

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

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LESSON PLAN EIGHT: *“Exploring U.S. Motives Behind WWII Imprisonment and Deportation of German, Japanese, and Italian Latin Americans”*

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

### TOPIC BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

The United States implemented three programs to identify and imprison civilians considered a threat to the country during the war years. In all three, both legal resident aliens and naturalized citizens whose ethnicity was suspect were targeted, as were their families.

The first program, run by the Department of Justice, focused on enemy aliens--German, Italian, and Japanese nationals--residing in the U.S. after the start of the war. The second program, run by the War Relocation Authority, focused on the Japanese and Japanese American community.

A third, little-known program was run by the Special War Problems Division of the State Department. Persons of German, Japanese, and Italian ancestry living in Latin-American countries were indiscriminately swept into local detention centers. The arrests and illegal deportations were so secret that the public knows little about it to this day. Some of the arrestees were sent by the United States directly to Germany, Japan, or Italy. Meanwhile, 4,058 Germans, 2,264 Japanese, and 287 Italians were forcibly brought to the United States and interned in camps run by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Many of prisoners and their families were citizens of the Latin American countries from which they had been taken. Although they were civilians, the internees and their families were treated with the standards used for prisoners of war, in the hope that Axis countries holding U.S. prisoners would reciprocate.

The prime motive for these measures in Latin America was to ensure hemispheric security, but commercial concerns were also incentives. Germans in particular had built up large businesses in Latin America. Destroying the businesses through blacklists and removing the German owners allowed U.S. firms to establish themselves. As arrests and deportations continued, a third motive emerged when U.S. officials recognized that those interned could be exchanged for U.S. civilians imprisoned in Germany or Japan.

### ESTIMATED TIME OF COMPLETION:

Three class periods.

## STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

Examine the secret Special War Problems Division (SWPD) program in Latin America.

Discuss the impact of the program on civil rights and human rights.

Examine and evaluate the motives for this program.

## MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:

Make copies of **Online/Media Resources** for use with the lesson (see below)

Make copies of **Topic Background Summary** (see above)

Make copies of **Key Terms/Concepts** for this lesson plan (see Lesson Plan One)

Make copies of “**The Deportation and Internment of Germans, Japanese, and Italians from Latin America during World War II**” by Max Paul Friedman, (see Lesson Plan Seven)

Make copies of **Isle of Pines, Cuba: Latin American Detention Facilities** (see [http://www.gaic.info/camp\\_latinamerica.htm](http://www.gaic.info/camp_latinamerica.htm) )

Make copies of **Quotes: In Times of War, Who is the Enemy?** (see Lesson Plan Seven)

## PERIOD ONE--CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

### For the teacher

Distribute **Topic Background Summary**

Distribute **Online/Media Resources**

Distribute **Key Terms/Concepts**

Distribute **Friedman** article

### For the teacher and students

Discuss the following terms from the **Key Terms/Concepts** list:

**Deportation, Detention, Internment, Enemy Alien, Relocation.**

Discuss the three civilian detention programs in use during WWII in the United States (War Relocation Authority, Alien Enemy Control Program, U.S. State Department Program or Special War Problems Division).

Suggested discussion questions:

How well are these programs known?

Why was the SWPD program in Latin American kept a secret?

### Student homework

Read handouts and explore the **Online/Media Resources** listed below to learn more about the Alien Enemy Control Program and the U.S. State Department’s Special War Problems Division (SWPD) secret activities in Latin America during World War II:

## PERIOD TWO--CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### For the teacher

Pose the question to the class for discussion: *In time of war, how do you decide who is the enemy?*

### For the teacher and students:

Divide the class into five or six groups, five-to-seven students per group.  
Instruct the groups to decide on a group leader/facilitator

### For the students:

Each group is to work on the following problem:

You have been assigned by the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), run by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI, to a post in Latin America. Your top-secret assignment is to make up a list of potential enemies of the United States. How are you going to get the information necessary to make up a list? Each group's facilitator will report on its recommendations.

### For the teacher and students:

Follow up with a discussion of methods suggested as well as those actually used (such as anonymous or paid informants and blanket assumptions that ethnicity decided loyalty).

### Student homework

Read "**The Deportation and Internment of Germans, Japanese, and Italians from Latin America during World War II,**" by Max Paul Friedman, PhD and explore the **Online/Media Resources**, particularly [www.gaic.info](http://www.gaic.info) and <http://www.campaignforjusticejla.org/history/index.html>

Look for the motives of the Special War Problems Division presented in this paper and on these sites and be prepared to discuss them.

## PERIOD THREE--CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

### For the teacher

Distribute:

**Isle of Pines, Cuba: Latin American Detention Facilities**  
**Quotes: In Times of War, Who is the Enemy?**

### For the teacher and students

Class discussion, suggested questions:

What motives did the U.S. have for going in to Latin American countries?  
(Security, economic rivalries, exchange of prisoners)

Were security concerns realistic? Why would controlling the Panama Canal be important?

Read the WWII quotes from **Quotes: In Times of War, Who is the Enemy?** What was the basis for the claim that “all German nationals without exception, all Japanese nationals, a small proportion of Italian nationals, and more individuals than might be expected among the political and racial refugees from Central Europe are all dangerous?” Is this an example of racial or ethnic profiling? Is this a valid way to decide that someone is a threat to the country?

Call student attention to **Isle of Pines, Cuba: Latin American Detention Facilities**. What large prison in Cuba is the United States funding/staffing today? Are there similarities between Isle of Pines and Guantánamo? Are there similarities between our current war on terror and policies toward Latin American aliens in WWII?

*Economic concerns:* Did the U.S. have legitimate interests in Latin America? Did the governments of some Latin American countries arrest German, Italian, and Japanese legal residents in order to confiscate their properties? Were big businesses in the United States eager to have their companies replace alien enemy businesses in Latin America? Was it acceptable for the U.S. to use concerns about security to get rid of business owners and replace them with American companies?

*Prisoner exchange:* Was it acceptable to consider trading civilian families taken from Latin America for American civilians being held in Germany, Italy, or Japan?

#### KEY TERMS/CONCEPTS:

See Lesson Plan One for **Key Terms/Concepts**

#### SELECTED ONLINE/MEDIA RESOURCES:

German American Internee Coalition: [www.gaic.info](http://www.gaic.info)

This organization and its Web site present information and case histories on the German, German American, and German Latin American chapter of the Enemy Alien Control Program.

Japanese Peruvian Oral History Project:

[www.campaignforjusticejla.org/AWRIC/awric](http://www.campaignforjusticejla.org/AWRIC/awric)

This organization provides an informational Web site on the internment of Japanese Latin Americans during World War II.

[www.campaignforjusticejla.org/history/index.html](http://www.campaignforjusticejla.org/history/index.html)

The Freedom of Information Times: [www.foitimes.com](http://www.foitimes.com)

This Web site, kept by former internee Art Jacobs, presents case histories, resources, and documents relating to the German and German American chapter of the Alien Enemy Control Program.

[www.fear-itself.com](http://www.fear-itself.com) This is the Web site of author Steve Fox, who has written extensively on the Latin American chapter of World War II internment.

TRACES: [www.traces.org](http://www.traces.org)

Traces is an educational organization and history museum in St. Paul, Minnesota that focuses in part on the Alien Enemy Control Program. Its Buseum-2 has traveled throughout the Midwest and has been viewed by tens of thousands of guests. The Buseum-2 presents a rolling exhibit of enemy alien case histories and background.