

WORLD WAR II ALIEN ENEMY CONTROL PROGRAM CURRICULUM GUIDE AND LESSON PLANS

LESSON PLAN TWO: *“Italian Enemy Aliens During World War II: Evacuation from Prohibited Zones”*

APPROPRIATE GRADES/COURSES: 8-14, U.S. History; Civics, American Government, Political Science

TOPIC BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

In the days following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Italian immigrants suffered a series of shocks. Presidential Proclamation 2527 came on December 8. The Proclamation declared that all immigrants from Italy who were not yet American citizens had become “enemy aliens.” This meant that in Italian communities nationwide, 600,000 unnaturalized Italian immigrants were now subject to immediate arrest, to deportation to their home countries, and to confiscation of their property. More specifically, they could not travel more than five miles from home without permission, they could not move to a new residence without notifying authorities, and they could not possess what the government called “contraband”--weapons of any kind, cameras, flashlights, binoculars, and radios with a shortwave band. All such items would have to be turned over to local police. The government could also decide that the safety of certain areas was endangered by the presence of enemy aliens, and could order them to vacate those areas.

Then people began to notice that certain members of their communities had disappeared. Rumors flew about the cause of these disappearances until word spread that many community leaders had been arrested. It took months and sometimes years before relatives and others learned what had happened. Hundreds of enemy aliens considered “dangerous” by the FBI had been taken to internment camps. They would be held there for the duration of the war.

A month later, in late January 1942, the government issued new rules for enemy aliens. The new order said that between February 2 and February 7, all enemy aliens would have to register with the government. This was surprising, because all aliens had just registered in 1940 to comply with the Alien Registration Act. No matter; enemy aliens had to register again. And this time, they had to bring with them a photograph and be fingerprinted. The photo and fingerprint would be displayed in little pink registration booklets issued by the government. The enemy aliens were told they had to carry this pink booklet with them at all times. Anyone caught without it could be arrested and interned for the duration of the war.

During all this time, rumors flew about an even harsher plan being considered by the government. Newspapers carried stories about an effort to remove enemy aliens from key areas where their presence might constitute a public danger. No one knew how many

would be moved, or which ones, or where they would be allowed to go. By late January 1941, the first evacuation plans were announced. The Department of Justice had selected specific areas, mostly along the West Coast, from which enemy aliens would be ejected. The first order designated 86 zones, stretching from the California border to below Santa Barbara, as “prohibited.” The entire coast west of U.S. Highway 1 was off limits to all enemy aliens. So were certain areas inside San Francisco Bay, from the city of Alameda north and east to Stockton, as well as areas around power plants, ports, railroads and airports. Parts of San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego were soon added, as well as zones in most western states. All enemy aliens living inside these “prohibited zones” would have to move out, a few by February 15, most by February 24. Enemy aliens found inside those zones after that date would be arrested and interned. Virtually all of the fishing towns of Monterey and Santa Cruz, both of which lay west of Highway 1, became prohibited zones, as were major portions of the towns of Alameda, Richmond and Pittsburg. Some 10,000 enemy aliens of Italian descent would have to move.

As the deadline for removal approached, immigrant families inside the prohibited zones talked and worried. Who would have to go? Who should go? How long would they be gone? In many families, only one member—often a mother or a grandparent, sometimes a father or an uncle—had failed to complete the citizenship process. Should just the mother go? Just the grandfather? What about the children? Soon it was learned that children under the age of fourteen had to go with their mothers. So what about fourteen-year-olds--should they go with mother or stay with father? And where could they find a place to live? So many Italian immigrants had to move out of the little town of Pittsburg, California, that rental houses nearby became very scarce. Four families ended up living in the railroad station at Oakley. One woman, Bettina Troia, could only find a chicken coop in which to live.

As the date for removal approached, plans were finalized. Families found houses to share. Two or three women, mothers separated from their families, would live together in an apartment that was beyond the prohibited line. Often this was only blocks from their homes, but no matter. The prohibited line was absolute. If a business were even on the wrong side of the street, as the Bronzini’s vegetable market in Oakland was, the enemy alien owner could not set foot in it. Many Italian fishermen, including the father of baseball great Joe DiMaggio, could not set foot on the fishing docks where they made their living. Farmers with fields west of Highway 1 could not farm.

To many, the zones also seemed foolish. Emma Nuti from Richmond, California was able to find lodging with a friend in San Francisco across the bay—but her new apartment had clear views of navy ships steaming to war in the Pacific. Her opportunities to spy--if she had wanted to--had become greater than before. The same was true for the Brunos who had to leave Pittsburg: after they moved to Oakland, their new house overlooked the Oakland shipyards. Also foolish to many was the fact that most of those who had to move were older women and men who hardly seemed “dangerous.” Ninety-seven-year-old Placido Abono of Pittsburg, for example, with some one hundred American-born children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, had to be carried from his home on a stretcher.

