
Appendix

Latin Americans

During World War II the United States expanded its internment program and national security investigations to Latin America on the basis of "military necessity." On the government's invitation, approximately 3,000 residents of Latin America were deported to the United States for internment to secure the Western Hemisphere from internal threats and to supply exchanges for American citizens held by the Axis. Most of these deportees were citizens, or their families, of Japan, Germany and Italy. Although this program was not conducted pursuant to Executive Order 9066, an examination of the extraordinary program of interning aliens from Latin America in the United States completes the account of federal actions to detain and intern civilians of enemy or foreign nationality, particularly those of Japanese ancestry.

What began as a controlled, closely monitored deportation program to detain potentially dangerous diplomatic and consular officials of Axis nations and Axis businessmen grew to include enemy aliens who were teachers, small businessmen, tailors and barbers—mostly people of Japanese ancestry. Over two-thirds, or 2,300, of the Latin American internees deported to the United States were Japanese nationals and their families; over eighty percent came from Peru.¹ About half the Japanese internees were family members, including Nisei, who asked to join their husbands and fathers in camps pending deportation to Japan; family members were classified as "voluntary internees."²

Underlying these deportations was fear of Japanese attack in Latin America, particularly at the Panama Canal, which produced suspicion of Latin American Japanese. But a curious wartime triangle trade in Japanese aliens for internment developed, too. Some Latin American countries, particularly Peru, deported Japanese out of cultural prejudice and antagonism based on economic competition; the United States, in turn, sought Latin American Japanese internees to exchange with Japan for American citizens trapped in territories Japan controlled. The same dynamic often affected Germans and Italians.

Deportees from Peru for internment in the United States dominated the Latin American deportation program and thus this discussion centers on them. The history of the Japanese in Peru offers suggestive parallels to West Coast history.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, expanding agriculture in Latin America attracted surplus skilled farm labor from Japan; by 1923 almost 20,000 Japanese had settled in Peru alone.³ During the 1930's, economic depression in Japan and restricted immigration to the United States⁴ drew more Japanese to Latin America, where 23,000 entered Brazil in a single year.⁵ Worsening economic conditions in Latin America, however, brought discriminatory legislation and business practices aimed at these immigrants.

Japanese in Peru inherited years of prejudice earlier directed against Chinese immigrants. Many Japanese in Latin America had migrated to urban areas where they built close-knit communities, opened small businesses and gained economic independence. The Peruvian Japanese formed ethnic business associations and social organizations, and, although some Japanese married Peruvians and the typical family joined the Roman Catholic church,⁶ many kept a love of Japan, nursed feelings of cultural superiority and sent their children to Japan for formal education. In Peru, most Japanese immigrants steadfastly refused Peruvian citizenship. This history fueled Peruvian resentment against them; economic competition, including fears of Japanese farmers and merchants monopolizing fertile land and some service industries, aggravated prejudice. Peru severely restricted Japanese immigration in 1936 and followed up by restricting the right to citizenship of some Peruvian Japanese, including Kibei. In 1940, when about 26,000 Japanese lived in Peru, including 9,000 Nisei,⁷ riots broke out. Japanese businesses were destroyed and homes ransacked, and restrictive laws muzzled the Japanese press.

By 1940, the United States had become directly involved with security in Latin America. After the European war erupted in 1939, the government posted FBI agents in United States embassies in Latin America to compile information on Axis nationals and sympathizers.⁸ Following Pearl Harbor, the United States immediately moved to secure the Western Hemisphere against dangerous enemy aliens. For the first time, Japanese-owned businesses in Latin America appeared on the United States' Proclaimed List of Blocked Nationals and were thus blacklisted through economic warfare. After a meeting of Western Hemisphere nations early in 1942, the Emergency Advisory Committee for Political Defense was created, composed of representatives from

the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela. The Committee forwarded to Latin American countries recommendations to control subversive activities and to secure the hemisphere, emphasizing internment of Axis nationals.⁹ Several Latin American countries, severing ties with the Axis, imposed restrictions against Axis nationals.

