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## Security, stability, or both? Peru's complexities in detaining German Peruvians

Brissa Campos Toscano

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Security, Stability, or Both?  
Peru's Complexities in Detaining German Peruvians

By  
Brissa Campos Toscano

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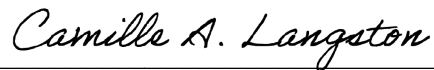
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To my readers, I extend my sincere thanks for taking the time to delve into my paper. It is my hope that together, we can illuminate this chapter in history and contribute to a richer understanding of the past.



## **Abstract**

The United States established internment camps during World War II, detaining families from Latin American Countries for national security, with a focus on German, Italian, and Japanese ethnicities (Roosevelt 1941). However, German ethnicity families living in Latin America who were taken to internment camps in Crystal City, Texas, are less visible in history, Jane Jarboe Russell's book "The Train to Crystal City" made some of the internees' stories more visible. I will contend that the principal reason for Peru's collaboration in the U.S-Latin American Internment Program was to obtain economic, political and social benefits from the United States which would enhance the country's stability rather than for a national threat to the continent. To demonstrate these, I will employ an approach of quantitative and qualitative data including historical analysis, oral interviews, and document reviews. The result of this paper is that Peru needed the U.S. influence and money for the country to obtain their stability. Furthermore, uncovers that a total of 16 individuals of German-Peruvian ethnicity families who lived in Crystal City Internment Camp during World War II, creating a more inclusive historical story which is now being ignored. Their stories reveal the internment reality and uncover the U.S.-Peruvians discriminatory removal with national security reasons. Finally, this study contributes valuable insights into the complexities of the International Internment Program during World War II. By uncovering this part of Peru's silent history from the experiences of German-Peruvian interns, I will fill a gap in World War II history inclusivity and neglect for so many years.

## Introduction

The history of civil rights during World War II addresses the domestic internment of Japanese Americans in detail, but it fails to adequately address the deportation of German individuals from other 19 Latin American countries, including Peru, and the reasons why that country would deport its own residents to the United States. From 1941 to 1948, Peru was the country who deported the biggest number of German and Japanese Peruvians with 702 and 1799 individuals respectively (“White to Lafoon Memo, 30 Jan 1946” 1946).

To address the gap in historical knowledge and insufficient attention to the experiences of German Peruvian internees, I wish to demonstrate that Peru’s decision to collaborate with the U.S. in engaging in the Latin American campaign to deport, detain and intern so-called “enemy aliens” on behalf of its allies was not solely driven by an unfounded national security concern. Rather, it emerged from a quest for the country’s economic, political and social stability. This decision significantly affected the lives of German Peruvians, making their narratives valuable contributions to both World War II and Peruvian History.

World War history scholars and advocates often focus on Japanese Peruvians as their lives were mostly affected due to events like Pearl Harbor (Natsu Taylor Saito 1998, 275). Researchers like Edwards Barnhart<sup>1</sup> (1962) and Natsu Saito<sup>2</sup> (1998) have done incredible work in analyzing

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Barnhart's authority in discussing Japanese internees from Peru stems from his esteemed position as a scholar in Latin American history, specializing in migration and transnational movements. With expertise in this field, Barnhart offers nuanced insights into the geopolitical and socio-cultural factors shaping the experiences of Japanese individuals during World War II. His disciplinary vantage points, grounded in extensive research, bolster the credibility and reliability of his analysis, reinforcing his authority in interpreting historical events.

<sup>2</sup> Natsu Taylor Saito's expertise in justice discourse in "Justice Held Hostage" is grounded in her distinguished role as a legal scholar specializing in critical race theory, civil rights, and social justice. As a Professor of Law at Georgia State University College of Law, Saito's interdisciplinary approach combines law, sociology, and critical studies, enabling her to offer insightful analyses that bridge legal theory with societal concerns. Her perspective, informed by academic scholarship and practical legal experience, underscores the authority and relevance of her work in examining justice and inequality within contemporary society.



the daily lives before, during and after the internment, but it mostly includes the experiences of Japanese Peruvians. The impact of the United States and Peru's collaboration to deport the German Peruvian community is rarely touch in history. Papers like "Daily Life at Crystal City Internment Camp" by Caitlin Dietze, 2016 or "Expolios, Deportaciones e Internamientos: El Destino de los Alemanes durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial" by Luis Fernando Molina Londono, 2017,<sup>3</sup> analyze the memoirs of Germans individuals during internment, but rarely touches base in the political, economic, and social reasonings in the collaboration of Latin American countries and the United States to deport this community. I wish to build upon these areas of knowledge of the internment camps and their experience to discover the unique aspects of the reasoning for deportation.

