

Today and Tomorrow

By Walter Lippmann

The Fifth Column* on the Coast
New York Tribune
 February 12, 1942

**("The fifth column" refers to people within national borders who engage in espionage or sabotage for an enemy country.)*

SAN FRANCISCO—The enemy alien problem on the Pacific Coast, or much more accurately the Fifth Column problem, is very serious and it is very special. What makes it so serious and so special is that the Pacific Coast is in imminent danger of a combined attack from within and from without. The danger is not, as it would be in the inland centers or perhaps even for the present on the Atlantic Coast, from sabotage alone. The peculiar danger of the Pacific Coast is in a Japanese raid accompanied by enemy action inside American territory.

This combination can be very formidable indeed. For while the striking power of Japan from the sea and air might not in itself be overwhelming at any one point just now, Japan could strike a blow which might do irreparable damage if it were accompanied by the kind of organized sabotage to which this part of the country is specially vulnerable.

This is a sober statement of the situation, in fact a report, based not on speculation but on what is known to have taken place and to be taking place in this area of the war. It is a fact that the Japanese navy has been reconnoitering the Pacific Coast more or less continually and for a considerable length of time, testing and feeling out the American defenses. It is a fact that communication takes place between the enemy at sea and enemy agents on land.

These are facts which we shall ignore or minimize at our peril. It is also a fact that since the outbreak of the Japanese war there has been no important sabotage on the Pacific Coast.

From what we know about Hawaii and about the Fifth Column in Europe this is not, as some have liked to think, a sign that there is nothing to be feared. It is a sign that the blow is well-organized and that it is held back until it can be struck with maximum effect.

In preparing to repel the attack the Army and Navy have all the responsibility but they are facing it with one hand tied down in Washington. I am sure I understand fully the unwillingness of Washington to adopt a policy of mass evacuation and mass internment of all those who are technically enemy aliens.... There is the assumption that if the rights of a citizen are abridged anywhere, they have been abridged everywhere.

Forget for a moment all about enemy aliens, dual citizenship, naturalized citizens, native citizens of enemy alien parentage, and consider a warship in San Francisco harbor, an airplane plant in Los Angeles, a general's headquarters at Oshkosh, and an admiral's at Podunk. Then think of the lineal descendant, if there happened to be such a person, of George Washington, the father of his country, and consider what happens to Mr. Washington if he would like to visit the warship, or take a walk in the airplane plant, or to drop in and photograph the general and the admiral in their quarters.

He is stopped by the sentry. He has to prove who he is. He has to prove that he has a good reason for doing what he wishes to do. He has to register, sign papers, and wear an identification button. Then perhaps, if he proves his case, he is escorted by an armed guard while he does his errand, and until he has been checked out of his place and his papers and his button have been returned. Have Mr. Washington's constitutional rights been abridged?

Has he been denied the dignity of the human person? Has his loyalty been impugned?

Now it seems to me that this is in principle and in general the procedure which ought to be used for all persons in a zone which the military authorities regard as open to enemy attack. In that zone, as in the corridors of the general's headquarters or on the deck of the warship or within the gates of the airplane plant, everyone should be compelled to prove that he has a good reason for being there, and no one should be allowed to come and go until he has proved that his business is necessary and consistent with the national defense.

In the vital and vulnerable areas it should be the rule that residence, employment, communication by telephone, telegraph, automobile, and railroad are confined to licensed persons who are fully identified and whose activities are fully known to the authorities and to

their neighbors. The Pacific Coast is officially a combat zone: Some part of it may at any moment be a battlefield. Nobody's constitutional rights include the right to reside and do business on a battlefield. And nobody ought to be on a battlefield who has no good reason for being there. There is plenty of room elsewhere for him to exercise his rights.

This is in substance the system of policing which necessarily prevails in a war zone. By this system the constitutional and international questions about aliens and citizens do not arise at the very place where they confuse the issues and prevent the taking of thorough measures of security. Under this system all persons are in principle treated alike. As a matter of national policy there is no discrimination. But at the same time the authorities on the spot in the threatened region are able to act defensively, and let the explanations and the reparations come later.

