

# UNWELCOME IN FREEDOM'S LAND:

## The Impact of World War II on Italian Aliens in Southern California

*by Gloria Ricci Lothrop*

### INTRODUCTION

The World War II experiences of un-naturalized United States residents born in Axis countries, have been consigned to memory and assigned a marginal place in the historical record. Nevertheless, the wartime policies of restriction, internment and exclusion enforced upon enemy aliens, particularly along the Pacific slope, in a region designated as Military District One of the Western Defense Command, radically altered the leadership structures within many Italian American communities, resulted in a deliberate alienation from the parent culture and affected profoundly the individuals involved. For example, Giuseppe Mecheli, a fisherman, excluded from his Vallejo home and his livelihood, took his life. Stockton resident Giovanni Sanguenetti hanged himself, rather than endure the stigma of being an enemy alien.<sup>1</sup> When 65-year-old Martini Battistessa was declared an enemy alien and expelled from his home of twenty years, he chose death on the railroad tracks near Richmond.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that these events occurred more than a half century ago, it is important to explore the impact of this relatively unfamiliar aspect of United States domestic policy during World War II. This essay examines the

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<sup>1</sup>San Francisco Chronicle, February 12, 1942, p. 9; February 17, 1942, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Los Angeles Times, February 17, 1942, p. 6; San Francisco Chronicle, February 22, 1942, p. 4-5.

policies of wartime regulation of enemy alien residents. More specifically it traces the plight of that portion of the 1,790,000 Italians of foreign birth living in the United States who resided in Military District One, roughly the western half of the states of Washington, Oregon and California.

The presence of large numbers of non-citizen residents in the United States, who had emigrated from belligerent nations, posed a unique challenge. Federal policy, which evolved during the first months of the war, developed three components: (1) the immediate detention of alien enemies who were deemed potentially subversive; (2) the imposition of restrictions upon resident enemy aliens, which included limitations on travel, registration, the surrendering of enumerated articles, and the imposition of a curfew; and (3) the exclusion of enemy aliens from designated zones and their relocation in less strategic areas.

These policies were not consistently enforced. For example, Italian non-citizens were exempted from enemy alien status on October 12, 1942, while the majority of Japanese aliens and citizens remained interned for the duration of the war. It should be noted, however, that 64 percent or 10,775, of those detained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation between December 7, 1941 and June 30, 1945, were Europeans or European-Americans. Enforcement of enemy alien regulations varied according to expediency and practicality. For example, 90 percent of the enemy aliens were concentrated in eleven states, 51 percent of the enemy aliens, approximately 1,500,000, living in the vicinity of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The size of such a population made it too unwieldy to relocate or incarcerate.<sup>3</sup> In addition to their sheer numbers, the political influence of Italians, particularly in eastern seaboard states, defied any efforts at regulation beyond the registration mandated in February 1942.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast, along the Pacific slope, a declared military zone, enemy alien groups were subjected to the full range of alien regulation, including detention, restriction and relocation from specific areas, for limited periods of time. In the early months of the war these policies affected the lives of three alien groups: 38,171 Japanese, 19,417 German and 52,008 Italian residing in California.<sup>5</sup> This study will examine the experiences of Italian enemy aliens living in the Los Angeles area in the early months of World War II.

<sup>3</sup>"Ninety Percent of Enemy Aliens Live in Eleven States," *L'Italo Americano*, March 2, 1942, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>For a fuller discussion of the role of Italian Americans in U. S. politics, see Philip V. Cannistraro, "Generoso Pope and the Rise of Italian American Politics, 1925-1936," in *Italian Americans: New Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity*, edited by Lydio Tomasi (New York: Center for Migration Studies of New York, Inc., 1983), pp. 264-285.

<sup>5</sup>*L'Italo Americano*, March 2, 1942, p.2.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The wartime policies and subsequent events are best understood within the context of the preceding three decades. Following the successful march on Rome in 1922 by Benito Mussolini and his blackshirted followers, Italy's new leader curried the support of the international community, particularly the United States. His efforts reaped benefits. As early as 1926 Congress approved a comparatively lenient settlement of Italy's World War I debt. In addition between 1925 and 1930 Italy's new Fascist government was extended loans of more than \$300 million provided by the New York financial organization Morgan, Blair and Company.<sup>6</sup> Italian relations were further reinforced by a meeting in 1931 between Italian foreign minister Dino Grandi and President Herbert Hoover. The amity continued into the New Deal. In correspondence with Franklin D. Roosevelt his ambassador to Italy, Breckenridge Long, praised Mussolini's dignity and energy.<sup>7</sup> In personal letters FDR observed that he was deeply impressed by what Mussolini was accomplishing, adding that he kept in close touch with that "admirable gentleman."<sup>8</sup> In a letter to *Fortune* magazine, written in the early months of his administration, FDR went so far as to describe Mussolini and Stalin as his "blood brothers."<sup>9</sup>

The signing of the 1929 Lateran Accords, bringing to a welcomed end the strained relations with the Vatican and Italy, garnered support for Mussolini from the U.S. Catholic hierarchy. In Los Angeles Archbishop John J. Cantwell joined the editor of *L'Osservatore Romano* to address 100,000 members of the Italian Catholic Federation at an outdoor Mass at the Coliseum.<sup>10</sup>

Through the mid-1930s Mussolini's Fascist credo not only assumed legitimacy within the Catholic Church, among conservative financiers and leading academics, but also among fringe groups like the Silver Shirts and the Knights of the White Camellia. The singularly popular Father Charles Coughlin, the radio priest, from his small studio in Des Moines, Iowa, broadcast to more than 15,000,000 listeners a variation of the Fascist agenda adapted to American culture.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup>"Italy's War of Nerves in America," *Fortune*, 22 (November 1940): 85-86.

<sup>7</sup>John Patrick Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View From America* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 72. See also Gloria Ricci Lothrop, "Shadow on the Land: Italians in Southern California in the 1930s," *California History*, 75 (Winter 1996-97): 338-353, 385-387.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>9</sup>Arthur Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 648.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Peter Bonino, Glendale, California, July 14, 1991; *Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1937, p.8.

<sup>11</sup>Dale Kramer, "The American Fascists," *Harpers*, 170 (September 1940): 380-393. See also Morris Schoenbach, *Native American Fascism During the 1930s and 1940s: A Study of Its Roots and Its Decline* (Hamden, Conn.: Garland Press, 1990).

## IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON ITALO-AMERICANS IN LOS ANGELES

Praise of the “new Italy,” echoed throughout the international press, was a source of pride for Italo-Americans, who were being urged by the Fascist government to celebrate their “*Italianità*.”<sup>12</sup> As a result, they became members of the Italian Touring Club and joined the growing number of language classes subsidized by the Italian government. In nostalgic celebration of their roots they became members of the Sons of Italy and the Italian war veterans association, Associazione Ex Combattenti e Reduci, and enrolled their offspring in the youth club, Gruppo Giovanile.

Recognizing that emigres represented potential troops, revenues and pub-

<sup>12</sup>Constantine Panunzio, “Italian Americans, Fascism and the War,” *Yale Review*, 31 (June 1942): 771–782; Givacchino Panettoni, *Professionisti italiani e funzionari pubblici italo Americani in California* [Italian American Professionals and Public Officials in California] (Sacramento: n.p., 1935); Alan Cassels, “Fascism for Export: Italy and the United States in the 1920s,” *American Historical Review*, 69 (April 1964): 702–712. Important insights into the effects of Fascism upon Italian Americans is provided in Philip V. Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy: Italian Americans and Fascism 1921–1929* (Lafayette, IN: Bordighiera, Inc., 1999).



The Italian American community of Los Angeles welcomed Italian athletes during the 1932 Olympics at Los Angeles. *From the author's collection.*

lic relations, especially in the United States where in the 1930s they represented the largest group of foreign born, Mussolini's government took every opportunity to remind Italian Americans that they remained Italian to the seventh generation. To reinforce this bond subsidies were made available to the Italian language press, and local consulates were increased to seventy, including one in Los Angeles. In an effort to strengthen local loyalties, the Italian government dispatched dignitaries, including flying ace General Francesco Di Penedo and arctic explorer Umberto Nobile. Both were feted at the Italian Hall at Main and Macy streets. Mussolini's son Vittorio was among the dignitaries. In addition to attending a reception at the Guasti mansion in Rancho Cucamonga, young Mussolini toured Hollywood where he represented his father in negotiations for the establishment of the RAM production company with Hal Roach Studios.<sup>13</sup>

Despite increasing criticism of the growing Fascist activity in the United States, in 1934 the Congressional McCormack-Dickstein Committee, investigating un-American activities, concluded that there was little reason to investigate Italo-American organizations. The next year, however, relations between the two countries became strained as Mussolini launched his invasion of Ethiopia. The United States ordered embargoes on oil and raw materials. But the promise of a new empire ruled from Rome, led Italian wives in the United States to donate their wedding rings for the war effort and young men to pay the fascist bachelor's tax. A U.S. embargo on copper shipments led to the mailing of 800 tons of copper postcards to Italy.<sup>14</sup>

Mussolini's entry into the Axis alliance with Adolph Hitler in 1936 stimulated additional criticism. Aware of this, the Fascists attempted to keep the international goodwill garnered through their propaganda campaigns by avoiding any outreach efforts with their new military ally. The German American Bund was notorious for its overt tactics and aggressive propaganda. But in Los Angeles the shared political aims of the new allies brought some Italians together with the German American Bund at Deutsches Haus, located in the 600 block of West 15th Street. This was the meeting place of one of the most active Bund chapters in the United States, having the responsibility for distributing propaganda, much of it printed in Mexico City, throughout the United States and Canada. There on June 12, 1937 a new group was

<sup>13</sup>Interview with Charles Higham, Los Angeles, California, June 27, 1991. Criticism of Vittorio Mussolini appearing in the Hollywood trade papers evoked a spirited response in letters of support published in *La Parola* of Los Angeles, October 20, 1937, p. 2. See also Marcus Duffield, "Mussolini's American Empire: The Fascist Invasion of the United States," *Harpers Magazine*, 159 (November 1929): 24-33.

<sup>14</sup>Brice Harris, *The United States and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964), p.139.

formed. The National Protective Order of Gentiles was organized to include Germans, White Russians, Latin Americans and Italians. News photos also reveal members of Italian organizations in attendance at other festivities sponsored by the German American Bund. They were also among the crowds participating in Bund activities at Hindenburg Park (now part of Crescenta Valley Park).<sup>15</sup>

By the late 1930s local criticism of the Axis allies increased. In 1938 the *Los Angeles Daily News* published a letter in which the writer's argument acknowledged the dichotomy posed by the two major political philosophies which would plague the world for decades to come. He asserted:

The safety of our country is being undermined not by communism but by Hitler's and Mussolini's underground propaganda. Our democratic institutions

<sup>15</sup>Record Group BB IIC, File 1434, Community Relations Committee Papers, Los Angeles Jewish Federation Collection, Los Angeles Urban Archives, California State University, Northridge. (Hereinafter cited as CRC.)



