

Hard time in the Big Easy

The unique role of New Orleans in Second World War enemy alien internment

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Camp Algiers and the Enemy Alien Control Program

On 9 November 2016, the day after the election that sent Donald Trump to the White House as the United States' forty-fifth president, I stood with radio producer Laine Kaplan-Levenson outside the locked security gates of a US Customs and Border Patrol Station in the Algiers neighbourhood of New Orleans, Louisiana, on the West Bank of the Mississippi River. Situated just a few miles from the city's historic French Quarter or *Vieux Carré*, the property we stood before was inaugurated in the early twentieth century as a US quarantine station and then repurposed during the Second World War as the Algiers Detention Station, an internment facility used primarily for non-citizen "enemy aliens" (Figure 1). I had seen a few mentions of the New Orleans site and its role in the largely secret Second World War Enemy Alien Control Program in Max Paul Friedman's book-length study *Nazis and Good Neighbors* and Harvey Strum's essay "Jewish Internees in the American South, 1942–1945."¹ But the scope of both those studies was much broader than the New Orleans context, and I was left with a host of questions. How was the New Orleans detention site selected, outfitted and utilised to house these alien enemies? Why was it established in a city known as the "Big Easy," famous for its culinary and carnal pleasures and its year-round carnivalesque atmosphere?² What was this detention experience like for those who were held there? Was it better characterised

1 Max Paul Friedman, *Nazis and Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Harvey Strum, "Jewish Internees in the American South, 1942–1945," *American Jewish Archives* 42 (1990) 1: 27–48.

2 According to Antony Stanonis, the nickname "Big Easy" originated with Black jazz musicians and referenced the city's association with leisure, promiscuity, permissiveness and moral laxity. See Anthony J. Stanonis, *Creating the Big Easy: New Orleans and the Emergence of Modern Tourism, 1918–1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 243–4.

as internment or incarceration? The Big Easy seemed an unlikely setting for doing “hard time” behind bars. And, at a moment when the city was deeply engaged in celebrating its tricentennial, it seemed almost no one was aware of this surprising chapter in its unique 300-year history.

Figure 1: US quarantine station, New Orleans, c. 1930, showing the site's location on the West Bank of the Mississippi River



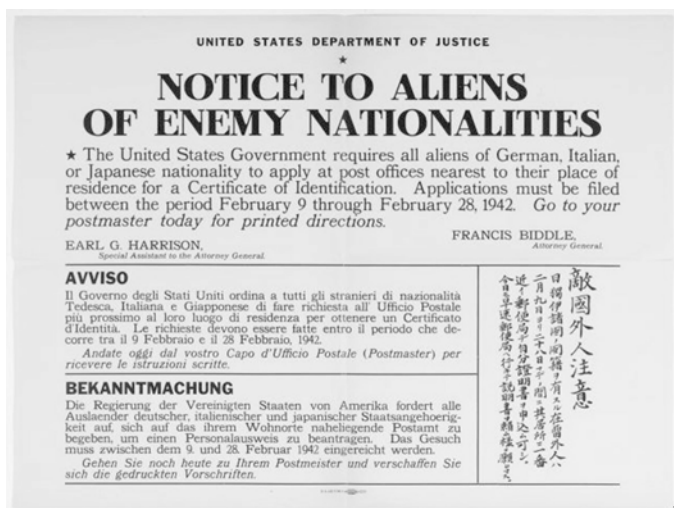
Source: Photo courtesy the Historic New Orleans Collection.

Signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States' subsequent entry into the Second World War, Proclamations 2525, 2526 and 2527 activated the Enemy Alien Control Program, authorising the detention of allegedly dangerous enemy aliens of German, Italian or Japanese ancestry living in the United States.³ Posters prohibited named alien en-

3 For an official governmental description, see “World War II Enemy Alien Control Program Overview,” <<https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/enemy-aliens/ww2>> (8 November 2021).

emies from entering areas deemed sensitive to US security and advised them to register their identity at US post offices (Figure 2). Propaganda generated by the US government warned the populace to “speak American” and not speak “the enemy’s language,” portraying Germany’s Adolf Hitler, Japan’s Tojo Hideki and Italy’s Benito Mussolini in caricature form voicing anti-democracy slogans in their respective languages (Figure 3).⁴ Nonetheless, unlike the wartime domestic “relocation” of more than 100,000 Japanese (two-thirds of whom were US citizens), which was ultimately treated as a shameful and embarrassing chapter of US history, the Alien Control Program’s targeting of “enemy” non-citizens during wartime has never been the subject of a sustained national reckoning. Who were these alien enemies and why were they held at this location, so close at hand? What was the connection, if any, between the detention of enemy aliens in New Orleans’ “backyard” neighbourhood of Algiers to the more well-known Japanese relocation program?⁵

Figure 2: US Department of Justice “Notice to Enemies of Alien Nationalities,” advising them to register their identity at a US post office, printed in German, Italian and Japanese



Source: Italian American Historical Society.