For most enemy aliens forced to move, though, the evacuation meant fear, worry, separation, and, in some cases, lifelong damage. As one woman noted about the day her parents had to leave Pittsburg: “It looked like a funeral. We were all dead. We couldn’t

part. We never were separated before.” Though most families were able to get together on weekends, the daily problems of life were made much harder by the separation. Frances Cardinale, for example, had to have an appendix operation. The surgery was performed in a hospital in San Francisco, but since her parents were not allowed to travel there, she had to recover alone. Similarly, Nancy Billeci of Pittsburg gave birth at this time. Her husband, an enemy alien, could not come to the hospital in the prohibited zone unless he agreed to be accompanied by peace officers. He agreed, and had to get his first glimpse of his new child under escort, and in handcuffs.

It was perhaps Italian American servicemen who endured the most bitter part of the evacuation experience. Large numbers of the immigrants forced to move had sons in the military. Many of those sons returned home on leave unaware of what had happened. Thus, Nick Buccellato returned to his home in Pittsburg to find the house empty. While he and his brothers had been serving in the U.S. Navy, their mother had been moved to migrant-worker housing nearby. The Ghio family of Santa Cruz had a similar experience. Two Ghio boys were serving in the navy and one in the army, but when Steve Ghio returned on leave in the Spring of 1942, he found his Santa Cruz home empty. “I came home and I couldn’t find my folks or my aunts and uncles. All the houses were boarded up shut. . . . Finally, I went down to the police station and they told me what had happened. I was still in my navy uniform. They looked through some records and found out where they were. . . . It was pretty upsetting. They’d lived here thirty, forty years, and to have this happen to them--well, it just wasn’t right, but there wasn’t much we could say.”

During all this time, none of these “evacuees” knew how long their exile would last. What they saw and read did not offer much hope. Beginning in March and April, the military began its program to remove all West Coast residents of Japanese descent--both enemy aliens and citizens--to War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps. Whole communities were taken on buses and trains to remote camps in eastern California and several other states. At about the same time, the 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew that had been imposed on California’s enemy aliens in February was extended to 8:00 p.m. And as this was going on, newspapers carried stories that the War Department was preparing to evacuate the rest of the enemy aliens from California, and enemy aliens from the East Coast as well. Reports said that General Drum of the Eastern Defense Command had already drawn up plans for a prohibited zone from Rhode Island to somewhere in the mid-Atlantic region near Maryland or Virginia. Senate hearings were held to determine what such an evacuation would involve--perhaps 10 million Italian and German immigrants being forced to move. At the same time, Tom Clark, the Department of Justice liaison with the Western Defense Command, created even more anxiety. In a letter to James Rowe of the Justice Department, Clark made clear that the evacuation of a mere 10,000 or 12,000 enemy aliens from specific coastal zones would not satisfy the Western Defense Commander, General John DeWitt:

anyone who has the idea that General DeWitt is going to delay the evacuation of German and Italian aliens is in error. He has consistently said publicly and otherwise that he intends to evacuate these groups as soon as his program with reference to the Japanese is completed. (Clark to Rowe, April 27, 1942, CWRIC, 25:573)

Clark was referring to General DeWitt's original plan to remove all enemy aliens from the entire Pacific Slope--a one-hundred-mile wide stretch of the West Coast from the Pacific Ocean to the Sierra foothills. This would mean that 100,000 or more German and Italian enemy aliens would have to leave their homes.

As it turned out, neither of these plans was ever implemented. Numerous advisers, including Attorney General Francis Biddle, urged the President of the United States to consider how the removal of millions more enemy aliens would affect the morale of defense-industry workers and military families. Soon the President agreed that more mass removals, on either coast, could seriously damage the nation's war effort. On May 5, President Roosevelt ordered all such plans to be halted unless he specifically ordered otherwise.

By late summer, the situation had changed still further. Not a single case of sabotage or espionage by an Italian enemy alien had been recorded. At the same time, the tide of war was beginning to turn in favor of the United States. General DeWitt reversed his earlier plans, and rescinded the evacuation order on Italian enemy aliens in late summer. Those who had left their homes were allowed to return. For Italian enemy aliens, the worst of the wartime restrictions was coming to a close.

ESTIMATED TIME OF COMPLETION OF LESSON PLAN:

Flexible: three to four class periods--one to read background, two or three for discussions and assignments.

OBJECTIVES:

Understand the provisions for "prohibited" and "restricted" zones under the WWII Alien Enemy Control Program.

Understand how the Italian community in particular reacted to evacuation and relocation, and to the restrictions of the Alien Enemy Control Program.