*Le Dope Scuole*, the afterschool Italian language classes, were intended to develop language proficiency and cultural ties, but were later utilized for propaganda purposes. Pictured above are students enrolled in the southern California Italian language school, *Le Scuole Pascoli*, ca. 1930s.

*From the author's collection.*

are denounced and ridiculed by Italian and German officials, professors in our colleges, teachers in our public and parochial schools and those who refuse to join nazi and fascist organizations are called communist.<sup>16</sup>

*La Parola*, the anti-fascist paper published in New York City, proposed a unique strategy. On its front page it listed all the U.S. recipients of decorations conferred by the Italian government, inviting the recipients to renounce the recognitions granted by Italy's fascist regime. Among those listed were Romolo Cacciarella, manager of the Italian Cruise Lines with offices in Los Angeles, retired Los Angeles banker Armando Pedrini and Gaetano Merola, impresario of the San Francisco Opera.<sup>17</sup>

Despite rising criticism of Mussolini's propaganda policies, La Direzione Generale degli Italiani all'estero, the ministry for Italians abroad, administered by Mussolini's son-in-law Count Galeazzo Ciano, accelerated its outreach programs to the emigres and their children, particularly through the after school language programs. In addition to offering prizes, including trips to Italy, the Italian government provided stipends to the host schools, paid teachers' salaries and supplied curriculum materials. Orders were also issued that classes were to commence with the singing of the Italian national anthem. Curriculum became increasingly assertive in proclaiming the fascist message, leading the Los Angeles Unified School District to withdraw two books, *Andiamo in Italia* (We're Going to Italy), which contained a lengthy discussion of the advantages of fascism and *L'Italia Nel Passato e Nel Presente* (Italy in the Past and in the Present), which contained pages of quotations from Mussolini.<sup>18</sup>

According to Maria Ricci, assistant director of Le Scuole Giovanni Pascoli, the Italian language program in Los Angeles, language teachers who objected to the increasingly partisan slant of the curriculum were summarily dismissed and barred from their facilities. Confronted with such policies, Los Angeles Italian school director Dr. Angela Spadea wired Count Ciano, offering her opinion in but one word: "Scoundrel!"<sup>19</sup>

The United States reacted to the escalating propaganda and threat of war with increased vigilance. In June 1940, President Roosevelt signed into law the Alien Registration Act which required the fingerprinting and registration

<sup>16</sup>Los Angeles Daily News, October 28, 1938.

<sup>17</sup>*La Parola di New York*, November 29, 1941, pp. 1-3. For a discussion of the fascist and anti-fascist debate in the Italian press, see Andrew Canepa, "Profile of Italian-language Freemasons in California (1871-1966)," *Studi Emigrazione*, XXVII (March 1990): 87-107; James Bruce "California Gets Tough: Mood of the State as War Draws Closer," *New York Times*, March 6, 1942, M3-4.

<sup>18</sup>Record Group 2B IIC, #1434 and #7641, CRC.

<sup>19</sup>Interview with Maria Ricci, La Verne, California, July 7, 1991.

of 4,921,452 alien U.S. residents over the age of fourteen. In May 1941, Italian personnel at the World's Fair at Flushing, New York, including several renowned musical performers, were taken into custody, 125 in all. In June 1941, the Axis allies were ordered to close all consulates in the United States. As a result, on July 15, 1941, six-foot, six-inch tall Los Angeles Consul-General Dr. Dino Simplicini, accompanied by his wife and staff, joined other consular officials bound for Lisbon aboard the S.S. *West Point*. That same month Italian public information libraries ceased operation in the United States.

Since 1939 when war broke out in Europe, ships belonging to the Axis powers had languished in 21 United States ports. The British government adamantly refused to assure safe trans-Atlantic passage to ships carrying able-bodied men from countries with whom the British were at war. In March 1941, President Roosevelt ordered the seizure of 69 Italian, German and Danish ships. The Danish sailors were allowed to remain aboard their ships, but the 775 Italian and 69 German seamen were served warrants for having overstayed the 60-day limit allowed to alien seamen in any United States territory. All the captured seamen, along with the orchestra and entertainers, multi-lingual athletes, medical staff and a Catholic priest, aboard the Italian luxury liner *Il Conte Biancamano*, which had been stranded in the Panama Canal Zone, were sent to join the World's Fair personnel at Fort Missoula, Montana, which would soon become the wartime home of a number of Los Angeles residents.<sup>20</sup>

Fort Missoula, located near the confluence of the Blackfoot, Bitterroot and Clark Fork rivers, was established in 1877. During World War I it became a training camp for mechanics and in the 1930s it served as headquarters for the Civilian Conservation Corps. During World War II the camp, isolated by mountain ranges, was used as an internment center.

Even as the nation was assuming a wartime posture, the Italian media carried an appeal issued by Spartaco Bonomi, vice-president of the Italian Catholic Federation in Los Angeles, requesting funds for food and medicine to be used by Italians displaced by the ongoing European military conflict. In May 1941, the local press reported that nearly \$11,000 had been raised. That campaign did not go unnoticed by government officials.<sup>21</sup> Cautioning against such activity at ceremonies marking "I Am an American Day," a representa-

<sup>20</sup>Record Group 85, Entry 282, Box 1, File 4250, National Archives, Washington D.C. See also Carol Van Valkenburg, *An Alien Place: The Fort Missoula Detention Camp 1941-1944* (Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., Inc. 1995). Though the overall interpretation is deeply flawed, the account provides useful details about the camp.

<sup>21</sup>Letter from Spartaco Bonomi, secretary of the Italian Catholic Federation, Los Angeles, to Maria Ricci, February 7, 1941. In the author's possession.





Camp programs included performances by the entertainers and orchestra who had served aboard the Italian cruise ship *Il Conte Biancamano*, impounded by the United States in the Canal Zone in 1941. *Courtesy Umberto Benedetti.*

tive of the U.S. Attorney General warned that it was the duty of non-citizens “to remain loyal to the United States, their host,” adding, “We have a right to expect loyalty that leads to no division.”<sup>22</sup>

As World War II hovered on the horizon and Americans were called upon to pledge allegiance to the national cause, Italian Americans quickly solved a seeming paradox. While they had earnestly reaffirmed their cultural roots, they had long before committed themselves and their futures to their newly adopted country. Thus, they dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to the war effort; Italian Americans represented the largest percentage of enlisted personnel at the onset of World War II. Nevertheless, for some the earlier political dalliances with Il Duce would exact a price. For those, particularly in Military District One, who had not completed the U.S. naturalization process, the months ahead would be filled with apprehension, confusion and fear.

<sup>22</sup>“Attorney General Affirms that the Recent Arrests of Aliens Should Not Cause Anxiety Among Foreigners,” *L’Italo Americano* June 6, 1942, p. 1. See also “Alien Mop Up: Drive on Spy Subjects Pushed: Expelled Subjects to Sail Soon,” *Newsweek* (July 14, 1941): 16; John Norman, “Repudiation of Fascism by the Italian Press,” *Journalism Quarterly*, 20 (March 1944): 2; “Italo-Americans and World War II,” *Sociology and Social Research*, 29 (July-August 1945): 470-471.

IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON  
ITALIAN AMERICANS IN LOS ANGELES  
THE FIRST COMPONENT OF ALIEN REGULATION: DETENTION

While the world and the nation had for some time anticipated the escalation of the war in Europe, events on December 7, 1941, stunned Americans. The ensuing state of war called for the rapid implementation of federal policies regulating resident aliens, who were citizens of belligerent countries.

Federal plans for enemy alien detention had been drafted many months before the start of war. By the late 1930s, four cabinet offices were actively engaged in intelligence gathering, and after June 26, 1939, the FBI joined the efforts of the Office of Naval Intelligence and the G-2 Branch of the Army in compiling lists of resident aliens considered dangerous. These names were subsequently collated by the Special Defense Unit (SDU) in the Justice Department into A, B and C lists of those to be arrested immediately in the event of war and those to be placed under surveillance.

Individuals whose names were on the "A" list were considered dangerous because they were influential in their communities or their work could facilitate espionage activity. The second group was viewed as potentially dangerous, and the final or "C" group merited vigilant observation. The names on the lists, which included teachers, travel agents and a variety of *prominenti*, or community leaders within the Italian community, had been gleaned in part from the columns of the ethnic community press, provided by informants or drawn from membership lists of selected organizations. Particular attention was given to the members of the Italian media who were believed in some cases to have informal connections with the Italian Ministry of Popular Culture and to the staffs of the Italian language schools which were directly administered by the Ministry of Education.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, by their own admission, agents were impeded in their compilations by their unfamiliarity with the language, culture and organizational structure of the alien communities they were investigating.

On the afternoon of December 7, 1941, Edward Ennis, Director of the

<sup>23</sup>Dale Kramer, "The American Fascists," *Harpers*, 170 (September 1940): 380-393; Ralph T. Tucker, "Tools of Mussolini in America," *New Republic*, 52 (September 14, 1927): 89-91; Raymond Moley and Charles Jedel, "About the Aliens in Our Midst," *American Mercury*, 53 (October 6, 1941): 481-486; Among the organizations under scrutiny were the Sons of Italy, American Italian Sports League of the U.S., Council of Marconi, Dante Alighieri Society, Federation of Italian War Veterans and the National United Italian Association. "Schematic Chart of Italian and Italian American Organizations. Supplemental Report, Western Defense Command and Fourth Army Western Civil Control," (Declassified), n.d., Italian American Collection, the Immigrant Research Center, University of Minnesota, St. Paul.

Enemy Alien Control Unit of the Justice Department, undertook the first phase of the government's program to regulate enemy aliens, issuing the orders for summary apprehension of German, Italian and Japanese aliens determined by the Attorney General or the Secretary of War to be dangerous to the public peace and safety of the United States. The legal justification for the action was cited as Section 21, Title 50 of the U.S. Code, as well as the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, as amended in 1918, which allowed the government to hold alien enemies and seize enemy property. Arrests began even before President Roosevelt had signed the Proclamation 2525.<sup>24</sup>

On December 8, the day following the initial apprehension of enemy aliens, the *Los Angeles Times* reported "that a great manhunt was underway in Southern California."<sup>25</sup> In theory every enemy alien in the United States was subject to internment for the duration of the war with no provision for legal appeal. Instead, only about 1,000 were apprehended in the first 24 hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and 2,000 more by February 1942.<sup>26</sup> In that same 24 hours 77 Italians were taken into custody.<sup>27</sup> On December 10 FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover reported that 147 Italians were among the 2,295 arrested nationwide.<sup>28</sup> However, these figures are not consistent with

<sup>24</sup>Randolph Boehm, ed., *Papers of the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Fredricksburg, Md.: Government Printing Office, 1984), 9:10378 hereinafter cited as CWRIC. "Rules for Apprehension for Those on 'A' List," Record Group 85, Access 85-58A734, Box 1765, File 560351, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Between December 7, 1941 and June 30, 1945, six Italians had been apprehended in San Diego, 458 in San Francisco and 142 in Los Angeles.

