Chapter 16: GROUP OF SEVEN

Thursday, January 13, 1944 — Two months since my imprisonment

Breakfast: pancakes, coffee, minced ham
Lunch: rice, curry (potato, lamb, carrot), cabbage salad
Dinner: rice, foo young hai (minced ham, carrot, egg) (or more commonly known in the U.S. as egg foo young)

Our barrack was on night duty today. I stayed up all night. We did not actually need to work so hard but we were energized. I ate fried rice around two o’clock in the morning. I took a bath at three. Then, I ate breakfast at six (breakfast is usually at seven.). It was still pitch dark. Everyone was animated and were acting as if we’ve all become young again.

The room was filled with gaiety because someone had put a radio in the kitchen. During lunch, I heard the word, “WRA,” coming from the radio and that caught my attention. The Spanish embassy had announced that the army had withdrawn from the center and that the camp’s administrative authority had reverted back to the WRA.

The Japanese government had apparently refused to give support to its citizens until the truth of the matter was disclosed, etc. The broadcast came from a Klamath Falls radio station.

I heard that Mr. Hoshiko’s wife went into the hospital. Mr. Hoshiko was worried that their little child would be left all alone. I wrote to Yuriko and asked her to look after the child at our place (since my children got along with Mr. Hoshiko’s child).

At 1:15 p.m., after roll call, we were told that the chief guard officer and corporal needed to talk to us. I had no idea what this was about. I took the snowy path to the administration building with five other men — Hoshiko, Nakamoto, Shimizu, Katayama, and Mori. Today, we were not trailed by soldiers, holding bayonets, but accompanied by two men (Scabner and the corporal), so I felt something was different in the air. When we entered the building, we saw (Tule Lake Project Director Raymond) Best there. In the next room, there were several Japanese. Something seemed strange. We were invited into the next room where I saw eleven men and one female.

My old friend, Mr. Shimada, and Mr. Yamatani, whom I had met in Poston, were also there. What was going on? As I sat down, I was trying to figure this out but couldn’t. The eleven men were dressed neatly, while we, six, looked like bums. We had untrimmed beards and stubble coming out of our once shaven heads. The female stenographer seemed to have found this contrast so funny that she turned away and giggled.

The Caucasian Americans, who had been in the room, got up and left the room. I was surprised to be introduced to those men, whose reputations were well known, but at the same time, I felt it was natural for them to be there.
Mr. Shimada went over the latest developments within the camp and explained that it was now time to restore a sense of normalcy to the camp by breaking the status quo. He added that the camp would never be peaceful unless the status quo was broken. He said the families of the imprisoned men were all worried and that an increasing number of people were asking for assistance because they found it difficult to make a living. He insisted that the residents were hoping to return to work.

The results from the vote were as follows:

- Continuation of the strike: 4,120
- Break the strike: 4,593
- Blank ballots: 128
- Possible Votes: 8,941 (missing 100 votes)

Breakdown of the results by Ward:
- (Ward 1) 6 versus 3
- (Ward 2) 5 versus 4
- (Ward 3) 5 versus 4
- (Ward 4) 8 versus 1
- (Ward 5) 7 versus 2
- (Ward 6) 2 versus 7
- (Ward 7) 2 versus 7

Total: 35 (break the strike) versus 28 (continue status quo)

As a result, the status quo group lost. Thirty-five blocks voted for breaking the strike, while twenty-eight blocks voted for the continuation of the status quo.

The camp residents were to return to work Monday, but since there was still tension between the two factions, which might lead to some problems, they had wanted our opinions and had asked for the meeting.

They explained that they would work hard to get the stockade prisoners released through legal means as soon as the situation in camp had settled down. (This is doubtful.) The army had rejected all their efforts up to this point. People were aware of what was going on. However, since no one was trying to resolve the situation and the camp residents were the ones who were suffering, they had decided to take action. They said they would make their intentions known when the time came.

To this, we replied, “We don’t know what to say when you suddenly tell us such things. In any case, we will relay your message to the people in the stockade, but if we take everyone’s opinions into consideration, it might be difficult to come up with a consensus. And since this has become an international affair, we cannot treat it lightly.”

We asked them why they had nominated the six of us, especially since there were members of the Negotiating Committee imprisoned, as well. To this, they replied, “We gave the names of ten people to the army, and the army rejected four of them. They approved the six of you, and Best even said he could release the six of you immediately.”
And we wanted your opinion because you are considered leaders among the people here. That is why we got permission to see you in the office.”

A man named Mr. Akizuki asked, “I heard that some people in the stockade miss their homes and want to go back to the center. Some are crying because they feel so lonely. Is that true?”

I scolded him. “You should never ask such an absurd question. At least, it is not a question to ask a Japanese.” The atmosphere chilled.