Group Task

Write a letter to the editor responding to this editorial. In your letter, state what you believe to be Lippmann's main argument and the examples he uses to support his argument. State whether you agree with Lippmann or oppose him. Be sure to respond to each of his examples.

The Nippu Jiji

Political cartoons are a visual way to express, criticize, and satirize different points of view through humor, symbols, and illustrations. This cartoon appeared in *The Nippu Jiji* in 1942 on the eve of the mass removal. *The Nippu Jiji* was a newspaper written for Japanese Americans in Hawaii. It encouraged the Americanization of second-generation immigrants. Given the text below, discuss as a group the message the cartoon conveys. Note especially the portrayals of the older Japanese man and the younger Japanese American. Discuss the intrapersonal conflict expressed by the man in Japan and also the possible reason this cartoon appeared on the eve of the mass removal of Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Your task is to create a three-minute telephone dialogue between the nisei in Hawaii and his grandfather in Japan.

THE NIPPU JIJI, TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 1942



1) English translation of the Japanese in the left panel of the cartoon: "Whenever the Imperial forces [of Japan] invade enemy territories, Prime Minister Tojo [the army general and prime minister of Japan from 1941 to 1944] says that many sacrifices have to be made. It may be risky to say this, but I personally wish that the Imperial forces would not invade enemy territories."

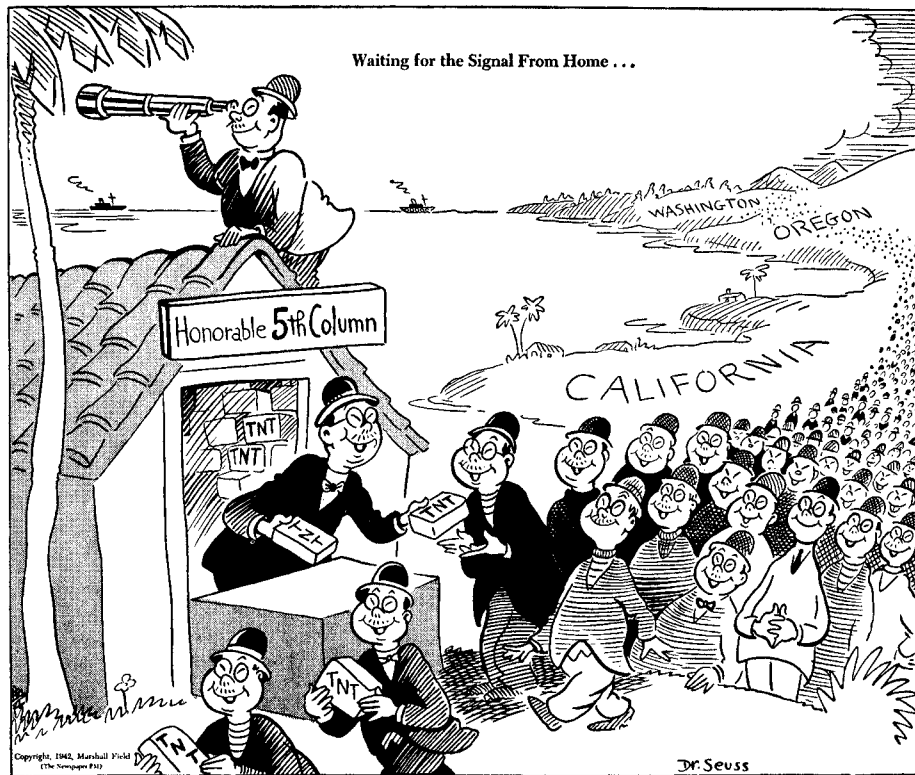
The cartoon's caption says, "Grandfather in Japan."