Similar sweeps occurred simultaneously in Latin America and Canada. Early in 1942, 2,364 aliens from Axis countries, residing in Latin America were interned in INS centers, including Crystal City, Texas and Ellis Island. CWRIC, p. 308. Ten Italians in this group remained in custody as late as June 30, 1945. Grace Shimizu, "Report of the Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project," Japanese American Historical Society, San Francisco, 1995.

On June 10, 1940 between 600 and 700 Italian aliens, including four women, residing in Canada were arrested and interned as being threats to Canadian security. Luigi Pautasso, "La Donna Durante Il Periodo Fascista in Toronto, 1930-1940," in *The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America*, edited by Betty B. Caroli, Robert F. Herney and Lydio F. Tomasi (Toronto: The Multicultural Society of Ontario, 1978), p. 185.

<sup>25</sup>*Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1941, quoted in Peter Irons, *Justice at War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 19-23; Rose Scherini, "Executive Order 9066 and Italian Americans: the San Francisco Story," *California History*, LXXI (Winter 1991/92): 367-377, 422-424. See also Gloria Ricci Lothrop, "The Untold Story: The Effect of the Second World War on California Italians," *Journal of the West*, 35 (January 1996): 7-14.

<sup>26</sup>James Rose, Jr., "Keeping Our Heads on the Enemy Alien Problem," *The American City*, 57 (February 1942): 56-57. See also Peter Sheridan, *Internment of German and Italian Aliens as Compared with the Internment of Japanese Aliens in the United States during World War II: A Brief History and Analysis*, Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, November 24, 1980, and Rose Scherini, Larry DiStasi and Adele Negro, *Una Storia Segréta: When Italian Americans Were "Enemy Aliens"* (Oakland, Calif.: Western Chapter of the American Italian Historical Association, 1995).

<sup>27</sup>Memorandum for Lemuel B. Schofield, Immigration and Naturalization Service," December 8, 1941. CWRIC 9:10371.

<sup>28</sup>"Memo to Mr. Ennis," December 10, 1941, CWRIC, 9:10373.

those issued on December 15, 1941 by William F. Kelly, Chief Supervisor of the Border Patrol, who reported 41 Italians arrested with warrant and an additional 85 arrested without warrant, totaling 126. A total of 48 aliens from the "A" and "B" lists were arrested in Los Angeles in the initial sweep, as the government implemented the first phase of its alien regulation program.<sup>29</sup>

Among the southern Californians taken into custodial detention were radio broadcasters Filippo Fordelone and Giovanni Cardellini, and Secretary of the Ex Combattenti, Spartaco Bonomi, who at one time had also served as president of the Italian Catholic Federation. Also arrested were the editor and assistant editor of *La Parola*, Dr. Giovanni Falasca and Capitano Zaccaria Lubrano. At least three of the detainees had no immediate families in the United States. Hence their apprehension went undetected and their disappearance remained unexplained as they failed to answer phone calls or appear at scheduled meetings. Friends reported that with the passage of time, the tires on their cars, left at curbside, gradually flattened from loss of air.

Families who had witnessed the arrests were confounded by the unfolding events as to the fate of their spouses, and particularly their own financial solvency, since detainees' assets had been frozen. Mrs. Fordelone, faced with caring for three young daughters without funds, repeated over and over again in her native dialect, as she methodically prepared tomato conserve, "*Mi mari, mi mari, dov e' mi mari.*" ("My husband, my husband, where is my husband?")<sup>30</sup> San Francisco attorney, John Molinari, described the parallel course of events in San Francisco as wives and mothers sought his assistance in securing the release of their loved ones.

In a letter to a friend Filippo Molinari recalled his arrest:

I was the first one arrested in San Jose the night of the attack on Pearl Harbor. At 11 P.M. three policemen came to the front door and two to the back. They told me, by the order of President Roosevelt, I must go with them. They didn't even give me time to go to my room and put on my shoes. I was wearing slippers. They took me to prison . . . and finally Missoula, Montana, on the train,

<sup>29</sup>William F. Kelly, "Memo for the File" December 15, 1941, CWRIC 9:10375-10376. By February 18, 1942 it is estimated that 267 Italian aliens had been apprehended in the U.S.

<sup>30</sup>Personal experiences of the author, Los Angeles, California, December 1941. Government assistance was available to the families of detainees through a grant jointly administered by the Social Security Administration and the California Department of Public Welfare, and later by a separate board called Services and Assistance to Enemy Aliens and Other in Need Because of Restrictive Action of the Federal Government. It was reported to the Tolan Committee that by February 21, 1942, while 5,500 individuals had visited Social Security offices in southern California to make inquiries, only 150 dependents of detainees had sought assistance. U. S. Congress, *Report of the Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration*. 77th Congress, 2nd Session, CWRIC 10:11420; Stephen Fox, *Unknown Internment: An Oral History of the Relocation of Italian Americans during World War II* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), p.154.

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over the snow, still with slippers on my feet, the temperature at 17 below, and no coat or heavy clothes!<sup>31</sup>

The Los Angeles detainees were first taken to federal facilities on Terminal Island. While there, they were not formally charged; the only explanation given for their seizure was a prepared statement authorizing the apprehension of potentially dangerous alien enemies. Ultimately, each appeared before a three-person hearing board, without being advised of charges and without benefit of counsel.

While the government's position was legal, the accusations which caused individuals to be included on the "ABC Lists" often consisted of no more than gossip or innuendo, allegations based on hearsay, and not uncommonly, vengeful accusations. In the estimation of most Italo-Americans those apprehended had not been disloyal to the United States. They viewed their relationship to the United States as a marriage of choice. This, however, did not in their minds negate their loyalty to Italy, their mother country, regardless of its current leadership. As a result, they expressed their pride in Italian accomplishments at public meetings and in print, while at the same time pledging their fealty to the United States. By January 30, 1942, 135 Italian aliens were held in southern California camps, including one in Tujunga, as well as in the Santa Ana Jail and Camarillo State Hospital. Ultimately, female detainees were housed separately, some of them in six centers spread across the nation operated by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.<sup>32</sup>

While at Terminal Island, valuables, money and identification were taken from the detainees and they were officially registered. The accused were then assigned to barrack-like facilities under military guard. A few were released after preliminary hearings. On December 16 the 14 remaining detainees from Los Angeles were transported to railway cars. The trip to their final destination, Fort Missoula, Montana, was spent in day cars with barred and darkened windows, under the watchful gaze of armed military personnel. On December 19, at 3:00 p.m., FBI agent Ed Kline reported by phone to William F. Kelly in Washington, that he had arrived at Missoula at 2:45 p.m., where he delivered 364 Japanese and 25 Italians, and was continuing on to Fort Lin-

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<sup>31</sup>Rose Scherini, "The Other Internment: When Italian Americans Were Enemy Aliens," *Ambassador* (Fall 1993): 12.

<sup>32</sup>Interview with Maria Ricci; Scherini, "Executive Order 9066," p. 366. Despite efforts to observe the provisions of the Geneva Convention, in a January 12, 1942 letter Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson complained to Attorney General Biddle that 106 enemy aliens, including five Italians, were confined to city and county jails. CWRIC 1:56-57. See also "The Wartime Reminiscences of Umberto Benedetti on the Life of Italian Internees at Fort Missoula, Montana, 1941-43," American Italian Historical Association Depository, San Francisco Public Library, and Umberto Benedetti, *Italian Boys at Fort Missoula, Montana 1941-1943* (Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., Inc, 1991).

coln with 110 Germans. He added that the rail trip transporting the class "A" and "B" detainees had been uneventful. Although Fort Missoula was the initial destination, some of the internees, including 79 Italians from Peru, were rotated from one camp to another. As a result, Falasca and Lubrano, formerly editor and assistant editor of *La Parola* in Los Angeles, were first dispatched to Fort Lincoln, North Dakota, but were returned to Missoula on May 22, 1943.<sup>33</sup>

According to Lemuel Schofield, administrative assistant to U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle, Fort Missoula had been in readiness to receive internees since April 1941. Kitchen appliances and bedding, including 3,800 sheets, had been requisitioned from other military bases. Medical supplies, some requisitioned from the Civilian Conservation Corps, included 250 sets of dentures but, initially, no X-ray equipment. An operating budget of \$750,000 had been allocated, which, based upon the demographics of the anticipated detainees, included funds for burial expenses.<sup>34</sup>

The facility had been surrounded by 2,400 feet of chain link fence topped by barbed wire, anchored by guard towers which were manned around the clock. Dominating the scene was a 50-foot iron searchlight tower. The 55 buildings within the enclosure included former Civilian Conservation Corps barracks each accommodating 40 men, which had been shipped from as far away as Alabama and the Pacific coast. In accordance with the guidelines established under the Geneva Convention governing the treatment of political internees during time of war, the government had provided a hospital, a school, a library, a theatre and a two-winged mess hall designed to provide meals for both the resident Japanese and Italians. Particularly impressive was the recreation hall built of lodgepole pine by the CCC, which seated over 800.<sup>35</sup>

The first residents at the commodious facility were 125 Italians associated with the World's Fair, detained in May 1941, along with the seamen from the 28 impounded ships and the entertainers from the Italian cruise ship *Il Conte Biancamano*. By the time Agent Ed Kline's charges arrived from Los Angeles, there were nearly 1,000 inmates at the camp.

Careful to observe the protocols of the Geneva Convention and inspections by the International Red Cross, and eager to assure reciprocal treatment for captured American nationals, officials had been attentive to making the

<sup>33</sup>James Brooke, "After Silence, Italians Recall Internment," *New York Times*, August 11, 1997, A8.

<sup>34</sup>Fort Missoula Internment Camp Record, Record Group 85, Box 1, Number 425-282-299 National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Van Valkenburg, *An Alien Place*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*; Benedetti, *Italian Boys*, p. 12.



Meals, which were more than adequate Army issue, were prepared and served in a two-winged mess hall designed to cater to the distinct tastes of the Japanese and Italian internees. *Courtesy Montana Historical Society, Helena.*

camp comfortable and well-supplied with library books and athletic equipment. There was even space for individual flower gardens which the southern California prisoners avidly cultivated. The food at Bella Vista, as the Italians named the facility, was more than adequate Army issue, enhanced by familiar Italian breads. For their duty assignments the Italians had been given the bakery, while the Japanese had been dispatched to the laundry. On occasion, Fordelone, who had been assigned to kitchen duty, enhanced the daily diet with extra steaks he brought to the barracks to share with Falasca and Lubrano.<sup>36</sup>

There was a clearly established camp routine. Following a 6:00 A.M. reveille and roll call, detainees were assigned to camp maintenance projects. If the men provided any specialized services as carpenters or mechanics they were paid 80 cents an hour.