- 4 For an interesting discussion of this poster, see blog entry from the University of Pennsylvania language lab <<https://languageblog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=24050>> (8 November 2021).
- 5 For a comprehensive study of Japanese internment, see Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

When my producer colleague and I met at the former internment camp in 2016 with the idea of featuring its history in a podcast for the public radio series *Tripod: New Orleans at 300*, I had already discovered a 1946 article from a local newspaper that claimed one of those interned there was a member of Hitler's inner circle, bringing high-stakes international wartime tensions into the local frame of New Orleans.⁶ The 30 March 1946 piece, titled "Close Pal of Hitler Held in Algiers Detention Unit," ran soon after the camp had been decommissioned (Figure 4).⁷ Arrows added to a photo of the site indicated the buildings where the Hitler associate and other internees had been held. How, I wondered, did this unnamed individual come to be interned right across the river at Camp Algiers? Who was interned along with him, before him and after him? Along with the front-page story about Hitler's confidant held at the station, I had found other news stories with dates ranging from 1943 to 1946 that also referred to the Algiers site's use as an internment camp, although they provided few answers to the broader questions regarding who was held there, what the reasons were for their internment, when and for how long they were held, what were their origins or political affiliations, and why they were confined at this specific site.

6 Laine Kaplan-Levinson, "The World War II Internment Camp, 'Camp Algiers,' Part I," in WWNO, *Tripod: New Orleans at 300*, 12 January 2017 <<http://wwno.org/post/wwii-internment-camp-camp-algiers-part-i>> (8 November 2021). A link to the Part II is also available on the site.

7 Ken Gormin, "Close Pal of Hitler Held in Algiers Detention Unit," *Times-Picayune*, 30 March 1946, p. 1.

Figure 3: US Second World War propaganda poster discouraging the use of German, Japanese or Italian and encouraging all to “Speak American”



Source: Wikipedia Commons (public domain).

With the 1946 article and photo of the detention unit in hand, Kaplan-Levenson and I could see that, while some of the buildings no longer remained, we were in fact standing at the exact location from which Camp Algiers had been photographed seventy years earlier, at the time of its closure. When we requested entry to the facility, functioning then as an active Border Patrol station, we were denied access. No personnel present in 2016, including the station's information officer, claimed to possess any knowledge of its use as an internment camp during the Second World War, and they responded with substantial scepticism to our enquiries. I soon learned that this response of incredulity was characteristic of the local populace. Even the staff at New Orleans' World War II Museum, the city's number-one tourist attraction in the city, claimed to know nothing about the existence of Camp Algiers or have any materials relevant to its role in wartime internment. It was this general lacuna of awareness at the local level that inspired me to write *Port of No Return: Enemy Alien*

Internment in World War II New Orleans.⁸ This essay offers a condensed version of the principal facts and events detailed in that study.

Hiding in plain sight

A central question in my inquiry was how the New Orleans station with its history as a Second World War internment camp was able to hide in plain sight for so long. Why was there this glaring gap in public knowledge? The first reason is likely the most obvious: The Enemy Alien Control Program was, after all, a secret operation, both in its application within the United States and in its later expansion to include some fifteen cooperating countries in Latin America. A second reason, though, is that research on wartime internment in the United States has understandably focused on Japanese internment – a historical episode that internee activists and their descendants' still fight to expose well into the twenty-first century, after a protracted struggle seeking acknowledgement and redress from the US government. By contrast, few Americans know that throughout the period of its participation in the Second World War, "and as late as 1949, the US government operated a nationwide penal complex designed to hold 'dangerous' enemy aliens who were neither criminal nor of Japanese ancestry."⁹

