

FRAGILE AND BELEAGUERED ARE THE MANY: THE RECURRENCE OF ANTI-GERMAN ACTIVITIES DURING WORLD WAR II

The manner in which the German-American community suffered as a result of nativist hostility during the World War I era is a well-documented aspect of American history. War-engendered hysteria against all visible signs of German culture led to the renaming of streets and even certain foods, the abolition of German-American social organizations, suppression of the German-language press, and prohibition of the instruction of the German language in numerous school systems. Less known is the story of the internment of approximately 6,500 members of the German-American community during World War II for fear of subversive activities against the United States.¹ By submerging its identity during the postwar years and understating many traditional aspects of German culture in America, the German-American community had hoped to prevent a recurrence of the nativism which imperiled its standing during the 1910s. In fact, a second war-engendered movement against the German element in America occasioned a new wave of anti-German discrimination, culminating in the arrest and internment of thousands of members of the German-American community, against whom there often was little or no hard evidence. Unlike the experience of World War I, the selective persecution of legal resident aliens from Germany during the period of the Second World War has gone largely undocumented in the half-century since its occurrence.² Attempts to bring this unique aspect of American history to light have generated controversy among some members of the scholarly community, including accusations of ethnic chauvinism. There have even been

unsubstantiated insinuations that research into the internment of German-Americans is part of an organized movement to alter history through publications "doubtless ... planted by the campaign" in reputable magazines, newspapers, and academic journals.³ Such contentions notwithstanding, there is considerable evidence that numerous members of the German-American community were afforded unduly harsh treatment as a result of wartime animosities. Further, many of these measures have yet to be fully explained or acknowledged by the United States government despite the enactment of legislation designed to apologize to, and even compensate, other victims of ethnic mistreatment during the period.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939, and mindful of its experience during World War I, the German-American community went to considerable lengths to avoid a repetition of the hysteria it had encountered scarcely a quarter-century earlier. On September 18 the *Cincinnati Freie Presse* published its platform for German-Americans, in which it clearly advocated a pro-American stance among its admonishments:

1. Absolute and unswerving loyalty to American Ideals and Principles;
2. Continued and consistent effort to inculcate that spirit in the mind and heart of every citizen of German extraction; and
3. Strict obedience to American laws and customs.⁴

A similar perspective was voiced in New York in December 1939 by *Youth Outlook*, a monthly publication of the

German American League for Culture (Youth Federation), in which unity was seen as the key to preventing a recurrence of anti-German sentiment:

We do not stand alone in our desire to prevent the return of the pogrom-like atmosphere which, in 1917, made life miserable for loyal and democratic citizens of German descent. ...The young people of this country will never sacrifice a constitution and Bill of Rights for the "right" to participate in the war whose only issue is the domination of the world—certainly no cause to die for. The German-American Youth Federation fights all attempts of reaction to create another "liberty cabbage" hysteria. It does this by proving that we German-Americans are loyal Americans.⁵

In spite of widespread efforts by the German-American community to distance itself from the strains of Nazism emanating from Germany during the 1930s, considerably more attention was generated by a relative few organizations such as the German-American Bund, consisting of a small but vocal minority of fascist sympathizers who openly expressed support for Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. Shortly after American entry into World War II on the side of the Allies, prominent German-American scholar Carl Wittke warned against the effect of such rabble-rousers in the fear that their activities would undermine the pro-American stance of a large majority of German-American organizations:

Like those who belonged to other racial strains and were intrigued by the alleged virtues of fascism, a relatively small number of German-born and native Americans of German stock, were attracted, before Pearl Harbor, by the swastika and [German-American Bund leader] Fritz Kuhn's aping of gangster meth-

ods, storm trooper camps, parades, and uniforms in the United States. But anti-Nazi leagues were also organized among German stock to combat Nazi influences, and many German societies were slit into violently hostile groups. In the nationwide debate over isolationism, the majority of the German element probably agreed, for the most part, with that 75 percent American majority whom the various polls of public opinion reported as opposed to American intervention in Europe.⁶

But such pleas fell upon deaf ears in a number of quarters. During the late 1930s and early 1940s numerous sensational reports circulated, particularly along the east coast, about Bund activities real and imagined. Far from being fodder for disreputable publications, the notices often were given added credence by their appearance in some of the most respected newspapers in America: in October 1940 the New York Times published an Associated Press dispatch on the testimony of a former member of the German-American Bund before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Despite a lack of corroboration for the account, the organization dutifully reported that the Bund had planned to march on Wall Street and hang "some big bankers," with the inference that Adolf Hitler might personally select the date for the action. Further accounts maintained that a "few hundred" members of the New York City police force were sympathetic to the activities of the Bund, and that the organization sponsored a German-language school in the Yorkville section of town, with the specific aim of indoctrinating sons and daughters of German immigrants in Nazi ideology.⁷ Invariably, such reports colored the perception of the German-American community as a whole and contributed to a changing per-

ception of German legal residents aliens from that of a benign presence to a possible threat to national security interests upon American entry into the war.