According to Alfredo Cipoletto, the camp program also offered opportunities for musical entertainment, enhanced by the orchestra and entertainers from the impounded cruise ship. Missoula residents were permitted to attend for a small admission fee. The high quality of the performances, however,

<sup>36</sup>Interview with Giovanni Falasca, Los Angeles, February 19, 1975; CWRIC 2: 1286-88; Fox, *Unknown Internment*, pp. 164-165; John Christgau, "Enemies" *World War II Alien Internment* (Ames: Iowa State University Press 1985), p. 36; Benedetti, "Wartime Reminiscences."

elicited protests from local musicians of Missoula who claimed the Italian prisoners represented unfair competition.<sup>37</sup> In due course the Italians also had cause to protest. On July 5, 1943, the musicians filed a formal complaint because they felt they had been misled into entertaining at an American patriotic holiday the day before.

Despite Geneva Convention stipulations, which precluded labor by prisoners of war, accommodations were made to allow those detainees who wished to work for the Western Montana Beet Growers Association, which had requested approximately 1,850 workers. At first heavy security surrounded the transport of workers to the beet fields. But the degree of vigilance was gradually reduced and policies were sufficiently relaxed to allow internees to serve on forest service crews, on the staff of St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula, even work on the Great Western Railroad and at the Garden City Floral Company in downtown Missoula.<sup>38</sup> By July 1, 1943, 800 of the 1,300 detainees, having received clearance from the FBI, were granted work paroles. Supervision was relaxed to the extent that Italian detainees were permitted to address service clubs in Couer d'Alene, Sandpoint, Newport and Priest River.

Daily life at Fort Missoula as captured in the diaries kept by Italian

<sup>37</sup>Fox, *Unknown Internment*, p. 165.

<sup>38</sup>Captain Paolo S. Saglietto, "Diary," Book 3 (Translation 3348) Record Group 85, Number 58-A-734, File 56/25/162. National Archives, Washington, D.C. and Van Valkenburg, *An Alien Place*, p. 81.



The many internees who had been granted work paroles were employed in downtown Missoula, on railroad lines, on farms, in hospitals and with forest service crews. Italian internees pictured above take a lunch break from harvesting sugar beets.

*Courtesy Montana Historical Society.*



detainee spokesman First Captain Allesandro De Luca and his successor Captain Paolo Stephano Saglietto, reveal that the routine included occasional highlights. The dreary routine was relieved by holiday celebrations, beginning with the first Christmas in camp in 1941, when a lottery was conducted in order to distribute 1,000 gifts presented by the YMCA. Easter of 1943 was marked by religious observance and the pouring of glasses of wine from a supply sent the previous Christmas by the Italian Cruise Lines.<sup>39</sup>

Such festivities occurred against a background of stern surveillance as 39 patrol inspectors observed from the towers and officers within the camp censored mail, monitored for possible escapes and maintained discipline, alert to such infractions as fermenting small amounts of raisins purloined from the larder to make wine. Given the surrounding wilderness and the snow-covered mountain ranges, the ratio of 53 enforcement officers to a maximum capacity 1,650 detainees was considered adequate. Sometimes, however, disputes called for armed response. On one occasion the melee between camp factions resulted in the hospitalization of five.<sup>40</sup>

Care in the camp hospital was one of the issues of contention, which resulted in appeals to the Spanish and Swiss embassies who were responsible for enforcing the protocols of the Geneva Convention. Walter de Boury, First Consul of the Swiss Legation in Washington, D.C., representing the International Red Cross and the Geneva Convention, arrived at the camp on August 4, 1943. In the ensuing interviews some Italian seamen employed outside the camp expressed displeasure at paying a worker's tax, which, in their estimation, aided their nation's wartime adversary.<sup>41</sup>

The degree of conflict, frustration and despair among the men was most apparent in the medical records, which reveal commitment to the state mental hospital of three inmates suffering deep depression. The records also revealed that cases of neurosis and neurogenic illnesses were increasingly alarmingly. Such a condition plagued Aurelio Mariani, one of several suicides, who before plunging from the third story of the hospital, wrote: "I kill myself because I am tired, tired of being closed in a cage . . ."<sup>42</sup>

In the meantime, the Italian community in Los Angeles observed in stunned silence. Not until January 23, 1942, after more than a month, did

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Fort Missoula Internment Camp Record, Box 1.

<sup>41</sup>Saglietto Diary, Book Two.

<sup>42</sup>Saglietto Diary, Book Three; Van Valkenburg, *An Alien Place*, p. 32. In the 1980s the graves of three Italian detainees who died at Fort Missoula were marked by a stone memorial erected by several of the detained seaman who had settled in the United States. The deceased were Giuseppe Marrasso, age 47, Giuseppe Marchese, age 24 and Aurelio Mariani, age 32. Benedetti, *Italian Boys*, pp. 80-83.

the Italo-American press report the detention of Italian prisoners. The shocking news was announced in conjunction with the publication of a speech made by Attorney General Francis Biddle, who reported that 3,000 arrests had occurred to date, and added that information about the detainees could be obtained at the nearest offices of the FBI or the Immigration and Naturalization Service. He explained that those arrested could send and receive letters, as well as visits from their families and from friends directly involved in their business affairs. In addition, detainees could also avail themselves of phone service. Biddle attempted to clarify the government's position by observing: "The enemy aliens will be held if and when their segregation is deemed necessary for the peace and security of the nation. Only when there is great reason to fear for the internal security of the nation, the enemy alien will remain interned for the duration of the war."<sup>43</sup>

To implement this policy, the Attorney General announced the formation of Enemy Alien Hearing Boards to be established in each Federal Judicial District, composed of three civilians in that locality. For those who had been detained, the boards could recommend unconditional release, release with parole or detention for the duration of the war. Biddle outlined the following procedures:

Each enemy alien may be accompanied to the hearing with a family member or a friend, but not an attorney, because hearing boards are not courts of justice and the United States has no constitutional obligation to provide recourse to the law in the cases of arrest of enemy aliens in time of war; and the procedures of boards are merely extensions of democratic principles. . . . People brought before the board will be permitted the opportunity to present reasons for their release, including affidavits and testimonials . . .<sup>44</sup>

In Missoula hearing boards consisted of local townsfolk, characterized by some of the detainees as inexperienced and prejudiced. Nevertheless, the prisoners appeared for interviews armed with affidavits and testimonials. In August 1942, Attorney General Biddle also allowed rehearings by Special Hearing Boards of those alien enemies whose cases deserved review, or about whom additional information was available.<sup>45</sup>

As a result of the work of the hearing boards, a number of enemy aliens

<sup>43</sup>Announcements from Francis Biddle, "L'Italo Americano, January 23, 1942, p. 2. See also Francis Biddle, "Axis Aliens in America: Statement of Policy Issued December 19, 1941," *Survey Graphic*, 31 (October 1942): 13-14. Though figures vary, it was estimated that 260 Italians were included among the 3,000 aliens interned nationwide. Scherini, "Executive Order," p. 368.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Christgau, *Enemies*, p. 117; Scherini, "Executive Order 9066," p. 369. For additional discussion of the nation's internment policy see Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of the Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986).



Fort Missoula, an Army camp and former Civilian Conservation Corp facility, as it appeared in the early 1940s when 29 barracks buildings had been added to accommodate the anticipated 3,000 internees.

*Courtesy Mansfield Library Photographic Collection, University of Montana, Missoula.*

were released. On June 5, 1942, the Los Angeles paper, *L'Italo Americano*, reported that of the 8,500 enemy aliens arrested, 2,548 cases had been heard to date. Among the Italians, 73 had been freed while 91 were on parole and 113 remained detained for they had "failed to prove beyond any doubt their loyalty to the United States."<sup>46</sup> By October 12, 1942, when Italian aliens were withdrawn from the enemies list, 228 remained in camps.<sup>47</sup>

By July 16, 1943, the procedures used to identify the detainees and those to be excluded from militarily sensitive areas were terminated. In a stinging letter to J. Edgar Hoover and the Special Defense Unit at the Justice Department, Attorney General Biddle directed that the keeping of detention lists on aliens was no longer necessary. He observed:

It is now clear to me the evidence used for the purpose of making these classifications was inadequate; the standards applied to the evidence for the purpose of making the classification were defective; and finally, the notion that it is possible to make a valid determination of how dangerous a person is . . . without reference to time, environment, and other relevant circumstances is impractical, unwise, and dangerous."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup>"Enemy Aliens Are Loyal to the United States," *L'Italo Americano*, June 5, 1942, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup>*San Francisco Chronicle*, October 13, 1942.

<sup>48</sup>Christgau, *Enemies*, pp. 82-83.

THE SECOND COMPONENT OF THE ENEMY ALIEN REGULATION PROGRAM:  
RESTRICTED MOVEMENT, IDENTIFICATION CERTIFICATES,  
HOUSEHOLD SEARCHES, CURFEWS

While some alien enemies were forced to endure custodial detention, those who remained at home were also affected by the national emergency as a result of the second and third components of the government's program to regulate resident enemy aliens. Italian non-citizens who remained in southern California were subjected to restrictions on their movement, additional certification procedures, household searches for illegal contraband and curfew restrictions.

The regulations were outlined by the U.S. Attorney General in early January 1942. Enemy aliens were not to travel outside their immediate communities without first securing official permission. Additional authorization was required if such travel was to be undertaken by aircraft. Aliens were forbidden to enter strategic areas, including power stations, airports, docks or elevated areas where they might send or receive signals. Furthermore, aliens were not to have in their possession, or on premises they owned or occupied, any weapons, explosives, photographic equipment, binoculars, shortwave communication or signalling apparatus, including flashlights. Enemy aliens were not to possess any rendering or reproduction of military installations, or any written matter containing writing in invisible ink.<sup>49</sup>

The new rules created immediate confusion in southern California. It was observed that residents of Los Angeles were allowed a wider range of movement than their friends and relatives in smaller towns like San Gabriel or Santa Monica. At the same time, enemy alien residents of San Francisco were allowed to travel within a 50-mile radius. It was also observed that the office of the U.S. Attorney which granted travel permits was located in the Federal Building on Spring Street in Los Angeles, which was beyond the area in which suburbanites were permitted to travel.<sup>50</sup>

On January 14, 1942, Biddle introduced another element into the program of enemy alien regulation. He announced a Presidential Order calling for the issuance of identification certificates, bearing a likeness, fingerprint and signature, which would be required of all enemy aliens, 14 years of age or older, who had not received their final papers. Biddle explained that the requirement reinforced national security and protected loyal foreigners.

<sup>49</sup>"New Rules for Enemy Aliens," *L'italo Americano*, January 2, 1942, p. 1. See also "Aliens in Prohibited Areas," WPA Writers Project, Group 306, Boxes 5 and 6, Department of Special Collections, Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

The registration issue was also addressed by Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, Commander of the Western Defense Command for the Fourth Army:

I want to clarify that in no sense should the issuance of identification cards be construed as a second registration of the foreign-born population. We are fully satisfied with the results of the national registration of 1940. We consider this essential for the protection of enemy aliens and to obtain supplementary information from them and to provide them with identification cards.<sup>51</sup>

The January 23, 1942, issue of the local Italian newspaper carrying news of the issuance of the certificates, also conveyed the intensifying war atmosphere. In addition to the headline bannering the alien registration to be held from February 2 to 7, there was another ominous one announcing, "300,000 Japanese Against the Limited Forces of General MacArthur," portending the fall of Corregidor, an event which would heighten further the fears of a Japanese attack on the Pacific coast. Indeed, the wartime mood permeated the paper.<sup>52</sup> The writer of the column, "La Cronica di San Pedro," likened the war to the Battle of Lepanto and urged prayer; while William G Bonelli, member of the State Equalization Board, reported that at a meeting on January 20 the Board had refused license applications of five Japanese and one Italian, suggesting that enemy aliens should not attempt to apply for liquor licenses in California for the duration of the war.