Acting on Emergency Advisory Committee recommendations or in response to United States security efforts, sixteen Latin American countries interned at least 8,500 Axis nationals during World War II.¹⁰ Economic and political pressure from the Proclaimed Lists and the Emergency Advisory Committee, coupled with Latin American nations' inability to establish costly security programs, encouraged the United States to accept Latin American enemy aliens for internment. Twelve Latin American countries—Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru—deported some or all of their enemy alien internees to the United States.¹¹ (Brazil and Venezuela did not.) Once in the United States, the State Department had custody and held internees in camps operated by the Justice Department's Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

The model of the Latin American deportation and internment program was developed in Panama. Before the war, the United States had agreed orally and informally with Panamanian officials to intern Japanese nationals during wartime. After the Pearl Harbor attack, Panama declared war on the Axis and froze Japanese assets. Japanese aliens were arrested by Panamanian and American agents for security reasons because they were near the Canal Zone. The War Department instructed the Commanding General of the Caribbean Defense Command to construct an internment camp in Panama for enemy aliens.¹² Panama later agreed to transfer internees to the United States to be traded for Western Hemisphere nationals held in Japan.¹³

In Peru, the State Department aimed to eliminate potential military threats and to integrate Peru's economy and government into the war effort. After war broke out, Peru notified the War Department that the United States could place military installations there; a small military force eventually encamped near the oil fields of northern Peru, and the United States promised \$29 million in armaments through Lend-Lease agreements, the largest pledge to a Latin American state.¹⁴ Peru moved quickly against its Japanese residents, whose newspapers, organizations and schools were closed after December 7. Japanese assets were frozen, and the Proclaimed Lists brought hardship to Jap-

anese businesses; some Peruvian Japanese were asked to leave. Before any deportations occurred, almost 500 Japanese registered repatriation requests at the Spanish Embassy, which represented Japan's interests in Peru.¹⁵ This group was among the first to be deported. The initial targets of the American-Peruvian deportation program were enemy alien diplomatic and consular officials and some business representatives of Japan. Peru wished to deport all Japanese and other Axis nationals as well, but the United States recognized its limited need of Latin American Japanese for exchange with Japan; the problems of limited shipping facilities; and the administrative burden of a full-scale enemy alien deportation program. The United States limited the program to deporting officials and "dangerous" enemy aliens.

John K. Emerson, Third Secretary of the American Embassy in Peru, who had been a language student in Japan and could speak and read Japanese fluently, was assigned to help the Peruvians identify "dangerous" aliens and compile deportation lists.¹⁶ But deportations were in fact planned with little coordination between the United States and Peru, and Peru chose some deportees over others for no apparent reason, although bribery may have been involved. Moreover, the inaccurate portrayal by Peruvian officials of Peruvian Japanese as deceptive and dangerous encouraged the United States to deport and intern not only Japanese nationals, but some Peruvian citizens of Japanese descent.¹⁷

During early 1942, approximately 1,000 Japanese, 300 Germans and 30 Italians were deported from Peru to the United States, along with about 850 German, Japanese and Italian aliens picked up in Ecuador, Colombia, and Bolivia¹⁸ and an additional 184 men from Panama and Costa Rica.¹⁹ Normal legal proceedings were ignored and none of the Peruvians were issued warrants, granted hearings, or indicted after arrest. On entering the United States, officials of Axis nations were placed in State Department custody and private citizens were sent to INS internment camps in Texas. In most cases passports had been confiscated before landing, and the State Department ordered American consuls in Peru and elsewhere to issue no visas prior to departure.²⁰ Despite their involuntary arrival, deportees were treated by INS as having illegally entered this country.²¹ Thus the deportees became illegal aliens in U.S. custody who were subject to deportation proceedings, i.e., repatriation.