To restate my argument in more detail, in this paper, I will contend that Peru's involvement in the Latin American Interment Program during World War II, which led to the detainment, deportation and internment of German Peruvians was motivated primarily by the pursuit of political, economic, and social stability rather than a genuine national security threat. This period, going from 1941 to 1948, significantly impacted German Peruvian individuals and families. To substantiate this argument, I will start this paper by addressing the origins of the term "enemy aliens" and its implications in international law, particularly for the German community. Secondly, I will provide a historical overview on Peru's circumstances before World War II to understand their existing situation. By contextualizing Peru's situation, I will analyze the political, economic and social factors that drove its collaboration with the U.S. in the international campaign. I will consider the counterargument that German individuals living in Peru were a threat to national

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<sup>3</sup> Luis Fernando Molina Londoño's expertise in Latin American history, combined with his focus on migration and transnational dynamics, lends authority to his argument regarding the fate of Germans in Latin America during World War II. He analyzes the geopolitical pressures driving expulsion, internment, and expropriation of Axis citizens, notably Germans, highlighting the role of U.S. influence and economic interests in the region. Molina Londoño's nuanced understanding, supported by extensive research and documentation, offers valuable insights into this understudied aspect of wartime history.

security, which gives based to German Peruvian deportation. In response, I will counter this assertion by demonstrating how the U.S. and the Peruvian government did not find any actual threat towards this minority that could led to their internment. Despite the passage of time, the Peruvian government has yet to issue a formal apology to the German descendants and survivors of these deportations, a step I argue is essential for genuine reconciliation. Finally, I will present the memoirs of two formers internees of German Peruvian ethnicity who were interned at the Crystal City Internment Camp during World War II. By comparing their experiences with current narratives, I aim to contribute to the broader understanding of the lives of deported internees in internment camps during this period. To substantiate these claims, I will employ a multi-method approach of quantitative and qualitative data including historical analysis, oral interviews of former internees, and documents reviews which I will use to analyze and review these assertions.

## **The Historical Context on the Concept “Enemy Aliens”**

While some people can define aliens as tall, large rounded head green beings, in international law, this term is used to define an individual who is not a citizen of a specific territory, in this case, from the United States (Campbell 2022). This term was first used in the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 which was the first document that gave power to the president in the U.S. to remove, imprison or detain an alien of the same nationality as the enemy country at any time during the war (U.S. Fifth Congress 1798). This power granted to the Executive, as explained by Marilyn Grace Miller in “Port of No Return: Enemy Alien Internment in World War II New Orleans,” was a pivotal change in international law because it holds a potential impact on the complexity of immigrant’s naturalization. Miller (2021) emphasizes how this law, with the usage of the words “alien” and “enemy,” set a precedent that resonated throughout U.S. politics and cultural discourse (Goodsell 2009; Miller 2021, 1). Miller’s analysis and conclusions find validation both in the present-day and through historic events. The term “alien” appears in different areas of immigration and international law dialogue, evident not only in legislation during World War II but also in modern deportation procedure in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Ebright 2024). This term, with the purpose of labeling individuals residing in a country lawfully or unlawfully in the U.S, now carries outdated connotations.

