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March 28, 1944.

SUBJECT: Arrival at New Orleans of 540 German and Japanese Internees.

Hammer

Dear Mr. Fitch:

In connection with the arrival of the USAT Cuba at New Orleans with 540 German and Japanese internees from South America, I arrived at New Orleans on March 17 accompanied by Special Agents Osborne, Briggs and O'Hanley. Special Agent Widdifield joined us at New Orleans. On March 18 we attended a conference at the Poland Street Army Base which was presided over by Col. B.R. Patton, New Orleans Port Security Officer, for a discussion of details concerning the arrival.

Mr. Lafoon of SWP arrived in the evening of March 18 and joined our group.

The USAT Cuba was scheduled to arrive on March 21 and all preliminary arrangements with Customs, Immigration, Border Patrol, the Port Military Authorities and the railroads were completed by March 20th.

On Monday, March 20, at 6 p.m. our entire party reported to the Poland Street Army Base where we joined a group consisting of 15 Customs Inspectors, Public Health doctors and military authorities and proceeded by automobile to Venice, La., which lies 80 miles below New Orleans. We arrived at Venice at 10 p.m. and boarded a Coast Guard Cutter and proceeded down the Mississippi River to the Pilot Landing. The Cuba was late in arriving and we remained at the Pilot Landing until 2 a.m. At 2:30 a.m. we boarded the USAT Cuba, as she was proceeding up the river. The prearranged ship clearance formalities immediately went into operation. There were 540 German and Japanese aliens of whom a large group consisted of small children between the ages of 5 and 14 years. All male adults were quartered in the two holds of the ship in bunks with the women and children occupying cabins on the upper decks.

Customs

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Customs examination began immediately with the male adults quartered in the hold. This continued all night and was then extended to the women and children on the upper decks and was completed by the time the ship docked at 10 a.m. The passengers had somewhat more baggage than the originally scheduled 100 lbs of baggage per person. However, the amount of baggage was not excessive.

Prior to Customs operations, an announcement in English, German and Spanish was distributed among the passengers, indicating the procedure for clearance of the ship that was to be followed by the Government officers. In this manner all the passengers were fully prepared for the system of clearance. Attached are copies of this announcement.

The State Department organized a checking desk through which all passengers had to pass. The name of each passenger was checked, the amount of baggage of each passenger was recorded, baggage tags, according to the destination of each passenger, were given out and an identification card, which was attached to the lapel of every alien was then distributed as the passenger checked through our Control Desk. This lapel identification tag gave the name of the alien, his destination, his train number and his pullman accommodation on that train. By so doing, we eliminated a great deal of confusion on subsequent checks, as each alien was clearly identified by this tag. After passing the State Department Control Desk, the alien tagged his baggage and then reported to the Public Health doctor. Each alien was then checked to determine whether or not he was suffering from any communicable disease. A State Department Agent assisted the doctor in this check and maintained a record of his findings. In general, the aliens were in excellent health and only one family was found to be ill. There were no stretcher cases and all the aliens were able to proceed through the examinations without assistance.

The Cuba docked at Chalmette Slip at 10 a.m. March 21st. As the aliens came from a typhus infected area, all persons who were on the ship necessarily had to submit to the typhus disinfection process.

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The disinfection process consisted of persons when entering the Plant, disrobing and placing all of their clothes in a large mesh bag. They then proceeded to a Central Room where they bathed and showered under extremely hot showers. Following this the medical staff sprayed each individual with a disinfectant spray. The party then proceeded to a Drying Room and following this received their clothes and valuables and were then ready to leave the Disinfecting Plant. The clothes of the party, meanwhile, were placed in Gas Chambers where they were kept for 45 minutes. Following this, the clothes were then placed on racks and under strong air pressure all the gas was blown out of the clothes. The system was extremely complete and thorough.

The Disinfection Plant was located just off the pier where the ship was docked, with the passage to the plant marked off by ropes and well guarded by Military Police. Every person who was on board the USAT CUBA had to pass through this process before they could come in contact with any person on the pier. This rule was rigidly enforced. The aliens were brought off the ship in groups of 75 persons. The first groups consisted of men and boys over eight years of age. Thirty men were left on the ship to unload baggage and to clean up the ship. Following the men were groups of women, girls and male children under 5 years of age. This process continued until 7:00 PM when all persons were cleared. The men cleared through the plant in regular order and without delay. The women and children required much more time as it was reported that the children were particularly difficult to handle as they were hard to control and the undressing and dressing of the children was a major task in itself.

On the pier, during this process, all the baggage was being sprayed or was being gassed in a similar process. It was found that the Gas Chambers were inadequate for the amount of baggage and accordingly the remainder of the baggage had to be sprayed with a disinfectant powder. Two special trains were parked adjacent to the pier and as the aliens cleared from the Disinfection Plant, they were directed to their train and car as was indicated by their lapel identification tag. This procedure continued

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all day and was completed by 7 PM. The cleansing of the baggage was slow but was finished by 7:15 PM and the trains were ready to depart. The first train, destined for Crystal City, consisted of 12 pullmans and 2 baggage cars and the second train consisted of 5 pullmans and 1 baggage car. The two trains were combined and departed at 7:30 PM. We arrived at Avondale, La. at 8:30 PM where 2 Diners were added to the first train and one Diner to the second train. From Avondale on, the two trains proceeded separately with the Kenedy train following the Crystal City train by 15 minutes. The train trip was without incident and the meals and all other facilities were adequate for the party. Public Health doctor, Terrance Billings, accompanied train No. 1, assisted by Immigration Matrons, Mrs. Courtney and Mrs. Pistorius while Public Health Doctor J.D. Zaugg accompanied train No. 2. The doctors were busy through their trip attending all the ailments that usually occur in a group this size. The aliens were highly satisfied with the treatment they received and had no complaints whatsoever. The Swiss and Spanish Consuls at New Orleans were present on the pier during landing operations and had an opportunity to talk to the German and Japanese group leaders. All persons concerned with the landing operation rendered excellent cooperation and service and the entire movement was handled according to arrangements and without delay. On arrival at Crystal City of train No. 1 at 10:45 PM it was found that it was too late to transfer the aliens to the Camp and accordingly they were held on the train overnight. Unloading operations began March 23 at 7:30 AM and were completed by 10:00 AM. Lt. Miguel Soto-Puig, Military Security Officer in charge of the ship, handled his duty extremely well and was commended by all those who had business with him. He turned over to me the following funds of the aliens which consisted of \$6,471 in cash; \$27,312 in negotiable checks and drafts; 17,755 Peruvian Soles; 39,595 Ecuadorian Suores; 3,144.85 Japanese yen and 10 German Marks. There is attached a list of these funds showing the amount to each alien concerned. This money was delivered to Henry Rascoe, Financial Officer at the Crystal City Internment Camp, and a receipt obtained. There is also attached a list of the aliens on the vessel as receipted for by me to Lt. Soto-Puig. I also turned over to the Crystal City Internment Camp the various identification forms and medical certificates.

Prior

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Prior to the departure of the train from New Orleans, the Jitsuo Dodobara family was removed to the Marine Hospital at New Orleans as it was found that the son, Hiroshi, was suffering from a very high temperature and it was impossible to determine at that time the cause of his ailment. Rather than risk exposure from a possible communicable disease, the entire family was sent to the hospital for observation.

All Special Agents and Mr. Lafoon rendered excellent service at all times and worked long hours without sleep and without complaint.

Respectfully,

*R L Bannerman*

R.L. Bannerman,  
SPECIAL AGENT.

CSA:RLB:ETV