All Second World War internment camps in the United States were operated by either the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) or the Department of Justice (DOJ). When I consulted with archivist William Creech at the US National Archives in Washington, DC, where the INS records are located, he warned me that the New Orleans detention facility was admittedly a minor player in a vast matrix of some 400 camps that extended from Hawaii to New York's Ellis Island and from North Dakota to Texas. Some, such as Crystal City, a model "family camp" in Texas, held up to 3,500 men, women and children at any given moment, whereas the Algiers unit probably saw only 2,000 or fewer internees pass through its gates during the years of its operation as a detention facility. With luck, Creech said, I might find a memo of how many potatoes they ordered weekly to feed the internees. Fortunately, I found many kinds of documents in this and other archives related to my "backyard" camp, including architectural plans, a telegram announcing its opening, lists of those detained and held on specific dates, news articles confirming the camp's opening, operation and decommissioning, letters and pleas (often with a censor's stamp) from internees to family members and governmental figures whom

8 Marilyn Grace Miller, *Port of No Return: Enemy Alien Internment in World War II New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2021).

9 Stephen Fox, *America's Invisible Gulag: A Biography of German American Internment & Exclusion in World War II: Memory and History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), xxii.

they hoped might grant them release, and site visit reports from diplomatic, religious and immigrant aid organisation representatives, such as the Swiss Legation, the Young Men's Christian Association and the National Refugee Service, respectively.¹⁰ But I found the most detailed and personal information regarding the individuals who passed through Camp Algiers in their Department of Justice and Department of State "name files," containing the government's own paper trails regarding their suspected status as enemy aliens, apprehension, detention, internment and release, often after several years without even receiving an explanation – much less a hearing – pertaining to their internment.¹¹

Debate continues regarding the precise numbers and identities of those held in US internment camps as part of the Alien Enemy Control Program, but "German" enemy aliens undoubtedly constituted the largest group. For the US government, the "German" category included all persons from territories under German control as of December 1941, including Poles, Austrians and Czechs. Historian Arnold Krammer calculated the total number of Germans, German-Americans, and German-Latin Americans incarcerated during the program to be in excess of 25,000 persons.¹²

Due in part to its location near the Gulf of Mexico and shipping routes that connected it to Central American ports, the vast majority of those held at Camp Algiers were German-, Italian- and Japanese-born persons arrested and deported to the United States from Latin America. A few, especially later in the war, were German-born persons apprehended within the United States, including Hitler's "pal" referred to in the 1946 local news article. Camp Algiers also stands out among the dense network of internment facilities nationally, because, at one point, it became an "anti-Nazi" refuge for some sixty Jews from Germany, Austria and elsewhere apprehended in Latin America, deported to the United States and interned in camps elsewhere in the US South before being congregated at the New Orleans site.

10 Alien enemy internment camp records and case files are housed in the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85 at National Archives I in Washington, DC <<https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/085.html#85.4>> (8 November 2021).

11 Information on individual enemy aliens is located in the Special War Problems Division records and Central Decimal File records in the General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 <<https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/state-dept>> (8 November 2021) and in the Alien Enemy Control Unit records and case files in the Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60 <<https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/060.html#60.14>> (8 November 2021), both at National Archives II in College Park, MD.

12 Arnold Krammer, *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America's German Alien Internees* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), x.

Repurposing the Alien and Sedition Acts

Though the United States' Enemy Alien Control Program was implemented in the Second World War, its precedents date back to 1798, when the Fifth Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, which complicated the path to citizenship and used the terms "alien" and "enemy" in combination. Historian Carol Berkin believes these late eighteenth-century laws can now be seen as the "forerunners of such modern abuses of American rights and liberties as twentieth-century immigration quotas, the Red Scare, Japanese internment camps, and minority voter suppression."¹³ Thus, at the moment when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, more than a million immigrants who were citizens of Germany, Italy and Japan – about a quarter of the non-citizen population of the entire country – were quickly classified as "enemy aliens."¹⁴

