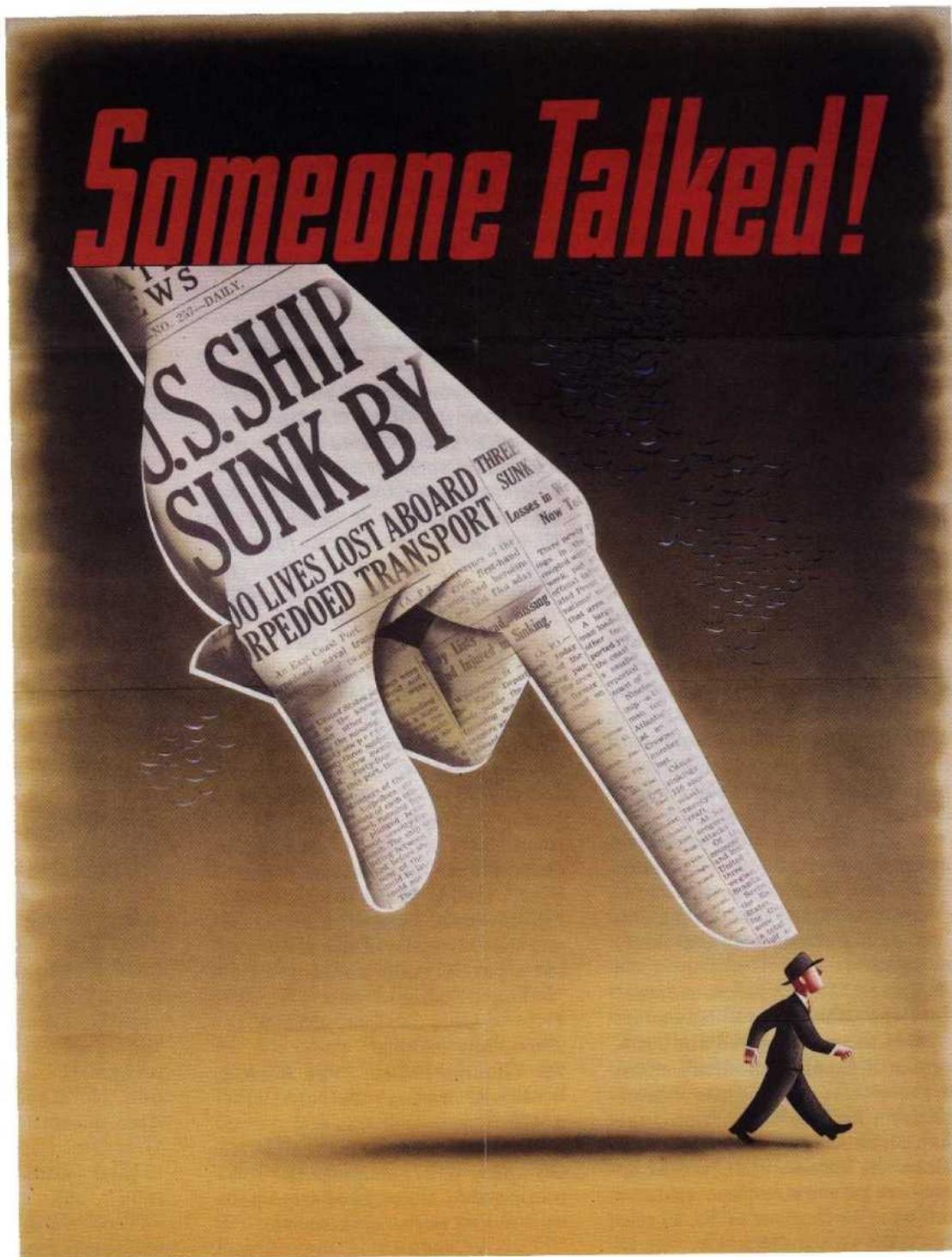


Waiting for Tojo

The Pro-Japan Vigil of Black Missourians,
1932-1943

Ernest Allen, Jr.



H. Grady Vien, U.S. Attorney: According to our information, you have been out doing a lot of talking about the colored people, about rising up against the whites and how the colored people should assert their rights and talking about Japan doing a lot for the colored people and I want to tell you here and now in the presence of the Grand Jury you had better cut it out. . . . You had better be a good American citizen and not try to cause trouble. Do you understand that?

Wolcie Gray, Pacific Movement member: Yes, sir. There ain't a man that can say I ever had anything to say against this country and tell the truth.

—Transcript of Testimony and Proceedings Before the Grand Jury, 1942

Gwan, Tojo! Gwan, Tojo! . . . Fly, black man! Fly! Fly! Fly!

—John Oliver Killens,
And Then We Heard the Thunder

On a cold Sunday morning in late January 1942, in the little southeastern Missouri town of Sikeston not far from the Mississippi, a black man was snatched from his jail cell by a mob of six hundred whites, some of whom were on their way to church when they decided to join the lynch party. Twenty-six-year-old cotton-mill hand Cleo Wright had been charged—whether accurately or not is impossible to determine—with the attempted rape and brutal slashing of Mrs. Dillard Sturgeon, a white woman whose sergeant-husband was away training at a California military base. Reportedly dying from bullet wounds suffered at the time of his arrest, Wright was secured to an automobile by his feet and his body dragged through the streets of the town. Determined to make a lasting impression on Sikeston's one thousand black residents, the driver of the car "stopped momentarily at each of the six churches in the Negro quarter, where services were in progress. . . . He then drove alongside the Missouri Pacific Railroad tracks, where the Negro was cut loose

from the car. The crowd stood and looked at the Negro for several minutes, then an elderly man in overalls walked up and poured gasoline over the Negro. A younger man dropped a lighted match on him."¹

Several hundred blacks quickly left town, while almost all others "remained close to their homes."² Occurring some seven weeks following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, at a time when American wartime patriotism had risen to a fever pitch, here perhaps was the worst possible confluence of transgressions with which a black man might be charged: an attempted rape of a white woman and—since her husband was unable to defend her because he himself was in training for the country's defense—an implied sabotaging of the war effort as well.

Stirred to action not only by the lynching but by the general treatment accorded African Americans during the war, the nationally distributed black newspaper the *Pittsburgh Courier* unfurled its Double V campaign two weeks later, urging victory over totalitarian forces at home as well as abroad. In March it unhappily fell to local prosecuting attorney David E. Blanton to announce the grand jury's decision that there would be no indictments in the Cleo Wright case. Ironically, Blanton had positively identified several lynch suspects before the Scott County grand jury and himself had suffered injuries while attempting to quell the lynching. The *Courier* responded to the travesty with a follow-up editorial: "Remember Pearl Harbor and Sikeston Too."³

The FBI's subsequent investigation of the Wright lynching revealed not only that Missouri blacks had been arming themselves (a not illogical step), but that strong pro-Japanese proclivities flourished in numerous black communities—a fact already documented by its St. Louis and Kansas City field offices over the preceding decade. This pro-Japan penchant on the part of Missouri blacks was characteristic of African American thought of the era: an unfolding of a messianic nationalist sentiment occasioned by the hard times of the Great Depression and a populist-based admiration for Japan which dated back to the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5.⁴

Facing: Someone Talked. *World War II* poster by Koerner, ca. 1942. During World War II, members of Japanese-African unity groups were often suspected of, and prosecuted for, treason, sedition, and espionage. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

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General Lee Butler and David D. Erwin. *Photograph by a St. Louis Post-Dispatch staff photographer, 1943. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch published this composite photograph of Butler and Erwin, on trial for violations of the wartime espionage and peacetime sedition acts. Courtesy of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.*

Far from quelling unrest among blacks in the Bootheel, the Sikeston lynching may have served as a stimulus. In late May cotton choppers in Scott, Pemiscot, and Charleston Counties struck for higher wages. A week later a racial altercation took place at Wyatt, located just a few miles from Sikeston. It effectively ended when a black youth, brandishing a rifle, held off a crowd of whites. Equally disturbing to federal officials was the fact that Japan's war propaganda machine had begun publicizing lynching incidents—including the one at Sikeston—proclaiming that they represented the true meaning of American democracy. There may have been an element of truth in the claim: although in May a federal grand jury was convened for the first time ever in a lynching case, it, too, failed to bring any indictments of Sikeston residents. Unable to bring an end to the practice of lynching, U.S. authorities instead continued their investigation of political disquiet among black Missourians and other African American dissenters across the country.⁵ Ironically as well, U.S. attorney Harry C. Blanton, a native of Sikeston and elder brother of Scott County prosecuting attorney David E. Blanton, came to assume a prominent role in the

investigation of these pro-Japanese sentiments among blacks in the St. Louis–East St. Louis region.⁶

As a result of these investigations, a two-count indictment was filed in East St. Louis in early 1943 against David D. Erwin and General Lee Butler, leaders of a pro-Japan organization known as the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World (PMEW); a presumed but unidentified Japanese government agent, John Doe; and the nonprofit corporation itself. (It turned out that the “Japanese agent” had been created out of thin evidence for propaganda purposes. As U.S. attorney H. Grady Vien subsequently advised the FBI, “by including one John Doe in the indictment it was possible to bring out the Japanese control of the group.”)⁷

Among other claims, the indictment pointed to the organization “among the Negro population of the United States [of] a movement for the purpose of spreading Japanese propaganda and to promote the idea that Japan was the champion of all colored races.” According to the FBI report, “this movement was undertaken at the instigation of the Black Dragon Society, of Japan, working through [Satokata] Takahashi, a retired major of the Japanese Imperial Army.”⁸ At the time the indictment was handed down, Satokata Takahashi, an apparent Japanese government operative who admitted only to membership in the ultranationalist Black Dragon Society, had already served three years of a federal prison term growing out of his proselytizing among African Americans in Detroit.⁹ Although Takahashi was far removed from the political scene in 1943, the seeds of Afro-Nippon solidarity which he had sown in the 1930s had taken root in manifold ways, though perhaps not always according to his expectations.



