

NISEI

The Quiet Americans

BY BILL HOSOKAWA



William Morrow and Company, Inc.

NEW YORK 1969

18

who were genuinely concerned with fifth-column rumors, the magnitude of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the continuing successes of the Japanese enemy in South Pacific areas . . .

"The necessity for protecting coastal areas, the widespread hostility toward resident Japanese, racial animus, economic cupidity, fears of attack and apprehension over the growing victories of the enemy—these factors became so intertwined that their separation was impossible. Yet they all had the common feature of pushing in the direction of evacuation. And the political representatives of the Western states reflected these one-way pressures."

Even so, the War Department was ahead of Congress. It was February 13 when the West Coast delegation sent their recommendations for evacuation to President Roosevelt. Stimson had made his decision two days earlier. It was on February 18 that Rankin stood on the floor of the House to join in bitter invective against the government's delay in taking drastic action against Japanese Americans. But the decision for such action had been finalized in that memorable meeting in Biddle's home the night before.

18

A FAULTY DIAGNOSIS

THE DOCUMENT known as Executive Order 9066 was placed on President Roosevelt's desk on February 19, 1942. The order gave the Secretary of War the authority to designate certain "military areas" and to exclude "any or all" persons from them. This was the authority that Secretary Stimson had sought to remove Japanese aliens as well as citizens of Japanese blood from the West Coast. President Roosevelt had endorsed this proposal in principle. The Army lawyers who composed the formal authorization realized there was a very good chance the Supreme Court would find it unconstitutional. So they couched the order in the broadest of terms to avoid the charge that it was a discriminatory measure directed at persons of a specific race.

The day that President Roosevelt received the document was the seventy-fourth since the attack on Pearl Harbor; two months and twelve days had sped by. What had been feared in the early days of December had not come to pass; the Japanese had ventured no farther to the east after the strike that had launched the war. Even to armchair strategists it was evident that the Pearl Harbor attack was a hit-and-run effort to cripple the American fleet and destroy its principal base, after which the thrust of Japanese aggression was turned in the opposite direction. As costly as the Pearl Harbor attack had been for the United States, it had not achieved the results Japan had sought, for the U.S. carrier fleet was still intact. Nonetheless, Japan had directed the full force of conquest at Southeast Asia and the far Southwest Pacific, not the American mainland. By February 19, Manila, Hongkong and much of the Dutch East Indies were in Japanese hands. Singapore had been lost

