

HEADQUARTERS WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY

PASADENA, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Civil Affairs Division

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EXHIBIT

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May 3, 1943

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MEMORANDUM TO: Commanding General, Western Defense Command and Fourth Army (THRU: Chief of Staff)

SUBJECT: Notes on Conferences with Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy

1. The substance of the week's conferences with Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy related to:

a. The attitude and position of the War Department with regard to the continuing exclusion of Japanese from the evacuated area of the Pacific coast; and

b. The final report of the Commanding General covering the Japanese evacuation.

2. The continuing exclusion of Japanese from the Pacific coast evacuated areas. After an extended discussion Mr. McCloy stated his conclusion to be that there no longer existed any military necessity for the continued exclusion of all Japanese from the evacuated zone. He stated that the War Department, of its own motion, would not take any action to direct or require the revision or revocation of present restrictions in this regard. He did say, however, that if the question were to be presented officially to the Secretary of War by the White House or by any other official federal agency having a legitimate interest whether from the viewpoint of the War Department there is longer any military objection to the return of those Japanese "whose loyalty had been determined," the answer would be, "No." The undersigned made the following points in response:

a. That it was the solid conviction of the responsible military commander, whose mission included the defense of the West Coast against attack both from within and without, military necessity continued to require the maintenance of present restrictions without relaxation and that no change would be prudent so long as such necessity continued in force;

b. That it would place the military commander in an untenable position if the War Department should reject or overrule his opinion, require him to rescind or relax present restrictions and at the same time leave unchanged the discretion vested in him to provide for the exclusion of any person or group of persons regarded by him as dangerous or potentially dangerous to the military security of his command;

c. That an unparalleled, extremely important public confidence in the Commanding General now exists within the command; that

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this confidence has arisen by reason of the many forthright steps taken to establish the defenses of the West Coast, not an inconsequential part of which is due directly to the evacuation;

d. That this public confidence would be severely shaken if the Japanese were readmitted to residence in the evacuated zone, and particularly would this confidence in the Commanding General be shaken if it were made to appear that he believed Japanese exclusion no longer to be necessary -- that if the War Department considered it to be in the national interest to relax these restrictions it was bound, in fairness not only to the military commander but, even more important, to the public, to make that fact unmistakably clear;

e. That while the public could never understand why the CG from the viewpoint of the security of WDC could, under present conditions, consider it prudent to readmit Japanese, the public might appreciate (but probably not understand) that from the national or international point of view "higher levels of authority" might deem it wise to take whatever risks would be involved in order to attain some larger objective;

f. That therefore if it should develop the War Department persisted in the view expressed by Mr. McCloy the only way to proceed would be:

(1) For the War Department to revoke so much of the CG's present discretion in this field as now permits him to maintain current restrictions, and

(2) Announce that, for reasons which the War Department finds essential to the national interest, it has found it necessary to provide for the relaxation of current restrictions;

g. That before any final action might be taken the War Department should ask for the views of the CG, receive and consider them in writing, and only then make a final decision.

3. The undersigned also made the following additional points:

a. That if the War Department thought no further military necessity existed and that therefore it could not justify the maintenance of present restrictions (notwithstanding the almost universal public view that no Japanese should be permitted to return short of a decisive military victory against the Japanese) then how could the War Department justify the existence of military areas coincident with each relocation center. (The undersigned reminded Mr. McCloy that there never was any military necessity for this action and that it was based only upon the request of War Relocation Authority for War Department assistance in maintaining proper public relations with the interior states in which relocation centers exist.)

