

## INTRODUCTION

ON FEBRUARY 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, initiating America's wartime concentration camps. He granted to Secretary of War Henry Stimson and his military commanders the power to exclude persons regardless of citizenship and without formal hearings from designated areas in the interest of national security. Using that authority, General John DeWitt, the head of the Western Defense Command (WDC), removed approximately 110,000 West Coast Japanese Americans to fifteen temporary shelters, euphemistically called "assembly centers," and two "reception centers" before transferring them further inland in late summer to ten "relocation centers," ranging in size from over seven thousand to eighteen thousand persons. Thirty-one thousand were placed under the charge of John Collier's Office of Indian Affairs in two camps in Arizona. Milton Eisenhower, Director of the War Relocation Authority (WRA), supervised the remaining seventy-nine thousand, incarcerating them in isolated locations in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. Here they were confined in camps where entry and exit of goods and personnel were controlled by Military Police units, and where they lived in tar-paper-covered, wooden barracks of approximately a hundred feet in length, with single rooms of only twenty by twenty-five feet. Each block within the camp was cramped with two rows of six or seven barracks housing 250 to 300 individuals, a de facto situation existing until the last camp was closed in March 1946.

Inside the camps Euro-American administrators established their internal organizations to secure a peaceful confinement but also to encourage relocation. Since each camp had an administrative staff of less than a hundred persons, few of them fluent in Japanese, they appointed bilingual internee block managers to disseminate goods, services, and information while organizing elections of community council officials to legislate management policy even though project directors retained veto power over all matters. To facilitate relocation, Dillon Myer, Eisenhower's successor, conducted in 1943 a Loyalty Registration, a mandatory questionnaire asking his charges to clarify which country they supported and the willingness of U.S. citizens among them to serve in the American armed forces. Disappointed with the results, Myer then sent social scientists to each camp as "community analysts," adding to the University of California's Evacuation and Resettlement Study's own twelve Japanese American and three Euro-American observers in eight of the ten camps to press relocation. Despite these measures, Myer successfully ushered out only

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a handful of Japanese Americans because he was thwarted by internee reluctance and DeWitt's conservative policy of continued exclusion based on "military necessity," the latter overturned in December 1944 by the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that made continued mass exclusion illegal.

Most Japanese Americans at least outwardly accommodated the WRA. Though nearly two-thirds of them held U.S. citizenship rights, they cooperated rather than resisting removal from the West Coast and internment to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars lost in property and other assets. Occasionally, however, they openly resisted, as in mid-November 1942 when they ceased all labor during the Poston Strike, and a couple of weeks thereafter in a bloody demonstration called the Manzanar Riot. But for the most part, they endured four years of cramped living quarters, inadequate facilities, low wages, and a general lack of freedom and privacy. The majority—approximately five out of every six—pledged their allegiance to the United States or promised obedience to its laws over Japan's when confronted with questions regarding which country the aliens would support and concerning the U.S. citizens' willingness to serve in the American armed forces during the infamous Loyalty Registration of 1943. Once the WRA dropped mass detention in favor of individual internment in January 1945, Japanese Americans left the camps to resume their lives, and partially recovered their losses through the 1948 Evacuation Claims Act, a presidential apology in 1976, and another redress payment through the Civil Liberties Act in 1988.

Despite general acceptance of the presentation above, writers on the internment differ over the causes and how its victims responded. Much of their disagreement is rooted in differing conceptions of the relationship over time between "race," on one hand, and "culture" and political "loyalty," on the other, and not about the relative weight of domestic and foreign factors for its causes and consequences. For many authors writing in the two decades after the camps closed, domestic factors, particularly "race," was important for explaining why the internment took place and how that causal element shaped Japanese American responses. Since the United States seemed less vulnerable to invasion after 1942, many dismissed security issues in favor of domestic factors, particularly "race," to explain why mass removal occurred. To these authors, "race" meant negative attitudes toward individuals based on physical features, amplified by economic interests but readily neutralized through education. Those attitudes, they believed, had nothing to do with "loyalty," since patriotism emerged from "culture"—where and how one was raised and educated—which they associated with "nation." Therefore, they found "military necessity" justification wanting because General John DeWitt's claim in his *Final Report* (1943) that "the Japanese race is an enemy race,"