In 1932 Takahashi had come into contact with Policarpio Manansala, a Filipino of apparent Japanese descent, who often presented himself as a Japanese citizen and who was better known by his dozen or so aliases—but especially the one of Ashima Takis.¹⁰ Born in the Philippines in 1900, by the early 1930s Takis, posing as a Japanese, was speaking before local audiences of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). An organization transplanted to the United States by Jamaican-born, pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey during World War I, the UNIA agitated for the political liberation and unification of the African continent and for the repatriation of African Americans there.¹¹



Moy Liang and Ashima Takis. *This photograph of the two Pacific Movement of the Eastern World recruiters appeared in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch under the caption "Hunted As Enemy Agents." The Justice Department suspected that the PMEWE was a Japanese "fifth column" front organization. Courtesy of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.*

In the spring of 1932 Satokata Takahashi reportedly recruited Takis and his Chinese companion, Moy Liang, into his newly formed organization, the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World; at the time the pair were conducting a speaking tour before UNIA-sponsored meetings in Chicago. An organization which preached the worldwide unity of the colored races under the leadership of Japan, the PMEWE registered in December 1932 as a "non-profit religious, civil and educational organization with the purpose of promoting the welfare of citizens," with Ashima Takis named to the post of president general. By this time the leadership and presence of Takahashi, once listed as president general on PMEWE membership cards, was no longer officially acknowledged.¹² Whatever the reason for this, Takahashi by then had begun to devote his greatest energies to organizing the black community of Detroit.

Chicago was the birthplace of the PMEWE, but it was in St. Louis that the organization achieved its greatest appeal.

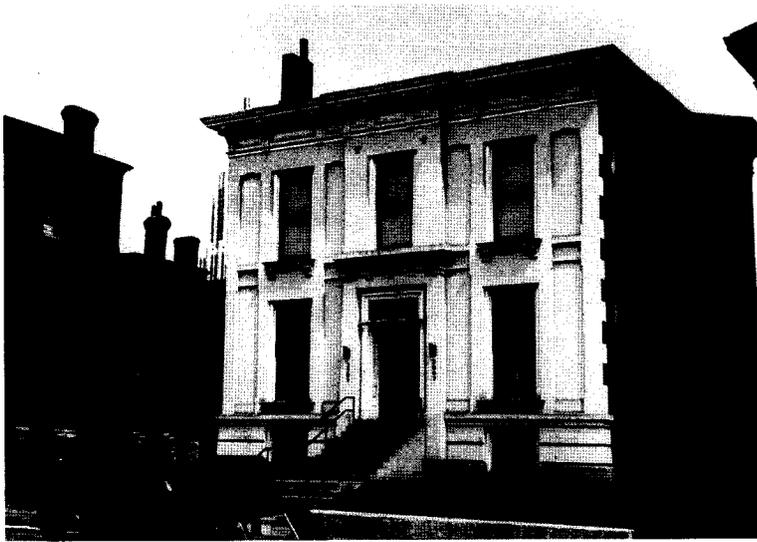
Takis abandoned his Chicago operation sometime prior to the fall of 1933, but his organizing visits to St. Louis actually began sometime in mid-1932. According to Takis, some three months following his first meeting with Takahashi in Chicago, the two arranged to meet in St. Louis at a Japanese restaurant on Market Street near Jefferson Avenue. After being introduced to St. Louis residents Burt F. Cornish and Walter Lee Peeples, Takis agreed to speak before a UNIA local the following day, where he informed his audience that the New York branch of the organization was affiliated with Japan and, more accurately, that Marcus Garvey "wanted the colored people to organize and migrate to Liberia where they could set up a government of their own." Motivated by widespread dissatisfaction with current UNIA policy, Cornish and Peeples decided following the meeting to form a new group under Takahashi's leadership.¹³

A decade later, elevator operator and former PMEWE member Burt Cornish offered additional descriptions of Moy Liang and Ashima Takis. Liang was "tall and thin," recalled Cornish, and "immaculately garbed. He carried a cane, had the air of a patrician, and was attended by a huge Negro valet. Takis was short, rather solidly built. He, too, was well dressed, with, as Cornish says, 'a suit for every day in the week.'" By far the more colorful of the two, Takis

spoke flawless English in private conversation, but in addressing public meetings spoke with a thick accent. "Your people wouldn't believe me if I spoke too well," he explained to Cornish. He also spoke German and French, Cornish said, and [David] Erwin says he also spoke Spanish.

He posed as a doctor of medicine, but told Cornish he was not licensed to practice, although he had studied medicine at some university. Among the Negro people he held himself out as a faith healer, and many, Cornish says, regarded themselves as cured of various ailments after Takis had laid his hands on them.¹⁴

Liang, who represented himself as an importer, went back to Chicago, returning occasionally for visits. Takis, meanwhile, "prescribed the colors for the Pacific Movement's banners, symbolic of the racial unity he preached—black, yellow, and brown."¹⁵ Riding a wave of African American



Pythian Hall. Photograph by Dr. William Swekowsky, 1940. In its early years, the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World likely met at this hall at 3507 Pine Street. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

discontent further fueled by depressed economic conditions, the Pacific Movement quickly attracted followers. By early 1934 African American households in St. Louis comprised only 11 percent of the total number of households, but close to 41 percent of all those on relief—fertile recruiting grounds for all manners of social discontent.¹⁶

In the early years PMEWS faithful gathered at a meeting hall (quite likely the Pythian Hall) on Pine Street. Regular meetings were later held at the Peoples Finance Building on Jefferson Avenue. Sustained organizational activity does not appear to have been initiated until mid-1933, however. And if the reports of an FBI informant can be trusted, June seems to have been a particularly busy month: “four Japanese men” under the leadership of “Doctor Tashu” [Ashima Takis], it was said, were “working fast” among St. Louis blacks, “especially the poorer working class.”¹⁷

Takis sometimes spoke at a vacant lot on Market Street between Seventeenth and Eighteenth Streets. Each night at 8 p.m. a PMEWS meeting was also held at Twenty-first and Gratiot Streets, in a yard situated directly behind a chemical plant. According to the FBI’s black informant, the speeches of “Doctor Tashu” and his “Japanese aides” worked “Negroes into a fanatical frenzy and open hatred of the white race.” Every time the PMEWS leader referred to whites, “some of the Negro men

and women attending these meetings would . . . expectorate with disgusting fanatical antagonism.” “Negroes!” roared Takis, “You are too easy to be fooled by anybody and especially by white people. White man pushes you ahead as cattle in any war and uses you as a shield, but when the spoils of the war are to be divided, white man is then in front and if any Negro raises only a finger of disapproval of white man’s actions, white man cuts off not only Negro’s finger, but whole hand! . . . Why should you respect the white man when the white man has nothing for you but a bloody whip?”¹⁸

Noting this rising anti-white sentiment among the downtrodden of the race, in September an internal committee report of the St. Louis branch Urban League warned of the “danger” posed by the PMEWS’s racial appeal:

Meetings have been held in churches, the Peoples Finance Building, and lately in out-door places. Those visited were at Carr Park and at 3818 Finney Ave. The speakers at these meetings followed the theme of race hatred and war, and dominion of the darker races over the world. The addresses were highly inflammatory. The immediate appeal is directed toward conversion to the cause and membership. Membership is conferred immediately upon application and the payment of a twenty cent fee—all who are Negroes are accepted without question, and are openly threatened with death if they divulge the grip or password. Some of the statements made by the speakers are of a low moral order and excite vicious attitudes. Appeals are directed toward resentment against discriminations and toward measures of revenge. Propaganda in Carr Park has resulted in [a] noticeable deflection of Negroes from the Communist Party. Some white persons, noting the changed attitude of Negroes at Carr Park toward them, now do not pass through nor do they permit their children the customary play there.¹⁹

Presumably, more tranquil rhetoric prevailed when Takis and two other Asian men (both of whom, it seems, were also PMEWS organizers) appeared on the Men’s Day Program at the First Baptist Church in July. As advertised, Dr. Ashima Takis of Japan was to speak on “The Struggle of the Darker Races of the World,” George Cruz of

the Philippines on "Why the Filipinos Want Freedom," and Moy Wong [Moy Liang?] of China on "The Old and the New China." *St. Louis Argus* editor J. E. Mitchell was scheduled to preside over the Sunday afternoon affair.²⁰

According to Burt Cornish, the Pacific Movement was well under way by September 1933:

Groups of two, three or more Japanese began to call at Cornish's home to visit Takis, and once, Cornish recalls, there were 12 at a meeting. . . .