Understand how national security measures collide with issues of due process and human rights during times of war.

Understand the constitutional issues underlying the Alien Enemy Control Program.

MATERIALS:

- Printed handouts of the **Topic Background Summary**
- Printed handouts defining **Key Terms/Concepts**
- Printed handouts of the **Alien Enemies Act** and **Executive Order 2527** (see Web sites listed below in the Online/Media Resources section of this lesson plan).

TEACHER PREPARATION:

Prepare copies of the materials listed above.

PERIOD ONE--CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

For the Teacher

Distribute the Lesson Plan materials

For the Students

Read the **Topic Background Summary**.

For the Teacher and the Students

Lead a classroom discussion to make sure students understand the basic facts of the Enemy Alien Evacuation.

It is especially important to emphasize that this mass evacuation of enemy aliens was ordered by the Department of Justice on January 29, 1942, three weeks *before* Executive Order 9066, which was signed on February 19, 1942 and led to the mass relocation and incarceration of all persons of Japanese ancestry. (See Lesson Plan One for a copy of Executive Order 9066) Because the Justice Department's order was directed at enemy aliens and *not* at American citizens, the evacuation order of January 29, 1942 did not require EO 9066 for its authority. Enemy aliens were already prohibited from certain areas and zones designed by the government. In the case of Italian Enemy Aliens, the authority for that prohibition rested with the President's Proclamation 2527, issued on December 8, 1941, which said, in part: "Whenever the Attorney General of the United States with respect to the Continental United States...deems it to be necessary for the public safety and protection, to exclude alien enemies from a designated area . . . or from any locality in which residence by any alien enemy shall be found to constitute a danger to the public peace and safety of the United States, then no alien enemy shall be found within such area or vicinity thereof. Any alien enemy found within any such area . . . shall be subject to summary apprehension."

Suggested discussion questions:

What authority did the government use to force enemy aliens to leave prohibited zones? (Proclamation 2527 which referred back to both the authority stemming from Section 21, Title 50 of the U.S. Code, the Alien Enemies Act and the specific regulations outlined in the previous Proclamation 2525 issued against the Japanese. These restrictions were expanded upon in February by *Regulations Controlling Travel and Other Conduct of Aliens of Enemy Nationalities*, 7 *Fed. Reg.* 844, specifically Section 15 which stated: "Prohibited and Restricted Areas: Prohibited aliens of enemy nationalities from residing, entering, remaining, or being found in any area designated as "prohibited" by the Attorney General of the United States."

On what coast were these prohibited zones located? (West Coast.)

Why were similar zones not set up on the East Coast? (The President decided it would be too disruptive to millions of immigrants and impede the war effort.)

Who was affected by these zones? (Enemy Aliens)

Were whole families required to move? (No, but some did.) What about children? (Children under 14 had to move with their mothers.)

Where did enemy aliens have to move to? (They could choose a place to live as long as it was outside the prohibited zones. Many Italian immigrants were unable to read English; this caused confusion regarding how far they had to move. Many moved a hundred miles when they might have moved just up the block.)

How did the evacuation affect businesses? (Enemy alien owners could not enter businesses in the prohibited zones. Some had to close.)

What do you think about the term “enemy alien” (or “alien enemy;” both terms were used)?

If you were an immigrant, how would it feel to be designated by this term? What might be the effect of being told that certain areas would be endangered by your very presence? What term being used today might be comparable? (Use, today, of “illegal immigrant” might be comparable. Students should discuss the difference.)

Homework: Research on your own.

(Students will need help and encouragement for this assignment. Give them some instructions for finding research help from librarians at their local library. More diligent students will be able to make copies of important articles in newspapers of the time, or copies of documents found on the internet, and share them with the class. Students may do better in small groups.)

1. Go to the Library. Check newspapers beginning February 1942 through February 24, 1942 to find out if newspapers in your city include reports about the evacuation of enemy aliens. Share what you find with your class.

2. See what you can find on the Internet regarding the Evacuation of Enemy Aliens. Look under “enemy aliens,” “alien enemies,” “World War II: prohibited zones,” “WWII: Evacuation,” *Una Storia Segreta*, and any other heading you can think of. Report on what you find, including finding a lack of materials on this subject.

3. Ask parents, friends, or teachers if they remember anything about these events. Record anything they may remember.

4. Search on the internet for some of the documents related to enemy alien evacuation, for example, Presidential Proclamations 2525, 2526, and 2527 for regulations governing possession of contraband, newspaper accounts of the prohibited zone closest to your home.

PERIOD TWO AND THREE--CLASSROOM ACITIVITES

For the teacher and students

Separate students into groups, with each group dramatizing one of the following situations listed below. Each group takes one class period to invent a 10-15 minute drama, writing down whatever they need as to dialogue, simple staging, a few props, and so on. Each group presents its dramatization in the next class period.