In June 1942 a confidential memorandum from the Bureau of Intelligence summarized the public mood relative to German and Italian aliens in the eastern United States based on a survey of residents of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and New Haven. Forty-seven percent of respondents believed Italians to be loyal to the American cause, while forty-three percent felt that few or no Germans were so. Only one percent of those polled opined that Italians were the most dangerous of alien groups, compared to forty percent who selected the Germans. Most importantly, while as much as sixty percent of respondents believed the treatment of Italian legal resident aliens by the United States government had been "about right," sixty-three percent felt that government treatment of German aliens had not been strict enough. Further according to the poll, Philadelphia was the east coast city most suspicious of German legal resident aliens and most anxious to take strict actions to curtail their liberties; New York and Boston were seen as similarly inclined "to be drastic with Germans." In support of the findings, the Bureau of Intelligence maintained that the number of ideological fascists within the German-American community was "considerably higher than that among the Italian-Americans and may be regarded as a significantly high minority," although the concession was made that there was "obviously no way of knowing exactly what proportion of German-Americans may be so described."⁸

As early as September 6, 1939, in an effort to identify which German aliens might be considered subversive, President

Franklin D. Roosevelt directed the Federal Bureau of Investigation to compile a roster of "individuals, both aliens and citizens of the United States, on whom there is information available to indicate that their presence at liberty in this country in time of war or national emergency would be dangerous to the public peace and safety of the United States."⁹ As a result, the so-called "ABC List" was generated which prioritized members of the German-American community from most to least likely to commit subversive activity. The master list was compiled primarily from the membership rosters of German-American societies, particularly those such as the German-American Bund known to have direct ties to Germany, subscription lists from German-language magazines and newspapers and German-American newsletters, and reports from confidential informants who often had no direct evidence of wrongdoing by members of the German-American community.¹⁰

Identification of potentially troublesome aliens was made simpler in the summer of 1940, when the Alien Registration Act of 1940 was enacted. Although the measure was introduced under the premise that it would safeguard German and selected other legal resident aliens from undue hardship or persecution, the government reserved the right to punish aliens who did not comply fully with the letter of the law; violation of the restrictions listed on the reverse of each alien identification card subjected offenders to possible detention and even internment. Clearly public opinion was on the side of the government. In response to a Gallup poll of June 10, 1940, in which those surveyed were asked if individuals who were not citizens of the United States should register with the government, ninety-five percent of respondents answered "yes."

As of late December 1940 roughly 5,000,000 aliens had filed the appropriate registration papers, and before the end of May 1941 over 950,000 aliens in New York City alone had undergone the process."

The ultimate benefit of alien registration to the federal government became evident in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor bombing on December 7, 1941. Faced with the prospect of American entry into an increasingly global, armed conflict, authorities quickly moved to detain aliens from Axis nations as a first strike against potential sabotage and treasonous activity. Although the United States did not formally enter into war with Germany until December 11, the first arrests and detention of German legal resident aliens deemed a security risk took place on December 7 and 8; as of 12:30 p.m. on December 9, a total of 620 German aliens had been taken into custody by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, including 47 by the New York field division district, 27 by the Newark branch, 23 by Philadelphia, 17 by Boston, 15 by New Haven, and 10 by Baltimore.¹² That the United States had formulated specific plans as to how to handle German legal resident aliens and suspicious Americans of German extraction was demonstrated by former Assistant Attorney General James Rowe, in testimony before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians during the early 1980s:

I found at the time [December 7, 1941] that there had been a planning commission at the Department of Justice, a war planning committee, whatever you wish to call it, that had been operating for about a year or six months on the theory that we might get into war. Also on the theory which proved correct that our enemies would be the Japanese, the Germans, and the Italians. And what

they were doing was trying to make a selection of the German, Italian, and Japanese aliens, enemy aliens we might have thought were dangerous. The program worked quite well; we picked up right after Pearl Harbor about 60,000 enemy aliens—I think mostly German, a large number of Italians, and a large number of Japanese. And we thought we were off to a pretty good run.¹³

For the duration of the war, the east coast provided the area with the greatest number of apprehensions of German legal resident aliens; between December 7, 1941 and June 30, 1945, New York led the list of arrests by state with 2,291, followed at a considerable distance by New Jersey (756); Pennsylvania (388); Connecticut (92); Massachusetts (58); and Maryland (56).¹⁴ A memorandum dated December 8, 1941, from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover made clear that preparations for the detention and possible internment of German legal resident aliens had been made well in advance of the Pearl Harbor bombing; among individuals "considered for custodial detention" were 636 German aliens, 1,694 individuals of German descent whose citizenship was unknown, and 1,393 American citizens considered sympathetic to Germany—a clear indication that the prospect of arrest and internment of German-Americans extended to the American-born as well as the German-born.¹⁵

In the aftermath of American entry into World War II, numerous measures were undertaken in traditional German-American communities to safeguard against the prospect of sabotage. In Ohio, officials in Cincinnati placed barbed wire around the main city water works building in January 1942, and Cleveland authorities instituted an ordinance forbidding the use of bright lights between midnight and 6:00 a.m.¹⁶ As

early as January 5 aliens nationwide were required to turn in all firearms, radio transmitters, short wave radio receivers, and cameras to local police; the list was quickly amended to include weapons or implements of war such as: bombs; ammunition; signal devices; codes or ciphers; sketches and photographs of military installations; and papers, documents or books in which there might be invisible writing.¹⁷ The spontaneity of the additional measure became evident in short order, when authorities were forced to concede that there was no practical way to determine whether or not there was invisible writing in a given book, as well as that no sane-thinking alien was likely to enter a police headquarters with a bomb to turn in.

The formation of alien hearing boards added a new dimension to the fate of German legal resident aliens. Formed in the immediate aftermath of the Pearl Harbor bombing and the early detention of enemy aliens, the boards were established in all ninety-four federal judicial districts and were composed of five citizens—only three of whom presided over a given hearing—from lists submitted by local district attorneys to the Department of Justice. In hearing the case of a given alien, the board was empowered to recommend one of three possible outcomes: 1) outright release of the alien, due to a lack of evidence of wrongdoing; 2) conditional parole, in cases where sufficient doubt remained regarding the trustworthiness of the alien that the individual would be required to check in with authorities on a regular basis; and 3) internment at a designated center for the duration of the war due to a perceived security risk. Although federal authorities maintained that the purpose of the boards was for aliens to have the opportunity to present their case

for release or parole, the hearing process was heavily slanted in favor of the government. Although aliens could have friends or family members vouch for their character, they were allowed neither to argue the particulars of the case against them nor to object to lines of questioning and evidence presented. Aliens were not allowed to retain legal counsel to argue on their behalf. The government, on the other hand, was able to present its accusations against a given alien without revealing the source; at no point were aliens allowed to confront their accuser.

