

JOHN FRANKLIN CARTER

(Jay Franklin)

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MEMORANDUM ON C.B. MUNSON'S REPORT "JAPANESE ON THE WEST COAST"

Attached herewith is the report, with supplementary reports on Lower California and British Columbia. The report, though lengthy, is worth reading in its entirety. Salient passages are:

- 1) "There are still Japanese in the United States who will tie dynamite around their waist and make a human bomb out of themselves... but today they are few."
- 2) "There is no Japanese 'problem' on the coast. There will be no armed uprising of Japanese. There will be undoubtedly some sabotage financed by Japan and executed largely by imported agents. There will be the odd case of fanatical sabotage by some Japanese 'crackpot'."
- 3) "The dangerous part of their espionage is that they would be very effective as far as movement of supplies, movement of troops and movement of ships... is concerned."
- 4) "For the most part the local Japanese are loyal to the United States or, at worst, hope that by remaining quiet they can avoid concentration camps or irresponsible mobs."
- 5) "Your reporter... is horrified to note that dams, bridges, harbors, power stations etc. are wholly unguarded everywhere. The harbor of San Pedro could be razed by fire completely by four men with hand grenades and a little study in one night. Dams could be blown and half of lower California might actually die of thirst... One railway bridge at the exit from the mountains in some cases could tie up three or four main railroads."

(signed)

J.F.C.

JAPANESE ON THE WEST COAST

(C. B. Munson)

GROUND COVERED

In reporting on the Japanese 'problem' on the West Coast the facts are, on the whole, fairly clear and opinion toward the problem exceedingly uniform. In reporting, the main difficulty is to know where to leave off and what to leave out. One could gather data for fifteen years with fifteen men and still be in the position of the Walrus and the Carpenter:

If seven maids with seven mops

Swept it for half a year -

Do you suppose, the Walrus said,

That they could get it clear?

Whisking up the grains of sand is the wrong approach, yet when your reporter declares there is a sea and a shore and some sand, and that he has sampled the general quality of sand in many varying beaches, do not be too hard in your judgment for him if he has stopped far short of sorting out each layer or tint or even each beach. You have to feel this problem -- not figure it out with your pencil. We only cite the sand that our reader may never forget the complexities of even a shovel full of sand.

Your reporter spent about a week each in the 11th, 12th and 13th Naval Districts with the full cooperation of the Naval and Army intelligences and the F.B.I. Some mention should also be made of the assistance rendered from time to time by the British Intelligence. Our Navy has done by far the most work on this problem, having given it intense consideration for the last ten or fifteen years. Your reporter commenced in the 12th Naval District, which covers Northern California, from thence to the 13th, covering Washington and Oregon, winding up his observations in the 11th Naval District, covering Southern California, where to his mind the whole 'problem' finally focuses. Your reporter also turned the corner into British Columbia through a member of the R.C.M.P. [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and the corner into Mexico through a conference with our Consul at Tijuana...

Opinions of the various services were obtained, also of business, employees, universities, fellow white workers, students, fish packers, lettuce packers, farmers, religious groups, etc. etc. The opinion expressed with minor differences was uniform. Select Japanese in all groups were sampled. To mix indiscriminately with the Japanese was not considered advisable chiefly because the opinions of many loyal white Americans who had made this their life work for the last fifteen years were available and it was foolish to suppose your reporter could add to the sum of knowledge in three weeks by running through the topmost twigs of a forest.

BACKGROUND

Unless familiar with the religious and family background of the Japanese, this rough background summary should be skimmed over as it has a bearing on the Japanese question. If the reader is familiar with the Japanese background, it may be omitted.

An American wit once said, "You cannot tell the truth about Japan without lying." This same witticism might be made with reference to the Japanese people, but, like all generalizations, it needs a corrective explanation. A study of Japan is a study in the category or social fully as much as of political science. The study of the Japanese people is one of absorbing interest.

