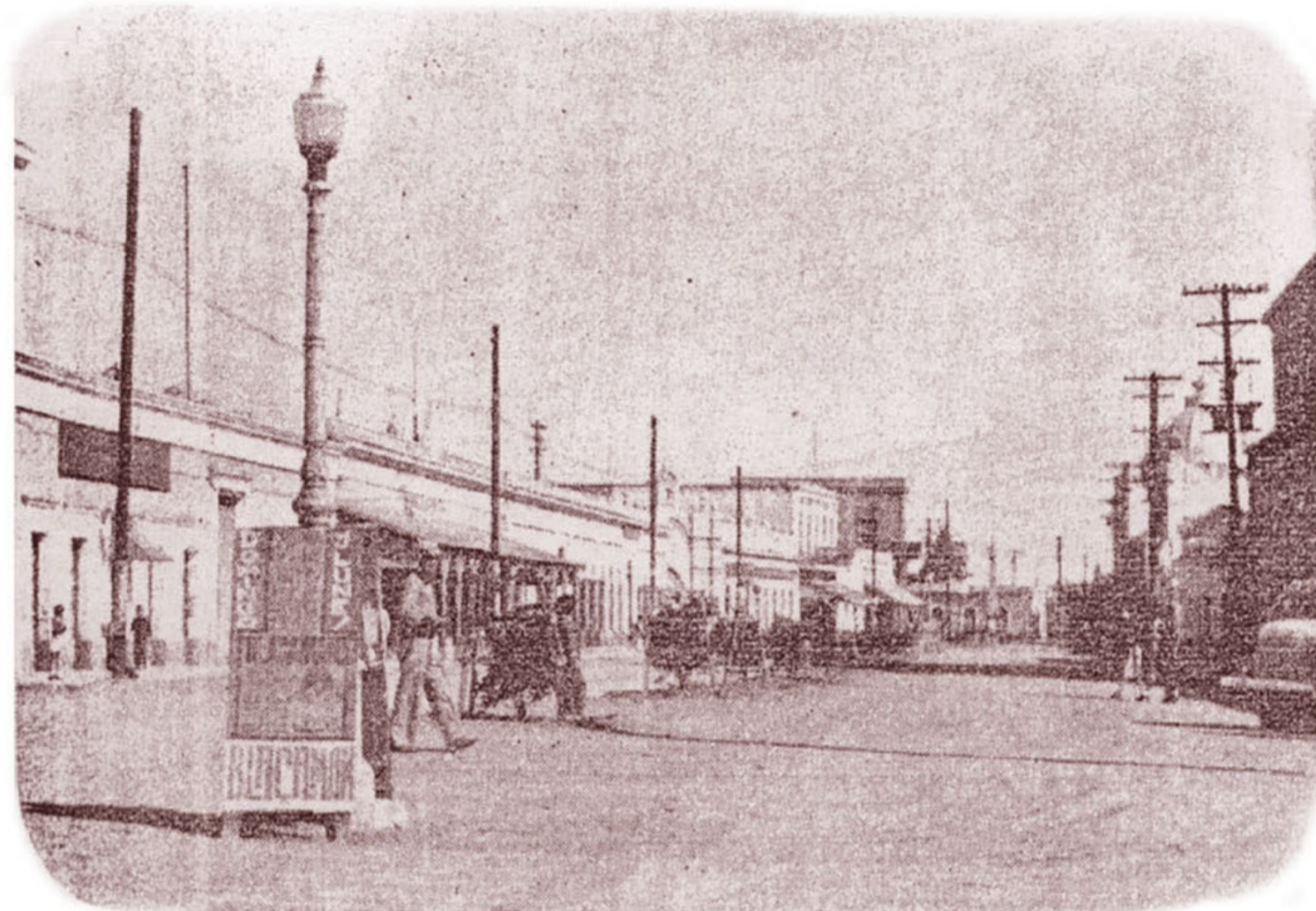


# SPIES on the WEST COAST



*Avenida XIV, Guaymas' main street, is well known to Japanese*

**An exposé of Japanese espionage activities in and around the United States, which was begun in the April 6 issue of Ken, continues here with an account of Japanese ownership of strategically situated tracts of land in Mexico which constitute potentially powerful bases of offense.**