They also said, “We had expected help from the Spanish consul’s office but were disappointed to learn that the consulate will not interfere in domestic affairs of the U.S. The administration is also taking a firm stand and is not willing to negotiate with us, so if we leave things as they are, under these circumstances, the camp residents will continue to suffer immeasurably. That is the reason we are taking action. After all, we should solve our problems ourselves. Please convey these thoughts to the people in the stockade.”

We responded, “We will tell them.”

The meeting lasted for two hours. When we returned, we gathered the representatives so they could pass along the information from the meeting. We also informed each barrack about the situation in camp.

They do not know that we have a radio.

Moreover, we asked to borrow the minutes of their meeting with the Spanish Consul for reference and brought them back with special permission. Among the papers, we found a few sheets of paper that were probably supposed to have been held back. I do not know whether they had handed those sheets to us inadvertently. These minutes contained information that clearly revealed why the army considered us a gangster group. Our guess had been correct, and this made us laugh.

I got a letter from Yuriko:

Receiving your letters sure made us all happy because there were very bad rumors going around here that caused me to imagine all sorts of terrible things. Since I have not received a letter, I was very worried whether you might have gotten seriously ill and gone into the hospital. I couldn’t sleep so I went to see the sergeant. I also went to the warden’s office this morning, but got no letter. I went again in the afternoon and the letter was there. From now on, please do not hold anything back. Tell me everything including bad news. We are all fine, I often see Mrs. Hoshiko. We get along well because we have so much in common. I received a check from Mr. Good. I have lots of other things to tell you but cannot tell you well in a letter. I really want to see you.

Mr. Masaki Hayashi gave me a ticket for shoes so I bought Sayuri a pair of shoes.
She sent me some newspaper clippings.

I replied to her:

_I received your letter. I’m very fine. I feel much better than before, maybe because I eat garlic every day. I heard that there are many rumors but do not worry about me. Do not forget that I have not changed and am the same person you know. I heard that Mrs. Hoshiko went into the hospital. Take care of her child in our home. When you need to see me, ask Lieutenant Hartman. But if you can wait, wait until I come back to you. I won’t write to others to express my gratitude but I will have the opportunity to thank them in person in the near future. Again, do not worry about me, etc._

Friday, January 14, 1944

Breakfast: coffee, two pieces of toast, mashed potatoes, grapefruit, French fries
Lunch: bread, udon, stewed carrots, beef
Dinner: rice, nimono (carrots, squid), tea

I woke up at eleven o’clock. I slept very well. I seemed to have made up for the continued lack of sleep, at last.

According to Mr. Nakano’s letter, Yuriko often goes to visit Mrs. Nakano. Misery loves company, I guess.

Mrs. Hoshiko had a miscarriage of a baby boy. This happened on the eleventh, but they just informed us this afternoon. How insensitive. I heard that the wives of Mr. Masuda and Mr. Hatano had also delivered babies but that both of the babies had not survived. I’d gotten to know Mr. Masuda and Mr. Hatano in the stockade, since we share many things together. How tragic for them. This is the third case. When we consider this, we have to face the fact that the administration’s oppressive behavior is causing the Japanese great suffering.

At 1:30 p.m., we met again with the seven Japanese at the administration office. Yesterday, they had told us that negotiations were not going very smoothly, but they appeared to be fooling us, so we treated them as if we were meeting with Japanese bureaucrats from the W.R.A.

Stockade group: “Yesterday, we relayed your message to the people in the stockade, but what are your qualifications for working with the administration?”

Group of seven: “We are the seven, who had been selected and entrusted by the people in charge of each section, to negotiate with the administration.”

Stockade group: “Have you ever tied to release the people from the stockade?”
Group of seven: “We have tried many times but failed each time. The administration is telling us that no one will be released until the camp returns to normal. They do not accept whatever conditions we offer them.”

Stockade group: “Do you really think that everyone in the stockade will be released if the situation in camp returns to normal?”

Group of seven: “The administration has not said anything about releasing everyone, but we intend to start legal procedures to get everyone released once the camp returns to normal.”

Stockade group: “The people in the stockade are determined not to agree to be released unless everyone is freed. The hunger strike that happened earlier shows our resolution. How could any one of us just pack our suitcase and leave the prison alone, after sharing our lives together here? Moreover, we have no idea how long we will be kept here because there has been no charges or trial. As a result, everyone believes, that as Japanese, we cannot leave this prison unless everyone is released together.”

Group of seven: “But the administration won’t negotiate with us until the camp returns to normal.”

Stockade group: “So did you simply come to see us to tell us that everyone is going back to work on Monday? What do you want us to do? Be honest about this.”

Group of seven: “We would like your opinions on this matter.”