After the Enemy Alien Control Program was implemented on the domestic front, President Roosevelt determined that the enemy alien threat exceeded the geography under his leadership. The National Socialists' rapid advance in Europe convinced him of the need to extend the reach of anti-alien policies beyond the United States' national boundaries. He claimed a secret map provided proof of Hitler's plan to control the entire hemisphere (Figure 4). Though the map's validity was questioned, Roosevelt ultimately gained the support of some fifteen Latin American countries in resisting pro-National Socialist and pro-Fascist forces. Paradoxically, in a much-touted "Good Neighbor" policy, implemented less than a decade earlier, the United States had promised non-interference in the other Americas. Guided by the State Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Justice and executive branch, officials in Central and South America collaborated by drawing up lists of potential enemies of the United States, arresting and holding them in detention and eventually helping the US military deport them to the United States. The subsequent selection and detention of those named "enemy aliens" depended on the political environment in the specific Latin American countries, the countries' respective relationships with the United States, levels of corruption, and many other factors. In many cases, European and Japanese-born residents in Latin America were deemed a threat based solely on their country of origin, regardless of any political or criminal activity – or lack of it. Thousands were summarily subjected to US-sponsored surveillance and seizure outside its borders and became part of a new, specious, wartime commerce in which officials in Latin America frequently demanded bribes from those who hoped to avoid internment or deportation, appropriated properties and businesses of those detained, and

13 Carol Berkin, *A Sovereign People: The Crises of the 1790s and the Birth of American Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 202.

14 Paula Branca Santos, "Injustice Ignored: The Internment of Italian-Americans during World War II," *Pace International Law Review* 13 (2001) 1: 151–82, at 161.

improved their countries' standing with the powerful neighbour to the north by swelling the ranks of potential enemy aliens. In many cases, those detained and named as enemy aliens would not ever know the reason for their detention, and most of those detained in Latin America would not receive any kind of hearing during stays in Camp Algiers and other camps that stretched from months to years.

A 1942 Associated Press photo with the caption "Enemy Aliens Leave Panama for US" shows individuals ascending the gangplank of a US Army Transport vessel in the Canal Zone, guarded by US military police.¹⁵ In many cases, Latin American functionaries decided who to include on these lists based solely on country of origin or surname, rather than on any evidence of criminal or pro-Axis political activity. Just as happened with the Japanese on US soil, persons of German, Italian, and Japanese birth were labelled as dangerous enemies without supporting evidence. Additionally, Austrians, Poles, Hungarians, Czechs and even a Swedish count were classified as "Germans," notwithstanding their protestations to the contrary.

For the small group of Jewish refugees caught up in the Latin American Enemy Alien Control Program, the application of the "German" label was especially bitter, since the National Socialists had only recently stripped Jews and many other non-Aryans of their citizenship condemning them to the stateless condition that prompted their desperate flight to Latin America. At least eleven of those held at Camp Algiers had already spent time in a European labour or death camp before being deported to the United States. Under the guise of identifying alien enemies for the U.S., many Latin American officials also profited by blacklisting businesses, preventing Axis-born persons from owning businesses, and confiscating named enemy aliens' properties and assets. All this occurred even though only about 10 per cent of Axis nationals named as enemy aliens in Latin America actively identified as National Socialists.

15 This photo and many other materials relevant to the Latin American component of the Enemy Alien Control Program can be viewed under "Latin American Internment Program" on the German American Internee Coalition site <<https://gaic.info/history/the-world-war-ii-lat-in-american-internment-program/>> (8 November 2021).

Figure 4: The “secret map” mentioned by President Franklin Roosevelt in his 1941 “New World Order” speech



Source: Image courtesy the FDR Presidential Library and Museum.

Port of no return

New Orleans was the point of delivery for many of the ships carrying these “enemy aliens” from Latin American ports. Their manifests have much to tell us. For example, the SS *Cuba* left the Panama Canal Zone on 4 October 1942, arriving in New Orleans a few days later (Figure 6). The enemy aliens on board are identified by their names, age, sex, marital status, calling or vocation, nationality, “race or people,” birthplace and, finally, last permanent residence. Some passengers on this particular manifest are identified as German on all counts, whereas others are labeled as “Jewish” in the category “race or people.” This is important because it shows that in

at least some cases, the US government knew at the time of their arrival that certain individuals were Jews, and thus unlikely allies of the German regime; yet, they were interned alongside Germans of all political stripes, and even subjected to pro-National Socialist activities in the US camps. The facing page of this same manifest indicates that the arriving passengers were to be “interned for the duration” for however long the war lasted. Some would remain in US internment until 1946.

Figure 5: Ship’s manifest of the SS Cuba, sailing 4 October 1942 from the Canal Zone to New Orleans; some passengers are identified as “Jewish” in the “race or people” category

U.S. 5400
34

ALL ALIENS working as a part of continental United States from a foreign port or as a part of the border personnel of the United States, and all aliens working as a part of said border personnel from a foreign port, a part of continental United States shall be subject to the laws of the United States.

U.S.A.T. SS CUBA Passengers sailing from Balboa C.Z. Oct 4, 1942.

