

CHAPTER V

Japanese Evacuation From the West Coast

One of the Army's largest undertakings in the name of defense during World War II was the evacuation of almost all persons of Japanese ancestry from California, from the western halves of Oregon and Washington, and from southern Arizona. The Army also removed persons of Japanese descent from Alaska and began what was initially intended to be a substantial transfer of such persons from Hawaii to the mainland.¹ Many facets of the story of the Japanese evacuation from the west coast have already been related in published works.² Here the discussion is limited to the plans and decisions for evacuation and to the nature of the military necessity that lay behind them.³

Initial plans for evacuation of suspected persons from strategic areas along the Pacific front concerned enemy aliens of all three Axis nations—Germany, Italy, and Japan—rather than persons of Japanese ancestry alone. Of the latter, the census of 1940 showed that, out of a total of 126,947 in the continental United States, 112,353 were living in the three Pacific states. California alone had 93,717 Japanese, or nearly three-fourths of the national total. Of the west coast Japanese, 40,869 were aliens ineligible for

¹ On Hawaii, see ch. VIII, below.

² During the war the Army itself published a detailed report of the origins and execution of the evacuation program: United States War Department, *Final Report: Japanese Evacuation From the West Coast, 1942* (Washington, 1943) (hereafter cited as War Department, *Final Report*). The principal works published since the war are: Mortin Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese Evacuation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949) (hereafter cited as Grodzins, *Japanese Evacuation*); Dorothy S. Thomas and Richard S. Nishimoto, *The Spoilage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946) and *The Salvage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952); Jacobus tenBroek, Edward N. Barnhart, and Floyd W. Watson, *Prejudice, War and the Constitution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954); and the United States Department of the Interior, War Relocation Authority, *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation* (Washington, 1946) (hereafter cited as *WRA*).

³ A substantially similar account of the decision to evacuate the Japanese appeared as study 4 in the collection of studies prepared by the Office of the Chief of Military History, *Command Decisions* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), and as study 5 in the publicly printed edition of this work (Washington, 1960).