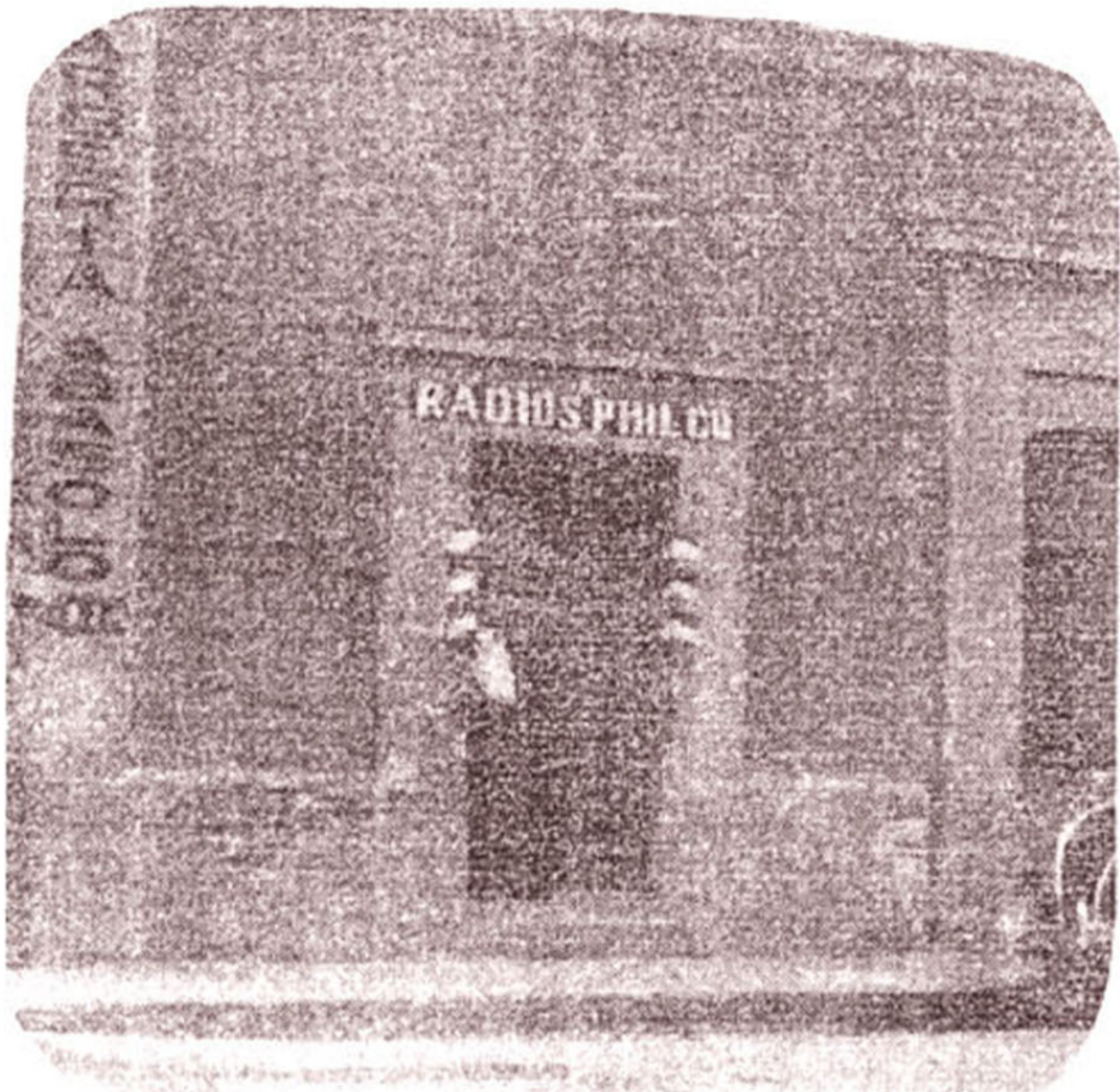
• • • In the Panama Canal Zone area, Japanese sit in empty barber shops, four or five to a shop, reading newspapers, staring at the stream of life passing before their doors or wandering off with their always handy cameras on photographing jaunts. But in Northern Mexico, though, there is a good sprinkling of barbers, storekeepers, just "laborers" and, in one strategic spot, there is a swell collection of unobtrusive dentists.

With four or five to each barber shop, one wanderer from the business is not missed, especially in an area so small that he can go and return the same day. In the desert and mountain regions south of the American border, the distances are vast and the roads bad. It is difficult to go any appreciable distance and return on the same day. A professional man, however, does not have to be in his office every day, especially if he hasn't too many patients anyway. A filling can wait two or three days. A doctor's office is even better than a barber shop for one to come to, make reports, hold conferences. It would be difficult to find a better profession to which one can go regularly without fear of being suspected.