Who are the Japanese people? From whence did they come and what emotional concepts did they bring with them? While there might not be unanimity of opinion as to the various strains that go to make up the Japanese of today, one leading anthropologist, Dr. Frederick Star of the University of Chicago, a number of years ago said to the writer, "the Japanese are the most mixed race of people that I have ever studied". The Malay strain is pronounced in the Japanese, especially in the Province of Kumamoto. The Mongol is very pronounced in the upper middle as well as in the so-called higher brackets of society. Then there is the Aryan strain still to be seen in its unmixed form in the 17,000 and more Ainu who inhabit portions of Hokkaido and the Kurile Islands. These latter are related to the Aryan group in physiognomy and in language. These three strains have produced the Japanese of today.

The Ainu, in so far as we know, was the aboriginal. His social status was changed from time to time as conquering groups drove him farther and farther to the North. These conquering groups came from China via Korea. Japanese history begins with the conqueror Jimmu Tenno, who arrived on a 'Floating Bridge of Heaven' -- a poetical expression for his coming to Japan by boat. He found a tribal people with a primitive animistic faith of nature worship. He had a superior religion and he was shrewd. He told the conquered people that their reverence for the tribal chief was a true reverence and that he also revered the head of his clan which was the Sun Goddess, whose beneficent rule was seen in her health-giving rays. Thus began what is known as 'Shinto' ('The Way of the Gods'), as we know it today. From the days of Jimmu (the first Japanese Emperor) to the

present, all Japanese have revered the Emperor as a descendant of the Sun Goddess, whose appearance in Japanese mythology is too complicated to be discussed here.

Another cultural element in Japanese life stems from the introduction of Buddhism in Japan in the sixth and seventh centuries. Buddhism is a foreign religion and made little progress in Japan, even though it was fostered by the Emperor Prince Shotoku. Buddhism had a very difficult time until some wise propagandist hit upon the idea of incorporating the Shinto Gods into the Buddhist Pantheon. All the Shinto deities were recognized as avatars of Buddha and we have continuing in Japan until the days of the Restoration what is known as two-fold Buddhism -- a union of Shinto and Buddhism -- a union so intricate that Buddhist God shelves in the home have unmistakable Shinto deities and Shinto God shelves have unmistakable Buddhist deities. Japan can never repay Buddhism for its contribution to the cultural life of the people. Its temples were schools wherein those who wished might be taught. It developed the arts and crafts, and was the developer and preserver of much that is beautiful in the cultural life of the Nation today.

While the Shinto and the Buddhist influence, separate and co-mingled, were moving forward, there developed in Japan a feudal type of society. This society was organized under the rule of a tribal person known as 'The Great Name' [daimyo] (a land baron). He had warriors or knights known as Samurai. They, the Samurai, preserved order and fought battles to maintain the existence of the clan. Besides the Samurai there was the farmer who raised the food, the artisan who fashioned and fabricated the tools, not only of the farmer but also of the warrior, and there was the merchant; below them there was the eta, and lower still the hinin -- those who for misconduct or through capture had been reduced in status until they were not considered men, as the term 'hinin' implies.

For nearly 1,000 years, this state of society existed with internecine wars of all too frequent and carnal occurrence until early in the seventeenth century when a great man, Ieyasu, appeared, and became the founder of what is known as the Tokugawa family. The story of this period is interesting, but time and space do not permit the telling of it here, other than to say it was a period of about 250 years of great peace.

During the Tokugawa period, Confucianism had great vogue. The Samurai children were privileged to attend the few schools which were maintained and where the principles of Confucian ethics were taught, but with one great characteristic change - the Japanese substituted for the chief virtue, loyalty for filial piety. Chugi (loyalty) is loyalty, not to an idea nor an ideal, but to a person. In this feudal society, personal relationships were supreme, and loyalty was the cardinal virtue.

