



Japanese Internment Camps in World War 2

The internment of about 110,000 Japanese during World War 2 has been a blight on America's history since it became an issue in the 1950s. But there IS another side to this saga. Here is the WHOLE story on the internment of Japanese Americans during World War 2.

You need to put yourself in the average Americans shoes in early 1942 to understand the emotions of the time. In 1942, the world was falling apart. Japan and Germany were winning everywhere. While the internment was somewhat controversial, it was mostly ignored as the country united for an all out effort to defeat Japan, Italy and Germany.

In Europe, Nazi Germany defeated Denmark, Norway and destroyed the Armies of France, Belgium and The Netherlands in only 6 weeks. Only Britain was left. Germany seemed invincible.

The supreme shock for Americans was on Dec. 7, 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. In April, 1941, Japan had signed a non aggression treaty with the Soviet Union which allowed Japan to concentrate most of it's military power against the US. Japan inflicted heavy losses on the US Pacific fleet, killing over 2,400 men, wounding 1,300, sinking 4 battleships and destroying 188 aircraft. The attack on Pearl Harbor was the first attack on US soil since the War of 1812. Japan had already conquered large parts of Asia and attacked the Philippines on Dec. 8, 1941, where 16,000 U.S. soldiers were cut off and doomed to die - or worse - be taken prisoner by the sadistic Japanese Army.(A) Only the US stood in Japan's way of complete domination of Asia and the western Pacific. The barbaric Japanese military seemed invincible.

Thanks to American ingenuity, we broke the Japanese code in late 1940. Intercepts indicated the existence of a Japanese spy ring on the west coast of the U.S.(B)

Then the attack on Pearl Harbor resulted in a bizarre incident on the Hawaiian Island of Niihau. A Japanese fighter, damaged in the attack on Pearl Harbor, crash landed on Niihau. There were only about 130 people on the island, 3 of Japanese descent. All three eventually sided with the Japanese fighter pilot and tried to take the islanders prisoner. During the confrontation, the Japanese pilot was killed and one of the ethnic Japanese committed suicide.(C)

After the ordeal, the Hawaiians were troubled by "the rapidity with which the three resident Japanese went over to the pilot's cause. The more pessimistic among them cited the Niihau incident as proof that no one could trust any Japanese, even if an American citizen, not to go over to Japan if it appeared expedient."[D]

In the official Navy report on the Niihau incident, dated January 26, 1942, its author, Navy Lieutenant C. B. Baldwin, wrote, "The fact that the two Niihau Japanese who had previously shown no anti-American tendencies went to the aid of the pilot when Japanese domination of the island seemed possible, indicate[s] [the] likelihood that Japanese residents previously believed loyal to the United States may aid Japan if further Japanese attacks appear successful."(E)

This incident provoked great fear that some Japanese Americans would be loyal to Japan if they had to choose. This incident, combined with the intercepts(F) had a profound effect on FDR issuing the Relocation Order in February 19, 1942, which allowed local military commanders to designate "military areas" as "exclusion zones", from which "any or all persons may be excluded." Another possible factor in FDR's decision was his close call with an anarchist bombing near his home in June, 1919.(G)



An article in the *Japan Advertiser* on the "Contest to kill 100 Chinese with Sword Extended when both fighters exceed mark - Mukai (left) scores 106 and Noda 105." The headline reads, "Incredible Record."



A Japanese soldier beheads a US prisoner on the Bataan Death March.



Barracks at Manzanar camp in California, similar to U.S. Army troop barracks.

Ironically, just four days later, at sunset on Feb 23, a Japanese sub shelled the oil refinery near Santa Barbara, California causing light damage. Some witnesses claimed seeing "signal lights" from the sub - apparently to spys on shore. After the attack, the Tokyo newspaper Kokumin said the attack showed that "occupation of the United States mainland no longer is in the realm of dreams." The only real accomplishment of the Japanese sub attack was to give further justification to FDR's relocation order and hasten the internment of Japanese.(H)

The Japanese were only evacuated from the West Coast - not from anywhere else in the U.S. Removing the Japanese from the West Coast eliminated the possibility of local Japanese helping Japan in the event of an invasion, or more likely, Japanese subs landing sabotage teams along the West Coast. Nazi subs landed two sabotage teams along the east coast - in Florida and New York in June 1942.(I) All 8 men were captured with six being executed.

