

**The Influence of the Office of War Information on the Portrayal  
of Japanese-Americans in the U.S. Films of World War II,  
1942-1945**

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## Abstract

The Office of War Information's influence on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans in motion pictures provides an unusual opportunity for a case study of the implementation of a motion picture propaganda policy. OWI's motion picture program included the production and theatrical distribution of government films and the review before release of feature films produced by the Hollywood studios. The OWI policy on Japanese-Americans is examined to show how it called for three conflicting views. In government films, implementation of the policy became a problem of film technique for government filmmakers. In Hollywood films, the policy was implemented by a special OWI Hollywood Office. The change in that Office's attitude toward the portrayal of Japanese-Americans over the course of the war is detailed through an examination of its film reviews and correspondence. They suggest the emergence of bureaucratic attitudes to deal with the difficult social issues involved.

## Résumé

Les pressions exercées par le Office of War Information sur la représentation filmique des Américains d'origine japonaise fournissent l'occasion inhabituelle d'entreprendre une étude de cas de la mise en place d'une politique de propagande cinématographique. Le programme du OWI comprenait la production et la distribution commerciale de films gouvernementaux et le contrôle avant distribution de films hollywoodiens. Un examen de la politique du OWI à l'égard des Américains d'origine japonaise démontre qu'elle faisait appel à trois raisonnements contradictoires. Dans les films gouvernementaux, l'application de cette politique devint un problème de technique pour les cinéastes du gouvernement. Dans les films hollywoodiens, la politique fut appliquées par l'entremise d'un bureau de surveillance spécial à Hollywood. On peut retracer l'évolution des attitudes du OWI à l'égard des Américains d'origine japonaise au cours de la guerre en examinant ses critiques de cinéma et sa correspondance. Celles-ci suggèrent l'émergence d'une attitude bureaucratique destinée à s'occuper des délicates questions sociales soulevées.

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## Preface

As a Canadian writing about an American problem, I have tried to keep in mind the fact that Canada moved its citizens of Japanese ancestry from the west coast to relocation camps before the United States did so and prevented them from returning for a much longer period of time. In terms of film production, the National Film Board of Canada in 1942 produced the perfectly vile theatrical short Mask of Nippon, which was distributed widely throughout North America. No doubt more such films would have been made in Canada had the resources been available. Insofar as they were not, I have restricted my study to the United States.

In the preparation of this paper, I am very much indebted to the staff of the Graduate Program in Communications for their encouragement. My fellow students have been invaluable in providing feedback and debating specific points. Professor Gregory Black at the University of Missouri--Kansas City was most helpful. The initial archival research was based on references provided in his publications. The staff of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park took considerable trouble to seek out relevant material. At the National Archives in Washington, Leslie Waffin and Robert Finlay of the Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Branch, Aloha South of the Judicial, Fiscal and Social Branch, and Charles Downs of the General Branch, all gave generously of their time. When the initial material indicated the existence of relevant further documentation, Karen Wyatt in Washington kindly agreed to act on my behalf and her assistance on many occasions in arranging

for the copying of film reviews, reports and correspondence, was indispensable. The staff of the Inter-Library Loans Dept. of McGill's McLennan Library went well beyond the call of duty in locating and obtaining many obscure publications, dissertations and theses from a number of cooperative institutions throughout North America. I am sure that all of the above generous individuals join in my sigh of relief at seeing this paper completed.

## Chapter I

### Introduction

The evacuation of the Japanese-Americans from the west coast of the United States, by Executive Order of President Roosevelt in the spring of 1942, remains a classic example of official racial discrimination by a democratically elected constitutional government. The task of explaining this extraordinary action to the general public, both at home and abroad, was given to the Office of War Information when it was created by the President in June of 1942. OWI's first responsibility was to:

Formulate and carry out, through the use of press, radio, motion picture, and other facilities, information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort, and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the Government.<sup>1</sup>

Insofar as OWI was a political creation of the President, this paper assumes that the desired result of its operations was that an "informed and intelligent" public would endorse the government's policies and activities. In the case of the Japanese-American evacuation, that result was very much in doubt.

The OWI influence on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans in motion pictures provides an unusual opportunity for a case study on the implementation of a motion picture propaganda policy. If propaganda is taken to mean "the organized dissemination of information, allegations, etc., to assist or damage the cause of a government, movement, etc.,"<sup>2</sup> then OWI qualified as a highly organized government propaganda agency.

This has been amply demonstrated by Winkler.<sup>3</sup> In the pre-television 1942-1945 period, motion pictures were an important mass medium. The OWI theatrical motion picture program was far too ambitious to have been contemplated except under the extraordinary conditions of war. That program included the production and theatrical distribution of government films and the review before release of feature films produced by the Hollywood studios.

The particular propaganda effort under study sought to justify the evacuation, convince the public that the Japanese-Americans were harmless and demonstrate that they were being well treated in the relocation camps. As shown later in this paper, these three objectives conflicted with one another. The first objective would have presented a most difficult propaganda challenge on its own. The recent Congressional Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians made it clear that it was impossible to justify the evacuation. Even without that report, the evacuation was clearly in conflict with government statements on the basic rights and freedoms for which the United States was fighting in the war.<sup>4</sup> The portrayal of Japanese-Americans in motion pictures presented an extraordinary propaganda challenge in a medium where the government wielded influence as extensive as it was rare.

#### **Definition of Terms**

In the thesis title, "influence" means "an effect of one person or thing on another"<sup>5</sup> and "effect" in turn is defined as "something that is produced by a cause or agent; result."<sup>6</sup> Attention is paid to the method of influence on both the

portrayal of Japanese-Americans (film content) and the context in which the portrayal was seen (film distribution).

"Portrayal" is defined as a "representation"<sup>7</sup> in the sense of "having a specified character or quality."<sup>8</sup> This includes the character of Japanese-Americans, their beliefs and behaviour, as well as the quality of their life and their position in society.

Due to the peculiarities of U.S. immigration law at that time, which are discussed later in this paper, the term "Japanese-American" includes all those of Japanese ancestry living for an extended period in the United States, whether U.S. citizens or not. Insofar as Japanese-Americans were frequently referred to simply as "Japanese" during the war, the portrayal of Japanese civilians in Japan are included where that portrayal presumably ascribes particular racial characteristics to all those of Japanese ancestry.

### **The Propaganda Problem**

This paper assumes that the portrayal of Japanese-Americans in motion pictures during the war was a propaganda problem and examines how OWI policies and procedures dealt with that problem. A great deal has been written by such scholars as Doob and Ellul on the nature of propaganda and its effect on public opinion and society.<sup>9</sup> In the film medium, the production process raises a fundamental question on the nature of propaganda:

It has been held that almost all films intended for public viewing partake of the nature of propaganda. Both state-owned industries and commercial production companies may be said to have an interest in preserving the status quo, on the one hand to perpetuate a political system or on the other to

maintain a social climate that will ensure a mass audience.<sup>10</sup>

This question has been addressed by such commentators as Neale and Sarris.<sup>11</sup> Although the characteristics of propaganda and the measurement of its effects are important issues, these will not be considered here; rather, this paper examines a specific propaganda policy and the problems of its implementation.

OWI's expressed intention was to influence both government and private sector films, particularly those to be shown in the mass theatrical market. There were specific OWI policies on the portrayal in motion pictures of the war in general and the Japanese-Americans in particular. The latter policy did not restrict itself to the portrayal of dangerous Japanese-Americans being held under guard until the end of the war. Such a propaganda policy would simply have been to spread the big lie. It would not have required influence on the Hollywood studios since they generally embraced such a view of their own accord. Rather, the OWI policy called for the portrayal of three contradictory views of Japanese-Americans and this paper therefore considers the manner in which the discrepancies were rationalized and the policy was implemented in both the public and private sectors. After an outline of the background and structure of OWI in Chapter II, the policy statements are discussed in Chapter III. The implementation of policy is the burden of individuals and the contradictory propaganda policy under discussion became a difficult problem for specific government officials.



## **Implementation of the Policy**

In government films, implementation of the policy became a problem of film technique for government filmmakers. The government films are discussed in Chapter IV, with reference to the writing of Furhammar and Isaksson on propaganda film technique.<sup>12</sup> Transcripts of film soundtracks are provided in the appendices since the government films under discussion are not generally available.

In Hollywood films, implementation of the policy became the burden of OWI's Hollywood Office. These films are discussed in Chapter V. The Hollywood Office provides a neat example of how bureaucratic attitudes emerge in government agencies to deal with difficult social issues. Grounding his work in Weber and Habermas, Hummel has considered bureaucracy in cultural terms. "The cultural conflict between bureaucracy and society is between systems needs and human needs."<sup>13</sup> He gives several examples to show that as bureaucracy is established, concern for such norms as justice, freedom, violence and oppression is replaced by concern for precision, stability, discipline and reliability. The portrayal of Japanese-Americans was very much a human problem looking for a solution in the public administration. The issue was certainly concerned with justice, freedom, violence and oppression.

## **The Hollywood Office Reviews and Correspondence**

The attitude of the Hollywood Office toward portrayals of Japanese-Americans is followed over its three years of existence. In particular, the increasingly bureaucratic reaction of film review staff to negative portrayals of Japanese-Americans is examined. The film review section

remained under the control of one person, Dorothy Jones, during the period when the process of bureaucratization took place. She was sympathetic to the plight of the Japanese-Americans and it is therefore interesting to trace the diminishing concern expressed in the reviews emanating from her section. Three Hollywood films which depict fictitious widespread sabotage plots involving Japanese-Americans on the west coast are discussed in detail. They provide a beginning, middle and end sample of the reviewers' reaction to similar portrayals of Japanese-Americans which violated stated policies. Reviews of other films are discussed where the film contains references to Japanese-Americans or characterizes all Japanese in racial terms.

This paper does not claim to prove or disprove anything about the process of bureaucratization. The sample is far too small and there may have been extraneous factors which governed the behaviour of the few individuals involved. However, this case study presents a clear issue about which the reviewers were free to express themselves fully. It is shown that their initial emotional protests developed into muted catalogues of policy violations and then decayed into bare mention of the issue altogether. Although extraneous factors could account for the change, the most likely cause is the feedback which they received through observance of the actions taken by their superiors on their recommendations.

Those in charge of the Hollywood Office were faced with implementing a contradictory policy. Behavioural theorists have studied this type of dilemma. Festinger calls it "cognitive dissonance."<sup>14</sup> His work indicates that if one lacks

the power to change the dissonant elements (the policy), one tends to downplay the importance of the dissonance or to avoid the issue altogether. While this paper does not claim to prove the theory, it does show that the first head of the Hollywood Office, Nelson Poynter, downplayed the importance of the issue although he did exhibit concern about it.

The tendency of government agencies to develop their own personalities has been studied by Peter Self. "The distinctive attitudes of an agency can be seen as the product of accumulated experience and tradition, created by familiarity with a particular set of tasks and problems, and influenced perhaps by the personalities of leading administrators."<sup>15</sup> A notable administrator succeeded Poynter as head of the Hollywood Office. Ulric Bell provided the teeth which gave OWI extensive influence over the films produced by the Hollywood studios. While he did not hesitate to wield his considerable power, he displayed little interest in the Japanese-American issue. By 1944, the government's attitude toward the Japanese-Americans had moderated and the dissonance referred to earlier had been greatly reduced. Nevertheless, there was no corresponding increase in willingness to deal with the issue. By then William Cunningham presided over a Hollywood Office which was widely accepted by the industry and had well established procedures. The reviewers' concern about the portrayal of Japanese-Americans continued to diminish and Cunningham gave bureaucratic evasions to an external suggestion that the Hollywood Office should involve itself with the issue. The process of government influence on Hollywood films, extraordinary in concept, had become a routine operation which

avoided controversy whenever possible.

### **Review of the Literature**

In addition to the report of the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, mentioned earlier, this case study refers to a number of works which comment in detail on the west coast evacuation and the history of prejudice against the Japanese-Americans.<sup>16</sup> Use has also been made of the official government reports published at the time.<sup>17</sup> As mentioned earlier, OWI itself has been studied in detail by Winkler. This was supplemented by David Jones' dissertation which examines in particular the public opinion surveys done by OWI.<sup>18</sup>

The author could find no study which provided a comprehensive list of government and Hollywood films which portray Japanese-Americans. For government films, Rhodes, MacCann and Weglyn were the main sources.<sup>19</sup> For Hollywood films, Bonnie Rowan's M.A. thesis provided a good start although her consideration of the image of all Japanese in American films during the period 1904-1967 precluded the more detailed list required here.<sup>20</sup> Russell Shain's dissertation was especially helpful in expanding the list.<sup>21</sup> In many cases, a film's title made it an obvious candidate for further investigation. The likelihood remains that important films have been missed because their titles do not suggest a connection with Japanese-Americans.

The specific contribution of this paper includes the compilation of the particular materials under study. An effort has been made to mention every film produced during the 1942-1945 period which portrays Japanese-Americans as defined

earlier, even if the film was clearly not influenced by OWI. This filmography may be of some use to others. Many of the OWI reviews were classified and have not been studied in detail before now. Since they are not readily available, the important Hollywood reviews and correspondence are reproduced in full in the appendices. This unusual step has been taken to make it easier to understand the context in which comments were made and to encourage others to pursue this study further.

The OWI Hollywood Office reviews have been mentioned by Dorothy Jones, Cedric Larson and Richard Lingeman.<sup>22</sup> A helpful interview with Dorothy Jones is included in Harry Sauberli's M.A. thesis.<sup>23</sup> However, the most detailed studies have been done by Gregory Black and Clayton Koppes.<sup>24</sup> This paper relied on their work in bringing out the evolution of the Hollywood Office structure and in giving examples of important references in the reviews.

The government adopted various euphemisms by referring to the Japanese-American "problem," "evacuation" and "relocation." In the absence of acceptable alternatives, those terms are used in this paper with the hope that they will not obscure the obvious injustice of what took place.

The evacuation of the Japanese-Americans from the west coast began in late February 1942, although OWI was not created until June 13, 1942, and did not begin operations until July 1, 1942. Some of the film activities which were undertaken by OWI had in fact begun before it was created. The next chapter examines the structure of OWI and its preceding agencies.

## Notes for Chapter I

<sup>1</sup> Office of War Information, United States Government Manual: Winter 1943-44 (Washington: GPO, 1944), p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Hanks, ed., Collins Dictionary of the English Language (London: Collins, 1979), p. 1171.

<sup>3</sup> Allan M. Winkler, The Politics of Propaganda, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Cong., Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, Personal Justice Denied, (Washington: GPO, 1982); hereafter cited as Personal Justice Denied. The government policy statements are examined in detail in Chapter III.

<sup>5</sup> Hanks, p. 750.

<sup>6</sup> Hanks, p. 467.

<sup>7</sup> Hanks, p. 1143.

<sup>8</sup> Hanks, p. 1238.

<sup>9</sup> Leonard W. Doob, Public Opinion and Propaganda (New York: Holt, 1948); Jacques Ellul, Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes (New York: Knopf, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Liz-Anne Bawden, ed., The Oxford Companion to Film (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 561.

<sup>11</sup> Steve Neale, "Propaganda," Screen, 18, No. 3 (1977), 9-40; Andrew Sarris, Politics and Cinema (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

<sup>12</sup> Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson, Politics and Film (New York: Praeger, 1971).

<sup>13</sup> Ralph Hummel, The Bureaucratic Experience (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), p. 56.

<sup>14</sup> Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

<sup>15</sup> Peter Self, Administrative Theories and Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 92.

<sup>16</sup> The principal works used were: Morton Grodzins, Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese Evacuation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Jacobus tenBroek, Edward N. Barnhart and Floyd W. Matson, Prejudice, War and the Constitution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engelman and Byron Fairchild, United States Army in World War II: The Western Hemisphere: Guarding the United States and its Outposts (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1964); Roger Daniels, The Politics of Prejudice, University of California

Publications in History, 71, (New York: Atheneum, 1972).

<sup>17</sup> War Department, Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, (Washington: GPO, 1943); hereafter cited as Final Report; War Relocation Authority, Dept. of the Interior, WRA: A Story of Human Conservation, (Washington: GPO, 1946); hereafter cited as WRA.

<sup>18</sup> David L. Jones, "The U.S. Office of War Information and American Public Opinion During World War II, 1939-1945," Diss. State University of New York at Binghamton 1976.

<sup>19</sup> Anthony Rhodes, Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion: World War II (New York: Chelsea House, 1976); Richard Dyer MacCann, The People's Films, (New York: Hastings House, 1973); Michi Weglyn, Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps (New York: Morrow, 1976).

<sup>20</sup> Bonnie G. Rowan, "The Japanese Image in American Films 1904-1967," M.A. Thesis University of Wisconsin 1968.

<sup>21</sup> Russell Earl Shain, An Analysis of Motion Pictures About War Released by the American Film Industry, 1939-1970 (New York: Arno Press, 1976).

<sup>22</sup> Dorothy B. Jones, "The Hollywood War Film: 1942-1944," Hollywood Quarterly, 1 (1945-1946), 1-19; Cedric Larson, "The Domestic Motion Picture Work of the Office of War Information," Hollywood Quarterly, 3 (1947-1948), 434-443; Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's a War On? (New York: Putnam's, 1970).

<sup>23</sup> Interview of Dorothy Jones by Harry Sauberli, Jr., Dec. 14, 1966, in Harry A. Sauberli, Jr., "Hollywood and World War II . . ." M.A. Thesis University of Southern California 1967, pp. 316-361; hereafter cited as Sauberli Interview.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory D. Black, and Clayton R. Koppes, "OWI Goes to the Movies: The Bureau of Intelligence's Criticism of Hollywood, 1942-43," Prologue, 6 (1974), 44-59; Clayton R. Koppes, and Gregory D. Black, "What to Show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945," The Journal of American History, 64 (1977), 87-105.

## Chapter II

### The Structure of the Office of War Information and Preceding Agencies

The Office of War Information did not start from scratch. Many of its departments and activities were simply transferred virtually intact from preceding agencies which were consolidated into the new OWI. A few of those activities are important to this paper and the preceding agencies will therefore be described before the OWI itself.

#### The Division of Information of the Office for Emergency Management

This sub-agency had been set up in May of 1940 under Robert W. Horton. Although Horton's authority proved to be too weak to establish a fully centralized government information agency, he served war-related civilian agencies by providing information services including the production of films. In particular, Horton's film unit commenced production on the film Japanese Relocation in April of 1942 for the War Relocation Authority which had just been established to take over responsibility for the Japanese-Americans who had been evacuated from the west coast by the Army. The Director of the WRA was Milton Eisenhower, Dwight's brother. Before the film was finished, Horton and most of his staff became part of the new OWI on July 1, 1942. By coincidence, Milton Eisenhower left the War Relocation Authority at that time to become the Associate Director of OWI.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs

This position was created in August 1940 for Nelson Rockefeller and gave him control of all information activities



in Latin America. Rockefeller put the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art in New York under contract to review films for possible use in Latin America. When OWI was created, Rockefeller was politically powerful enough to keep his own operation completely separate. As a result, Latin America was the only area not covered by OWI policies.<sup>2</sup>

#### **The Coordinator of Information**

In July 1941, President Roosevelt created this position for Col. William Donovan who thereafter was responsible for collecting strategic intelligence abroad. In August 1941, the Foreign Information Service was set up as part of COI under Robert Sherwood who had suggested to Roosevelt that the dissemination of propaganda abroad was important to an understanding of the U.S. in foreign countries. Sherwood and Donovan did not get along. Nevertheless when OWI was created, Donovan tried to hang on to FIS. Sherwood convinced Roosevelt that FIS should be transferred to the new OWI and on July 1, 1942, Sherwood became Director of OWI's Overseas Branch.<sup>3</sup>

#### **The Office of Facts and Figures**

This agency was established in October of 1941 under Archibald MacLeish who was also Librarian of Congress. The agency gathered information, analyzed it and served in an advisory capacity to President Roosevelt and government departments. Its Committee on War Information was the central government body dealing with information policy and it played an important role in coordinating information and establishing guidelines for the release of information immediately after the Pearl Harbor attack.<sup>4</sup>

OFF became known for its Bureau of Intelligence which

conducted polls and surveys of public opinion for use by senior government officials as part of a program which had been recommended by Harold Lasswell. Lasswell's Research Project on Wartime Communication was set up within the Library of Congress. This connection with Archibald MacLeish probably led to Lasswell's work as a consultant to BOI. The results of the polls and surveys were classified "confidential." Intensive surveys were often conducted by the Dept. of Agriculture under Rensis Likert while polls were frequently commissioned to the National Opinion Research Center of the University of Denver. "Archibald MacLeish's principal contribution at the White House conferences was incoming information about the thinking of the American people."<sup>5</sup>

One of the first topics tackled by BOI in January 1942 was west coast public opinion of Japanese-Americans. The initial report to Archibald MacLeish on the first survey concluded:

There is a widespread tendency for people to be willing to follow the Government's lead as to what's to be done with Japanese-Americans, but very few people know what the Government is doing and who is doing it.<sup>6</sup>

Government action was not likely to be challenged, but it should be explained. People doubted that most of the Japanese-Americans were dangerous, but favoured some sort of action as a precaution:

There is a feeling that all should be watched, until we know which are disloyal, but a tendency to feel that most are probably loyal - if we could be sure which.

This BOI survey was circulated in the highest government

circles and may have been used during the White House debate on whether to move the Japanese-Americans.<sup>8</sup>

The Bureau of Intelligence continued to survey public opinion and newspaper comment on the Japanese-Americans and in April 1942, began to review all films released in the United States. It used analysts working in the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art, perhaps because of the operation there to review films for use in Latin America by Nelson Rockefeller. BOI later explained that the review of feature films "provides a way of determining just what in the way of war material in fictional shape is being presented to the public."<sup>9</sup> When BOI was transferred to the new OWI on July 1, 1942, Archibald MacLeish became Assistant Director of OWI in charge of the Policy Development Branch.<sup>10</sup>

#### **The Coordinator of Government Films**

The person most concerned with film policy before the establishment of the OWI was the Coordinator of Government Films, Lowell Mellett. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, the Hollywood motion picture industry asked Roosevelt to designate a liaison agency to coordinate industry assistance in the war effort. At the same time, the industry formed a War Activities Committee to organize its own considerable production, distribution and exhibition resources.<sup>11</sup>

On December 18, 1941, Roosevelt appointed Mellett as Coordinator of Government Films. In addition to the film industry liaison role, he had authority over all films produced by government agencies for civilian distribution. Arch A. Mercey was appointed Deputy Coordinator. To obtain permission for production of the film Japanese Relocation, Milton

Eisenhower had to work through Mellett's office.<sup>12</sup>

To handle the film industry liaison function, Mellett established a Hollywood Office under Nelson Poynter in May 1942. It analyzed the output of the Hollywood studios and suggested subject areas of importance to the war effort which were not being adequately treated. Dorothy Jones, formerly an assistant to Harold Lasswell, headed the "staunchly liberal" film reviewing staff. The Hollywood Office continued to analyze features throughout the war and make its views known to the Hollywood studios. Its work is therefore central to this paper.<sup>13</sup>

When the OWI was formed, it was only natural to make Mellett head of OWI's Domestic Motion Picture Bureau. He retained the same responsibilities and acquired many additional resources.<sup>14</sup>

#### **The Office of War Information**

At its inception, OWI had two bureaus which are relevant to this paper: the Bureau of Intelligence inherited from OFF and Mellett's Bureau of Motion Pictures.

#### **The OWI Bureau of Intelligence**

After it was merged into OWI, BOI continued its film reviews and beginning in October of 1942, they were consolidated into "weekly summaries" and distributed to the Bureau's readership of Washington policy makers. The films discussed in the summaries had already been released in the United States and therefore no specific action could be taken on them, but they were of general interest. This reviewing operation continued until March of 1943.<sup>15</sup>

The central concern of course was the considerable impact

of motion pictures on public opinion. BOI felt that a comprehensive program was necessary and drew up a detailed plan, "Motion Pictures and the War Effort" (See Appendix A), which included pre-production script analysis, film content analysis, audience research and the production of short films by the government based on the resulting data. Oddly enough, the proposal does not mention the film content analysis which was also being done by Dorothy Jones and her staff in Hollywood. Although the BOI film review summaries were available to the Hollywood Office beginning in October of 1942 if not earlier, it appears that the Hollywood Office reviews were not routinely sent to Washington until some time later.<sup>16</sup>

Although this paper quotes some of BOI's comments on films, the reviews are of limited relevance to the particular films under study in this paper for several reasons:

1. The Hollywood features under study were influenced through the Hollywood Office which acted before a film was released and therefore before the Bureau of Intelligence reviewed the film.
2. One of the government shorts under study (Japanese Relocation) was not likely affected by the Bureau of Intelligence plan to influence short films since it was completed at a time when the plan was apparently still under consideration.
3. The other government short under study (A Challenge to Democracy) was made long after the operation was terminated in 1943.

As for the pre-production analysis suggested in "Motion Pictures and the War Effort" there is no evidence that it was

ever undertaken by the Bureau of Intelligence. However, just such an operation was begun by the Hollywood Office of the Bureau of Motion Pictures in the fall of 1942 when the Hollywood studios were asked to submit scripts in advance of production.<sup>17</sup> The operation was so similar to the one suggested by the Bureau of Intelligence that their document likely influenced the decision to proceed.

Aside from pre-production analysis and content analysis, "Motion Pictures and the War Effort" called for the Bureau of Intelligence to establish an elaborate program of audience research to help in the design and testing of short films produced by the government. This was to be done using a special "film laboratory" to test audience reaction to specific parts of films, a comprehensive mail questionnaire to be sent to all theatres in the country, and nationwide interviewing using the existing survey facilities. Apparently all three techniques were used for about six months until the program was phased out along with the film review function. Unlike the film reviews, no formal reports or summaries of the audience research activities are known to have been distributed. For the same reasons listed above, the audience research operation is not relevant to the particular films under study in this paper. However, it does indicate that the leadership of OWI was prepared to undertake elaborate programs in the field of motion pictures. As it happened, the Bureau of Intelligence ceased to exist as such when Congress drastically cut the Domestic Branch budget in mid-1943.<sup>18</sup>

## The OWI Bureau of Motion Pictures

The OWI department of central interest to this paper is the Domestic Bureau of Motion Pictures under Lowell Mellett. Initially, it had three offices:

1. Washington - Mellett, Mercey, coordination of civilian distribution of government films and other minor operations;
2. New York - film production under Sam Spewack and William Montague, Jr.;
3. Hollywood - film review and industry liaison under Poynter.

It cost almost \$1,350,000 for 1942-43 and had 142 regular employees, about 60 of whom were engaged in film production.<sup>19</sup>

One of the first films produced by Spewack's office was Japanese Relocation which it took over from the Division of Information, OEM when that agency merged with OWI.

The Domestic Bureau of Motion Pictures coordinated a program with the industry's War Activities Committee whereby 16,000 theatres across the country were pledged to exhibit a new OWI short film every other week to an audience of about 90 million. Under this arrangement, Japanese Relocation was released to the theatres on November 12, 1942.<sup>20</sup>

With the Domestic Branch budget cut in mid-1943, Spewack's film production unit ceased to exist and he transferred to the Overseas Branch office in London. The Overseas Branch stepped up its own production activities thereafter under Philip Dunne, but the Japanese-Americans were not of much interest to it.<sup>21</sup>

## The Hollywood Office

The main activity of the Hollywood Office was to review feature films and influence their content. As mentioned earlier, Dorothy Jones was put in charge of the reviewing staff when the Office was established in May 1942. Harold Lasswell had worked both with Jones and with Leo Rosten who became a Deputy Director of OWI in 1942. These connections plus Lasswell's work with Archibald MacLeish and the Bureau of Intelligence meant that Lasswell's work was well known within OWI. It will be touched upon when policies on portrayal of "The Enemy" are discussed in the next chapter.<sup>22</sup>

Dorothy Jones was no doubt influenced by Lasswell's work in her approach to film analysis and review. The analysis procedure evolved somewhat as the war went on. At first, they used a very simple format for analysis and review which gave the barest essentials, such as studio and running time, in addition to the comments on the film itself.<sup>23</sup>

Before the Hollywood Office became a part of OWI, it had decided to issue a "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry." This Manual was based on the "government information program as it pertains to the motion picture industry."<sup>24</sup> Presumably this "information program" was the collected policies of Archibald MacLeish's OFF as filtered through Lowell Mellett who was represented on both the policy and implementation committees of OFF. A draft version of the manual is dated June 8, 1942. After the July 1, 1942 merger with OWI, quotations (mostly from Roosevelt's speeches) were added to each section of the Manual to legitimize its parentage and, with minor changes, it was issued to the motion picture



industry sometime thereafter and dated "summer 1942."<sup>25</sup>

This manual took for its structure the six themes which President Roosevelt had outlined as the basis for a better understanding of the war in his State of the Union address to Congress on January 6, 1942, one month after Pearl Harbor. These six themes were in turn adopted by Jones and her staff in the fall of 1942 as a means of content classification. This was the "analysis" function which involved keeping track of how many films on a particular theme were to be released at a particular time. Thereafter, the thematic classification appeared on each film review. The "review" function involved checking the content in detail for any deviations from the government's information objectives for that theme as stated in the Manual. Any objectionable material was brought to the attention of Poynter and his deputy, Warren Pierce, who interceded with the Hollywood studios. Particularly difficult cases were brought to the attention of Mellett in Washington. In late 1944, after Jones had left, the classification system was changed and two new items were added to the reviews: "Positive Propaganda Content" and "Negative Propaganda Content."<sup>26</sup>

Initially, the films were reviewed after they were completed, but before they were released. Poynter felt that this was not sufficient and in July 1942, he told Mellett that the film Little Tokyo, U.S.A. was "a clear example" of the necessity for them to comment on films at the script stage.<sup>27</sup>

Less than one month later, the Bureau of Intelligence was suggesting its plan for pre-production analysis of scripts, but there was some hesitancy to formally implement such a

procedure. Nevertheless, Poynter had limited success in obtaining scripts for review during the fall of 1942. The format used for the script reviews was the same as the one for reviews of finished films.

The problem was that the Bureau of Motion Pictures clearly wanted to influence all Hollywood output, but cooperation was purely voluntary on the part of the studios. In December 1941, Roosevelt had made a clear pronouncement:

The motion picture must remain free insofar as national security will permit. I want no censorship of the motion picture.<sup>28</sup>

Some changes were being made to films at Poynter's suggestion, but this was not sufficient. In the end, increased power became possible due to the industry's dependence on lucrative export markets. The head of OWI, Elmer Davis, particularly objected to the "outrageous caricature of the American character"<sup>29</sup> which Hollywood films conveyed to foreign audiences. Although there was no domestic censorship of films, the Office of Censorship could bar films from the export market. Its Los Angeles Board of Review was responsible for all dramatic and commercial films produced on the west coast. Poynter had little success with the Los Angeles Board. Mellett therefore suggested that a representative of the OWI Overseas Branch be posted to the Hollywood Office to establish a link with the Censor. The overseas expert could argue that material which the Hollywood Office found objectionable would in fact harm foreign relations if approved for export. If Mellett's plan worked, the Hollywood Office could thereafter use the threat of export sanctions to influence films even before they

were released domestically.<sup>30</sup>

The overseas representative, Ulric Bell, arrived in Hollywood in November of 1942 and on December 9, 1942, Mellett wrote to the heads of the Hollywood studios formally asking for all scripts to be submitted in advance of production. A full pre-production analysis procedure, as envisioned by the Bureau of Intelligence, was implemented in the Hollywood Office. Mellett's letter met with outright hostility; it was seen as the imposition of domestic censorship. After much reassurance that the program was still voluntary, the industry began to comply. As might be expected, there were degrees of cooperation, with Paramount being the most reluctant to go along.<sup>31</sup>

There was some concern that word of a particular studio's plans might get out to competitors through the script review process. As a result, script reviews and film reviews were thereafter officially classified, usually as "Restricted" or "Confidential."<sup>32</sup>

There was technically both a Domestic Hollywood Office under Poynter and an Overseas Hollywood Office under Bell, but they shared the liaison function and the reviewing staff under Jones. This required close cooperation between Poynter and Bell so that they could speak with one voice to the studios, which produced the same film for both domestic and overseas markets. Unfortunately, Poynter and Bell couldn't stand one another. Poynter felt that Bell was using the threat of export censorship to force the studios into making pictures of "sweetness and light." Bell replied that Poynter's attitude would result in a "flood of bad pictures."<sup>33</sup> The hostility

between the two continued while Congress debated a drastic cut in the OWI Domestic Branch budget. On June 26, 1943, Poynter wrote to Mellett to urge that he "take vigorous steps to resolve this absurd situation just as soon as Congress has made the decision on budget."<sup>34</sup> A week later, the budget of the Domestic Motion Picture Bureau had been reduced from \$1,350,000 to \$50,000 and Mellett and Poynter were departing OWI. Milton Eisenhower left OWI shortly thereafter. The Domestic Motion Picture Bureau became a liaison and non-theatrical distribution operation. It continued the theatrical program with the War Activities Committee, but all of the films used were now produced by other government agencies or the Hollywood studios. In this connection the WRA film, A Challenge to Democracy, is discussed in Chapter IV. Stanton Griffis, chairman of Paramount in New York, took over from Mellett without pay.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Overseas Branch**

Warren Pierce, Dorothy Jones and the reviewing staff stayed on with the Hollywood Office. It became a part of the Overseas Branch and was officially known as the Los Angeles Overseas Bureau, Motion Picture Division. Ulric Bell took over complete command of the Hollywood Office and reported to the head of the Overseas Motion Picture Bureau, Robert Riskin, in New York. Bell quickly developed an excellent relationship with the Censor, Watterson Rothacker, and by the fall of 1943, the export strategy began to work wonders with the studios. As Dorothy Jones later admitted:

[T]here really were not many export licenses that were refused. However, somewhere in the background a refusal of export license hung as a worrisome possibility. And since government is government and there is a tendency in Hollywood as everywhere to

confuse one government office with another, this shadow persisted, despite the fact that we made it very plain in talking with people that we had absolutely no control whatsoever with respect to export.<sup>36</sup>

Britain in particular was a lucrative market for the studios. With the exception of Paramount, which showed only finished films to OWI, the Hollywood studios submitted to Bell almost all scripts which touched in any way on the war.