The internment of German legal resident aliens and selected American-born members of the German-American community remains to this day the most problematic issue with regard to the treatment of ethnic Germans in the United States during the 1940s. While only a small minority of all German legal resident aliens and other German-Americans were targeted specifically for custodial detention, wartime internment, and eventual deportation to Germany, the number of individuals affected by such action remains considerably higher than most estimates have provided during subsequent decades. In 1991, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Pearl Harbor bombing, widely respected newsmen, such as Clarence Page of the "McNeil-Lehrer News Hour" and John Chancellor of NBC News, reported that no European-Americans—German, Italian, or otherwise—were interned during World War II. Such assertions are far from the truth. According to an Immigration and Naturalization letter of August 9, 1948, 10,906 Germans were received by the INS under the enemy alien program, including those from outside of the continental United States and those who were voluntarily

interned in order to join families already in internment centers. Furthermore, although native Japanese and American-born Japanese-Americans were out of internment camps by the end of June 1946, the last group of German legal resident aliens, roughly 100 in number, was finally released in June 1948—over three years after the end of World War II in Europe; authorities have yet to explain why it took so long to conclude the internment of ethnic Germans to a close.¹⁹

To facilitate the incarceration process, detention and internment centers were established in various parts of the United States, in each case under the jurisdiction of one of three separate authorities: 1) military forces; 2) the Immigration and Naturalization Service; and 3) the Department of Justice. Along the eastern seaboard several camps were under the authority of the military, including Fort Howard and Fort Meade in Maryland and Camp Upton in New York. But the most famous of such centers, Ellis Island, was maintained by the INS and proved to be the last facility to hold alien enemies, until June 1948. Long known as a beacon for immigrants, Ellis Island served as a multipurpose facility during the World War II era, when it was used as a processing center for new internees from the east coast, as a collection point for internees waiting to be reassigned after the closure of another internment center, and as a last stop for those aliens designated for repatriation or deportation. Despite the historic nature of the Ellis Island facility, many individuals directly affected by such actions found the environs less than hospitable, as demonstrated by the account of one former internee:

At Ellis Island you were confined to this big room. It was a real, total bore. We did a lot of talking and a lot

of card playing and a lot of waiting. I painted for ten cents an hour because I needed that for cigarettes, but above all because you needed to keep yourself busy. Otherwise you'd go daffy.²⁰

For a variety of practical reasons, including the minimal possibility of successful escape, the larger internment centers were located in geographically barren areas. In terms of size the preeminent internment facility was located outside Crystal City, Texas, serving as a family camp from December 12, 1942, until 1947. Located 110 miles southwest of San Antonio, the camp was heavily fortified with fencing and guard towers. Armed guards were on patrol twenty-four hours per day. By night, floodlights illuminating the perimeter of the camp were bright enough to be seen almost to the Mexican border. Escape from the center was highly unlikely, especially in the summer months. The camp was located "in an extremely isolated spot," and temperatures in the vicinity often climbed to well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit from June into September.²¹

While most men in the Crystal City camp were forcibly interned, many of the women and children were classified as "voluntary" internees, joining the men due to family and economic hardship. Though many of the adult males were foreign-born, mostly in Germany and Japan, "practically all children and many women" internees were American born and raised.²² Families often had individual cottages, but privacy was otherwise very limited; only a few cottages had private bathrooms, with the majority of people using public showers and latrines. The camp laundry handled the clothing of over 4,000 internees, with a sewing shop and tailoring shop providing additional services; the tailoring shop alone

was permitted to charge a nominal fee for its services. For those not eating in their own cottage, a chow line was used to feed internees in a cafeteria setting. Regarding postal matters, there were few restrictions placed on the number of letters an internee could send or receive; however, censors fluent in English, German, and Spanish monitored all letters and packages, altering any correspondence deemed unacceptable before mail was passed along. Restrictions on personal property also were common. Foodstuffs were rationed at a general store, depending on the size of the family. New arrivals to the camp had their valuables placed in a safe in exchange for a receipt. Living quarters were assigned in advance of arrival.

A "very restricted variety" of clothing could be bought at Crystal City, by using rationing cards or, on rare occasions, plastic money which also was used at the camp.²³ From the beginning of their internment, detainees were placed in charge of maintaining their own homes; internees were obliged to use personal funds to beautify their cottages and allotted property, with flowers and other home improvements. Called "morale builders" by federal officials, beautification was undertaken by many internees, particularly among those of German stock; a Japanese gardener cared for the public grounds, at government expense. Chores assigned to internees were divided by ethnic groups in many cases: Japanese internees did most of the farming, as "the Germans did not like farming;" German males were given primary responsibility for doing machine work, as well as repair work on machinery and motor vehicles at the camp. While Japanese women often handled cooking and medicinal matters in a public setting, German women

were often left to their own devices, as "generally speaking, the German women declined to work outside of the home."²⁴

Many other everyday chores, such as hauling garbage and delivering ice, were done on a rotation basis, with internees of all backgrounds working a minimum number of hours each month. Internees wanting regular jobs often received them, at the rate of ten cents per hour, for twenty to thirty hours per week. Young internees tended to use such earnings as pocket money with which they could buy cigarettes and drinks or pay for an evening out. Aliens also procured and prepared some of their own food; numerous internees maintained small gardens at their cottages where they grew their own fresh vegetables. A portion of Crystal City's meat, dairy, and produce came from a farm located outside of the camp and maintained by aliens under the direction of the government and the guidance of a Texas rancher. Government authorities placed great importance on providing internees with meals of high nutritional value, claiming that quality food also was "good for morale." The farm's cows provided some of the 2,500 quarts of milk needed per day in the camp, particularly for children, who numbered approximately 1,600 at one point.²⁵