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whose “racial strain remains undiluted” was a prime example of that confusion of “race” with “culture” and “political loyalty.”<sup>1</sup>

Social scientists in particular dismissed “military necessity,” narrowing the debate over the camps to domestic causes and consequences in the decade after their closure. Using “race” as their main explanation, too, they channeled their analysis of the causes and the consequences toward identification of the culprits behind the decision, and cast Japanese American responses to it along the lines of other racial minorities of their time. Morton Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed* (1949), fingered West Coast pressure groups such as the Western Growers Protective Association and the Native Sons of the Golden West for constantly badgering public officials with views approximating “the doctrine of Nazism” until they caved in and influenced the army to reverse its own initial resistance to the idea. Jacobus tenBroek, Edward N. Barnhart, and Floyd W. Matson, *Prejudice, War, and the Constitution* (1954), disputed Grodzin’s conclusions and expanded the scope of blame to “the dark background of prejudice,” “the century-long history of anti-Orientalism on the West Coast of the United States,” whose “deadly legacy of suspicion and superstition” was “firmly embedded” in the “public consciousness.” Thus, no pressure groups were needed to convince DeWitt, they maintained, since the general himself harbored “blatant and unmistakable” racial prejudices. Studying Japanese American responses to internment, University of California demographer Dorothy Swaine Thomas applied a similar domestic-only framework in explaining why, in February 1943, two-thirds of all internees responded positively to questions of loyalty, and a sixth, negatively. She argued in *The Salvage* (1952) that the former relocated out of the camps quickly and were spared political disaffection because they were the “most highly assimilated segments” of the internee population—the ones who relocated “beyond the bounds of segregated ethno-centered communities” to take advantage of “wider opportunities” in the Midwest and East. Conversely, the sixth choosing Japan as their final destination were, as she and research assistant Richard Nishimoto claimed in *The Spoilage* (1946), individuals who experienced “spoilage” as a result of “evacuation and detention.” For Thomas, the Issei were disillusioned by racial discrimination in the economic and political spheres and when confronted by the shattering experience of removal and internment, had understandably refused allegiance to the United States. She asserted that the Nisei’s education in nonsegregated American schools where they were “indoctrinated in democratic principles” played a large role in determining the extent of their embitterment. Hence, Thomas argued that the shift from “loyal” to “disloyal” was the result of “the stress of racial discrimination, expulsion and detention” rather than any prewar political identification with Japan. Her conclusions fell in step with Alexander Leighton, *The Governing of*

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*Men* (1946) whose study of internee behavior during the Poston Strike of November 1942—the Rising Sun flags, the shouts of *banzai*, and cheering of the alleged victories by Imperial Japanese forces—were not indications of “real” patriotism toward Japan but rather embracing “an emblem of hope in a world that had fallen crashing about them.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the emergence of a new generation of authors in the 1960s and 1970s, domestic factors still dominated explanations of why the camps were established. Skeptical of “military necessity” too, they came of age in a world in which federal government officials used similar phrases to rally public support for a widely perceived immoral war against a weaker military opponent in Vietnam. The “wartime hysteria” and failure of political leadership that these authors witnessed provided a persuasive explanation for why the World War II camps were built, and they cast accommodation or resistance as the two options Japanese Americans had, much like any other racial minority in America, or colonized Third World people under oppression. Thus they gravitated toward “race” explanations but saw, unlike the previous generation, it as more than mere attitudes but seemingly institutionalized “reality” underscored by the failure of the civil rights movement of their day to root it out. While they shared a similar view of “culture” as the previous generation, they interpreted “loyalty” broadly, placing protest acts under it, much like Jane Fonda’s visit to Hanoi, and her denunciation of the American bombing of that city and of the war against that country. Scholar-activist Roger Daniels, for example, fused Grodzins’s pressure group hypothesis with tenBroek’s idea of nationwide racial antipathy to account for the removal decision made by the Office of the Provost Marshal General, the War Department, and the Western Defense Command in San Francisco, California. He argued that these military officials, pressured by various lobbyists, and sharing in common the Yellow Peril racial stereotypes of the Japanese, succumbed to wartime hysteria in the face of mounting Allied losses in the early months of the war. Daniels blamed Allen Gullion and Karl Bendtson of the Office of the Provost Marshal General for bending General John DeWitt of the Western Defense Command, and John McCloy and Henry Stimson of the War Department to their view. He also found fault with “the general racist character of American society” and with President Franklin Roosevelt’s caving into political expediency and his own concerns that “Japanese, alien and citizen, were dangerous to American security.” About two decades later, another civil rights activist-scholar Richard Drinnon, in *Keeper of Concentration Camps* (1987), concluded that “Western racism, nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism” formed the basis for the decision for removal and internment after he explored the “common matrix” of American Indian reservations and the concentration camps in the career of WRA Director and Bureau of Indian Affairs Direc-