In the feudal state, as well as throughout all Japanese history, the individual as an individual did not exist. He existed only as a member of the family and the family existed as a member of the clan. The family could dispose of individuals at will, should occasion merit such action. Even life itself could be taken, after the case had been submitted to the family council. In this connection, one should not overlook the tremendous influence of the dead. The living succeed or fail, are happy or sad, through the influence of the dead who live in the tombs of the village or hover over their familiar haunts. It is well to keep this in mind when estimating Japanese activity. The Japanese believe that the dead remain in the World and that all dead become Gods with supernatural powers, and that happiness of the dead depends upon respectful services that are rendered them by the living.

In a feudal society, the merchant cuts a very poor figure. He was looked down upon by the Samurai and he was inferior to the farmer and the artisan. It is significant that but a very few families of merchants have maintained a good social position. Of these there are the Mitsui, the Iwasaki (this latter being represented by what we know as the Mitsubishi), and also the Sumitomo family.

With the coming of Commodore Perry in 1853 and 1854, feudalism began to pass away and within 20 years was abolished by Government edict. Although the feudal social system was legally abolished, its influence continues even today.

With the Restoration there appeared a new influence in Japanese life and that was the coming of the Christian missionary with his doctrine of individual responsibility to deity. This was something new to the Japanese system of society. Heretofore religion centered in the family, and family culture and family faith were a collective thing and not individual. The success of the missionary movement in Japan is remarkable because it brings this new element into the social picture. Wherever Christianity succeeds, it also succeeds in breaking the old family ties and hang-overs of a feudal order. Japan's advance in Government, its development educationally and the vast improvements that we see in society today have been furthered by the application of Western methods of teaching, of Government, etc. But, the Christian influence must not be underestimated nor should one go too far in over-stressing its great importance. Christianity is individualistic, and that is one reason why the 'powers that be' in Japan today are endeavoring to regulate its activities, if not to change some of its tenets. The Christian Japanese understand America better than any other group because they have been more and more weaned away from the influence of feudalism.

The Japanese are a perplexing people and their study is a very interesting and very enlightening one. They follow the leader -- they have done this throughout all the years of their history. Even today, personal ties are stronger than legal ones.

No estimate of the elements characteristic of the Japanese is complete without a word about 'giri'. There is no accurate English word for 'giri'. The nearest approach to an understanding of the term is our word 'obligation', which is very inadequate and altogether too weak. Favors or kindnesses done to a Japanese are never forgotten but are stored up in memory and in due time an adequate quid pro quo must be rendered in return. The clever and none-too-scrupulous individual often hangs 'giri' upon the unsuspecting, to their hurt and harm. 'Giri' is the great political tool. To understand 'giri' is to understand the Japanese.

ASSOCIATIONS

The Japanese is the greatest joiner in the world. To take care of this passion he has furnished himself with ample associations to join. There are around 1,563 of these in the United States. Your reporter has before him a Japanese publication entitled "The Japanese-American Directory of 1941" at least two inches thick listing the Japanese associations in fine print. Your reporter also has before him lists furnished him in the various Naval Districts of some of the leading associations considered the most important, with full descriptions of their activities as far as known. It is endless to clutter up this report with them.

FAMILY SET-UP IN UNITED STATES

In the United States there are four divisions of Japanese to be considered:

1. The ISSEI -- First generation Japanese. Entire cultural background Japanese. Probably loyal romantically to Japan. They must be considered, however, as other races. They have made this their home. They have brought up children here, their wealth accumulated by hard labor is here, and many would have become American citizens had they been allowed to do so. They are for the most part simple people. Their age group is largely 55 to 65, fairly old for a hardworking Japanese.
2. The NISEI -- Second generation who have received their whole education in the United States and usually, in spite of discrimination against them and a certain amount of insults accumulated through the years from irresponsible elements, show a pathetic eagerness to be Americans. They are in constant conflict with the orthodox, well-disciplined family life of their elders. Age group -- 1 to 30 years.
3. The KIBEI -- This is an important division of the NISEI. This is the term used by the Japanese to signify those American born Japanese who received part or all of their education in Japan. In any consideration of the KIBEI they should be again divided into two classes, i.e. THOSE WHO RECEIVED THEIR EDUCATION IN