Recreational activities helped internees to take their minds off their plight and, in addition, provided camp residents with the opportunity to indulge some of their cultural, athletic, and hobby interests. In Crystal City, a camp orchestra was staffed largely by those of German stock, providing a chance to play and hear German classical music. Lectures provided educational, cultural, and occasionally political viewpoints. Many German detainees took up soccer for athletic competition and exercise, while oth-

ers also played basketball and softball. Japanese internees not otherwise involved in those sports took turns at wrestling and a sort of horseless jousting as a means of physical exercise. A large swimming pool which had previously been used as a tank for irrigating the nearby farm helped make summer heat more bearable for all. Unfortunately, seepage problems caused mud holes and unsanitary conditions, forcing the pool to close until internees could fix it with concrete at a cost of \$2,500.00 to the government.²⁶ The International Red Cross, as well as Swiss and Spanish legations, regularly inspected the camp, among other things making sure that internees had adequate access to sports equipment, radios, newspapers, and books.²⁷ Inside the camp German internees published a news page, the *Lager-Nachrichten*, on a weekly basis. The paper provided information of interest, in German, such as camp concerns, recommendations on matters including how to send Christmas greetings (and comply with censorship regulations), dates and times of parties given for those departing the camp, library news, and dates and times of camp soccer matches, including starting lineups and names of players designated to be substitutes.²⁸ In addition to parties, dances were held regularly for young people and school children as a way of maintaining a social life within the camp. Dances were held regularly on Friday and Saturday nights, with big band records by Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, among others, providing the beat. However, not all German internees took kindly to dances at the camp. According to one camp resident, "that was kind of frowned on. Because the folks would say, 'You're dancing—and the boys are dying?' They meant the German boys."²⁹

Some former internees have provided insight into life within World War II internment facilities through personal accounts of their experiences. Many of those who were interned during the 1940s have gone to their graves in silence, unwilling or afraid to speak of the ordeal out of feelings of shame and disgrace. Still others have spoken of their experiences, but only under the condition that their last names not be revealed. One such individual, known simply as John, was born in Philadelphia in 1932 to German parents who had emigrated to the United States.³⁰ Although he shared a typically American interest in baseball and flying with his friends from his earliest days, during the war years John and his siblings were taunted by other children for their German heritage. His father was arrested after neighbors accused him of building bombs in the basement of the family home. Although John's father was never convicted of any crime, he was sent initially to a holding facility in New Jersey and later to the Crystal City internment camp, where his family chose to join him for the duration of the war rather than live without him. After hostilities with Germany ceased, John and his family were faced with a most difficult choice: if the entire family—even those members born in America—did not accept deportation to Germany, the father would be imprisoned for evading the draft during the war. Before the end of 1945 John's family thus found itself in Nuremberg, hardly welcome among Germans who saw the new arrivals more as conquering enemies than friends. Later John would join the U.S. Army in Germany and serve in the Korean War, before eventually returning to the United States to stay in 1967. But the scars of the internment experience were slow to fade, and when John later sought counseling at a veterans' hospital, he received a stun-

ning reply: "I told the shrinks that I'd been in a U.S. internment camp. They called me a liar. They said I was making it up." Many former internees encountered such disbelief

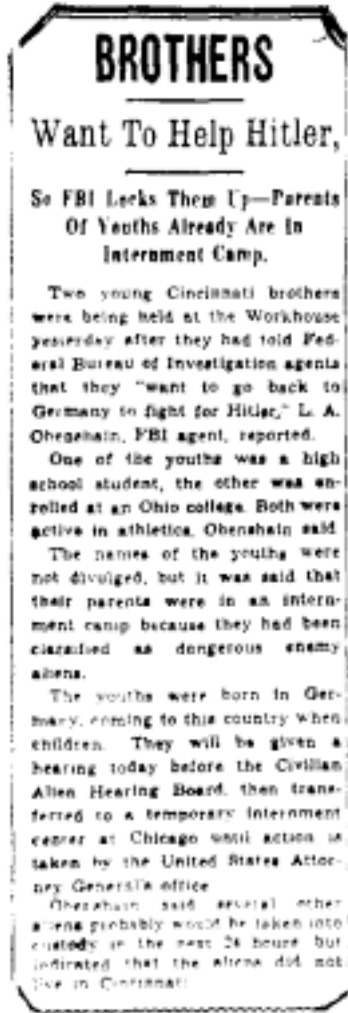


Figure 1: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 24 March 1943
 Note next to last paragraph: "They will be given ...then transferred...."

when they attempted to tell their story, leading to many cases of fear and guilt that often have taken years, even decades, to resolve. "We [children] always felt guilty for what happened in Germany," said John. "We felt like we deserved this punishment because

our parents were German. Looking back on it now, that bothers me. My parents were good, simple people."³¹

Another former internee who in recent years has spoken freely of his wartime experience is Eberhard Fuhr. Born in Germany in 1925, Eberhard emigrated with his family to the United States in 1927. Despite a growing anti-German sentiment during the 1930s, the Fuhrs chose not to seek citizenship. In 1940 the Fuhr family complied with the Alien Registration Act and continued to abide by restrictions placed on enemy aliens after the outbreak of war in December 1941. In August 1942, Carl and Anna Fuhr were arrested without warning as enemy aliens and sent to the Seagoville, Texas, internment facility soon thereafter, before being transferred to the Crystal City camp. A younger brother of Eberhard, Gerhard, at the time twelve years old, went into internment with his parents and was classified as a "voluntary" internee. Had he chosen not to go with them, he would have been sent to an orphanage. The internment of his parents and younger brother came as a complete surprise to Eberhard, who found out the news upon returning from summer camp in North Carolina: "I didn't know about this until I walked in the door and said, "Where's Mom and Pop?" Julius said, "They were interned two weeks ago. We didn't want to get you upset, because you couldn't do anything about it anyway."³²

When Julius went away to college in the fall, with a football scholarship, Eberhard was left alone at home, paying for groceries with money earned from a paper route. After the football season, Julius returned home to help maintain the family home, taking a job in a local brewery to pay the bills. Eberhard had his first encounter with federal authorities in November 1942.