From mid-1943 until the end of the war, OWI exerted an influence over an American mass medium never equaled before or since by a government agency.<sup>37</sup>

Bell himself only exercised this influence until November of 1943. His deputy, Warren Pierce, filled in briefly before William Cunningham, who had been serving as Chief Liaison Officer to the studios, took over in early 1944. Cunningham was far more pragmatic than Bell and by that time the studios accepted the Hollywood Office as a fact of life. Thereafter, the Hollywood Office wielded its influence quietly. When Dorothy Jones left in mid-1944, the reviewing operation was apparently taken over by Gene Kern, one of her staff members.<sup>38</sup>

The Overseas Branch was given responsibility for organizing and operating a distribution system for U.S. films in the liberated areas as they came under Allied control. OWI passed on the substantial profits from the operation to the films' distributors. Before the liberation of France in the summer of 1944, the major distributors asked the Overseas Branch for permission to dub particular features into French and Italian for early use in Europe by OWI. Eventually, a special unit was set up in the Overseas Motion Picture Bureau to select existing films from those suggested by the

distributors. According to Dorothy Jones, "the records of the Hollywood Office of OWI were used as a resource in the selection of films."<sup>39</sup> The New York Office also did its own reviews. These reviews gave a brief synopsis of each film and then found it suitable or not for use in particular liberated areas. They did not have the depth of the Hollywood Office reviews and covered only films suggested for use in areas where OWI controlled film distribution. They will be mentioned in this paper where they have been found with the Hollywood Office review of the film under discussion.<sup>40</sup>

OWI was thus a major force in the implementation of government policy on the screen. It made films of its own and controlled the release of all government films to civilian audiences, particularly those destined for mass release through its agreement with the War Activities Committee. The Hollywood Office was the pressure point for government influence on the Hollywood studios. This influence increased when OWI developed a working relationship with the Censor and intensified further when OWI began to distribute films in liberated areas. Although Dorothy Jones headed the Hollywood Office reviewing staff from inception to mid-1944, management of the Office changed as it went from Domestic to shared to Overseas status. Similarly, the change in responsibility for the Hollywood Office in Washington brought in different individuals with different interests. The departure of Milton Eisenhower removed his personal interest in the Japanese-Americans from the top level of OWI.

Although film reviews were done by the Bureau of Intelligence at the beginning of the war and by the New York

Office at the end of the war, it is the Hollywood Office reviews and correspondence which clearly show how policies were implemented. It was also through the Hollywood Office that the policy statements were issued which bear on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans on the screen. These policy statements are examined in the next chapter.

## Notes for Chapter II

- <sup>1</sup> David Jones, pp. 66-75.
- <sup>2</sup> Winkler, pp. 25-30; MacCann, p. 149.
- <sup>3</sup> Winkler, pp. 26-30.
- <sup>4</sup> David Jones, pp. 91-101.
- <sup>5</sup> David Jones, pp. 103-106.
- <sup>6</sup> Bureau of Intelligence, OFF, "Exploratory Study of West Coast Reactions to Japanese," February 4, 1942, Report No. 3, Box 1786; R. Keith Kane, Memo to MacLeish, January 26, 1942, Box 1803; filed with the records of the Office of Government Reports, Record Group 44, National Archives, Washington; hereafter cited as filed OGR, RG 44, NA;
- <sup>7</sup> Kane Memo to MacLeish, Januray 26, 1942.
- <sup>8</sup> Another summary of the survey is in the files of the Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy, who was very much involved in the debate. See Conn et al, p. 127.
- <sup>9</sup> The other BOI surveys: "Pacific Coast Attitudes Toward the Japanese Problem," February 28, 1942, Report No. 7, Box 1797; "West Coast Reactions to the Japanese Situation," March 6, 1942, Report No. 6, Box 1786; "The Japanese Problem," April 21, 1942, Report No. 19, Box 1797; "Newspaper Comment on Enemy Aliens," June 22, 1942, Report No. 46, Box 1845; all filed OGR, RG 44, NA; Black and Koppes, "OWI Goes to the Movies," pp. 44-46; Gregory D. Black, Letter to the author, June 30, 1983; Bur. of Intell., OWI, "Motion Pictures and the War Effort," August 15, 1942, BOI, OWI, filed OGR, Box 1842, RG 44, NA.
- <sup>10</sup> David Jones, pp. 131-133.
- <sup>11</sup> Larson, p. 436; Introd., Movies at War, Library Ed., 4 vols., (New York: War Activities Committee Motion Picture Industry, [1946]).
- <sup>12</sup> Lingeman, p. 171; Arch A. Mercey, Memo to Horton, April 28, 1942, OEM, filed OWI, Box 1492, RG 208, NA.
- <sup>13</sup> Koppes and Black, "What to Show the World," p. 89.
- <sup>14</sup> Larson, pp. 436-437.
- <sup>15</sup> Black and Koppes, "OWI Goes to the Movies," pp. 46-58.
- <sup>16</sup> This inference is drawn from the list of copies on the Hollywood Office film reviews, Boxes 3510 to 3530, RG 208, NA; hereafter cited as Hollywood Office reviews. After research for this paper was completed, the National Archives decided to reorganize the filing system for the reviews. As a result, the box numbers given in this paper for particular reviews may change.



- 17 Larson, p. 440.
- 18 "Motion Pictures and the War Effort," pp. 5-6; David Jones, pp. 325-327; Black and Koppes, "OWI Goes to the Movies," p. 58.
- 19 Lingeman, p. 183; Larson, p. 437.
- 20 Larson, pp. 437-438; Movies at War, I, p. 8.
- 21 MacCann, pp. 139-141.
- 22 Leo C. Rosten, Hollywood, (1941; rpt. New York: Arno, 1970), p. viii; David Jones, p. 306; David Jones, p. 103.
- 23 Hollywood Office reviews.
- 24 "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry," June 8, 1942, as reproduced in Sauberli, pp. 363-397; This version is hereafter cited as Manual 1.
- 25 David Jones, p. 95; Changes included substituting "Japanese war lords" for "Hirohito" in references to the enemy and adding the Free French to the list of those displaying "heroic resistance."; "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry," summer 1942, Box 15, RG 208, NA, n. pag.; hereafter cited as Manual 2.
- 26 Manual 2, Dorothy Jones, "The Hollywood War Film," pp. 1-19; Sauberli Interview; Hollywood Office reviews.
- 27 Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, July 21, 1942, OWI, Box 3518, RG 208, NA.
- 28 Lingeman, pp. 170-171.
- 29 Koppes and Black, "What to Show the World," p. 96.
- 30 Robert B. Randle, "A Study of the War Time Control Imposed on the Civilian Motion Picture Industry . . ." M.A. Thesis University of Southern California 1950, p. 79.
- 31 Koppes and Black, pp. 97-100; Lingeman, p. 185.
- 32 Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, Feb. 25, 1943, Box 16, Mellett Papers, F.D.R. Library, p. 4; The classification system is explained in Randle, p. 103.
- 33 Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, May 17, 1943, p. 6; Ulric Bell, Memo to Poynter, May 19, 1943, p. 1; both in Box 16, Mellett Papers, F.D.R. Library.
- 34 Nelson Poynter, Letter to Mellett, June 26, 1943, p. 2, Box 16, Mellett Papers, F.D.R. Library.
- 35 MacCann, pp. 134-135.
- 36 Sauberli Interview, pp. 325-326.

- 37 Koppes and Black, "What to Show the World," p. 103.
- 38 Hollywood Office reviews.
- 39 Randle, pp. 84-85; Sauberli Interview, p. 327.
- 40 Hollywood Office reviews.

### Chapter III

#### The OWI Hollywood Office Policy Statements

In December 1982, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded:

A grave injustice was done to American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them, were excluded, removed and detained by the United States during World War II.<sup>1</sup>

If that is the government view today, it obviously was not its view during the war. Government policy had to presume that the Japanese-Americans posed a very real danger which justified the evacuation.

The Japanese-Americans were the particular problem of WRA which was most anxious to relinquish responsibility for large numbers of clearly harmless people. Racial prejudice was a major obstacle. The hostility toward these people could be dissipated or intensified depending on how they were portrayed to the American public, particularly through motion pictures. It was therefore in WRA's interest to pressure OWI into conveying the message that these dangerous people had been rendered harmless by removing them from the corrupting influence of the Pacific Ocean. At the same time, Japan had declared that it was engaged in a race war with the United States. If racial prejudice against the Japanese-Americans was allowed to continue, it would tend to confirm those assertions. The Japanese were also holding a number of American civilians and the U.S. was most anxious to repatriate them or at least ensure their safety. When the Japanese began to use the holding of the Japanese-Americans as a propaganda weapon in

this regard, the situation became important for U.S. foreign policy.

There were thus three important aspects to information policy on the Japanese-Americans: justification of the evacuation, elimination of racial prejudice, and confirmation of good treatment in the camps. Unfortunately, these aspects did not mesh well with one another as will be explained further in this chapter. As mentioned in the last chapter, the Hollywood Office had a draft version of its "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry" when it became part of OWI on July 1, 1942. This was issued to the Hollywood studios during the summer and is important for its statements on the basic issues of the war and the nature of the enemy. During that summer, the New York Office was making Japanese Relocation, in which Milton Eisenhower took a personal interest. That production required a statement of OWI policy on the Japanese-Americans. At the same time, Hollywood's portrayal of Japanese-Americans as spies, particularly in Little Tokyo, U.S.A., brought an outcry from WRA officials and from OWI's own film reviewers. These pressures resulted in the issuance of a "Special Bulletin" by the Hollywood Office on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans, dated October 24, 1942. This chapter analyzes that document in detail to show how it attempts to reconcile the three aspects of government information policy on the Japanese-Americans. The resulting contradictions in that document are used to suggest that those charged with implementation of the policy on Japanese-Americans would be faced with a most difficult task. Later in this paper, it is shown that in fact there was a reluctance on the

part of OWI supervisory staff to implement the policy with any vigour in the cases of several specific Hollywood films.

### **Versions of the Hollywood Office Manual**

In addition to the draft and summer 1942 versions of the Manual, a number of "Fact Sheets" were issued which expand on various themes. Two Fact Sheets which deal with the nature of the enemy are discussed in this chapter. Finally, a condensed version of the Manual was issued on April 29, 1943.<sup>2</sup>

### **Themes of the Hollywood Office Manual**

As stated in Chapter II, the Manual took Roosevelt's six themes for a better understanding of the war and used them as a basis for explaining the government's "Information Program" to the film industry. The first three themes have a bearing on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans:

- I. THE ISSUES - Why we fight. What kind of peace will follow victory.
- II. THE ENEMY - Whom we fight. The nature of our adversary.
- III. THE UNITED NATIONS AND PEOPLES - With whom we are allied in fighting. Our brothers-in-arms.<sup>3</sup>

The first theme, "The Issues," is of general interest since it concerns individual rights and freedoms. The second theme, "The Enemy," is of specific interest since it applies directly to the situation of the Japanese-Americans being classed as enemies or potential enemies. This theme is therefore discussed in detail. The third theme, "The United Nations and Peoples," is of limited interest since it applies to this paper only insofar as it deals with portrayal of the Chinese, Asiatics like the Japanese, but allies in the war effort.

## The Issues

The main task of motion pictures insofar as "The Issues" were concerned was to make clear the essential principles of democracy for which the United States was presumably fighting. The summer 1942 version of the Manual stressed that one important aspect of the American democratic ideal was the "E Pluribus Unum" concept of unity emerging from many diverse backgrounds:

We must emphasize that this country is a melting pot, a nation of many races and creeds, who have demonstrated that they can live together and progress. We must establish a genuine understanding of alien and minority groups and recognize their great contribution to the building of our nation. In this war for freedom they fight side by side with us.<sup>4</sup>

One must presume that the Japanese-Americans were no less entitled than any other group to be understood and to have their contribution to the building of the nation recognized.

The above policy statement was followed by one of the quotations inserted into the draft version. The quotations were taken from the speeches of Roosevelt and other notables, but apparently they had nothing to say about aliens and minorities. It may have taken some effort to uncover this quotation from a banquet speech given by Lt. Oren Root, Jr. of the U.S. Navy:

For all our faults, more people of diverse origins and races and creeds live in freedom and dignity here than anywhere else now or ever before in all the sweep of history. Our beginnings, our culture, our reason for existence, our hope for victory are all founded in this concept. It is essential, demanding, transcendent.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the Japanese-Americans were suddenly living in

less freedom and dignity than other races. The Manual indicates that Lt. Root made his speech on February 19, 1942. That same evening President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the evacuation of Japanese-Americans from the west coast.<sup>6</sup>

When the condensed version of the Manual was issued in April 1943, the first objective of the war was spelled out directly:

We are fighting for the rights and dignity of the individual human being.<sup>7</sup>

That being so, the government clearly wanted to avoid any suggestion that it had infringed on the rights and dignity of the 110,000 Japanese-Americans in the relocation camps on January 1, 1943. This question of basic human rights was not lost on the War Relocation Authority, the agency responsible for the care and supervision of the Japanese-Americans:

[I]t was incumbent on the War Relocation Authority to consider, constantly and painstakingly, the individual rights of every last one of the more than 100,000 people who were then passing under its supervision and to sanction infringement of those rights only when it was clearly necessary in the interest of the national safety or the future welfare of the entire evacuated group.<sup>8</sup>

Their rights were of central concern, but infringement of those rights could be sanctioned for some greater interest of the nation. Herein lay the dilemma of the Japanese-American situation. As part of the war effort, the U.S. was denying the very rights for which it was fighting.

Roosevelt wanted to win the war as quickly as possible and his resulting strong support of the military had allowed

the Japanese-American evacuation to be undertaken in the first place:

While Roosevelt had proclaimed the liberal, democratic war aims, and while those aims gave substance to the struggle, as the fighting wore on the propaganda leaders became increasingly aware the the president, and the State, War, and Navy Departments, were willing to compromise those aims in the interests of a quick end to the struggle.<sup>9</sup>

While the 1942 version of the Manual was strongly idealistic, the 1943 version reflected Poynter's growing conviction that U.S. films had to reveal some of the country's warts if they were to be believed. The melting pot theme of the summer 1942 version was summarized:

We assert that even though our system falls far short of perfection, under it more people of diverse origin, race and creed live together in peace and dignity here than anywhere else on earth.<sup>10</sup>

This summary was lifted almost word for word from the Lt. Root quote in the first version of the Manual with the added admission that things were far from perfect. What might have happened had Poynter stayed on is pure speculation. Bell took over and he fully supported what came to be the general OWI policy of painting racial harmony as close to perfection as possible:

Comprehending the root problem of a heterogeneous society, OWI released material emphasizing the theme of unity while avoiding or suppressing news that might even remotely encourage racial, ethnic, or religious differences.<sup>11</sup>

Bell and his successors regarded the Japanese-American situation as a Domestic Branch problem and they therefore showed little interest in it.



## The Enemy

The second theme of the Manual was "The Enemy." As mentioned in Chapter II, the work of Harold Lasswell was well known within OWI and it may be helpful to refer briefly to one aspect of that work in discussing the Manual's treatment of the enemy.

In a 1942 article, Dorothy Jones indicates her familiarity with Lasswell's 1936 book, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How. In that book, Lasswell writes about the psychological implications of the use of propaganda in war:

Propaganda, when successful, is astute in handling:  
     Aggressiveness  
     Guilt  
     Weakness  
     Affection.<sup>12</sup>

Basically, Lasswell's point is that war invokes feelings of aggressiveness toward the opponent, feelings of guilt about that aggressiveness, and feelings of weakness caused by a fear of death and mutilation. A nation uses propaganda to help its population cope with these internal stresses by projecting them on the opponent nation. The enemy is aggressive, scheming and treacherous; its methods are immoral and it suffers from inferiority. The propaganda also denies any love and respect to the enemy and instead invests all affection with the homeland which becomes "infinitely protective and indulgent, powerful and wise."<sup>13</sup>

By the time OWI was established in mid-1942, Lasswell's Research Project on Wartime Communication had been working for about a year to perfect an empirical approach to mass communication research.<sup>14</sup> Although this paper does not take an

empirical approach to film analysis, Lasswell's emphasis on the handling of aggressiveness, guilt, weakness and affection provides a helpful list of themes to watch for in looking at the Hollywood Office's policy statements on portrayal of the enemy in general and the Japanese-Americans in particular.

The summer 1942 version of the Manual gives suggestions for dramatizing the nature of the enemy. It points out that the war is against a specific doctrine: militarism. In particular, it is careful to caution against portrayal of the enemy in racial terms:

The power, cruelty and complete cynicism of the enemy should be pictured, but it is dangerous to portray all Germans, all Italians and all Japanese as bestial barbarians. The American people know that this is not true. They will resent efforts to mislead them.<sup>15</sup>

The enemy is aggressive and guilty, but its weakness is that it is supported by a ruling elite and not the population as a whole. If some Japanese are not enemies, then surely this must include those who have chosen a life in the United States for many years.

Two Fact Sheets were issued to expand on "The Enemy" theme sometime during the fall of 1942. The first one asserts that Axis agents in the U.S. seek to exploit "latent prejudices and hatreds, to destroy our national unity and our will to resist aggression." Their method is to coat lies with "a thin veneer of truth." This is explained further:

Each instance of the mistreatment of a citizen of foreign extraction is used to undermine the loyalty of all naturalized citizens and friendly aliens. Conversely, each instance of disloyalty on the part of an immigrant is used to arouse suspicion toward everyone of foreign birth or parentage.<sup>16</sup>

Citizenship was a key. Immigrants were presumed to see their citizenship as proof of their legitimacy which protected them from discrimination. They were likely to be sensitive to any government action which lessened the protection afforded by citizenship.

The citizenship of the Japanese-Americans created a number of information problems for the government. Japanese immigrants were ineligible for U.S. citizenship under the original naturalization statute which "limited naturalization to 'free white persons.'" <sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Japanese immigration had been halted when Congress passed the Oriental Exclusion Act in 1924. Most of the immigrants in the camps (the Issei) had been in the U.S. for over twenty-five years, but could not become citizens. This was not generally understood by the general public and there was therefore the possibility that people would assume that they did not wish to become citizens because their first loyalty was to Japan. On the other hand, to explain the situation would presumably require the government to make it clear that they were victims of racist and discriminatory legislation. <sup>18</sup>

The status of the Issei created an important problem. The Issei were Japanese nationals and could be seen as the counterparts of the 10,000 American civilians, excluding military personnel, who were caught behind Japanese lines:

Thus WRA was under a constant and heavy responsibility to avoid any action-or even any appearance of action-in its treatment of Issei evacuees which might precipitate an outburst of repression and reprisal against American citizens in the Far East. <sup>19</sup>

It was therefore important to show the Issei as well-treated

and content in the camps.

The immigrants' children (the Nisei) were U.S. citizens by birth. Insofar as they made up almost 65% of the 110,000 Japanese-Americans in the camps, the relocation operation could be seen as primarily an attack on citizens. However it was clearly impossible for the government to separate children from their parents. This dilemma encouraged the portrayal of the Japanese-Americans as a special minority which posed a sufficient danger to national safety to require infringement of citizenship rights.<sup>20</sup>

The notion of the Japanese-Americans as dangerous could not be pushed very far. Firstly, there had not in fact been any sabotage on the west coast and there was no reason to suppose there would be unless one could follow the extraordinary logic of Gen. DeWitt, chief salesman of the evacuation idea:

The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, fear of sabotage on the part of Japanese-Americans would run counter to a policy of national unity and could spread to include fear of German-Americans and fear of foreigners in general. At the time of the evacuation, 46% of the population considered German aliens to be the most dangerous, compared to 35% who named Japanese aliens. Insofar as 1,237,000 people who had been born in Germany were living in the U.S. in 1940, the Manual had good reason for suggesting that Hollywood downplay disloyalty on the part of immigrants.<sup>22</sup>

The second Fact Sheet on "The Enemy" issued in the fall

of 1942, explained that part of the Axis strategy was "to foster the persecution of minorities by the majority." Although a number of minorities were mentioned, particularly the Jews, the generalizations which were made could be applied to the case of the Japanese-Americans:

Persecution of any one group is the danger signal. If allowed to continue, it is only a question of time until the rights and liberties of everyone are lost.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the two Fact Sheets reinforced indirectly the explicit statement in the first version of the Manual that all Japanese should not be lumped together as simply part of a racial group.

As will be shown in Chapter V, the Hollywood reviewers under Dorothy Jones initially exhibited great sensitivity to the plight of the Japanese-Americans. Jones was concerned about the portrayal of Asiatics on the screen and in a 1966 interview, she discussed the Japanese-Americans:

As you know, we had problems here with our own American-Japanese. And this was a serious domestic problem. And our handling of the American-Japanese problem in this country reflected very badly on our government; it was unfortunate and remains such. I think that on the whole it was just a feeling that we are not a nation that has to go to these lengths, to whipping up fury and hatred in fighting a war.<sup>24</sup>

If the reviewers showed a diminishing inclination to bring negative references to Japanese-Americans to the attention of their superiors, it was more likely a result of the feedback which they received than of any insensitivity on their part.

The 1943 condensed version of the Manual included specific examples, from films produced in 1942, which should be avoided in future films:

Don't refer to the Japanese as "little brown men" or "yellow rats". This is not a racial war. Many millions of our allies belong to the brown and yellow races and such references are offensive to them.<sup>25</sup>

By this time, the Japanese were carefully watching the situation of the Japanese-Americans and they did not hesitate to take full advantage of the propaganda value:

In the Orient, there were vast millions of people whose good will and active collaboration were badly needed in the war against the Axis and who were being told constantly by the Japanese propagandists that American democracy had a deep-rooted bias against all Asiatics.<sup>26</sup>

In fact OWI did find it difficult to get across the message that many Asiatics were allies.

### **The United Nations and Peoples**

According to Dorothy Jones, OWI "encouraged a very favorable portrayal of China and Chinese on the screen."<sup>27</sup> Under the theme "The United Nations and Peoples," the first version of the Manual had understated the enthusiasm required in praising the Chinese as important and loyal allies. By April 1943, the condensed version was more effusive in its praise and went on to deplore Hollywood's traditional portrayal of Asiatics:

Avoid the types such as the comic laundryman Chinese. . . . Don't show Filipinos and Chinese only as good-natured but slightly comic house boys or menials.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, west coast prejudice against Asiatics had actually begun with the Chinese long before the Japanese began to arrive. It resulted in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which was still in force in April 1943. It was finally

repealed in December of that year. Although the Japanese immigrants had taken on the "yellow peril" image as they surpassed the Chinese in numbers, there was a tendency for "the public to view both groups as a single racial threat."<sup>29</sup> The confusion between the Chinese ally alien and the Japanese enemy alien created a bizarre situation. The evacuation of the Japanese-Americans caused an acute shortage of Oriental actors in Hollywood and many Chinese with no acting experience were pressed into service to portray Japanese villains on the screen. An incredible Time article tried to provide an easy list of ways to tell the two apart including the notion that "Japanese are hesitant, nervous in conversation, laugh loudly at the wrong time."<sup>30</sup>

By mid-1943, Poynter realized that Hollywood was having trouble finding acceptable villains:

Generally speaking, Hollywood feels it can only portray an Axis heavy or an American - and only an American who does not belong to a minority group. There is a virtual ban on any heavy being a Latin-American, a national of the United Nations or a neutral.<sup>31</sup>

It is easy to see why Japanese-American villains were less of a problem for OWI than Chinese ones. This is explored further in Chapter V with specific examples.

### **The "Special Bulletin" on Japanese-Americans**

The OWI Hollywood Office issued a "Special Bulletin" on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans dated October 24, 1942. That policy document (see Appendix B) is central to this paper and it is therefore discussed in detail. Only one piece of correspondence which apparently refers to this Special Bulletin has been found by the author. In an October 1, 1942 memo to

Mellett, Poynter referred to the fact that "the statement of Dillon S. Myer will be circulated to the movie industry." Myer had taken over from Milton Eisenhower as Director of the WRA. The October 24th policy statement contains the only known statement by WRA circulated to the film industry by OWI. Poynter was therefore probably referring to that policy statement. His comment may mean that the original intention of the Hollywood Office was to transmit the WRA comments verbatim to the film industry without elaboration. However when it was issued, the Special Bulletin included specific policy directives. It began by making it clear that the Hollywood Office was issuing the policy at the request of the War Relocation Authority. It then quoted at length a statement of the WRA. This created the impression that the Hollywood Office wanted to distance itself from the issue of the portrayal of Japanese-Americans in motion pictures.<sup>32</sup>

There was concern at the highest levels of OWI at that time about the image of Japanese-Americans. The Associate Director, Milton Eisenhower, had been the first Director of the WRA. OWI had just completed the film Japanese Relocation which Eisenhower introduces and narrates. On October 2, 1942, Eisenhower and OWI Director Elmer Davis had proposed to Roosevelt that Japanese-Americans be permitted to volunteer for service in the armed forces:

This matter is of great interest to OWI. Japanese propaganda to the Philippines, Burma, and elsewhere insists that this is a racial war. We can combat this effectively with counter propaganda only if our deeds permit us to tell the truth. Moreover, as citizens ourselves who believe deeply in the things for which we fight, we cannot help but be disturbed by the insistent public misunderstanding of the Nisei. . . .<sup>33</sup>



An all-Nisei combat team was formed in early 1943 and footage of them training became part of the film A Challenge to Democracy which is discussed in the next chapter. This obvious strong concern at the top of OWI may well have been responsible for the issuance of the Hollywood Office Special Bulletin. However, the structure of the Bulletin itself suggests that the Hollywood Office issued the Special Bulletin with reservations.

The Hollywood Office's attitude may have been grounded more in the policy itself than in any negative feeling toward the Japanese-Americans. In working with WRA, OWI had to contend with the split in WRA's policies:

The WRA walked a fine line in providing for evacuees' basic needs. On the one hand was their genuine sympathy for the excluded people. On the other was a well-founded apprehension that the press and the politicians would seek out and denounce any evidence that evacuees were being treated generously.<sup>34</sup>

It was difficult for WRA to avoid this problem given the fact that good treatment of the Issei must be widely shown to ensure the safety of American civilians held by the Japanese. WRA clearly had information problems. It is not surprising that the WRA statement, quoted in the Special Bulletin, reflected its ambivalent attitude toward the evacuated people.

Somehow, the Hollywood Office had to flesh out the details of a policy for the film industry which would mesh with the WRA statement. This was easier said than done. In this case, the details of the policy reveal a serious gap in logic. As mentioned earlier, the U.S. was denying the very rights for which it was fighting. To gloss over this fact, the Special Bulletin mixes together three different views of the Japanese-Americans: the dangerous view, the harmless view and

the good treatment view. Statements about the Japanese-Americans generally lean toward one of these views, but in this paper, classification of a statement as belonging to a particular view should not be taken to imply that there are clear dividing lines between the views. They can be explained briefly with some assistance from Lasswell's themes.

### **The Dangerous View**

The dangerous view was that the Japanese-Americans as a group constituted a significant danger and that this justified the infringement of their rights involved in holding them under guard. A significant number of them were scheming and treacherous and therefore the enemy. This view held that loyal Japanese-Americans admitted this to be true and therefore recognized the necessity for mass evacuation. The fatal flaw in the enemy's schemes was its failure to foresee that the U.S. government would undertake the evacuation and thus foil espionage and sabotage.

### **The Harmless View**

The harmless view was that the Japanese-Americans as a group were loyal and not dangerous. They were not the enemy. This view held that even though there was some unfortunate and unavoidable infringement of rights, the Japanese-Americans cooperated cheerfully. They obeyed the government without question and were therefore loyal. They accepted difficult conditions in the camps. Further, they were strong supporters of the U.S. and contributed significantly to the war effort against Japan. It was safe to release most of them from the camps.

### **The Good Treatment View**

Lasswell's notion is that war propaganda invests all affection with the homeland. This was the good treatment view which held that, guilty or not, the Japanese-Americans' rights had not been infringed after all. Their rights were being protected while the government cared for them. Living conditions in the camps were good. There was no cause for concern. The evacuees were contentedly running their own affairs. Further, the evacuees looked to their future in the camps as a challenge; they were pioneers out to conquer new frontiers.

### **The Objective of Each View**

The dangerous view was used to justify the evacuation. The harmless view was used to lessen racial prejudice and encourage resettlement of the Japanese-Americans in normal communities. The good treatment view was used to bury the whole issue and provide effective foreign propaganda to safeguard American civilians caught behind enemy lines. The contradictions involved in trying to pursue all three objectives in the Special Bulletin resulted in a very awkward document. The Japanese-Americans both were and were not the enemy. The rights of citizens had not been infringed; yet infringement was justified. Facilities in the camps were barely adequate, but treatment was excellent. Mellett and Poynter may have found the policy more than a little difficult to apply with any consistency.

In particular, the Special Bulletin quoted the WRA's explanation of the necessity for the evacuation:

The evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry from the Western states is not an indictment of the entire group as being disloyal, but rather an admission that the government found it impossible in a short time to segregate the disloyal from the loyal. Military officials point out that the concentrations near the West Coast of these people who look like our Japanese enemies, enormously complicated the defense of our Coastal areas; hence, in the interest of national safety, they were evacuated.<sup>35</sup>

This statement both created the impression that a significant portion of the group was dangerous and characterized the group by racial appearance. Presumably the Chinese in California could have also been mistaken for the enemy should there have been an invasion. Although genuinely trying to improve the image of the Japanese-Americans, the WRA was preoccupied with justifying the evacuation and often wound up damning the Japanese-Americans with faint praise. To say that the entire group was not disloyal implied that a significant portion was disloyal. As mentioned earlier, the Manual issued by the Hollywood Office had downplayed the idea that immigrants were dangerous. It could spread to include fear of German-Americans and fear of foreigners in general. The Manual had also cautioned against portrayal of the enemy in racial terms.