Setting out on his organization work, Takis seized every opportunity to address Negro groups, in churches, at fraternal and other social gatherings. He advanced a scheme to transport Negroes to Japan, where, he assured them, they would be treated as equals, have jobs at better pay than they could get here, and could even marry Japanese women. At a later stage he spoke of establishing a Negro colony in Brazil, and one of the expressed aims of the movement he formed was to repatriate the Negroes to Africa.

More than 100 joined the Pacific movement in its early stages, Cornish said, paying \$5.50 each to be enrolled in a group of Negroes who were to emigrate to Japan. Takis informed them that "at the proper time," when enough had signed up, they would assemble in San Francisco, charter a boat, and set sail for the land of the rising sun.

For those who did not want to go to Japan there was a general fee of \$1 a year. Several thousand joined at that price. Takis told them the group formed here was the one thousandth organized in this country, and that outside of this city there were 165,000 members. Yet all understood that St. Louis was the national headquarters for the movement.

It was said that "several thousand St. Louis Negroes joined the movement, and tens of thousands elsewhere. Many were attracted to it as just another fraternal organization, others were won to it by glittering promises of a world in which the Negro would be 'truly emancipated.'"²¹

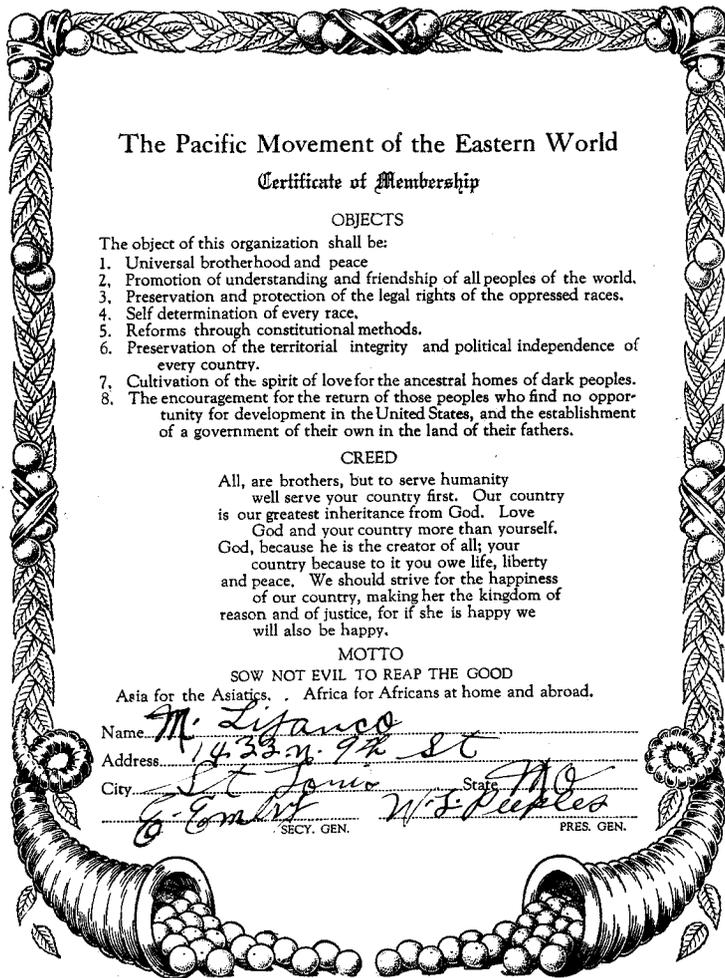


More precisely, at the heart of the PMEWS attractiveness to working-class African Americans lay a desire on the part of blacks for full societal equality, whether achieved within or outside the borders of the United States. With respect to the latter option, the UNIA's emigrationist ideology continued to exert a powerful hold on the imagination of marginalized African Americans throughout the 1930s. Moreover, as a powerless minority conditioned by the racial thinking of whites, many blacks were naturally attracted to the racial appeal of a more powerful Japan, whom they perceived as an adversary of their own enemy. And for the black landless, a Japanese invasion of the U.S. mainland also offered the promise of a redistribution of southern farmland. As U.S. attorney Harry C. Blanton remarked of Bootheel sharecroppers in 1942: "Rumor has it that the darkies in my home town had already picked out the farms they were going to take over when the invasion by Japan occurred."²² In later years the PMEWS incorporation of Masonic-inspired signs and rituals and the cultivation of an overlapping membership with a Holiness church aided in the retention of a core following even as a majority of devotees departed the ranks.

Appropriating a leaf from Marcus Garvey's program, the organization's motto proclaimed, "Sow not evil to reap the good—Asia for the Asiatics, Africa for Africans, at home and abroad." The general stated aims of the PMEWS declared for:

1. Universal brotherhood and peace.
2. Promotion of understanding and friendship of all peoples of the world.
3. Preservation and protection of the legal rights of the oppressed races.
4. Self determination of every race.
5. Reforms through constitutional methods.
6. Preservation of the territorial integrity and political independence of every country.
7. Cultivation of the spirit of love for the ancestral homes of dark peoples.
8. The encouragement for the return of those peoples who find no opportunity for development in the United States, and the establishment of a government of their own in the land of their fathers.²³

Central to the PMEWS world view was an underlying tension between its demands for legal and social rights for African Americans within the United States,



Certificate of Membership in the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, 1934. *John T. Clark Papers, Washington University Archives.*

on the one side a quest based upon the presumed citizenship status of blacks, and on the other, an implied renunciation of that status in an advocacy of expatriation as a means for obtaining black political self-determination. Historically speaking, of course, the duality of this ideological pattern mirrored that of white Americans in general, who desired, in the abstract, to uphold the universal ideals embodied in the Constitution, while denying that such rights applied to African Americans. But in addition to embracing a “Back-to-Africa” orientation reminiscent of Marcus Garvey’s UNIA, PMEWS emigrationism also endorsed colonization projects in Japan and Brazil. On the other hand, members also viewed themselves as beneficiaries of a more democratic social order within the United States via the intervention of the Japanese imperial army.

After Walter Peeples (for whom biographical information remains elusive) became head of the organization, the PMEWS endorsed anti-lynching legislation introduced by U.S. Senator Edward P. Costigan in 1934 but resisted Communist Party efforts to unionize white and black workers in the St. Louis nut-processing industry during the same period. A Mississippi branch of the organization originated with the idea of forming economic cooperatives, then shifted to a “Back-to-Africa” plan. Emigration to Africa, Japan, and Brazil was variously advocated by PMEWS leaders, but members were also advised to place a purple cloth in their windows in order to identify themselves as Japanese supporters once Japan’s anticipated invasion of the United States began.²⁴



Shortly following the incorporation of the St. Louis branch of the PMEWS, Ashima Takis and his supporters withdrew to form a rival organization with an identical program and creed, the Original Independent Benevolent Afro-Pacific Movement of the World, Inc. (OIBAPMW). Of the several reasons offered for the break, the least contradictory, for once, was the one given by Takis: when the Missouri-based PMEWS filed incorporation papers toward the end of 1933, Walter Peeples and Satokata Takahashi moved to exclude him from the leadership.²⁵ Takis attributed the rift to jealousy on the part of others within the group; organizers received the ten-cent joining fee for each new member enrolled, and Takis apparently exacted above-average sums from his energetic proselytizing. He admitted as well, albeit implicitly, that he had failed to follow Takahashi’s instructions. Over Takahashi’s objections, Takis and Liang continued to employ their apparently popular, public debate format regarding Japan’s colonization of Manchuria, Takis assuming the “pro” position and Liang adopting the “con.” Takahashi reportedly insisted, however, that both speakers should publicly endorse Japan’s militarist intervention in China. Takis then, by his own admission, attempted to split the organization and was warned by Peeples that if he did so he would “never leave St. Louis alive.” Discouraged, Takis departed the city.²⁶

In explaining the rift to a reporter, Burt Cornish offered another explanation: some who signed up in the belief that they had joined a mere fraternal order “became alarmed at Takis’ inflammatory statements

and withdrew to form a similar organization of their own. . . . Despite the rupture, Takis tagged along with the new group, although retaining his direction of the old. There was much shifting about between the old and new groups, with some members, and even some officers, not being quite sure just which group it was they belonged to." Whatever the underlying reasons for the schism, when a group of PMEWS officers filed incorporation papers in late August 1933, Peeples replaced Takis in the top post of grand president general. The rival OIBAPMW, whose nominal purpose was "to dispense charity among its members; to set up subordinate groups for the same purpose; to come to the aid and relief of its members and to promote peace; and universal brotherhood," filed two months later. Takis became the OIBAPMW's great grand president, John McWhite, erstwhile campaigner for the Republican Party in southeastern Missouri, its grand president, and Burt Cornish, its grand secretary.²⁷

