

Jap 'Revenge' Feared for Tule Lake Incident

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 13.—Director Dillon S. Myer of the War Relocation Authority warned tonight that reports of recent disturbances at the Tule Lake, Calif., center for disloyal Japanese civilians might be made a pretext for abusive action against American civilians and prisoners of war held in Japan. He pleaded for accuracy and understanding of the situation.

Myer said that many of the reports were "exaggerated and even hysterical," with a strong implication that they originated from within his own organization. He said that during the incident many of the W. R. A. staff became apprehensive concerning their personal safety.

"Most of them remained calm," Myer continued, "but a few became almost hysterical. All were offered an opportunity to leave the center

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Tule Lake

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until they felt secure in returning there and a number did so. Since the incident, 12 people have resigned voluntarily and two have resigned or were separated from the service."

Myer Recounts Events

Myer issued a 4,000-word statement detailing events at the center from the time disloyal Japanese were moved to Tule Lake in mid-October until the Army took control November 4. He supplemented the statement with verbal explanations at a press conference.

In presenting the "factual statement" of events as authenticated by investigations, he said the W. R. A. wished to emphasize that reports of the disturbances were being watched closely by Tokyo

"Already," he said, "some of the recent newspaper accounts have been used by the Japanese government for propaganda purposes. There is every possibility that they may be used as a pretext for retaliatory action against American civilians and prisoners of war under Japanese control. Under these circumstances, it is imperative that the situation at Tule Lake be handled with a scrupulous regard for accuracy."

Truck Mishap Recalled

Myer's statement recited these events:

On October 15, a truck carrying 18 evacuees to the center's farm overturned, injuring, all, one fatally. The next day no workers appeared for farm duty.

On October 26, a delegation asserting it represented the evacuee community called, on Ray Best, project director, and said they would not harvest crops for use at other evacuee centers. Best said other means would be found to harvest the crops in that case, and the \$500,000 worth of vegetables subsequently were harvested by Japanese from other centers.

On November 1, Myer and Robert B. Cozzens, W. R. A. assistant director, arrived at Tule Lake. From 3,500 to 4,000 evacuees gathered outside the Administration Building to hear Myer speak, and a request for Myer to talk to a committee of 17 was granted. The committee presented a series of demands, including one for Best's ouster.

Dr. Pedicord Beaten

While this conference was in progress, word was received that Dr. Reece M. Pedicord, chief medical officer, had been severely beaten by a group of evacuees at the center's hospital. (Myer told his press conference Pedicord had admitted striking the first blow, and that he—Myer—told Pedicord there would have been no trouble "if you had kept your hands in your pockets.")

Myer told the evacuee committee—and the camp as a whole, in a subsequent speech over a public-address system—that W. R. A. would consider requests made by the evacuees provided they were in the framework of national policy; that W. R. A. would not accede to demands, and that W. R. A. believed the majority wanted to live in a peaceful and orderly atmosphere. The crowd later returned to quarters "quickly and peacefully."

Little Property Damage

The only property damaged during the meeting was "slight" damage to a number of automobiles and the smashing of a wooden railing.

On November 4, work was started on a fence separating the evacuee and administration sections of the camp. That evening "a crowd of about 400 evacuees, mainly young men—many of them armed with clubs—entered the administration area." Internal security officers resisted the crowd's advance, and one officer "tripped, struck his head on a stone and was then struck by evacuees with clubs." No one else was injured.

When the crowd closed in around his home, Best asked the commander of the Army unit outside the center to take over control and troops were sent in immediately.

An investigation failed to verify reports that oil-soaked straw was placed around the Administration Building the night of November 1.