The Special Bulletin also quoted the Tolson Committee, the House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, which was holding hearings on the west coast when the decision to evacuate was made:

The curtailment of the rights and privileges of the American-born Japanese citizens of this country will furnish one of the gravest tests of democratic institutions in our history.<sup>36</sup>

While it did not openly criticize the evacuation as a mistake,

the Committee clearly had reservations about the infringement of rights which had taken place. It cautioned that the government should proceed with care. From the OWI standpoint, the Committee's position provided a helpful blend of the dangerous, harmless and good treatment points of view.<sup>37</sup>

After quoting others at some length, the Hollywood Office finally spoke for itself and presented four "points to watch" in the portrayal of Japanese-Americans. It began with the dangerous view:

- (1) Do not present them as martyrs. For the most part they recognized the necessity of mass evacuation and cooperated cheerfully.<sup>38</sup>

The first sentence presumably meant that pain and suffering on the part of Japanese-Americans should not be shown. They were guilty and the audience should not feel any deep sympathy for them. The second sentence was misleading. If it had said that the Japanese-Americans were to be portrayed as cooperating cheerfully even though their rights were being infringed, then there would have been the clear implication that they were loyal. However in this case, the reason for their cooperation was given as the recognition on their part that the mass evacuation was necessary: the dangerous view. The statement was an attempt to reconcile two contradictory objectives. In fact, most of the Japanese-Americans did not recognize the necessity for mass evacuation at all. They cooperated in the hope of demonstrating their loyalty.<sup>39</sup> They did not anticipate that their cooperation would be used to indicate an admission of guilt.

The second point changed direction:

- (2) Do not over-emphasize the disloyalty of the few.<sup>40</sup>

Most of them were not dangerous; they were loyal. This point showed the harmless view, but one must question the use of "over-emphasize" rather than "emphasize," if not "portray." It was the harmless view within limits.

The third point was neutral:

- (3) Show the evacuees as making the best of an unfortunate situation that grew out of military necessity.

This was a combination of the dangerous and harmless views. On the one hand, there was a military danger. On the other, they were cooperating with an unfortunate infringement of their rights and/or unfortunate conditions in the camps.

The fourth point gave the good treatment view:

- (4) Emphasize the responsibility of the American people to deal fairly with the Japanese-Americans now and after the war, so as to insure the preservation - for all peoples - of the democratic principles for which we are fighting.

The closing statement referred to "The Issues" as explained in the Hollywood Office Manual and in particular to the fight for individual human rights and dignity. It was carefully worded to advocate respect for the rights of the Japanese-Americans while implying that these rights had not been infringed already. It echoed the Tolan quotation's challenge for the future.

There was in fact little point in suggesting to the Hollywood studios that they present the good treatment view. Not only did such a story have little dramatic potential, but WRA itself was deeply suspicious of the studios and certainly

did not encourage them to visit the camps, as will be seen when the film Behind the Rising Sun is discussed in Chapter V. Presentation of the good treatment view fell to the films produced by OWI and WRA.

### **Summary**

The Special Bulletin reflected the ambiguous government policy on the Japanese-Americans. Davis and Eisenhower may have been interested in clearing up "public misunderstanding of the Nisei," but the Hollywood Office policy statement instead clouded the problem further by blending together three different views tied to three different objectives. Insofar as the Hollywood Office policy statement had to mesh with the WRA statement, Mellett and Poynter probably could not have come up with anything better. However, it is small wonder that thereafter those in charge of the Bureau of Motion Pictures and the Hollywood Office appeared reluctant to pursue the issue with any vigour when called upon to do so.

As the war dragged on, WRA felt that it had paid its dues and showed less inclination to defend the Army's evacuation of the Japanese-Americans. By mid-1944, the dangerous view was thoroughly discredited, at least within government (see Appendix E). As WRA pushed harder for the release of the Japanese-Americans, it became more sensitive to negative portrayals of them by Hollywood. By then, there was little interest in the problem within OWI. The Overseas Branch assumed a bureaucratic attitude by calling the issue a Domestic Branch problem while jealously guarding its exclusive right to influence film content through the Hollywood Office. This will be demonstrated when the film Betrayal from the East is

discussed in Chapter V. WRA therefore decided to bring its message directly to general audiences by producing its own film, A Challenge to Democracy and enlisting the support of OWI in its distribution. That film and the earlier OWI film, Japanese Relocation, are examined in the next chapter.



## Notes to Chapter III

- <sup>1</sup> Personal Justice Denied, p.18.
- <sup>2</sup> Koppes and Black, "What to Show the World," p. 91n, refer to the existence of a January 1944 version of the Manual although that document cannot now be found in the location mentioned by them. In correspondence with the author, Prof. Black mentioned that he is unable to locate his copy of the 1944 version. Should that document be discovered, it would be important to this paper insofar as it might reveal a change in emphasis from the 1943 version.
- <sup>3</sup> Manual 2, n. pag.
- <sup>4</sup> Manual 2, n. pag.
- <sup>5</sup> Manual 2, n. pag.
- <sup>6</sup> Grodzins, p. 267.
- <sup>7</sup> "Government Information Manual," April 29, 1943, Box 15, RG 208, NA, p. 4; hereafter cited as Manual 3.
- <sup>8</sup> The total increased to a peak of 120,000 under the control of the WRA. WRA, pp. 196-198; WRA, p. 16.
- <sup>9</sup> Winkler, p. 6.
- <sup>10</sup> Manual 3, p. 5.
- <sup>11</sup> David Jones, p. 383.
- <sup>12</sup> Dorothy B. Jones, "Quantitative Analysis of Motion Picture Content," Public Opinion Quarterly, 6 (1942), 420n; Harold D. Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How, (1936; rpt. Cleveland: Meridian-World Pub., 1958), p. 37.
- <sup>13</sup> Lasswell, Politics, pp. 37-39.
- <sup>14</sup> Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, Preface, Power and Society, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1950).
- <sup>15</sup> Manual 2, n. pag.
- <sup>16</sup> "Footprints of the Trojan Horse," Fact Sheet No. 4, [Fall 1942], Box 15, RG 208, NA, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>17</sup> Daniels, p. 50.
- <sup>18</sup> Daniels, pp. 50-103.
- <sup>19</sup> WRA, pp. 17-18.
- <sup>20</sup> WRA, p. 198.
- <sup>21</sup> Final Report, p. 34.

- 22 "The Japanese Problem," p. 1; Personal Justice Denied, p. 289.
- 23 "'They' Got the Blame," Fact Sheet No. 5, [Fall 1942], Box 15, RG 208, NA, pp. 1-2.
- 24 Dorothy B. Jones, The Portrayal of China and India on the American Screen, 1896-1955 (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T., 1955); Sauberli Interview, pp. 360-361.
- 25 Manual 3, p. 8.
- 26 WRA, pp. 18-19.
- 27 Dorothy Jones, The Portrayal of China, p. 40.
- 28 Manual 2, n. pag.; Manual 3, p. 10.
- 29 tenBroek et al, pp. 22-28; Personal Justice Denied, p. 37.
- 30 Dorothy Jones, The Portrayal of China, p. 28; Lingeman, pp. 180-181; "How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs," Time, December 22, 1941, p. 33.
- 31 Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, May 17, 1943, Box 16, Mellett Papers, F.D.R. Library, p. 6.
- 32 Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, October 1, 1942, Box 3518, RG 208, NA; "Special Bulletin," October 24, 1942, Box 15, RG 208, NA, p. 1.
- 33 Elmer Davis, Memo to the President, October 2, 1942, RG 407, NA, as quoted in Personal Justice Denied, p. 189.
- 34 Personal Justice Denied, p. 162.
- 35 "Special Bulletin," pp. 1-2.
- 36 "Special Bulletin," p. 2.
- 37 Personal Justice Denied, p. 87.
- 38 "Special Bulletin," p. 3.
- 39 Personal Justice Denied, p. 194.
- 40 "Special Bulletin," p. 3; The third and fourth points are from the same source.

## Chapter IV

### The Government Films on Japanese-Americans

In addition to several films which reflect indirectly on Japanese-Americans through derogatory comments on the character of Japanese civilians in Japan (see Appendix C), the government made two films for general release to the population specifically on the evacuation of the Japanese-Americans: Japanese Relocation in 1942 and A Challenge to Democracy in 1944. This chapter analyzes the content of these two films according to the three views of the Japanese-Americans which were outlined in the last chapter. It should be kept in mind that there are not clear dividing lines between the views and that classifications are intended to show conflicting tendencies. This chapter also compares the two films to one another to show the change in emphasis which occurred as the war progressed.

#### Japanese Relocation

This film was begun at the suggestion of Milton Eisenhower in March 1942, before OWI was created. Documentation on the production and a transcript of the soundtrack are reproduced in Appendix D. The film was taken over by OWI in July 1942 and was completed in October 1942 at about the time that the Hollywood Office released the Special Bulletin on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans. The script of the film and the Special Bulletin are remarkably similar in structure. The Special Bulletin actually summarizes the three conflicting views of the evacuees presented in Japanese Relocation. An examination of the documentation on the production of the film suggests that on at least two occasions,

a change was made in the views to be presented by the film. The original idea was to present the dangerous and harmless views. When the decision was made to begin production, only the dangerous view was mentioned as an objective. When editing began, this was changed again to the final difficult formula of presenting all three views in one film.

When WRA was created by President Roosevelt on March 18th, 1942, Eisenhower considered the situation. He was alarmed to discover that Japanese-Americans, leaving California voluntarily, had encountered outright hostility in states to the east of California, including armed posses at the Nevada border. Eisenhower therefore reluctantly agreed to the creation of camps, but with the idea that a large number of evacuees would be moved directly into private employment in the intermountain states, in particular to help with the sugar beet crop. In view of the racial hostility in those states, an information campaign would be necessary to convince their citizens both that the evacuation was necessary (the dangerous view) and that the evacuees could be safely put to work in their areas (the harmless view). On March 29, 1942, Eisenhower wrote to Archibald MacLeish, Director of OFF, asking for assistance in a program to create a positive image of both the evacuation and the evacuees. It seems likely that Eisenhower communicated with Lowell Mellett at about the same time to ask for a film on the same subject since a week later Arch Mercey was trying to set up a meeting with Eisenhower to discuss his request for the filming of the evacuation. However before the meeting could be held, Eisenhower ran into more trouble.<sup>1</sup>

On April 7th, Eisenhower met in Salt Lake City with the

governors, or their representatives, of ten western states. He explained his plan for private employment of the evacuees in the intermountain states and asked for cooperation, especially in the campaign to calm public opinion in their states. The governors were "angry and hostile." One promised physical violence against any Japanese who were brought into his state. Eisenhower later described it as "probably the most frustrating experience I ever had."<sup>2</sup> He quickly decided to put his private employment plan on the back burner temporarily and concentrate instead on finding sites for a large number of camps.

If Japanese Relocation was now a low priority for Eisenhower, the ball was nevertheless still rolling to film the evacuation. By April 28th, Mercey had met with John Bird, WRA Director of Information, and Guy Bolte, a film director for Robert Horton's DOI, and on that date Mercey wrote to Horton to urge that the filming be undertaken immediately. They were keen on the idea of a film and in the memo, they came up with three reasons for filming the evacuation:

1. Record documentation for the Government in the largest relocation program in history.
2. Use of this footage for both theatrical and non-theatrical audiences to give the public a real understanding of the problem and what is being done about it.
3. Acquisition of footage for use by the Donovan office and the Rockefeller office in foreign propaganda. We have been specifically advised by both of these offices that they would be interested in using the footage.<sup>3</sup>

The first objective does not involve a finished film, only "documentation." WRA officials were preoccupied at that time with the enormous logistical problems of setting up the

camps and saw the challenge of the project as a whole. The harmless view had been set aside. They were doing the impossible and they wanted the feat recorded for posterity. Eisenhower was putting a large agency together overnight and he later admitted that he had "spent little time pondering the moral implications of the President's decision" to evacuate the Japanese-Americans.<sup>4</sup>

The second objective listed in Mercey's memo is the making of the film which became Japanese Relocation. The emphasis is on the west coast Japanese-American "problem" which led to the evacuation. This is the sabotage threat which is emphasized in the dangerous view. Those involved in planning the actual film production apparently put the harmless view of the evacuees on the back burner along with the private employment objective and decided to concentrate on the dangerous view.

The third objective of the filming was to supply footage to the two men who were responsible for foreign propaganda at that time: Nelson Rockefeller (Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs) and Col. William Donovan (Coordinator of Information). Insofar as the good treatment view was the response to a foreign policy problem, it would be their responsibility to present it by making a film or films of their own. That didn't happen, perhaps in part because Donovan's foreign propaganda arm, FIS, was taken over by OWI in July.

Upon receipt of Mercey's memo, Horton approved the project and by mid-June shooting was completed. The Army and the War Department insisted on seeing all footage before editing began. At this point, Horton's DOI was absorbed into

the new OWI along with Donovan's FIS. The film became the responsibility of Sam Spewack in the New York Office of the Domestic Bureau of Motion Pictures. By late July, the footage had been shown to Milton Eisenhower, by then at OWI, and to WRA officials including Morril M. Tozier who was to take quite an interest in the portrayal of Japanese-Americans on the screen.<sup>5</sup>

At this point, there was apparently another change in purpose. It was decided to wait until September in order to add more footage of the evacuees once they were settled more comfortably in the camps. Tozier suggested that they also get some shots of the abandoned farms on the west coast and of the agricultural projects being undertaken in the camps. This extra footage would not have been required unless it had now been decided to emphasize the good treatment and harmless views equally with the dangerous view. In fact the situation was changing. The Battle of Midway in June had turned the tide of war in the Pacific in favour of the U.S. and the sugar beet producers had applied sufficient pressure for a group of evacuees to be released temporarily to help with the harvest. It may be that when Milton Eisenhower had a chance to view the footage and discuss the film at length with the filmmakers, he brought them back to his original idea of a film which would create a positive image of both the evacuees and the evacuation. His narration of the finished film indicates that he was closely associated with what it has to say. OWI's responsibility for foreign propaganda added the good treatment view to create the difficult task for Japanese Relocation of reconciling the three views of the Japanese-Americans.<sup>6</sup>

The film itself begins with titles which give an overview

and then introduce Milton Eisenhower. The author's transcript of the titles and narration appear in Appendix D together with an analysis which shows the correspondence with each of the three views of the Japanese-Americans. The accompanying images are also described where the narration does not sufficiently convey the impression which the film creates. The opening titles mention casually that "it became necessary to transfer several thousand Japanese residents from the Pacific coast to points in the American interior." It is then left to Eisenhower to explain that the "transfer" was compulsory, that "several" meant more than one hundred, and that two-thirds of the "Japanese residents" were American citizens.

Eisenhower's narration is the basic vehicle for the film's message. The narration neatly draws conclusions for the audience and blends the three views together so that inconsistencies are not readily apparent. This is a classic device of the propaganda film:

Comments can be made, explanations offered and conclusions drawn, insuring that the ambivalences of reality do not allow the audience to stray into political confusion.<sup>7</sup>

The film is well put together. Transitions are smooth and the unobtrusive use of music carries the viewer through its nine minutes with little inclination to critically examine what is being said. About 40% of the film is spent on the good treatment view with the dangerous and harmless views taking up about 30% each. The use of Eisenhower in his office at the beginning of the film provides a tone of authority and neatly gets around the lack of footage to cover the dangerous view of the Japanese-Americans.



Eisenhower begins by explaining that some of the Japanese-Americans were dangerous and "no one knew what would happen" among the rest in the event of an invasion. The implication is that in addition to the active disloyalty of the minority, there was a strong suspicion of passive disloyalty among the majority which would manifest itself during an invasion. This suspicion is reinforced by referring to them as "Japanese." Two-thirds of the references use this term rather than "Japanese-Americans" or "persons of Japanese ancestry." When Eisenhower describes the "problems of sabotage and espionage," the images show oil fields, factories and other possible sites for those activities, but without showing any Japanese-Americans in the vicinity, no doubt because they had already been evacuated.

It is only when the film gets to the harmless and good treatment views that the Japanese-Americans make their first appearance. They are invariably shown in long lines or large groups. No Japanese-American is identified by name nor is any information given about one individual or family. This impersonal treatment leaves the Japanese-Americans at a distance. The audience does not identify with them. Thus the harmless and good treatment views are presented unemotionally through the narration without any intimacy in the accompanying images.

In the harmless view segments, the Japanese-Americans "cheerfully" handle paperwork, cooperate "wholeheartedly" and make sacrifices "in behalf of America's war effort." They further the war effort by making camouflage nets and growing guayule for rubber. There are "americanization classes" which

presumably remove any negative influences of the Japanese culture. Toward the end of the film, the private employment objective is introduced with the expressed hope that all will soon be engaged in "productive work."

The good treatment view is first presented in reference to the evacuation by the Army which is characterized as "planned and protected." The need for protection from the racial prejudice of fellow Americans is not explained. The assistance of government agencies is demonstrated by showing officials talking to evacuees. This is a good example of the narration drawing the desired conclusion for the viewer. The officials are not shown actually caring for the evacuees' property in any way. In fact very little was done by government officials in this regard.

Life in the camps is shown at length. The idea was to portray the camps as small American towns with stores, churches, schools and newspapers. There is "plenty of healthful, nourishing food for all." However the guards and barbed wire are nowhere to be seen.

The challenge for the future is introduced by referring to the camps as "pioneer communities." One can almost imagine the Japanese-Americans arriving by wagon train after numerous romantic adventures in the wild west. The land is "raw" and "untamed, but full of opportunity." By the end of the film, the narration is looking forward to the day "when the raw lands of the desert turn green."

The conclusion of the film darts quickly from one view to another. The loyal will be free. The disloyal will have left for good. The Axis powers will treat American prisoners well.

The appeal is made on the emotional level through the skilful use of film technique. The film gathers momentum. The narration becomes lyrical. It implies that there is a religious blessing on the evacuation:

We are protecting ourselves without violating the principles of Christian decency. We won't change this fundamental decency no matter what our enemies do.

The camera pans across a majestic chain of snow-capped mountains, invoking the wonders of nature. Nestled at the foot of the mountains sits the camp with its rows of barracks, as if basking in the glow of divine approval.

### A Challenge to Democracy

When this film was made in 1944, the situation had changed a great deal from 1942. OWI had come to regard the Japanese-Americans as a Domestic Branch problem and that Branch had stopped making films after the 1943 budget cut. However WRA had developed its own filmmaking capability. Its Photographic Unit, operating out of WRA's Denver Office, had made two short films in late 1943 for showing in the camps.<sup>8</sup>

The Way Ahead shows a number of Japanese-Americans who have left the camps to take jobs in private industry or agriculture. An overview of 1943 society is given along with specific information for those resettling such as how the rationing system works. It concludes with shots of a prosperous Japanese-American family in their suburban home. Life in the camps encouraged a passive attitude and this film was intended to motivate evacuees to seek resettlement at the earliest opportunity. Go for Broke shows the Japanese-American Combat Team training at Camp Shelby in Mississippi. The film

was designed to restore some of the self-respect and pride which had been seriously injured by the evacuation. These two films were first shown in the camps in December 1943.<sup>9</sup>

Early in 1944, WRA put together A Challenge to Democracy primarily to present the harmless view to the general public to prepare them for the reintegration of the Japanese-Americans into normal communities. It was produced in colour and also differed from Japanese Relocation in that its prime objective was clear and did not change during production. A Challenge to Democracy shows life in the camps, then uses the individual stories of resettled evacuees from The Way Ahead, and finishes with footage of the Combat Team from Go for Broke.

Distribution to the general public required OWI approval and this was secured. The opening titles of the film acknowledge OWI cooperation. Ideally, WRA officials wanted a theatrical release for the film. In a June 6, 1944 letter (see Appendix H), WRA Information Specialist Pat Frayne notes in passing that during a visit to the RKO studios he discussed A Challenge to Democracy. It was suggested to him that WRA "find the proper approach to Harry Warner of Warner Brothers and it would be possible to present that picture in many theatres."<sup>10</sup> Normally, theatrical release of government films would be arranged by OWI's Domestic Motion Picture Bureau through their agreement with the War Activities Committee. Despite OWI approval of the film, it was not released theatrically. This may have been related to the fact that the Japanese-Americans were a major policy problem at that time.

WRA Director Dillon Myer had been pressuring Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, the man responsible for WRA to the

Cabinet, to adopt a program to resettle the evacuees and close most of the camps. This pressure resulted in top level correspondence (see Appendix E). In writing to Roosevelt on June 2, 1944, Ickes pointed out, among other things, that the Japanese-Americans posed no military risk and that their detention was hampering efforts to secure better treatment for Americans held by the Japanese. He concluded:

I will not comment at this time on the justification or lack thereof for the original evacuation order. But I do say that the continued retention of these innocent people in the relocation centers would be a blot upon the history of this country.<sup>11</sup>

After confirming that there were no military risks, Roosevelt expressed concern about public opinion in California and suggested that resettlement proceed slowly. There was a presidential election coming up in November 1944. In reply to Roosevelt on June 16, 1944, Secretary of State Cordell Hull concurred with his go slow policy, but underlined the foreign policy problem:

As long as these people remain in the custody of the Federal Government, therefore, any incidents concerning them are more likely to give rise to protests from the Japanese Government and to the possibility of retaliation and reprisals than if the people concerned are at liberty.<sup>12</sup>

Although the dangerous view had been clearly discredited within government, there was still a definite need for both the good treatment and harmless views.

Insofar as A Challenge to Democracy presents the harmless and good treatment views, OWI was content to see it distributed non-theatrically. The WRA effort to have it seen as widely as possible was apparently part of an information campaign to

prepare the general public for the return of Japanese-Americans to normal communities. On June 19, 1944, Dillon Myer wrote to OWI Director Elmer Davis (see Appendix E) to request assistance with "a radio and motion picture campaign of limited scope in the near future on WRA activities and problems." On June 23rd, Davis agreed to cooperate by making available "information facilities."<sup>13</sup> Although no documentation has been found on such a campaign, presumably A Challenge to Democracy was to be the motion picture part of it. The lack of documentation makes it impossible to confirm that WRA officials asked OWI to arrange for the theatrical distribution of the film and that OWI refused to do so. However the circumstantial evidence presented here suggests that this is what happened, most likely on a verbal basis. Unfortunately, the film lacks professional polish and would have required major work to prepare it for a theatrical release. Given Roosevelt's go slow policy, OWI apparently didn't think it was worth the effort.

The author's transcript of the narration appears in Appendix E. Although its message would be best conveyed in under 10 minutes, the film runs 18 minutes, twice as long as Japanese Relocation. Much of the material is repetitive and the narrator barely pauses for breath in his catalogue of every detail. Music isn't used except at the beginning and end.

The one page summary of the film which WRA prepared for its campaign (see Appendix E) mentioned the good treatment view, but concentrated on WRA's first priority, the harmless view. It was made clear that the "challenge" in the film's title referred to the reintegration of the evacuees "into the normal stream of American life."<sup>14</sup> The summary did not refer to

the dangerous view at all.

The film itself barely mentions the dangerous view in passing. It vaguely notes that the evacuation "was ordered to reduce a military hazard at a time when danger of invasion was great." However, it quickly adds that even those born in Japan "are not under suspicion." The film later puts the dangerous view in doubt by arguing for the release of the Japanese-Americans "so there can be no question of the constitutionality of any part of the action taken by the government to meet the dangers of war, so no law-abiding American need to fear for his own freedom." In effect, it admits that the evacuation may have been an infringement of constitutional rights. This admission eliminates much of the contradictory and confused reasoning which pervades Japanese Relocation. The harmless and good treatment views which remain in A Challenge to Democracy conflict with one another on only one major point.

One aspect of the harmless view was that the evacuees loyally accepted difficult conditions in the camps. On the other hand, the good treatment view showed that facilities were adequate. With one exception, the film segregates the two views by using them with different aspects of life in the camps. The good treatment view is applied to education, self-government, cooperative enterprises and the attitude of WRA. The harmless view is applied to housing, food production, recreation and wages. Health care is split between the two views by saying that it is "about like that of any other American community in wartime, barely adequate."

The good treatment view in A Challenge to Democracy

usually equates facilities in the camps with those in any town of the same size, but WRA only devotes about 20% of the film to the good treatment view while spending about 80% of the film on its prime interest, the harmless view. The physical facilities of the "pioneer communities," which were only touched on in Japanese Relocation, are here examined in painstaking detail and made a part of the harmless view rather than the good treatment view. The housing is found to be "barren" and "unattractive." The guards and barbed wire, which were not shown before, are here very much in evidence. "Plenty of healthful, nourishing food for all" becomes "nourishing, but simple" food costing less than 45 cents per person per day and largely produced by the evacuees themselves. The film goes as far as it can without abandoning the good treatment view. There is a careful choice of words. "Home life is disrupted. Eating, living and working conditions are abnormal. Training of children is difficult." Wages are low. Despite all that, the evacuees are model Americans. There is little crime. The evacuees provide their own baseball equipment and boy scout uniforms. They have a Beauty Queen and harvest sugar beets to relieve the nation's shortage of sugar.

The harmless view portrays the evacuees far more sympathetically than in Japanese Relocation. The film begins by calling them "the unwounded casualties of war." The term "Japanese" is never used to refer to the entire group. Their hard work and ingenuity are credited for the great success in cultivating desert lands. They are shown to be both cultured and educated. There are artists and doctors. Sunday church services are mentioned. One can infer that any blessings are



on the evacuees rather than the evacuation. Whereas the evacuees had only been shown impersonally in groups in Japanese Relocation, they are here seen as individuals. A long sequence on those who have resettled outside the camps has been lifted intact from The Way Ahead, the WRA film which was shown in the camps. The narration has been changed slightly to accommodate a general audience. The wish of the lady who sews flags to have one of them "carried in triumph down the streets of Tokyo," gets a big play although it had somehow been omitted from the earlier film. The film concludes with shots of the Japanese-American Combat Team from Go for Broke. Music fades in and builds to a climax as they march by in formation, saluting the flag.

A Challenge to Democracy does have an ending calculated to impel the average citizen to invite a Japanese-American home for dinner. The potential for an effective propaganda film is definitely there. OWI's approval of the film on the one hand and failure to arrange for it to be edited for theatrical release on the other, indicate that the change in policy on how to portray the Japanese-Americans was countered by the attitude that the problem was no longer an important issue. The change in OWI attitude from 1942 to 1944 will be even more apparent when its record of influencing the features produced by the Hollywood studios is examined in the next chapter.

## Notes for Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> WRA, pp. 25-27; Milton S. Eisenhower, The President is Calling, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), p. 117; WRA, p. 28; Em. Rowalp, Telegram to Mercey, April 6, 1942, Box 1492, RG 208, NA.

<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> Arch Mercey, Memo to Horton, April 28, 1942, Box 1492, RG 208, NA.

<sup>4</sup> Eisenhower, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> This information is derived from the following correspondence: George Gercke, Telegram to Martin, May 1, 1942; Col. W.M. Wright, Jr., Letter to Horton, June 11, 1942; George Gercke, Letter to Col. Wright, June 17, 1942; George Gercke, Letter to Eisenhower, June 17, 1942; Eleanor Herring, Memo to Spewack, July 31, 1942; all in Box 1492, RG 208, NA.

<sup>6</sup> Herring Memo; WRA, p. 32; Despite the film's emphasis on the good treatment view, there is no record of OWI distributing Japanese Relocation abroad.

<sup>7</sup> Furhammar and Isaksson, p. 162.

<sup>8</sup> WRA, "Semi-Annual Report: July 1 to December 31, 1943," Box 132, RG 210, NA, pp. 81-82; All WRA films acknowledge the assistance of the Office of Strategic Services. The author has not discovered any documentation to explain the exact nature of this assistance. WRA shot the films. It may be that OSS assisted in the editing by providing facilities and/or advice.

<sup>9</sup> These films are located in the Motion Picture, Sound and Video Archives, National Archives, Washington; The Way Ahead, 16 minutes, colour, Film No. 210.1; Go for Broke, 12 minutes, black & white, Film No. 210.4.

<sup>10</sup> Pat Frayne, Letter to Tozier, June 16, 1944, Box 251, RG 208, NA, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Dillon Myer, Letter to the Secretary of War, March 11, 1943; Harold Ickes, Letter to the President, June 2, 1944; both in Official File 4849, F.D.R. Library.

<sup>12</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, Memo to the Under Secretary of State, June 8, 1944; E.A. Stettinius, Jr., Memo to the President, June 9, 1944; Franklin D. Roosevelt, Memo to the Acting Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Interior, June 12, 1944; Cordell Hull, Memo to the President, June 16, 1944; all in Official File 4849, F.D.R. Library.

<sup>13</sup> Dillon Myer, Letter to Davis, June 19, 1944; Elmer Davis, Letter to Myer, June 23, 1944; both in Box 559, RG 208, NA; The OWI contact person was Herbert Little, Deputy Director of the Domestic Branch for Labor and Civilian Welfare. A file was opened in the office of Natalie Davison, OWI's Program

Manager for Homefront Campaigns, but no documentation on such a campaign could be found during a brief search of OWI and WRA records.

<sup>14</sup> WRA, "A Challenge to Democracy," n.d., Box 115, RG 210, NA.

## Chapter V

### The Hollywood Films on Japanese-Americans

The Hollywood Office efforts to influence film content produced voluminous files which include script reviews, film reviews and correspondence with the studios. This chapter relies on those files to demonstrate what the OWI attitude was and how it changed during the war. Initial complaints by OWI reviewers at the portrayal of Japanese-Americans resulted in some protests to the studios, but within definite limits. One possible explanation for the limits, offered earlier in this paper, is that the confused and contradictory policy positions required the simultaneous holding of three different views.

The Hollywood studios concentrated quite naturally on the dangerous view since it was the only one which offered the sort of dramatic potential which they sought. OWI support of that view at the beginning of the war precluded strenuous protest. However OWI reviewers felt that a film went too far if it extended the dangerous view to include all Japanese or to suggest a widespread Japanese-American plot on the west coast. An individual Japanese-American might be disloyal, but the enemy was not to be identified by some racial characteristic. OWI supervisory staff were generally unwilling to pursue the reviewers' protests very far. Where a studio showed any resistance to a softening of its dangerous view, OWI simply recommended the insertion of token statements to indicate that there was also a harmless view. As far as the good treatment view was concerned, OWI generally left it to government films since WRA was reluctant to permit the Hollywood studios to visit the relocation camps. By the time the dangerous view was

quietly dropped from government policy in mid-1944, the Japanese-American issue had a very low priority in the Hollywood Office. Although it had far more influence with the studios by then, the Hollywood Office did little to eliminate the dangerous view from Hollywood films produced late in the war.

In examining OWI influence on the Hollywood films, attention is focussed on Little Tokyo, U.S.A., produced in 1942, and Betrayal from the East, produced in 1944. WRA exerted considerable pressure on OWI to force changes in both films, but there was a marked difference in OWI's reaction to that pressure. The dangerous view of the Japanese-Americans is the central theme of both films. To reinforce that view, the films have a prologue and an epilogue which address the audience directly. These serve instead of a narration to ensure that the films' message is clear and authoritative. They are therefore quoted in full and discussed. In addition to these two films, a number of other films are considered which touch on the Japanese-Americans in some way. Some of these portray Japanese as racial stereotypes with the inference that everyone of Japanese ancestry will revert to type if given the opportunity. Those films which were not reviewed by the Hollywood Office are only mentioned briefly.

### **The Early Spy Films**

The "stab in the back" at Pearl Harbor opened endless possibilities for films to speculate on how the Japanese managed to slip through American defenses. Some of these were released before the Hollywood Office reviews began. Twentieth Century-Fox was first out of the blocks with Secret Agent of

Japan (Directed by Irving Pichel; With Preston Foster and Lynn Bari), released in late March 1942. Although espionage is credited for the success of the Pearl Harbor attack, the film does not take place in the United States. Preston Foster plays Ray Bonnell who owns a cafe in Shanghai and is drawn into plots and counter-plots.<sup>1</sup>

One month later, OFF's Bureau of Intelligence began reviewing films and discovered that Hollywood was churning out spy films as quickly as possible. Generally, BOI found these films to be totally unrealistic. It later reported:

Comparing the realities of the times with the representation of our enemies in the movies we find their film actions incredible and untrue, their figures wooden, the picture false.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the shortage of Chinese actors to portray Japanese, these films often used Caucasians whose Oriental makeup was less than convincing.

