot might be confused because there were so many bays and inlets of similar shape surrounding the island. But he still wasn't very convincing. It seemed more than probable that a carrier pilot would have a map and be able to read it and that he would have a compass and be able to follow it—and, well, anyway, there weren't any such swaths across the canefields. A lot of cursing investigators had some bad days making sure.

"And another thing," said our informant on the docks. "Every one of those pilots they shot down over Wheeler Field and Kaneohe was wearing a McKinley High School ring and two or three had Honolulu street car tokens in their pockets."

Ralph Jordah of the International News Service was critical of that story.

"What did they want the tokens for?" he wanted to know. "Did they figure on taking the bus in from Pearl Harbor?"

Milk-Can Story, Too

But that wasn't the answer. They were luck tokens, our informant thought—something belonging to Honolulu that would bring them safely home.

"They all went to school here," we were told. "That's why they knew just what to look for here."

And naturally we looked into that matter. We asked a Navy surgeon who had been in charge of all enemy wounded—pilots and submarine survivors—and who had made a point of examining some 18 Japanese corpses taken from the wreckage of planes in the Pearl Harbor area.

"I've heard that story," he said. "But I never saw any rings. I never saw any street car tokens. None of the pilots had much of anything in his pockets. None wore any jewelry. Only one had a watch."

And we said: "What a pity."

For even longer than the story of the arrow-shaped swath in the canefields, the story of the transmitter in the milk can kept going the rounds. As usual in such yarns, the locale kept changing, but the details were always the same.

Some Belligerence

A pleasant-faced Japanese, long and favorably known to everybody in the neighborhood, had come driving onto an air field shortly after the attack. A sentry who appears to have been smarter than anybody else on guard that day became suspicious, opened up one of the Jap's milk cans, disclosed a very fine transmitter and shot the alleged milkman dead on the spot.

That one wasn't true, either. The lads working the transmitters weren't bothered about carrying them around in milk cans. You kept hearing for a couple

of months that all the Jap housemaids and cooks in Honolulu failed to show up for work the morning of December 7. But when you went looking for somebody whose maid actually had been late for work you could never find him. It was always somebody else's maid who had been mysteriously delinquent.

There were, of course, some instances of belligerence on the part of the Japs here, before order or whatever they call it had been restored. One ancient alien was caught trying to smash up a street hydrant with an ax. Another was caught popping off crossing lights in his neighborhood. And he was generally supposed to have been "touched." If he had waited another few hours the blackout would have eliminated the lights, anyway.

One former restaurateur still was being hunted a few days ago because of a fire that destroyed his place—a wooden shack out on the road to Pearl Harbor. It was conceded generally that a few less restaurants of the type would lower the ptomaine rate of the community. But the hunt was on, anyway.

West Coast Menace Removed

It seems that sometime before the Battle of Midway, Jap patrol ships were spotted in the neighborhood, and in Honolulu the panic was on again, this time, as it turned out, with good reason. One night the alert sounded and sundry portions of the populace took to the hills, convinced, as were the local authorities, that an air raid was imminent. That was the night the Jap restaurant man contrived to

make a blazing torch of his lunchroom. The odd thing about it all is that such incidents have been so infrequent as to be memorable.

Japs Missed Chance

One may become philosophical about it now that the menace to the islands and the West Coast seems to have been permanently removed. We may even look forward to some success in the Americanization movement that we used to hear so much about before we went to Honolulu. But we're not likely to forget that our Oriental-American population gave us something to think about in those days. It was no fault of ours that they were smart enough—even those who hated us most—to see that their best opportunity lay in quiescence. No matter who might win the war in the Pacific, they couldn't

lose if they merely sat still and did not try to crowd the result either way.

There is increasing indication that a very large percentage of the Honolulu Nisei (American-born Japanese) are really good American citizens and no more opportunists than most of us. There is also a belief among men qualified to know that these lads will be leaders after the war in a movement to bring people of their race into an American way of life and destroy their ties to an alien tradition.

But whether that is true or not seems to make no difference at the moment. If any Jap fifth-column existed in Hawaii, it can now turn its energies into more useful and practical channels, for, like the Japanese Admiralty, it has certainly missed its chance.



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