So, in Nogales, Sonora, just across the American border, in Hermosillo, capital of the state, in Navajo and Mexicali, in Tijuana and Ensenada—wherever you look at a spot of strategic importance for American defense, there you find a Japanese dentist who is sometimes in his office. And all of them have a peculiar affinity for the Japanese fishing fleet, and are ready to drop their practices to call upon Japanese ship captains.



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*Shop of a Japanese "barber" in Hermosillo*



*—Adjoins the office of "dentist" Iwamoto*

Let us consider Nogales, Son. The best road to Guaymas from the United States starts at Nogales. The Southern Pacific of Mexico Railroad also starts its winding course through mountains and desert down the west coast, at Nogales. This railroad and the highway to Hermosillo are of strategic military importance to American defense for they are the chief means over which to transport troops and food supplies should it ever become necessary for the United States to proceed against a foreign power attempting to use Mexican soil for a base. Destruction of the railroad and the highway would seriously hamper military movements and in this strategic center are some 30 Japanese with their leader, Dr. Takaichi Hojyo, a dentist, living at Calle Granja No. 40.

From all I could gather, he is not a particularly brilliant practitioner, yet he is a magnate attracting famous, powerful and wealthy Japanese business men entering Mexico through this port. Just what big Japanese industrialists or just ordinary "tourists," who have never been in Nogales before, have in common with a little-known dentist pulling teeth in a sprawling border city is as strange as the interest dentists have in the fishing industry. The moment a Japanese mission or "tourist" passes the towering gateways which separate No-



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gales, Arizona from Nogales, Sonora, they start for Calle Granja No. 40 like homing pigeons. On one observed occasion, even a Japanese sailor off a fishing boat found his way there. I have heard of sailors wandering off to strange places, but this is the first time I ever heard of a sailor who went hunting in the desert for a dentist — not a well-known one at that.

At other times, a Japanese, consumed with a yen to settle in Nogales, Son., has appeared out of nowhere. The business didn't matter—any kind of little store, restaurant or even barber shop, and these wanderers far from the homeland also find their way to the dentist who seems to know just exactly what they can do and helps set them up in business.

None of them makes a fancy living, but all of them manage to own expensive cameras with which they wander off into the desert and mountains photographing the terrain in every direction, especially roads and paths leading into the main highway. Mexican maps do not show the small paths and trails. And when a road is marked, it does not indicate what the land around it is like, which military men want to know. These photographers never develop negatives in public shops. Careful inquiry in Nogales and Hermosillo, Guaymas, Mexicali, Tijuana, Ensenada — all along the border where they take yards of pictures—failed to disclose one place to which they brought them for development.

Hermosillo, the capital of the state, has another little dentist and 20 other Japanese in the parched, semi-tropical city. They operate barber shops, restaurants, ice-cream parlors, stores, and take pictures. Hermosillo is at the other end of the strategic highway, and in this desert town, smiling and suave, Dr. Lucas M. Iwamoto has his offices at Serdan 81, a one-story adobe house plastered and painted pea green. The doctor is seldom in. He is often to be found in Guaymas, where he goes frequently to see the little soda bottler, F. Matsumiyo, and about once a month, he drives to the Mayo River Valley where a colony of Japanese patiently farms long level acres of land which can be turned into an enormous air base almost overnight. The distance is about two hours' flying time to San Diego. These trips habitually occur a few days before the *Tyoko Maru* leaves on her monthly trips to Japan. (The *Tyoko Maru*, originally a freighter of 1,886 tons, was converted into a shuttle ship to



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carry fish to the home country. She first arrived in Los Angeles Harbor on Jan. 19, 1938, all set with emplacements for small cannon and stands for machine guns.)

It takes a dentist a long time to build his practice, but this unobtrusive little character deserts his patients for days at a time and once a year closes his office altogether for a couple of months and sails for Japan. This habit of annual pilgrimages to the homeland has also been developed by colonists farming in militarily strategic areas. Some of the farmers have been known to leave when they should have been plowing and others when they should have been harvesting. A careful study of their businesses and professions shows that they earn just about enough to live on but not enough for trips abroad even with minimum expenditures.

Topolobampo is a little south of where the Mayo River empties into the Gulf of California. It is the largest city in the valley where the Japanese farmers are settled. In this town is another little dentist, Dr. K. Ieda, and his interest, too, seems to be more in fish than in teeth. Dr. Ieda devotes most of his time to cultivating Mexican fishermen's co-operatives whose members know every inch of the coast line.