Monogram Pictures released two films in May 1942. Black Dragons (Directed by William Nigh; With Bela Lugosi and Clayton Moore) involves Japanese agents whose features are altered by a German plastic surgeon so that they can operate freely without arousing suspicion. The German and the Japanese wind up killing each other. In fact, there really was a Black Dragon Society, but it was one of the less important super-patriotic Japanese groups on the west coast. It had been thoroughly infiltrated by the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) and was therefore incapable of significant espionage or sabotage.<sup>3</sup> However Hollywood filmmakers fell in love with its name and worked it into most of the Japanese spy films in one form or another. Let's Get Tough (Directed by Wallace Fox) stars the

Dead End Kids who uncover and smash a Japanese spy ring, the Black Dragon Society of course. Universal Pictures released a serial, Junior G-Men of the Air (Directed by Ray Taylor and Lewis D. Collins), in June 1942. Some American boys capture Japanese spies who are trying to obtain an aviation device which the boys have invented. Once again, the Black Dragon is the villain. In discussing this film and Little Tokyo, U.S.A., BOI points out that the "Japanese agents are more implacable and stern than their Nazi counterparts. They are extremely scornful of the United States."<sup>4</sup>

### Little Tokyo, U.S.A.

Twentieth-Century-Fox Film Corporation

Producer: Bryan Foy

Director: Otto Brower

With: Preston Foster (Michael Steele), Brenda Joyce (Maris Hanover), Harold Huber (Takimura), Don Douglas (Hendricks) and J. Farrell MacDonald (Captain Wade).

By July 1942, the Hollywood Office was reviewing films and Little Tokyo, U.S.A. became one of the first to be altered at OWI request. The review and correspondence are reproduced in Appendix F.

A narrator delivers the prologue to the film which would have us believe that it is a documentary:

[Shows a parcel addressed to "Y. Takimoto, Nippon Nursery, Los Angeles, California"]

For more than a decade, Japanese mass espionage was carried on in the United States and her territorial outposts while a complacent America literally slept at the switch.

[Shows Japanese taking pictures of refineries, harbors, airports]

In the Philippines, in Hawaii, and on our own Pacific coast, there toiled a vast army of volunteer spies, steeped in the traditions of their homeland: Shintoists, blind worshippers of their Emperor, all-out believers in Kipling's immortal lines: "East

is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet."

This film document is presented as a reminder to a nation which until December 7, 1941, was lulled into a false sense of security by the mouthings of self-styled patriots whose beguiling theme was: "It can't happen here."<sup>5</sup>

As the review points out, the film does not tell the truth. The producers had proudly revealed that their information came from the files of the Dies Committee. Congressman Martin Dies of Texas was chairman of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities and claimed to have evidence of widespread espionage by Japanese-Americans directed by diplomats in the Japanese consulates. In fact a small number of Issei were suspected of disloyalty, but they had been kept under surveillance and were arrested immediately after Pearl Harbor. None of the Nisei, American citizens by birth, were even suspected of disloyalty. Japanese diplomats were known to be engaged in espionage, but FBI experience indicated that they used Occidentals to obtain information. The two agencies responsible for keeping tabs on the Japanese, FBI and ONI, were well-informed and made it clear to the government that there had never been any evidence of a "vast army of volunteer spies." Insofar as there had been a great deal of misinformation and alarm in the press, spread by Dies among others, Twentieth Century-Fox could be partly excused for running off in the wrong direction. The OWI reviewers knew that there had never been any evidence of a widespread plot and that the few who posed a threat had been promptly interned. The Hollywood Office review angrily rejected the film's portrayal of the Japanese-American community as "a single, unified body which works together at all times for itself and against America."<sup>6</sup>



The plot begins with Takimura (Harold Huber in Oriental makeup), a Nisei and therefore an American citizen, receiving his orders in Tokyo for coordination of espionage and sabotage in California. As proof of his authority, he is given a ring bearing the Black Dragon symbol and he promises to "wear it with honor." Back in Los Angeles, he gathers the leaders of the Japanese-American community together and puts them to work. Detective Lieutenant Michael Steele (Preston Foster) happens by as Takimura's meeting breaks up and he immediately becomes suspicious. Steele enlists the aid of Oshima, the only loyal Japanese-American in the film, to help him find out what is going on. Someone promptly chops off Oshima's head. As the Hollywood Office review points out, "the penalty for loyalty to the U.S. is swift, certain, and mortal."<sup>7</sup>

Steele's girlfriend, Maris Hanover (Brenda Joyce), is a radio commentator who preaches tolerance for Japanese-Americans while blissfully unaware that her boss, Hendricks (Don Douglas), is secretly a Nazi in league with Takimura. Steele argues with her. "You keep right on spreading sweetness and light, telling the public there's nothing to fear while these half-pint connivers are getting all set to tear us apart." He is determined to get evidence of the plot and is not too troubled about what methods he uses to obtain it. A suspicious couple, Mr. and Mrs. Okuna, have moved into Oshima's home and refuse to let Steele look around without a search warrant. As the review points out, the couple are shown to be taking unfair advantage of their constitutional rights. The obvious conclusion is that they deserve to lose them. A few scenes later, Steele searches another home without a warrant despite

protests from Hanover. The review comments:

This is not even one step removed from Gestapo methods; yet the material is presented in such a way that the audience is expected to be moved to mild cheers. Did somebody mention that we are presumably fighting for the preservation of the Bill of Rights?<sup>8</sup>

The Japanese-Americans are influential enough to have Steele's superior, Captain Wade (J. Farrell MacDonald), transfer him to another beat. Like Hanover, Wade believes that the Japanese-Americans are peaceful and harmless.

Takimura is delighted and instructs his radio operator:

Send word through our relay stations to assure Tokyo that protests registered by powerful Japanese societies and certain sympathetic American interests will prevent any mass evacuation. We shall be here, ready to assist when our military forces invade the United States.

This is the dangerous view at its most extreme.

Fortunately Steele gets the goods on Takimura and Hendricks and the plot is foiled:

[As Captain Wade and the police arrive, Steele grabs Takimura's gun and then punches him in the jaw.]

**Steele:** That's for Pearl Harbor, you slant-eyed..

**Captain Wade:** Nice punching Mike. You delivered them with the confessions just like you promised you would. Maybe I ought to bop this squarehead, huh?

**Steele:** What can you lose?

**Captain Wade:** I think I will.

[Captain Wade slugs Hendricks. Music fades in and footage of the Japanese-Americans being evacuated begins.]

The review protests this further abuse of constitutional rights. "Physical beating up of people one doesn't like is

another Gestapo tactic; and we call the Nazis inhuman because they beat up anti-Nazis who cannot fight back." The Hollywood Office reviewers could not reconcile this behaviour with the issues of the war as outlined in the Manual. "The misuse of democratic privilege by some does not give anyone, especially the makers of a picture which will be seen by millions, the right to encourage the flouting of the democratic values for which we are fighting."<sup>9</sup>

The lengthy footage of the actual evacuation is followed by an epilogue delivered by Hanover as she broadcasts from an evacuation assembly point with Steele at her side:

**Hanover:** And so in the interests of national safety, all Japanese, whether citizens or not, are being evacuated from strategic military zones on the Pacific coast. Unfortunately in time of war, the loyal must suffer inconvenience with the disloyal.

[Steele shows her something.]

**Steele:** Don't forget this.

[Music (God Save the King) begins]

**Hanover:** America's attitude toward this whole evacuation can best be summed up, I believe, by the last four lines of a poem by Robert Nathan entitled Watch, America:

God who gave our fathers freedom,  
God who made our fathers brave,  
What they built with love and anguish,  
Let our children watch and save.

Be vigilant, America!

The last line of the poem is misquoted. It actually reads "their children" rather than "our children."<sup>10</sup> This could have been accidental or "our children" may have been substituted to give a more emotional pull to Hanover's appeal. The review comments that "the picture closes to the strains of the

Invitation to the Witch Hunt."<sup>11</sup> That is true, but it also closes to the strains of the British national anthem, presumably chosen because it sounds patriotic without being obvious. The tone of the final scene strikes the same chord as OWI's later contribution, Japanese Relocation, with its implied divine blessing on the evacuation.

Unlike the OWI film, Little Tokyo, U.S.A. gives only the dangerous view of the Japanese-Americans. This was apparently just fine with the Army. Colonel Wright was quick to approve the script submitted by Twentieth Century-Fox so that the studio could shoot its own footage of the evacuation. The Censor did not mind either and promptly approved the film for export before OWI could comment.<sup>12</sup>

OWI reviewers were less enthusiastic about the fact that the film presents only the dangerous view:

[R]abidly unbalanced treatment of Japanese-American citizens makes it an extremely dangerous picture. One such film can open the floodgates of prejudice, can encourage the concoction of many more of the same type of film, and can render the post-war re-absorption of Japanese-Americans an almost insuperable problem.<sup>13</sup>

The reviewers protested loudly that the film's portrayal of Japanese-Americans and the authorities' treatment of them contravened the Manual. If release of the film could not be prevented, they recommended making major changes although these were not spelled out.

It should be kept in mind that the Special Bulletin on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans had not yet been issued. In passing on the review to Mellett, Poynter made it clear that he did not object to the film "quite as passionately" as the

reviewers did. He felt that it could be "largely cured" by changing the prologue and epilogue and deleting a few references in between.<sup>14</sup> When Poynter suggested making changes to Colonel Jason Joy at Twentieth Century-Fox, Joy initially refused. Mellett then suggested that the picture "would not be very harmful" if references to loyal Japanese-Americans could be inserted in three scenes: Takimura's meeting with the leaders upon his return from Tokyo, Captain Wade's meeting with Steele when the latter is transferred, and Hanover's last speech in the epilogue.<sup>15</sup> Given the extreme nature of the film and the reviewers' recommendation for extensive changes, the alterations proposed by Poynter and Mellett were mild. On the one hand, the film was complete and approved for export. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter II, this film helped to convince Mellett that OWI should review films at the script stage. On the other hand, OWI was capable of much stronger protest when it felt that the release of a film was a major evil.<sup>16</sup> The minor changes suggested by Poynter and Mellett for Little Tokyo, U.S.A. indicate that they were not inclined to push for equal emphasis on the dangerous and harmless views. Where the Japanese-Americans were concerned, contraventions of the Manual could be balanced by a few token references to the harmless view. They recognized that there was a natural inclination for people to lean heavily toward one view or the other. The reviewers leaned one way; Twentieth Century-Fox the other.

Twentieth Century-Fox agreed to follow two of Mellett's suggestions. A shot was inserted of Takimura saying, "There are many Japanese here in California known to be loyal to the United States. They are not to be trusted." In transferring

Steele, Captain Wade observes, "The Japanese are harmless, peaceful, industrious citizens. They're loyal too, most of them. Of course there may be some rats in the bunch, but that's nothing to get excited about." Unfortunately, the addition of that last sentence tended to negate the positive opinions which Captain Wade had just expressed. As far as Hanover's last speech was concerned, it was left unchanged since by then Brenda Joyce was "in the family way."<sup>17</sup>

The film was released in New York in early August 1942, on a double bill with Chaplin's Gold Rush. The New York Times did not take Little Tokyo, U.S.A. seriously and dismissed it as "mediocre melodrama."<sup>18</sup> However WRA did not shrug off the film so easily. WRA felt that its efforts to revive the private employment objective at that time could be seriously harmed by such an extreme presentation of the dangerous view. Morril Tozier wrote to Mellett to ask that pressure be put on the studio to limit distribution of the film in the middle west. Failing that, he requested that a title be added to the beginning of the film to make it clear that the film had not been approved by the FBI or any other government agency.<sup>19</sup>

The WRA pressure had quite an effect on Poynter and he approached Colonel Joy in an effort to sell him on the much stronger WRA position. Colonel Joy rejected the WRA requests out of hand. He was not troubled by the necessity to hold any opinion more complex than the dangerous view. In frustration, Poynter composed a letter to Mellett in which he characterized his presentation of the OWI viewpoint to Joy as "inept." Poynter sensed that there was a problem, but related it to some personal inadequacy of his own. Rather than mailing the

letter, Poynter discussed the problem with Mellett in Washington in late September 1942.<sup>20</sup> It would be interesting to know what was said at that meeting. Mellett would certainly have been aware of the views of WRA and Milton Eisenhower on the subject and the position being taken in the final editing of Japanese Relocation to present all three views. On the other hand, Mellett probably recognized that Poynter's frustration in dealing with Colonel Joy was due more to the difficulty of selling contradictory views than anything else. If so, this would explain the hesitancy (described in Chapter III) with which the Hollywood Office issued the Special Bulletin one month later under pressure from WRA. In any case, there is no record of OWI supervisory staff ever again pressing the issue in the face of studio intransigence.

The WRA complaint about Little Tokyo, U.S.A. was not the only one passed on to Poynter for action. CBS protested that the portrayal of Hendricks as a radio station manager and the way in which he treated Hanover were "very bad publicity for radio." Without mentioning the portrayal of Japanese-Americans at all, the note from CBS concludes with the admonition that "no useful purpose is served by undermining faith in radio in so insidious a way."<sup>21</sup>

Fortunately, the Hollywood Office reviewers rarely had to contend with such vicious portrayals of Japanese-Americans and radio stations. However, their reviews of Samurai in 1943 and Betrayal from the East in 1944 were to show a diminishing inclination to protest the image and treatment of Japanese-Americans portrayed in Hollywood films. The lack of support from their superiors may well have been a contributing

factor.

### Busses Roar

A few days after Little Tokyo, U.S.A. was released in early August 1942, the Hollywood Office review team had a look at the Warner Bros. film Busses Roar (Directed by Ross Lederman; With Ricard Travis). A Japanese submarine is lurking offshore waiting to shell an important California oil field. A spy team made up of a German, a Japanese and an Italian arranges to plant a bomb on a bus so that it will go off as the bus passes through the oil field and pinpoint the target for the submarine. Insofar as there is no widespread Japanese-American plot, the reviewers had little to complain about except for the racial stereotype embodied in a Marine sergeant's remark about "little slit-eyed, yella-bellied Japs."<sup>22</sup>

### Across the Pacific

Two days later, they were reviewing a far more memorable Warner Bros. effort, Across the Pacific (Directed by John Huston; With Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor and Sidney Greenstreet). Rick Leland (Humphrey Bogart) is working undercover for U.S. Army Intelligence to foil a Japanese plot to blow up the Panama Canal. First on a Japanese freighter and then in Panama, he tangles with the head of the spy ring, Dr. Lorenz (Sidney Greenstreet), a sociology professor who has been living in the Orient. One of the spies is a Nisei who has betrayed his American citizenship. Although the film does not take place in the United States, the only Japanese-American is portrayed as a traitor. Nevertheless, the reviewers had only praise for the film's depth of characterization and the fact



that several "Japanese types" were shown including a Japanese Prince and "a stupid but not unlikable cabin boy."<sup>23</sup> Insofar as the film does not restrict itself to the classic Japanese stereotype and there is no widespread Japanese-American sabotage plot, the reviewers did not object.

### Air Force

By October 1942, Poynter had convinced some of the studios to submit scripts for review and Warner Bros. sent along Air Force (Directed by Howard Hawks; With John Garfield, Gig Young and Arthur Kennedy). The film tells the story of the Pacific war by following a B-17 bomber crew as they fly across the Pacific while Pearl Harbor, Wake Island and the Philippines are being attacked by the Japanese. The script portrayed Japanese residents of all three territories as traitorous fifth columnists who provided decisive assistance to the enemy. When the crew made an emergency landing on Maui, they were driven off by rifle fire from "local Japs."<sup>24</sup>

The question of Japanese-American loyalty during the Pearl Harbor attack had been misrepresented and used as an excuse to call for the evacuation. On his return from the first brief examination of the situation, the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, had reported to the press that "the most effective Fifth Column work of the entire war was done in Hawaii with the possible exception of Norway."<sup>25</sup> This resulted in sensational headlines. However when Knox's official report came out the next day, it mentioned only espionage by Japanese consular officials and it praised many Japanese-Americans who had assisted in the defense. Although Roosevelt was urged to publicly repudiate Knox's initial statement, this was never

done. In the absence of an official denial, UPI correspondent Wallace Carroll, after a brief visit to Honolulu, wrote a wildly inaccurate story of Japanese-American sabotage which was run prominently in major newspapers. Ironically, a year later OWI made him head of its office in London.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Air Force script used some of the inaccuracies from Carroll's article, even he had not suggested that Japanese-Americans were firing at American planes during the Pearl Harbor attack. The Hollywood Office reviewers protested strongly the film's portrayal of Japanese-Americans:

We have a tremendous responsibility to these people, whose present and post-war adjustments are difficult enough under the most favorable circumstances, to show them that we really are fighting for the preservation of democratic justice for everyone in the world. To imply that all Japanese in America and her possessions were fifth columnists is not only unjust, but it sabotages the very aims for which we are fighting and immeasurably increases our post-war problems.<sup>27</sup>

Nelson Poynter found the film's producer, Hal Wallis, to be very cooperative. Poynter reported to Mellett that Wallis had "scrupulously tried to follow fact in the incidents that portray Japanese treachery."<sup>28</sup> Apparently he tried even harder thereafter since most of the references to Japanese fifth columnists had been removed when the film was released and submitted for review in February 1943. By then, Ulric Bell had arrived in the Hollywood Office and from then until mid-1943, reviews were done for use by both Domestic and Overseas branches. Unfortunately, the film retained the "local Japs" firing on the plane when it lands on Maui. The reviewers did not object to this single historical inaccuracy and found the picture to be "extremely valuable to the information program."

They did object to one sentence in the epilogue which referred to "America" winning the war instead of the "United Nations."<sup>29</sup> Even though the film had been released, Poynter felt this to be a serious problem and immediately wrote to the head of the studio, Jack Warner. Ulric Bell followed this up with his own letter to Warner making it clear that the epilogue would preclude a favourable export recommendation. Warner quickly agreed to change the epilogue in the export prints.<sup>30</sup> If they felt that one sentence in a film violated an important policy, Poynter and Bell were quite willing to apply considerable pressure to have that sentence changed.

### Black Dragon of Manzanar

In January 1943, Republic Pictures came out with a serial entitled G-Men vs the Black Dragon (Directed by William Witney; With Rod Cameron, Roland Got and Constance Worth). It was also issued as a feature film entitled Black Dragon of Manzanar although it is not clear whether this was done much later or at the same time. No review file can be found for either title, but in a 1945 article, Dorothy Jones refers to the serial as a war film portraying stereotyped Japanese. According to her, "a Japanese sabotage plot to blow up Boulder Dam is exposed, and the saboteurs are shown damaging shipping and arms production."<sup>31</sup> Insofar as Manzanar was one of WRA's relocation centers, the film may portray Japanese-American sabotage in the interior of the country. Should any reviews by OWI on the film be discovered, they would be important to the discussion in this paper.

### Behind the Rising Sun

Ulric Bell began to make his presence felt. The reviews were not as important to him as his own opinions. In late April 1943, RKO submitted the script for Behind the Rising Sun (Directed by Edward Dmytryk; With Margo, Tom Neal, J. Carrol Naish and Robert Ryan). Taro Seki (Tom Neal in Oriental makeup), a young Japanese educated in the United States, returns to Japan before the war and becomes indoctrinated by Japanese militarists. He pursues a brutal career in the Japanese Army. His fiancée Tama (Margo) is employed by an American in Tokyo and both she and her employer are falsely arrested as spies. To ensure their conviction, Taro perjures himself against them. The film is important because it was the first film of the war to seriously portray civilian Japanese as a race. In addition, while the central character is not a Japanese-American, he has had a Japanese-American upbringing and arrives in Japan with American values. The ease with which he gives them up implies that his Japanese ancestry is a much stronger influence than his American upbringing.

The script review places great emphasis on the film's potential value "in acquainting the public with a little understood member of the Axis." However the reviewers did not see that potential being realized in the script. Among other problems, the film provided no explanation for Taro's dramatic transformation.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the reviewers' misgivings, Poynter and Bell decided to give the film every assistance. Poynter asked Arch Mercey to arrange for RKO to use scenes from OWI's World at War. Bell wired Dillon Myer of WRA to ask permission for RKO

to observe a particular dance at the Tule Lake Relocation Center. Myer wired back:

TREATMENT OF AMERICAN JAPANESE PROBLEM BY MOVIE INDUSTRY THUS FAR HAS USUALLY GIVEN IMPRESSION THAT JAPANESE IN AMERICA ARE CLOSELY LINKED WITH ENEMY STOP THIS IS RESENTED BY AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY AND IS HARMFUL TO WRA PROGRAM OF ATTEMPTING TO RESETTLE EVACUEES IN NORMAL COMMUNITIES STOP AM NOT WILLING TO APPROVE PHOTOGRAPHS IN RELOCATION CENTERS WHICH WOULD SUGGEST THAT ALL EVACUEES ARE ORIENTAL RATHER THAN AMERICAN IN CULTURE. STOP WOULD APPROVE RKO VISIT ONLY ON CONDITION THAT WRA HAVE CENSORSHIP POWER OVER ANY SCENES TAKEN THERE OR PATTERNED AFTER RELOCATION CENTER SCENES.<sup>33</sup>

The idea was not pursued further.

Shortly after Bell took over full control of the Hollywood Office in July 1943, the finished version of Behind the Rising Sun was reviewed. The picture had been improved, but not the characterization of Taro. The film "would seem to confirm the common prejudice against the Japanese which holds that as a race they are unpredictable and that they will inevitably 'revert to type' - revert to the hysterical anti-Western ideology promulgated by the Japanese ruler caste." Also, the Japanese assertion that they were engaged in a race war was stated "without being refuted as Fascist propaganda."<sup>34</sup> The review recommended against export approval. Ulric Bell felt less strongly and his own views took precedence. He wrote to the Censor that while OWI couldn't recommend an export license "with any enthusiasm," it nevertheless would not oppose a license.<sup>35</sup> Once approved, the film was promoted heavily abroad. Even Bell began to think that was going too far. He stepped in when he discovered that OWI's Pacific Operations office was requesting use of the film's star, Margo (whose real name was Maria Marguerita Guadelupe Boldao y Castilla), to

promote the film in Australia.<sup>36</sup>

In January 1944, there was an inquiry from the outposts in India and China as to whether the film contained "veiled references to race antagonism and allusions to the Emperor."<sup>37</sup> By then, Bell had departed and William Cunningham replied that the film did indeed contain such references and allusions. He sent along a copy of the feature review, pointing out that it recommended against export, but neglected to mention Bell's memo to the Censor. Cunningham also pointed out that RKO had now offered to cure any problems "with a pair of scissors," and in the end that is what was done.<sup>38</sup> Much later, in March 1945, RKO asked OWI to distribute the film in France, but the New York reviewers found it "very unreal" and "too openly propagandistic."<sup>39</sup>

### Beast of the East

In October 1943, while Bell was contemplating the overseas promotion of Behind the Rising Sun, Universal submitted the script for Beast of the East. The story takes place in occupied Hong Kong where an American widow falls in love with a Frenchman who is working for the Chinese underground. Although Japanese-Americans are not portrayed, the review comments that the film was intended as "a hate and atrocity story about the Japanese." The review raises strong objections to the portrayal of every Allied nationality in the film--American, French, British and Chinese--as well as "the emphasis on Japanese brutality and sadism to the exclusion of any constructive material on the Japanese people themselves."<sup>40</sup> Bell decided to consult "an expert on Hong Kong" to get reaction and suggestions for alterations. The expert replied:

"I can't imagine anything much more lousy than this for a movie."<sup>41</sup> After an attempt at fixing up the script, Universal decided to drop the project and the film was never made.<sup>42</sup>

### The Purple Heart

While Bell was waiting for a reply from the Hong Kong expert, Twentieth Century-Fox submitted the script for The Purple Heart (Directed by Lewis Milestone; With Dana Andrews, Richard Conte and Farley Granger). After a raid on Tokyo, the crew of an American bomber is shot down over occupied China. They are betrayed by an elderly Chinese who is subsequently murdered by his son for his treachery. Contrary to international law, they are tried in a civilian kangaroo court presided over by the head of the Black Dragon Society. The Japanese torture them to make them reveal military secrets. Their continued defiance results in their conviction and execution. The reviewers noted that the film failed "to make anywhere the important distinction between the Japanese militarists and the Japanese people, a distinction called for by our government's information policy." They also pointed out that the Chinese quisling was more prominent in the film than his loyal son.<sup>43</sup>

As with Air Force reviewed one year earlier, there is an important historical inaccuracy in the film. Insofar as it is an isolated reference, there was no protest from the reviewers. Karl Keppel (Torben Meyer), a Swiss diplomat, arrives at the prison to intercede on the Americans' behalf. He has this exchange with General Ito Mitsubi (Richard Loo), their chief captor:

MITSUBI. Tell me - Mr. Keppel - in your opinion can Washington force us to drop these charges?

KEPPEL. It most certainly can - and will. Remember, there are over a hundred thousand Japanese nationals in internment camps in the United States.<sup>44</sup>

This statement categorizes all of the 110,000 Japanese-Americans who were under WRA control as Japanese nationals although 65% of them were in fact American citizens born in the United States.<sup>45</sup> It implies that the evacuation provided a useful tool for American foreign policy.

Unfortunately, the film goes on to reveal that Mitsubi is an Issei who has returned to Japan to take up the torture of Americans. After Keppel leaves, Mitsubi asks the American pilot, Capt. Harvey Ross (Dana Andrews), whether he has been to California recently. Ross reminds him that he cannot answer such questions:

MITSUBI (after a moment). I admire your frankness, Captain. I was only curious about Santa Barbara. I lived there for some time. Worked on a fishing boat.

ROSS (smiling). And charted every inch of water from San Diego to Seattle.

MITSUBI (smiling). Those charts will be useful some day.<sup>46</sup>

The reviewers had no objection to the characterization of Mitsubi, but they did complain that no distinction was made between Japanese militarists and the Japanese people.<sup>47</sup>

Ulric Bell and his deputy, Warren Pierce, were far more concerned about the portrayal of the Chinese quisling. The Chinese authorities learned of the picture and launched a protest. There was a flurry of correspondence which finally succeeded both in calming down the Chinese and in having the



studio build up the role of the loyal son.<sup>48</sup> When the finished film was reviewed at the end of February 1944, the portrayal of the Japanese was long forgotten. The review noted that the film could have praised the Chinese allies even more, but that it was nevertheless "a really great contribution" and "highly recommended for distribution in liberated areas."<sup>49</sup> Once again, OWI applied considerable pressure on a studio when the violation of a policy on racial portrayal was felt to be important enough.

### Samurai

In mid-October 1943, while the script for The Purple Heart was being reviewed, OWI received the script from Cavalcade Pictures for what was to become Samurai (Working title: Orders from Tokyo) (Directed by Raymond Cannon; With Paul Fung and Luke Chan). The reviews and correspondence are reproduced in Appendix G. Ken Morey (Paul Fung), a Japanese who has been raised as an American by foster parents in San Francisco, meets a disloyal Shinto priest in Monterey and is quickly converted into joining a vast sabotage plot on the west coast. After an apprenticeship in brutality with the Japanese Secret Service in Shanghai, he returns to California where Japanese-American fishermen and farmers have been smuggling in explosives. His family discovers the plot two days before Pearl Harbor. Ken murders his foster parents before he himself is killed and the FBI rounds up everyone involved in the plot. The script for this film calls to mind two other films. It starts with the widespread Japanese-American sabotage plot from Little Tokyo, U.S.A. To this is added the quick and unexplained conversion of an American-educated Japanese into a

brutal, scheming beast from Behind the Rising Sun. The first script review for Samurai calmly enumerated OWI's objections to the widespread Japanese-American sabotage plot and the exclusive use of the Japanese stereotype. In the review, Dorothy Jones and her staff indicated that they were if anything more sympathetic to the cause of Japanese-Americans than they had been a year earlier by describing the major contributions to the war effort made by Japanese-Americans since the release of Little Tokyo, U.S.A. However the tone of their review was very different from that used in the review of the earlier film. In 1942, the reviewers' outrage at Little Tokyo, U.S.A. had been summed up by bluntly stating that "rabidly unbalanced treatment of Japanese-American citizens makes it an extremely dangerous picture." In 1943, the reviewers could have applied that conclusion equally to Samurai, but instead they commented with restraint:

This is an inaccurate and unfortunate picture of an American minority group, and the production of such a film along the lines indicated in the present script could reflect unfavorably upon our democratic traditions, were the film shown abroad.<sup>50</sup>

Supervisory staff had not treated the portrayal of Japanese-Americans as a high priority issue. They would protest, but within limits. In addition, the transition to Overseas Branch control of the Hollywood Office had resulted in a bureaucratic attention to jurisdiction which made an artificial distinction between foreign and domestic audiences. Only if a film were to be shown abroad need one worry about it reflecting unfavourably on democratic traditions. The reviewers moderated their remarks accordingly. In their

conclusion, the reviewers referred to Americans' responsibility "to deal fairly with Japanese-Americans now and after the war, so as to insure the preservation, for all peoples, of the democratic principles for which we are fighting." This is a direct quotation from the Special Bulletin on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans. The reviewers also felt that any suggestion of "oppression and inequities against minority groups" in America should be eliminated.<sup>51</sup> In other words, the good treatment view must prevail.

One month later in November 1943, a second version of the script was reviewed. The conversion of Ken by the Shinto priest was properly developed and explained, but all Japanese-Americans were still shown as traitors. As in Little Tokyo, U.S.A., the only loyal Japanese-American in Samurai was promptly murdered. Japanese were referred to as "'quadrupeds', 'lemurian gnomes', [and] 'dwarfed baboons.'" This second review closed with a pitch for the harmless view:

It should be brought out that only a small percentage of the Japanese on our West Coast were disloyal to the United States, and that after Pearl Harbor the majority of Japanese-Americans on the West Coast cheerfully cooperated in the move to relocation camps.<sup>52</sup>

The reviewers were more circumspect in their reaction to problems in the portrayal of Japanese-Americans than they had been in July 1942. When they did react, they simply quoted the policy statements in the Special Bulletin and in effect suggested that Samurai show all three views.

The production company, Cavalcade Pictures, had no allotment of film stock, which was rationed, and therefore needed Hollywood Office approval to obtain the stock to make

the film. As soon as they were given a copy of the second review, they hastened to adopt as many of the recommendations as possible. The racial epithets were removed and the dialogue was altered to make it clear that the Nisei could not be trusted for sabotage work. Only devotees of Shintoism were in on the plot. Unfortunately they had a very large number of such devotees participating in a widespread plan to cripple California during the Pearl Harbor attack. While Cavalcade was changing the script, Ulric Bell left the Hollywood Office and Warren Pierce began minding the store. Although it would have been simple for him to prevent the film from being made, he gave lukewarm approval to the allotment of film stock. It may be that he found it no easier to suggest the presentation of all three views in a film than his predecessors had. In writing to Samurai's producer, he said that the Hollywood Office was "very much pleased with the revisions" and he thought that there was "a splendid opportunity to spell out the ideological background of the Japanese militarists."<sup>53</sup>

The film took a year to make and the finished product was finally reviewed at the beginning of November 1944. Although the government had dropped the dangerous view by then, the review does not object to the widespread sabotage plot, but rather to the fact that it was discovered just before Pearl Harbor, "implying that Pearl Harbor was not a stab in the back, but was foreseen in America." The "splendid opportunity" to portray Japanese militarists which Warren Pierce had envisioned, did not materialize due to "production quality on the level of an inferior comicstrip" which made the facts "appear so fantastic they cannot be taken seriously."<sup>54</sup>

Samurai took about a year to produce and during that time The Purple Heart was released and William Cunningham was put in charge of the Hollywood Office. In mid-1944, Dorothy Jones left although the legacy of her influence on the reviewers of course remained. At the end of June 1944, they tackled RKO's latest project.

### Betrayal from the East

RKO-Radio Pictures Inc.

Producer: Herman Schlom

Director: William Berke

With: Lee Tracy (Eddie Carter), Nancy Kelly (Peggy), Richard Loo (Tanni), Abner Biberman (Yamato), Philip Ahn (Kato), Louis Jean Heydt (Jack Marsden) and Jason Robards (Charles Hildebrand).<sup>55</sup>

The reviews and correspondence are reproduced in Appendix H.

Drew Pearson, the well-known journalist, delivers the prologue and epilogue. The opening shot is of the nameplate on his desk. As the camera pans up to Pearson sitting behind his desk, he closes a copy of the book Betrayal from the East and addresses the audience:

Betrayal from the East is a true story. Nobody could have made it up. It really happened. I know. As a newspaperman, I saw some of it happen. I did what I could to help assemble some of the facts from the files of G-2, military intelligence. But that's not important. The important thing is that it happened in America, right here. It must never happen again. Look at it and remember that. The similarity to persons living and dead is not accidental. Some of their names have had to be changed; some of them haven't. Some of them are living; some are dead. It is time for you to know how they died and why, now that the whole story can be told.