Most of the first group of deportees from Peru were men, primarily diplomatic and consular officials, representatives of Japanese business interests, and private citizens targeted as community leaders and thus

“believed to be dangerous.” Categorical classifications of some as “believed to be dangerous” enabled the deportation of many private citizens because the United States was unwilling to investigate the need to deport each individual. As John Emmerson later stated: “Lacking incriminating evidence, we established the criteria of leadership and influence in the community to determine those Japanese to be expelled.”²²

By June 1942, many Latin American countries had severed diplomatic relations with the Axis nations. Lend-Lease and trade consignments between the United States and Latin America had strengthened hemispheric unity. But the United States was not confident that Latin America could control subversive activity and thus increased its interest in the deportation and internment program. By this time traffic in the exchange of Japanese and other Axis nationals for American citizens was growing. By early 1942, aided by Swiss and Spanish intermediaries, the United States and Japan had begun negotiating for the exchange of nationals, both officials and private citizens. By July, the United States had deported approximately 1,100 Latin American Japanese and 500 Germans to their home countries.²³ Enemy alien citizens who threatened nothing were uprooted from their homes to be used in the exchange. By August 1942, the State Department estimated that, in addition to the Americans caught as Japan advanced across the southwest Pacific, at least 3,300 Americans were trapped in China and available for exchange with Japan.²⁴ These considerable numbers increased American interest in receiving Japanese deportees from Latin America. But slow communications, problems in obtaining assurances that repatriates could pass safely through the war zone, shipping shortages, and Justice Department refusal to repatriate an individual against his will, delayed further repatriations for over a year. As a result, “dangerous” enemy aliens were deported to the U.S. at a comfortable pace for both Latin America and the United States, including INS administrators seeking to prevent overcrowding in the camps.

In January 1943, after 200 more Japanese aliens had been deported from Peru, the Justice Department refused a State Department request for the deportation of another 1,000 Latin American Japanese.²⁵ Unsatisfied with the screening procedures of the American embassy in Peru as well as Peruvian practices in identifying dangerous individuals, the Justice Department sent Raymond Ickes of its Alien Enemy Control Unit to Peru to oversee the selection. Ickes, partially successful in overcoming low-level Peruvian officials’ obstructionism and indiffer-

ence, entertained a novel idea shared by other American officials in Peru and President Prado—to establish internment camps in Peru financed by the United States. The Administration had already requested appropriations to establish an internment camp in Cuba. Moreover, the State Department was reluctant to encourage Peru to breach international law by sending all its Peruvian Japanese from a nonbelligerent state directly to a belligerent one.²⁶ But the American embassy in Peru vetoed the Peruvian camp idea, distrusting Peruvian officials' ability to intern dangerous individuals—a view supported by Peru's record in the deportation. As Emerson had reported earlier, "since local police and other officials are susceptible to Japanese bribes, their alertness cannot be depended upon."²⁷ Indeed, Arthur Shinei Yakabi, a bakery worker deported from Peru, testified: "I was asleep in February 1943 when some Peruvian police came and arrested my employer. My employer pulled a fast one by bribing the police, and offered me as a substitute."²⁸ In addition, the embassy's view of the danger posed by Peruvian Japanese was changing by the end of summer 1943; Emerson, now Second Secretary, was confident that the Japanese community no longer constituted a threat to security.²⁹ The Latin American deportation program continued nevertheless.

In May 1943, the Emergency Advisory Committee adopted a resolution that American republics intern and expel dangerous Axis nationals.³⁰ Near the end of 1943, the Committee reviewed the Latin American security situation and concluded that direct United States involvement in securing the hemisphere was crucial. Except for Brazil, no Latin American country had initiated security measures compatible with United States standards. The Committee wanted agreements for deportation programs from Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela and Colombia.

The repatriation and exchange program proceeded slowly. In September 1943, over 1,300 Japanese left New York for Japan, over half from Peru, Panama, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Cuba, El Salvador and Guatemala; almost 40 percent of the entire contingent was from Peru.³¹

In the spring of 1944, the State Department realized that no more Axis nationals would be repatriated until the war was over. Nevertheless, from January to October 1944, over 700 Japanese men, women, children and 70 German aliens were deported from Peru to the United States, along with over 130 enemy aliens from Bolivia, Costa Rica and Ecuador.³² Peru pushed for additional Japanese deportations, but the United States could not commit the shipping and did not want to

augment the hundreds of Japanese internees awaiting repatriation. The State Department also decided not to repatriate Axis nationals against their will, realizing that many internees might not want to return to a devastated country. Thus deportation proceedings lagged and the INS internment camps became overcrowded.