Japanese Americans were given time to voluntarily move out of the exclusion zone and approximately 5,000 did so before the March 1942 deadline. About 110,000 people of Japanese descent were then interned in relocation camps in the interior of the US.

Over the next two years, nearly a quarter of the internees left the camps to live and work elsewhere in the United States, outside the exclusion zone. Eventually, some were authorized to return to their hometowns in the exclusion zone under supervision of a sponsoring American family or agency whose loyalty had been assured.(I) Japanese of college age were permitted to leave the camps to attend nearby institutions willing to accept students of Japanese ancestry. By December 31, 1943, there were 2,263 students enrolled.(J)

On Dec. 17, 1944, with Japan's defeat in sight, U.S. General Henry C. Pratt issued Public Proclamation No. 21, declaring that Japanese American "evacuees" from the West Coast could return to their homes, effective January 2, 1945.(K) The problem was that some had no home to go back to.

This information is not intended to justify FDR's Relocation Order, which punished the innocent with the guilty, but gives us greater understanding why the Relocation Order was issued. After the attack on Pearl Harbor and with the Allies losing everywhere, people were in panic mode and not taking any chances.

The internment of Japanese Americans has sometimes been compared to the persecutions of other ethnic minorities in the World War II era but there is no comparison. An estimated 500,000 Volga Germans were rounded up and deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan by Stalin, never to return, with many of them dying en route. In 1944, the Red Army rounded up about 500,000 Chechens and Ingushes for relocation. A third of this population perished in the first year from starvation, cold, and disease.(J)

Critics have attacked the housing accommodations of the internees. The fact is millions of American servicemen lived in the same type of wooden barracks - equipped with cots, blankets, a light bulb and had to share toilets, bathing and dining facilities. The Japanese had a mattress, bedding and each living section had an oil stove for heat. Each camp had a sewage treatment plant.

Most internees worked at the camp. They planted crops and raised chickens, hogs, and cattle. They made clothes and furniture for themselves. They served as mess hall workers, doctors, nurses, police officers, firefighters, and teachers. Professionals were paid \$19 per month, skilled workers received \$16, and nonskilled workers got \$12.(L) These camps were guarded by border patrol agents, not the military.

"Inevitably, war creates situations which Americans would not countenance in times of peace, such as the internment of men and women who were considered potentially dangerous to America's national security."
— INS, Department of Justice, 1946 Report (M)



School kids playing at Granada Camp in Colorado.



The Uyano family in their barracks room at the Granada Camp, Colorado.



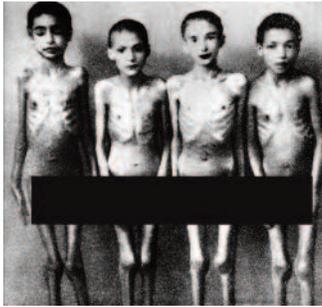
Typical interior scene.



A baseball game at Manzanar, 1943.

A big controversy over the past several decades has been what to call these camps - Internment/Relocation camps or Concentration camps. Concentration camps were places of torture, barbarous medical experiments and extermination centers. The internment/Relocation camps for the Japanese did none of this, therefore it is wrong to call them Concentration camps. The Japanese were basically left alone. The Japanese were in Internment/Relocation camps.

Below are three pictures of Nazi Concentration Camps.



Children prisoners of the Auschwitz Concentration camp in Poland were often experimented upon by the infamous Josef Mengele.



A mass grave at the Mauthausen Concentration camp in Austria, May, 1945.



Dachau Concentration camp in Nazi Germany.

Below are three pictures of Japanese Concentration Camps during World War 2.



Rescued from a Japanese Concentration Camp in the Phillipines.(O)



A rescued British POW.(P)



An Australian POW moments before being beheaded. The Japanese Officer ordered a private to take a picture of the beheading for a souvenir.(Q)

Source:

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- C. http://internmentarchives.com/showdoc.php?docid=00211&search_id=49022&pagenum=47 p 474,475
- D. December 7, 1941: The Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor by Prange, Gordon W. McGraw Hill. p 377
- E. The Niihau Incident by Beekman, Allan. Honolulu, HI: Heritage Press of Pacific. ISBN 0-9609132-0-3. p 112
- F. Magic: The Untold Story of U.S. Intelligence and the Evacuation of Japanese Residents by David D. Lowman
- G. <http://americanaction.us/index.php/american-history/anarchist-terror-bombings-1919-20/>
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- Q. <http://histclo.com/essay/war/ww2/pow/pow-jap.html>