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tor Dillon Myer. In *Justice at War* (1983), a study of the legal strategies of the internment cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, Peter Irons further fleshed out the critique of the decision by revealing how the decision makers were well aware that Japanese Americans posed no security threat.<sup>3</sup>

The same confinement to the domestic sphere characterized these authors' view of Japanese American responses to internment. Although they added to our understanding by expanding the definitional boundaries of American "culture" and "loyalty," they showed that many internees resisted camp policies by opposing patriotic work projects such as camouflage nets and "Food for Victory," and that when coerced, these internees used slowdown tactics not unlike African American slaves of the previous century. They brought to the fore stories of previously unheralded internees risking arrest for refusal to register for Selective Service until their civil rights were restored, and others rioting to vent their rage over their unjust confinement. Just as the colonized of the Third World opposed colonizers and local elites, Japanese Americans, too, these authors claimed, dug in their heels against the WRA and JACL's relocation program. Some authors swept seemingly "disloyal" and even "Japanese" ways under the new "loyalty" label, likening this behavior to the widespread draft resistance during the Vietnam War. For example, Gary Y. Okihiro dropped the "loyal-disloyal" dichotomy and portrayed people as drawing upon "a preexistent, underlying layer of resistance potential" or "an undercurrent of counter administration sentiment among the majority of the people" in their efforts to covertly or overtly resist camp management policy, the loyalty questionnaire, and military conscription, claiming that it was rooted in "the daily struggle for survival in a racist American West," and that it was "continuous and purposeful." Arthur Hansen took the definitional boundary a step further after observing "disloyal" behavior in Manzanar, such as the singing of the Japanese national anthem and the Imperial Navy marching song during a riot, and interpreted it as evidence of a Japanese American desire to create "Little Tokyos in the desert," where their prewar culture of "group solidarity" and "the predominance of elements of Japanese culture" could survive.<sup>4</sup>

Only a small handful of this generation considered the wider, global context influencing decision makers and the victims. They were largely unsuccessful in persuading others to look beyond the national borders for additional causes and consequences of the event because they too often lacked sufficient proof. In *Years of Infamy* (1976), an exploration of internee resistance at Tule Lake, Michi Weglyn used some fragmentary evidence from the Secretary of War's files to speculate that Japanese in the western hemisphere were taken as hostages to ensure humane treatment of American military personnel captured by the Imperial Japanese forces. Weglyn's hostage thesis made sense of the discovery of over two-thousand

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Japanese immigrants from Latin America interned in the Department of Justice camps as part of the wider “hemispheric removals.” Instead of seeing this action as part of a possible western hemispheric defense agreement, she fell back on the “race” explanation for why federal government officials accepted the hostages. Taking the opposite tack, Page Smith, in *Democracy on Trial* (1995), and David Lowman, in *Magic* (2001), downplayed or denied “race” as a factor in the decision and instead claimed that strong ties between Japanese Americans and the Imperial Japanese government caused high military and political officials to mass intern all West Coast Japanese Americans before an invasion, however wrongly anticipated in hindsight. Smith never revealed his specific sources except to say that they came from the WRA documents and the Evacuation and Resettlement Study materials. Lowman utilized the *Magic* cables in which mention of Issei and Nisei involvement in intelligence-gathering is apparent. But Lowman failed to make clear whether this handful of Japanese Americans had actually committed espionage, whether the decision makers actually read the cables, and why a handful of Japanese Americans engaged in espionage would merit mass rather than individual removal. Had these authors explored fully the implications of the hostage thesis for governors and the governed, or considered “military necessity” beyond the binational and “race” context, they might have seen how many participants understood their respective situations. Nevertheless, whether justifying or criticizing the decision, at least they set a new course for studying Japanese American internment beyond the domestic sphere, a direction in which studies on the Japanese internment in Canada have recently turned.<sup>5</sup>

