

*Japanese in the U.S.*

STATEMENT BY WAR DEPARTMENT

For Release 5:00 P.M. EDT December 17, 1944.

Favorable progress of the war in the Pacific, as well as other developments, has resulted in a determination by the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command, with the approval of the War Department, that the continued mass exclusion from the West Coast of persons of Japanese ancestry is no longer a matter of military necessity.

For this reason, mass exclusion orders under which persons of Japanese ancestry were evacuated from the Pacific Coast Area in 1942, were revoked today through the issuance by Major General Henry C. Pratt, Commanding General of the Western Defense Command, of Public Proclamation Number 21.

The revocation order provides that any person of Japanese ancestry about whom information is available indicating a pro-Japanese attitude will continue to be excluded on an individual basis. Those persons of Japanese ancestry whose records have stood the test of Army scrutiny during the past two years will be permitted the same freedom of movement throughout the United States as other loyal citizens and law-abiding aliens.

The decision to revoke the exclusion orders, first applied on March 24, 1942, was prompted by military considerations. Since the evacuation, our armed forces steadily have pushed the enemy in the Pacific farther from our shores and closer to the Japanese home islands. Although hard fighting is ahead in the Pacific, it no longer can be said as it could be said in 1942, that an enemy invasion of the West Coast on a large scale is a substantial possibility.

In 1942, it was impossible to make an immediate determination of which persons of Japanese ancestry were loyal and which were not. Mass treatment of all Japanese-Americans, therefore, was a necessary military precaution. Since that time, persons of Japanese ancestry who were evacuated from the coastal area have been thoroughly investigated from the standpoint of loyalty, probably more thoroughly than any other segment of our population.

As a result of these investigations, it has been possible to make progress in separating those who may be dangerous from those who are loyal to the United States. One of the first steps in this direction was taken by the Army itself in selecting those persons of military age among the persons of Japanese ancestry who were acceptable for the Army, initially as volunteers and later under Selective Service. Many of these men were recruited from relocation centers and many of them have families in the centers. The outstanding record which these men have made fighting for the United States in Italy, in France, and in the Pacific, has shown conclusively that it is possible to make sound judgments as to their loyalty.

The War Department is aware that the rescission of mass exclusion will create certain adjustment problems beyond military considerations. It believes, however, that adequate solutions for these problems exist. The Department of the Interior has informed the War Department that it intends to put into effect a program based on a gradual and orderly return to the West Coast and a vigorous continuation of its efforts to relocate persons of Japanese descent throughout the United States.

The War Department believes that the people of the Pacific Coast Area will accord returning persons of Japanese ancestry all the considerations to which they are entitled as loyal citizens and law-abiding residents.

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