In St. Louis the pro-Japan movement among blacks was reportedly in high gear by September 1933, but at that moment the OIBAPMW appears to have enjoyed limited influence in Missouri's most populous city. That same month, Ashima Takis and Moy Liang transferred their operations to the greater Kansas City area, misrepresenting themselves as president general and secretary general, respectively, of the PMEWS. The former, meanwhile, had assumed a new identity, that of M. Yamamoto; the latter apparently went by the name of T. Loing. The theme of their speeches, noted an army investigative report, was that "within two years the colored races must fight the white for self-determination, and that American Negroes should be ready to support Japan on call by training their young men in modern weapons, especially aviation, instruction in which is now denied the darky. They then receive enrollments in the 'Pacific Movement' (25¢) and in a proposed colored aviation school (25¢); total 50¢."²⁸

Noting the large crowds that attended the meetings and the hundreds who joined, *The Kansas City Call*, on the other hand, preferred to focus on the emigrationist character of the movement. The weekly reported a speech of proselytizer "Yamamoto" (Takis), now claiming "Hawaiian birth" and "Filipino parentage," who "implied that members of the organization would be taken to the Orient where they would become citizens of Japan and

be eligible to homestead land."²⁹ The PMEWS charter, however, embraced the notion of an African "return" for black Americans, and Takis may have gleaned his idea for a Japan emigration from an incident reported in the press that past March, when a group of unemployed black workers in Blyth, England, joined the crew of a Japanese-owned ship and set sail for the land of the rising sun. Rumor had it that these laborers, stung by the mounting anti-black prejudice that had forced them out of work in England, intended to enlist in the Japanese army.³⁰

Despite his popularity, Takis left Kansas City within two months' time, after being accused by Peeples of fraudulently misrepresenting the PMEWS. Thereafter—at least until late 1939, when he made a brief, if fateful return to St. Louis—his proselytizing vigor would be felt throughout some of the larger cities of the Midwest, small towns of the upper Mississippi delta, and cities of the eastern seaboard. He continued to organize independently under the PMEWS and other banners in Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Dayton, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere. From 1935 to 1939 Takis worked the New York–New Jersey region, coming into contact with a Newark-based, black Hebrew religious organization known as the House of Israel. In 1935 he co-founded the Ethiopian Pacific Movement in New York City with Jamaican-born Robert O. Jordan (a.k.a. the "Harlem Hitler") before moving on. Additionally, he developed a thriving business as a purveyor of teas, herbs, and other health remedies.³¹



Meanwhile, others continued to spread the message of Japanese–African American unity in Missouri, finding a particularly receptive audience in the depression-stricken, cotton-producing regions of the Bootheel. The depression brought devastation and ruin to the upper Mississippi delta, but there, as elsewhere, not all social classes suffered equally. For example, passage of the Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1933 resulted in a deliberate, wide-scale acreage reduction in southern agriculture. In order to avoid paying tenant farmers their legally mandated share of AAA subsidies, many landowners resorted to sharecropper evictions or to downgrading the status of tenant farmers to that of wage hands or day laborers. During the winter of 1934–35, such practices were worst in Arkansas, Tennessee, and southeastern Missouri.³² Under such conditions, it is not surprising that Bootheel communities, as



Evicted Tenant Farm Family Camping along Highway 60 in New Madrid County, Missouri. Photograph by Arthur Rothstein for the Farm Security Administration, 1939. In the depression-stricken, cotton-producing regions of the Bootheel, impoverished sharecroppers provided a particularly receptive audience for the pro-Japan movement. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

those of surrounding areas, would offer marvelous possibilities for messianic activity and identity politics among African Americans, in addition to the better known unionizing efforts of the Southern Tenant Farm Worker's Union, which expressed a more reflective impulse towards self-organization based upon conscious, material interest.

As noted earlier, PMEW factionalism had produced an offshoot, the OIBAPMW, resulting in an intense competition between the associations for new members. In the spring of 1934 the OIBAPMW set out to organize the black rural communities of the upper delta. One witness hostile to the OIBAPMW later described a typical meeting, most likely addressed by Filipino organizer George Cruz: "This Jap specialized in pointing out to Negroes the unfairness and brutality heaped upon us by the American white man. . . . Amidst great bursts of applause he pointed out the great things that awaited us when Japan would come to America to free its black brother from modern slavery. This man organized thousands of Negroes, from Cape [Girardeau] County to the State line."³³ By late 1934 units belonging to

one group or the other had been established in the small southeastern Missouri towns of Steele, Caruthersville, Wardell, Hermondale, Bragg City, and Pascola (Pemiscot County); New Madrid and Portageville (New Madrid County); Sikeston (Scott County); Charleston (Mississippi County); and Cape Girardeau (Cape Girardeau County).

That August, at the start of the picking season, OIBAPMW Grand President John Malachi McWhite claimed to have addressed a "super-resplendent meeting down at Charleston in the Southeast Missouri jurisdiction, where 2,500 cotton pickers heard me speak for three hours."³⁴ According to army intelligence, the group also initiated a recruitment drive in Crosno, located directly southeast of Charleston near the Mississippi River. While attempting to organize at a Blytheville, Arkansas, church in late August 1934, George Cruz and his Mexican wife, Carmen, were arrested on charges of anarchy and subsequently released.³⁵ Not to be outflanked by the OIBAPMW in delta country, the PMEW dispatched a crew to southeastern Missouri. Several weeks following the

Blytheville incident, four PMEW organizers of African descent were arrested in Pemiscot County on the charge that they

then and there willfully, unlawfully, riotously did assemble together with intent to do an unlawful act with force and violence against the peace and to the terror of the people, to wit, to unite the Negro race in one body with the Japanese race and all the dark races of the world, and did then and there issue a call to arms for all of the Negroes to unite with the races of the Far East to overthrow the present system of government and to make the white race subservient to the Negro race and to set up a government by the Negroes and the people of the Far East.³⁶

Driving a "high-powered" Chrysler and armed with suitcases filled with records of lynching incidents, newspaper clippings concerning the Scottsboro case,³⁷ and other literature (including a speech "telling the Negroes they should wake up and quit being kept in servitude"), the organizers had been working in southeastern Missouri for about a week when southern law caught up with them. Their arrest, according to Justice of the Peace Max Kelley, "was brought about partly by complaints of Negro preachers 'and other reputable Negroes' who thought numerous Negroes, particularly in the rural sections, were being victimized by promoters." But the more substantive issue, it seems, was that "several cotton plantation owners complained also, anxious to avoid any 'unrest' during the cotton picking season."³⁸

At their September 11, 1934, trial, held some five miles north of the Arkansas border at Steele, Missouri, all four defendants pleaded innocent, protesting that their intentions had been confused with those of the rival, breakaway lodge, the Original Independent Benevolent Afro-Pacific Movement of the World. PMEW members held that theirs was the association devoted to benevolent activities and disclaimed anything other than the promotion of "brotherhood and peace." Openly referring to the defendants as "niggers," the prosecuting attorney remained unconvinced: blacks "were all right as long as they were in their places picking cotton," he was reported as saying, "but when they ride up in high powered machines trying to agitate, that was something different."³⁹ Found guilty, each of the four men

was given a maximum sentence of one year in jail and charged a thousand-dollar fine.

Prior to sentencing, both judge and constable stepped outside the courtroom doors, apparently a prearranged signal for the some two hundred white spectators inside the courtroom to brutally mob the defendants and their supporters. Later the four "were unable to give details of their beating, saying that 'it happened all at once and we were down on the floor before we knew what was going on.'" Struck "as he ran down the [courthouse] steps towards his car," their lawyer was unable to "learn of the fate of his clients until he reached Cape Girardeau," some ninety miles to the north. The following day, a black investigator who requested information about the prisoners was assaulted in the streets.⁴⁰

Despite differences with the Pacific Movement, NAACP lawyers in St. Louis promptly filed for a writ of habeas corpus in the case and paid the defendants' travel expenses to Jefferson City, where their plea was heard before the Missouri Supreme Court. In a move audacious for its time, the court freed all four just six days following their conviction, handing down a unanimous and altogether appropriate edict that a legal trial had not taken place.⁴¹

However such violence on the part of whites might spur the growth of African American nationalism, nothing quite matched the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935, which electrified African American national consciousness in a way perhaps not seen since the UNIA's grand inaugural convention held fifteen years earlier. In 1937 a New York-based organization known as the Ethiopian World Federation, which conducted fund raising and agitation on U.S. soil for the defense of Ethiopia, rolled through the St. Louis region, depleting much of the Pacific Movement rank and file. But a year later, according to the same account, the St. Louis EWF suddenly broke up; a hundred or so former members then recast their lot with a temporarily revitalized branch of the original PMEW, whose seriously diminished membership core by that point had shifted geographically to the eastern side of the Mississippi.⁴² On the heels of an organizing visit by PMEW president David Erwin to Arizona and California, a conference of the PMEW's Supreme Executive Council was called in East St. Louis in September 1938, the official purpose of which was

THE PACIFIC

The Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.