2) **Varsity Victory Volunteers:** an all-nisei labor battalion in Hawaii during World War II. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the nisei members of the Hawaii Territorial Guard (charged with defending Hawaii's security) were discharged due to doubts about their loyalty. Those who were discharged organized the Varsity Victory Volunteers in response. The volunteers engaged in construction and manual labor six days a week, bought war bonds, and contributed to blood banks. The group's volunteerism was one of the factors in convincing U.S. government officials to lift the ban on Japanese Americans in the armed forces, and many Varsity Victory Volunteers later fought in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in Europe.

Dr. Seuss

[cartoon reproduced from Richard H. Minear's book, *Dr. Seuss Goes to War* (New York: The New Press, 1999) p. 65]

Political cartoons are a visual way to express, criticize, and satirize different points of view through humor, symbols, and illustrations. This cartoon drawn by Theodor Geisel—better known to the world as Dr. Seuss—appeared in the New York newspaper *PM* on February 13, 1942. According to Professor Richard Minear, who wrote *Dr. Seuss Goes to War*, Dr. Seuss drew political cartoons in the early 1940s before becoming an author of children's books. Most of his political cartoons urged the United States to take bolder measures against Hitler and the Axis powers. This cartoon, however, was drawn in response to the perceived threat that Japanese Americans on the West Coast posed to the security of the United States. In your group, decide what message this political cartoon conveys and list the techniques it uses to make its point. Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper *PM*, sharing your reactions to the political cartoon by Dr. Seuss.



In the News

During the course of the World War II, most of the media coverage expressed support for the incarceration of Japanese Americans. Several non-Japanese Americans, however, publicly voiced regret, anger, and disappointment (sometimes in retrospect) with the government's decision. The following are sections from some notable articles.

- 1) "Get the Evacuees Out!" M. Margaret Anderson. *Common Ground*, summer 1943.

It seems crystal-clear that against our Japanese Americans, democracy has done deep wrong. Evacuated from their West Coast homes in the hysteria that followed Pearl Harbor, over 100,000 people, two-thirds of them native-born American citizens, have been detained now over a year in government camps euphemistically known as relocation centers but uncomfortably close to concentration camps, detained not on investigated and determined dangerousness to the country, but because they happen to have been born with Japanese faces and names, and because the rest of us—citizens by no better right than the almost 70,000 Nisei, the accidental right of birth—forgot for a moment the story of transplantation that lies behind all American citizenship, were blind to the implications of something that threatened the security of all Americans. For if the United States government can not only evacuate from designated areas but indefinitely detain American citizens, without a hearing, only because of race or nationality background, then no one of us is safe.

To undo the wrong we allowed to happen will not be easy. Wrongs breed evils; and no one can read the accounts later in these pages of the spiritual crack-up of families and individuals in the centers and not realize the size of the social problems we have created for ourselves. We will have need of great imagination and understanding and vision. We will have to ask ourselves how we would have taken a year and a half's arbitrary confinement in our own country because—say—we happened to be of Swedish or Swiss or Italian or German descent and the United States happened to be at war with that ancestral homeland. Would we have been docile evacuees? Would we have remained unembittered? Could we have lost our personal freedom and still have kept our faith in the ultimate justice of the democracy we thought we were part of? We have asked this of Japanese Americans.

For other reasons, too, the job will not be easy. Anti-democratic forces are always better organized and more vocal than the voices of goodwill. It is these who see danger to community security in the arrival of a half dozen badly frightened evacuees, cleared by the FBI and the WRA [War Relocation Authority], to take up jobs in their city; who stir up scare editorials and hurl their shameful epithets, "A Jap's a Jap," forgetting that an American—regardless of his descent—is also an American, and if the title is deserved it is because the wearer practices American beliefs. It is these forces who call mass meetings of protest at giving fellow-American jobs, even while we import labor from Mexico and the Bahamas and Puerto Rico; who have written a succession of discriminatory laws into state legislation, a process insidiously creeping eastward, until now even as liberal a state as Iowa would ship relocated students of Japanese descent back to the centers. And this, while we engage in a colossal war for the freedom of the common people of the world. America is people, too. It is time we stopped being intoxicated with ourselves and our mission and ideas, and really had a look at what we are doing here at home. It is understandable why we like to look away.