The following week another local Italian newspaper carried detailed instructions for registration in the form of a series of questions and answers prepared by immigration attorney, F. M. Andreani. In addition to routine information, he pointed out that applicants would be required to answer fourteen questions soliciting such information as the names and addresses of all relatives residing outside the United States, as well as all organizational affiliations during the past five years. If respondents had been residents of this country for less than five years, they would be required to list former places of residence, and all former political party affiliations. They were also required to present receipts as evidence of their August 1940 alien registration.

Despite wartime difficulties, including the effects of enemy alien regulation, routine events continued to absorb the attention of the local Italian com-

<sup>51</sup>"From February 2 through 7 Italian, German, Japanese Non-citizens Will Have to Secure Identification Documents," *L'Italo Americano*, January 23, 1942, p. 1. Plans for the registration of aliens had been drawn up by the FBI in December 1940. Conference in Lt. General DeWitt's office, January 4, 1942. CWRIC 2:1251. See also Michael Van De Water, "U.S.A. Being Fingerprinted: Identification, Registration Required of All Aliens," *Science Newsletter*, 38 (August 10, 1940): 86-87.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

munity. Accompanying reports of the expected arrival of the San Carlo Opera Company, there were relieved assurances that the Garibaldina Society, having acquired blackout curtains, would proceed with plans for its annual Valentine's Day dance. Advertisements for citizenship schools increased to three and one entrepreneur, demonstrating that it is an ill wind indeed that doesn't blow some good, offered three passport photos, suitable for the soon-to-be-required registration cards, for 75 cents.<sup>53</sup>

In the first two days of filing 6,800 grim-faced enemy aliens stood three and four across in a block-long line which circled the county offices at East 22nd and South San Pedro streets, the registration site for all Los Angeles County residents with the exception of those living at great distances. Because of the numbers and the burden on the 160 clerks, the filing for the photo identity cards was extended two days, through Monday, February 9.<sup>54</sup>

At the same time it was dispensing information about the required registration, the Justice Department continued to urge enemy aliens to turn in all contraband items. Although the January 30 deadline had passed, they were still being directed to turn in those items listed in Section 5 of the Presidential Proclamation of December 7, 1941. As encouragements, the aliens were assured U.S. marshals would provide an inventory of all that had been consigned to them and would keep the enumerated articles on deposit for the duration. In the interim, it was promised that radios would be returned once their shortwave capabilities had been removed. Furthermore, it was announced that application could be made to the Attorney General for the return of such items as antique muskets and ceremonial swords. Finally, photographers and other professionals needing their equipment for business purposes, could contact the FBI which would conduct an examination of each applicant's professional records to determine if equipment could be released.<sup>55</sup>

Strongly suspecting the presence of potential saboteurs among the enemy aliens, the unrelenting Lt. General DeWitt prevailed upon the Justice Department to issue special search warrants allowing access to residences and other premises owned and/or occupied by enemy aliens. In response, on January 1, 1942, the FBI telegraphed four forms to be used as Executive Search warrants. DeWitt's staff was also directed to examine bank records for evidence of any suspicious financial contributions.

The implementation of the special warrant program, soon authorized in

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<sup>53</sup>*L'Italo Americano*, January 30, 1942, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup>"Aliens Flock to Register Unit," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1942, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup>"Restitution of Various Objects Consigned to the Police by Enemy Aliens," *L'Italo Americano*, February 27, 1942, p. 2.

most of the states and territories, was outlined in the FBI's Bureau Bulletin No. 2, First Series, 1942. In a supplementary memo issued on February 25, J. Edgar Hoover advised divisions that they were being held responsible for local infractions of Section 5 of the Presidential Proclamation forbidding enemy alien possession of contraband items. He urged them to use all resources, including game commissions and related agencies, in gathering data. He also urged multiple spot searches on succeeding days, particularly in the vicinity of military and naval installations and war industries, as well as other areas where recently collected registration data revealed a concentration of enemy aliens. Hoover added that simultaneous spot searches were to be developed with the cooperation of appropriate U.S. attorneys and were to be followed with reports to the FBI offices in Washington of the numbers of enemy aliens apprehended and the enumerated articles, including binoculars and flashlights, which had been confiscated.<sup>56</sup>

In the wake of the investigations *L'Italo Americano* reported: "In recent days numerous homes of enemy aliens in the harbor area have been searched by FBI agents and it was announced that a considerable amount of contraband material was found." While expressing the hope that no Italians were guilty, the editors noted that they had repeatedly advised Italians about the dangers of keeping contraband items, explaining that, "It doesn't matter if this enemy alien is the mother or father of one of the citizens in the family. In that home, as long as an enemy alien resides there, no one can possess enumerated articles."<sup>57</sup>

The bureau chief of the FBI office in Los Angeles advised after the San Pedro raid, that while no one was arrested, "such action will be taken against those who will be found in possession of interdicted items." He added, "We will consider it our duty to sequester and punish the transgressors."<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Giuseppe Guarini of San Francisco was arrested on April 9, 1942 when it was discovered that he possessed a rifle.

In a memo from Edward Ennis to Lemuel Schofield dated May 27, 1942, Ennis warned: ". . . all persons, aliens or citizens, believed to be dangerous by the War Department are to be detained on whatever grounds possible. Possibly hundreds of persons will be apprehended for violations of regulations

<sup>56</sup>J. Edgar Hoover, "Multiple Spot Searches of Premises Inhabited or Controlled by Alien Enemies—Internal Security Alien Control," Washington, D. C., February 25, 1942. CWRIC; J. Edgar Hoover, "Alien Enemy Control," *Iowa Law Review*, 29 (1944): 398–399.

<sup>57</sup>"Homes of Enemy Aliens Searched by FBI," *L'Italo Americano*, May 1, 1942, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.* See also Jerome S. Bruner and Jeanette Sayre, "Shortwave Listening in an Italian Community," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 5 (Winter 1941): 640–656.

beginning tonight, and not immediately released.”<sup>59</sup> However, two female curfew violators apprehended in Los Angeles on June 4, 1942 were ordered released the next day. Between June 4 and 10 eight more were arrested. According to DeWitt those arrested for curfew or contraband violations should not be released until consultation with appropriate military authorities. They could, however, be retained in their localities and need not be sent to camps at Missoula, Bismark or Santa Fe.<sup>60</sup>

In another series of sweeps which included the home of Luigi Franceschini, former president of the disbanded Ex Combattenti, agents searched from attic to basement several times. The investigation yielded only a table model radio having a shortwave band, which belonged to his teenage daughter, Velma. The cause of the search was not Franceschini, he and his wife were citizens, but rather his aged non-citizen in-laws who lived with them. Later, when the family recalled a carton of long-forgotten Dopo Scuola textbooks in the basement, they immediately consigned them to a backyard bonfire.<sup>61</sup>

In one of the FBI's frequent visits to the home of Italian alien writer and community activist, Maria Ricci, a shortwave capacity was detected in the deluxe floor model Philco radio, of which no one in the family had been aware. Even greater concerns were raised by the revolvers in the possession of Mrs. Ricci's husband, Leo, a deputy sheriff and U.S. citizen for over 25 years. Ricci, a World War I veteran and founding member of the Dante Post of the American Legion, had concluded that his personal record exempted him from the enemy alien household status. Some time would pass, however, before his revolvers were returned. In the meantime, Maria Ricci, a prolific writer of political satire as well as poetry, was directed to compile all her work for official translation by someone to be selected by the FBI. In addition, for the next ten months she and her family were visited at least once a month by FBI agents. To everyone's relief no subversive activity was ever detected.<sup>62</sup>

The actions of the FBI were driven largely by Lt. General DeWitt's single-minded concern about enemy aliens as potential saboteurs and by a groundswell of public reaction against enemy aliens along the West coast.

<sup>59</sup>Memo to Lemuel Schofield from Edward Ennis, May 27, 1942. Record Group 85, Number 58-A-734, File 56 1251B, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>60</sup>Memo to Lemuel Schofield from Edward Ennis, June 16, 1942. Record Group 85, Number 58-A-734, File 561 25173, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>61</sup>Interview with Velma (Franceschini) Pagliossotti, West Covina, California, July 5, 1991; see also George E. Pozzetta, "My Children Are My Jewels: Italian American Generations during World War II," *Home-front War: World War II and American Society*, edited by Kenneth P. O'Brien and Lynn Parsons (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), pp. 84-103.

<sup>62</sup>Interview with Maria Ricci, July 7, 1991.



United States defeats in the Pacific in the early months of the war raised the issue of vulnerability along the coast. Indeed, on December 20, 1941, near Crescent City the tanker S.S. *Emedio* became the first United States vessel sunk within coastal waters in World War II. On December 23 a Japanese submarine torpedoed the Union Oil Company tanker *Montebello* near Estero Bay. The next day the U. S. lumber carrier, the S.S. *Absaroka*, was torpedoed off the coast near Los Angeles, resulting in the death of one crewman.<sup>63</sup> The shelling of the wharf at Goleta by an enemy seaborne craft on February 23, 1942 while President Roosevelt was delivering a Fireside chat on nationwide radio, and the Los Angeles blackout and artillery response, possibly activated by unidentified planes in the early hours of February 25, heightened these concerns.<sup>64</sup>

Columnist Walter Lippmann was among those who warned of an imminent attack aided and abetted by a Fifth Column, adding, "The enemy alien problem on the Pacific coast, or more accurately the Fifth Column problem is very serious and it is very special . . . The Pacific coast is in imminent danger of a combined attack from within and from without." To reduce this danger Lippmann urged that the nation forget about, ". . . enemy aliens, dual citizenship, naturalized citizens, native citizens of alien parentage . . . and consider instead [the threat to] an airplane plant in Los Angeles." He concluded with a recommendation that the federal government should undertake a mass evacuation and internment "of all those who are technically enemy aliens."<sup>65</sup>

Lippmann's was but one voice in a rising chorus. On February 11, 1942, the Los Angeles County Defense Council approved a resolution calling for the evacuation to working internment areas of all able-bodied enemy alien males.<sup>66</sup> On February 11 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors led the way in approving a resolution, the draft of which had been circulated at a statewide meeting of county supervisors, that urged the evacuation of all enemy aliens. More than a week earlier, while urging the passage of the resolution, Supervisor William A. Smith observed that this was the only nation where alien enemies enjoyed such freedom, a condition which should be remedied by internment. Also on February 11 the Colton Chamber of Commerce called for the evacuation of enemy aliens and all others who are sympathetic

<sup>63</sup>Suzanne Dewberry, "Perils at Sea: The Sinking of the S.S. *Montebello*," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives*, 23 (Fall 1991): 260–265. See also *Union Oil Company v. War Damage Corporation*, Civil Case 24101, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, Southern Division, R.G. 21, National Archives, Pacific Sierra Region, Laguna Niguel; Arthur C. Verge, "The Impact of the Second World War on Los Angeles," *Pacific Historical Review*, LXIII (August 1994): 295.