The Organization that Represents 15,000,000 Negroes

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A PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT, D. D. ERWIN.

By WM. A. COLE,
Editor and National Technical Director.

In this first edition of the Pacific for the month of January and February, 1936, it is quite fitting and proper that we pay a tribute to our leader and your leader, because you cannot lead or, in other words, show the light to one Negro or a group of Negroes without helping the group in general, when you uplift one person, share his destiny and help his morale, you automatically help the group to which he belongs, because the human family is one great chain, and by helping one you help all to a degree and vice versa when you injure one to a degree you injure all. So, regardless of who is or isn't a member of this organization the good things and sacrifices that this our National President David D. Erwin makes for the multitude of members in this organization, he makes the sacrifices and does good things for the welfare of all Negroes. May time bring about a change in the minds and hearts of men that they will admit the truth when they see it, feel it and hear it.



DAVID D. ERWIN,
National President

The National President has risked his life many times for the Negro race. It became so dangerous in some Southern States that the Supreme Executive body had to show him the danger of going into the far South in the behalf of Negroes, because after all every reader of this article knows that it is highly dangerous to encourage anything in the deep South but that which treats of religion. Not even is some kind of insurance operated by Negroes safe in the South.

The National President's life was first in great danger on September 11, 1934, in the face of the outrageous Steel Mill accident and just here of recent when he traveled through the State of Mississippi and just here of recent when he crossed the briny deep to London, as he was the midist for hours of a terrible hurricane which looked like every moment the ship would sink and be swallowed by the mad waters. These Perils he has taken all in the interest of not just Pacific Movement members, but for Negroes here and abroad, as his heart reaches out with sympathy for his Black Brother wherever he may be found.

And the astonishing thing about it is that David D. Erwin soon forgets about each case as he goes on. He takes, all be- lieving in the motto "make some sacrifices and take some risks has no business leading any people."

What a man!

THE LONDON CONFERENCE

It was in late November, 1935, a Round Table Conference convened. Dark and Colored representatives from all parts of the World were there; even from Italy. We discussed first the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. The Colored Italian presented first the special political and territorial situation of Italy in regards to Ethiopia. Who claims that Italy established relations with the countries which actually constitutes the Ethiopian Empire, in the middle of the last century. Italian activities in Ethiopia were juridically defined with the Treaty of May 2, 1889. Italy's pre-eminent position in Ethiopia was established in Article 17 of the Treaty, and all the powers were so informed on October 11, 1889.

Italy claims the peaceful developments of Italo-Ethiopian collaboration should have thus been introduced in a regime similar to that constituted in other African and Asiatic regions. Immediately after the conclusion of the Treaty of 1889 the Ethiopian Government initiated against Italy a series of hostile acts, always more aggravated, culminating in the armed conflict of October 26, 1896.

Italy claims the loyalty and goodwill of the Italian Government towards Ethiopia were further demonstrated by the fact that the largest supply of arms and munitions received by the King of Ethiopia came from Italy, before the Treaty of 1930 between Italy, France and Eng

Bulletin: All Current News and Activities of the P. M. E. W.
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Front Page of *The Pacific*, Newsletter of the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, February-March, 1936. *John T. Clark Papers, Washington University Archives.*

to discover the number of active members, to determine the "points that should be withheld from the members for a period of time," to discuss whether "the colored people of America [would] accept any other land for colonization other than Africa," and, finally, to decide whether "the Pacific Movement [should] urge support or condone members of the race to seek colonization in South America and support the Movement there under Japanese leadership 100 percent."⁴³

At the meeting—which witnessed a return to the fold of John Malachi McWhite, former national president of the OIBAPMW—Erwin explained the difference between the PMEW and the Ethiopian World Federation: "The colors of the Pacific Movement include the Black, Yellow, Red and Brown races, which would naturally accept Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Australians or any division of mankind less than White as members; while the Ethiopian Federation organization calls for the Blacks only." He also reportedly called Japan the "champion" of all dark and colored races.⁴⁴

Central to the Pacific Movement's attempted revitalization was a fictitious plan for colonizing African Americans in South America under Japanese control,

with Brazil the destination most often cited. Ten dollars were exacted "from each member who expressed his desire to make the trip." Erwin also solicited funds to be ostensibly employed for the welfare of Japanese soldiers. Additionally, he introduced a fraternal unit into the organization, replete with rituals, passwords, signs, and degrees inspired by Freemasonry and more closely associated the PMEW with Triumph the Church of the New Age; the church had appointed Erwin—a sometime laundryman and cook who came to St. Louis from the Mississippi delta in 1922—to the post of district bishop in 1939.⁴⁵

In December 1939 Ashima Takis returned to St. Louis, this time as Mimo De Guzman. The peripatetic, pro-Japan crusader was welcomed back into the PMEW—a decision its two principal officers, David D. Erwin and General Lee Butler, would come to regret. Anticipating an attack on the U.S. by Japan, the organization commenced preparations—just how seriously, one still cannot ascertain—for the Japanese military occupation of St. Louis. To that end Takis worked with Erwin and Butler to collect an arsenal as well as to prepare flags by which Japanese troops could recognize friendly PMEW members. Sometime around January 1940 Erwin and Takis traveled to the southern Illinois town of Mounds, where they reportedly collected a small number of guns for the organization. In early February they visited Tulsa, Oklahoma, where N. C. Lewis, secretary of the PMEW unit in that city, was questioned by Erwin regarding his apparent delinquency in forwarding funds to the home office. Assuring the PMEW president that twenty-one dollars recently had been sent, Lewis produced a postal money order receipt as proof. Shortly thereafter Takis and Erwin proceeded on to Phoenix, Arizona, where Takis abruptly disappeared after a couple of days. Returning alone to St. Louis in early March, David Erwin had the wayward money order traced; to his chagrin, he learned that one Mimo De Guzman (a.k.a. Ashima Takis) had fraudulently cashed it in St. Louis just prior to the Tulsa and Phoenix visits. Charges were filed and a warrant subsequently issued for Takis' arrest, but two full years would pass before he was apprehended.⁴⁶

In 1940 General Lee Butler, a janitor employed by the Midwest Rubber Reclaiming Company at Monsanto, succeeded David Erwin as PMEW president. Also hailing from Mississippi, Butler had

resided in East St. Louis since 1926. While this change in leadership brought no discernible change in organizational ideology, the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan late the following year quickly transformed U.S. domestic politics altogether. Speech protected by the First Amendment prior to the U.S. declaration of war on December 8 might be regarded as treasonous after that date. Although far more tolerant in some ways than the draconian policies engineered by J. Edgar Hoover and A. Mitchell Palmer during World War I, government crackdowns directed towards presumed internal security threats did occur.⁴⁷ Bowing to fears of the “yellow peril,” on February 9, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which provided for the internment of West Coast Japanese in concentration camps. Attacking “lethargy” in government security agencies, the *Washington Post* launched a public campaign to root out “subversives” in American life, prompting an intensified Justice Department search for domestic spies. Except for the intervention of Attorney General Francis Biddle, the black press and its Double V campaign most likely would have been shut down by the government during the war.⁴⁸

As noted earlier, the investigation of the 1942 Sikeston lynching by federal agents in February had brought to even greater light the existence of a strong pro-Japan sentiment among black Missourians. In response, “responsible Negro leaders,” including U. S. Falls of the National Negro Business League and William Pickens of the NAACP, conducted a series of patriotic meetings to offset what they considered to be “seditious activity” in the St. Louis black community.⁴⁹ At the same time, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ran a front-page photograph of “Dr.” Ashima Takis and Moy Liang with the caption, “Hunted As Enemy Agents.” (Unknown to his pursuers, however, Liang had died in 1938.) Almost five months later, in September 1942, Takis was finally tracked down in New York City and charged with two relatively minor federal offenses: failure to comply with the draft laws and the fraudulent cashing of the postal money order in St. Louis. After Takis offered convincing proof that his alleged Selective Service violations were the result of sloppy bookkeeping on the part of his local draft board, the former set of charges was dropped. Takis was then remanded to St. Louis to stand trial for forgery, for which he was sentenced to three years imprisonment.⁵⁰

That same summer a dozen members of the Kansas City, Kansas, branch of the Moorish Science Temple of America were arrested for failing to register for the draft.⁵¹ Around the same time, a federal investigative grand jury was convened in St. Louis for the purpose of investigating the scope of pro-Japan networks among local black residents. Two months later government agents conducted raids against alleged pro-Japanese African American individuals and organizations in New York City, Chicago, Washington, D.C., St. Louis, East St. Louis, and New Orleans. The following January a second round of arrests took place in East St. Louis and Newark. Most of the 125 or so cases involved failures to register for the draft; others were prosecuted under federal laws interdicting wartime espionage and peacetime sedition.⁵²