Situations:

1. Put yourself in the position of a family which has to move. The mother is an

enemy alien and has to go. One daughter is two months shy of her fourteenth birthday; she wants to go with her mother, but also wants to stay in school and help her father, who will remain at home for his job. A brother wants everyone to stay together. Focus on the feelings and conflicts that might come up and how it is resolved.

2. Imagine you could tell someone in power why the evacuation is wrong. Dramatize a delegation going to Washington DC, or to the headquarters of the Western Defense Command, to argue for your community, from which more than a thousand people have to move.

3. Dramatize the situation in which a sailor returns home on leave to find his house empty, his parents forced to move. Have him respond, figuring out how to find them, including what he says to those in charge, and how the scene will play out when he finally finds his family.

4. Invent your own scene based on what you know about those who had to leave home. You might create a conflict in a family where one member wants to fight the law, and another prefers not to “make waves.” You might create a scene in court where an enemy alien has been arrested for entering a prohibited zone, preparing his/her defense, and preparing the prosecutor’s case for sending him/her to an internment camp.

PERIOD FOUR—CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

For the Teacher and Students

Have students choose a position either in favor of, or opposed to the idea of setting up prohibited zones for enemy aliens. Those in favor, taking the position of the military, should write down their reasons: (i.e. fear of invasion, fear that those born in nations now at war with the U.S. might be loyal to their nations of origin, fear of spying or sabotage or other acts dangerous to public safety). Those opposed, taking the position of the unnaturalized immigrants, should write their reasons: (immigrants chose to come to the U.S. and were therefore likely to be loyal, especially those with American children, even more those with sons in the military; the failure of most Italian immigrants to get citizenship was due not to disloyalty but to the difficulty of passing the test in a foreign language, etc.) Then have the students debate the issue in class.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS:

See Lesson Plan One for a complete list of Terms and Concepts. For this lesson plan, relevant terms include:

Evacuation: The process of moving people from a place, often under the pretext that the move is for their “own protection.” During WWII, the term was considered a euphemism, since “evacuation” really meant the forced removal of “enemy aliens” from designated coastal and other prohibited zones, thereby excluding them from their homes and businesses.

Contraband: Materials whose possession by “enemy aliens” the U.S.

Government considered dangerous, and which were forbidden. Enemy aliens had to turn in to local police all weapons, radios with shortwave capacity, cameras, binoculars, and signaling devices such as flashlights.

Short-wave radio: Radios that could receive and transmit messages in the short-wave band of 60 meters or less. Short-wave radios could be used to listen to foreign radio stations, such as those from enemy nations, or to transmit messages to ships or boats.

Register: To supply information for making an accurate entry into a formal record, often requiring that a person appear before an official agency. Proof of the accuracy of the information is often necessary.

Interned: Confined, usually during time of war, in a camp run by the Department of Justice or the U.S. Army or other government agency. During World War II, immigrants who were enemy aliens were interned by order of the Attorney General. Some of those interned were U.S. citizens. Internment is also popularly used to refer to the incarceration of both aliens and U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry in War Relocation Authority camps.

Prohibited Zones: Areas designated by the Department of Justice from which all Italian, German and Japanese “enemy aliens” were banned during World War II.

Restricted areas: Vast areas designated by the Department of Justice where enemy aliens could remain, but within which they had to observe curfews and other restrictions.

Evacuee: An Italian, German or Japanese “enemy alien” who was forced to move from designated coastal and prohibited zones during WWII.

Unnaturalized: An immigrant to a country such as the United States who has never become a U.S. citizen. Naturalization refers to the legal process by which aliens become citizens.

SPECIFIC READING SOURCES FOR THIS LESSON PLAN:

DiStasi, Lawrence, *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment During World War II*, (Heyday Books: 2001).

Fox, Stephen, *Uncivil Liberties: Italian Americans Under Siege during World War II*, (Universal Publishers: 2000)

_____, *Fear Itself: Inside the FBI Roundup of German Americans during World War II*, (iUniverse, Inc., 2005)

Report to the Congress of the United States: A Review of the Restrictions on Persons of Italian Ancestry During World War II, (U.S. Department of Justice, November 2001) http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/Italian_Report.pdf

Here, In America? Immigrants as "the Enemy" During WWII and Today: Report of the Assembly on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, April 8-9, 2005, (San Francisco: 2006)

ONLINE/MEDIA SOURCES:

The Alien Enemies Act: Title 50, Section 21, USC: followed by Presidential Proclamations 2525, 2526, 2527

<http://www.gaic.info/history.html>

also: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/dec/dec07.htm>