

Bendetson

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

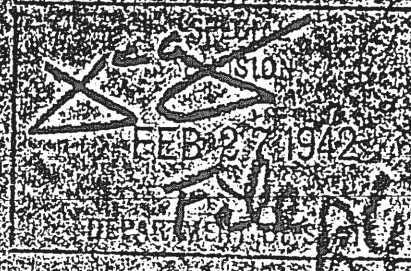
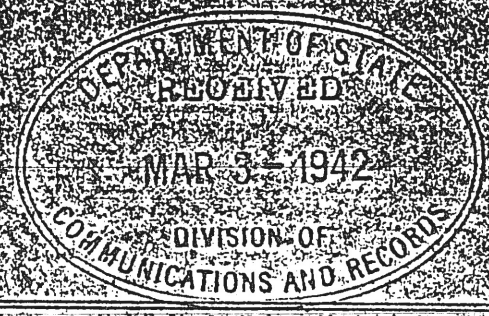
Memorandum of Conversation
TELEPHONE

DATE: February 21, 1942

SUBJECT: Removals of enemy aliens from certain localities on the Pacific Coast

PARTICIPANTS: Lieutenant Colonel Karl Bendetson, Office of the Provost Marshal General, War Department, and Mr. Bernard Gufler, Special Division

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Mr. Gufler telephoned Colonel Bendetson to ask what effect the Executive Order reported in the press placing control of removals in the hands of the Army might have on the situation which he discussed with Colonel Bendetson yesterday.

Colonel Bendetson stated that the Army has not yet exercised the new powers given to it and that authority for removals in the 88 areas already designated still remains in the hands of the Department of Justice. The Army will, however, probably designate these areas as well as other areas and take action in them under the new authority granted to it. The actual exercise of authority will be in the hands of the general commanding the California military district. The War Department shares the reluctance of the Justice Department to move the Italian nationals from the restricted areas. The General in Command of the California District, General DeWitt, feels, however, that if he gives the Italians more favorable treatment than he gives the German and Japanese by allowing Italian aliens to remain in restricted areas reprisals against Americans in the hands of the German and Japanese Governments might result.

Mr. Gufler remarked to Colonel Bendetson that the General's point of view did not appear correct in that reciprocity of treatment of civilian alien enemies applied bilaterally as between the United States and the individual countries with which it is at war and not bilaterally between two collective groups of allied warring nations. Colonel Bendetson said that he agreed with this point of view and would draw it to the attention of the appropriate authorities in his department.

Colonel Bendetson

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Colonel Bendetson displayed great bitterness toward the Department of Justice in his general remarks concerning the Pacific Coast alien problem. He stated that the Department of Justice was continually writing "letters for the record" to the War Department and was "passing the Buck" to the War Department. He inferred that the Department of Justice was refraining from taking necessary action and was reserving for itself the position of critic of the War Department's actions.

He said that many of the aliens ordered to move had moved and had found new places for themselves. The War Department is prepared, he added, to provide food and housing, such as that provided for soldiers, and railroad transportation for those aliens who do not move before the deadline date. It does not, however, desire to advertise the fact that it will provide such facilities for fear that there might be a rush on the part of numerous aliens to take advantage of free living. Colonel Bendetson remarked with great emphasis that the War Department is not a W.P.A. or resettlement organization, that it will handle persons who fall on its hands as well as it can but that other Departments of the Government should remember that the Army's job is to kill Japanese not to save Japanese and that if the Army is to devote its facilities to resettlement and social welfare work among Japanese aliens, it will be that much more difficult for it to get on to its primary task, that winning the war.

Handwritten initials: JF, RY, MW

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