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Notes on the Manzanar Shooting

*Morton Grodzins was a political scientist. In the aftermath of the violent uprising at Manzanar in December, 1942, Grodzins visited the camp and wrote down his own impressions and observations. In this section of his report draft, Grodzins disputes the argument that the violence stemmed from pro-Japanese and anti-American forces within the camp during a celebration of Pearl Harbor—an argument picked up by numerous newspapers at the time—and instead insisted that frustration with camp administration was more to blame. In 1949, Grodzins wrote a book on the mistreatment of Japanese Americans during the war called Americans Betrayed.*

The Manzanar shooting incident was attributed by Camp Director Ralph Merritt, in his statement to the newspapers, to “a celebration of Pearl Harbor by the pro-axis group among the Japanese.” This entire report points to the doubtful **validity** of this statement. From the evidence at hand, there is no indication that a celebration of Pearl Harbor had anything to do with the affair. It would be crediting the Japanese with over-abundant **prophetic powers** to believe that they could foresee that Uyeno [Harry Ueno] would be removed from the camp following the beating of Tayama. Uyeno did not come forward and confess, thus setting up cause for reaction. Rather, the evidence indicates that he was identified by Tayama’s wife on **tenuous** evidence, and removed from the camp over his own protest.

Furthermore, there is little evidence to corroborate the view that pro-axis sentiment was the main factor in creating the riot situation. Pro-axis elements appear to have been the **catalysts** at work. But the main dynamics are anti-administration rather than anti-American. The basis of this anti-administration feeling has been traced chronologically to at least the early part of August, and **quantitatively** to all segments of the Manzanar population, old and young, American and non-American. That the anti-administration feeling came to a head on December 6 is pure chance. If it had come to a breaking point on December 25, Mr. Merritt, with equal validity, could have called it a Christmas celebration.

**validity:** accuracy

**prophetic powers:**  
predicting the future

**tenuous:** weak

**catalysts:** causing  
something the  
happen quickly

**quantitatively:**  
measuring the  
numbers of

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**Source:** Grodzins, Morton. " The Manzanar Shooting, Jan. 10, 1943. " The Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement: A Digital Archive, Bancroft Library, University of California. BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder O10.04.

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