b. That while there now existed some suspension of the civil rights of the United States born Japanese, it was an orderly suspension, that Axis propaganda was now wholly ineffective on this count, but that if Japanese were returned to the coast there would doubtless be rioting and bloodshed with a consequent disorderly suspension of civil rights having the flavor of a race war and that this would constitute just the opening the Axis propagandists would like to have;

c. That the War Department could not overlook the contingent military responsibility always imposed on the military establishment to

employ federal troops for the maintenance of civil order where local authority was unable so to do;

d. That state police, county and local police forces had been decimated by selective service and not only could not, but would not, be responsible and that they would shortly "throw up the sponge" if the matter got out of hand;

e. That if the desire to force the return of Japanese to the Pacific coast is in part based on the hope that they will be accepted and that there will be a resulting favorable shift in the public hostility against Japanese which now prevents their release and relocation in the interior, a woeful miscalculation will have been made; that on the contrary, such action would complicate and confound the problem, creating a reaction whose ramifications would probably stop the release program cold;

f. That the War Department should in the national interest carefully analyze the temper of the public in this regard, particularly along the West Coast.

4. Mr. McCloy stated that the Secretary of War was then in receipt of a letter from Mr. Dillon S. Myer, War Relocation Authority Director, asking the War Department pointedly whether any objection to the return of Japanese longer existed; that he was preparing a letter for the signature of the Secretary of War in response stating that there was an objection. He expressed the opinion, however, that in so doing he did not feel personally convinced of the soundness of his position, that it was largely based on an extreme loss of patience with WRA. He further stated that if the question were presented by the President or by the Congress at a later date, the War Department would not take the position that there was any military objection. He agreed, however, that the War Department would then ask for the views of the CG before taking any action and that it would transmit those views to the President or the Congress along with its response, even though it did not agree with him. He further stated that if ultimately the War Department decided to direct the relaxation of restrictions it would take full responsibility therefor, that it would revoke so much of the CG's discretion as now authorizes him to provide for the exclusion of any person or group which he considers to be dangerous or potentially dangerous to the military security of his command.

5. The final report of the Commanding General covering the Japanese evacuation. Mr. McCloy stated that he strongly desired to avoid creating the impression that he had any wish to prescribe what the Commanding General should say or not say in the final report. He did say, however, that he thought it could be improved upon. Following this vein, he expressed an earnest desire to have transmitted to the CG the nature of his specific suggestions with an explanation of why he felt the making of revisions conforming to these suggestions would result in improvement. He requested that the undersigned proceed as soon as feasible to explain to the CG his view. He emphasized, however, that he did not wish to be misunderstood and that if the CG did not himself feel that an improvement would result he would rather drop the matter.

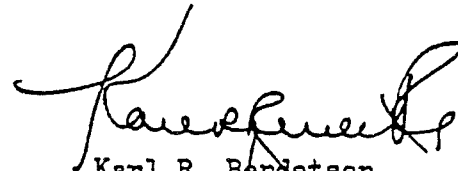
Memo to CG, WDC-4A, 337-CAD, May 3, 1943

6. In brief, Mr. McCloy's suggestions cover three points:

a. In paragraph 2 of the letter of transmittal the statement appeared that the necessity for exclusion of all Japanese from the Pacific coast "will continue for the duration of the present war." He said he could see no objection to a statement to the effect that exclusion will be essential so long as any military necessity exists therefor, but he said no one could foresee what the situation would be a year or two hence, and therefore he felt it stultified the report to make such a statement. He drew a parallel to the fact that in the last war a formal state of war continued in existence until 1921, although hostilities had ceased on November 11, 1918.

b. The second objection was to that portion of Chapter II which said in effect that it is absolutely impossible to determine the loyalty of Japanese no matter how much time was taken in the process. He said that he had no objection to saying that time was of the essence and that in view of the military situation and the fact that there was no known means of making such a determination with any degree of safety the evacuation was necessary.

c. His other comments related to certain changes in style and tone, which were orally described as designed to eliminate redundancy. These were indicated by him with blue pencil. In a number of cases he made comments on changes in tone which he believed were calculated to eliminate unnecessary pointedness with regard to certain sins of omission on the part of the Department of Justice. He said he felt this could be accomplished without in any way departing from an accurate factual account.


Karl R. Bendetsen
Colonel, G.S.C.
Assistant Chief of Staff

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