Internees at INS camps in Crystal City, Kennedy and Seagoville, Texas, and Missoula, Montana, had two main concerns: having their families join them in the United States and repatriation to Japan. Living conditions at the camps were not unlike those in the war relocation centers. Confinement's bad effects were evident: lack of privacy, family breakdown, listlessness and uncertainty about the future. To safeguard the internees from unhealthy conditions, the camps were inspected routinely by Spain, the International Red Cross, the War Prisoners Aid of the YMCA and the YWCA, the American Friends Service Committee, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference. At the end of the war, approximately 1,400 Latin American Japanese, mostly from Peru, were interned in the United States, awaiting a decision on their destiny. Some wished to return to Latin America, others to Japan. To most it was a choice of the lesser of two evils: they had lost everything in Latin America, but Japan, which they had left to pursue greater economic opportunity, was devastated by the war. A number wanted to remain in the United States and begin anew.

As the end of the war approached in Summer 1945, the United States and other Western Hemisphere nations began to consider the postwar fate of interned Axis nationals. President Truman issued Proclamation 2655 authorizing the United States to deport enemy aliens deemed "to be dangerous to the public peace and safety of the United States."³³ The Latin American Conference on Problems of War and Peace passed a resolution recommending that persons deported for security reasons should be prevented from "further residing in the hemisphere, if such residence would be prejudicial to the future security or welfare of the Americas."³⁴

The State and Justice Departments disagreed about security measures to take against interned enemy aliens. The Justice Department wanted to remove internees from its jurisdiction and divorce itself from the deportation and internment program; the State Department wanted to conclude the program by removing all dangerous Axis influences from the hemisphere.³⁵ As part of its long-term security strategy, in September 1945 the State Department secured a proclamation from President Truman directing the Secretary of State to remove any enemy aliens in the United States from the Western Hemisphere, in-

cluding those from Latin America, who were illegal aliens and dangerous to hemispheric security.

In December 1945, approximately 800 Peruvian Japanese were voluntarily deported to Japan,³⁶ but in general the internment ended very slowly and tortuously. The United States sought to return internees who were not classified as dangerous and who refused deportation to Axis countries, to their points of origin in Latin America.³⁷ But the common hemispheric interests that bred the deportation had dissolved, and the government now had to negotiate about returning internees to Latin America using weak, hastily-written wartime agreements, for the United States had not exacted initial guarantees defining the deportees' postwar fate. For the most part, the Central American and Caribbean countries that had deported enemy aliens to the United States had placed few restrictions on their disposition. Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador had required specific guarantees before releasing enemy aliens to the United States. Peru, Ecuador and El Salvador wanted jurisdiction over internees in order to obtain the return of some German deportees, for many Germans in Latin America, unlike the Japanese, had acquired economic and political influence as well as greater social acceptance. Peru had sought no firm agreement from the United States concerning final destination and wanted to restrict the return of Japanese (but not German) internees. The United States wanted a consistent policy for the Latin American internees and gave Peru the choice of accepting all non-dangerous internees or leaving deportation control to the United States. So negotiations dragged on for the return to Peru of Peruvian Japanese.