During the first wave of arrests, the FBI raided the Pacific Movement’s East St. Louis office as well as the homes of select members. After being tipped off by an informant, police seized a rifle and four hundred rounds of ammunition discovered in the automobile of General Butler when they apprehended him on Eads Bridge, connecting St. Louis and East St. Louis. (An earlier FBI search failed to locate these items in Butler’s East St. Louis home; apparently fearing another raid, Butler decided to move them to safety on the other side of the river.) Following ten hours of interrogation without the benefit of a lawyer, Butler made a full confession to FBI agents.⁵³

On trial for forgery in St. Louis, Ashima Takis then testified before an East St. Louis federal grand jury investigating the PMEWS in late September. The grand jury having finished its preliminary work, a decision was made to withhold indictments against the organization’s officers until its findings could be coordinated with those of the earlier St. Louis inquiry and similar investigative bodies then meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Oxford, Mississippi; and Kansas City, Missouri. Indicted two months later, David Erwin and General Butler were arrested in late January 1943 and brought to trial the following May.⁵⁴

Erwin, Butler, the PMEWS itself, and a Japanese male, John Doe, whom authorities were unable to locate let alone identify, were each charged with violations of the wartime espionage and peacetime sedition acts. On six different occasions following the declaration of war by the United States on December 8, 1941, the defendants were



General Lee Butler Shortly after His Arrest on Eads Bridge in September 1942. Photograph by a St. Louis Post-Dispatch staff photographer. Courtesy of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

MAY 12, 1943. ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

FORMER OFFICERS OF NEGRO PACIFIC GROUP ON STAND

Sedition Defendants

Defendant Erwin Quoted as Calling Japanese Champions of Dark and Colored Peoples.

Former officers and members of the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World were called as witnesses for the Government today in the sedition trial of General Lee Butler and David D. Erwin, leaders of the Japanese-sponsored organization of Negroes.

GENERAL LEE BUTLER (left) and DAVID D. ERWIN, photographed at their sedition trial in East St. Louis.

Sedition Defendants General Lee Butler and David D. Erwin. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 12, 1943. Courtesy of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

said to have conspired to make public statements with the intent of causing insubordination and disloyalty within the armed forces of the United States, and of hindering recruitment into same. The second charge concerned the alleged influencing of draft-age men to avoid military service by becoming ordained ministers in Triumph the Church of the New Age without regard to qualification. The trial was conducted without the benefit of a jury, most likely because the defendants felt that the selection of impartial jurors during wartime would have been impossible. Indeed, General Butler had reported that union members at his place of work threatened his life when they learned of his arrest on charges of sedition.⁵⁵

Shuttled in from the federal correctional institution at Sandstone, Minnesota, where he was serving out his sentence, Ashima Takis became the star witness for the prosecution in *United States v. Pacific Movement et al.* Although Takis for years had made statements and participated in activities no less provocative than those of the defendants, such incidents had occurred outside the legal time frame, thereby granting him immunity from prosecution. The Espionage Act, covering acts of wartime sedition, became effective on December 8, 1941; the Selective Training and Service Act, which addressed peacetime infractions, was passed in September 1940. Moreover, since Takis had severed his connections with the PMEWS prior to March 1940, he had no direct knowledge of the alleged violations committed by the defendants during the most critical period. Unfortunately for the defendants, however, the fact that they were charged with conspiracy also meant the application of less rigorous guidelines for determining the admissibility of evidence against them.

From the stand Takis charged that "Erwin got money on [occasion] from the Japanese owner of a restaurant near Jefferson Avenue and Market Street," located near PMEWS headquarters in St. Louis. He quoted Erwin as having said at one PMEWS meeting: "I will never fight for America, because of what it has done to my people, and I will make you ministers so that you won't have to fight either." Finally, Takis related that PMEWS military units "drilled in uniform at their meeting place and were instructed in the manual of arms. The members were given secret signs and codes which were to identify them to the invading Japanese and were told to make flags of black, brown, red and

yellow to hang in their windows as signals when the invaders marched in."⁵⁶ (The colors had been changed from earlier years.) Counsel for Butler and Erwin later complained that Takis had testified against them in retaliation for their 1940 criminal complaint, which had resulted in his conviction on the forgery charge. However, while the sworn assertions of a number of former or current PMEWS members contradicted those of Takis, those of others tended to support him. And although it lay outside the time frame in question, the prosecutor's introduction of "the minutes of a meeting held at St. Louis in June 1939, which quoted Erwin as saying that the Japanese were the champions of all dark and colored people, and that the victory of the dark and colored races 'started with the Japanese,'" did not augur well for his defense. Nor was the defendants' case helped by Butler's earlier admission to FBI agents, which he recanted on the stand.⁵⁷

Finding the defendants guilty on two counts each, presiding U.S. district court judge Fred L. Wham concluded that the PMEWS had demonstrated an "unvarying purpose to put the interests of the colored races above the interests of the United States Government, and to put Japan as the alleged friend and leader of the colored peoples, above the United States in the minds and hearts of the members. . . . Be it to the credit of the colored people of the country," he reflected, "that, although the membership at its peak was more than a million, as the disloyal tendencies of the organization became more and more clear, the membership declined until comparatively few remained active at the time of the indictment."⁵⁸ For crimes against the state, David D. Erwin was sentenced to four years imprisonment and General Butler to two on account of his six children. The Pacific Movement of the Eastern World was fined one thousand dollars. Charges against the nonexistent Japanese John Doe were dismissed.⁵⁹ Perhaps the most bitter irony of all of this was that the federal investigation of African American sedition in Missouri had been prompted by a similar, but ineffective, inquiry into the Sikeston lynching, itself a generator of black political "disloyalty." Although African Americans could be successfully prosecuted for political crimes, the possibility that identified lynchers of a black victim might be saddled with the burden of a court trial and ultimate punishment was virtually nil.



In the same way that African American hopes for the arrival of Japanese general Hideki Tojo and his divisions on the U.S. mainland cannot be equated with support for Japan's coercive policies, neither can organizations such as the Pacific Movement be "explained away" as the actions of a handful of hustlers and mountebanks. The St. Louis Urban League's characterization of the PMEWS as a "money-getting racket" contained a great deal of truth.⁶⁰ Indeed, the organizing activities of Ashima Takis were all too indistinguishable from those of petty hustling, and it is difficult to escape the judgment that he was little more than a talented rogue.⁶¹ But aside from Takis' machinations, an element of sincerity often characterized the actions of PMEWS leaders—especially in the early stages of the movement. For example, David Erwin's inquiries to U.S. government officials in 1935 regarding the availability of Ethiopian territory for African American settlement appear genuine enough.⁶² But even as a swindle, the attraction of tens of thousands of black Missourians to the pro-Japan movement had startling implications. Black middle-class organizations such as the Urban League and the NAACP had consistently underestimated the desire for self-determination on the part of impoverished black industrial workers, tenant farmers, and numerous members of the black middle-class itself, as well as the extent to which marginalized African Americans might welcome outside military intervention in the affairs of the United States.

The existence of strong pro-Japan affinities among African Americans from the turn of the century through World War II has remained a deeply buried subject. The careful reader will therefore likely register skepticism at potentially self-serving media and law enforcement reports detailing the scope of pro-Japanese black organizations during the thirties and early forties. But in fact, the media in general—including the African American press—deliberately downplayed such sympathies, emphasizing instead the "loyal" character of the majority of the black population even while reaping dividends from sensationalist headlines. Indeed, black dissidents lying outside the patriotic mold were treated as "crackpots" or fringe elements undeserving of worthy consideration. True, a modicum of hype surrounded the Justice Department's handling of the PMEWS case, to the point of fabrication of a Japanese "John Doe" for the purpose of publicly emphasizing the organization's



Sumner High School Students Marching for Victory at Home and Abroad during a Cleanup Week Parade. *Photograph, 1942. Most African Americans—like these high school students—joined in the war effort while continuing to struggle for civil rights at home. Pierce W. Hangege Collection, Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.*

alleged Japan connection. But the arrests of a handful of black dissidents on sedition charges during World War II seemed much more geared towards the intimidation of others with like sympathies than a pretext for cracking down on the African American population as a whole.

The tens of thousands of African Americans who joined pro-Japan organizations during the 1930s were dispersed throughout the northeastern, southern, and especially the midwestern region of the country. They participated in organizations as diverse as the Nation of Islam, the Moorish Science Temple, The Development of Our Own, the Peace Movement of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Pacific Movement, and the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World. With respect to numbers, however, aside from the Chicago-based Moorish Science Temple of America, which appears to have grown steadily in membership throughout the thirties, organized pro-Japan groups among black Americans peaked rapidly in terms of the thousands of adherents which they attracted at the very beginning of the Great Depression, in contrast to the hundreds who could be counted among their members at the end. In Detroit

the Nation of Islam's initial size was estimated at eight thousand, but that number had dwindled into the mere hundreds by late 1934; the membership of The Development of Our Own was estimated at ten thousand, of which only a handful of members remained by the early 1940s. Solid figures for PMEWS remain somewhat elusive at present, but membership certainly numbered in the thousands. Chicago's Peace Movement of Ethiopia also claimed a large following.

