

BOOK REVIEWS

Americans Betrayed. By Morton Grodzins. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949. Pp. xvii, 445. \$5.00.

Professor Grodzins deserves the gratitude of all patriots for this book, the first detailed study of the decision to deport some 70,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast.¹ The author has painstakingly traced the growth of that decision from its seedbed, California racism, to its fruition, the first American concentration camps. He concludes that the reasons advanced for the deportation and imprisonment of these 70,000 American men, women and children cannot support the deportation, and, worse, that a true assessment of these reasons would have been possible in the early spring of 1942, when the fatal decision was made.

It is impossible in a short book review to give a satisfactory impression of the patience with which Mr. Grodzins has gathered and sifted the crowd of facts supporting his conclusions. The doubters cannot be spared the reading of the book; for no mere summary can adequately produce the shock of conviction.

It will be remembered that the deportation and the concentration camps were asserted by their advocates to be a military necessity. Military necessity, in turn, was largely deduced from the dangers of espionage and sabotage, particularly of shore-to-ship signalling to the enemy, supposedly carried on by Japanese on the coast. Mr. Grodzins' analysis reveals that the three "most striking" illustrations of supposedly successful communication with the enemy, which, among others, were listed in the Commanding General's final report as having driven him to the conclusion that military necessity did demand deportation, occurred *after* he had recommended deportation; indeed, two of the incidents thus singled out as the crowning exhibits of the General's evidence occurred after all unfortunates of Japanese blood had been imprisoned.²

The lesser arguments in defense of deportation fare no better under the Professor's scalpel. He shows that "what happened at Pearl Harbor," far from justifying deportation, refuted the necessity of it. For he can cite J. Edgar Hoo-

¹ The first comprehensive book on the deportation and the camps was Carey McWilliams' excellent *Prejudice, Japanese-Americans: Symbol of Racial Intolerance* (1944). It covered the machinery of deportation and the history of the camps, which are not covered by the book under review. For a scientific and thorough study of the Tule Lake concentration camp see Thomas and Nishimoto, *The Spoilage* (1946).

² Pp. 294-95. There has been only a single conviction of a Japanese for unauthorized relations with Japan: in June 1942, a Japanese alien was sentenced to a prison term of two to six months for having failed to register properly under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. P. 137 n.

ver, as of April 1942, to the effect that in Hawaii, where one-third of the people were Japanese or of Japanese ancestry, "there was no sabotage committed . . . prior to December 7, on December 7, or subsequent to that time."³

He shows that the "dual citizenship" argument was a grotesque deduction from the civil law principle of *jus sanguinis*, which, if valid at all, would have been just as valid with regard to citizens of German or Italian ancestry. He demonstrates that Nisei did cooperate with government intelligence agencies. And he points out that the doctrines of the cultural unassimilability and racial inscrutability of the Japanese could have been checked, and found wanting, in the extensive technical literature on the subject. "But the library shelves were undisturbed, and the Japanese specialists were not consulted."⁴

Perhaps the greatest value of Mr. Grodzins' book lies in his analysis of decision-making by top officials in Washington. It was they, or their aides, who should have been able to weigh and thus to discard the phony arguments for deportation. But Mr. Grodzins proves that they made their crucial decision just about as casually as they might have decided on the desirability of a shoe shine. The War Department chose to believe General "a Jap is a Jap" De Witt. The Department of Justice, thoroughly convinced of the undesirability of deportation, lacked the guts even to attempt to stand by its conviction. The Bureau of the Budget approved Executive Order 9066, which authorized deportation, on the very day it was presented. The President signed it a few hours after it was laid on his desk. It was never discussed in a cabinet meeting.

The legislative record was equally sorry. The hearing on the bill that provided for the criminal enforcement of the deportation order in the Senate Military Affairs Committee proceeded on the assumption that the bill was directed against enemy aliens, and when the bill was discussed on the floor of the House, Mr. May, the memorable chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, in reply to a question whether citizens could be penalized for unknowingly straying into the military zones of exclusion, stated, without being challenged, that citizens of this country would never be questioned about the zones.⁵ The full Senate was treated to a recital of the more hair-raising fairy tales about Japanese fifth columnists at Pearl Harbor by Senator Reynolds. There was no serious discussion of the bill, and no opposition to it. Senator Taft alone furnished the decent exception: "This is probably the sloppiest criminal law I have ever read or seen anywhere. I certainly think the Senate should not pass it."⁶

Unfortunately, neither Mr. Grodzins' thorough refutation of the arguments for deportation nor his analysis of the frivolity with which deportation was decided upon, constitutes the most disturbing aspect of his book. For its most disturbing aspect is that it gives an inkling of the real reasons for deportation.

Those real reasons could have been sensed by any man of good will walking by the buses that were waiting in a San Francisco street to take their human freight away. For, if that man had looked away in shame, he might have seen

³ P. 131.

⁴ P. 368.

⁵ P. 340.

⁶ P. 344.

the faces of the Caucasian onlookers. Those faces were smug—just as the faces of the Aryan onlookers when the Jews were taken away on the day of the pogrom. He would then have known that evil grows in many soils, and that it had grown on the West Coast, where anti-Japanese propaganda from its very beginnings had borne a striking family resemblance to the anti-semitism of Julius Streicher.