[Pearson opens book]

It begins:

[Shows page 1 of book and Pearson begins to read it]

Early in the year 1941, His Imperial Majesty,

[Shows footage of Hirohito and the Japanese military]

Emperor Hirohito, chose to designate his reign as "Showa." "Showa" meaning "radiant peace." But the promises of the Emperor and his war lords belied their meaning. Words cannot obscure the smoke that rises from a war-born fire.

[Shows office door with lettering: "Foreign Press Service, Tokyo Branch, C.H. Hildebrand, Editor-in-Chief"]

There were a few in the year 1941 who saw that smoke and wondered.<sup>56</sup>

The Pearson prologue and epilogue were added in January 1945, after the finished version of the film had been reviewed by the Hollywood Office. When these additions were submitted for review, the only objection was to the reference to Hirohito. RKO offered to drop the prologue and epilogue entirely if OWI would distribute the film in liberated areas.<sup>57</sup>

The prologue states that the film is true and makes it clear that it is based on the book of the same title. The relationship is a very loose one. The page 1 read by Pearson in the prologue is not from the book. The book consists of a number of stories. The film uses the villain from one story, the plot from another, changes the location from Hawaii to Panama, and fabricates a heroine. It really did not matter since the book was not known for its factual accuracy in the first place. the final chapter, which is not used in the film, is devoted to a description of the Japanese-American situation in the United States in 1943:

There are at large today men of Japanese ancestry who are awaiting only the propitious time and the opportunity to commit acts of sabotage which, if successful, will be of hideous enormity. It is no secret in Washington that J. Edgar Hoover has his

fingers crossed because of the "liberal," not to say stupid, policy of the War Relocation Authority.<sup>58</sup>

Needless to say, WRA was less than delighted when it came upon this nasty bit of hate literature in February 1944. It was even more alarmed when a radio commentator referred to the proposed film in mid-June. Morril Tozier sent Pat Frayne, a member of his staff, to Los Angeles to investigate. The radio commentator told Frayne that "RKO is making a picture with the inducement of the Hearst newspapers who have planned to give it heavy publicity." He also added that there had been "strenuous argument" within RKO over the depiction of Japanese-Americans as "members of a huge spy system." Frayne had then visited RKO and been given details on how the film had been substantially changed from the book. In particular, RKO felt that the addition of a loyal Japanese-American had removed most objections to the story. Frayne remained skeptical and suggested that Tozier make "further representations."<sup>59</sup>

When the script was reviewed in June 1944, the film began with Hildebrand's office door. Jack Marsden (Louis Jean Heydt), an American newspaperman in Tokyo, arrives and tells his editor, Charles Hildebrand (Jason Robards), about a plot he has uncovered:

Tokyo has set up a complete espionage and sabotage organization to cripple all our defenses from Seattle to San Diego in one simultaneous blow when war comes.

A few minutes later, Marsden gives Hildebrand a sheet of paper:

**Marsden:** Here's a list of the men involved. They're all Japs living in America.

**Hildebrand:** [looks at list] Holy smoke! Some of these are important men on the west coast: been in

the United States for a long time.

**Marsden:** Yeah, and one of those babies has been over here all summer, getting final instructions from the government. He's just been made leader, to go back and head the organization.

**Hildebrand:** Any idea who he is?

**Marsden:** Not the slightest. I tell you Charlie, the Japs are setting themselves for war with our country. It's as plain as the nose on your face. We see the peril in the situation so much more clearly over here than they do back home. If you can only make the American people realize what's happening. They've got to stop sleeping!

Marsden and Hildebrand are murdered. The leader of the spy ring turns out to be a language student at Stanford University, Tanni (Richard Loo). The Japanese Consul introduces Tanni to his two Japanese-American lieutenants and they arrange a meeting of the "key men in the various cities." As the scene opens on that meeting, Tanni is showing a film in the last shot of which a train goes off the track and crashes:

And that gentlemen is an example of the type of work that was taught at our sabotage schools in Japan this summer. A few hundred simultaneous acts such as this and you can easily see the paralyzing effect on the western states.

The plotters depart and Tanni meets the American hero of the film, Eddie Carter (Lee Tracy). Carter agrees to obtain details of the Panama Canal defenses, but then becomes a counter-spy for Army Intelligence. It soon transpires that Carter's new houseboy is a loyal Japanese-American who is keeping an eye on him for Army Intelligence. True to the tradition of Little Tokyo, U.S.A. and Samurai, the only loyal Japanese-American in the film is promptly tortured to death with a hot poker. The script review took all of this very much



in stride. There was not even the restrained criticism which characterized the Samurai review. The message seems to have sunk in that the issue was of little importance. The Pacific Operations Office of the Overseas Branch was consulted to ensure that there would be no protest from that quarter, but the reviewers expressed no opinion of their own.<sup>60</sup>

The ending in the script featured a fight between Tanni and Carter. Tanni dies and the head of Army Intelligence arrives to proclaim that the Japanese way of life "must be destroyed from the earth forever." At this point, the reviewers woke up and mentioned that this statement should be corrected. In passing on the reviewers' comments to RKO, Gene Kern summed up the Hollywood Office attitude:

Inasmuch as this story presents U.S. Army Intelligence triumphant over Japanese espionage, this office is content to follow whatever opinion is expressed by the War Department on the portrayal of a widespread Japanese sabotage plot to cripple the West Coast prior to Pearl Harbor.<sup>61</sup>

Although supervisory staff had never gone to great lengths to defend Japanese-Americans, this was the first time that the reviewers retreated so far as to declare themselves content with a film which used a widespread Japanese-American sabotage plot as a central theme. Their contentment was to be strained somewhat when WRA began to make its feelings known.

WRA launched its protest through channels which meant that it went first to the Domestic Branch. It was passed on to the head of the Domestic Motion Picture Bureau, Stanton Griffis. He made it clear that any dealings with Hollywood studios were strictly the province of the Overseas Branch through the Hollywood Office. A WRA official contacted

Cunningham in the Hollywood Office and also visited RKO, but apparently left less than satisfied. Cunningham later explained that "the WRA problem is basically a domestic one and by order we are only concerned with overseas reaction." WRA became the victim of a bureaucratic vicious circle. Cunningham did not initiate any suggestion to the studio that reference be made to the loyalty of most Japanese-Americans. The Hollywood Office had finally abandoned the harmless view completely at the very time that government policy was emphasizing it and dropping the dangerous view to encourage resettlement of the evacuees. Cunningham displayed no malice toward the Japanese-Americans, simply a lack of interest:

I won't say that the script is now completely harmless from the WRA point of view as I am not thoroughly familiar with their problem. However, I feel that we have gone as far with this matter as we can.<sup>62</sup>

That was that. In the completed film, the objectionable dialogue at the end was dropped and both Carter and Tanni are killed. The final review termed it "an exciting melodrama with good production quality." Perhaps out of consideration for WRA feelings, the reviewers hesitantly added that "because of the subject matter, it is not especially recommended for distribution in liberated areas at this time."<sup>63</sup>

In January 1945, as explained earlier, Drew Pearson's epilogue was appended:

[Pearson puts down book]

Eddie Carter died; a soldier out of uniform, a soldier ahead of his time in a war that was still undeclared, a war Tojo thought he was going to fight, not on Tarawa, but in Texas; not on Saipan, but in San Bernadino, California. Eddie's friends...

friends, your sons, your husbands, have tossed that war right back, red hot, into Tojo's little lap. It will end when the price of complacency has been paid. But it will be no bargain and Eddie will have died in vain if you forget America what he knew: that the war against underground enemies never begins and never ends. We must not relax again. It can't happen here, again.

If the Hollywood Office was asleep, the New York Office was wide awake. Drew Pearson notwithstanding, the New York review saw the picture as a "flimsy, trite spy story." In addition: "The Nisei, with one Jap-tortured exception, are shown disloyal to the U.S., a topic which does not seem particularly useful to mention." Despite an appeal from RKO, the film was not chosen for distribution in liberated areas.<sup>64</sup>

### Blood on the Sun

While Betrayal from the East was being filmed in late October 1944, United Artists submitted the script for Blood on the Sun (Directed by Frank Lloyd; With James Cagney and Sylvia Sydney). The film takes place in Tokyo in 1927 and concerns the smuggling of a secret document out of Japan. Although it does not refer directly to Japanese-Americans, the film does portray the Japanese as a race. The Hollywood Office succeeded in having dialogue removed which referred to racial conflicts and which attributed Japan's weakness to its failure to accord equal status to women. The final review in April 1945, concluded that although "the Japanese characters are played as stereotypes," the film could be of limited value in portraying "the Japanese mode of living and Japan's historical plan of aggression."<sup>65</sup> However Bosley Crowther was less kind in his New York Times review and complained that the film "puts the Japs in the popular but highly deceptive 'monkey' class."<sup>66</sup> By the

time of that review, OWI was winding down its activities and it was finally abolished on August 31, 1945.<sup>67</sup>

### First Yank Into Tokyo

There is no record of any OWI comment on First Yank Into Tokyo (Directed by Gordon Douglas; With Tom Neal and Barbara Hale) which was released in October 1945. Tom Neal plays an American spy who slips into Japan to rescue an American scientist who holds the key to the atomic bomb. With Neal's portrayal of a Japanese in Behind the Rising Sun to bolster his confidence, the film has him undergo plastic surgery to make him look Japanese and thus escape detection. The film makes it clear that this is the ultimate sacrifice: Neal gives up the heroine because it is unthinkable that she could accept his Oriental features.<sup>68</sup> This view can be contrasted with that of the first film discussed in this chapter, in which it is the Japanese who undergo plastic surgery to make them look like Americans. They miss out on elevation to martyrdom.

### Summary

Although the Hollywood Office reviewers were always willing to countenance the odd Japanese-American villain, they initially protested strongly any suggestion of a widespread plot involving Japanese-Americans and any use of Japanese stereotypes. Unfortunately, their zeal was not received with any great enthusiasm by their superiors. As the war progressed, the reviewers' passion receded and they calmly suggested that gross distortions were better avoided. By the end of the war, they didn't even take the trouble to do that.

## Notes for Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> T.S., rev. of Secret Agent of Japan, New York Times, March 23, 1942, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Bur. of Intell., OWI, "The Enemy in the Movies," Nov. 25, 1942, Special Intelligence Report No. 77, Box 1845, filed OGR, RG 44, NA, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> "The Enemy in the Movies," pp. 8-9; James L. Limbacher, Feature Films on 8mm, 16mm, and Videotape, (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1982), p. 30; Final Report, pp. 11-13; Personal Justice Denied, pp. 53-54.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Maltin, ed., TV Movies, (New York: Signet-New American Library, 1980), p. 435; Copyright Office, Motion Pictures: 1940-1949, (Washington: Library of Congress, 1953), p. 197; "The Enemy in the Movies," pp. 23-24; These comments also appear without acknowledgement in Arthur F. McClure, "Hollywood at War: The American Motion Picture and World War II, 1939-1945," Journal of Popular Film, 1 (1972), 134.

<sup>5</sup> This and the following excerpts from the film were transcribed by the author from the print of the film in the possession of Cinemacraft Films, Montreal.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas M. Pryor, "At the Palace," rev. of Little Tokyo, U.S.A., New York Times, August 7, 1942, p. 13; Grodzins, pp. 84-85; Personal Justice Denied, pp. 51-60; Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: Little Tokyo, U.S.A.," July 14, 1942, Box 3518, RG 208, NA, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> "Feature Review: Little Tokyo, U.S.A.," p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> "Feature Review: Little Tokyo, U.S.A.," p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> "Feature Review: Little Tokyo, U.S.A.," p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Nathan, The Darkening Meadows (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> "Feature Review: Little Tokyo, U.S.A.," p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, July 23, 1942, Box 3518, RG 208, NA; Koppes and Black, "What to Show the World," p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> "Feature Review: Little Tokyo, U.S.A.," pp. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup> Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, July 21, 1942, Box 3518, RG 208, NA.

<sup>15</sup> Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, July 23, 1942; Lowell Mellett, Message Re: Little Tokyo, U.S.A., July 24, 1942; both in Box 3518, RG 208, NA.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of OWI protests during this period, see Koppes and Black, "What to Show the World," pp. 92-93.

17 Nelson Poynter, Memo to Mellett, July 31, 1942, Box 3518, RG 208, NA.

18 Thomas M. Pryor, rev. of Little Tokyo, U.S.A.

19 Morril M. Tozier, Letter to Mellett, August 26, 1942, Box 3518, RG 208, NA.

20 Nelson Poynter, Letter to Mellett, Sept. 2, 1942, with added notation that it was not mailed, but discussed in Washington, Sept. 26, 1942, Box 3518, RG 208, NA.

21 Charles H. Smith, Memo to Stanton, Sept. 14, 1942, Box 3518, RG 208, NA.

22 Thomas M. Pryor, "At the Palace," rev. of Busses Roar, New York Times, Sept. 25, 1942, p. 25; Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: Busses Roar," August 12, 1942, Box 3515, RG 208, NA.

23 Bosley Crowther, rev. of Across the Pacific, New York Times, Sept. 5, 1942, p. 9; Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: Across the Pacific," August 14, 1942, Box 3515, RG 208, NA.

24 Maltin, p. 10; Hollywood Office, OWI, "Script Review: Air Force," Oct. 27, 1942, Box 3515, RG 208, NA.

25 Personal Justice Denied, p. 55.

26 Personal Justice Denied, pp. 55-57; Wallace Carroll, "Japanese Spies Showed the Way for Raid on Vital Areas in Hawaii," New York Times, Dec. 31, 1941, p. 3; Winkler, p. 86.

27 "Script Review: Air Force," Oct. 27, 1942, Box 3511, RG 208, NA.

28 Nelson Poynter, Letter to Mellett, Oct. 30, 1942, Box 3511, RG 208, NA.

29 Sauberli, p. 42; Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: Air Force," Feb. 2, 1943, Box 3511, RG 208, NA.

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31 Maltin, p. 68; Dorothy Jones, "The Hollywood War Film," p. 5.

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34 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: Behind the Rising Sun," July 8, 1943, Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

35 Ulric Bell, Memo to Rothacker, July 9, 1943, Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

36 Ulric Bell, Memo to Cooke, Sept. 1, 1943, Box 3522, RG 208, NA; Leslie Halliwell, The Filmgoer's Companion (London: Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1974), p. 502.

37 Sidney Harmon, Memo to Cunningham, Jan. 31, 1944, Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

38 William Cunningham, Letter to Lober, Feb. 7, 1944; Louis Lober, Letter to Cunningham, Feb. 15, 1944, Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

39 New York Office, OWI, "Motion Picture Review: Behind the Rising Sun," March 26, 1945; Arnold Picker, Letter to Lissim, March 30, 1945; both in Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

40 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Script Review: Beast of the East," Oct. 5, 1943, Box 3514, RG 208, NA.

41 Ulric Bell, Letter to Webber, Oct. 12, 1943; Derk Bodde, Memo to Murray, Oct. 18, 1943, both in Box 3514, RG 208, NA.

42 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Second Script Review: Beast of the East," Nov. 23, 1943, Box 3514, RG 208, NA.

43 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Script Review: The Purple Heart," Oct. 15, 1943, Box 3518, RG 208, NA; Bosley Crowther, "'Purple Heart' Premiere," rev. of The Purple Heart, New York Times, March 9, 1944, p. 15.

44 John Gassner and Dudley Nichols, eds., Best Film Plays of 1943-44 (New York: Crown, 1945), p. 122.

45 WRA, p. 198.

46 Gassner and Nichols, p. 123.

47 "Script Review: The Purple Heart."

48 Ulric Bell, Letter to Lattimore, Oct. 19, 1943; Warren Pierce, Letter to Joy, Oct. 21, 1943; Owen Lattimore, Letter to Price, Nov. 10, 1943; Harry B. Price, Letter to Lattimore, Dec. 6, 1943; Jason S. Joy, Letter to Pierce, Dec. 16, 1943; all in Box 3518, RG 208, NA.

49 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: The Purple Heart," Feb. 23, 1944, Box 3518, RG 208, NA.

50 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Script Review: Orders from Tokyo," Oct. 13, 1943, Box 3525, RG 208, NA.

51 Thomas M. Pryor, "At the World," rev. of Samurai, New

York Times, Aug. 25, 1945, p. 7.

52 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Second Script Review: Orders from Tokyo," Nov. 10, 1943, Box 3525, RG 208, NA.

53 Raymond Cannon, Letter to Pierce, Nov. 19, 1943; Warren Pierce, Letter to Mindenburg, Nov. 23, 1943; Warren Pierce, Letter to Montague, Nov. 26, 1943; all in Box 3525, RG 208, NA.

54 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: Samurai," Nov. 1, 1944, Box 3525, RG 208, NA.

55 Bosley Crowther, "Slap the Jap," rev. of Betrayal from the East, New York Times, April 25, 1945, p. 27.

56 This and the following excerpts from the film were transcribed by the author from the print in the possession of Bellevue Motion Picture Enterprises, Toronto.

57 Gene Kern, Memo to Cunningham, Jan. 20, 1945, Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

58 Alan Hynd, Betrayal from the East (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1943), p. 269.

59 Dillon Myer, Letter to McBride and Company, Feb. 2, 1944; Pat Frayne, Letter to Tozier, June 16, 1944; both in Box 251, RG 208, NA.

60 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Script Review: Betrayal from the East," June 30, 1944, Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

61 "Script Review: Betrayal from the East," June 30, 1944; Gene Kern, Letter to Gordon, July 3, 1944, both in Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

62 Herbert Little, Memo to Frederick, Aug. 1, 1944; Stanton Griffis, Letter to Frederick, Aug. 11, 1944; William Cunningham, Letter to Little, Sept. 11, 1944; all in Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

63 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: Betrayal from the East," Dec. 16, 1944, Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

64 New York Office, OWI, "Motion Picture Review: Betrayal from the East," March 6, 1945; Arnold Picker, Memo to Handler, April 3, 1945; Long Range, Memo to Picker, April 7, 1945; all in Box 3522, RG 208, NA.

65 Hollywood Office, OWI, "Feature Review: Blood on the Sun," April 19, 1945, Box 3523, RG 208, NA.

66 Bosley Crowther, "'Blood on the Sun,' Melodrama of Japanese Intrigue," rev. of Blood on the Sun, New York Times, June 29, 1945, p. 12.

67 David Jones, p. 447.



<sup>68</sup> Bosley Crowther, "The First Atom," rev. of First Yank Into Tokyo, New York Times, Oct. 25, 1945, p. 18.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

This paper has presented a case study of the implementation of a motion picture propaganda policy. Initially, OWI information policy on the Japanese-Americans had three important aspects: justification of the evacuation, elimination of racial prejudice, and confirmation of good treatment in the camps. In chapter III, the Hollywood Office "Special Bulletin" of October 24, 1942, on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans, was analyzed to show how it minimized the conflicts inherent in these three views. The same could be said of the film Japanese Relocation, produced by the OWI New York Office, which was examined in Chapter IV. It accomplished its goal through the use of careful scripting and other film techniques to carry the viewer along without an opportunity to reflect on what was being said or to identify with the plight of individual Japanese-Americans.

In Chapter V, it was shown that the Hollywood Office reviewers initially protested the Hollywood studios' general tendency to portray the Japanese-Americans as disloyal and dangerous. In particular, the reviewers took the film Little Tokyo, U.S.A. to task although their supervisors were subsequently reluctant to give their objections a high priority. The one serious effort, under pressure from WRA, to change the studios' attitude resulted only in frustration.

As the Hollywood Office began to obtain scripts for review, in addition to finished films, its influence was greatly enhanced. Although Warner Bros. readily took the reviewers' protests into account and softened references to

Japanese-Americans in Air Force, supervisory staff paid little attention to the issue. This paper has suggested that one likely explanation is that the contradictions in policy on the portrayal of Japanese-Americans led those in charge to downplay its importance. Over time, the reviewers got the message. Especially after it became part of the Overseas Branch, the Hollywood Office's ability to block the export of a film increased its power substantially. Yet as the power to cause change grew, concern about the portrayal of Japanese-Americans diminished. Blatant distortions in the script of Samurai elicited from reviewers the restrained comment that it was better to avoid such material.

The latter stages of the war saw the release of the WRA film A Challenge to Democracy which abandoned the dangerous view and concentrated primarily on the harmless view. Despite OWI's approval of the film and the existence of its program to release government shorts in theatres, there is no record of any OWI attempt to prepare the film for a mass audience. With similar ennui, the Hollywood Office reviewers had very little to say about the distortions of fact in Betrayal from the East. In reference to Samurai the year before, the reviewers had pointed out that similar distortions would reflect badly on the U.S. if shown in foreign countries. That concern gradually evaporated. WRA's strenuous protest against the film was neatly sidetracked by OWI.

On the one hand, OWI officials informed WRA that only the Hollywood Office was empowered to intervene where Hollywood films were concerned. On the other hand, Hollywood Office officials classified the Japanese-American situation as

exclusively a "domestic" problem and therefore outside their jurisdiction since they were part of OWI's Overseas Branch. This bizarre classification invoked the classic bureaucratic device whereby the poor complainant was told that the only department with any power had none.

Although extraneous factors may have affected the behaviour of those involved, it appears likely that the emergence of a pronounced bureaucratic attitude in the Hollywood Office was a response to the difficulties inherent in the social issues under consideration. The portrayal of Japanese-Americans raised controversial issues of basic justice and freedom. The Hollywood Office staff most likely sensed that such issues were a threat to their own stability and therefore went to some lengths to avoid dealing with them.

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## **Appendix A**

### **"Motion Pictures and the War Effort"**

Master File

August 15, 1942

## MOTION PICTURES AND THE WAR EFFORT

An over-all plan of film analysis, audience reaction, and film evaluation projects and their interrelations.

The following material represents an outline of film analysis and audience reaction operations and the manner in which they can be inter-related. The film analysis operations will report on film preparation and content; audience reaction projects are designed to gauge the effectiveness of various film products in promoting the various points in the Government's program.

Taken together, the plan envisages an inter-related series of operations keeping in close contact with pictures of all types from their beginnings to their viewing and appraisal by audiences. Some of the film analysis operations have been under way for some time; the audience response and composition projects are proposals for immediate action.

The aim of this over-all plan is to provide the Motion Picture Bureau with comprehensive and reliable information on all aspects of the production, content, and public evaluation of motion pictures of all types. Though releases with war themes are of primary interest, all motion pictures would be included. While the information resulting from these activities is expected to be of most direct value in connection with war information short subjects, feature pictures, as well as newsreels, must be considered for their war content, incidental remarks about various aspects of the war, and the reactions of audiences to them. Based on this and other information, suggestions will be made for the subjects of short motion pictures to further the Government's war program.

To provide this material, the operations are divided into four sections:

- I. Pre-production analysis: nature and content of motion pictures under consideration and in production by the industry; stories purchased, scripts being shot, etc.
- II. Content analysis: content analyses of released pictures of all types: newsreels, feature pictures, short subjects. (This work has been under way for some time.)
- III. Audience research: audience reactions and preferences for all types and contents of pictures; audience composition in theatres throughout the country, etc.
- IV. Short subjects program: indication of fields where shorts are needed.

The following pages describe in detail the nature and extent of these operations.



- 2 -

### I. Pre-production analysis

A thorough intelligence operation on the content of motion pictures must begin with the initial stages in their preparation and production. A series of systematic reports would be instituted in close conjunction with the industry. These reports would contain information on the scripts and stories purchased by the various producers, the nature of the war themes and their treatment, and the general direction of the picture. This material would be provided for feature pictures of all sorts and for short subjects, in especially full detail on those connected in whole or in part with the war.

This material would provide the Motion Picture Bureau with information on what pictures are being considered by Hollywood and their war themes. It would be basic to cooperation with the industry in selection of Governmentally provided material, in cooperation in the presentation of promotional themes, and in suggestions from the Government in regard to treatment and handling of themes, plots, and plot sequences.

Such material would also be of service to various agencies concerned with the content of coming pictures. The Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs is now interested in all plots and sequences touching on Latin American customs, peoples, and customs in an attempt to eliminate objectionable material.

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### II. Content analysis

The second stage in intelligence operations is the reporting on the contents of releases. This program of work is already under way and full reports on pictures of all types are being provided the Bureau of Intelligence from the analysts, working under the Bureau's supervision, in the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art.

The content analysis varies with the type of picture. For newsreels, complete description of all shots in all stories are provided and the narrative script of the commentator. For short subjects, a complete shot analysis is provided and the comment, together with a description of added material such as maps, animations, and so forth. For feature pictures, the material is in considerable detail describing the plot, the major characters and types, illustrations (stills) are attached, and basic data given on producer, direction, and so on.

This material should provide the Motion Picture Bureau with information on the actual content of pictures as they are released. Running reports keep tab on the output of newsreels and the effectiveness of the newsreel in the war program and their treatment of Government material. Information on feature pictures, especially those with war-related themes, provides a way of determining just what in the way of war material in fictional shape is being presented to the public.

- 4 -

### III. Audience research

It is further proposed that the Bureau of Intelligence, by engaging in a continuing program of movie audience research, furnish the Motion Picture Bureau with information on who see pictures in this country and what the reactions of these audiences are. This will make possible a critical evaluation of the motion picture industry's contribution to the war program.

The information made available by the proposed audience research falls into five categories:

#### 1. Audience Size and Composition Data

- a. We will be able to estimate the number of persons who see any specific war film during any given period of time. (This is possible whether or not the list of theatres showing the picture is made available.)
- b. We will have for any specific production rough approximations of the audience composition by geographic areas, sex, age, economic status, etc.

Audience size and composition data will enable the Motion Picture Bureau to evaluate their over-all program, not in terms of the number of films devoted to various themes, but in terms of the audience reached by the pictures devoted to each theme.

#### 2. Special Group Campaign Data

The analysis will make available information about the type of audience which attends each theatre in the country. To some degree, this will permit a pre-selection of theatres for the exhibition of pictures designed to reach certain segments of the population such as Negroes, foreign-born, etc.

#### 3. Audience Reaction to Films Already Released

Short subjects and newsreels can be tested to reveal the public's attitude toward the film as a whole, toward specific parts of the film, and toward the technical aspects of the production (length, sound, etc.)

Information of this sort will serve a double purpose. First, it will supplement audience size and type estimates with an indication of the effectiveness of the film. Second, it will furnish a file of film case histories which can be used to make future pictures more effective.

- 5 -

#### 4. Pre-testing of Proposed Film Continuities

Prior to the production of a short subject, an outline of the film continuity, or several proposed outlines on the same theme, can be tested for audience criticism.

This process will increase the effectiveness of continuities finally selected for production and would thereby improve the informational effort of the motion picture industry.

#### 5. General Opinions about Motion Pictures

General preferences of representative moviegoers can be secured. Included in this would be public preference for various types of pictures, general public reaction to news-reels, etc.

### RESEARCH TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The Bureau of Intelligence would employ three research tools to obtain the above information. These tools and techniques are:

1. A film laboratory will be established, equipped with facilities for the exhibition of pictures and with Program Analyser equipment. The Program Analyser enables a person to express his "likes" and "dislikes" to specific parts of a motion picture while the film is being shown. In composite, it presents a group profile of "likes" and "dislikes."

The film laboratory research will be limited to relatively small groups of carefully selected moviegoers, about 50 to 100 persons being used for the test of any single motion picture. The picture will be exhibited, and the group will express its preferences by means of the Program Analyser and by detailed interviews following the showing. The same group may be used for the pre-testing of continuities.

2. A mail questionnaire will be sent to all motion picture theatres in the country to gather information on audience size and composition, and on exhibition policies.

This "inventory" of U. S. motion picture theatres would make possible audience size estimates for films shown in any combination of theatres and would permit a pre-selection of theatres to reach most effectively specific segments of the population.

It would also permit a selection of a group of theatres as representative of all U. S. theatres. By checking the programs of this sample, audience size estimates could be made without resort to a list of theatres exhibiting a given film. In addition, the sample can be used for occasional

- 6 -

studies of motion picture exhibition practice. For example, a check can be made to determine the number of theatres that adjust their running schedule by omitting assigned war shorts from some of their performances, etc.

3. The nationwide interviewing facilities of the Bureau of Intelligence are available for studying general public preferences in regard to motion pictures.

- 7 -

#### IV. Short subjects program

The fourth step in the over-all program would be the suggestions of subjects and treatments of war information shorts based on analyses of the extensive reports on American public opinion conducted continuously by the Bureau of Intelligence. These reports show areas of ignorance and misunderstanding, revealing in a reliable and unmistakable manner where information and promotion are needed and along what lines.

The indication of need for quick and available information at various points and for various sections of the population can be readily combined with our knowledge, based on audience composition research (III) of just where and in what form this material be presented in film form. Further, the program of such short subjects will be helped by our knowledge of what types of films the public, in the areas under consideration, have been seeing, including newsreels, shorts, and feature pictures. All the information gained above would be valuable in directing the short program, both for long-term presentations and for immediate attacks on important problems.

This material, provided continuously to the Motion Picture Bureau, would provide part of the material needed to insure an adequate coverage of the war and the promotion necessary for the war effort by means of the motion pictures.

## **Appendix B**

### **The "Special Bulletin" on Japanese-Americans**

Office of War Information  
Bureau of Motion Pictures

SPECIAL BULLETIN

The War Relocation Authority has requested this office to advise the motion picture industry to exercise extreme discretion in the treatment of Japanese-Americans on the screen.

The War Relocation Authority states, "It is inevitable that in dealing with our enemies in Japan the motion picture producers, writers, and directors will present them in an unfavorable light. With this no one can take issue. However, in enthusiasm for painting the despicable nature of the enemy abroad, it sometimes happens that American citizens whose ancestry traces back to Japan are presented as being disloyal to the United States. There are in the United States some 85,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry. Most of them have demonstrated in many different ways their loyalty to this nation, to our government, and to the cause for which we are fighting. Those whose disloyalty has been established have been apprehended by the appropriate authorities. The evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry from the Western states is not an indictment of the entire group as being disloyal, but rather an



Page 2.

admission that the government found it impossible in a short time to segregate the disloyal from the loyal. Military officials point out that the concentrations near the West Coast of these people who look like our Japanese enemies, enormously complicated the defense of our Coastal areas; hence, in the interest of national safety, they were evacuated. They are quartered in relocation centers in the interior of the country until opportunities can be found for the many persons among them who are loyal to the United States to take their respective places in the national war effort."

The government's policy toward the Japanese is simply this: fair treatment now and after the war.

The report to Congress of the Tolan Committee emphasizes the importance of a clear understanding of the situation. Says the report:

"The curtailment of the rights and privileges of the American-born Japanese citizens of this country will furnish one of the gravest tests of democratic institutions in our history. As with all previous crises in the nation's history, the preservation of liberties will depend upon the degree to which clear vision is applied to momentary difficulties. Realism must go hand in hand with a profound sense of responsibility for the maintenance of our way of life."

Page 3

Motion pictures, wielding a larger influence today than ever before on the attitudes and emotions of the American people, can help bring about a just solution to the problem of the Japanese-Americans. These are the points to watch in presenting Japanese-Americans on the screen:

- (1) Do not present them as martyrs. For the most part they recognized the necessity of mass evacuation and cooperated cheerfully.
- (2) Do not over-emphasize the disloyalty of the few.
- (3) Show the evacuees as making the best of an unfortunate situation that grew out of military necessity.
- (4) Emphasize the responsibility of the American people to deal fairly with the Japanese-Americans now and after the war, so as to insure the preservation - for all peoples - of the democratic principles for which we are fighting.

October 24, 1942

## **Appendix C**

### **Government Films on Japanese Civilians**

### Government Films on Japanese Civilians

The author has found four government films which, in whole or in part, discuss the character of Japanese civilians:

1. My Japan, Treasury Dept., 1943, 16 minutes. This film was intended for non-theatrical distribution in factories and clubs during War Loan Drives. It uses captured footage of Japan and a supposedly Japanese narrator who describes the strength and determination of his people and contrasts it with American weakness and lack of commitment. This is the only one of the four films which was probably seen by the general public in the United States. It was not given a theatrical release. Film No. 56.30, Motion Picture, Sound and Video Branch, National Archives, Washington.

2. Japanese Behavior, Office of Strategic Services, 1945, 51 minutes. The titles list this film as Part 3 of the Japanese Background Study Program made for the Schools and Training Branch. It is a compilation film which takes excerpts from Japanese theatrical and documentary films and puts them together with a very sarcastic narration to suggest that they accurately portray Japanese life. Film No. 226.2, Motion Picture, Sound and Video Branch, National Archives, Washington.

