

Shadyus

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Interview with James Rowe, the Assistant to the Attorney General, October 15, 1942.

"I am convinced that the whole story lies in the single fact that the Army folded under pressure.

"When I was in San Francisco the first week of January, General DeWitt told me, in referring to the demand already made by the Los Angeles group, that he 'thinks mass evacuation is damned nonsense!' and I agreed with him and still agree with his original statement. Mass evacuation is damned nonsense and there was no good military reason for it."

Proclamation 9066 was actually put through in less than two days. The Justice Department had no idea that the Army was considering the evacuation of citizens and aliens from large territories until an evening meeting at Attorney General Biddle's home

which can now be definitely dated on February 17. Before this evening meeting, there had been discussion of evacuation of aliens and citizens from small strategic areas. And the Justice Department previously had refused to evacuate citizens from Bainbridge Island. The January 17th meeting was called to adjust the differences between the Justice Department and the War Department in regard to the huge areas in Oregon and Washington that the Army had set forth from which it wanted all aliens excluded. But the question of citizens being evacuated was not being considered.

"The argument waxed hot and though the Attorney General did not back Ennis or me with much force, he at least did not argue against us, and we had refused every Army demand successfully. Suddenly General Gullian (Provost Marshall General) reached in his pocket and pulled out a slip of paper which contained an order giving the Department power to remove citizens and aliens.

"I laughed at him. The old buzzard got mad. I told him he was crazy, and immediately perceived that he was pulling the Army tactic of attacking when on defense.

"But in another minute I thought that I was crazy. Because the Attorney General immediately wanted to get to work polishing up the order. His attitude amazed me. Ennis almost wept. I was so mad that I could not speak at all myself and the meeting soon broke up.

"The next morning we met in Mr. Stimson's office and I arrived about three minutes late. Ennis was there when I arrived, arguing with Stimson and Biddle and getting absolutely nowhere because his own boss was against him. Now Biddle was wholeheartedly in favor of the resolution. Ennis and I might have combatted Biddle's passive acceptance of 9066, but it was impossible for us to oppose his energetic approval.

"So Ennis and I ~~next~~ helped draw up the resolution that very morning, and on the way home in the cab I had to convince Ennis that it was not important enough to make him quit his job."

Roose pushed 9066 through the budget and had it signed by the evening of the 19th, just two days after it was suggested for the first time. After it was signed by the President and announced, Biddle remarked plaintively to Roosevelt: "Jim, I thought it would

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"...get back to my desk." This, I think is an interesting twinge of conscience, because Rowe said that Biddle was well aware of the fact that once he approved of such a measure it never required any further action upon his part.

Further facts:

1- After S066 was through the President, Rowe immediately set to work in getting the WRA organized. He was largely responsible for its inception because ^{he} "didn't want the Army to keep the poor people a minute longer than was necessary."

2- Rowe is certain that if Biddle had not given in, the Army would have been well satisfied with a compromise. He is equally certain that the Army was surprised and a little overwhelmed by their success, as is evidence by the months lapse between the signing of S066 and the first exclusion orders.

3- Rowe likes Biddle and it was obviously difficult for him to condemn him as he did. He excuses for Biddle were (a), the fact that Biddle was in such a precarious position as far as his job was concerned, and (b), public opinion was ^{so} strong that the Army would probably have received its way a month later than it did, anyway.

Rowe

4- Rowe was almost solely responsible for the Tolson Committee going to the West Coast. He thought it would relieve the pressure on the Justice Department. (This confirmed by Lamb later.)

The interview with Rowe was supposed to last for "no more than fifteen minutes." It lasted for an hour and twenty minutes, making me late for my appointment with the Assistant Secretary of War. Mr. Rowe saved my skin by having a government car drive me to the War Department.

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