Stockade group: “Yesterday, we listened to you, and we felt something didn’t make sense. You say that it has been decided that everyone is to return to work on Monday in order to have the camp return to normal. However, on the other hand, you are saying that the camp is divided into those who support the status quo and those who oppose it and that the two factions are in conflict. Are you ready to deal with the situation if trouble should erupt when the residents return to work on Monday? If you are not prepared to deal with this potential problem, there may be more turmoil in camp, rather than peace. If you really hope for peace, you must come up with a plan.

“So tell us clearly, what you intend to do. According to what you told us yesterday, the difference in the votes cast between the two factions was very small. And although the side in support of breaking the status quo won, we don’t think that is a true picture of reality.

“These people have been suffering under martial law for two months. Then, they are forced, at the point of bayonets, to vote. Yet, under such circumstances, the results still came out close to fifty-fifty, so if you return to work on Monday, you should know what will happen.”

Group of seven: “That is exactly why we need your cooperation.”
Stockade group: “We’re sorry but we do not wield such power. We elected committee members to handle such things. They represent the will of the 16,000 people in camp. Unless they can convince the public, it will be impossible to solve the problem in camp.”

“Group of seven: “The army will not take responsibility for such action. We submitted ten names to the army but four of them were rejected. Those four included members from the Negotiating Committee.”

Stockade group: “Have you ever considered why the army and the WRA take such a stand? Have you ever considered who came up with these false accusations? We have been repeatedly investigated by the FBI, and we were told that some of the Japanese must be lying. And because of those lies, trivial matters developed into complicated incidents. Those lying Japanese are working for the center, and those men are doing nothing good for the army, for the FBI, or for the larger Japanese community. I don’t know who they are, but it seems they’ve influenced the army because they gave misleading information to the administration or painted a picture that suited them. It is certain that these men exist in camp. Have you ever considered who they might be?

“If any of us dies in the stockade, it will bring great consequences from the Japanese government, which has lodged a protest to the U.S. government on our behalf. We would like you to consider this point and handle this situation accordingly. As fellow Japanese, we hope you will fully recognize this point. You say the army is stubborn and will not negotiate and that negotiating with them is like running into a brick wall, but we would like you to take a different perspective. If you really care about the Japanese, the first thing that should be negotiated should be the unconditional release of everyone in the stockade.”

The seven men seemed to be at a loss for words after this.

Stockade group: “You say that the army would not negotiate but you never know until you try.”

Group of seven: “Yes, we could try, but if we fail, there will likely be no future negotiations, so it will be a gamble.”

Stockade group: “You say that the army’s attitude is firm and that they are getting increasingly tougher. However, the way we see it, the army has softened their attitudes from before. It might’ve been difficult to negotiate with them earlier, but it might be easier now.”

Group of seven: “How do you know that?”

Stockade group: “We’ve negotiated with the army many times, and each time, we’ve seen a change in their attitude.”
It was obvious the group of seven were facing a dilemma. I could see the difficult position they were in. If they asked to negotiate with the army, they would have to call something black that they had been calling white the day before. But it was very clear that the camp would only return to normalcy if the army released all of us. The problem was that if the army released us, it would be admitting that the information the army collected had all been wrong.

Group of seven: “So you are saying that even if one person is released from the stockade, he won’t leave until each and every one of you are released at one time?”

Stockade group: “Exactly. The hunger strike proved our determination. Nothing proved that more clearly than when we struggled together and put our lives on the line. If the army threatens us or grabs our arms and legs and throws us into the truck, they may force us into camp, but if they do that, some might act in such a way that they would be put back into the stockade. In fact, some people have volunteered to come into the stockade.”

They confessed that they had wanted the leaders of the stockade prisoners to sign a paper that recommended the breaking of the status quo. (They said they will show this paper to the army and the WRA, but we suspected the real purpose was to show it to the Japanese.) Most likely, this is what they were aiming for.

Stockade group: “You are badly mistaken if you think having us sign a piece of paper will resolve this serious situation. We believe the quickest way to restore normalcy within the camp is to hold a joint meeting with the committee members, the administration, and your group.”

Group of seven: “The army will never allow that.”

They were fixated on this point.

Stockade group: “Then, we would like you to negotiate the release of the Negotiating Committee members, so that they can attend the meeting of representatives in camp. It’s fine if the authorities want them accompanied by armed soldiers. At the meeting, we can declare our recommendation for the camp to return to normal. If normalcy is restored in camp, everyone in the stockade should also be released. We will actively cooperate so that there will be no problems after everyone’s release. We can even recommend the temporary return of the committee members to the stockade after the meeting if the army is uncomfortable about releasing them at that time. In either case, everybody should be released after the camp returns to normalcy. Could you propose this to the administration?”

Despite the fact that we are all Japanese, the group of seven was hesitant even with this suggestion. I wonder why? We should not miss this opportunity, which seems heaven-sent.
They would need to plead their case fervently for their fellow Japanese. And now that they were pressed into a corner, they said, “Okay, we will try.”