3. Know Your Enemy - Japan, Signal Corps, 1945, 63 minutes. This film was begun under Frank Capra's supervision in 1942 to explain the nature of the Japanese to U.S. soldiers. The saga of its production over the next three years is described in William J. Blakefield's article "A War Within." (Sight and Sound, 52 (1983), 128-133.) The film would have been released

to theatres in the U.S. by OWI, through the War Activities Committee, but the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima made it obsolete. It was withdrawn, on the recommendation of General Douglas MacArthur, from military release after only three weeks. The film portrays the Japanese character as violent and cruel beneath a serene exterior. At the insistence of John J. McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War and a participant in the decision to evacuate the Japanese-Americans, a title appears at the beginning of the film which praises the bravery of the Nisei combat team in Europe. Film No. A00432, National AudioVisual Center, National Archives, Washington.

4. Our Job in Japan, Signal Corps, 1946, 17 minutes. This was the last film produced by Frank Capra's unit and apparently it was never released. According to one report, it also displeased General MacArthur. (See Blakefield's Documentary Film Classics Produced by the United States Government, (Washington: GPO, 1982), pp. 31-32.) The film was intended for occupation troops to encourage a policy of non-fraternization with former enemies. The film sympathetically portrays the Japanese people as pawns of scheming leaders although it contains a bizarre animated collage of human brains. Film No. A06847, National AudioVisual Center, National Archives, Washington.

## **Appendix D**

### **Documentation on Japanese Relocation**

*Japanese relocation*

APRIL 6, 1942

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

ARCH A. MERCEY  
OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT REPORTS  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

EISENHOWER OUT OF TOWN FOR FEW DAYS WITH JOHN BIRD,  
HIS INFORMATION CHIEF. NOT POSSIBLE TO GIVE SCHEDULE  
NOW. BIRD WILL WIRE DETAILS THURSDAY.

EM. ROWALP

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

## OFFICE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

## OFFICE MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Robert W. Horton, Director  
 Division of Information, Office for Emergency Management  
 Date: 4/23/42  
 From: Arch A. Mercey  
 Deputy Coordinator of Government Films  
 Subject: JAPANESE EVACUATION PROGRAM

John Bird, Director of Information for the War Relocation Authority, gave Mr. Bolte and me a rather complete summary of the relocation problem in connection with the Japanese on the West Coast. Both Mr. Bolte and I feel definitely that there is need for motion picture coverage for the following purposes:

1. Record documentation for the Government in the largest relocation program in history.
2. Use of this footage for both theatrical and non-theatrical audiences to give the public a real understanding of the problem and what is being done about it.
3. Acquisition of footage for use by the Donovan office and the Rockefeller office in foreign propaganda. We have been specifically advised by both of these offices that they would be interested in using the footage.

I would like to recommend that since you have a camera crew available now, you authorize Mr. Gercke to send a writer-director to the Coast to make a complete study. I would advise the writer in charge to come here and check with Mr. John Bird and then proceed to work with the War Relocation Authority.

This general problem came up first when Mr. Eisenhower requested us to go into the matter of motion picture coverage. The status of the War Relocation Authority seems somewhat unclear, and Mr. Wellett discussed the matter with Wayne Coy. Mr. Coy said it would have to be handled by or through your office. He further said that if it was a matter of funds, he felt quite certain there would be no difficulty in your obtaining the necessary funds even if it required an expenditure over and above your present allotment. Since the relocation work is moving forward rapidly, if action is to be taken, I strongly urge that the matter be expedited.



STANDARD FORM NO. 14  
APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT  
MARCH 10, 1925

# TELEGRAM

OFFICIAL BUSINESS—GOVERNMENT RATES

FROM	OEM FILM UNIT
BUREAU	OFFICE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
CHG. APPROPRIATION	DIVISION OF INFORMATION

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 10-1723

FAST WIRE

MAY 1, 1942

MR. PHILIP MARTIN, JR.  
OEM FILM UNIT  
ROOM 1000  
1600 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

HORTON AND ARMY HAVE OKAYED WEST COAST PROJECT FOR IMMEDIATE  
START. BOLTE FLYING NEW YORK ARRIVING OFFICE TWO O'CLOCK. WILL  
HAVE FULL DETAILS. ASK "A" CREW STAND BY.

GEORGE GERCKE  
HEAD CONSULTANT, OEM FILM UNIT

# 52

C  
o  
p  
yWAR DEPARTMENT  
Bureau of Public Relations  
WASHINGTON

June 11, 1942

Mr. Robert Horton  
Information Division  
Office for Emergency Management  
New Social Security Building  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Horton:

With reference to the permission granted by the Bureau of Public Relations to the Office for Emergency Management camera crew, under the direction of Mr. Guy Bolte, to make scenes at enemy alien concentration camps on the West Coast, this is to advise you that that film must be submitted to this office for review prior to any editing.

For the Director, Bureau of Public Relations:

(s) W. M. WRIGHT, JR.  
Colonel, G. S. C.,  
Chief, Pictorial Branch,  
Bureau of Public Relations.

20. U. S. Information Publishing  
June 17, 1942

Colonel W. M. Wright, Jr.,  
Chief, Pictorial Branch,  
Bureau of Public Relations,  
War Department,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Colonel Wright:

Acknowledging your letter of June 11, addressed to Robert W. Horton, this will advise you that motion picture film photographed in connection with coverage of Japanese relocation from West Coast areas will, of course, be submitted to your office for review prior to any editing.

Shooting on this picture was completed in California on Monday. Such dailies as were available at the time were screened for a member of General Dewitt's staff last week in San Francisco for his information and at his request. I was informed by Mr. Guy Bolte, director of the picture, that no exceptions were taken to the footage screened.

As soon as all footage has been assembled in New York, I shall be glad to make it available to you for review at your convenience. Mr. M. S. Eisenhower, Director, War Relocation Authority, has also been advised of the completion of shooting.

Sincerely yours,

George Gercke,  
Head Consultant, Film Unit.

GG:MB

2201 U.S. Information Building  
June 17, 1942

Mr. M. S. Eisenhower, Director,  
War Relocation Authority,  
622 Barr Building,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Eisenhower:

By way of progress report on the motion picture coverage of the Japanese relocation story, this will advise you that shooting has been completed on such phases of the story as are now available. Guy Bolte, the director, is leaving San Francisco tonight by plane for New York where I plan to join him tomorrow for a tentative review of the footage.

The camera crew has been instructed to remain in San Francisco awaiting further advice. These men would still be available for further shooting if such were needed.

I have had word from Colonel W. Mason Wright, Jr., Chief of the Pictorial Branch of the Bureau of Public Relations, War Department, to the effect that all film must be submitted to his office for review prior to any editing.

I would appreciate any suggestions you may care to make as to how this matter should proceed further. Mr. Mercey, of course, is fully familiar with all details.

Sincerely yours,

George Gercke,  
Head Consultant, Film Unit.

68-1000

Mr. Spewack

7/31/42.

Eleanor Herring

Japanese Relocation picture.

Mr. Morrill B. Tozier, of the War Relocation Authority, has called to find out the status of the Jap relocation film. He came over with Mr. Baker when we screened the footage for WRA and Mr. Eisenhower.

I explained to him that it had been suggested that completion be held up until September when final shots can be taken of the projects after they have settled down and established themselves.

He thought this a good idea, and asked that, if convenient, we let them have the edited version of the final footage for showing to key staff people and to Mr. Myer, the Director, who was not able to see the original screening.

He had one comment which I pass on for what it is worth: He missed two points in the over-all picture:

1. Shots of the farm land left behind.
2. Some coverage of the farm work that will be done on the projects.

Mr. Tozier is Assistant Chief, Office of Reports, WRA.

I have brought this to Mr. Mercey's attention, but thought perhaps you should have a memorandum for your records.

# **Transcript of Japanese Relocation Soundtrack**

Office of War Information, 1942, 9 minutes.

Transcribed by the author from the film, Film No. 208.207, Motion Picture, Sound and Video Branch, National Archives, Washington.

The author's classification of the narration as corresponding to the dangerous, harmless or good treatment views is shown in the left column.

## **Title:**

Following the outbreak of the present war, it became necessary to transfer several thousand Japanese residents from the Pacific coast to points in the American Interior. This is an historical record of the operation, as carried out by the United States Army and the War Relocation Authority. The narrator is Milton S. Eisenhower, who was director of the War Relocation Authority during the initial period of the transfer.

**View:**           **Narration [Image in brackets where applicable]:**

[Eisenhower in his office]

**Dangerous**           When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, our west coast became a potential combat zone. Living in that zone were more than 100,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of them American citizens, one-third aliens. We knew that some among them were potentially dangerous.

**Harmless**           Most were loyal,

**Dangerous**           but no one knew what would happen among this concentrated population if Japanese forces should

try to invade our shores. Military authorities therefore determined that all of them, citizens and aliens alike, would have to move. This picture tells how the mass migration was accomplished.

Harmless            Neither the Army, nor the War Relocation Authority, relished the idea of taking men, women and children from their homes, their shops and their farms, so the military and civilian agencies alike determined to do the job as a democracy should: with real consideration for the people involved.

Dangerous           First attention was given to the problems of sabotage and espionage. [goes to map] Now here at San Francisco for example, [pan of harbor] convoys were being made up within sight of possible Axis agents.

[houses and hotel]

There were more Japanese in Los Angeles than in any other area. In nearby San Pedro, houses and hotels occupied almost exclusively by Japanese were within a stone's throw of [air base, etc.] a naval air base, shipyards, oil wells. [boats in harbor] Japanese fishermen had every opportunity to watch the movement of our ships. Japanese farmers were living close to [factory] vital aircraft plants. So as a first step, [boats in harbor] all Japanese were required to move from critical areas such as these. But of course, this limited evacuation was a solution to only part of the problem. The larger

problem, the uncertainty of what would happen among these people in case of a Japanese invasion, still remained. [Army office] That is why the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command determined that all Japanese within the coastal areas should move inland.

[Officers go to map.]

Good Tr.           Immediately the Army began mapping evacuation areas and for a time encouraged the Japanese to leave voluntarily. The [sic] trouble for the voluntary evacuees soon threatened in their new location, so the program was quickly put on a planned and protected basis. Thereafter the American citizen Japanese and Japanese aliens made their plans in accordance with Army orders.

[posting of evacuation notice]

Notices were posted. All persons of Japanese descent were required to register. [first scenes of evacuees] They gathered in their own churches and schools and

Harmless           the Japanese themselves cheerfully handled the enormous paperwork involved in the migration.

Good Tr.           Civilian physicians made preliminary medical examinations. [long scene of officials talking to evacuees] Government agencies helped in a hundred ways. They helped the evacuees find tenants for their farms. They helped businessmen lease, sell or store their property. This aid was financed by the government.



Harmless      The quick disposal of property often involved financial sacrifice for the evacuees.

[Shows scenes described on soundtrack]

Now the actual migration got underway. The Army provided fleets of vans to transport household belongings. Buses moved the people to Assembly Centers. The evacuees cooperated wholeheartedly. The many loyal among them felt that this was a sacrifice they could make in behalf of America's war effort.

In small towns as well as large, up and down the coast, the moving continued. Behind them, they left shops and homes they had occupied for many years. Their fishing fleets were impounded and left under guard.

Good Tr.      Now they were taken to race tracks and fairgrounds where the Army almost overnight had built Assembly Centers. They lived here until new pioneer communities could be completed on federally owned lands in the interior.

Santa Anita racetrack, for example, suddenly became a community of about 17,000 persons. The Army provided housing and plenty of healthful, nourishing food for all. The residents of the new community set about developing a way of life as nearly normal as possible. They held church services: Protestant, Catholic and Buddhist. They issued their own newspaper, organized nursery schools and

Harmless      some made camouflage nets for the United States Army.

Good Tr.      Meanwhile in Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and elsewhere, quarters were being built where they would have an opportunity to work and more space in which to live. When word came that these new homes were ready, the final movement began.

At each relocation center, evacuees were met by an advance contingent of Japanese who had arrived some days earlier and who now acted as guides. Naturally, the newcomers looked about with some curiosity. They were in a new area, on land that was raw, untamed, but full of opportunity. Here they would build schools, educate their children, reclaim the desert. Their own physicians took precautions to guard against epidemics.

Harmless      They opened advanced americanization classes for college students who in turn would instruct other groups.

Good Tr.      They made a rough beginning of self-government;

Dangerous      for while the Army would guard the outer limits of each area, [not shown]

Good Tr.      community life and security were largely up to the Japanese themselves.

They immediately saw the need for developing civic leaders. At weekly community meetings, citations were given to the block leaders that worked most diligently.

Special emphasis was put on the health and care of these American children of Japanese descent.

Harmless        Their parents, most of whom are American citizens, and their grandparents, who are alien, immediately wanted to go to work. At Manzanar, they built a glass house and began rooting guayule cuttings. The plants when mature will add to our rubber supply. At Parker, they undertook the irrigation of fertile desert land.

[farm lands]

Dangerous        Meanwhile, in areas away from the coast and under appropriate safeguards,

Harmless        many were permitted to enter private employment, particularly to work in sugar beet fields where labor was badly needed.

[people lining up]

Good Tr.        Now this brief picture is actually the prologue to a story that is yet to be told. [pan of farm land] The full story will begin to unfold when the raw lands of the desert turn green and

Harmless        all adult hands are at productive work on public lands or in private employment. [long shot of camp with mountains in the background] It will be fully told only when circumstances permit the loyal American citizens once again to enjoy the freedom we in this country cherish and

[cut to medium shot and pan of same scene]

Dangerous        when the disloyal we hope, have left this

country for good.

Good Tr. In the meantime, we're setting a standard for  
the rest of the world in the treatment of people  
Dangerous who may have loyalties to an enemy nation.

Good Tr. We are protecting ourselves without violating  
the principles of Christian decency. We won't  
change this fundamental decency no matter what our  
enemies do, but of course we hope most earnestly  
that our example will influence the Axis powers in  
their treatment of Americans who fall into their  
hands.

## **Appendix E**

**Documentation on A Challenge to Democracy**



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

JUN 2 1944

My dear Mr. President:

I again call your attention to the urgent necessity of arriving at a determination with respect to revocation of the orders excluding Japanese Americans from the West Coast. It is my understanding that Secretary Stinson believes that there is no longer any military necessity for excluding these persons from the State of California and portions of the States of Washington, Oregon and Arizona. Accordingly, there is no basis in law or in equity for the perpetuation of the ban.

The reasons for revoking the exclusion orders may be briefly stated as follows:

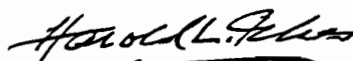
1. I have been informally advised by officials of the War Department who are in charge of this problem that there is no substantial justification for continuation of the ban from the standpoint of military security.
2. The continued exclusion of American citizens of Japanese ancestry from the affected areas is clearly unconstitutional in the present circumstances. I expect that a case squarely raising this issue will reach the Supreme Court at its next term. I understand that the Department of Justice agrees that there is little doubt as to the decision which the Supreme Court will reach in a case squarely presenting the issue.
3. The continuation of the exclusion orders in the West Coast areas is adversely affecting our efforts to relocate Japanese Americans elsewhere in the country. State and local officials are saying, with some justification, that if these people are too dangerous for the West Coast, they do not want them to resettle in their localities.
4. The psychology of the Japanese Americans in the relocation centers becomes progressively worse. The difficulty which will confront these people in readjusting to ordinary life becomes greater as they spend more time in the centers.
5. The children in the centers are exposed solely to the influence of persons of Japanese ancestry. They are becoming a hopelessly maladjusted generation, apprehensive of the outside world and divorced from the possibility of associating—or even seeing to any considerable extent—Americans of other races.
6. The retention of Japanese Americans in the relocation centers impairs the efforts which are being made to secure better treatment for American

prisoners-of-war and civilians who are held by the Japanese. In many localities American nationals were not interned by the Japanese government until after the West Coast evacuation; and the Japanese government has recently responded to the State Department complaints concerning treatment of American nationals by citing, among other things, the circumstances of the evacuation and detention of the West Coast Japanese Americans.

I will not comment at this time on the justification or lack thereof for the original evacuation order. But I do say that the continued retention of these innocent people in the relocation centers would be a blot upon the history of this country.

I hope that you will decide that the exclusion orders should be revoked. This, of course, would not apply to the Japanese Americans in Tule Lake. In any event, I urge that you make a decision one way or another so that we can arrange our program accordingly.

Sincerely yours,



Secretary of the Interior.

The President,

The White House.

*Ickes folder*  
*2-44*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 8, 1944.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE:

Will you talk about this with  
Secretary Stimson and after that with  
Secretary Ickes?

F.D.R.

Secret letter to the President, 6-2-44, from  
Secretary Ickes re urgent necessity of  
arriving at a determination re revocation  
of the orders excluding Japanese Americans  
from the West Coast. (Copy of letter is  
attached)



THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON  
June 9, 1944

4849

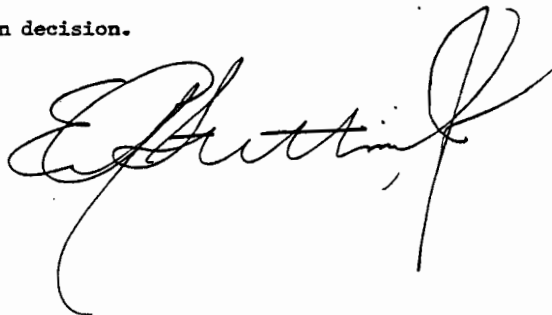
MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Revocation of the Orders Excluding  
Japanese Americans from the West Coast

At your request I discussed the attached letter with Mr. McCloy this morning, and after discussing it with Mr. McCloy, I also talked with Secretary Ickes.

The Army is in accord with the views set forth by Mr. Ickes.

The question appears to be largely a political one, the reaction in California, on which I am sure you will probably wish to reach your own decision.



- The Acting Secretary of State)  
- The Secretary of the Interior)

**THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON**

June 12, 1944.

**MEMORANDUM FOR**

**THE ACTING SECRETARY OF STATE  
THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR**

The more I think of this problem of suddenly ending the orders excluding Japanese Americans from the West Coast the more I think it would be a mistake to do anything drastic or sudden.

As I said at Cabinet, I think the whole problem, for the sake of internal quiet, should be handled gradually, i.e., I am thinking of two methods:

(a) Seeing, with great discretion, how many Japanese families would be acceptable to public opinion in definite localities on the West Coast.

(b) Seeking to extend greatly the distribution of other families in many parts of the United States. I have been talking to a number of people from the Coast and they are all in agreement that the Coast

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

-2-

would be willing to receive back a portion of the Japanese who were formerly there -- nothing sudden and not in too great quantities at any one time.

Also, in talking to people from the Middle West, the East and the South, I am sure that there would be no bitterness if they were distributed -- one or two families to each county as a start. Dissemination and distribution constitute a great method of avoiding public outcry.

Why not proceed seriously along the above line -- for a while at least?

F. D. R.

No papers accompanied the original of this memorandum to the Acting Secretary of State; copy of this memorandum sent to the Secretary of the Interior.

ADDRESS OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO  
THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

June 16, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

With reference to your memorandum of June 12, 1944 I agree with your opinion that it would be a mistake to do anything drastic or sudden in ending the orders excluding from areas on the West Coast American citizens of Japanese descent. I understand that before any of these people can be resettled in those areas it will be necessary for the military authorities to raise the exclusion order against them. At such time as it may be considered desirable to end the exclusion order it should be possible to make provision for a gradual and orderly relocation of those found to be loyal to the United States and acceptable to the communities in which they seek resettlement according to the same procedure that is now being followed by the War Relocation Authority in placing these people in other parts of the United States.

I understand that there are pending in the courts actions to test the constitutionality of the exclusion order as applied to American citizens. If you have not already done so you may wish to consult the Attorney General and the Secretary of War concerning the status of the constitutional angle of the problem.

Reports reaching the Department from various sources have indicated that any wholesale return of these people to their former homes might result in incidents owing to the intense feeling against them on the part of some of the inhabitants of the Western Defense areas. Others who have carefully studied the question are of the opinion that many substantial residents of the West Coast area want at least some of these Americans of Japanese descent back, not only on the grounds of fair dealing with those who are loyal American citizens but also because they are needed in the economic and commercial activities of the states concerned.

From the

-2-

From the international standpoint the evacuation of Japanese nationals and Americans of Japanese origin from the West Coast area and their detention gave rise to a similar movement of Americans to assembly centers in areas under Japanese control. Moreover, the detention of these people and incidents that have occurred in our detention centers have resulted in protests from the Japanese Government and have supplied that Government with pretexts for refusing to negotiate for further repatriation of our nationals in Japanese custody or for their relief. Experience has shown that incidents involving persons in our custody attract more attention and result in more publicity unfavorable to our interests than incidents involving Japanese nationals and Japanese-American citizens at large. As long as these people remain in the custody of the Federal Government, therefore, any incidents concerning them are more likely to give rise to protests from the Japanese Government and to the possibility of retaliation and reprisals than if the people concerned are at liberty.

It is my opinion, therefore, that the welfare of our people still in Japanese custody will be served by the release as soon as circumstances permit of all of these people who are found to be loyal to the United States. I agree with you, however, that the matter of their resettlement in the Western Defense area should be approached discreetly. Accordingly, I would favor adopting simultaneously both the methods suggested in your paragraphs (a) and (b) with a view to the gradual dissemination and distribution of loyal individuals and families both in areas on the West Coast and in other parts of the United States. This would seem to be the wisest method of feeling out the sentiment of the country and ascertaining whether the blind prejudice against these people cannot gradually be overcome.

C H

WRA

JUN 19 1944

Mr. Elmer Davis  
Director  
Office of War Information  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Davis:

Mr. John Baker, Chief of our Reports Division, informs me that he and Mr. John Ryckman, Director of Information for the Department of the Interior, have recently discussed with Mr. Herbert Little of your office the possibility of obtaining OWI assistance in conducting a radio and motion picture campaign of limited scope in the near future on WRA activities and problems.

I believe that such a campaign could be extremely helpful to us in building better public understanding of our program and would like to request that OWI assistance be made available to us along the lines suggested by Mr. Little.

Sincerely,

*D. J. Myer*

Director

cc: ✓ Mr. Herbert Little  
Office of War Information

Mr. John E. Ryckman  
Director of Information  
U. S. Dept. of the Interior

Postal Zone 25

June 23, 1944

D. S. Myer, Director  
War Relocation Authority  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Myer:

In reply to your letter of June 19, the Office of War Information will cooperate with your agency, through the Interior Department, to make available information facilities which will be useful to your program.

I understand that our people have been discussing with your Mr. Baker some special activities in connection with new developments in your activities, and that whenever these new developments are formulated, we will proceed to act as fast as we can.

Mr. Little and Mr. Nash of this office will keep in touch with your program.

Very truly yours,

Elmer Davis  
Director

By: Herbert Little

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Washington

"A Challenge to Democracy"

"A Challenge to Democracy" tells the story of 110,000 displaced people and how the United States Government is handling their problem. It is a 20-minute sound movie, filmed in color and produced by the War Relocation Authority of the Department of Interior.

The subjects of this film are the people of Japanese descent who were evacuated from the Pacific Coast by the Army in 1942 and subsequently transferred to barracks cities (relocation centers) managed by the civilian War Relocation Authority. In the two years since evacuation, more than 22,000 of these people have resettled in other parts of the country. The film traces the movements of these resettlers, showing them at work and in their new homes, and telling of their adjustment to new communities.

Also shown are some of the 85,000 evacuees, both American citizens and Japanese aliens, who are still living in relocation centers. Here they receive the necessities of life, such as food, shelter, education, and medical care. Recreation and other essentials of community life are provided by evacuees themselves.

The film closes with scenes taken at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where the 442nd Combat Team (a unit composed entirely of Japanese Americans) recently completed training in preparation for active duty.

The future of these evacuees, whose exclusion from the Pacific Coast set a precedent in American history, is a problem to be solved by all citizens in a democratic nation. Their reestablishment into new communities and readjustment into the normal stream of American life are truly

"A Challenge to Democracy."



# **Transcript of A Challenge to Democracy Soundtrack**

War Relocation Authority, 1944, 18 minutes.

Photography: Tom Parker & Charles Mace; Narration: John Baker.

Transcribed by the author from the film, Film No. 210.5, Motion Picture, Sound and Video Branch, National Archives, Washington.

The author's classification of the narration as corresponding to the dangerous, harmless or good treatment views is shown in the left column. Where Japanese names are used, this fact is indicated in brackets as are references to the images and other comments.

**View:**            **Narration [Comments in brackets where applicable]:**

[The first few words are garbled.]

[General scenes of the camps]

The situation: More than 100,000 men, women and children all of Japanese ancestry removed from their homes in the Pacific coast states to wartime communities established in out of the way places.

Harmless        Their evacuation did not imply individual disloyalty,

Dangerous      but was ordered to reduce a military hazard at a time when the danger of invasion was great.

Harmless        Two-thirds of the evacuees are American citizens by right of birth. The rest are their Japanese-born parents and grandparents, but these are not under suspicion.

Good Tr.        They are not prisoners. They are not internees.

They are merely dislocated people:

Harmless the unwounded casualties of war.

The time: spring and summer of 1942. The place: ten different relocation centers in unsettled parts of California, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and Arkansas. The relocation centers are supervised by the War Relocation Authority which assumed responsibility for the people after they had been evacuated and cared for temporarily by the Army.

A relocation center: housing from 7 to 18,000 people. Barrack-type buildings divided into compartments; 12 or 14 residence unit buildings to a block. Each block provided with a mess hall, bathhouse, laundry building and recreation hall. About 300 people to a block. The entire community bounded by a wire fence and guarded by military police: symbols of the military nature of the evacuation.

Each family, upon arrival at a relocation center, was assigned to a single room compartment about 20 by 25 feet; barren, unattractive; a stove, a lightbulb, cot, mattress and blanket. These were the things provided by the Government. The family's own furniture was in storage on the west coast. Scrap lumber, perhaps some wallboard, and a great deal of energy, curtains, pictures, drapes, depending on the family's own ingenuity and taste, helped to make the place livable. Some families

built partitions to help provide some privacy. Others took what they received and made the best of it.

The 300 or so residents of each block eat in a mess hall, cafeteria-style, rough wooden tables with attached benches. The food is nourishing, but simple. A maximum of 45 cents a day per person is allowed for food and the actual cost is considerably lower than this, for an increasing amount of food is produced at the centers. A combination of Oriental dishes to meet the tastes of the Issei, born in Japan, and of American-type dishes to satisfy the Nisei, born in America.

Lands that had never been occupied or farmed was chosen for most of the relocation centers. Most of the land was covered with desert growth or with timber in the case of the Arkansas centers. It had to be cleared before farming could start. Then it had to be levelled and irrigation ditches laid out or rebuilt in order that the people could produce a part of their own food. Then came the plowing and preparation of the soil, and planting. A few of the centers had crops in 1942; in 1943, all of them.

About half of the evacuated people were farm folk, skilled producers of vegetables, fruit and other crops. They had made desert lands productive before and around the relocation centers they could and did do it again by the application of hard work

and water for irrigation. At the two centers in Arkansas, they have introduced western-type irrigation and succeeded in producing vegetables in the heat of mid-summer when ordinary production methods are not successful. Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, corn, melon and many other crops have been grown on land that a year or two years ago was unproductive.

Food production is aimed at self-support for the relocation centers. It does not go onto the open market. From the fields it goes to the center warehouse. From there it may go to the kitchen or it may be shipped to other centers. The Arizona centers are most productive in winter. The others produce only in summer or fall, so vegetable crops are exchanged.

Besides the workers engaged in farming, it takes many others to handle food, in the warehouses, in transportation, in the kitchens. To keep the rolling equipment, trucks, cars and tractors, in operation it takes mechanics and machinists. Water mains have to be laid and repaired. Roads, sanitation systems and buildings have to be maintained. At the Arkansas centers, the land is covered with trees and the clearing process provides lumber for construction and firewood for heating.

Those who work are paid. Wages by outside standards are low: 12 dollars a month for

beginners, 16 dollars a month for most of the workers, and 19 dollars a month for professional people such as doctors and others on skilled or difficult work. The workers also receive a small cash allowance for clothing. The money received as wages lets [name] buy the things he needs which are not provided by the Government, but most have had to draw on their savings to live as they would like to.

Good Tr.

In each center, a cooperative business association operates stores which handle clothing, toilet articles and the merchandise which would be needed in any community. The coops also run barber shops, beauty parlors, shoe repair shops and other services for the community.

When the school bell rings, it's the signal for these students at Heart Mountain in Wyoming to change classes. The school curriculum meets the standard of the state where the center is located. Mathematics, American history, geography: the fundamentals of an American education. This is a class in mathematics. [pause] And a rhythm class of fifth grade pupils. In the modern school, many subjects are added to reading, writing and 'rithmetic as part of the school work. Some of the teachers are Caucasian. Some are evacuees, Americans of Japanese ancestry. The first graders in this class, taught by an evacuee teacher, are making colored drawings which will decorate the

walls of their barracks building classroom, the same kind of beautifully clumsy drawings that can be found in almost any first grade room.

In the high school, vocational training gets plenty of attention: scientific farming studied in school and in the field. And older boys are learning trades. They use them first as part of the regular work of the relocation center: as welders, mechanics, machinists. Frequently, learning to do the necessary jobs in a relocation center has led to better jobs outside.

Health protection is part of the obligation assumed by the Government. Evacuee doctors and nurses serve in the hospital under the supervision of Caucasians; dentists, oculists and pharmacists also.

- Harmless      The Japanese professional men and women, most of them American citizens, had their own practices on the west coast before evacuation. Many of them now are in the Army Medical Corps and others have replaced doctors and other health workers in communities outside the centers.
- Good Tr.        The health service in relocation centers, in proportion to population, is about like that of any other American community in wartime,
- Harmless        barely adequate.
- Good Tr.        The evacuees have a form of community self-government which aids the appointed officials in the administration of the community. A

community council of evacuees is elected to make rules and regulations. Anyone 18 years of age or older is eligible to vote in the elections which are carried on in the democratic manner. A judicial commission sits in judgement on minor offenses. Attorneys among the evacuees represent the prosecution and the defence. A serious crime would be tried in the regular courts outside the center.

Harmless      The crime rate among people of Japanese ancestry in the United States has always been extremely low and this has proved to be the case in the centers.

After working hours, over weekends, a relocation center is the scene of baseball and softball games by the dozen. The teams are counted by the hundreds. Evacuees have provided practically all of their own equipment, for little government money has been spent for strictly recreational purposes. In the fall, touch football is in season and more quiet forms of recreation. The relocation centers include many well-known artists. Amateur and professional artists and craftsmen have used their time in creating beauty in many different forms.

Sunday church services: advance preparations include carrying the benches into the barracks building. Most of the alien Japanese are Buddhists, but almost half their American-born children belong to Christian denominations:

Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian.

Good Tr.      Except for State Shinto involving emperor worship, there is no restriction on religion in the relocation centers.

Harmless      Boy Scouts, who usually provide the color guard for the American flag which floats over each center, are typical of the American organizations which are prominent in each center. There is a U.S.O Club to provide entertainment for Japanese-American soldiers who come to the center to visit their families or friends. Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, Parent-Teacher Associations, the Red Cross: the evacuees belonged to these organizations in their former homes and transplanted them to the centers. The Boy Scout Drum and Bugle Corps here is leading a harvest festival parade marking the high point of the successful season of farm production. Everyone turns out to view the Beauty Queen, see the well-decorated floats and to join in the good time that goes with the full day of celebration.

While they have many things in common with ordinary American communities, in the really important things relocation centers are not normal and probably never can be. Home life is disrupted. Eating, living and working conditions are abnormal. Training of children is difficult. Americanism, taught in the schools and churches and on the playground, [shows soldier guarding the camp] loses



much of its meaning in the confines of a relocation center.

Good Tr.        When the War Relocation Authority was only a few months old, it was decided that relocation centers should not be maintained longer than necessary.

Harmless       The first people to leave the relocation centers were volunteer workers recruited to help tend, and later to harvest, the sugar beet crop of the western states. Almost one-tenth of the evacuees volunteered for this seasonal work in 1942. The result of their labor was a year's sugar ration for about ten million people. [guard checking young couple out through camp gate] But work in the beet fields was temporary. Most of the people returned to the centers.