Widening the scope of inquiry to include nondomestic factors promises fresh new insights on the Japanese American internment, as recent studies suggest. The “failure of political leadership” explanation, for example, appears less compelling when one looks at the new studies on how other countries dealt with their enemy alien problems. In contrast to the actions of politicians in other countries, President Franklin Roosevelt’s treatment of Japanese Americans seems relatively benign. Even though British officials declared the majority of resident enemy aliens “loyal” and refused to mass intern them, they still arrested twenty-six thousand Austrians, Germans, and Italians, many without trial, and allowed their guards to separate some families, steal their property, and were partly responsible for the death of hundreds who drowned at sea en route to Canada. National leaders of the Commonwealth countries of Australia, Canada, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and the Union of South Africa expanded their definition of “enemy aliens” to arrest and detain those with long-term residency or British citizenship, separated interned families, and even conscripted enemy alien labor. Other Allied leaders simply confiscated their property

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and expelled them from the country, as did Panama and Peru. Or they removed only those residing in the “security sensitive” regions, as did President Manuel Avila Camacho of Mexico and Getúlio Vargas of Brazil. Still others tread upon the victims’ citizenship rights even when some among them were enemy aliens only in a technical sense, as did Joseph Stalin did with fifty thousand Koreans residing within sixteen kilometers of the Soviet-Manchurian border and another one-hundred-and-eighty thousand from the Maritime Provinces. Despite these revelations during their celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of World War II, neither these leaders nor their governments have, like the Americans and Canadians, compensated the victims after the war. “Captivity is as old as war itself,” Jonathan Vance reminds us, and it also involves civilians who, though not prisoners of war in a strict sense, are nevertheless “prisoners in wartime.”<sup>6</sup>

Yet there are “domestic” reasons for another look at the Japanese American internment. In the early 1990s, the understanding of “race” changed substantially since the days of earlier studies. Today, “racial stereotypes” are now seen not as a set of fixed ideas traveling across time unchanged and awaiting reactivation during a crisis, but rather as a set of ideas constantly undergoing a formation and reformation through contestations and negotiations as the socioeconomic, political, and cultural interests underlying them change. Hence, the same nineteenth-century Yellow Peril racial idea, revived by wartime hysteria, and “causing” the concentration camps, seems outdated even if certain elements persist. Moreover, Holocaust specialists warn us against assuming a major causal link between “race” views and concentration camps since the origins of the Nazi version of them were multiple rather than singular, with the rise of the Nazi State figuring more importantly than anti-Semitism.<sup>7</sup>

And finally, the passage of time has created a favorable atmosphere for a reassessment of the subject. Prior to the announcement made by the federal government’s Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (1979–82) concerning its findings that racism, wartime hysteria, and the failure of political leadership caused the internment, many writers resisted contradicting the commission and shied away from depicting Japanese Americans as anything but loyal to the United States, fearing that they might undermine the commission’s drive for redress. Once the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 passed and individual redress payments began, however, a small but growing number of authors began exploring the political and cultural connections between Japanese Americans and the Japanese government. They were assisted by discovery of many previously unseen documents, particularly by a spate of individual internees who donated their papers to public and private institutions for access at places like the Japanese American Research Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Japanese American National Mu-