Following the attack in Pearl Harbor on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the United States issued Proclamation 2526 on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941, designating German individuals as “potentially dangerous enemy aliens” (Goodsell 2009; Roosevelt 1941). This proclamation empowered authorities to restrict the freedom of these individuals if they posed a threat to national security (Roosevelt 1941). Proclamation 2525 and 2527 targeted Japanese and Italians individuals, respectively. The abrupt issuance of these proclamations raises questions about their preparedness

in the event of such crises. While the wartime environment may justify the need of contingency measures like those created after Pearl Harbor, the readiness to issue specific proclamations for different nationalities suggests prior planning. Thanks to the Alien Enemies Act as precedent, along with the development of laws and acts prior the event, the U.S. had equipped itself to formulate proclamations when faced with events like Pearl Harbor. Franklin D. Roosevelt utilized the language and authority granted in the Alien and Seditions Acts to anticipate and address scenarios like the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In the late 1930s, the U.S. government started a review of the existing precedents to prepare for potential wartime scenarios. On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1939, President Roosevelt ordered J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), to create a list of “aliens” within the U.S. and start gathering data and activities from them (Rights 1975, 189; Theoharis 1978, 1011). This will later be known as the Custodial Detention Index, designed to include “suspected” individuals who could potentially be detained in response to national security concerns. As tensions escalated in Europe in 1940, the U.S. approved the Alien Registration Act, which mandated that all alien within the U.S. must register their status with the government (“Alien Registration Act of 1940.” 2017; “1940 Alien Registration - Immigration and Naturalization Records Blog - Immigration and Naturalization Records - History Hub” 2021; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2020). This legislation directly impacted immigrants, requiring them to register promptly. During a broadcast on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1940, Francis Biddle, the Solicitor General of the U.S. stated that the purpose of the act was solely to gather information from “aliens” residing in the U.S, emphasizing that it would not lead to prosecution (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, n.d.). Nonetheless, subsequent events during World War II would contradict this assertion. The information gathered through these forms helped various government agencies to impact

individuals economically, socially, and military as they were able to access their bank accounts, residences, and places of employment. Lynn Goodsell (2009), an Archives Specialist at the National Archives and Records Administration, highlighted during a conference on World War II Enemy Aliens Programs that departments such as the Navy, the Treasury, and Federal Communications Commission cross-referenced this data to freeze funds and conduct background check on individuals or radio operators (Goodsell 2009). By 1941, the term “alien,” referred to individuals from Japanese, Italian and German heritage, categorizing all as potential criminals or enemies to the country. The U.S. government not only mobilized various departments to oversee areas of logistics, facilities, and hearings but also to facilitate the detention, deportation, and repatriation of individuals (Goodsell 2009).

The preparations undertaken were useful for these government agencies when Pearl Harbor occurred. Within hours of the attack, President Roosevelt issued Proclamations 2525, 2526, and 2527, initiating the imprisonment of over 1800 enemy aliens (Goodsell 2009). This readiness demonstrated that the U.S. government had a well-defined action, ensuring a prompt response to events like Pearl Harbor. However, such actions could be perceived as discriminatory if not grounded in prior justifications.

The preceding events suggest a pattern where the U.S. justified deportation, detainment, repatriation, and internment by labeling individuals as national threats (“enemy aliens”). The secrecy surrounding these plans, coupled with the collaboration among national and international entities, indicates a concerted effort to limit the freedom of these individuals immediately following events such as Pearl Harbor. Moreover, the definitions of “alien” in relevant acts and laws reflect an unfortunate use of language that marginalized immigrants, leaving repercussion to this day. These concepts and methodologies reflect a mindset within the U.S. that views certain

individuals as inferior and display a strategic intelligence purposed to finding opportunities and creating pathways to protect national interests, regardless of the costs of third parties not of U.S. citizenship, commonly referred as “aliens.”