Good Tr.        The War Relocation Authority has been more concerned with permanent relocations: getting the evacuees out of the backwater of the relocation centers into the mainstream of American life so their labor can help to win the war, so the cost to the taxpayers may be reduced, [shots from The Way Ahead of Japanese-American family in their suburban home] so there can be no question of the constitutionality of any part of the action taken by the government to meet the dangers of war, so no law-abiding American need to fear for his own freedom.

[hands leafing through an evacuee's file]

Harmless

Relocation of the evacuees is not to be carried on at the sacrifice of national security. Only those evacuees whose statements and whose acts leave no question of their loyalty to the United States are permitted to leave. All information available from intelligence agencies is considered in determining whether or not each individual is eligible to leave. Those who are not eligible to leave have been moved to one center to live presumably for the duration of the war. The others, established as law-abiding aliens or loyal Americans, are free to go whenever they like. Thousands already have gone. Here are a few of them.

[sequence taken from The Way Ahead]

[name] is examining corn for insects in a field in Illinois. [name] used to operate his own orchard in Hollister, California. Machine work was a hobby; now it's his job. He's making precision parts for American bombers. [name] is Assistant Head Nurse in a large hospital. She was a teaching supervisor of nurses in a Seattle hospital before evacuation. She has three brothers, all in the Army. The tractor driver here is [name] who used to farm near Walnut Grove, California and was evacuated to the Tule Lake center. This young machinist has learned his trade since he relocated to Chicago and his boss says he's learned it well. He's helping to make kitchen equipment. [name]

paints miniature dolls in a midwestern studio. She used to live at Talusa, California and then lived at the Granada Relocation Center. In the background is [name] who divides her time now between working and attending college. [name] feeds chickens on an Illinois farm and on the same farm is an Issei, [name]. [3 names] cultivate potatoes on a farm in the middle west. This is [name]. Her father ran a fruit stand in Berkeley, California and [she] helped him. After living in the Poston Relocation Center, she moved to Chicago and has become a skilful turret lathe operator. These young men spraying potatoes are from the Minedoka Relocation Center. This boy liked the printing trade, but had no chance to learn it until he had left a relocation center. He's helping to print some of the nation's supply of magazines. American eggs are shipped all over the world to Americans in the armed forces and to our allies. [name] breaks eggs which are to be dried. And in the same plant, [name] feeds the drying machines. [name] used to be a clerk in Madera, California. Now he's a candy maker in Chicago. American flags, some of them for the armed forces, are turned out by [name]. She hopes that one of the flags she makes someday may be carried in triumph down the streets of Tokyo. The produce business in Watsonville, California used to be home for these boys. Now they're in the produce business in

Denver. [name] used to be a farmer at Fresno, California. From the Jerome Relocation Center, he moved to the middle west to make marshmallows. Threshing oats in the middle west is a new experience to [name] who used to grow vegetables near Venice, California. An artificial leg doesn't interfere with the way he handles a pitchfork. This young fellow, operating a bookbinding machine, is typical of the evacuees who are adjusting to new communities, getting along with their employers, fellow workers and neighbors and finding satisfaction in becoming self-supporting once more.

[footage of combat team from Go for Broke]

The Americanism of a great majority of America's Japanese finds its highest expression in the thousands who are in the United States Army. Almost half of them are in a Japanese-American combat team created by order of the Secretary of War early in 1943. Some of the volunteers came from Hawaii; some from the eastern part of the United States mainland where there was no mass evacuation. Hundreds of them volunteered while they were in relocation centers; volunteered to fight against the militarism and oppression of Japan and Germany. They know what they're fighting against and they know what they're fighting for: their country and for the American ideals that are part of their upbringing: democracy, freedom, equality of opportunity regardless of race, creed

or ancestry.

[music fades in as soldiers march by saluting  
flag]

## Appendix F

Documentation on Little Tokyo, U.S.A.

## FEATURE REVIEW

## LITTLE TOKYO, USA

20th-Fox

20th-Fox

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LITTLE TOKYO, USA tells a story of Japanese espionage and fifth column activities in Los Angeles just prior to and during the first days of the Japanese-American war.

It is the unhappy truth that virtually everything in it — that which is said and that which is left unsaid — is calculated to shiver the well-sensitized spines of the Office of War Information.

In brief:

(1) The picture opens with a spoken foreword in which the commentator states that "this document" is entirely composed of material which can be substantiated in fact. The impression is deliberately created that the subsequent story is in the nature of a documentary. This is not true.

(2) The Japanese-American problem is treated to a thorough mauling. At the outset of the picture, at a Tokyo conference of Japanese bigwigs, it is firmly planted that American citizens of Japanese ancestry do far more damage than Japanese who merely reside in America, because the opportunities of the former group are greater. And, of course, all any person of Japanese ancestry asks is the opportunity to sabotage democracy and the U.S.A. This idea is implicit throughout the picture. It is a theory with a corollary; the Japanese-American community is a single, unified body which works together at all times for itself and against America. For example, when the hero, Detective Mike Steele, goes into Little Tokyo to investigate a murder, the Japanese of the community dummy up on him. "Just try to get information from this Oriental bund around here," he complains. And sure enough, he doesn't learn a thing from the tight-lipped, belligerent group.

(3) The theory that there might exist a loyal American among those of Japanese ancestry is advanced three times in the course of the story's unfolding; two out of the three times it is kayoed.

(a) Early in the story, the hero, Detective Lieutenant Mike Steele, feels that he needs the help of a loyal American of Japanese

Marjorie Thorson	20th-Fox	July 9, 1942
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Dorothy B. Jones	20th-Fox	July 9, 1942
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Marjorie Thorson		July 14, 1942
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## FEATURE REVIEW

LITTLE TOKYO, U.S.A.

20th-Fox

20th-Fox

( )

not set

blood. He indicates that finding such a person is pretty much a needle-in-the-haystack proposition, but presently he comes up with Ochiai, a young Japanese-American with whom Steele went to high school. He calls on Ochiai, who provides his assistance. Before the reel is ended, Ochiai turns up again -- in the morgue, minus his head. It is the implication that is important; that the penalty for loyalty to the U.S. is swift, certain, and mortal.

(b) The heroine, Marjorie Thorson (Brenda Joyce), is a lady radio news commentator. Up to the outbreak of war, she unwittingly plays the Axis game by preaching isolationism, appeasement, and significantly, tolerance for Japanese-Americans. "Give up the idea that every Jap gardener is a spy, and enjoy life," she repeatedly tells Mike. But in the end, isolationism proved to be a myth, appeasement a fallacy, and every Jap gardener turns out to be a spy!

(c) At the end of the picture, when everything ends happily with the internment of the Japanese, the lady commentator declares that "all Japanese, whether loyal or not" must be removed to camps where it is certain they can do no more harm. This is the only unrefuted hint in the entire picture that loyal Japanese-Americans actually exist.

(4) There is a certain type of propaganda whose purpose is to create unreasoning hatred. This kind of propaganda, one of the vehicles by which the Nazis rode to power, addresses itself chiefly to emotional prejudice. In LITTLE TOKYO, USA we find some prime examples of this dangerous and double-edged weapon:

(a) Suma, a small Japanese boy, repeats to his American schoolmates what he has heard his father boast: that the Japs are going to take California. In the face of Suma's certainty, the American youngsters, confused and furious, can only answer with their

Marjorie Thorson	20th-Fox	July 9, 1942
Dorothy B. Jones	20th-Fox	July 9, 1942
Marjorie Thorson		July 14, 1942



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# FEATURE REVIEW

## LITTLE TOKYO, USA

20th-Fox

20th-Fox

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not set

ineffectual fists..... This mixture of pathos, bathos and patriotism is designed to arouse the fighting instincts of every hundred-percenter in the audience. In another context, the incident might serve an entirely different purpose: for example, to show how war burdens children with hatreds they do not understand, but here it is purely a rabble-rousing device.

- (b) In another part of the picture, Mike goes to the home of the murdered Oshima to see if he can pick up any clues. He finds a Japanese couple, Mr. and Mrs. Okuna, already established in the house. Mrs. Okuna is all done up in a Japanese kimono; neither she nor her husband can speak good English. But both of them are very well up on their constitutional rights, babbling brokenly and belligerently that Mike has no legal right to enter their home or to question them without a warrant.

This scene is played in such a fashion that it demands a perfectly obvious reaction from the audience: "These people are abusing their constitutional rights; therefore, we must take all those constitutional rights away from all such people."

To pick up the point that this type of propaganda is double-edged, let's see how the audience gets what it has been made to want: - Not much footage later, here Mike declares he's going to search the home of a Japanese suspected of having an illegal broadcasting outfit. The heroine objects that he has no warrant. Mike bluntly declares that he doesn't need a warrant; he'll see to it that his badge (detective lieutenant) gets him into any house he wants to see. This is not even one step removed from Gestapo methods; yet the material is presented in such a way that the audience is expected to be moved to wild cheers. Did somebody mention that we are presumably fighting for the preservation of the Bill of Rights?....

Marjorie Thorson

20th-Fox

July 9, 1942

Dorothy B. Jones

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July 9, 1942

Marjorie Thorson

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## FEATURE REVIEW

LIONEL TONYO, USA

20th-Fox

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20th-Fox

not set

Again: When the Japanese spy ring has at length been rounded up, disarmed, and is about to be marched off to jail at gun's point, the hero suddenly decides he wants a clip at the leader of the ring. This inspires his superior (police) officer to make with a haymaker on his own; whereupon one of the minor characters joins the scramble — and we cut. The point is, this is no even fight: the villains are disarmed and helpless and facing a battery of guns. Physical beating up of people one doesn't like is another Gestapo tactic; and we call the Nazis inhuman because they beat up anti-Nazis who cannot fight back. Is it permissible for us to resort to the same hoodlumism if the victims happen to be people we dislike instead of people they dislike?

This is not to say that enemy agents have not abused the constitutional rights granted them by the United States or that such abuse should not be portrayed by pictures. But in this picture the significance of this material has perhaps unconsciously been twisted to another and unadmirable purpose. The misuse of democratic privilege by some does not give anyone, especially the makers of a picture which will be seen by millions, the right to encourage the flouting of the democratic values for which we are fighting.

(5) The loyalty of Japanese-Americans is dealt another blow in a scene which occurs just following the outbreak of the war. Takimura, head of the spy ring, is shown putting in his shop window the sign: "This store is owned by a loyal American." The implication is, of course, that all such signs were hung up by traitors.

(6) All the spies are shown contributing feverishly to the Japanese-American Buy A Bomber campaign. Implication is that all those who contributed were merely trying to cover up their true anti-American activities.

Marjorie Thorson

20th-Fox

July 9, 1942

Dorothy B. Jones

20th-Fox

July 9, 1942

Marjorie Thorson

July 14, 1942

## FEATURE REVIEW

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## LITTLE TOKYO, USA

20th-Fox

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20th-Fox

not set

(7) Pressure of the 25,000 organized Japanese-American voters causes the removal of hero Mike Steele from Little Tokyo to a Hollywood beat. The police captain, telling Mike that he is seeing visions when he suspects the Japanese of disloyalty, declares, "The Japanese are a peaceful and harmless people — they grow 93% of all the vegetables in California." Mike returns bitterly that those vegetables are grown and sold very largely at a loss — because the Japanese Specie Bank subsidizes the farmers. Why the subsidy? Because the land the Japs farm happens to be next to oil drums, oil fields, military installations, airplane factories, etc. The "farmers" are really spies, collecting information for Japan and prepared, when "the day" comes, to turn their hands to sabotage.

This accusation sounds very much like the familiar propaganda line of the Associated Farmers of California, well known for its fascist bias and its interest in taking over Japanese-owned land.

(8) Scenes of the evacuation and internment of Japanese and Japanese-Americans are shown. Ironically enough, although such material is proscribed by Postal censorship for export, these scenes are the only ones which might be said to be favorable to the Japanese, who appear cheerful and cooperative.

(9) The curtain line is spoken by the newly reformed and informed heroine. Commenting on the spy activities and the evacuation of the Japanese, she pleads into the microphone, her voice breaking with earnestness, "Be vigilant, America!" So the picture closes to the strains of the Invitation to the Witch Hunt.

The real problem throughout LITTLE TOKYO, USA is the basic one of point of view. The whole body of the story is out of joint. Differently handled, the revelation of Japanese espionage methods, of Japanese objectives ("the end of the white man's rule," the "conquest of the United States, Japan's greatest stumbling block to world domination") might have been extremely effective. But rabidly unbalanced treatment of Japanese-American citizens makes it an extremely dangerous picture. One such film can open the floodgates of prejudice, can encourage the

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## FEATURE REVIEW

## LITTLE TOKYO, USA

20th-Fox

20th-Fox

( )

not set

concoction of many more of the same type of film, and can render the post-war re-absorption of Japanese-Americans an almost insuperable problem.

The fact that such a picture has been made at all indicates a frightening misapprehension concerning the war program. Couple this with the advance publicity on the picture, which exhibited what the Fox organization evidently felt to be a pardonable pride in its product, and with the excited acclaim for its war content the picture rated in the trade review, and the need for some careful re-education of the industry becomes apparent.

It is my personal opinion that it will prove almost impossible to prevent the release of LITTLE TOKYO, USA, even if that should be the desire of the Office of War Information. Fox would have an investment in this film of about \$300,000. But a careful re-editing of the picture with some retakes, should render it somewhat less objectionable.

Marjorie Thorson

20th-Fox

July 9, 1942

Dorothy B. Jones

20th-Fox

July 9, 1942

Marjorie Thorson

July 14, 1942

Lowell Mallott

July 21st, 1942

Nelson Poynter

LITTLE TOKYO, U. S. A. (20th Century Fox Film Corp.)

I am enclosing a review on LITTLE TOKYO, U.S.A. I have seen the picture and do not regard it quite as passionately as do Mrs. Thorson and Mrs. Jones.

I may wire you to urge that you take a look at it. I think it might be largely cured merely by changing the foreword and perhaps one speech at the end, plus the deletion of several references to "Orientals".

Here is a clear example of the reasons why we should see scripts ahead of shooting. The studios still refuse to accede to our request for scripts. I am not pressing them, but Colonel Jason, Joy, after discussing this with him yesterday, said he saw the necessity of our having access to scripts in advance.

Lovell Hellest

July 23, 1942

Nelson Foynter

LITTLE TOKIO, USA (20th Century Fox Picture)

Enclosed is a review of LITTLE TOKIO, USA.

When Tony Noto gets a print, I wish you would take a look at it. I have seen it, and I am not as upset by it as our reviewers, but the net effect of the picture in my judgment is to cause the audience to hate all Japanese, including the loyal fellow citizens.

I have discussed this with Colonel Joy of 80th Century Fox. He says this was not the intention of the picture. He says the intention was to cause the audience to hate only those who were disloyal.

I suggested that if after seeing the picture, you agree with me that they could take most of the curse off of it by merely changing the prologue and perhaps only two or three cuts of no re-shooting. Joy was a little annoyed and more or less put it on an all or nothing basis -- that it would go as is, or they would kill the picture entirely if it were out of line with government policy. I told him we would not take the responsibility for this and therefore, it would go as is rather than have the government kill it.

This picture dramatizes the necessity of our seeing scripts ahead of shooting - if this office is to be 100% effective.

Soon after I came out here, Joy told me about the picture, but the finished picture is a long cry from the way I visualized it.

Colonel Joy told me yesterday that prior to shooting and prior to the opening of our office here, he had sent the script to Tony Noto and that Tony Noto had showed it to Colonel Wright who approved it.

Also, the local Censorship Board has seen the picture and passed it for export.

July 24th, 1942

Re: LITTLE TOKYO, USA

Lowell Mallett says:

1. Picture would not be very harmful if in two or three spots, it can be amended to prove that all Japanese were not subversive. Suggestions for specific changes:

2. The scene where the Japanese return from Tokyo and summon The Black Dragon aids. If he could say something to this effect, "We must remember that not all our fellow Japanese are loyal to the Emperor. We must hide our activities from them."

3. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
When Mike Steele, the detective, is talking to the police captain if he could say something like, "Because there are so many loyal Japanese who will not recognize the danger."

4. The girl in the last scene broadcasting could amplify her remarks again, stating, "They were so many loyal -- etc."

See  
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Lowell Mellett

July 31st, 1942

Nelson Poynter

LITTLE TOKYO, USA

20th Century Fox is making two retakes for LITTLE TOKYO, USA, inserting dialogue that brings out the fact that all Japanese-Americans are not disloyal.

They were rather limited in their ability to make these inserts because so many of the actors in the picture are not presently on the lot. I am certain you will sympathize with the fact that the lady radio announcer cannot be used because she is in the family way, as we used to say out in Indiana.



## WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

WASHINGTON

August 26, 1942

Mr. Lowell Mellett  
Bureau of Motion Pictures Chief  
Office of War Information  
Room 2009  
14th & Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Mellett:

As I indicated over the telephone this morning, some of our staff members are considerably disturbed about the possible repercussions which the Twentieth Century movie "Little Tokyo, USA" may have on our relocation program. The results may be especially bad if the picture is widely exhibited in the Middle West where we are hoping eventually to place a number of the Japanese people in private employment.

If it were at all feasible to limit distribution in this area, such a move would be tremendously helpful to us. But we all realize, of course, that this is a dollars-and-cents matter to the Twentieth Century people and that they probably will not accept such a proposal too readily.

As an alternative, one of our staff members has suggested that we ask the company to consider the insertion of a prefatory note somewhat along the following lines:

"We are running this notice at the request of the War Relocation Authority, the Federal agency established by the President to handle the relocation of Japanese and persons of Japanese ancestry evacuated from the Pacific Coast Military Areas.

"This production was not cleared with the Federal Bureau of Investigation or any other



-2-

Government agency prior to its release. It has not been given any official sanction as an explanation of the evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific Coast areas. It should not be taken as a blanket indictment of all persons of Japanese ancestry, and especially not the citizens, who comprise two-thirds of the group and whose average age is only 23 years."

Such a notice, I would imagine, could be sent out to exhibitors as a clip and spliced in at the beginning of the print.

I realize, of course, that this is asking quite a bit especially since the company has already made some changes in response to the suggestions made by you and Mr. Eisenhower. If you could, however, present this proposal to the company's representatives, your efforts would certainly be appreciated.

Would you also be good enough to advise of any action taken on this?

Sincerely yours,

*M. M. Tozier*

M. M. Tozier  
Acting Chief  
Office of Reports

September 2nd, 1942

Mr. Lowell Mallott  
Office of War Information  
1400 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Lowell:

Re LITTLE TOKYO, USA, Colonel Jason Joy of 20th Century Fox said that they could not put in the foreword for LITTLE TOKYO, USA, as recommended by Mr. M. M. Foxier, Acting Chief, Office of Reports of the War Relocation Authority. Colonel Joy took the position that the changes which they made at the suggestion of our office were sufficient to relieve the objections that Mr. Foxier mentioned.

Colonel Joy was frankly irritated because he does not agree with the viewpoint of OWI regarding the Japanese question and apparently I have been inept at my presentation of our viewpoint because he persists in stating that we do not advocate killing Japanese merely because I have tried to present the OWI viewpoint that:

1. It is unhealthy in the interest of national morale to indicate that all Japanese in the United States are disloyal.
2. OWI tries to emphasize that Japanese military and not all the Japanese people must be exterminated.

Regard Mr. Foxier's suggestion to not circulate the picture widely in the middle west where the War Relocation Authority hopes to place a number of Japanese people in private employment — Colonel Joy also rejected this.

Sincerely,

Nelson Poynter,  
Assistant Chief,  
Bureau of Motion Pictures  
Office of War Information.

*Review made by  
Poynter & Co.  
9/26/42*

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
OFFICE MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Nelson Poynter  
From: William B. Lewis  
Subject:

Date: September 17, 1942

The attached memorandum was sent me by Frank Stanton,  
who is Consultant to the OWI Bureau of Intelligence.

I think it will be important to you.

*WBL*

Attachment

*Director*

OEM-32

24332

Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.

F 5238 5/42

To Dr. Stanton  
 From Mr. C. H. Smith  
 Station \_\_\_\_\_

## OFFICE COMMUNICATION

September 14, 1942

Bad Propaganda for Radio and Films

I don't know if this means anything at all but I am passing it on for what it is worth.

Saturday night I was exposed to a grade Z associate feature titled "Little Tokio U.S.A.", released I believe by Twentieth Century Fox. In the course of this opus a radio station of considerable magnificence located in Los Angeles was used as a part of the plot. The manager of this station is the number one Nazi agent in town.

This seems to me very bad publicity for radio since the inference is given by the picture that even in the big radio stations, agents could be and in this case were in positions of responsibility. But this wasn't enough!

The flaxen haired heroine was a radio news commentator whose boy friend was a cop in town. Now the news commentator in December 1941 is still preaching sweetness and light while her flat footed friend is chasing sinister Japanese up and down all convenient alleys. Then she sees the light. She prepares a script designed to scare the pants off the audience, submits it to the station manager who goes to great pains to explain that her contract is up for renewal the next day. He points out that he has wangled a raise in salary for her and then with a most sinister leer says that the sponsor was well satisfied with the work she had done but did not want her to use scripts such as this one which might scare the bejeez out of the women and keep them from buying his product.

This is even worse publicity for radio. I don't know what can be done about it but it seems that possibly those interested in maintaining morale might make a point of the fact that no useful purpose is served by undermining faith in radio in so insidious a way.

  
 Charles H. Smith.

CHS:FEB  
 CC - Mr. Churchill

## **Appendix G**

### **Documentation on Samurai**

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OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION  
Los Angeles Overseas Bureau  
Motion Picture Division

FEATURE SCRIPT REVIEW

~~Confidential~~

Title: ORDERS FROM TOKYO (Confession of a Japanese Spy)

Studio: Independent

Producer: Not given on script

Writers: Ben Mindenburg

Stars (Tentative): Not given

Date & Stage of Script: 3-page undated synopsis and 87-page screenplay. Est. Gr: B

Classification: Major: II C a (Japanese Enemy - Espionage)

Read by: Dorothy B. Jones

Date: Oct. 14, 1943

Read by: Lillian R. Bergquist

Date: Oct. 13, 1943

Reviewed by: Lillian R. Bergquist

Date: Oct. 13, 1943

Backstopped by: Dorothy B. Jones

Date: Oct. 16, 1943

SYNOPSIS: In 1923, at the time of the Japanese flood and earthquake, Dr. and Mrs. Morry, medical missionaries in that country, rescued and adopted a Japanese boy, Kaniketchi, whom they brought to San Francisco. In this country Kaniketchi was given a strictly American upbringing, which included an excellent education, and all the care and kindness which his foster-parents could lavish upon him. When "Ken" was sixteen, the Morrys adopted another child, four year old Frank ....

At an early age, Ken demonstrates a talent for painting which his parents develop by giving him the finest art instruction. While painting at Monterey, Ken meets a Shinto priest, spiritual advisor to the Japanese of that vicinity. The priest, however, is a member of the ancient family of Yamamoto, and is also a Samurai warrior. This man sees in Ken a potential disciple, meets him frequently, and in a short time has succeeded in instilling in him the principles of the "Divinity of the Emperor" and the "Japanese Superior Race." The Morrys, who know nothing of Ken's connection with the priest, send him to Europe to study medicine and painting. Abroad, he receives his doctor's degree.

Upon his return to San Francisco, Ken opens an art studio which is really a blind for operations which he conducts under the guidance of the priest. These operations consist of drawing into modernistic paintings the outlines of California bridges and public installations of all kinds, drawn to scale. These are to be used as guidance in the vast sabotage plot which is being planned by the Japanese government when she strikes at the United States. With these drawings, Ken goes to Tokyo, giving his parents and friends the excuse that he has been commissioned to select Japanese objects of art for the San Francisco World's Fair. In order to make sure that Ken is really loyal to Japan, the Japanese Secret Service sends him to the front in Shanghai, where he proves his Japanism by murdering an old English school chum, now a correspondent, who is sending out stories of Japanese atrocities in China.

Feature Script Review  
- 2 -

~~Confidential~~

Title: ORDERS FROM TOKYO

Date: 10/13/43

Description: 3-page synopsis and 87-page undated screenplay by Ben Mindenburg.

SYNOPSIS (continued):

In Shanghai, he further proves his contempt of the white race by torturing and raping a white girl prisoner. Ken is appointed Governor of California, to take office when the Japanese successfully invade the West Coast. Returning to San Francisco, Ken conducts a propaganda campaign from his art studio and from the Japanese concession at the World's Fair, from the tower of which Japanese agents keep watch on the Bay for signs of U. S. war preparedness. Ken's propaganda consists of belittling Japanese ability in all directions. The Japanese fleet are tin cans. Her fliers are near-sighted. The Japanese people are sick of war. Japan is bankrupt.

Frank, his foster-brother, is the only one who suspects Ken. This is exactly the type of thing the Japanese would wish the Americans to believe if they were preparing for war against us. When Ken realizes Frank's suspicions, he manages to lull them for the time being. Meanwhile, Japanese fishermen meet ships from Tokyo south of California, unload explosive and take it to shore, where it is buried on the land of Japanese farmers and in other appropriate places. Word goes around to the various Japanese colonies in California that the time is approaching for the vast sabotage plan to be touched off.

It is December 5th. Frank, about to leave for the Army, finally finds incontrovertible evidence in the art studio of Ken's guilt, and takes the doubting Merrys there to prove it. He leaves them on the premises while he goes for the police. The elderly doctor and his wife are surprised by Ken. They accuse him of treason, whereupon Ken slays them with a dagger. He is about to phone the order to set the sabotage plan in motion, when Frank returns. There is a bitter struggle, during which Ken falls from the window and meets his death. The F.B.I., summoned by police, arrive, secure data, and round up all the Japanese involved.

REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATION: ORDERS FROM TOKYO deals with an alleged Japanese sabotage plot to blow up the West Coast at the time of Pearl Harbor.

It is understood that the producers plan to use footage from the documentary on China, RAVAGED EARTH, and to make the film in the documentary tradition.

From the standpoint of overseas distribution the main problem which arises in connection with ORDERS FROM TOKYO concerns the theme of the script, that no Japanese, no matter where he is born, can be trusted — and the implication that all Japanese-Americans on our west coast were traitors at the time of Pearl Harbor. This is an inaccurate and unfortunate picture of an American minority group, and the production of such a film along the lines indicated in the present script could reflect unfavorably upon our democratic traditions, were the film shown abroad.

Naturally no final opinion can be given on this project until the completed script has been reviewed. However, if the producer definitely plans to make this film and submit it for overseas distribution, he should be urged (1) to give a representative picture of Japanese-Americans, and (2) to develop the narration about the Japanese militarist philosophy, as fully and accurately as possible. Only by careful development of these two themes, could the film prove of any positive value to the Overseas War Information Program.



## Feature Script Review

Title: ORDERS FROM TOKYO (Confession of a Japanese Spy)

Date: 10/13/43

Studio: Independent

Writer: Ben Mindenburg

Description: 87-page undated synopsis and screenplay. (3-page synopsis)

COMMENT: ORDERS FROM TOKYO, an incomplete screenplay, is supposedly based on the diary of a Japanese spy. While this script has possibilities for contributing to understanding of the enemy, in its present form it raises serious problems from the standpoint of Overseas Branch of OWI.

In showing how the malevolent influence of the Shinto priest molded Keniketchi, the Japanese youth, into a fanatical tool of the Tokyo war lords, the story offers an opportunity to dramatize, in corollary, how the samurai warriors and other Japanese leaders have - like the Nazis - fed their people an ideology based on principles of "Superior Race", "Divinity of the Emperor" and "Rule of the Sword." However, much of the narration in which the priest explains Japanese culture to Keniketchi remains to be written, so that it is difficult to judge at this point to what extent the script will contribute to United Nations' understanding of Japanese ideology.

A serious problem arises in the misrepresentation of the Japanese-Americans and the implication that the majority, if not all of them, were involved in a Japanese plot to sabotage our west coast at the time of Pearl Harbor. On page 13, it is stated that no Japanese is to be trusted, regardless of where he is born. The entire story appears to be based on this premise.

It is important to portray authentically the despicable nature of the Japanese enemy in this country. However, as regards the general portrayal of Japanese-Americans on the screen, it must be remembered that the majority of them have proven themselves loyal to this country. For example, at the end of May, 1943, there were approximately 7,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry in the United States Army. Americans of Japanese ancestry were incensed by atrocities of the Japanese government and army; soldiers of Japanese ancestry at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, bought over \$100,000 worth of war bonds on two days immediately following the announcement that the Japanese government had executed American fliers captured after the bombing of Tokyo. Americans of Japanese ancestry have participated in some of the most bitter fighting in Italy.

Therefore, a distinction should be made between Japanese spies on the west coast, and Japanese-Americans, the great majority of whom were loyal to this country. Unless this distinction is made, the film would misrepresent an American minority group, and would fail to show the responsibility felt by our government and people to deal fairly with Japanese-Americans now and after the war, so as to insure the preservation, for all peoples, of the democratic principles for which we are fighting. Fascist countries are noted for oppression and inequities against minority groups; it would reflect most unfavorably on America abroad if our films suggest that minorities receive the same treatment here.

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OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION  
Los Angeles Overseas Bureau  
Motion Picture Division

FEATURE SCRIPT REVIEW

**RESTRICTED**

Title: ORDERS FROM TOKYO

Studio: Cavalcade Pictures Co.

Writers: Ben Mindenburg

Stars (Tentative): Not given

Date & Stage of Script: Screenplay, undated Pp. 101 Est Gr of Pic: B

Classification: Major II (Japanese Enemy)

Read by: Lillian R. Bergquist

Date: Nov. 9, 1943

Reviewed by: Lillian R. Bergquist

Date: Nov. 10, 1943

Backstopped by: Dorothy B. Jones

Date: Nov. 12, 1943

SYNOPSIS: This is the story of a Japanese-American youth who is influenced by a samurai priest to turn traitor to the United States and organize a sabotage plot for Japan on our West Coast.

(For full synopsis, see review dated October 16, 1943. Only minor changes have been made in this story.)

REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATION: ORDERS FROM TOKYO, first reviewed in incomplete form on October 13, 1943, has not been submitted as a more detailed screenplay with fuller narration. While it makes a contribution to greater understanding of how Japanese religion and philosophy are used to warp their people, the script still raises the identical problems pointed out in the first review. These are discussed more fully in the Comment.

An additional problem arises out of the recent War Department order banning the screen portrayal of Japanese atrocities in any films involving War Department approval. Since this film ends with Frank Morry's enlistment in the Army, it would appear to be subject to this new order. On pages 38-65, Kenikitchi Morry goes to Shanghai to demonstrate to his superiors that he hates the white race. He is shown in at least two acts which are highly questionable under the War Department order -- the murder of an English friend, and the brutal beating of a white girl. This sequence also involves Japanese atrocities against the Chinese people in general, and a group of white and Chinese women who are raped. The producer should be warned that these scenes raise serious problems and because of them a film based on this script might be denied an export license.

Title: ORDERS FROM TOKYO (Cavalcade Pictures Co.)

Date: 11/10/43

Description: 101-page undated screenplay by Ben Mindenburg

COMMENT:

The incomplete script of ORDERS FROM TOKYO was reviewed by this office on October 13, 1943. While the material contained possibilities for contributing to a greater understanding of Japanese fascism, it also raised serious problems from the standpoint of this office in its misrepresentation of Japanese Americans as spies and saboteurs loyal only to Japan.

In the new submission the story itself remains unchanged except in minor instances, but a fuller narration has been written. As hoped for in the first review, the narration, which tells how the Shinto priest influenced the Japanese-American youth to become a tool of Tokyo, dramatizes the method by which the minds of their children are warped for the future service of the Japanese war lords. However, this valuable theme is contradicted throughout the rest of the story where it is both stated and implied that all people of Japanese ancestry are incapable of human decencies because they are Japanese. The portrayal of the Japanese is further confused by stating that they are not people, but "quadrupeds", "lemurian gnomes", "dwarfed baboons" (pp. 2, 8, 11 of narration).

ORDERS FROM TOKYO also implements the Japanese propaganda line that this is a racial war. While it is brought out that Japan's first attack was directed against the valiant Chinese, it is suggested that the Japanese are primarily engaged in a war against the whites (pp. 23, 55, 63, 97 of script). This emphasis on racial warfare is never refuted.