JAPAN FROM CHILDHOOD TO ABOUT 17 YEARS OF AGE and THOSE WHO RECEIVED THEIR EARLY FORMATIVE EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND RETURNED TO JAPAN FOR FOUR OR FIVE YEARS OF JAPANESE EDUCATION. The Kibei are considered the most dangerous element and closer to the Issei with especial reference to those who received their early education in Japan. It must be noted, however, that many of those who visited Japan subsequent to their early American education come back with an added loyalty to the United States. In fact it is a saying that all a Nisei needs is a trip to Japan to make a loyal American out of him. The American educated Japanese is a boor in Japan and treated as a foreigner and with a certain amount of contempt there. His trip is usually a painful experience.

4. The SANSEI -- The third generation Japanese is a baby and may be disregarded for the purposes of our survey.

We must now think back to the paragraph entitled BACKGROUND. This is tied into the family of which the Issei is the head with more authority and hold over his family than an old New England Bible-thumping pioneer. Their family life is disciplined and honorable. The children are obedient and the girls virtuous. We must think also of the Associations, some sinister, some emanating from Imperial Japan, some with Japanese Consular contacts. It all weaves up into a sinister pattern on paper. This pattern has been set up in a secret document entitled "Japanese Organizations and Activities in the 11th Naval District", and may be scrutinized with proper authorization in the Navy Department in Washington. We only suggest this to our reader in case our words have not built up the proper Halloween atmosphere. It is like looking at the 'punkin' itself. There is real fire in it, yet in many ways it is hollow and dusty. However, your reporter desires to have you know that all this exists before he goes on to the main body of his report on how the Japanese in the United States are liable to react in case of war with Japan.

THE TOKIO-SUN GOD-RELIGIOUS-FAMILY-ASSOCIATION PLUS ORIENTAL MIND SET-UP SHOWS SIGNS OF THE HONORABLE PASSAGE OF TIME.

There are still Japanese in the United States who will tie dynamite around their waist and make a human bomb out of themselves. We grant this but today they are few. Many things indicate that very many joints in the Japanese set-up show age and many elements are not what they used to be. The weakest from a Japanese standpoint are the Nisei. They are universally estimated from 90 to 98% loyal to the United States if the Japanese educated element of the Kibei is excluded. The Nisei are pathetically eager to show this loyalty. They are not Japanese in culture. They are foreigners to Japan. Though American citizens they are not accepted by Americans, largely because they look differently and can be easily recognized. The Japanese American Citizens League should be encouraged, the while an eye is kept open, to see that Tokio does not get its finger in this pie - which it has in a few cases attempted to do. The loyal Nisei hardly know where to turn. Some gesture of protection or wholehearted acceptance of this group would go a long way to swinging them away from any last romantic hankering after old Japan. They are not oriental or mysterious, they are very American and are of a proud, self-respecting race suffering from a little inferiority complex and a lack of contact with the white boys they went to school with. They are eager for this contact and to work alongside them.

The Issei or first generation is considerably weakened in their loyalty to Japan by the fact that they have chosen to make this their home and have brought up their children here. They expect to die here. They are quite fearful of being put in a concentration camp. Many would take out American citizenship if allowed to do so. The haste of this report does not allow us to go into this more fully. The Issei have to break with their religion, their god and Emperor, their family, their ancestors and their after-life in order to be loyal to the United States. They are also still legally Japanese. Yet they do break, and send their boys off to the Army with pride and tears. They are good neighbors. They are old men fifty-five to sixty-five, for the most part simple and dignified. Roughly they were Japanese lower middle class about analogous to the pilgrim fathers. They were largely farmers and fishermen. Today the Japanese is farmer, fisherman and businessman. They get very attached to the land they work or own (through the second generation), they like their own business, they do not work at industrial jobs nor for others except as a stepping stone to becoming independent.

The Kibei, educated from childhood to seventeen, are still the element most to be watched.