I was aware that this was a difficult task but there is no way of reaping any fruits, if you don’t plant the seeds. The time was already 3:30 p.m.

In the meantime, I had the following conversation with them. They asked me, “Mr. Inouye, you were imprisoned here just because you were a leader in the judo organization. We’re very sorry this happened to you.”

Inouye: “It’s no problem. I would go through this experience again even if I had to pay for it. It was a great learning experience for me.”

Group of seven: “Do you have any messages that you would like us to convey to your family? They are very worried.”

Inouye: “No, I’m sure my wife is not worried. There is no message. My wife should be fine. She is Japanese, after all.”

Group of seven: “If there are any casualties, we will need to apologize to the Japanese government. We heard that a person, who returned to Japan on the second hostage exchange ship, had made a speech in Hibiya. In the speech, he had mentioned reparations, etc., and he was apparently criticized from all directions. Currently, Japan is devoting all of the country’s energy to fighting the war, so we should not burden the Japanese government. During a war, it cannot be helped if a country conducts unconventional diplomacy. We should not depend on our government and burden them. That is why, at this point, we believe it will be a win-win situation if we make concessions and persevere through the hardships that we are facing.”

They may have a point, but if a handful of people, who are accused of being gangsters, are left in the stockade, this entire incident will be remembered for the Japanese community having gangsters. The American government will use this against us. Thus, if we accept being persecuted for crimes we had not committed, it not only dishonors the individual, but it dishonors the Japanese government. It is sad that these men do not understand this.

If one lacks the spirit of sacrifice and just spouts the words, “peace” and “solution,” without any conviction behind them, one will get nowhere. Why are they so hesitant? That is probably because they are aware of their position. They just want to save their butts. That is why they are asking us to calm the supporters of the status quo, because they, themselves, cannot accomplish this. If the voting result had been 8 to 2, they would not have come to us. (Even if they had to come to us, they would not have met with us because a few would remain in the stockade, which the administrators would label as “agitators.”) Only those, who know, understand why they came to see us and why they lost the trust of the army. What goes around comes around. But this must be utterly humiliating for them.
Mr. Yoshiyama brought me coffee. He had mixed a laxative in it. I thought the coffee had tasted strange but drank it anyway. Then, I felt the effects right away. Every evening, Mr. Yoshiyama amuses himself by playing tricks on his fellow prisoners.

The radio repeatedly broadcasted the joint announcement by the WRA and the army. I can’t remember hearing one announcement repeated so many times, until now. The report said that since peace had been restored at the Tule Lake Center, the army was withdrawing and that the administrative authority was reverting back to the WRA, etc. The radio broadcast was directed towards Japan, but I doubted that it would be effective, considering what has happened so far. I assumed this was just a formality.

January 15, 1944, Saturday — an important meeting (from 4:35 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.)
Breakfast: biscuits, coffee
Lunch: bread, pink beans, boiled carrots and cabbage, Jell-O
Dinner: rice, nimono (weenie, cabbage, carrots)

The six of us were summoned after 4 o’clock. We were accompanied to the administration office by Second Lieutenant Schaner and the corporal. Snow was still visible here and there. I had assumed they would not summon us today…(I had heard that they had negotiated with the administration all afternoon about the proposal we had brought up yesterday.) The authorities gave us a few cigarettes, as usual. They had confiscated our cigarettes, and now, they dole out three or four a day to us. Yesterday, Mr. Teruo Ikemoto sent Mr. Nakano and me a pack of cigarettes (delivered by Akizuki).

Group of seven: “We explained to Colonel Austin and Director Best about the proposal you offered us yesterday, but Colonel Austin stubbornly stopped listening once we mentioned the Negotiating Committee, especially when he heard the names Kai, Kuratomi, and Sugimoto. He just held his chin up and would not talk to us. Since they had violated the curfew, we tried to have their charges lightened. We also tried to get the charges of the other committee members lessened. (It was obvious this would have been a useless effort.)

“After all this, your proposal was rejected. What if the six of you, instead, come out of the stockade and persuade the supporters of the status quo to change their minds? The administration knows they are detaining many innocent men, so they are willing to conduct hearings and release as many people as possible.”

Stockade group: “Then, what happens to the committee members?”

Group of seven: “That is the difficult part. The army has made it clear that they have final judgment on that, not us, so no matter how many times we try to negotiate with them on this point, they won’t budge.”