### **Peru’s standpoint before the period of World War II**

Surprisingly, Peru stands out as the country that contributed the highest number of Germans repatriated to the U.S. for relocation to internment camps, totaling 702 individuals (“White to Lafoon Memo, 30 Jan 1946” 1946, 2). Despite Peru’s significant involvement in World War II Internment Program, the country’s contemporary historical narrative remains silent on these events, which affected German individuals, families, and businesses. In contrast, the history of Japanese Peruvians has been extensively documented through various authors, researchers, reporters, and historians such as Natsu Saito (1999), Edwards Barnhart (1962) and others. Barnhard (1962) in his book, “Japanese Internees from Peru,” states that the prejudice against the Japanese in the country began in the early 1930s due to their community’s economic growth, influence, and the current political situation of the country. This revelation unveils that Peru began experiencing significant changes impacting its economy, politics, and social behaviors in the early 1930s, long before the outbreak of World War II. Although some researchers like Daniel Masterson in “The History of Peru” mention the deportation, they often lack detailed analysis and information on the policies and underlying reasons. Milagros Martinez-Flener (2005) in her book “Presente sin pasado: la comunidad alemana en el Peru y el Partido Nazi (1932-1945)” highlights how Peruvian scholars have overlook discussing the reasons for deportation and the treatments towards Germans during World War II, including Peru’s role in the internment program. This historical gap does not reflect silence but rather neglect. To understand Peru’s decision-making process, it is crucial to delve into its political, economic, and even social context before the period of World War II,

therefore, understanding their historical context and the various tendencies, political parties or movements that influenced the country's decision making.

*A weakened government: Peru's political state of affairs*

Between 1929 to 1939, Peru experienced a significant transition in its leadership, with a total of nine individuals serving as presidents or government leaders ("Presidentes y Gobernantes de La República Del Perú 1900 - 1950" 2012). Some of these leaders held office for remarkably short periods, such as Manuel Maria Ponce Brousset, who was president for only two days before transferring power to Luis Miguel Sanchez Cerro. Moreover, between March to December 1931, Peru witnessed three interim presidencies: Ricardo Elias (4 days), Gustavo A. Jimenez (6 days), and Daniel Ocampos y Sobrino (10 months), who functioned as transitional leaders until Luis Miguel Sanchez Cerro regained power in August of the same year. Sanchez Cerro's presidency was cut short due to his assassination on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933, leading to Oscar Raymundo Benavides assuming power until December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1939 (El Consejo de Ministros Encargados del Poder Ejecutivo 1933). Additionally, the 1933 Constitution led to complex changes in the country's politics structure establishing a bicameral legislature, and delineating a separation of power between the assembly and the presidents (Bernaes B. 1978). Scholars such as Barry Levitt (2012), in his book "Power in the Balance," affirm that examining Peru's early 1930's history reveals the pivotal moment in the country's political affairs and institutional changes. This period introduces key actors and factors that influenced subsequent actions in the following years.

During this period, two political parties emerged: The Socialist Party, founded by Jose Carlos Mariategui, and the populist Alliance Popular Revolutionary American (APRA), created by Victor Haya de la Torre during its exile in Mexico and officially established in 1930 (Levitt 2012, 9). APRA's ideology was characterized by a blend of both right and left ideologies, with anti-

feudal, anti-imperialist principles. However, the party also advocated the use of using democracy as a tool of oppression rather than fostering functional democracy (“Historia del Apra” 2021). Despite experiencing growth in societal influence, particularly in suburban areas across the country, APRA faced opposition from politicians and the military, leading to the persecution of its members by several presidents during this era. For example, in 1930 President August B. Leguia was overthrown by Luis Miguel Sanchez Cerro, an army officer, who rose to power with significant support from the citizenship as he put an end to Leguia’s 11-year government (Delgado G. 2013). During the elections of 1931 Sanchez Cerro won the elections which led to the defeat of the APRA leader. This event made Haya de la Torre suspect that election fraud had occurred. For the next two years, Sanchez Cerro first objective was to defeat APRA’s founders and leaders, throwing Peru into a period of sustained political violence. This tumultuous period led to an intense social disturbance involving the military, APRA supporters, students, intellectuals, and minority communities. Franklin Pease (1995) in his book “Breve Historia Contemporanea del Peru” supports these actions, stating that the methods employed during Sanchez Cerro government were accompanied with violence and vengeance. This period was defined as a witch-hunting era, where politicians who opposed the new government were targeted and persecuted ( Pease 1995, 171–72). The violence only stopped with the assassination of Sanchez Cerro by an APRA militant in 1933, paving the way for APRA to gain influence under the subsequent presidency of Oscar Benavides, who was appointed by the legislature despite the imminent updating of the constitution in 1933 (Levitt 2012, 10). Nonetheless, Benavides prevailed in power and extended his term by dissolving Congress and governing as a military dictator. Even though he maintained power, his government did not impact in any way the course of history. Historians like Antonio Delgado (2013) assures that his government did not generate impactful change in the current social or economic Peruvian