<sup>64</sup>Dillon S. Myer, *Uprooted Americans* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971), p. 24.

<sup>65</sup>Walter Lippmann, "The Fifth Column on the Coast," *Washington Post*, February 12, 1942. CWRIC, RG 107, Box 6, ASW 014,311.

<sup>66</sup>CWRIC 1:108.

to the enemy nations. Draconian as it may now seem, the resolution was less sweeping than that adopted by the Orange County Grand Jury on February 2 which called for the removal from the County of Orange of all enemy aliens, their children and all those of enemy alien extraction. The following day the Orange County Board of Supervisors reiterated the request.

California Attorney General Earl Warren, at a conference of sheriffs and district attorneys, warned that the nation was at war with Axis powers whose activities included organized infiltration and sabotage. He followed with a letter on February 18 polling the law enforcement officials with regard to the enemy alien situation. Twenty-eight of the 118 responding felt that all enemy aliens should be treated the same. However, J. C. Gregory, Chief of Police in Fullerton, felt that not only had the Japanese been more cooperative than either the Germans or Italians, but also they were more readily identified, and, therefore, their internment was not as urgent. On the other hand, the Huntington Park Chief of Police urged that all enemy aliens be moved inland, and added that descendents of enemy aliens should be regularly investigated.<sup>67</sup>

Organizations also took positions on the issue of alien internment. On January 29 the 22nd District of the Native Sons of the Golden West asked for the summary arrest and internment of all aliens on the Pacific coast. On February 19 the American Legion adopted a statewide resolution stating that Axis agents and aliens along with sympathizers should be removed from California. As federal officials became increasingly apprehensive about possible violent confrontations between factions in southern California, assertions escalated. Los Angeles was described as a center of enemy alien activity and the second most dangerous area in the state.

Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron, in a radio broadcast on KECA, February 5, alleged that there were among the local enemy alien population some who were bent on treason. He added that Los Angeles had become "the hotbed, the nerve center of the spy system, of planning for sabotage."<sup>68</sup> Some days later he added that it was the offspring of the German and Italian enemy aliens who posed the greater threat to the security of the nation in time of war. On December 8, 1941, while assuring Angelinos that no enemy bombing was expected, Bowron advised that if it occurred, citizens should not be on the streets or in their automobiles.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup>Fox, *Unknown Internment*, pp. 43-53; Jacobus tenBroeck, Edward Barnhart and Floyd Matson, *Prejudice, War and the Constitution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), pp. 38-81, n. 98, n. 102 and n. 103; CWRIC 9:10475, 9:10649-50; *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1942, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup>Verge, "Impact of World War II on Los Angeles," p. 295.

<sup>69</sup>"Speeches and Press Statements, 1938-41," Fletcher Bowron Papers, Box 33, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Adding to this climate of heightening ethnic tension, the Los Angeles Council of California Women's Clubs recommended that all enemy aliens be immediately placed in concentration camps. These sentiments were echoed by the Young Democratic Club of Los Angeles, which approved a resolution also calling for the West Coast evacuation of Germans, Japanese and Italians born in the United States.<sup>70</sup>

A memo from a committee of California church leaders headed by Galen M. Fisher, President of the Board of Trustees of the Pacific School of Religion, cautioned Colonel W. L. Magill, Provost Marshal and Director of Evacuation:

We believe that a mass evacuation of women, children and aged is not necessary except in Class A military zones. It is of course possible for the Army to place the 115,000 Italian, 72,000 German and 33,000 Japanese aliens in California on trains and transport them to a distant place, but the care of the many elderly people would be very difficult, if they were uprooted.<sup>71</sup>

There were a few who expressed opposition to the potential suspension of civil rights. Among them was Ruth Benedict, Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Los Angeles Branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, who wrote to President Roosevelt commending Congressman John H. Tolan of Oakland, who headed the House Select Committee Investigating National Defense. She warned, however, that private economic interests as well as growing hysteria could result in alien policies which could create economic problems, as well as long term resentment.<sup>72</sup>

Despite this warning and the detainment of the potential subversives on the A, B and C lists, the heated public debate hastened the government's formulation of the third component of its enemy alien program, a plan of evacuation, relocation and internment. Its implementation would reveal differences between Lt. General DeWitt and the Department of Justice. These disagreements would result in an uneven and sporadic enforcement of the plan. It would fall heavily on West Coast Japanese aliens and affect Italians and Germans to a much lesser degree.

Before turning to an examination of the halting implementation of the third component of alien regulation, it is important to take note of the economic effects on alien lives that can be traced to war fever in general but are often directly attributable to the regulations already discussed. Despite the fact that the Department of War and the Navy Department had approved 99 percent of the aliens' requests to work on government contracts and despite

<sup>70</sup>CWRIC 2:412-14; Fox, *Unknown Internment*, pp.48-50.

<sup>71</sup>CWRIC 10:11478.

<sup>72</sup>CWRIC 9:10674.

Attorney General Biddle's warning that job discrimination would deprive the United States of a valuable labor resource, enemy aliens were reporting a high incidence of job discrimination. On January 9 Biddle again declared that the exclusion of aliens from private employment is "a most effective method to create disunion and to break faith with a people who came seeking liberty and equity." Citing numerous cases where workers had been dismissed simply because of their foreign names, he observed that such policies were shortsighted, wasteful and unmindful that sons of these dismissed workers were serving in the cause of national defense. He characterized such action as "a complete rejection of our American institutions and principles upon which our democracy is founded." He also publicly challenged the Board of Trustees' decision to bar enemy aliens from the University of Missouri as being inconsistent with federal policy.<sup>73</sup>

In an open letter to Alien Control Coordinator, Tom Clark, published by the local press, attorney and community leader F.M. Andreani provided specific examples of employment discrimination. "They are not only being discharged wholesale as wage earners, but their relatives, native-born young men, armed with birth certificates, cannot approach an employment office window . . . for consideration because such applications bear Italian names."<sup>74</sup>

Andreani's complaints were directed to both the private and public sectors. Despite the admonitions from Attorney General Biddle, and overriding the official dissent of California Attorney General Warren, even the California State Personnel Board on February 1, 1942 issued a directive barring descendants of alien enemies from civil service positions. To assure this exclusion, state employment applications issued pursuant to a State Senate Concurrent Resolution reflected an added degree of vigilance, requesting a vast amount of information including the names of physicians or midwives in attendance at birth. If applicants were foreign born, they were asked to supply information about the reasons, condition and mode of their entry into the United States.<sup>75</sup> Even Italians who were naturalized citizens employed by such public agencies as the United States Post Office, were personally questioned by their superiors about their entry and citizenship status.<sup>76</sup>

Despite calls for moderation issued by the President and by the Justice Department, members of the California Congressional delegation lobbied for the removal of all aliens from the coastal zone. With the added support of

<sup>73</sup>Important Declaration by Attorney General Biddle," *L'Italo Americano*, January 9, 1942. p. 1.

<sup>74</sup>F.M. Andreani, "The Italian Enemy Alien Situation," *ibid.*, March 27, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup>State Personnel Board Application Form, CWRIC 9:10707. "Aliens Have a Right to Work," *Christian Century*, 58 (July 9, 1941): 876.

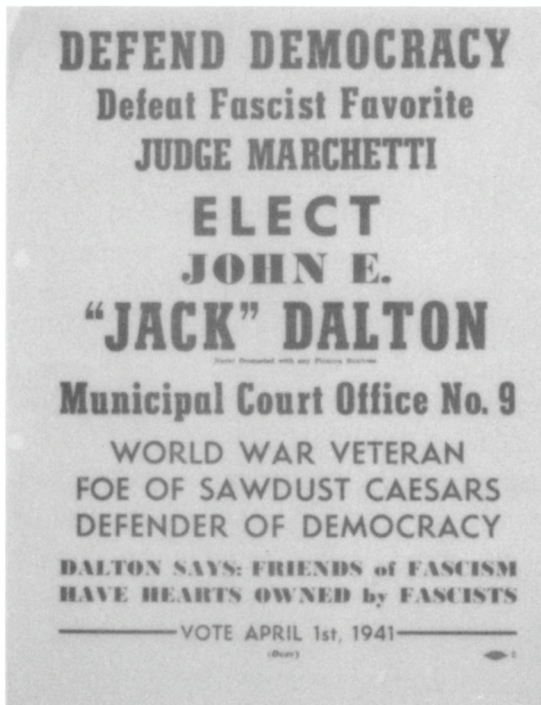
<sup>76</sup>Interview with Peter Bonino.

representatives from the other Pacific states, they called upon the President to order a mass evacuation of all enemy aliens.<sup>77</sup>

The Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California, which held sixteen of its thirty days of hearings in Los Angeles, also ignored the admonitions for moderation. In its final recommendations pre-saging a disdain for civil rights which would be a hallmark of the McCarthy era, it urged that members of un-American and subversive groups should have professional licenses revoked and be ousted from civil service positions. Furthermore, if they were aliens, it was recommended that the suspected subversives should be prohibited from holding any official positions in labor unions, and if naturalized, their citizenship should be revoked. In addition, the committee recommended that there be close supervision and censorship of the foreign press.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup>CWRIC 5:6212-6216; "Enemy Within," *Time* (July 13, 1942): 13; "Moving Aliens," *Business Week* (March 7, 1942): 26; "Safety First: Ban Aliens from West Coast Defense Areas," *Newsweek*, 19 (February 9, 1942): 27. See also Stephen Fox, "General John DeWitt and Proposed Internment of German and Italian Aliens During World War II," *Pacific Historical Review*, 57 (November 1988): 407-438.

<sup>78</sup>State of California, Summary Report of Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities in California (Sacramento, California: State Legislature, 55th Session, 1943), pp. 383-385. See also "What to Do with Foreign Press Puzzles Officials," *Advertising Age*, 22 (April 20, 1942): 25.



Even before war was declared hostility toward Mussolini's government transformed a traditionally non-partisan Los Angeles Municipal Court election into a heated name-calling attack. Courtesy Urban Archives Center, California State University, Northridge.