They asked him to come downtown with them late at night to answer questions about his family and his loyalties in the event that he would be drafted at age eighteen. In the course of the interrogation, Fuhr was repeatedly confronted with "evidence," preceded with phrases such as "Somebody said that ..." and "Some neighbors said ..."³³ On March 23, 1943, Eberhard was taken out of his English class at Woodward High School by his principal without warning and was apprehended by two federal authorities. The seventeen-year-old high school senior was handcuffed outside the building. The authorities then took him to the brewery, where Julius also was apprehended, and then to the police station for booking on suspicion. The next morning federal authorities questioned the brothers at the federal building in downtown Cincinnati. The interrogation touched upon aspects of the family's life as German legal resident aliens and members of the German-American community, including questions such as: "Five years ago did you say that Hitler was good for Germany?;" "Did you go to a German American Day at Coney Island?;" and "Your cousin from Germany ... just came up the Ohio River in a submarine and wants you to put him up. What are you going to tell him?"³⁴

Although the stated purposes of the interrogation was to determine if sufficient reason existed for arrest and possible internment, the Fuhr brothers soon found out that the outcome was predetermined:

They call[ed] my brother in for his hearing, and while he's in there I'm reading the paper. And it says, "Two brothers arrested. They will have a hearing, and then they will be interned." I said to this FBI agent: "It says right here were going to have the hearing—I haven't even had my

hearing yet, but it says 'They will be interned.'" ...I was kind of numb.³⁵

After the hearing the brothers were driven home, told to pick up two changes of clothes, and then driven back to jail. The next morning, they were driven to Chicago to a detention center there without the opportunity to secure their home in Cincinnati or take personal possessions with them. The sudden upheaval in an otherwise routine life left Eberhard shaken; the German enemy alien considered himself far more American than German:

Up to that point I was a happy-go-lucky high school jock. I didn't do too well in school with my grades. I just played football, baseball, and had a lot of fun. I wanted to be a professional baseball player. I wanted to be the best catcher that ever played for the Cincinnati Reds.³⁶

As boys growing up in America, Julius and Eberhard always regarded themselves as Americans, even though others pointed out that they were German by birth and citizenship. According to Eberhard, "I grew up knowing I was a German, because everybody in the neighborhood reminded me of it. As a matter of fact, I couldn't even speak German."³⁷

In July 1943 Julius and Eberhard were sent by train to join their parents and their brother Gerhard at the INS family camp in Crystal City. The Fuhr family resided there until April 1947, when they were sent back to Cincinnati to prepare for possible deportation. At the time some of the Crystal City internees were being repatriated to Germany. By the end of the war, approximately 4,450 Germans and their families had been deported. Though Eberhard was largely unfamiliar with Germany, he signed up to be repatriated in 1944; his then-girlfriend Millie and her family were being

deported, and he wanted to follow them. Like many people, Fuhr had had enough, and saw repatriation as the best way to get away from internment life: "[Officials asked,] 'why did I really want to go back? Did I want to kill Americans, or did I just want some freedom?' I was military age, but then they sent some other guys there that were military age too. I just wanted to get out."³⁸ After his internment ended in 1947, Eberhard went to college and eventually took a job as a salesman for Shell Oil. After becoming a student at Ohio University in 1949, he applied to become a United States citizen and was naturalized in 1955.³⁹

In recent years some former internees have shown a greater willingness to speak of their wartime experience, in an effort to make their story known and correct inaccuracies which have plagued scholarship in this area. At the forefront is the widely held but mistaken viewpoint that only ethnic Japanese were interned during World War II. In fact, according to documentation compiled by two contemporary scholars of the internment issue, out of 25,655 individuals interned during the war era, 14,426, or 56.6 percent, were European and European-American, the largest concentration of whom were German.⁴⁰ In an effort to create a record of wartime internment in the United States, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians was created in July 1980, with the stated purpose of reviewing the relocation and internment of American citizens. Operating under the widely held presumption that other ethnic groups were not subjected to wartime internment or relocation, the committee did not seek, hear, or permit testimony from German-Americans; according to Committee chairwoman Joan Z. Bernstein, the group was "charged with documenting the

record of the internment of Japanese Americans ... Peripherally the Commission has touched on the German-American experience during the war but has not by any means focused on the issue."⁴¹

With input nonexistent from European-American individuals, it came as little surprise that when the official report of the Commission, "Personal Justice Denied," was released in December 1982, it maintained that only Japanese-Americans had been the victims of wartime internment. In fairness to the Commission, the vast majority of non-voluntary ethnic Germans interned during the war years were, strictly speaking, legal resident aliens rather than American citizens. Yet the use of citizenship as the sole barometer of whether one could be considered "German" or "American," while practical from a legal standpoint, fails to distinguish between individuals with firm roots in the German homeland and those who, despite their birth abroad, maintained few if any connections there, linguistically or culturally, a circumstance made clear by the case of Julius and Eberhard Fuhr as well as hundreds of other, similarly affected individuals. Further, while there is no question that members of the Japanese-American community were subjected to inappropriate detention and internment during the period, longstanding reports of wholesale arrest and internment of Japanese aliens does not withstand the scrutiny of statistical evidence: only 5,428, or six percent, of the 90,000 registered aliens of Japanese origin were arrested, and only 11,229, or nine percent, of all individuals of Japanese ancestry—both legal resident aliens and United States citizens—were interned.⁴²