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Mexican law prohibits aliens from owning land within approximately 32 miles of the coast line and 65 miles of the land border, but there is no provision to prevent a Japanese born in Mexico from having land registered in his name although owned by someone else. And, though Mexico is vast, Japanese colonists manage to secure large tracts of land within the shadow of the American border.

Upon the turbulent Colorado River depends the life of thousands of square miles of American farm land. Ingenious locks regulate the river to irrigate desert areas and turn them into fertile soil to grow fruits and vegetables and pasture cattle. A good portion of the food eaten by many thousands of Americans depends upon this water. Disruption of the irrigation system would seriously dislocate the American food supply. Fertile soil would quickly revert to desert wastes — and in wartime, destroying food supplies is as important as destroying soldiers in the field.

The mouth of the Colorado empties into the Gulf of California. The area around it is chiefly desert and mountains almost inaccessible except by horse and on foot. At the mouth of this vitally important river in the San Luis region just south of



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the border, are some 20 Japanese farmers. They live so quietly that few, even of the Mexicans around them, know of their presence. They have lost themselves among the natives in surrounding tiny villages. But their habits are like none of the other farmers in the region. The Japanese like to take long hikes along the river and photograph the terrain, including all paths and trails leading to the water.

The leader of this colony is one Luis Katsurayama who lives in La Grullita, a little village so small that only the largest maps even dot its existence. Luis and his compatriots work on some 4,000 acres of land, and Luis himself, though an old son of the soil, has an irresistible fascination for fish besides the ordinary one for hiking and photography. Luis is always making trips to another tiny little village, at the mouth of the Colorado, known as Gulf, where he meets the captains of small Japanese trawlers, after which he crosses to the American side through Yuma. Where he goes in the United States, I don't know.

During the past ten years, some 75 Japanese have gradually bought themselves thousands of long level acres on both sides of the Mayo River. These large tracts of land are 36 miles from the coast line and thus just within legal provision governing alien ownership of land. Many of these farms adjoin one another and combined, they would make an enormous air field without even a fence post to break it. All of these farmers grow crops which do not require deep plowing and the making of great furrows. From these acres, it is two hours' flying time to the naval and air base at San Diego.

The tip of Lower California, as I have mentioned before, is of tremendous military importance to a political enemy of the United States. This tip is chiefly desert and mountain and very sparsely settled. At the very tip of the peninsula is a tiny place called San Gabriel Bay, so small that even large maps do not mark it. For the benefit of those who wish to locate it on naval maps, it is in Latitude 24° 26' N. and Longitude 110° 21' W. If this spot and Mazatlan, almost directly across it on the inland, were fortified, the Gulf of California would become a private lake capable of taking care of the entire Japanese fleet and more. It is on the deserted and sparsely-settled San Gabriel Bay that the Japanese want to establish a colony of 400 men. They are at the present time moving heaven and earth to get permission for this from the Mexican government.



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In charge of the negotiations is Captain Manuel Camiro, a native Mexican working closely with Dr. Yochuchi Matsui, who was sent to Mexico by Japan to teach Mexicans how to fish scientifically. This provision is part of the fishing agreement between the two powers. The Doctor, however, appears to be more concerned with establishing the colony at this exact latitude and longitude than in scientific fishing.

Almost as soon as he arrived in Mexico, Dr. Matsui, accompanied by Captain Camiro appeared in Guaymas (Oct. 26, 1936). He did a little fancy entertaining to win the support of local officials, but the Mexican government was a bit wary. For more than two years, Camiro pulled wires and worked hard on this, but lately he has lost interest in the project. Even the Japanese do not understand his sudden change; perhaps they will when they read this.

There are native pearl fishermen on San Gabriel Bay who have no interest whatever in Japanese efforts to establish strategic footholds on the Western Hemisphere, but they do fear Japanese invasion of their fisheries. When the Japanese surveyed the shore line and took soundings of the bay, the natives were certain they had eyes upon the pearls.

Since Captain Camiro had come with Dr. Matsui and was actively trying to persuade the natives to approve of the proposed colony, they centered their dislike upon him. On Dec. 19, 1938, they had a little meeting at which they concluded that the Captain should be informed of their feelings. They sent a soft-spoken fisherman to explain, quietly and simply, that if the Japanese succeeded in getting the permission, he would be held personally responsible and shot.

Camiro knew that this simple messenger meant what he said. Today he is trying to persuade the Japanese that San Gabriel Bay isn't such a wonderful spot after all. He suggests other places even better than the Bay, but the Japanese are not interested: they want a colony on San Gabriel Bay. ■



*Agents also operate out of Hermosillo*