Stockade group: “Lieutenant Hartman has always said that most of us can be released from the stockade. That is nothing new. We all know this. But from even before the
hunger strike, we have seen no progress. They said that they will allow the Japanese to have autonomy, but this is already happening at the other camps, so this is nothing special. Such an offer only helps the administration, not the Japanese. In this situation, it is useless for the six of us to return to camp and ask the residents to calm down. If we had something to convince the residents that things were moving in a positive direction, we might have a chance to calm the camp down, but if the Negotiating Committee members are left in the stockade, it will not work. It is the committee members that the people in camp support. Unless you get them released, nothing will be resolved. We already know that the non-committee people will be released even if you don’t negotiate for their freedom.”

Naito from the Group of seven said, “Then, are you saying that you will just let the 16,000 people in camp continue to suffer because a few of you are left in the stockade? Why can’t the six of you go out to the camp to calm the people down first, and then, work with us to start the process of trying to get the Negotiating Committee members and the others out of the stockade? Don’t you care about the Japanese people?”

Stockade group: “You are looking at this from the wrong perspective. The committee members did not act on their own behalf. They had done so on behalf of the 16,000 camp residents, and they had just conveyed to the administration what the people had asked them to. And now, they are being detained in the stockade as gangsters. As a fellow Japanese, how can you neglect them? How can we ask the people in camp to calm down and still keep our honor while the committee members languish in the stockade? You are Japanese. You should be able to understand this. You say the people in camp are suffering, but the latest vote revealed that there are people, who support the committee, no matter how much they are suffering. In this camp, there are those who prefer to endure hardships to uphold Japanese honor.”

Group of seven: “Either way, the army has announced that we are to return to work on Monday. Some people have already gone back to work, so even if you will not return to camp, it has already been decided that everybody should go back to work.”

Stockade group: “That does not concern us. And if any trouble should develop from this policy, you will be held responsible. Have you considered how your actions will be interpreted in the future? You, who are protected by armed soldiers, are forcing people to return to work, although half the camp population is in opposition to this.

“Have you ever thought about how you will be remembered in the future? Things may be calm on Monday, but something might happen on Tuesday or a week later or ten days later. Who knows? In any case, unless you eliminate the cancer that is the root cause of all the problems, peace will never return to camp. There will be no excuse if blood should be shed among our compatriots. You’re making the decision to put your plans into action, so you should be ready to face the consequences, as well.

Group of seven: “But that is exactly why we need your cooperation.”
Stockade group: “We are sorry but we do not wield that kind of power. Who has such authority? The Negotiating Committee does. In any case, even if we should return to camp and things don’t go as planned, we will be blamed for this and put back into the stockade. Since we know we’ll just be sent back into the stockade, we prefer not to get out at this moment.”

Group of seven: “Then, it sounds like we are unable to reach an agreement…”

No matter how much we continued to talk, we circled back to where we started from and couldn’t make any progress.

Stockade group: “Did they end martial law in camp?”

Group of seven: “No. We’ve been told it will remain in place for a while and that the army will be patrolling the camp.”

Stockade group: “So it sounds like things are the same as before.”

Group of seven: “There was an announcement that the army withdrew from camp.”

Stockade group: “We would like you to think carefully about why the army has not withdrawn yet, even after they announced that they had withdrawn.

“In addition, we think it is obvious why the majority of the residents are supporting the status quo even if they must continue enduring great pain. And that is, there is a clear distinction between those who got arrested and those who were not arrested. Those who disagreed with you were immediately arrested, while the ones, who agreed with you, were not bothered. And even if someone was arrested accidentally, he was released immediately if he supported your views. How do you explain this? We imagine the residents must consider this strange, as well. What do you think about this?”

In the end, we agreed upon the following proposal: Hold hearings immediately, especially for the Negotiating Committee members to get them out of the stockade. If any of the Negotiating Committee members are charged with curfew violations, they should be informed as to how long they will be detained.

We promised them that if these proposals were accepted, we would not spare any effort to bring peace in the camp.

Group of seven: “The army is rather stubborn, so we do not know whether we will succeed in negotiating with them, but we will try. We cannot guarantee success. Please convey our sincerity to everyone in the stockade.”

Stockade group: “Certainly. If you are really thinking about your compatriots, we would like you to take the proper measures in the spirit of selfless devotion. We have informed
you that we are ready to endure any hardship to uphold the honor of the Japanese people.”

The meeting ended at 6:15 p.m., and we walked back to our stockade barrack on a snow-covered path. The accompanying soldiers (the second lieutenant and the corporal) had waited for us for the duration of the meeting and hadn’t had dinner.

We had talked to seven people today — Yamatani, Shimada, Nakao, Okamoto, Maeda, Naito, and Furukawa.

The seven had said to us: “Since the officer doesn’t trust us, he checked our badges and took down our names. If they suspect us of suspicious activity, this meeting will be void.”

They had said that a little too cheerily. What kind of liars are they? During the three meetings we had with them, we could see that they had a close relationship with the administration. We could see this by the way Director Best smiled when he took us into the meeting room and how he checked up on us three times during the meeting. It was obvious that they had consulted the administration in advance. I detest these kinds of dealings.