The most controversial aspect of the internment question has been the issue of apologies given by the government, and

reparation payments made to former internees and their families. From July 1948 through September 1992, a total of nine laws were passed with the purpose of providing formal apologies and financial compensation to former Japanese-American internees. The most significant of the nine measures was Public Law 100-383, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which acknowledged the unjust nature of Japanese-American evacuation, relocation, and internment. The legislation offered a public apology on behalf of the people of the United States; and provided for restitution to individuals of Japanese ancestry who had been interned. In sum approximately 60,000 former Japanese-American internees and their dependents were empowered to receive payments of \$20,000 per person from a total pool of \$1.25 billion. Given that the legislation was based largely on findings presented in "Personal Justice Denied," most notably that members of the Japanese-American community had been singled out for custodial detention and internment, ethnic Germans and other European-Americans were excluded from the action. While there are many who seek compensation along the lines of that granted to members of the Japanese-American community, there are others who simply wish to see the historical record set straight, to gain official acknowledgment of the fact that ethnic Germans and others were also persecuted during the World War II era. Years after his internment, Eberhard Fuhr insisted that he sought neither monetary compensation nor an apology for his internment as a German legal resident alien; his goal was formal recognition of the internment of members of

the German-American community, particularly after the war had ended:

I don't think [German legal resident aliens] necessarily should be compensated, [though] ... guys like [my brother Gerhard] should be compensated. He's a native; because his parents are considered dangerous enemy aliens, and his brothers are considered dangerous enemy aliens, he's bearing this terrible guilt and he shouldn't have to ... I do think there should be recognition that the Germans were indeed interned, and it really wasn't necessary to have these phony hearings where no witnesses were permitted and counsel was denied ... They really didn't have a right to keep us interned after the war was over.⁴³

The sentiments expressed by Fuhr reflect not only a personal concern, but also an awareness that a fundamental ignorance of the events of the past can lead to their repetition. The increasing willingness of Fuhr and others to speak out about their past, despite a longstanding fear of intimidation or ridicule, has been the first step in the effort by victims of World War II-era persecution to present the other side of the story, one which for over fifty years has gone largely unnoticed and unreported. Through continued efforts to bring these accounts to light, and ongoing scholarly research into the events of the past, it has become more likely that the full story of ethnic intimidation, up to and including the arrest and internment of enemy aliens, will become a well-known matter of historical record, allowing for a fuller account of the German-American experience during one of its most turbulent periods.

— Timothy J. Holian
Missouri Western State College

LAGER - NACHRICHTEN

Wöchentliches Mitteilungsblatt der Deutschen Gruppe

Nr. 42.

CRYSTAL CITY, TEXAS

24. November 1945

Wahl des Lagersprechers

Kamerad Emil Beyer wird die Lagergeschäfte bis zur Abfahrt der Rückwanderer weiterführen, um sie dann bis zur Neuwahl dem Lagerausschuss zu übergeben. Die übliche Wahlversammlung wird voraussichtlich am Sonnabend, den 1. Dezember, stattfinden. Darüber wird aber noch genaue Mitteilung erfolgen.

Weihnachtspost.

Es wird hier noch einmal darauf hingewiesen, dass bis einschliesslich 5. Januar 1946 Weihnachts- und Neujahrsgriisse an Adressaten innerhalb der kontinentalen Vereinigten Staaten in unbeschränkter Anzahl gesandt werden können. Dabei ist aber zu beachten, dass keinerlei Mitteilungen auf die Karten geschrieben, noch dem Gruss beigelegt werden dürfen, da diese Glückwünsche sonst den üblichen Zensurvorschriften unterliegen. Die Postbehörden empfehlen die Absendung solcher Glückwünsche zu den Poststufen "erster Klasse," weil diese Post zuerst befördert und abgeliefert wird. Briefe "erster Klasse" unterliegen zudem dem Rücklieferungszwang an den Absender, sofern sie nicht bestellt werden können, während das bei Drucksachen nicht der Fall ist.

Abschiedsabend

Wie angekündigt findet heute Abend im Auditorium ein Kameradschaftsabend statt, der gleichzeitig die Abschiedsfeier für die heimkehrenden Kameraden ist. Es wird nur eine beschränkte Anzahl von Tischen zur Verfügung haben, empfiehlt es sich, dass alle Lagerbewohner, die diese Veranstaltung

besuchen wollen, ihre Tische und Stühle am Sonnabend nachmittag in der Zeit von 3 bis 5 Uhr mit Namen versehen im Auditorium platzieren. Ebenso wollen Sie bitte Ihre eigene Tischdecke mitbringen. Wir werden versuchen, die Tische wunschgemäß zu arrangieren. Ebenfalls müssen Sie Ihre eigenen Biergläser stellen, wenn Sie nicht aus der Flasche trinken wollen oder können.

Buchgeschenk

Der Lagerausschuss hat beschlossen, es jedem Heimkehrer zu gestatten, sich aus der Leihbücherei zwei Bücher auszuwählen und diese als Geschenk mitzunehmen. Es ist bei der Auswahl darauf zu achten, dass keine Bücher gewählt werden, die den Stempel der Y. M. C. A. tragen. Die Bücherei ist entsprechend angewiesen worden.

Fachbücherei

Wer sich für bestimmte Bücher aus dieser Bücherei interessiert, kann dieselben jetzt dort für einen geringen Betrag käuflich erwerben. Der Erlös wird dem Heiseführer der jetzt abfahrenden Gruppe übergeben, um damit während der Überfahrt dort unterstützend einzugreifen, wo es Not tut.

Fussball.