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seum. Adding to this new atmosphere, librarians at Cornell University, University of California, Berkeley, and Columbia University recently announced the discovery of materials left by camp social scientists at their respective institutions. The termination of the commission also allowed federal government officials to release to the growing mountain of previously unseen documents newly declassified documents. Taken together, the recent availability of documents from a variety of federal government agencies involved with the internment allows one to determine more accurately the probable course of events in the camps by comparing, for example, what WRA officials said to their critics in the WDC or the FBI, on the one hand, and to their supporters in the Office of War Information (OWI), on the other, and then further checking all information against that of the Special War Problems Division of the State Department and the social scientists, much like a surveyor triangulating where the plotted lines intersect.<sup>8</sup>

This book therefore reexamines the Japanese American internment in the light of these developments to capture the victims' viewpoints but also to explain the complexity of its causes and consequences. Building upon past works on the causes, this book looks beyond the national borders to see how military security issues, real and imagined, shaped the decision for mass removal. The study explores how the internment affected domestic water rights and land development issues of minority and majority populations living adjacent to the sites of governance. But it also delves into how those "lessons learned" in educating Japanese Americans in democracy were carried abroad and applied to people residing beyond the national boundaries, a theme reflected in the book title. Hence, it does not limit the consequences to the event's important implications for the civil rights of its victims or for all Americans. And finally, it links the victims' accommodation, resistance, or avoidance responses to Japanese Americans' varying assessment of the war's progress on their possible postwar placement in the Japanese empire, behavior consistent with immigrants used to traversing the Pacific Ocean than racial minorities incapable of imagining a life outside of the United States. Although primarily focused on the years between 1942 and 1945, this study gives due weight to the pre-camp political practices and thought of the governed, on the one hand, and the thoughts and managerial practices of the governors, on the other.

To accomplish this end, a close probing of a well-chosen few rather than a broad survey of all camps is desirable. The sheer volume of materials in the hundred-plus manuscript depositories nationwide and the existence of over two dozen camps administered by the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) and the WRA necessitate selecting a handful of sites for analysis. Three camps—Manzanar, Central Utah (Topaz), and Colorado River (Poston)—were chosen for a number of reasons. First, these camps

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exhibited a broad range of camp administrations, with Manzanar characterized by strict governance since it was located inside the Military Zone and had high management turnover, with Poston, loosely managed by liberals from the Office of Indian Affairs until the WRA transformed the camp in 1944 from an ethnic “colony” to the “ethnocidal” relocation center, and with Topaz fitting in between the other two. The three camps also provide a solid cross-section of the prewar Japanese American community since their combined population represents roughly a third of all internees by January 1, 1943 and hailed from the San Francisco Bay region (Topaz), the city of Los Angeles (Manzanar), and the rural regions of northern, central, and southern California (Poston). And finally, these camps offer an unusual abundance of primary sources due to the early presence of social scientists in Poston and Manzanar, the former housing an entire research team called the Bureau of Sociological Research from its inception in 1942 until fall 1943. In addition, many of the southern California Japanese’s prewar records are available, making Manzanar, Poston, and, to a lesser extent, Topaz, the logical choice of study.<sup>9</sup>

While consistent in exploring Japanese American connections with and beyond the domestic context, the findings here differ substantially from previous studies. The first chapter explores the prewar background of camp administrators, social scientists, federal government officials, and military officers administering Manzanar, Poston, and Topaz. It finds that the latter two groups conflated “race” with “culture” and thus equated “Japanese Americans” with “Japanese,” and presumed that their loyalties lay with Japan rather than the United States, leading these agents to favor mass removal. However, the camp administrators and social scientists, a mixture of different “liberals” for the most part, shared in common an understanding that “race” was not the same as “culture” and thus distinguished between “Japanese” and “Japanese Americans.” Since “loyalty” was believed to come from “culture,” and Japanese Americans, particularly the American-born group, were immersed in American culture, the administrators and social scientists confidently asserted that the people under their care were “loyal” to the United States rather than Japan. Their attitudes would later prove helpful in winning over many internees but would also bring upon them charges of mismanagement and “mollycoddling.” Chapter two looks at the internee political factions prior to the internment, and finds them not united but divided by prefecture, class, and other categories, including generation. With the Japanese government inculcating loyalty through a conflation of “race” with “loyalty,” Japanese Americans, including the American-born citizens, increasingly identified with Japan, not the United States, narrowed the conceptual gap between “race” and “culture,” and developed their own rules of governance at variance with JACL and progressive leaders’ ideas.