On the other hand, such organizational collapses should not be mechanically interpreted as a corresponding decline in positive African American feelings towards Japan, which seem to have remained strong even following Pearl Harbor.⁶³ We do know, for example, that the persistence of a pro-Japan sentiment among Missouri blacks lingered for years following the decline of local chapters of the PMEWS and the OIBAPMW, in urban as well as rural areas. In the Missouri Bootheel, Southern Tenant Farmer Union organizer Owen Whitfield noted during the war, "Where it is safe for me to travel I have broken down this belief that the Jap is the Negro's friend. At the present time there are thousands of

Negroes on the large plantations who are loyal to this country, but are confused because of this Jap's [the OIBAPMW's George Cruz] teaching and wonder what to do next."⁶⁴ And we know also that a survey conducted under the direction of the Office of War Information in 1942 uncovered a significant core of pro-Japan sentiment among New York City blacks.⁶⁵

The ultimate confusion, of course, came not from OIBAPMW or PMEWEW recruiters but rather the broad transgressions of democracy occurring under Allied

leadership in their respective colonial or semi-colonial "backyards." These were the conditions that created the audience for the pro-Japan message. In the end it was the incarceration of leaders of the pro-Japanese movement and the military defeat of Japan by the United States that closed this chapter on a fascinating and important history, erasing the events of a decade from living memory and leaving traces only in forgotten newspaper accounts and in the archives of government intelligence services.

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1. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 27, 1942. See also Dominic J. Capeci, Jr., "The Lynching of Cleo Wright: Federal Protection of Constitutional Rights during World War II," *Journal of American History* 72 (March 1986), pp. 859-87; Michael J. Pfeifer, "The Ritual of Lynching: Extralegal Justice in Missouri, 1890-1942," *Gateway Heritage* 13 (Winter 1993), pp. 22-33.
2. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 26-27, 1942.
3. Patrick S. Washburn, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press during World War II* (New York, 1986), pp. 100-101; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 11-12, 1942; David E. Blanton to Ernest

Allen, Jr., February 28, 1994; Capeci, "The Lynching of Cleo Wright," p. 873; *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 14, 1942.

4. See Ernest Allen, Jr., "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races': Satokata Takahashi and the Flowering of Black Messianic Nationalism," *The Black Scholar* 24 (Winter 1994), pp. 23-46; and, for the broader historical background, Reginald Kearney, "Afro-American Views of the Japanese, 1900-1945" (Ph.D. diss., Kent State University, 1991).
5. *The Kansas City Call*, May 29, June 5, 1942; Capeci, "The Lynching of Cleo Wright," pp. 871, 873; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 23, 1942; Transcript of Testimony and Proceedings Before the Grand Jury (E.D. Ill., completed September 29, 1942), pp. 2-3 (hereafter cited as Grand Jury Testimony), copy filed with the National Archives' holdings of *United States v. Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.*, No. 15840 (E.D. Ill. June 15, 1943) National Archives-Great Lakes Region, Chicago; John T. Furlong to Ernest Allen, Jr., January 20, 1994; David E. Blanton to Ernest Allen, Jr., February 28, 1994.
6. U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri from 1934 to 1947, Harry C. Blanton conducted a federal grand jury investigation into the pro-Japan activities of African Americans in St. Louis in late July 1942; he was then named as "special assistant" to H. Grady Vien, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Illinois, who led a similar probe at East St. Louis two months later. *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 23, 1942; Grand Jury Testimony, pp. 2-3; John T. Furlong to Ernest Allen, Jr., January 20, 1994; David E. Blanton to Ernest Allen, Jr., February 28, 1994.
7. D. M. Ladd to Director, FBI,

- January 27, 1943, FBI file 65-40879-263; FBI, Springfield, Ill., to Director, FBI, January 27, 1943, FBI file 65-40879-257. Except where indicated, all FBI files used in this study were obtained under the Freedom of Information Act from FBI headquarters, Washington, D.C.
8. Indictment, *United States v. Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.*
 9. FBI report, "Survey of Racial Conditions in the United States" (Washington, D.C., 1943), p. 544, in Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; report of [agent name deleted], Detroit, March 20, 1940, pp. 60-61, FBI file 65-562-43. Takahashi was sentenced for having entered the U.S. illegally in 1939 and for the attempted bribery of immigration officers. See Allen, "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races,'" pp. 23-46.
 10. Among his other appellations: Mimo de Guzman; Dr. Itake Koo (Ku, or Coo); Dr. Tashu; M. Yamamoto; Joseph Leon Mannso; the Hon. Poli Takis Manansala, M.D.; Lima Takada; Conrado De Leon; Ashima Nicomesini Pacificae; Ashima Takis Kinnosuki; Adachi Kinnosuki; and Jo-A. Bredo Takis. Occasionally he claimed to be Satokata Takahashi, and a Filipino co-worker in Pittsburgh sometimes used the name Dr. Koo as well. In a 1934 statement to immigration officials, a 1942 newspaper interview, and a statement to FBI officials given in 1942, Takis claimed that his given name was Policarpio Manansala. Policarpio Manansala, Immigration and Naturalization Service interview, Pittsburgh, April 17, 1934, in RG 165, MID 10218-261/120, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as NAW); *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 28, 1942; statement of Mimo De Guzman [Policarpio Manansala], August 3,

1942, in report of [agent name deleted], New York City, August 12, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-165.

11. Statement of Mimo De Guzman [Policarpio Manansala], August 3, 1942. See also Trial Testimony, *United States v. Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.*, No. 15840 (E.D. Ill. June 15, 1943), p. 37, National Archives—Great Lakes Region, Chicago (hereafter cited as Trial Testimony).

12. Statement of Mimo De Guzman (Policarpio Manansala), August 3, 1942; "Survey of Racial Conditions," pp. 546-48, 553-54.

13. See Allen, "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races,'" pp. 23-46; Grand Jury Testimony, pp. 549, 784-89; Abstract of Grand Jury Testimony, Appendix B, p. 110, *General Lee Butler v. United States*, No. 8338 (7th Cir. December 16, 1943) National Archives—Great Lakes Region; report of [agent name deleted], Springfield, Ill., September 18, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-199; report of [agent name deleted], St. Louis, January 5, 1943, FBI file 65-40879-248.

14. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 5, 1942.

15. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 5, 8, 1942; *Constitution and By-Laws of the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World*, Government Exhibit 32, *United States v. Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.*

16. Katherine D. Wood, *Urban Workers on Relief; Part II—The Occupational Characteristics of Workers on Relief in 79 Cities, May 1934* (Washington, D.C., 1936), p. 6. See also Paul Dennis Brunn, "Black Workers and Social Movements of the 1930s in St. Louis" (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1975), pp. 108-37.

17. Grand Jury Testimony, pp. 633, 642; reports to SAC [Special Agent in Charge] D. M. Ladd, St. Louis, June 24, 28-29, 1933, FBI files 65-562-1[?], 65-562-1x, and 65-562-2.

18. Reports to SAC D. M. Ladd, St. Louis, June 24, 1933, FBI files 65-562-1[?].

19. "Report on Pacific Movement of the Eastern World," September 1933, in John T. Clark correspondence, series 5, box 7, Archives of the Urban League of St. Louis, Washington University Library, St. Louis.

20. *St. Louis Argus*, July 14, 1933.

21. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 5, 1942.

22. Grand Jury Testimony, p. 17. See also Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*

(New York, 1944), p. 1007.

23. "Certificate of Membership," The Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, in John T. Clark correspondence, series 5, box 7, Archives of the Urban League of St. Louis. See also "Articles of Agreement of the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World," August 23, 1933, Office of the Secretary of State of Missouri, Jefferson City; *Constitution and By-Laws of the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World*.

24. *St. Louis Argus*, December 8, 1933; *The Pacific* 1 (February 1934), pp. 3-4, copy in RG 165, MID 10110-2666/77, NAW; Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago, 1978), p. 428; report of [agent name deleted], Jackson, Miss., September 30, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-207; minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, PMEWS, September 11, 1938, Government Exhibit 2, *United States v. Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.*; Grand Jury Testimony, pp. 148, 704-5.

25. A former religious advisor to the PMEWS claimed that when Takis left Peoples in charge while away on a trip, the latter chartered the organization in his own name. Frederick D. Stark to Department of Justice, August 21, 1934, RG 165, MID 10218-261/109, NAW.

26. Grand Jury Testimony, pp. 789-90; report of [agent name deleted], Jackson, Miss., September 30, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-207. The report of [agent name deleted], St. Louis, April 3, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-66, p. 23, also described a St. Louis banquet held in early 1933 where Takis and Liang spoke.

27. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 5, 1942; *St. Louis Argus*, November 24, 1933; "Second Amended Articles of Agreement, The Original Independent Benevolent Afro Pacific Movement of the World," October 23, 1933, Office of the Secretary of State of Missouri, Jefferson City.

28. Major J. M. Moore, special report on "Pacific Movement" (Jap-Negro), October 25, 1933, RG 165, MID 10128-261/85, NAW. Yamamoto [Ashima Takis] and M. Liang were listed as officials on the PMEWS certificate of at least one Kansas City resident; see reproduction in Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers* (Berkeley, Calif., 1990), vol. 7, p. 717; *The Kansas City Call*, November 10, 1933; *St. Louis Argus*, November 17, 1933; J. Edgar Hoover to Lieut. Col. C. K. Nulsen, September 18, 1933,

RG 165, MID 10218-261/83, NAW.

29. *The Kansas City Call*, November 10, 1933.

30. *St. Louis Argus*, March 17, 1933.

31. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 1, September 28, 1942; *New York Times*, August 1, 1942; Grand Jury Testimony, p. 253; Lieut. Col. Fred A. Prince to Commanding General, 3rd Corps Area, April 28, 1934, RG 165, MID 10218-261/120, NAW; Allen, "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races,'" pp. 26-27; Trial Testimony, pp. 18, 713-14.

32. Thad Snow, *From Missouri* (Boston, 1954), pp. 154-60; Carey McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land: Migrants and Migratory Labor in the United States* (Boston, 1942), p. 284; David Eugene Conrad, *The Forgotten Farmers: The Story of Sharecroppers in the New Deal* (Urbana, Ill., 1965), p. 77.

33. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 6, 1942.

34. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1934; *The Charleston (Mo.) Enterprise-Courier*, August 23, 1934.

35. C. D. Wilson to Department of Justice, April 26, 1934, RG 165, MID 10218-446/1, NAW; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 6, 1942; *Blytheville (Ark.) Courier News*, August 23-24, 1934, copies of the latter two items are in the report of [agent name deleted], Little Rock, April 13, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-81; *The Charleston (Mo.) Enterprise-Courier*, August 30, 1934.

36. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 14, 1934. The defendants were Ella Brown, Dave Johnson, Sam Sawyer, and Robert Thomas, represented by attorney William A. Cole—all from St. Louis.

37. In March 1931, just outside the town of Scottsboro, Alabama, nine black youths were falsely charged with having raped two white women aboard a freight train on which they had been traveling. With legal support forthcoming from both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Communist Party USA, the case quickly became an international cause célèbre. The best scholarly work on the issue remains Dan T. Carter's *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (Baton Rouge, La., 1969).

38. *St. Louis Argus*, September 14, 1934; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 12, 14, 1934.

39. *The Kansas City Call*, September 21, 1934.

40. *St. Louis Star-Times*, September 14, 1934, in John T. Clark

- correspondence, series 5, box 7, Archives of the Urban League of St. Louis; *St. Louis Argus*, September 14, 1934; *The Kansas City Call*, September 14, 18, 1934; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 14, 1934; *St. Louis Argus*, September 14, 1934; Wm. A. Cole, "A Personal Tribute to the National President, D. D. Erwin," *The Pacific* 1 (February-March 1936), p. 1, in John T. Clark correspondence, series 5, box 7, Archives of the Urban League of St. Louis. Initial reports in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and *The Kansas City Call* confused the PMEWS with the OIBAPMW; see *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 14, 1934.
41. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 18, 1934; *The Kansas City Call*, September 21, 1934; *St. Louis Argus*, September 21, 1934; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 18, 1934. The *St. Louis Daily Record*, which carried regular notices of each previous day's state supreme court proceedings, failed to take note of the hearing in its September 18 issue.
42. Statement of General Lee Butler, Government Exhibit 39, *United States v. Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.*; Grand Jury Testimony, pp. 478, 678-79. For information on African American responses to the war, see William R. Scott, *The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941* (Bloomington, Ind., 1993) and Joseph E. Harris, *African American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941* (Baton Rouge, La., 1994). The PMEWS's revitalization efforts apparently failed to sustain themselves; one member reported that activity slacked off in 1938 and 1939 at East St. Louis Unit No. 2 and that sometimes there were not enough people to hold a meeting. Trial Testimony, p. 327.
43. Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council, PMEWS, September 11, 1938.
44. *Ibid.*; report of [agent name deleted], Pittsburgh, May 6, 1943, FBI file 65-40879-307.
45. Grand Jury Testimony, pp. 126, 184, 357, 664, 760; "Survey of Racial Conditions," p. 550; Trial Testimony, pp. 703-6, 807.
46. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 11, 1943; statement of Mimo De Guzman [Policarpio Manansala], August 3, 1942; Trial Testimony, pp. 49, 717, 719; *United States v. Mimo De Guzman*, No. 21577 (E.D. Mo. October 1, 1942) National Archives-Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Mo.
47. William W. Turner, *Hoover's F.B.I.* (1970; reprint, New York, 1993), pp. 178-81.
48. *Newsweek*, August 3, 1942, pp. 26-27; Washburn, *A Question of Sedition*, pp. 66-97.
49. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 8-9, 1942. The irony here was that in 1922 Pickens had lauded Japan as "the first real threat against white domination of the world since the keys of the Alhambra were last handed over." Cited in Kearney, "Afro-American Views of the Japanese," p. 95.
50. Takis claimed on one occasion that Liang had returned to China, where he reportedly died of tuberculosis; on another occasion, he maintained that the latter had died in California. Statement of Mimo De Guzman [Policarpio Manansala], August 3, 1942; report of [agent name deleted], St. Louis, April 3, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-66, p. 24; "Survey of Racial Conditions," p. 547; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 5, August 1, September 28-29, October 2, 1942; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 1, 1942; *New York Times*, August 1, 1942; *Cleveland Call and Post*, October 10, 1942; *The Kansas City Call*, October 9, 1942; *Chicago Defender*, January 30, 1943; *United States v. Mimo De Guzman*; S. K. McKee, SAC, Washington, D.C., field office to Director, FBI, August 17, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-167; *Washington Times-Herald*, August 20, 1942, copy in FBI file 65-40879-A; R. P. Kramer to D. M. Ladd, August 15, 1942, FBI file 65-40879-171.
51. *Kansas City Star*, July 25, 1942; S. Culbertson to D. M. Ladd, July 24, 1942, FBI file 62-25889-[10X?]; report of [agent name deleted], Kansas City, Mo., August 7, 1942, FBI file 62-25889-15; J. Edgar Hoover to SAC, Kansas City, November 6, 1942, FBI file 62-25889-25; report of [agent name deleted], Kansas City, Mo., November 23, 1942, FBI file 62-25889-29; "Survey of Racial Conditions," pp. 361, 574.
52. D. M. Ladd to Director, FBI, January 27, 1943, FBI file 65-40879-263; Allen, "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races,'" pp. 23-27.
53. *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 23, 1942; Grand Jury Testimony, pp. 26, 29-30. Also arrested was Finis Williams, a PMEWS member who appears to have been the government informant in the case. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 12, 14, 1943.
54. *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 23, 30, 1942; *Chicago Defender*, October 3, 1942; "Survey of Racial Conditions," pp. 207, 551; D. M. Ladd to Director, FBI, January 27, 1943, FBI file 65-40879-263; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 28, May 9, 1943; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 28, 1943; *New York Times*, January 28, 1943.
55. Memorandum, [name deleted] to D. M. Ladd, FBI, January 26, 1943, FBI file 65-40879-261; Trial Testimony, p. 595. Described as a "pseudo-religious adjunct" of the Pacific Movement by the government, Triumph the Church's existence in fact antedated that of the PMEWS. Indictment, *United States v. Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.*
56. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 11, 1943; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 12, 1943; Trial Testimony, p. 23.
57. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 12, 1943; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 15, 1943.
58. Judgment, *United States v. Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc.*; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 15, 1943; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 16, 1943.
59. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 15, 1943; *New York Times*, June 16, 1943. Appeals were denied in December 1943, but the PMEWS leaders elected to begin serving their sentences even before these appeals had been heard. Fred Hallford, SAC, Springfield, Ill., to Director, FBI, March 6, 1944, FBI file 65-40879-333; report of [agent name deleted], Springfield, Ill., December 30, 1943, FBI file 65-40879-330.
60. "Report on Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, Inc."
61. Among the numerous petty crimes of which he was accused over the years were the thefts of his shipmates' belongings, of a gold watch in Baltimore, a film projector in Cleveland, and library books in Cincinnati.
62. See David D. Erwin to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 2, 1935, and David D. Erwin to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, September 3, 1935, RG 59, 884.52/9, NAW.
63. See Allen, "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races,'" pp. 38-39.
64. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 6, 1942.
65. See Allen, "When Japan Was 'Champion of the Darker Races,'" pp. 38-39.