It would be possible to clarify and correct the presentation of the Japanese by showing that the United Nations are fighting Japanese fascism, whose leaders, in cooperation with fascists in Germany and Italy, embarked upon a joint plan of world conquest — not for racial reasons — but for wealth and power; that these leaders instilled in their people the false ideas of "divine origin" and superiority because that was the only way they could get them to fight such a war.

Unfortunately, this script still misrepresents Japanese-Americans as spies and saboteurs involved in a gigantic scheme to blow up our West Coast at the time of Pearl Harbor. On page 71, one Japanese-American who refuses to contribute money for the plan is killed, whereupon there is no trouble with the other Nisei. It is implied that all Japanese-American fishermen, gardeners, farmers, and everyone in Little Tokyo were traitors. As pointed out in the original review, this false portrayal of an American minority which is doing its share in fighting for democracy is most unfortunate from the standpoint of overseas distribution. It should be brought out that only a small percentage of the Japanese on our West Coast were disloyal to the United States, and that after Pearl Harbor the majority of Japanese-Americans on the West Coast cheerfully cooperated in the move to relocation camps.

CAVALCADE PICTURES CO.  
1509 No. Vine Street  
Hollywood, 28, Cal.

November 19, 1943

Mr. W. Pierce,  
Office of War Information,  
Taft Building,  
Hollywood, 28, Cal.

Re: "ORDERS FROM TOKYO"

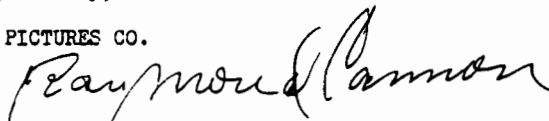
Dear Mr. Pierce:

In response to your review of November 10, 1943. We have made all alterations in action, dialogue and narration suggested in your comment -- giving full credit to American born Japanese, avoiding criticism of Japanese as a race, showing the cooperation with Fascism for world conquest, eliminating references to war as racial, etc.

Your expressed opinion that our expose of "Shintoism" would be beneficial to the war effort, was highly reassuring. We have no greater desire than to do all we possibly can to further this vital cause, and will appreciate any future suggestions you might have.

Yours respectfully,

CAVALCADE PICTURES CO.



RAYMOND CANNON

rc.ehs

Los Angeles Overseas Bureau  
Motion Picture Division  
616 Taft Building  
Hollywood, California

November 23, 1943

Mr. Ben Mindenburg  
Cavalcade Pictures Co.  
1509 No. Vine Street  
Hollywood 28, California

Dear Mr. Mindenburg:

We are very much pleased with the revisions you are making in the script of ORDERS FROM TOKYO, as detailed in the letter from Raymond Cannon. These changes will enormously improve the picture from our viewpoint.

I think you have a splendid opportunity to spell out the ideological background of the Japanese militarists in a way which has not yet been portrayed on the screen. I would suggest that this can be most useful if the direction and acting are done with restraint and a minimum of melodrama. We shall be very much interested in seeing a rough cut at the earliest possible stage.

Sincerely yours,

Warren H. Pierce  
Deputy Chief

Los Angeles Overseas Bureau  
 Motion Picture Division  
 616 Taft Building  
 Hollywood 28, California

November 26, 1943

Mr. William Montague  
 Office of War Information  
 35 W. 45th Street  
 New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Montague:

An independent producer here, Ben Mindenburg, has submitted a script to this office for his picture, tentatively titled "Orders from Tokyo." He has cooperated very closely with this office in following all suggestions and we believe that the film has some affirmative value in the war information program.

Mr. Mindenburg applied on WFB Form 2165 for 290,000 linear feet of negative and positive stock to make this picture. He was advised by Harry Carpenter, one of Hopper's assistants, in a letter -- WFB Reference CD-106 -- that because he had no record of use in 1941 he could not be granted the film unless it was approved by this office.

I do not know just how stringent the present shortage is. This picture is not of earth-shaking value. On the other hand, however, it does do a partial job of revealing how young Japanese are indoctrinated with the spirit of Bushido and become militarist killers. If the shortage is not acute I should recommend the granting of this allotment.

Would you please discuss this matter with Mr. Carpenter and telegraph me at the earliest possible moment what your views are as to Mr. Mindenburg's prospects.

Sincerely yours,

Warren H. Pierce  
 Deputy Chief  
 Los Angeles Overseas Bureau

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OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION  
 Los Angeles Overseas Bureau  
 Motion Picture Division

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FEATURE VIEWING

Title: SAMURAI (Formerly: ORDERS FROM TOKYO)

785067  
 11/1/44

Studio: Cavalcade Pictures

Producer: Ben Mindenburg

Rel. Studio:

Rel. Date:

Type Print: Tone Time: 85 min.

Writers: Ben Mindenburg

Stars:

Classification: Major: II C a (Japanese Espionage) Straight

Seen by: Gene Kern  
 Eleanor Berneis

Date: November 1, 1944  
 November 1, 1944

Reviewed: Eleanor Berneis

November 1, 1944

Backstopped by: Gene Kern

November 1, 1944

SYNOPSIS: A Japanese boy adopted by American missionaries betrays America when he grows up.

(For full synopsis, see Script Review dated October 13, 1943)

RECOMMENDATION: A synopsis of SAMURAI was reviewed by this office October 13, 1943, under the title ORDERS FROM TOKYO, and a screenplay was reviewed November 10. Both these scripts suggested problems in the theme that all Japanese-Americans are potential traitors to the United States, and in presenting the Japanese war as a racial war. It was emphasized that only by presenting a representative picture of Japanese-Americans and by developing carefully the narration on the Japanese militarist philosophy as fully and accurately as possible could this story prove of any value to the Overseas War Information Program.

Literally speaking, the specific problems noted in the Script Reviews do not appear in the film. Dialogue lines state that the Japanese militarists cannot trust American Nisei for sabotage work and that only followers of Bushido are in on the plan to cripple California in preparation for Japanese invasion. Also following the suggestions of this office, all references to racial aspects of the war have been eliminated.

However, by a peculiar combination of documentary technique -- which gives the story a factual air and a production quality on the level of an inferior comic-strip, this picture emerges as a most unfortunate portrayal of our Japanese enemies, in that even the sober facts about Japanese militarism appear so fantastic they cannot be taken seriously.

Within this over-all unfortunate presentation, certain problems are outstanding.

~~RESTRICTED~~

SAMURAI (Cavalcade Pictures)

-2-

Nov. 1, 1944

RECOMMENDATION: (Continued)

These include: A scene in which a group of Americans applaud a Japanese statement that when the Chinese affair is over, we will all realize that a great deal of good has been done there by the Japanese; the story point that a gigantic plan for sabotage in California to be carried out simultaneously with the attack on Pearl Harbor was prevented by the arrest of all the saboteurs the day before, implying that Pearl Harbor was not a stab in the back, but was foreseen in America; and constant reiteration in the narration of American self-praise which would appear to audiences overseas as distasteful boasting.

For these reasons, SAMURAI would be most unsuitable for distribution in liberated areas.



## **Appendix H**

**Documentation on Betrayal from the East**

JUN 16

AIR MAIL

Mr. M. M. Toslar  
Acting Chief, Office of Reports  
War Relocation Authority  
Barr Building  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear "Tos":

Per your instructions, I ran down to Los Angeles over June 14 and 15 to check on the motion picture referred to in Jimmy Fidler's broadcast of last Sunday. I first contacted Mr. Fidler who told me that RKO is making a picture with the inducement of the Hearst newspapers who have planned to give it heavy publicity. It would not be a big picture but an ordinary "E" variety similar to "Behind the Rising Sun" and "Hitler's Children". Japanese Americans, he said, were to be depicted as members of a huge spy system which he felt was a reflection on the loyal Japanese. He stated that his informants had told him that within the walls of RKO there had been strenuous argument over this phase of the picture. That was as much as he knew about the situation, except that his personal feelings were that Japanese Americans were as loyal as any other hyphenated group. He explained that he had had two Japanese servants in his home prior to Pearl Harbor and that their grief over the attack on Pearl Harbor convinced him that they were far removed from any influences of the old country. He felt further that the motion picture industry was treading on dangerous ground in encouraging any cinema story which might create racial antagonism.

I then approached Paul Harrison, acting public relations chief of the Will Hays office, otherwise known as the Association of Motion Picture Producers. The top man, Arch Reeve, was ill at home. Mr. Harrison had recently taken his position with the Hays office and had been six weeks on the job, coming from the New York Scripps Howard newspaper. He was reluctant to go with me to the RKO studio although had Reeve been available, I am sure that through old personal friendship we would have made further investigation.

- 8 -

I contacted Piller again and he stated that he had just received information that the Navy office had told KEO that they were going too far in their preliminary story and that the KEO had been given orders to inject a few sympathetic moments for the Japanese Americans. In addition, Piller said that he had received many letters of commendation and commendation for his Sunday broadcast, but that those who opposed the broadcast were mostly anonymous.

On the second day I was able to contact Terry Lieber, KEO publicity chief, who made an appointment for me to meet William Gordon who is in charge of the war policy of KEO pictures. Mr. Gordon was apparently sure that more than usual interest was being taken in the picture. He told me that he was familiar with the entire evacuation situation as well as acquainted with the non-evacuation of the Hawaiian Islands, and in subsequent statements he included proof that he was very familiar with the whole program. He brought out from his desk a letter he had written in March of 1942 in which he had proposed that a "short" be made of the evacuation showing the manner in which the Japanese Americans treat their letters to KEO production chiefs showed a deep sympathy for the American Japanese. He said that the picture to be produced was called "Fall from the East" and adapted from a book written by Allen Rand. This had also been used in strip form by the Hearst newspapers. The studio had bought the title and had changed the story considerably so as to eliminate much of the anti-racial tinge. Where the book refers to subversive activity in Hawaii, the film transfers that action to Panama. Where the book deals with Navy personnel, that also is eliminated.

The story is filmed for the pre-Pearl Harbor year. It opens in Tokyo (which is not in the book) where a newspaper man discovers the plot to blast Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He attempts to bring this information to the United States, but aboard the boat is a Lieutenant commander of the Japanese navy who is posing as a Japanese American schoolboy working his way home from a summer vacation. This character is responsible for the death of the newspaper man and his secrets. The Lieutenant commander schoolboy returns to "some college in the Bay area" under orders from the Imperial Government. It is his duty to get plans of all military and strategic installations, ship yards, aircraft, factories, etc. Heeting him is a Japanese American who is acting for one of the United States Government intelligence services. This Japanese American pretends to be in on the over-all Japanese plot but is reporting to his American superior. As part of the business of the film, he is photographed and studied by Japanese who recognize him as an American spy in their midst. He is slowly tortured to death, while, Mr. Gordon said, was a sympathetic note for the Japanese Americans. This, he further declared, will be a very horrible scene, but will prove

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that some Japanese Americans are loyal to this country. Brought into the picture now at this time are three supposed Japanese Americans one of whom is the counterpart of "the yellow Capone of Los Angeles", a gambler who was continually in trouble with the police before the war. The two or three other characters are also of the gangster type and, as Mr. Gordon explained it, not in any way to be confused with the law-abiding merchant and vegetable-growing Japanese American. They are involved in subversive activities and take part in a switch<sup>ing</sup> of the story to Panama with a "cape and rebbers" finale <sup>and with</sup> ~~final~~ <sup>film</sup> vengeance overtaking them. Of course the boy meets girl theme is carried throughout.

Mr. Gordon said that the original plan for the story plot had changed, but he wished to assure us that there was no intent in the final picture to hold the Japanese Americans up to scorn. I told him that I had no authority or right to dictate any themes of motion pictures, but that I would like to have him and his script writers know about some of the things Americans of Japanese ancestry were doing for the war. I pointed out the number of men already in the service, the number of Purple Hearts received in Italy by the 100th Battalion as reported by the Associated Press, the 153 members of the War Mothers Club at Jerome and the many patriotic and production contributions in the camps. I left with him a few pieces of our literature on these matters and asked that they be referred to his script writers for background.

While I was given assurances that there would be nothing of racial antagonism in the picture, I was not fully satisfied that such would be the case. It is obvious, however, that what might have been a very bad situation has been changed by Fidler's open criticism, but still further changes could be made with further representations. This would necessitate what we already ~~said~~ <sup>have</sup> in Los Angeles and that is a good reports officer who can keep up to date with these matters.

Because of other duties I had in San Francisco, I could not spend more than two days in Los Angeles and Hollywood which, by the way, is a city of magnificent distances, and therefore could not make many other contacts I should have made. For instance, Frank Capra is compiling a picture at Ft. Hal Beach, as they call it, showing signal corps pictures of the 100th Battalion landing in Italy. The scenes disclose many of the nice being killed as they shipped ashore. This is part of a series called "This Is America" which Capra is doing.

Mrs. Kaplan of the American Principals and Fair Play Committee in the Southland has a luncheon planned for June 20 at which Robert Gordon Sproul is to talk, but she needs plenty of help, even if indirect help.

- 4 -

Under the date of June 13 a letter has been sent to outstanding Catholics in Los Angeles by Daniel G. Marshall calling for the establishment of a Catholic inter-racial council in Los Angeles at a preliminary meeting to be held Wednesday evening, June 21, at the offices of the "Tidings", Catholic weekly newspaper. I will have a report on this from a personal friend who will attend the meeting. This, of course, has been spurred by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph T. Moynihan of Los Angeles Catholic Diocese. I am enclosing a copy of the letter sent out by Mr. Marshall.

There are these bright spots in the picture, but we still need help to put them to their fullest use. I talked to many people in many walks of life in Los Angeles and I found there is considerable fertile ground for our over-all program.

I told Mr. Gordon of our film, "A Challenge to Democracy", and he suggested that we find the proper approach to Harry Warner of Warner Brothers and it would be possible to present that picture in many theatres.

Attorneys in the Southland are still waiting for an interpretation of the evacuation order, stating that it is one of the most mystifying procedures of American jurisprudence.

Well, that's the report.

Sincerely,  
Pat Frayne

Pat Frayne  
Information Specialist

Enclosure

~~RESTRICTED~~

WJ  
GK  
PL  
WR  
EB  
Wash  
File  
Extra

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION  
Los Angeles Overseas Bureau  
Motion Picture Division

FEATURE SCRIPT REVIEW

MUN/AP 78506

Title: BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST Est. Grade of Picture: B  
Studio: RKO Producer: Herman Schlom  
Writers: Screenplay by Kenneth Gamet, from the Novel BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST  
Stars (Tentative): Bonita Granville  
Date & Stage of Script: 127-page Estimating Script dated June 22, 1944  
Classification: Major: II C 2 (Enemy Within - Japanese Espionage in U.S.) Melodrama  
Read by: Eleanor Berneis June 29, 1944  
Gene Kern June 30, 1944  
Reviewed by: Eleanor Berneis June 30, 1944  
Backstopped by: Gene Kern July 1, 1944

SYNOPSIS: An American civilian helps Army Intelligence smash a Japanese plot of sabotage from Seattle to Panama.

IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE STUDIO, PLEASE KEEP THIS STORY PLOT CONFIDENTIAL.

Jack Marsden, an American newspaperman in Tokyo, confides to Hildebrand, his editor, that he has uncovered a Japanese plot of espionage and sabotage to cripple American defenses from Seattle to San Diego in one simultaneous blow when war comes. Because there is no other sure way of getting the information out of Japan with secrecy, Marsden boards a liner to take it out himself. En route, Marsden is pushed overboard, and back in Tokyo Hildebrand is pushed out of a high window. When the ship arrives in San Francisco, Tanni, the cabin-boy, reports to the Japanese Consul as a high-ranking Japanese officer, Lieutenant-Commander Miyazaki. Tanni is also a special language student at Stanford, where he is the students' favorite cheer-leader. In order to complete the Japanese plan for sabotage, Kono, one of Tanni's assistants, contacts an easy-money American named Eddie Clark. Always glad to pick up extra money, Eddie agrees to do whatever the Japs ask, until he learns they want a plan of the defenses of the Panama Canal and realizes this is a serious matter. Although watched constantly by the Japanese, he succeeds in contacting Army Intelligence. They know of every step he has made, as they have had him under surveillance through a girl Secret Service agent named Sue Dennison. They ask Eddie to fall in with the Japanese plans and promise they will keep watching him. The Japanese discover that Sue is an agent and order Eddie to bring her to them,

~~RESTRICTED~~

Page 2.

BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST (RKO)

July 1, 1944

SYNOPSIS (Continued):

showing him how a Japanese named Onaya, also employed by the American Secret Service, has been caught and is being tortured. Under the watchful eyes of the Japanese, Eddie takes Sue to a football game and tells her what has happened. When they go out on the street, Sue is run over and killed. The Japanese take Eddie to Panama, where he works with Army Intelligence in obtaining bonafide but obsolete plans of the Canal's defenses. He finds Sue there, disguised as a blonde Finn and doing counter-espionage work. She explains that the "accident" when she was apparently killed was framed by the Secret Service to fool the Japanese. A plan to have Eddie killed by two German-Americans before he leaves Panama is foiled by the Army, but Sue learns of the substitute plan and saves Eddie. For this, she is killed by the Germans in the steam room of a beauty parlor. Back in the States, Eddie is taken to a Japanese liner docked in San Francisco Bay, where he delivers the plans for the Canal. Realizing now that Tanni, the cabin-boy, is really the leader of the espionage gang, Eddie searches Tanni's cabin. Caught in the act by Tanni, Eddie fights to kill Tanni after the Japanese tells him about Sue's murder. The liner has already left the dock and is moving out of the Bay. Eddie knocks out Tanni and then collapses. When he regains consciousness, he finds that Army Intelligence has boarded the ship, and is taking it back to the dock. Tanni will not live. Captain Bates, of the Army, foresees that America must build a fighting machine of overwhelming strength, because there can be no compromise with the Japanese enemy, only death.

RECOMMENDATION: Dated just prior to Pearl Harbor, BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST uses Japanese espionage and U.S. Army counter-espionage as the frame-work for cheap melodrama. Consultation with the San Francisco office on this story resulted in advice to us that OWI raises no objection to this screen presentation of a wide-spread Japanese sabotage plot to cripple the West Coast prior to Pearl Harbor, or the presentation of a loyal Japanese-American being tortured by Japanese spies in Los Angeles under the circumstances of this story unless these points are questioned by the War Department.

From the standpoint of this office, the attention of the studio should be drawn to the following points:

- Page 52 - The reference to Japanese Ambassador Admiral Nomura as "a good friend of the President" should be deleted from the Newsreel Commentator's speech.
- Page 100 - The line, "Finnis do not usually like Germans" would be better deleted, in the light of the present Finnish situation.

Page 3.

~~SECRET~~

BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST (RKO)

July 1, 1944

RECOMMENDATION (Continued):

Page 121 - Miyazaki's line informing Eddie that the Japanese liner is "making its last peacetime voyage" would imply that Army Intelligence had information in advance that Japan would make war against the United States, and would be better deleted.

Page 125 - Could Captain Bates' speech referring to Eddie's fight with Miyazaki be revised to eliminate the line, "The way you took the law into your own hands"? This would avoid the implication that Eddie, a bonafide Secret Service agent, acted illegally.

Page 127 - Captain Bates' line, "Their way of life must be destroyed from the earth forever" seems contrary to United Nations policy. This could be corrected by substituting "Japanese militarism" for "their way of life."

This script should of course be checked with the War Department, particularly regarding the screen presentation of a pre-Pearl Harbor Japanese sabotage plot to cripple the West Coast, and the presentation of an atrocity being committed against a loyal Japanese in Los Angeles.



OK  
DJ  
Wash  
Extra

July 3, 1944

Mr. William Gordon  
Censorship Department  
RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.  
780 North Gower Street  
Hollywood, California

Dear Bill:

I am returning herewith the script of BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST.

Inasmuch as this story presents U.S. Army Intelligence triumphant over Japanese espionage, this office is content to follow whatever opinion is expressed by the War Department on the portrayal of a widespread Japanese sabotage plot to cripple the West Coast prior to Pearl Harbor. The same applies to the presentation of a Japanese atrocity committed on a loyal Japanese-American in Los Angeles. I am assuming that you are in contact with the War Department on both of these questions, since their approval of the script is definitely advisable.

From the standpoint of psychological warfare, I would like to offer several suggestions for your consideration:

Miyazaki's line informing Eddie that the Japanese liner is "making its last peacetime voyage" (page 121) implies that Army Intelligence had specific information on when to expect a Japanese attack. This would negate the surprise element of the stab in the back at Pearl Harbor. Could this line be deleted?

In our opinion, Captain Bates' expression of the Japanese - "Their way of life must be destroyed from the earth forever" - (page 127) is contrary to United Nations war aims. What do you think about substituting "Japanese militarism" or its equivalent for the phrase "their way of life"?

The reference to Japanese Ambassador Admiral Nomura as a "good friend of the President" (page 52) is open to misinterpretation abroad.

Mr. Gordon

- 2 -

July 3, 1944

Could Captain Bates' speech on page 125, referring to Eddie's fight with Miyazaki, be revised to eliminate the line, "The way you took the law into your own hands"? This would avoid the implication that Eddie, in behalf of Army Intelligence, acted illegally.

In the light of the present Finnish situation, the line "Finns do not usually like Germans" (page 100) appearing in an American-made film could be misunderstood by audiences abroad.

Thank you for sending us the script.

Sincerely,

Gene Kern,  
Liaison Officer

Encl: Script

## OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION

WASHINGTON

Aug. 1

Dave:

Would you read over the enclosed? WRA apparently has, through the Hays office and directly with RKO, obtained some modification to eliminate prejudice against loyal Japanese-Americans. Now they ask if we can do more, along the lines indicated.

I think Jap-baiting, as directed against these loyal ones, is very bad, and if you can ask Taylor Mills to look into this, it might do some good.

*if not**Return to**10-1-41*

*William (unclear)*

## PARAMOUNT PICTURES INC.

TIMES SQUARE  
CHICKERING 4-7040



NEW YORK  
CABLE ADDRESS: PANTIN

STANTON GRIFFIS  
CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

5451 Marathon Street  
Los Angeles 38, California  
August 11, 1944

Mr. David Frederick  
Director of War Programs  
Domestic Branch  
Office of War Information  
Washington, D. C.

*Handwritten signature: Herb Miller*

My dear Mr. Frederick:

Mr. Mills handed me the material and your letter in reference to the RKO picture "Betrayal From The East", which I am returning to you herewith.

The Overseas Branch of OWI in Hollywood, which has a large staff out here, are apparently specifically charged with the responsibilities of handling situations of this sort. Of course neither Branch has powers of censorship, but it has been represented to the industry that the purpose of the Overseas and here is to recommend changes in scripts so that ideas of the Government and the State Department as to relations to other countries and races may be carried out.

The moment that the Domestic Branch steps over the line and begins to make suggestions to the companies on matters which they definitely understand come under the functions of the Overseas Branch, the whole structure is weakened and adds to the general confusion. Accordingly I do not feel that either Mills or I should get into this situation and that it should be referred to the Overseas Branch.

Taylor Mills has been out here for ten days and has done a great job. We have a lot of things in the works and I think that all hands will be happy about the forthcoming program.

With best personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

*Stanton Griffis*

Stanton Griffis *by p*

SG:mb

*File*

Los Angeles Overseas Bureau  
616 Taft Building  
Hollywood, California

September 11, 1944

Mr. Herb Little  
Office of War Information  
Room 3456 Social Security Bldg.  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Little:

I am returning the correspondence you gave me  
in Washington regarding BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST.

Here is what has happened from our end since  
our conversation: We obtained the final shooting script from the  
studio and read it. Subsequently, Mr. Frayne called me from San  
Francisco and we discussed it over the phone. A lot of the things  
he thought were in the script were not included and I told him so.  
I did suggest that either he or another WRA official should contact  
the studio and ask to read a shooting script. He assured me that  
Mr. O'Day was coming to Los Angeles and would contact me. I have  
not seen Mr. O'Day and in a subsequent conversation with the  
studio, learned that he had now shown up there. The studio as-  
sured me that it was very sympathetic to the WRA problem and that  
it thought it had satisfied Mr. Frayne in a previous discussion  
with him.

As you realize, we are in a rather peculiar  
position in matters of this sort, since the WRA problem is basi-  
cally a domestic one and by order we are only concerned with over-  
seas reaction. We are happy at any time to act as liaison between  
other agencies and the studios, and due to our friendly relations  
frequently can open doors for them that they might have trouble  
crashing otherwise.

Officially, however, we cannot be concerned with  
the domestic problem. After my conversations with Frayne, I do  
feel that he had obtained a lot of information from the book and

- 2 -

from a news broadcast out here which was not used by the studio in preparing the script. I won't say that the script is now completely harmless from the WRA point of view as I am not thoroughly familiar with their problem. However, I feel that we have gone as far with this matter as we can. If O'Day does show up at the office here, I know I can arrange a conference for him with the proper representatives at the studio to clear up any doubts which may be in his mind.

It was a pleasure to meet you in Washington and if we can ever be of any service, please call on me.

Sincerely,

William S. Cunningham

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NY  
File

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION  
Los Angeles Overseas Bureau  
Motion Picture Division

**RESTRICTED**

FEATURE VIEWING

Title: BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST Rel. Studio: RKO  
Type: Melodrama Est. Gr. of Pic: A  
Locale: U. S., Panama and Japan, wartime  
Positive Propaganda Content: Entertainment  
Negative Propaganda Content: None.  
LAOB Classification: 4

Producer: Herman Schlom Producing Studio: RKO

Stars: Lee Tracy, Nancy Kelley

Writers: Screenplay by Kenneth Gamet, from the Novel BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST.

Type-Print: Release Running Time: 85 Min. Release Date: Not Set.

Seen by: Gene Kern Date: December 15, 1944  
Eleanor Bernais December 15, 1944

Reviewed by: Eleanor Bernais December 16, 1944

SYNOPSIS: An American civilian helps Army Intelligence smash a Japanese sabotage plot to cripple the West Coast.

(For full synopsis, see Script Review dated 6/30/44).

RECOMMENDATION: The screenplay of BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST was reviewed by this office June 30, 1944. Inasmuch as this story presented U. S. Army Intelligence triumphant over Japanese espionage, this office was content to follow whatever opinion would be given the studio by the War Department on the portrayal of a widespread Japanese sabotage plot to cripple the West Coast prior to Pearl Harbor. The same applied to the presentation of a Japanese atrocity committed on a loyal Japanese-American in Los Angeles. The studio was advised that several dialogue lines were questionable for overseas (see Script Review for these lines).

All the dialogue lines questioned by this office were eliminated. The film comes through as an exciting melodrama with good production quality and raises no specific overseas problems. However, because of the subject matter, it is not especially recommended for distribution in liberated areas at this time.

*Wern*

*Office Memorandum* • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Bill Cunningham

DATE: January 20, 1945

FROM : Gene Kern *CK*

SUBJECT: BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST - RKO

We have read Drew Pearson's speeches which are being attached to the RKO film BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST in prologue and epilogue form. We questioned the advisability of the reference to Hirohito, which implies that he was equally responsible with the Japanese militarists for the war: "It begins early in the year 1941 his Imperial Majesty Emperor Hirohito chose to designate his reign as 'Showa'. 'Showa' meaning 'radiant peace.' But the promises of the Emperor and his warlords belied their meaning."

I discussed this point with Bill Gordon who expressed agreement on the potential implied violation of government policy in this reference. Mr. Gordon suggested that if OWI wished to distribute BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST in certain liberated areas and found it objectionable in part, he would be glad to delete Pearson's speeches in their entirety from the prints.



## LONG RANGE CONTROL

Area

	S	G	CH
UNITED NATIONS			
Australia			
China			
England			
Ethiopia			
India			
New Zealand			
Russia			
South Africa			
UNITED NATIONS (OCCUPIED)			
Belgium		✓	
Czechoslovakia		✓	
France		✓	
Netherlands		✓	
Norway		✓	
Poland		✓	
Rugoslavia		✓	
UNITED NATIONS (DEPENDENCIES)			
British Guiana			
Gold Coast			
Hawaii			
Jamaica			
Kenya			
Nigeria			
Trinidad			
ASSOC NATIONS & TERRITORIES			
Denmark		✓	
France		✓	
Fr. Equat. Africa		✓	
Italy		✓	
LIBERATED AREAS			
French North Africa		✓	
Libya		✓	
Madagascar			
NEUTRAL			
Austria			
Finland			
Iceland			
Liberia			
Mozambique			
Portugal			
Spain			
Spanish Morocco			
Sweden			
Switzerland			
Tangier			
Turkey			
EGYPT AND MIDDLE EAST			
Egypt			
Bulgaria		✓	
Germany		✓	
Hungary		✓	
Yugoslavia			

Title: Betrayal From the East Co. BKO  
 Audience: General Running Time: 88 min.  
 Type: Feature  melodrama  
 Reviewers: Clement Reinhold, Margit Gyorgy

## Synopsis:

American newspaper men in Japan discover the existence of a Japanese-directed, Nisei executed espionage ring on the U.S. West Coast. Trying to warn our government, they are mysteriously killed.

Then, the Japanese in California, approach a broke American vanderbillian, former Army Private Dick Carter when they are trying to bribe into getting them the urgently needed plans of the Canal Zone. Carter sees through them, informs G-2 and with their backing, continues. He accomplishes his "mission" in Panama, delivering outdated plans to the Japanese who now try to get rid of the man who knows too much. A girl-spy with whom he has just fallen in love, once saves his life but is finally shown tortured to death for his escape. Betrayed by the Japanese, Carter kills all the important spies in a close fight which costs him his own life.

## Comments:

This flimsy, trite spy story, interwoven with an unconvincing romance, with greatly overplayed Japanese, removes all seeming reality an introduction and epilogue by Drew Pearson may lend the picture.

The Nisei, with one Jap-tortured exception, are shown disloyal to the U.S., a topic which does not seem particularly useful to mention.

## Comments:

Date: March 6, 1945  
 Final Decision

## MOTION PICTURE CLEARANCE

FAR EAST

Date March 13, 1945

To: Arnold M. Picker

From: Joseph Hendler

Title Betrayal from the East (MGO)Decision UnsuitableRegions:

- 1. Philippines x
- 2. China x
- 3. Thailand x
- 4. Japan x
- 5. Korea x

Others:

- 6. French Indo-China
- 7. Burma
- 8. Malaya
- 9. Indonesia

Comment: Makes third-rate melodrama of Japanese espionage and is likely to arouse suspicion of foreigners in general.

cc: Don Brown  
Helene Canterells (2 copies)

C  
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P  
YMEMORANDUM

April 3, 1945

TO: Mr. Joseph Handler  
FROM: Arnold M. Picker  
SUBJECT: BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST - RKO

RKO have asked us to submit for reconsideration the feature,  
BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST.

In view of the limited number of films dealing with this aspect  
of the war, may we have your final recommendation.

In the event your original decision is re-affirmed, we should  
appreciate having in detail the reasons which prompted your  
decision.

HPC:er

cc: Mrs. M. E. Allen  
Secretary, New York Review Board

cc: Mr. Cunningham

C  
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Y

April 7, 1945

M e m o r a n d u m

To: Mr. Arnold M. Picker  
From: Long Range  
Subject: BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST - RKO (your memo of 4/5/45)

We have reconsidered our original decision and now make this picture suitable but not recommended because it is a flimsy, trite spy story, interwoven with an unconvincing romance, with greatly overplayed Japanese, removes all seeming reality and introduction and epilogue by Drew Pearson may lend the picture.

cc Helen Cantarella  
cc: Mr. Cunningham

25 West 45th Street  
New York, New York

April 9, 1945

Mr. Vladimir Lissin  
RKO Radio Pictures Inc.  
1270 Sixth Avenue  
New York, New York

RE: BETRAYAL FROM THE EAST

Dear Vladimir:

This refers to your letter of March 22nd.

We wish to advise you that while there is no objection to the preparation of this picture for France, we cannot recommend its early use in that Territory.

Since the number of films this office can ship abroad for early showing in liberated areas is necessarily limited, OWI feels that it must recommend only those which best fit in with the information program of the United States Government.

Sincerely yours,

ARNOLD W. PICKER  
Motion Picture Bureau  
Overseas Branch

HPC:er

cc: Mr. Cunningham