As early as 1909 Assemblyman Grove Johnson of California had said: "Do you want your daughters—your little daughters—in school with Japanese? They are not boys. They are men—grown men—with all the base passions of men. That is why they ought to be kept out of the schools. They have no more regard for morality than do beasts. They live like beasts. They are beasts. Do you want your daughters in school with such as these?"⁷ In 1920 the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that "Japanese boys are taught by their elders to look upon . . . American girls with a view to future sex relations. . . . What answer will the fathers and mothers of America make. . . . The proposed assimilation of the two races is unthinkable. It is morally indefensible and biologically impossible. American womanhood is by far too sacred to be subjected to such degeneracy. An American who would not die fighting rather than yield to that infamy does not deserve the name."⁸ And in 1935 the Southern California Committee of One Thousand revealed that "wherever the Japanese have settled, their nests pollute the communities like the running sores of leprosy. They exist like the yellowed, smoldering discarded butts in an over-full ashtray, vilifying the air with their loathsome smells, filling all who have the misfortune to look upon them with a wholesome disgust and a desire to wash."⁹

And when the concentration camps had become a fact, in the winter of 1943, the county clerks and the recorders rejoiced in their establishment and, in response to a survey of their opinions, unequivocally said so: "For your information I may state to you advisedly that each member of the Board of Supervisors of Yuba county is strongly anti-Jap. . . . Nevada County does not want any Japs of any color, kind, or description. . . . I am instructed to inform you that a bunch of Japs were run out of this city 16 years ago and we still feel that same way about them. . . . Insofar as the local sentiment is concerned . . . it will be entirely satisfactory to keep them all in Concentration Camps until they all die of old age. . . . Keep the Japs in concentration camps for the duration and then turn them over to the Chinese for safekeeping. . . . As to the sentiment of the Mayor and Council . . . we believe that the only good Jap is a dead one and that the United States would be better off if they were all deported. . . . Let's clean America up."¹⁰

As in Germany such unabashed sadism was only expressed by the few. But its translation into barbed wire fences, machine gun towers and tears, was accomplished, there and here, with the more literate support of the respectable. The rantings of Westbrook Pegler were but a slightly distorted mirror image of

⁷ P. 14.⁸ P. 8.⁹ Ibid.¹⁰ Pp. 117-19.

Walter Lippmann's arguments against the Nisei. Congressman John Rankin of Mississippi may have sung in a slightly different key from that of California's Attorney General Earl Warren, but they both sang the same tune. General De Witt's decision to deport, made not because of military necessity, but because of the General's belief that "the Japanese race is an enemy race . . . the racial strains are undiluted,"¹¹ was approved by chambers of commerce and CIO locals, by vegetable growers associations and Elks, by American Legion chapters and women's clubs, by countless elected representatives of the people as well as by the Puente Class in Christian Citizenship. The newspapers approved, the Congress approved, the President approved, the Supreme Court, by upholding, approved,¹² and the bar approved by silence. We were all among the congregation of the wicked, and deaf to the feeble and dispersed voices of the good.¹³

Thus we learn from Mr. Grodzins' book that the real reasons for the "evacuation" of the Nisei were the sadism of the few and the moral apathy, if not the moral imbecility, of the many. It is not a criticism of Mr. Grodzins to say that the main task presented by the facts he has collected and described still remains to be done. That task is to answer the question why well-meaning and well-educated men can support irrational and evil acts. No one who has reflected on what has happened in the German death camps, or on what is happening in the Peoples' Democracies, and who has been frightened by the parallels—by God's mercy still remote parallels—between events there and events here, can remain untroubled by that question. And yet there seems to be a fear of facing it, a fear evidenced, for instance, by the fact that the basic text on the German concentration camps, Eugen Condon's *Der S. S. Staat*, remains untranslated and unpublished in this country.¹⁴ All patriots must hope that Professor Grodzins and many of his colleagues will devote their future studies to finding an answer to that question, for our moral survival may well depend on it.

FRANZ M. OPPENHEIMER*

¹¹ P. 362. General De Witt used the racial argument persistently (pp. 282-83, 297).

¹² *Hirabayashi v. United States*, 320 U.S. 81 (1943); *Yasui v. United States*, 320 U.S. 115 (1943); *Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944); *Ex parte Mitsuye Endo*, 323 U.S. 283 (1944). Mr. Grodzins devotes only 10 pages to the Supreme Court in a note on the role of the Supreme Court. Yet, it was the Supreme Court which converted "a piece of war-time folly into political doctrine, and a permanent part of the law." Rostow, *The Japanese-American Cases—A Disaster*, 54 *Yale L.J.* 489, 491 (1945). Mr. Rostow's article remains the classic indictment of the Court's "bewildering and unimpressive series of opinions," as well as the most profound social and political evaluation of the evacuation program.

¹³ Religious leaders were the most prominent group in opposition to the deportation program; their "voices were lost in the cries for evacuation." Pp. 181-82.

¹⁴ For exceptions to the general lack of interest see David Rousset, *The Other Kingdom* (1947); Bondy, *Problems of Internment Camps*, 38 *J. Abn. & Soc. Psych.* 453 (1943); Bettelheim, *Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations*, 38 *J. Abn. & Soc. Psych.* 417 (1943). The most illuminating analysis is Hannah Nendt's article, *The Concentration Camps*, 15 *Partisan Rev.* 743 (1948).

* Member of the New York Bar.