

THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED  
STATES OF AMERICAAmerican Embassy  
Lima, Peru, April 18, 1942.

MEMORANDUM TO: The Ambassador.

My short study of the Japanese problem in Peru leads me to the conclusion that it is a very serious one. The Japanese are a people whose strength and ability have, in the past, been vastly underestimated and whose fanatic spirit has neither been understood nor taken seriously. I believe that the Japanese in Peru have in no sense lost the characteristics which make them Japanese. There has apparently been no assimilation and in striking contrast to the situation in the United States where many nisei, or second generation Japanese, are loyal, patriotic citizens, I believe the Japanese here have no feelings of love, loyalty or obligation to Peru.

The fact that the Japanese are an Oriental people with language and customs almost unknown in the West, makes them an especially dangerous element. It is particularly difficult--and, as of course you know, this is true in Japan as well--to find out what they think and plan. This fact and the fact that they form by far the largest foreign element in Peru, make investigation of the situation and efforts to control it of the greatest importance.

My tentative conclusions and suggestions, to date, are contained in the following brief outline:

1. The Japanese colony in Peru is dangerous. The census figures are inaccurate and it is impossible to know the exact numbers of Japanese in Peru. Estimates run from the 17,000 of the census to 50,000. For example, the census reports 23 Japanese in the entire province of Huanuco, whereas it is known that a large "quina" plantation is operated by Japanese at Tingo Maria and one observer reports 200 Japanese in this village alone.

2. The Japanese in Peru are thoroughly organized. Their school system was closely controlled by the Japanese Government. Although the schools are reported closed and a few teachers have left (6 on the Etolin), the organization is still intact.

3. The Japanese are organized in local associations with centralized control in the Federation of Japanese Societies. Orders could easily be communicated to residents in Peru from central headquarters and action dictated.

4. The Japanese are intensely patriotic and would act for the interest of Japan in every instance. They would follow implicitly the directions of their leaders.

5. These leaders have great power to direct the small shopkeepers and farmers, which form the masses of the Japanese colony. The leaders are relatively few, when the total number of the community is considered.

6. Peruvians are apathetic toward the situation. Although they do not like the Japanese, there appears to be little realization of the actual danger and a reluctance on the part of the Government to take positive measures. Furthermore, since local police and other officials are susceptible to Japanese bribes, their alertness cannot be depended upon.

7. Regardless of the truth or falsehood of alarming rumors of pending Japanese action (one such rumor describes a mass movement of Japanese toward the north and predicts action within a month), steps should be taken to decrease the power of this group in Peru. The following recommendations are made:

a. Japanese leaders believed to be dangerous should be expelled from Peru.

Of the 141 Japanese who embarked on the Etolin no more than 3 or 4 could be considered important or potentially dangerous. Only 6 undesirables (heads of families) were expelled on the Acadia.

In preparation for the arrival of the Acadia on May 8th, the Auxiliary Section has already prepared a list of some 250 Japanese whom it recommends for expulsion. These include officers of Japanese associations, business men who have been active in the Japanese colony, journalists, directors of educational and propaganda organizations, and teachers in Japanese schools. Many of the names have been suggested by the Peruvian authorities. It is believed that continued investigation, in close cooperation with the Peruvian authorities, will result in the recommendation of at least an additional 100 individuals whose expulsion would be highly desirable. An effort is being made to select leaders in the important Japanese communities throughout Peru, since it is believed that the danger of Japanese action will be perceptibly diminished by the removal of key individuals upon whom the harmless masses depend for leadership and stimulation.

b. Indirect efforts should be made to encourage propaganda intended to call the attention of the Peruvians to the Japanese danger.

There are certain organizations whose stated purpose is to acquaint the Peruvian people with the situation as regards the Japanese. They may be found to provide such groups with material without of course permitting the source to become known as the Embassy. Any increase of awareness in this country that, after Pearl Harbor, any desperate act by the Japanese is possible, is to the good. The enemy is a compact, insulated body, ill understood and ill appreciated.