Am kommenden Sonntag wird das Rückspiel gegen die Japaner ausgetragen. Spielbeginn 4 Uhr nachm. Tracht: Dunkle Hose, helle Hemd. Die folgenden Kameraden werden für uns antreten:

Strassberger, Jacobs, Stügel
Schrock, A. Fuhr, J. Fuhr,
Harten, Schmelzer, Heins, Schwartau, Heik,
Ersatz: G. Fuhr, Jans, Lochman.
Schiedsrichter: Reinhold

GROSSER KAMERADSCHAFTSABEND

Heute abend - im Auditorium - 8,30 Uhr
Buntes Unterhaltungsprogramm
Freier Bierverkauf - Eingelegte Heringe und Kartoffelsalat
Kaffee und Berliner Pfannkuchen

Figure 2: Newspaper published in the Crystal City camp six months after the end of the war in Europa



Figure 3: Camp Entertainment

Notes

- ¹For a detailed overview of the World War I internment of members of the German-American community, see Gerald H. Davis, "Orgelsdorf: A World War I Internment Camp in America," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 26(1991): 249-265.
- ²In recent years there has been an increase in the amount of scholarship performed in this area. For examples of such research work in book form, see Timothy J. Holian, *The German-Americans and World War II: An Ethnic Experience* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996); Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed., *German-Americans in the World Wars* (Munich: K.G Saur, 1995); and Arnold Krammer, *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America's German Alien Internees* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).
- ³See Jeffrey J. Sammons, "Were German-Americans Interned During World War II? A Question concerning Scholarly Standards and Integrity," *The German Quarterly* 71.1 (1998) 77. Sammons criticizes recent scholarship in this area as a "campaign" by German-Americans to receive the same compensatory treatment afforded the Japanese-American community in 1988, and notes his fear that such an effort, "were [it] to be made public, might bring ridicule or worse on our fragile and beleaguered discipline." (73)
- ⁴"Our Platform," *Cincinnati Freie Presse*, 18 September 1939.
- ⁵"No More 'Liberty Cabbage'," *Youth Outlook German-American Monthly* 2 (1939): 1. An editorial in the same publication reinforced the viewpoint that a large base of support existed for American interests within the German-American community: "Hitler's oppressive rule can only be permanently abolished by the oppressed themselves. We support the fight of the German people for their liberation and we regard it as our duty to preserve the real German culture and the traditional democracy of the United States. We must prevent a repetition of the chauvinism of the last war. We must not fall again into the trap of war propaganda. That is why we celebrate the German Day. It will be a demonstration against fascism and for peace and liberty." (4)
- ⁶Carl Wittke, "German Immigrants and Their Children," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 223 (Sep. 1942): 90. For a detailed discussion of the German-American Bund and its impact upon the perception of the German-American community, see Susan Canedy, *America's Nazis: A Democratic Dilemma* (Menlo Park, CA: Markgraf Publications Group, 1990); and Leland V. Bell, "The Failure of Nazism in America: The German-American Bund, 1936-1941," *Political Science Quarterly* 85.4 (1970): 585-599.
- ⁷"Says Bund Mapped Wall St. Hangings," *New York Times*, 5 October 1940.
- ⁸Office of War Information, Bureau of Intelligence, "Enemy Alien Minorities in Eastern Cities," *Special Report Number 15, Division of Surveys*, 22 June 1942. A copy of this memorandum is in the possession of the author.
- ⁹J. Edgar Hoover, memorandum to Special Agents in Charge, 6 December 1939, as cited in Arthur Jacobs, "Fifty Years of Silence," *Society for German-American Studies Newsletter* 12.2 (1991): 10-11.
- ¹⁰Stephen R. Fox, *The Unknown Internment: An Oral History of the Relocation of Italian Americans During World War II* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990) 152.
- ¹¹"10,200 Aliens Estimated To Have Registered Here," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 27 December 1940; "Aliens Total 12,271," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 March 1941.
- ¹²Information on the number of German legal resident aliens arrested by the FBI as of December 9, 1941 is taken from an unpublished graphic illustration, based on figures gleaned from declassified federal documentation and in the possession of the author.
- ¹³Personal Justice Denied, as cited in an unpublished paper by Arthur D. Jacobs and Joseph E. Fallon, "History Denied: The Internment of European-Americans": 8.
- ¹⁴Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, "Apprehensions, December 7, 1941 to June 30, 1945," Reference Document 100-2-4014, as prepared by Arthur D. Jacobs, 15 November 1990. According to Jacobs, the original document was declassified on August 17, 1990 and obtained via the Freedom of

Fragile and Beleaguered, Notes

Information and Privacy Act. With regard to specific eastern cities, the following number of apprehensions of German aliens were noted per FBI field office: Albany (77); Baltimore (53); Boston (57); Buffalo (48); New York (2,159); and Newark (756).

¹⁵John Edgar Hoover, "Memorandum for Major Lemuel B. Schofield, Immigration and Naturalization Service," 8 December 1941.

¹⁶"Barbed Wire To Be Placed About Units of Waterworks To Guard Against Sabotage," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 Jan. 1942; "Blackout Fine \$100; First in Cleveland," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 5 June 1942. An interesting footnote was added to the Cincinnati experience when a WPA crew attempted to photograph the water works installation in June 1942. The men, said to "look Japanese" by some observers, were threatened with a hose by an overzealous engineer and investigated thoroughly by the FBI before being cleared; shortly after the incident Cincinnati police chief Eugene T. Weatherly stated, "They were very lucky that they were not shot." See "'Twas WPA, Not Japanese, Tried To Photograph Pumps," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 5 June 1942.

¹⁷"Cameras and Radios Called In," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 January 1942; "Bombs Are Added To Lists of Contraband As Aliens Relinquish Radios and Camera," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1 January 1942.

¹⁸W. P. Kelly, Assistant Commissioner, Immigration and Naturalization Service, letter to Mr. A. Vulliet, 9 August 1948. A copy of this letter may be found in Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed., *German-Americans in the World Wars 4* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1995) 1513.