WHAT WILL THE JAPANESE DO

SABOTAGE

Now that we have roughly given a background and a description of the Japanese elements in the United States the question naturally arises -- what will these people do in case of a war between the United States and Japan? As interview after interview piled up, those bringing in results began to call it the same old tune. Such it was with only minor differences. These contacts ranged all the way from two-day sessions with Intelligence Services, through business men, to Roman Catholic priests who were frankly not interested in the United States and were only interested in making as many Catholics as possible. The story was all the same. There is no Japanese 'problem' on the Coast. There will be no armed uprising of Japanese. There will undoubtedly be some sabotage financed by Japan and executed largely by imported agents or agents already imported. There will be the odd case of fanatical sabotage by some Japanese 'crackpot'. In each Naval District there are about 250 to 300 suspects under surveillance. It is easy to get on the suspect list, merely a speech in favor of Japan at some banquet, being sufficient to land one there. The Intelligence Services are generous with the title of suspect and are taking no chances. Privately, they believe that only 50 or 60 in each district can be classed as really dangerous. The Japanese are hampered as saboteurs because of their easily recognized physical appearance. It will be hard for them to get near anything to blow up if it is guarded. There is far more danger from Communists and people of the Bridges type on the Coast than there is from Japanese. The Japanese here is almost exclusively a farmer, a fisherman or a small business man. He has no entree to plants or intricate machinery.

ESPIONAGE

The Japanese, if undisturbed and disloyal, should be well equipped for obvious physical espionage. A great part of this work was probably completed and forwarded to Tokio years ago, such as soundings and photography of every inch of the Coast. They are probably familiar with the location of every building and garage including Mike O'Flarety's out-house in the Siskiyou with all trails leading thereto. An experienced Captain in Navy Intelligence, who has from time to time and over a period of years intercepted information Tokio bound, said he would certainly hate to be a Japanese coordinator of information in Tokio. He stated that the mass of useless information was unbelievable. This would be fine for a fifth column in Belgium or Holland with the German army ready to march in over the border, but though the local Japanese could spare a man who intimately knew the country for each Japanese invasion squad, there would at least have to be a terrific American Naval disaster before his brown brothers would need his services. The dangerous part of their espionage is that they would be very effective as far as movement of supplies, movement of troops and movement of ships out of harbor mouths and over railroads is concerned. They occupy only rarely positions where they can get to confidential papers or in plants. They are usually, when rarely so placed, a subject of perpetual watch and suspicion by their fellow workers. They would have to buy most of this type of information from white people.

PROPAGANDA

Their direct propaganda is poor and rather ineffective on the whole. Their indirect is more successful. By indirect we mean propaganda preaching the beauties of Japan and the sweet innocence of the Japanese race to susceptible Americans.

SUMMARY

Japan will commit some sabotage largely depending on imported Japanese as they are afraid of and do not trust the Nisei. There will be no wholehearted response from Japanese in the United States. They may get some

helpers from certain Kibei. They will be in a position to pick up information on troop, supply and ship movements from local Japanese.

For the most part the local Japanese are loyal to the United States or, at worst, hope that by remaining quiet they can avoid concentration camps or irresponsible mobs. We do not believe that they would be at least any more disloyal than any other racial group in the United States with whom we went to war. Those being here are on a spot and they know it. This is a hurried, preliminary report as our boat sails soon for Honolulu. We have not had a moment even to sort out our voluminous material since we came west. Your reporter is very satisfied he has told you that to expect from the local Japanese, but is horrified to note that dams, bridges, harbors, power stations, etc. are wholly unguarded everywhere. The harbor of San Pedro could be razed by fire completely by four men with hand grenades and a little study in one night. Dams could be blown and half of lower California might actually die of thirst, not to mention the damage to the food supply. One railway bridge at the exit from the mountains in some cases could tie up three or four main railroads. The Navy has to crawl around San Pedro on its marrow bones from oil company to oil company, from lumber yard to harbor board, to city fathers, to politicians in lieu of a centralized authority, in order to strive albeit only partially to protect the conglomeration of oil tanks, lumber, gas tanks and heaven knows what else. And this is the second greatest port in the United States! This is the home base of at least the South Pacific Fleet! This is the greatest collection of inflammable material we have ever seen in our lifetime concentrated in a small vulnerable area! We do not suspect the local Japanese above anyone else or as much as the Communists or the Nazis, but before or on the outbreak of war in the South Pacific someone will set fire to this. If they do not they are fools. The Navy or some unified authority should have complete control of the harbor of Los Angeles, known as San Pedro and Long Beach, from the water's edge in a twenty-five mile radius inland, before the outbreak of war with Japan. That time is now.