In addition, Naito had said to me, “Mr. Inouye, you are hiding something. Please talk to me honestly.”

I had replied, “I have nothing to hide. Our sole purpose is to maintain peace in the camp without bringing disgrace upon Japanese honor. We already told you our intentions in great detail yesterday. That was my personal opinion, as well as my public stand. I have no reason to hide anything.”

Naito did not respond. “…”

The six of us ate a late dinner together. One of them said to me, “Inouye-san, they are intimidated by you. Your voice is so deep that it sounds like it is being pushed out of a pipe organ and is very effective each time you talk.”

Another said, “Your voice is very strong, and it sounded like those seven men were being scolded.”

I responded with, “Yuriko always tells me that the way I talk sounds like I’m always having a quarrel. This comes from the fact that I am naturally a poor speaker, so people from other prefectures might get the wrong impression.”

On the other hand, I felt that we needed to talk forcefully with people like that.

**Sunday, January 16, 1944**

Breakfast: bread, mash
Lunch: bread, soup (carrots, minced ham), beets, fried together - cabbage, carrots, minced ham, tea
Dinner: rice, stew (beef, cabbage, carrots), tea

Yesterday, after we had returned to the stockade following the meeting and had re-grouped for a late dinner, Mr. Nakamoto, who had also attended the meeting, said, “I just heard on the Japanese broadcast that Foreign Minister Shigemitsu made a statement about the Tule Lake issue. He said Japan would retaliate against the Americans residing in Japan, unless the U.S. army withdrew from camp before January 15, resolved the camp problem by January 29, and accorded the Japanese people proper treatment under international law, etc. . . .”

Although the army publicly announced on the radio and in the newspapers that they were withdrawing, they were still in camp. This is inexcusable. Yesterday, I heard the colonel say we could discuss our problems with Director Best but that we should first get the consent of the army. He told us that although an officer’s position for a Japanese in the law enforcement division would be nominally created, the army would continue to oversee camp security. They plan to open a police station and post Japanese police officers, just as a formality.

They announced that they had withdrawn one thousand soldiers, but I heard that there are still more than two thousand soldiers remaining. The atmosphere is extremely tense because there are tanks, armored cars, and jeeps all lined up in an impressive, straight line. I don’t know why they needed to deploy such a large contingent. In any case, there is no doubt that they are terribly afraid of us, which is very amusing.

Yesterday, Nakao asked us to get signatures from the committee members. He suggested that their signatures would calm the camp down, etc. Here is his real intention: he is scared. Why? It would be easier to ask him. Who suggested that only the non-committee members be set free? It is very questionable whether they really brought up our proposal to the administration. We waited to see if they would call another meeting today, but we did not hear from them. This proved that they were not serious about resolving this matter.

Monday, January 17, 1944
Breakfast: grapefruit, mash, coffee, bread
Lunch: bread, rice, sardine
Dinner: rice, spareribs, cabbage salad, tea

Needless to say, four pounds of sugar per day is insufficient to feed 232 people. But we often have days when they don’t even bring the four pounds. Mashed potatoes and coffee without sugar or milk is the same as sashimi without soy sauce. The shortage of cigarettes is unbearable. There are no words to describe this spiteful treatment.

They confiscated our personal belongings, and then, in order to cover up the fact that we lack certain goods, they distribute a few cigarettes to the cells (but we saw them steal our
possessions right in front of our eyes). And once we receive the cigarettes, we share them among the inmates. I feel like contacting Japan about this deplorable situation in which the army doles out four or five cigarettes per person as if they were doing us a favor but these cigarettes belonged to us in the first place.

In addition, there were inmates, who had not brought their own cigarettes to the stockade but are now insisting that the cigarettes be distributed evenly. This is despicable. We have been trying to pass out the cigarettes fairly by including those who had not brought in any personal cigarettes, but it is shameful that these inmates should take this generosity for granted. I once made my way to the area where they were distributing the cigarettes, but I had to look away because I was embarrassed to see such shameful behavior. I came back very disturbed by what I saw. They are acting like animals.

Around 11:00 a.m., Mr. Nakano said, “That looks like my wife.” He gazed towards the fence in the distance. When I went to see what was happening, I saw two women eagerly waving their hands. I couldn’t tell who they were so I returned to my room. Then, Mr. Nakano came to fetch me. He said that one woman was shouting, “Inouye.” I went back out and could indeed hear someone shout, “Inouye.” When the woman saw me, she jumped up and down. Judging from her behavior, I guessed that was probably Yuriko. Mrs. Nakano and Yuriko must’ve had some errands and came here together. I knew, however, that we could not conduct a conversation since our voices would not reach each other due to the distance, so I waved my hand and went inside. One man said to me, “Looks like you’ll be treated wonderfully when you return home.” Two months have passed since I parted with my family. I will never forget this despicable experience I’ve been put through by a country that boasts of being democratic and humanitarian.