In San Francisco hearings there were also attacks against enemy aliens from the Italian community, generated by such anti-Fascists as A.M. Cogliandro, the mysterious Mr. X-2 who in one executive session categorically condemned the Dopo Scuola program. Another witness was Carmelo Zito, editor of *Il Corriere del Popolo*, who in testimony before the Joint Fact-Finding Committee, lashed out at longtime adversaries. Under oath Zito attacked as Fascist sympathizers San Francisco Mayor Angelo Rossi, the Italian Chamber of Commerce and the Bank of America. In testimony he accused Los Angeles residents Giovanni Cardellini and Luigi Colombo of Fascist affiliations, despite the fact that FBI files listed Giovanni Valperga as the only member of the Fascist Party in Los Angeles. He also claimed Falasca's Los Angeles paper *La Parola* was definitely pro-Fascist although in point of fact, Falasca had fled Italy in protest against Mussolini.<sup>79</sup> As a result of this testimony, exclusion orders were issued to twenty men and women, all naturalized American citizens, requiring them to leave Military District One within ten days.<sup>80</sup>

Members of the anti-Fascist Mazzini Society also became involved in the debate. Amerigo Bozzani, a successful Los Angeles businessman and a leader in southern California Democratic politics tried to persuade Maria Ricci to participate in international broadcasts urging the Italian people to support the resistance movement. The young writer, who in the late 1930s had been approached for support by Fascist operatives in the offices of Vice-Consul Ernesto Arrighi, noted the irony of these two conflicting appeals. Since she was currently under regular surveillance by the FBI, she chose to decline the invitation and continue to maintain a low profile.<sup>81</sup>

In the midst of these heated debates, the Italian-American population faced a series of vexing problems. Mail service to loved ones in Italy had been interrupted by the war. On January 16 Federal Censor Byron Price prohibited any postal communication, with the exception of that transmitted by the Red Cross, with residents of any areas occupied by the enemy. The Red Cross had been authorized to make available RC forms on which correspondents could write no more than 25 words in English, with no mention of defense employment, with no codes or abbreviations used. Nothing was to be conveyed regarding politics, weather conditions, ship departures, military matters or geographic descriptions. Despite the philanthropic assistance of the Red Cross, Italian nationals still had to contend with the impossible difficulties in transmitting funds to families in Italy for whom they were often the sole source of support.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup>Summary Report of Joint Fact Finding Committee, pp. 286, p. 299; CWRIC 24:25998.

<sup>80</sup>Scherini, "Other Internment," p. 12.

<sup>81</sup>Interview with Maria Ricci, July 7, 1991. See also Diggins, "Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition," pp. 579-598.

An outgrowth of these legal complications confronting enemy aliens was a victory in court by California Attorney General Earl Warren regarding aliens whose estates had been bequeathed to persons in Italy. Warren argued, successfully, that since no reciprocal agreements existed with that nation after July 1, 1941, when there were no heirs within the United States, estates should pass to the particular state within the U.S. where the deceased had resided.<sup>83</sup>

#### THE THIRD COMPONENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ENEMY ALIEN PROGRAM: EVACUATION AND INTERNMENT

While seemingly arcane legal issues were being decided by the courts, enemy aliens were informed of the third component of the government's enemy alien regulation policy: their restriction from designated geographic zones and their relocation and possible internment. On the evening of January 29 Attorney General Biddle ordered all German, Italian and Japanese enemy aliens to vacate by February 24 certain areas in California, specifically in the Bay area and Los Angeles, promising that additional restricted areas would soon be announced. In San Francisco the exclusion extended from China Basin to the Presidio, including the Embarcadero. In Los Angeles the initial restricted zone was the coastal area extending from the intersection of Sepulveda Boulevard and Rosecrans Avenue to Western Avenue and north to Manchester Avenue.<sup>84</sup>

Reminding its readers that California was not only a war zone, but also an essential war industry area, on February 6 *L'Italo Americano* explained that newly restricted areas, too numerous to list, had been designated. Enemy aliens were requested to vacate by February 15 all areas around oil fields, aircraft plants, munitions factories, hydroelectric installations and other areas where there would be posters listing evacuation procedures. It was added that additional restricted areas would be announced on February 24.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup>Interview with Fernando Castagnola. Alhambra, California, July 2, 1991; personal papers in the author's possession; "To Send Letters to Your Dear Ones in Italy," *L'Italo Americano*, February 27, 1942, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup>"New Rules Regarding Succession of Deceased Aliens," July 24, 1942, p. 4 and "All Aliens Will Be Reclassified for Military Service," *L'Italo Americano*, May 29, 1942, p. 1. See also "More Assets Iced: Treasury's Control over Enemy Alien Funds \$8,000,000,000," *Business Week* (February 27, 1943): 95-96; "2000 Alien Patents Seized by United States Aviation," *Aviation*, 41 (July 1942): 184.

<sup>84</sup>"Enemy Aliens Will Have to Evacuate the Entire Coastal Area of Los Angeles By February 24," *L'Italo Americano*, January 30, 1942, p.1.

<sup>85</sup>"Placards Posted," *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1942, p. 1; "New Restrictions for Enemy Aliens," *L'Italo Americano*, February 6, 1942, p. 1. It is interesting to note that in the same issue an advertisement for Jessie Piri's market included the notice: "We deliver in the country and nearby towns." There was an added explanation: "Given certain restrictions existing at the moment, many non-naturalized fellow Italians living in the country and nearby towns may come to Los Angeles only with the permission of the authorities, we have decided to make available the acquisition of imported foods, wines and olive oil." Obviously, the restrictions outlined in the December Presidential Proclamation had their desired effect. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

On Sunday, February 1, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Germans, Italians and Japanese would be barred from 69 war zones in the state, but noted that to date, there were few indications of alien departures from the coastal area. The article concluded with assurances from Tom Clark, the newly appointed Alien Control Coordinator, who warned that aliens who had not voluntarily left by the deadline would be ejected under whatever procedure was necessary. Three days later in an article describing farm colonies to be set up for the enemy nationals who were being evicted, the *Times* reminded readers that in the process of enemy alien evacuation, "The aged and infirm will not be permitted to remain with naturalized sons and daughters in such areas."<sup>86</sup>

By February 13 posters listing evacuation instructions, printed in English, German, Italian and Japanese, appeared in seventeen localities around Los Angeles County. Enemy aliens were informed that within two days, on February 15, they were to vacate such areas as West Hollywood, sections of Santa Monica, Huntington Park, Burbank, Inglewood, Long Beach, Downey, Vernon, central Los Angeles and south central Los Angeles, among others. The prohibited list also included the various pumping stations operated by the Metropolitan Water District. Aliens were informed that service committees had been established by the Social Security Administration offices at 623 East 8th Street and 435 South Boyle Avenue for those seeking assistance and clarification. In the face of these new proposed evacuations *L'Italo Americano* continued to advise patience, explaining that since Los Angeles was an important military and industrial area, the government was forced "to adopt policies more stringent than those adopted in other states of the Union."<sup>87</sup>

The enforcement of the evacuation order was sporadic. It was comprehensive at Terminal Island and in northern California coastal communities. In other areas regulations were not invoked, creating both confusion and relief among the alien residents, who now focused on a new concern.

Beginning in January, rumors had circulated concerning the extension of the curfew that had been imposed in northern California. The curfew soon

<sup>86</sup>"More Listed in County and 69 in State," *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 1942, p. 3; "Farm Colonies to Be Set Up for Evicted Enemy Nationals," *ibid.*, February 4, 1942, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup>"Prohibited Zones for Enemy Aliens," pp. 1 and 5; "To Assist Enemy Aliens Who Will Have to Abandon Various Zones," pp. 1 and 2; "While We Are Studying the Problems of the Enemy Aliens," *L'Italo Americano*, February 13, 1942, pp. 1-2. For a comprehensive discussion of the political infighting which surrounded the imposition of evacuation regulations, and particularly their effects upon the coastal communities of northern California, see Fox, *Unknown Internment*, pp. 173-177. In early 1942 civilian leaders were well aware of Lt. General DeWitt's plan to move all enemy aliens out of California. See Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 75.



reached as far south as Santa Maria, and on March 24, 1942 it was applied to enemy aliens remaining in southern California. Regulations stipulated that enemy aliens could travel any required distance back and forth to work, but were required to be in their homes from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. No exceptions would be permitted to those with night time employment. Finally, when not working, enemy aliens could not travel more than five miles from their homes.<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps because the government's orders for evacuation and relocation had thus far been generally unenforced in southern California, many southland alien enemies at first honored the curfew in the breach. The casual observance of the curfew invited a brisk warning from Attorney General Biddle, which was contained in a telegram directed to U.S. Attorney William Fleet Palmer in Los Angeles. Biddle's message was to the point: "All enemy aliens arrested for violating regulations issued by the President regarding contraband material or military regulations regarding the curfew will be placed in confinement and not released."<sup>89</sup>

The press continued to carry warnings about the importance of observing the curfew. On June 5 *L'Italo Americano* added, along with the warning that those arrested would not be released, the news that the newly appointed government hearing officer was a member of the Italo-American community, Assistant U.S. Attorney Attilio Di Girolamo. The appointment was auspicious in light of the sweeps by the FBI and local police and sheriffs which occurred in the middle of June. They resulted in the apprehension of 45 and the eventual arrest of 25.

Newspaper editor Cleto Baroni took the opportunity to remind readers that although by June 6 only the Japanese had been evacuated and interned, in his opinion the Executive Order 9066 was not specific to the Japanese, adding: "Keep always in mind that the order to evacuate enemy aliens from California was not abrogated after the evacuation of the Japanese, . . . if the authorities see Italians and Germans do not observe the law, they could order their exodus as well."<sup>90</sup>

The raids, which continued through June, and often included several consecutive visits to the same home, were usually conducted in the dead of night. The practice elicited the only expression of impatience found in the pages of *L'Italo Americano* during these difficult times. The practice of nocturnal visits provoked the editor to observe, "It does not seem logical or humane that for

<sup>88</sup>"No Changes in the Curfew Orders," p. 4 and "Rules and Regulations for Enemy Aliens," p. 2, *L'Italo Americano*, April 17, 1942.

<sup>89</sup>"Prison for Those Who Break Curfew Laws," *ibid.*, May 29, 1942, p.4.

<sup>90</sup>"Curfew Violators Arrested," *ibid.*, June 19, 1942, p. 4.

a simple verification, it is necessary to waken and frighten people in the middle of the night.”<sup>91</sup>

Although enemy alien Italians had been subjected to many restrictions and limitations, most of them in southern California escaped the evacuation and internment that had been imposed on their confreres in northern California and on the Japanese. The vacillation regarding orders for evacuation from restricted districts was the result of conflicting opinions regarding strategy. During the first two months of war, the Western Defense Command had determined that it was essential to remove all enemy aliens from sensitive areas along the Pacific Coast. When Executive Order 9066 was drafted in early February it was still understood that all enemy aliens would be evacuated.