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Differing ideas of the rules of governance and classification resulted in both riotous and peaceful conditions in the camps as philosophies diverged and merged, depending on which faction of the governed and the governors gained the upper hand. Chapter three looks at the decision to mass remove and intern by high federal government officials and top-ranking military officers and finds how their conflicting rules of governance settled upon the common ground of “military necessity.” Under it, the governors established strict management rules over internees and found, much to their surprise, Japanese Americans largely cooperative with removal more than internment because they anticipated the worst. Chapter four tackles the first year of governance and how the liberal rules of management meshed well with the Japanese Americans’ own sense of governing themselves, but resulted in the Poston Strike and Manzanar Riot because an internee faction fingered those supporting Japan. The incidents in turn brought management changes, resulting in the Loyalty Registration to separate the proverbial goats from the sheep. Chapter five introduces the “quiet period,” a time when new rules of governance were accepted by both internees and the administrators. The former installed political moderates while the latter announced new, stricter rules to appease the American public, but also relaxed other regulations on camp life. Chapter six examines the period after the end of mass removal policy in December 1944 resulting in a reduction of camp rules but also increased administrative pressure for relocation. Internees reluctantly shifted their support toward the United States after these combined pressures merged with the obvious decline of the Japanese empire.

The chaos created by mass removal and internment cast a long shadow over the domestic and international landscape in ways heretofore not considered, as the final chapter demonstrates. Those living in the immediate vicinity of the campsites, for the most part, were adversely affected since internment and relocation brought with them unresolved water rights and land development issues. For its victims, the episode meant an end to all things “Japanese” and the triumph of the “American,” both politically and culturally, while creating economic hardship for most in the years immediately following the end of the war. For administrators, mass removal and internment often meant new career opportunities to ply their new management skills abroad on “uprooted” people. Top-level federal government officials and military brass remained embarrassed by the event, and when later confronted with how history would cast their role in the decision for mass removal and internment, they forgot their own quiet confessions and misgivings, and took up a stubborn insistence on “military necessity.” But for social scientists the camps provided them with a chance to “do good” as well as use captive audiences to work out their “applied” anthropological methods in service of not only the victims

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they sought to help, but also of their academic fields and of the American Occupation of Japan.

Two examples illustrate the sum of these themes. The prologue begins with W. Wade Head, Project Director of Poston, in the Philippines to illustrate the influence of that country on both the decision to remove and intern, as well as how to govern the Japanese. The epilogue ends with Toshio Yatsushiro, a Nisei social scientist whose experience of working in Thailand in the 1960s shows the unexpected ways in which and locations where the lessons of the removal and internment were applied.

However, it is also important to explain what the findings do *not* indicate. They do not justify internment of Japanese Americans despite the obvious presence of Japanese nationalistic sentiments before and during the camps, since people cannot and should not be locked up on the basis of political sentiment but rather on the basis of acts committed. Nor does the presence of a small number of individuals willing to pass on information of military value to the Japanese government justify mass removal or internment. By the standards of the time, federal government officials distinguished strong political loyalty to an Axis Power from the potential for sabotage or espionage as a group, and detained only a small percentage of the latter; the same should have applied to Japanese Americans. On top of this, many Japanese Americans who supported Japan were *not* antagonistic toward the United States, and many who favored a Japanese “victory”—successful defense of the Empire and not the invasion of the United States—believed it would secure a discrimination-free postwar life for Japanese in the United States. The findings here also do not support the argument that the victims suffered little during World War II. Camp life had many oppressive aspects to it—the roll calls, the contraband searches, the spies, the poor living accommodations—and was without a doubt racially discriminatory especially when one compares the experience of Japanese Americans with that of the Italian and German Americans who were not mass interned. And finally, while not comparatively harsh, the study does not find that the United States government treated enemy aliens relatively well because of a “liberal” tradition. Rather, the American concentration camps did not become oppressive because of the need to ensure humane treatment of over twenty-one thousand American servicemen and fourteen thousand civilians in Japanese hands by 1942.<sup>10</sup>