LINE NO.	NAME IN FULL	AGE	SEX	RACE OR PEOPLE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE OF ENTRY	STATUS	REMARKS
1	Backer, Patricia	17	F	German	1925	Germany			
2	Friedman, Leo	37	M	Jewish	1905	Poland			
3	Friedman, Margaret	35	F	Jewish	1907	Poland			
4	Friedman, David	34	M	Jewish	1908	Poland			
5	Kallos, Leo	27	M	British	1915	England			
6	Kallos, David	25	M	British	1917	England			
7	Kallos, David	23	M	British	1919	England			
8	Kallos, David	21	M	British	1921	England			
9	Kallos, David	19	M	British	1923	England			
10	Kallos, David	17	M	British	1925	England			
11	Kallos, David	15	M	British	1927	England			
12	Kallos, David	13	M	British	1929	England			
13	Kallos, David	11	M	British	1931	England			
14	Kallos, David	9	M	British	1933	England			
15	Kallos, David	7	M	British	1935	England			
16	Kallos, David	5	M	British	1937	England			
17	Kallos, David	3	M	British	1939	England			
18	Kallos, David	1	M	British	1941	England			
19	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
20	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
21	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
22	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
23	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
24	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
25	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
26	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
27	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
28	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
29	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			
30	Kallos, David	11/12/42	M	British	1942	England			

NEW ORLEANS, LA. 10/4/42
RECEIVED
J. H. HARRIS
10/4/42

Emergency Responsibility
Camp
Wm. Strawn

Source: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, National Archives.

The men, women and children who arrived on these vessels rarely proceeded directly to Camp Algiers. Rather, New Orleans functioned as a hub from which named aliens and the family members who “voluntarily” joined them were sent to internment facilities elsewhere by train. Nonetheless, it was in New Orleans that these newly arrived detainees were stripped of their passports and other documentation, and then charged with entering the United States illegally. This tactic, itself illegal, was only used with named enemy aliens arriving from Latin America. It was in New Orleans where these incoming passengers and their luggage were sometimes

sprayed with insecticide; some of those arriving were even forced to undress and enter a shower area naked. Thus, even if a small percentage of the people who passed through New Orleans as enemy aliens would finally return to the countries where they were detained, the site symbolically represents a point or “port of no return” from which they could not return to pre-internment life. The internment experience could not be undone, even if most chose to silence or suppress it, even with their own children, upon their eventual release.

Despite constituting a minority, pro-National Socialist contingents assumed dominance among German-identified populations in some US internment camps. Hoping to incur good treatment for their own citizens detained or imprisoned behind enemy lines in German-controlled territories, US officials permitted Nazi supporters in the internment camps to assemble, sing National Socialist songs, display swastikas and celebrate Hitler’s birthday. Even at Camp Algiers, at one point labelled an anti-National Socialist facility, someone mowed a swastika into the unit’s lawn. An August 1942 bulletin of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency publicized the frictions that inevitably ensued between pro- and anti-National Socialist internees under the headline “Jews, Nazis Fight in U.S. Internment Camps; Separation Asked by Jewish Internees.”¹⁶ After many months complaining of such conditions, a group of about sixty Jewish men, women and children were concentrated at Camp Algiers in February of 1943, thanks to the intervention of the Joint Distribution Committee, the National Refugee Service, and other Jewish aid organizations. As I expand on in Chapter 6 of *Port of No Return*, a woman named Cecilia Razovsky worked tirelessly in the “Joint,” the NRS, and other organizations to improve the conditions of Jewish internees and secure their ultimate release, even as leadership in these organizations was wary of the way such efforts might call into question Jewish groups’ loyalty to the nation and support of the government’s national security operations as evidenced in the Enemy Alien Internment Program.¹⁷ Thus, for a brief period after Jews were consolidated at New Orleans’s Camp Algiers, it was known as an anti-National Socialist camp and the “Camp of the Innocent.”

Classification and release of internees

Although there are only partial records of who was held at the Algiers site during its 1942–1946 run as an internment camp functioning within the city limits of New

16 “Jews, Nazis Fight in US Internment Camps: Separation Asked by Jewish Internees,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 18 August 1942.