structure (Delgado G. 2013, 347). Nonetheless, in Peruvian politics, Benavides restricted APRA's participation in elections. In 1936, Peru held elections in which Luis Antonio Eguiguren from APRA emerged as the victor. However, Congress saw the elections as invalid, citing a constitutional provision that rendered their organization ineligible due to its international heritage (Bernaes B. 1978, 13). Due to this, Congress annulled elections and Benavides stayed in power until 1939. This dictatorship weakened Peru's political structures and centralized power in the presidency. In 1939, Benavides' ruling ended with the victory of Manuel Prado y Ugarteche (Levitt 2012, 11). Nonetheless, the country's instability persisted, requiring successive presidents to work towards restoring balance and stability.

#### *An Uncontrollable Society: Peru's social situation*

Peruvian political upheaval resulted in societal instability and change during the 1930s. Due to the constant change of power between the military and aristocracy, the middle class started to rise into political positions, which was formerly completely covered by the aristocracy or the military. As highlighted by Delgado (2013) in his book "Los años treinta una apreciación sobre la década del tercer militarismo y el populismo en el Perú," between 1930 through 1940 the country faced a crucial shift in their social structure as most of the society was rural and had little to no participation in politics. During this period, the aristocracy depended specifically from the military to protect its interests (Drake 1994, 112). This is proved as Sanchez Cerro and Benavides were in the army and by approving the government, the aristocracy interests could be protected.

Another factor that impacted Peruvian society was the emergence of the middle class. This was a combination of students, agriculture, laborers, and others. During this period, strikes across various sectors, including workers, telephone operators, and bus drivers, resulted in a continuous paralysis of different entities within the country. Numerous rebellions occurred in the southern part

of the country, posing a significant threat of civil war, and leaving Peru in a state of fragile stability in 1931 (Bollinger 1977). These events were triggered by a severe economic crisis that impacted workers' salaries, leading to uprisings in various provinces throughout the year

Amidst these tumultuous events, it becomes evident that Peru was grappling with deep-seated social issues due to the current political affairs that threatened to destabilize the nation further.

### *Economy Unmerging: Peru's weak economic position*

A crucial moment that impacted Peru was the Great Depression in 1929 which lowered the exportation of products such as cotton (Bernaes B. 1978, 352). Carlos Contreras Carranza in “La Crisis Mundial de 1929 y la Economía Peruana” stated that this was attributed to the current country's economy, which had a commercial focus because of the executive's decision in legislature affairs. Some of the consequences of the crisis included a decline in exports such as cotton, silver, and sugar (Estadística, 1935). This is also affirmed by Carranza, stating that the Great Depression led to a decline in the export of prime materials (Contreras Carranza 2009). Not only did exports decrease in value, but they also experienced a decline in volume, making their recovery difficult, if not impossible, in the following year (Contreras Carranza 2009, 34). Consequently, this created difficulties in the marketplace and reduced the prices in the national market as well the exportations to other countries like the U.S. or European countries like Germany or France. As Peru was a country with an export-oriented system that was foreign dominated by foreign corporations, the worldwide crisis made the country more susceptible to these changes. On the other side, the country also faced the closure of banks like “Banco del Peru y Londres,” one of the oldest and most sustainable banks in the country (“Novena Memoria, Año 1930” 1930).

The shifts in Peru's political, economic, and social landscape created a tumultuous backdrop when World War II erupted, leaving the nation entangled in a web of social unrest, economic upheaval, and erratic power dynamics. This rendered Peru vulnerable and susceptible to external influences, as other nations sought to intervene and restore stability, often disregarding the potential consequences for those caught in the crossfire.