As noted earlier, the calls for removal were echoed in numerous resolutions approved by local governmental agencies and organizations. Alien Exclusion was also supported by the Congressional Committee on Handling Enemy Aliens on the West Coast, which at the behest of the California delegation, urged the War Department to assume responsibility “to effectuate the evacuation, resettlement or internment of enemy aliens and of United States citizens holding dual citizenship with enemy nations.”<sup>92</sup>

Although encouraged by widespread calls for wholesale internment, Lt. General DeWitt was also receiving an increasing number of indications that there were insufficient personnel and organization to move the 85,000 German and Italian aliens. He was also confronted with the continuing resistance to full scale evacuation by the Justice Department and the President. As a result of these factors, by March 24 DeWitt was finally persuaded that the strategy of full scale evacuation, relocation and internment was not feasible in Military District One. By April he conceded to the Department of Justice that there would be no mass evacuation of Germans and Italians. He agreed that severe restrictions on travel and a curfew had already been imposed sufficient regulation. Furthermore, there was a growing acceptance of the fact that there was slight prospect of an Italian or German attack along the Pacific Coast.<sup>93</sup>

By August DeWitt was under the impression that the Department of Justice had agreed to an alternative procedure in which the majority of aliens would be saved from exclusion through broad categorical exemptions. The possible security risks, amounting to 25,000 names compiled by security

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<sup>91</sup>“Of Interest to Enemy Aliens,” *ibid.*, June 26, 1942, p. 4.

<sup>92</sup>“The Internment of German and Italian Aliens,” CWRIC 24:25888; “CRS-9,” CWRIC 1: 1-9.

<sup>93</sup>CWRIC 24: 25886-25888.

agencies, would be reviewed by hearing boards, who, after reviewing files and interrogating subpoenaed suspects, would submit recommendations regarding possible exclusion from Military District One, to officials of the Western Defense Command.<sup>94</sup> The procedure was soon repudiated by Attorney General Biddle in a memo issued in September 1943. Between August 1942 and April 1943, of the 335 cases reviewed, the Western Defense Command excluded only 174 aliens and native-born citizens.

The utilization of hearing boards had been proposed in the first report of the House Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. As early as February 28, in a telegram to Attorney General Biddle, Congressman John H. Tolan of California, chairman of the committee, advised the formation of hearing boards to examine the loyalty of German and Italian aliens. In its fourth report the Committee also raised questions about the logistical burden of a massive internment process which had already removed an entire Japanese community from the population.

This is in the nature of an exodus of a people. The numbers involved are large, but they are by no means as large, for the whole country, as those who will be involved if we generalize the current treatment of the Japanese to apply to all Axis aliens and their immediate families. Indeed this committee is prepared to say that any such proposal is out of the question if we intend to win the war.<sup>95</sup>

In a press conference held in early June, Tolan had received sufficient assurances from the government to declare confidently that the War Department did not contemplate any additional mass evacuation of aliens from the Pacific Coast.<sup>96</sup> The Committee had helped convince the government that to move the 85,000 German and Italian aliens in the three coastal states, who had an average age of 60 and an average length of residence of 24 years, was impractical. Furthermore, it was pointed out such a move would also dislocate members of their families, requiring, as a result, the actual movement of 145,000 people.<sup>97</sup>

Federal policy was also being shaped by political realities, not the least of which was the fact that Roosevelt's earlier election victories had been strongly supported in eastern urban states where Italo-Americans were most heavily

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>House Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, *Findings and Recommendations, Fourth Report*, p. 31.

<sup>96</sup>"Italians and Germans Will Not Be Evacuated," *L'Italo Americano*, June 5, 1942, p. 1. See also Carlo Sforza and Gaetano Salvemini, "Biddle's Order: Two Views on the Removal of the Enemy Alien Stigma for Italians," *Nation*, 155 (November 7, 1942): 476-478.

<sup>97</sup>"For an Equitable Treatment of the Enemy Aliens," *L'Italo Americano*, May 8, 1942, p. 2.

concentrated.<sup>98</sup> It was a fact which the Italian political community and labor unions did not allow to be overlooked. The administration was also concerned about the morale implications of Italian alien internment upon relatives in military service, since a large percentage of the military were Italians or had one or more parent who was Italian.<sup>99</sup>

The composition of the enemy alien community was also a factor. Nationwide, the average age of Italians was 44; 10 percent were over 64 years of age. Furthermore, it was generally accepted that their failure to file for U.S. citizenship grew not from disloyalty, but from educational impediments and long traditions of regional rather than national allegiance. The alien German community presented its own complexities. The West Coast population, which had burgeoned to over 60,000 during World War II, included approximately 20,000 refugees from Nazi Germany. Clearly, the enemy alien classification did not apply to these new American residents.<sup>100</sup>

The exemption of most Italians and Germans from the third phase of the government's enemy alien regulation program, consisting of evacuation, relocation and internment, was, in part, also the result of racial bias. This became clear in policy statements made by the Attorney General and the President. In a memo dated April 17, 1943 for the President in which Biddle strongly opposed Lt. General DeWitt's efforts to initiate exclusionary proceedings against Sylvester Andriani of San Francisco, the Attorney General reminded the President as the second point of his argument, "You signed the original Executive Order permitting the exclusion so the Army could handle the Japs. It was never intended to apply to Italians and Germans."<sup>101</sup> The position was reiterated by Roosevelt in a letter to Governor Herbert H. Lehman of New York on June 3, 1943 in which the President assured him "that no collective evacuation of German and Italian aliens is contemplated at this time."<sup>102</sup>

Increasing support for designating Italians as non-dangerous aliens met

<sup>98</sup>Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1936 victories by margins of three to one in the densely populated Italian American New York community of Queens, two to one in Staten Island and Richmond, and four to one in the Bronx, had been followed in 1940 with a marked voter shift toward the GOP. In the Bronx the Republican presidential vote more than doubled from 93,000 in 1936 to 198,293 in 1940. For a fuller discussion of Italian American voting patterns see Michael Barone, "Italian American Politics," *Italian Americans: New Perspectives in Italian Immigration and Ethnicity*, edited by Lydio F. Tomasi (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1985), pp. 378-384. See also "Intelligence: Oval Room" Folder, Box 107, Ernest Cuneo Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.

<sup>99</sup>Italian aliens had 60,000 of their husbands and/or sons in the U.S. military and 500,000 Italian Americans would serve in the U. S. military before World War II was concluded. Larry DiStasi, "Schizoid America," unpublished manuscript in possession of the author.

<sup>100</sup>Memo from Mr. Jaretzki, War Department to Colonel Tate," June 4, 1942, CWRIC 6:6697-6699.

<sup>101</sup>Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (New York: William Morrow, 1976), p. 200 and *Personal Justice Denied*, p. 78, n. 149.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, p.134.

with some opposition in the War Department where it was argued that such a designation would embolden Italian operatives working under German direction, and also "create bitter resentment within the anti-Fascist Communist Party, as well as the Soviet Government."<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, policies were relaxed. In May the Italian press heralded the Second War Powers Act in which the administration simplified citizenship procedures for foreign-born soldiers in the United States military, waiving the residence, language and literacy requirements. Later that same month it was announced that male enemy aliens with or without first papers, were being reclassified from IV-C to a military service classification.<sup>104</sup> In July another Presidential Order, urged by the Order of the Sons of Italy, embraced all enemy aliens who had served in the armed forces, all those with continued residence in the U.S. since 1916, all those married to U.S. citizens and had not returned to their homelands since 1924, and all those who had applied for their first papers before December 7, 1941.<sup>105</sup>

Within months the policy of exclusion was terminated and the release of interned Italian aliens soon followed, hastened by Italy's realignment as an ally of the United States. In an effort to make amends for the disruptions which had occurred, the U.S. government offered to subsidize the detainees' return to private life. Falasca, released November 16, 1943, had lost his newspaper. He was now offered a government subsidy to launch a literary magazine, an invitation the disenchanted newsman declined.<sup>106</sup>

In June 1942, Biddle proposed to the President an idea originally advanced by Edward Ennis, head of the Alien Enemy Control Section, to completely remove Italians from the enemy alien category. Roosevelt welcomed it as good statesmanship and politics, and regretted that he had not come up with the idea himself.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup>Memorandum for the Hon. J. J. McCloy: Suggested Preferential Treatment of Italian Citizens in the United States," June 8, 1942, CWRIC 1:148-49.

<sup>104</sup>"Naturalization Process Simplified to Accommodate Alien Soldiers," *L'Italo Americano*, May 1, 1942, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup>"All Aliens Will Be Reclassified for Military Service," May 29, 1942, p. 1 and "Orders to Aliens Reflect Good Sense By the Executive Leadership," *L'Italo Americano*, July 24, 1942, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup>Interview with Maria Ricci, July 7, 1991. Among the detainees only Spartaco Bonomi returned to his previous employment as a travel agent. Upon his release Zacharia Lubrano relocated to Paso Robles. Filippo Fordelone established the successful Angelus Concrete Block Company. Instead of launching a literary review, which the U.S. government had offered to subsidize as restitution for the demise of his newspaper, *La Parola*, Dr. Giovanni Falasca opened a restaurant in a section of Los Angeles where residential patterns gradually shifted. In August 1975, he was beaten to death by young gang members who had broken into his establishment.

<sup>107</sup>Francis B. Biddle, "Americans of Italian Origin: An Address by the Honorable Francis Biddle Delivered at the Columbus Day Celebration, Carnegie Hall, New York . . . October 12, 1942," *United States Congressional Record*, 76th Congress, p. 11134 ff. See also Francis B. Biddle, *In Brief Authority* (Hartford, Conn.: Greenwood Press 1976), p. 229. See a contrasting view in "Concerning the Exemption of Italian Aliens from Alien Enemy Classification," *Interpreter Releases*, 19 (October 20, 1942): 353-362.

On October 12, Columbus Day, Attorney General Biddle was introduced to a Carnegie Hall audience by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, to make his announcement, which was broadcast throughout the United States, Latin America and Europe. Biddle began by praising those of the “free Italy of the people,” the land from which came “Dante who ripped through the fog of antiquity, Galileo, navigator among the stars . . . Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Tasso and Ariosto.” He continued, “When America was forging independence, Italian patriots were also calling for it and Leopardi was praising it in poetry.”

Following his fulsome praise of the Italian cultural heritage, the Attorney General addressed the current state of affairs. He announced that after ten months of surveillance, “We found that 600,000 enemy aliens were in fact not enemies.” As a result, he offered as the highlight of his message, the announcement that from October 19 Italians would no longer be classified as enemy aliens in the United States. The news was carried in a banner headline in *L'italo Americano*, “Non Piu' – Nemici - !” (No Longer . . . Enemies . . .)!<sup>108</sup> Italians were no longer unwelcome citizens in freedom's land!

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<sup>108</sup>*L'italo Americano*, October 17, 1942, p.1. See also Joseph S. Roucek, “Italo-Americans and World War II,” *Sociology and Social Research*, 29 (July/August 1945): 465-471; Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, “Ethnics at War: Italian Americans in California during World II,” in *The Way We Really Were: The Golden State in the Second Great War*, ed. by Roger W. Lotchin (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 143-163. Italian Americans now seek an official apology for the violation of their civil rights. Senator Alphonse D'Amato (Rep., N.Y.) introduced, “Wartime Violation of Italian Americans Civil Liberties Act,” S969, 105th Congress, *Congressional Record*, 143 (June 26, 1997): S6504; Rep. Rick Lazio (Dem., N.Y.) introduced, “Wartime Violations of Italian Americans Civil Liberties Act,” 105th Congress, *ibid.*, 143 (June 27, 1997): E1348. This bill passed the House of Representatives on November 10, 1999 and is now pending before the U.S. Senate. *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 1999, A22.