17 For further details of Razovsky’s work, see: Miller, *Port of No Return*, chapter 6; and Bat-Ami Zucker, Cecilia Razovsky and the American Jewish Women’s Rescue Operation (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

Orleans, one very interesting list compiled in November 1944 documents the government's attempts to sort out its primarily German internees as "Pro-Nazi," "Anti-Nazi" or "Jew" (Figure 6). The inclusion of several question marks in the classification columns shows that, even in late 1944, officials were still uncertain of many internees' true political postures, however. Thanks to this list and other archival research, I was able to identify the "pal of Hitler" mentioned above in the March 1946 *Times-Picayune* story as Kurt Ludecke, who had represented the National Socialists in the United States in the 1930s, and in 1937 had published a book titled *I Knew Hitler*. Having made the case to US officials that he had repented of his earlier support of Hitler's campaign, Ludecke appears on the November 1944 list as "Anti-Nazi" although with a question mark alongside this classification. The government remained septical of Ludecke's conversion throughout the war and even after it ended; he was released from Camp Algiers but later was detained off and on at Ellis Island in a long-fought battle to avoid repatriation to Germany that ended unsuccessfully in 1948.¹⁸

Ludecke's case is unique in terms of his protracted detention, his final "removal" to Germany and the legal precedent the case set for subsequent generations.¹⁹ Piecing together the stories of many other individuals, it becomes clear that, despite long confinements, separations from spouses and family members, lack of access to hearings or even explanations for their detention, internment ultimately provided a kind of back door entrance to legal residence in the United States for many apprehended in Latin America who passed through Camp Algiers and other internment facilities. It was without doubt ironic that many of those caught up in the Enemy Alien Control Program were residing in Central or South American countries at the time of their apprehension precisely because their efforts to find refuge in the United States had failed. Panama, Nicaragua, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and other sites south of the border sometimes offered the only route out of Europe as the National Socialists occupied ever more early escape routes, such as Belgium, France and Italy. Jewish refugees, in particular, traversed incredibly peripatetic routes to "safety" in Latin America, acquiring visas to countries in the region only as the last available option when entry to the United States was denied. Their subsequent arrest, detention, deportation from those countries and internment at the hands of the US government thus seemed to them not only a grave injustice but also a hideous joke.

18 Kurt Ludecke's name files in the Department of State (Record Group 59) and Department of Justice (Record Group 60) files at the National Archives both provide details of his long internment saga. See: RG 60 COR 146-13, Enemy Alien Files, Box 318, NA; and RG 59 740.00115, European War 1939 / 5819, Box 2841, NA.

19 See Stephen Vladek, "Ludecke's Lengthening Shadow: The Disturbing Prospect of War without End," *Journal of National Security Law and Policy* 2 (2006): 53-110.

From the local perspective, however, Jews and other alien enemies who were released from internment after it was finally determined they posed no threat to national or hemispheric ultimately received a message of “welcome” from North America. For example, the 21 August 1943 edition of the *New Orleans Item* celebrated the release from Camp Algiers of a German-Jewish refugee violinist identified only as “Siegfried” together with his mother.²⁰ Reporter Marjorie Roehl wrote that “Mr Siegfried met America this morning with music in his heart and at his fingertips. With him, her eyes glad, her earrings bobbing, went his mother.” Dr David Fichman of the New Orleans Committee for Refugee Services was also on hand to wish the two godspeed as they left for an unidentified city in the country’s interior under a parole-type programme called “Internment at Large.” Identified in my research as Jeanette and Siegfried Wolff, the smiling and well-attired mother and son were photographed together at New Orleans’ Union Station with Fichman, also a rabbi at Touro Synagogue. Roehl’s article quoted Siegfried (Wolff) as saying, “Your America is a wonderful place [...] We can live in quiet here where everyone is free.”

Other German internees apprehended in Latin America were not so lucky, however, and would remain in internment until much later dates. Hamburg businessman Wolfgang Harten was arrested in Ecuador and interned in a Texan camp in December 1943. Though his wife and children were finally able to join him after a hellish voyage almost a year later, the family was then interned at Crystal City until the camp closed in May 1946, well after the war ended. The Hartens waited several weeks at Camp Algiers before finally boarding a plane back to Panama, from where they eventually were able to travel on to Ecuador. The diaries in which Gertrude Harten described these experiences (providing a female perspective rarely seen in the archival materials) were later compiled and published in Spanish by Karin Schramm, the youngest of the Harten children, only a baby at the time of their internment.²¹

20 Marjorie H. Roehl, “Refugee Violinist Fled from Nazis; Finds US: Welcomes Self and Mother,” *New Orleans Item*, 21 August 1943, pp. 1, 5.