Meanwhile, the internees used litigation to block deportation to Axis states. Some German internees filed habeas corpus petitions challenging their detention by the United States, claiming that they were not alien enemies as defined by the Alien Enemy Act of 1798, because they were not natives or citizens of an enemy country. In January 1946, this effort failed when a federal district court ruled that the Latin American internees were "alien enemies" who could legally be detained.³⁸ After this decision, 513 Japanese (over ninety percent from Peru), 897 Germans and 37 Italians from Latin America in United States internment camps were granted hearings pending deportation to Axis countries.³⁹ The hearings were a formality leading inevitably to deportation to Axis countries, although most of the remaining Latin American Japanese wished to return to Peru. Voluntary repatriation continued into 1946, with at least 130 Peruvian Japanese returning to Japan by June.⁴⁰

The final destiny of the Latin American Japanese was placed in the hands of the Justice Department after the State Department concluded that insufficient evidence existed to call the remaining Japanese internees dangerous to the Western Hemisphere.⁴¹ The State Department, although willing to proceed with deportations to Japan, hoped the Justice Department would stop deportation proceedings against Peruvian Japanese with families in Peru.⁴² The process moved very slowly for those who wanted to remain in the United States or return to Peru. Two Peruvian Japanese, Eigo and Elsa Kudo, remembered their anxious waiting period:

There were several hearings to persuade these poor internees to leave for Japan. We were one of those who asked, "Why are we illegal aliens when we were brought under armed MPs and processed by the immigration officers upon arrival in New Orleans?" . . . Again and again they repeated, "You are illegal aliens because you have no passports nor visa. . ."⁴³

In August 1946, Wayne Collins, an attorney who had often helped Issei and Nisei over the years, arranged for some Peruvian Japanese to be transferred from INS internment camps to a fresh produce processing plant in Seabrook, New Jersey, where Japanese Americans had worked during the exclusion from the West Coast. The internees welcomed Seabrook as an opportunity to escape camp life, restore traditional family life, and earn relatively decent wages while awaiting word of their ultimate fate; at the same time, it must be recognized that conditions at Seabrook were far less attractive than those of ordinary liberated life. Other internees were paroled from the INS camps under sponsorship of American citizens.

To some extent, returning internees to Peru was further complicated during 1946 by a nationalistic pro-Japan underground movement, the Aikoku Doshi-Kai, which sprang up in Peru and South America. Both Peruvian and American officials overestimated the movement's influence, but the United States accepted Peru's reluctance to bring Japanese deportees back into a country inflamed by anti-Japanese sentiment. Peru announced that it would allow only Peruvian citizens of Japanese descent and Japanese related to Peruvian citizens to return,⁴⁴ and from May to October 1946, only about 100 Japanese internees went back to Peru.⁴⁵ At the same time, almost 600 German nationals were returned to Latin America in the year 1945-46.⁴⁶

At the beginning of 1947, 300 Peruvian Japanese remained in the United States, the majority at Seabrook. Those with family ties in Peru entertained hopes of returning home. Talks between the United States

and Peru were stalemated during 1947; negotiations were renewed with the Peruvian government which had come to power in a coup in the winter of 1948-49, but it refused to accept any non-citizens.

In the spring of 1949, exasperated State Department officials concluded that the only solution to the Peruvian Japanese internee problem was to give internees the status of "permanent legally admitted immigrants" who could remain in the United States.⁴⁷ Finally, in July 1952, the remaining Japanese Peruvian internees, having resided in the United States for seven years or more, petitioned the Board of Immigration Appeals to reopen hearings to suspend deportation orders, and Congress approved the deportation suspensions in 1953. The wartime deportation and internment program was finally at an end. But, for some, the emotional trauma of the program was endless. Peruvian deportee Ginzo Muroso stated: "Some of the people from Peru who were interned with me were separated from their families for many years. In a few cases, the broken families were never reunited."⁴⁸

Historical documents concerning the ethnic Japanese in Latin America are, of course, housed in distant archives, and the Commission has not researched that body of material. Although the need for this extensive, disruptive program has not been definitively reviewed by the Commission, John Emmerson, a well-informed American diplomat in Peru during the program, wrote more than thirty years later: "During my period of service in the embassy, we found no reliable evidence of planned or contemplated acts of sabotage, subversion, or espionage."⁴⁹ Whatever justification is offered for this treatment of enemy aliens, many Latin American Japanese never saw their homes again after remaining for many years in a kind of legal no-man's-land. Their history is one of the strange, unhappy, largely forgotten stories of World War II.