We knew people were returning to work today since we had been informed at the last meeting. The camp area appeared livelier with the movement of trucks, and I could see people going to work. There seemed to be a change in the camp atmosphere.

Four new men were brought in. When I asked them about conditions in camp, they told me that the latest ballot results showed that the overwhelming majority supported the status quo. One man told me that in some blocks, no one had voted. They said that some of the people had looked into this and had found that there had been voter fraud, so they had posted an announcement about this discovery in each block. I was told the announcement had said something like the following: “As a result of our own private investigation of each block, it has become clear that the outcome announced by the army and the real results are opposites. This is fraud, carried out by dogs.” This proved how low the army was willing to go.

The soldiers had, then, apparently rushed in to remove these announcements and posted one of their own that had said something like this: “Notwithstanding the results from the vote, everybody should return to work. If you do not break the strike, the 16,000 residents will suffer unfortunate consequences.”

I heard that at this point, the majority of the residents had not returned to work and that negotiations were continuing. Apparently, not everyone has work to return to either, and
the army is only giving jobs to those whom they favor. When Naito had insisted on holding the latest vote, the camp residents had warned him that the side in support of breaking the status quo would lose. To this, Naito had asserted that he had a plan and that everything would work out fine.

(Kawamura, who had been released from the stockade a few days ago under murky circumstances, had stated that the inmates in the stockade were split into two factions and that because of this, it was useless for the camp residents to keep insisting on maintaining the status quo. I heard he had also talked about the hunger strike and had said some of the inmates were taking vitamin pills and expressing radical thoughts.)

I figured out that Naito’s assertion had been based on what he had heard from Kawamura. That is the reason we had three meetings with them. Thinking back on this, I can, now, understand why Naito had asked me for my personal opinion and had questioned whether I was still hiding something. Those who believed Kawamura must’ve been puzzled because in all three meetings, our opinions never coincided with what Kawamura had told them.

Tuesday, January 18, 1944
Breakfast: coffee, bread, mashed potatoes, prunes
Lunch: rice, tempura (corn), Chinese-style greens, salted pork, carrots, tea
Dinner: rice, nimono (carrots, beef, cabbage), Jell-O, soup (ozouni-style)

Today’s meals were delicious. They were the most delicious meals I’ve eaten since I was put into the stockade.

The wives of the detained men are getting together and meeting with Colonel Hartman. They have initiated a movement to try to get us released. Last night, I received a letter signed jointly by Yuriko and Mrs. Nakano. It said that they had met with the colonel the day before yesterday but nothing came of the meeting. She also scribbled that they went to see him today again and so on.

Apparently, the so-called “stockade widows” are leading the charge. Yesterday, I received a lot of newspaper clippings from Yuriko. (I had written to her, telling her not to send me any newspapers, but she must’ve read it the wrong way.) According to a letter sent to Mr. Nakano, Yuriko had been sick but she had gotten better. The letter noted that Yuriko had requested that I not be told that she had been sick.

A recent radio broadcast reported that the bodies of about three thousand Japanese, who had been buried alive, had been unearthed in Singapore. It was not confirmed but there was indication, from the way the kimonos were found, that the women had been raped. Such barbaric behavior by the Anglo Saxons is utterly unforgivable. These compatriots, who had fallen on foreign soil, probably shed bitter tears and died with hate against the enemy. When I think of this, our present hardship feels insignificant.

It is about time that Mr. Shimonishi’s wife gave birth to her baby but we have not been given any update on her. I worry about her since they also have a little child and there is
no way to know how that child is faring. However, even if we do learn that something is
wrong, there is nothing we can do. Mr. Hoshiko’s wife had a miscarriage and went into
the hospital. We do not know who is looking after her four-year-old daughter. Mr.
Hoshiko said the girl is shy in front of strangers, so he is worried that she might be crying
all the time. I cannot help but feel sympathetic towards them. I hope Yuriko is
successfully looking after her at our place.

Four new men were brought in. They told us that the opinions of those, who are in
support of breaking the status quo, feel that we should not trouble Japan since the country
is in the midst of a war. They are insisting that we should first break the status quo, return
to work, and only then, initiate a movement to have us released from the stockade in an
effort to improve conditions in camp.

Of course, we should not worry our home country. However, this whole thing started
when we had selected representatives to negotiate with the administration to improve life
in camp. The administration had reacted with arrogance and a sense of superiority. They
had promised to improve things but kept breaking those promises. This angered the
residents, who were suffering from overcrowded living conditions. Lamenting this
situation, the Negotiating Committee had requested a meeting with the administration on
the day that WRA Director Myer was scheduled to visit the center. Both the WRA
director and the project director promised improvements in camp but also asked the
committee for cooperation. Just as negotiations were about to bear fruit, an incident
happened, whereby the project director overreacted and called in the army and instituted
martial law.