¹⁹According to documents prepared by the Department of Justice, 118 ethnic Germans continued to reside in the Crystal City, Texas internment camp as of December 31, 1946—more than a year and a half after World War II had ceased in Europe. Among the 118 individuals were fourteen native-born Americans, children of internees who were forced to go into internment with one or more of their parents. Five others were brought from Latin American nations. For representative paperwork on enemy aliens held at Crystal City, Ellis Island, and other internment centers, see *German-Americans in the World Wars 4*: 2089-2253.

²⁰quoted in Kitry Krause, "Dangerous Enemy Alien," *Reader* 22, 48 (3 September 1993).

²¹Alien Enemy Detention Facility, film, United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1947. Produced by the Department of Justice, the film focused on the Crystal City camp as a representative internment center. The purpose of the production was to show that the government treated aliens in a decent and humane way, providing for a reasonable standard of living according to the conventions of the day. A confidential memorandum of April 28, 1943 demonstrates a commitment by the Department of Justice to the rights and privileges of the internees, in stressing that all were to be given a voice in internee affairs and allowed to make suggestions for improvements. See Don Heinrich Tolzmann, ed., *German-Americans in the World Wars 4* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1995) 1667-1670. Former internees with whom I have spoken are united in their viewpoint that they were treated well during their time in Crystal City, and that the facility offered a reasonable level of comfort given the circumstances. According to one former internee, "I think you have to separate the living conditions from the other things that make it a place of prison. From a standpoint of living conditions, you couldn't really get better. ...At Crystal City, you could get out, you could see the sun shine, you were with your family. We had movies twice a week, there were dances there." (Eberhard Fuhr, personal interview, 27 March 1993)

²²Alien Enemy Detention Facility film.

²³Alien Enemy Detention Facility film. While selected items could be purchased by internees at the camps, many preferred to bring personal property from home where possible. Included in the list of materials deemed acceptable for internees to take into the camps from outside were clothing items, toiletries, handicrafts, small toys, and photographs. Items which internees were not allowed to bring were pets of any type, household decorations, and any type of transportation. See *German-Americans in the World Wars 4*: 1864, 1980.

²⁴Alien Enemy Detention Facility film. For a list of specific kitchen and housekeeping chores performed by German internees as of October 1943, as well as general household rules, see

German-Americans in the World Wars 4: 1914-1916.

²⁵Alien Enemy Detention Facility film. Food requirements varied between German and Japanese internees, based on longstanding social customs as well as personal preferences. Some Japanese internees requested that less meat and more fish be served, in addition to regular portions of rice and vegetables. On the other hand, German complaints of inferior-quality meat (particularly in the case of lamb) were frequently heard, along with requests for at least one hot meal per day, chicken and bread on a regular basis, and more fresh vegetables and milk in the daily ration. See *German-Americans in the World Wars 4: 1903*. Copies of menus for internees at the Seagoville, Texas internment center are reproduced in *German-Americans in the World Wars 4: 1905-1906, 1982-1984*.

²⁶Alien Enemy Detention Facility film.

²⁷Krause "Dangerous Enemy Alien." Camp inspections were a regular component of ensuring that living conditions were adequate in the internment facilities. Primary areas of focus included general housing, washing and toilet areas, food preparation and cooking procedures, medical facilities, the canteen, and recreational and educational institutions. Several inspection reports have been preserved; copies of extant forms may be found in *German-Americans in the World Wars 4: 2045-2076*.

²⁸*Lager-Nachrichten: Wöchentliches Mitteilungsblatt der Deutschen Gruppe*, Crystal City, Texas 42, 24 November 1945. A copy of this publication was provided to the author by former internee Eberhard Fuhr.

²⁹quoted in Krause "Dangerous Enemy Alien."

³⁰In recent years John has opted to use his full name—John Voelkel, Jr.—in discussing his World War II-era internment and deportation experience. Among the ways in which he recently has made known his background is

through Recognition & Reparations, an organization which endeavors to foster an awareness of national origin bigotry.

³¹Alan Gathright, "Memories of Injustice," *San Jose Mercury News*, 2 January 1991.

³²Krause "Dangerous Enemy Alien."

³³Eberhard Fuhr, personal interview, 27 March 1993. The account Fuhr provides of his interrogation is consistent with that of other former detainees, according to Arthur Jacobs, a former internee who has compiled extensive documentation of the wartime internment of members of the German-American community.

³⁴quoted in Krause "Dangerous Enemy Alien."

³⁵quoted in Krause "Dangerous Enemy Alien." Proof of the allegation made by Fuhr is available in the article "Brothers Want To Help Hitler," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 24 March 1943. The specific passage referred to by Fuhr reads as follows: "[The Fuhr brothers] will be given a hearing today before the Civilian Alien Hearing Board, then transferred to a temporary internment center at Chicago until action is taken by the United States Attorney General's Office." Based on the article and its wording, it is apparent that the case of the Fuhr brothers was determined in advance of their arrest and hearing date, and that federal officials viewed their hearing simply as a formality before a final decision of internment was rendered.

³⁶quoted in Krause "Dangerous Enemy Alien."

³⁷Eberhard Fuhr, personal interview, 27 March 1993.

³⁸quoted in Krause "Dangerous Enemy Alien."

³⁹Eberhard Fuhr, personal interview, 27 March 1993.

⁴⁰cited in Jacobs and Fallon, "History Denied: The Internment of European-Americans," 1.

⁴¹cited in Jacobs and Fallon, "History Denied: The Internment of European-Americans," 2.

⁴²cited in Jacobs and Fallon, "History Denied: The Internment of European-Americans," 3.

⁴³Eberhard Fuhr, personal interview, 27 March 1993.