- 2) "Dark Day for Liberty," Norman Thomas. *The Christian Century*, July 29, 1942.

Not one of [the interned Japanese Americans] has been charged with any crime or misdemeanor. No act of sabotage has even been alleged against them. In Hawaii, where sabotage was charged and officially and explicitly denied, Japanese Americans have received no such treatment. What was and is being done in the West was born of panic, race prejudice and greed for Japanese-American property. It is justified unconvincingly in the name of military necessity, and on the further ground that it is necessary to protect these citizens from mob violence. That is a horrible indictment of our democracy.

- 3) "Americans in Concentration Camps," Harry Paxton Howard. *The Crisis*, September 1942.

Along the eastern coast of the United States, where the number of Americans of Japanese ancestry is comparatively small, no concentration camps have been established. From a military point of view, the only danger on this coast is from Germany and Italy. Enemy submarines are carrying on a terribly successful war against American shipping along the coast. They have landed agents along the coast, some of whom have been apprehended. But the American government has not taken any such high-handed action against Germans and Italians—and their American-born descendants—on the East Coast, as has been taken against Japanese and their American-born descendants on the West Coast. Germans and Italians are "white."

Color seems to be the only possible reason why thousands of American citizens of Japanese ancestry are in concentration camps. Anyway, there are no Italian-American, or German-American citizens in such camps.

- 4) "The Nisei Speak," Carey McWilliams. *Common Ground*, summer 1944.

Those who have remained in the centers are becoming over-cautious; more timid; highly race conscious. Their world tends to grow smaller, not larger; and it was a small airless world to begin with. They lose perspective; they become Rip Van Winkles, out of touch with the world, with the nation, with the people.... The most alarming aspect of life in the centers is the demoralization it is working in the people. It is sapping their initiative in a frightening manner. The forced labor, with its low pay, indecent housing, inadequate food, the insecurity of their position in a postwar America, have contributed to a deterioration of family life that is beginning to show in a sharply increased juvenile delinquency—this among a people that had the lowest crime rate of any group in the United States.

5) "Our Worst Wartime Mistake," Eugene V. Rostow. *Harper's Magazine*, September 1945.

Time is often needed for us to recognize the great miscarriages of justice.... As time passes, it becomes more and more plain that our wartime treatment of the Japanese and the Japanese Americans on the West Coast was a tragic and dangerous mistake. That mistake is a threat to our society, and to all men. Its motivation and its impact on our system of law deny every value of democracy.

In the perspective of our legal tradition, the facts are almost incredible.

During the bleak spring of 1942, the Japanese and the Japanese Americans who lived on the West Coast of the United States were taken into custody and removed to camps in the interior. More than one hundred thousand men, women, and children were thus exiled and imprisoned. More than two-thirds of them were American citizens.

These people were taken into custody as a military measure on the ground that espionage and sabotage were especially to be feared from persons of Japanese blood. The whole group was removed from the West Coast because the military authorities thought it would take too long to conduct individual investigations on the spot. They were arrested without warrants and were held without indictment or a statement of charges, although the courts were open and freely functioning. They were transported to camps far from their homes, and kept there under prison conditions, pending investigations of their "loyalty." Despite the good intentions of the chief relocation officers, the centers were little better than concentration camps.

Group Task

Besides the fact that these authors disagreed with the incarceration of Japanese Americans, what else do these articles have in common? Do you agree or disagree with one of the authors in particular? If so, why? Choose one of the following activities to complete:

- Political cartoons are a visual way to express, criticize, and satirize different points of view through humor, symbols, and illustrations. Draw a political cartoon that captures the essence of one of the article excerpts. Create a caption as well.
- Create a talk show radio program. One person should role play the author; another should play the talk show host; others should be people who call in with questions for the author. Your talk show should discuss the main views expressed in the author's article. Include one advertisement and a news update from the early 1940s during the program as well. The time slot for the radio program is five minutes.