21 María Cuvi Sánchez and Karin Harten Ahlers (eds), *Gertrudis: Diarios de una mujer alemana sobre el Ecuador, 1937–1956* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2014). A section of Gertrude Harten’s diaries is also available in English on the German American Internee Coalition website <<https://gaic.info/the-harten-family-story/>> (8 November 2021).

Figure 6: A page of the November 1944 list titled "Aliens at Algiers, LA," with marks indicating classification as "Pro-Nazi," "Anti-Nazi" or "Jew"; question marks indicate doubt about the classification

<u>ALIENS AT ALGIERS, LA.</u>			
		<u>Pro-Nazi</u>	<u>Anti-Nazi Jew</u>
<u>German - Detained</u>			
Steiner, Carl Offerman	39/10518	X	
<u>Germans Interned</u>			
Barber, Harold	56176/788		?
Blumenthal, Annaliese Gertner	56162/820		X
Blumenthal, Ernst	56125/317		
Hoffmann, Franz	56176/552	X	X
HURPER, Wilhelm L.D.C.	56125/789		X
Ising, Friedrich Wilhelm Hermann	56176/901		?
Jacobi, Arthur	56125/462	X	
Jacobi, Erna Frieda	56125/388	X	X
Jacobi, Herta	56125/388		
Jacobi, Manfred Victor	56125/388	X	
Jacobi, Ursula	56125/388	X	
Johanning, Friedrich	39/7162	X	
Kaul, Fritz Karl, Dr.	56125/318		X
Kolb, Gertraude Rose	39/7694		
Kolb, Helde Marie	39/7694	X	
Kolb, Karl	39/9042		
Kolb, Klaus Peter	39/7694	X	
Kuhne, Werner Gerhard Otto	56176/856	X	
Loewenthal, Emil	56125/459		
Loewenthal, Hilda	56125/384		
Loewenthal, Jean	56125/384	X	
Ludecke, Kurt George W.	39/3087		X?
Meyer, Irngard Martha	56162/33		X
Meyer, Siegfried Bernhard, Dr.	56125/320		

Source: US National Archives; used with permission.

Reading such accounts from our own era marked by virulent attacks on noncitizens arriving from Latin America and other areas of turmoil and internal conflict suggests that conditions were in fact *better* in some respects for enemy alien internees during the Second World War than they are for non-citizen detainees during today's "peacetime;" this was especially true for German noncitizens who were perceived in the United States to be "white" in contrast to Japanese Americans and border-crossing Mexican migrant workers.²² In "Aliens Live Well at Algiers Base," a story that ran in a New Orleans newspaper in September 1945, the officer-in-charge, Raymond Bunker, assured readers that he and others at Camp Algiers served more as social workers than prison guards: "The work is much more than surveillance [...] We are more social workers than jailers and have a wonderful opportunity to show these people what the American way of life is."²³ Such a claim is hard to imagine in the context of for-profit detention today. Under Donald Trump, Louisiana became an "epicenter" of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities, with sites located in "old state prisons and local jails [...] several hours away from New Orleans and other major cities in the region, far from most immigrant rights groups and immigration lawyers. Migrants complain of mistreatment and prolonged detention."²⁴ Just as during wartime more than three quarters of a century ago, governments in the United States and elsewhere claim harsh measures of non-citizen control and deprivation of freedom are necessary to maintain national and hemispheric security in the Second World War.

In hindsight, then, it's clear that the Enemy Alien Control Program – even when administered in a city as driven by pleasure as New Orleans--contributed to contemporary US policies and practices that routinely treat non-citizens arriving from Latin America as dangerous criminals, despite supporting evidence. Our hope is that exposure of the internment programme in contemporary scholarship can serve as a memorial of sorts to the unjustly interned, and that such work will serve as a warning of history's propensity for repeating itself when we fail to sufficiently examine what happened and continues to happen in its shadows.

22 See Jessica Ordaz, *The Shadow of El Centro: A History of Migrant Incarceration and Solidarity: Justice, Power, and Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 17: "German racial privilege led to treatments and wages, even after the start of World War II, that differed for Japanese Americans and later Mexican migrants."

23 Quoted in "Aliens Live Well at Algiers Base," *Times-Picayune*, 1 September 1945, p. 13.

24 Nomaan Merchant, "Louisiana Becomes New Hub in Immigrant Detention under Trump," *AP News*, 9 October 2019.