This entire situation is unprecedented and outrageous. However, in spite of the chaos
happening around them, the Negotiating Committee, our only legitimately selected
representatives, managed to continue discussions. We even started to believe that the
camp would be restored to normalcy, but it was at this point that some of the more
politically ambitious compatriots used underhanded means and fed misinformation to the
administration. As a result, the Negotiating Committee members, who were making
attempts to work things out, and a number of people such as us, got detained, one after
another.

Thus, the entire camp fell into turmoil, and the residents became distressed. Needless to
say, the actions of the administration were questionable and stemmed from ignorance.
But it is an irrefutable fact that some of our compatriots engaged in activities that added
fuel to the flame and escalated the administration’s persecution of those of us imprisoned
in the stockade. No matter how many times we tried to continue negotiations from the
stockade in order to bring a sense of calm to the camp, the administration (and the army)
continued to treat us as troublemakers and refused to listen to us. The situation resulted in
what we have today. In other words, we are in what Mr. Hamamoto refers to as “sasara
mo sara.” (Sasara mo sara is a Hiroshima dialect and means a mess.)

This situation has, thus far, lasted for two months, and we see no signs of improvement.
However, the administration appears to be finally grasping the truth, after repeated
protests from the Japanese government. They removed some of the officials and have started interviewing us, the prisoners, in an effort to get at the truth.

In the meantime, those compatriots, who were being protected by armed soldiers, distributed a pamphlet and ignored the will of their fellow residents. (They instructed anyone, who objected to their viewpoint, to be beaten up. They also carelessly admitted that they have the approval of the army.)

When we heard about their behavior, from behind the stockade walls, we could not help but lament the actions of our compatriots. We prayed that no shame would be brought upon the government of our homeland and made every effort to try to get the administration to understand the truth of the matter. But it was too late. The administration was in too deep. They repeatedly issued proclamations without consulting the community and went too far, to the point that they could no longer retreat. The administration would lose face internationally, unless they found the so-called “gangster group,” and so, they made every effort, at our expense, to avoid embarrassment.

These compatriots also started feeling threatened, so they cooperated with the administration. (In turn, the administration needed assistance from those Japanese.) So they ran around madly, and yet, they could not budge the residents from their position. As a result, after exhausting every possible means, they came to us for help. (I have already written about this in detail.) So who is causing problems for the Japanese government, now? Without those foolish morons, this camp would have become peaceful a long time ago. They are the ones responsible for this mess, and at this late date, it is very stupid of them to panic. I will never forgive them for their crimes.

Then, these people started a movement to have us released. It is ironic because they were the ones who had advised the administration to detain some of the Japanese in the stockade. The administration is also, now, promising to improve living conditions, but they were the ones, who had imprisoned us, for daring to ask for living improvements in camp in the first place. When we got thrown into the stockade, those Japanese men should have also been jailed. It is detestable that they became followers and minions of the army and yet, bring up such words as the “Japanese spirit.” The more they take some sort of action, the more they seem to please the administration.

Today, from 10:00 in the morning to noon, six representatives met with Robertson. They were Kuratomi, Tsuda, Hayashi, Sakamoto, Sugimoto, and Agatsuma (or can also be read, Kamizuma). (Robertson is taking over as project director after Best.)

The content of the negotiation was similar to the one that we had discussed when we had met with those treacherous Japanese the other day. Our meeting had been unofficial (or at least, that was the impression we were given when we met with those Japanese, who were basically minions of the WRA officers). Today, the six representatives were officially asked for their opinions.
The poor administration is now under pressure. In that meeting, Robertson made it clear that Kawamura had passed along false information about the situation in the stockade. (Kawamura had allegedly gotten out of the stockade with the help of those Japanese minions because anyone, who received their backing, could be released from here.) Kawamura’s misinformation caused great confusion and not only hindered progress but made the situation worse. (Due to this, we agreed tonight to be more careful in what we said.)

Apparently, these minions became bewildered when, contrary to what they had expected, the camp residents continued to be resolute in supporting us, even under threat of bayonets. It was at this point that they had heard from Kawamura, and that was the reason, they had asked for a meeting with us. It had been their hope that they could make a little advancement in their position. That would explain why I had felt strange about that meeting. (Kozuki’s questions and Naito’s reference to 800 young people didn’t sound right. In addition, Naito kept insisting that I was hiding something.) Kawamura had given them the impression that we had softened our position and that this was the reason resolving this problem had become difficult. I am totally ashamed that there are such deceitful people, even among our own compatriots.