We will re-work this report for final submittal later. We have missed a great deal through haste. We believe we have given the high points to the best of our ability. The Japanese are loyal on the whole, but we are wide open to sabotage on this Coast and as far inland as the mountains, and while this one fact goes unrectified I cannot unqualifiedly state that there is no danger from the Japanese living in the United States which otherwise I would be willing to state.

(signed)

Curtis B. Munson

[See also FBI memo regarding Munson's remark that disloyal citizens on the West Coast should be arrested along with the dangerous aliens.]

JOHN FRANKLIN CARTER

(Jay Franklin)

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December 19, 1941.

SUMMARY OF REPORT ON PROGRAM FOR LOYAL WEST COAST JAPANESE.

Curtis Munson reports from Los Angeles that already five L.A. Japanese-Americans have committed suicide because their honor could not stand suspicion of their loyalty. He is rushing to Washington a program, which is based largely on the O.N.I. (Commander Ringle) proposals for maintaining the loyalty of Japanese-Americans and establishing wholesome race-relations. Its essence is to utilize Japanese filial piety as hostage for good behavior.

The chief points of this program are as follows:

- 1) Encourage the Nisei (American-born Japanese) by a statement from high authority;
- 2) Accept offers of patriotic cooperation from the Nisei through such agencies as a) Civilian Defense, b) Red Cross, c) United Service organizations;
- 3) Appoint an Alien Property Custodian to supervise Issei (Japanese-born residents ineligible for citizenship), under instructions to encourage the Nisei (U.S. citizens of Japanese blood) to take over Issei property;
- 4) Accept INVESTIGATED Nisei as workers in defense industries such as ship-building plants, aircraft plants, etc.
- 5) Put responsibility for the behavior of the Issei and Nisei on the leaders of Nisei groups such as the Japanese-American Citizens League;
- 6) Put responsibility for the production of food (fish, vegetables) on the Nisei leaders mentioned above. (Japanese produce is frozen by Treasury orders; Japanese fishing boats are beached by the Navy; result is threat of starvation to loyal Japanese families and food shortage in Los Angeles.)

(signed)
J.F.C.

Stimson Letter to Roosevelt
Regarding Munson Report

FEB 5 1942

Dear Mr. President:

In response to your memorandum of November 8, the Department gave careful study and consideration to the matters reported by Mr. C. B. Munson in his memorandum covering the Japanese situation on the West Coast.

Since you are generally aware of the radical steps which have been taken since December 7 to control the situation on the West Coast and particularly the guarding of the key points in that area by Federal troops, I see little need of commenting on the report I have before me. The California state authorities are still somewhat confused as to the steps they wish to take to form units to guard local property generally, but I understand a number of interests are endeavoring to reach some solution of the problem. In the meantime, General DeWitt's forces continue to guard many of the more important strategic points and installations.

We have worked out with the Attorney General a more expeditious legal method than formerly prevailed in the Western theatre of operations in connection with the search and seizure of enemy aliens and their property.

I may add that our officials have consulted with Mr. Munson on the matter of the defense of the West Coast against enemy agents.

As requested in your memorandum, I am returning Mr. Munson's report.

Faithfully yours,

HENRY L. STIMSON

Secretary of War

The President

The White House

Encs.:

1. Report
2. Memorandum