### **Reasonings for the Collaboration in the Latin American Internment Program**

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the U.S. shaped diplomatic relations and perceptions in Latin American countries through its influence. Researcher Anchi Hoh (2018) supports this claim, noting that policies enacted during this period impacted the views of Latin American countries towards World War II (Hoh 2018). Policies like the Monroe Doctrine and the Good Neighbor Policy aimed to safeguard Latin American sovereignty and foster mutual respect and cooperation between the U.S. and Latin American nations. The Monroe Doctrine, articulated by President James Monroe in 1823, aimed to prevent European colonization efforts in the Western Hemisphere and protect the sovereignty of Latin American nations (“Monroe Doctrine (1823) | National Archives” 2022). Similarly, the Good Neighbor Policy, introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s, emphasized non-intervention and mutual respect between the United States and Latin American countries (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising that the U.S. sought this solidarity during World War II and insisted on collaboration with countries like Peru, as these policies marked an earlier interventionist approach that would set a precedent for future collaboration, emphasizing equality and reciprocity when the time came.

On July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1940, Manuel Prado y Ugarteche sent a national message in Congress detailing the country’s state and progress. During this speech, Prado emphasized Peru's

continued immigration policies but failed to mention the introduction of an Alien Registration prohibiting foreigners from starting new ventures (Pelcovits 1941, 310; Prado y Ugarteche 1940). Related to the European War, his speech stressed Peru's strict neutrality and sought economic agreements with the United States (Prado y Ugarteche 1940, 3). The impact of the war compounded Peru's existing economic woes from the Great Depression (Prado y Ugarteche 1940, 60; Contreras Carranza 2009). Prado's emphasis on economic agreements with the U.S. reflects the influence of the Good Neighbor Policy as it aligns with the policy's goal of fostering economic cooperation and mutual respect between nations.

In his speech in 1941, Prado y Ugarteche reiterated Peru's neutrality, highlighting efforts for peace and participation in conferences like the II Conference of Havana (Prado y Ugarteche 1941). Compared to the speech from 1940, this speech gives a new fact: the participation to seek the welfare of the Americas has Peru in the guest list (Prado y Ugarteche 1941). This indicates that Prado y Ugarteche is confident that Peru will participate in conferences aimed at addressing potential internal threats. By making this statement, he mentions the II Conference of the Havana, and this is the first time that the reader hears about these international conferences. Furthermore, preceding this conference, another took place from September 23<sup>rd</sup> through October 3<sup>rd</sup> in Panama in 1939. The speech positions Peru as a country willing to collaborate in maintaining a peaceful front to foster "continental solidarity." The participation of Peru in conferences like the Conference of Havana and its efforts for peace resonate with the principles of the Monroe Doctrine, as they reflect a commitment to regional stability and non-intervention in external conflicts. The speech briefly touches upon the Alien Registration Act, which had a significant impact on hundreds of immigrants, unfortunately there is no physical evidence about it. Under this act, individuals born in Peru but with parents from other countries risked losing

their Peruvian nationality, for reason not explained in the article (Prado y Ugarteche 1941). On the economic side, Peru was urged to finalize commercial accords to have an economic stability. As a result, it became necessary to initiate trade negotiations with the U.S. Government. This is important as it helps understand the gradual intensification of the U.S. involvement in Peru over the years, exerting economic influence in the country directly and indirectly (Beck 1939, 110).

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1942 Lino Cornejo Zegarra, Former Minister of Justice and Human Rights of Peru send an official letter to the German minister, Willy Noebel, stating that Peru will break diplomatic relationships with the German Government, citing solidarity with the United States (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores del Peru 1941, 90). The Rio Conference coincided with this decision, raising questions about its timing. Peru's collaboration with the U.S. in deporting Germans was influenced by U.S. economic dominance from 1939 to 1942. It is interesting to point out that even though this statement was made, it was not stated in Prado's speech on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1942. The Monroe Doctrine is perceived in Peru's decision to sever ties with as it reflects a commitment to regional security and non-alignment with hostile powers. Additionally, Peru's solidarity with the United States reflects the spirit of the Good Neighbor Policy, as it demonstrates a willingness to cooperate with neighboring nations for mutual defense and stability. Max Paul Friedman (2003), in "There Goes the Neighborhood: Blacklisting German Latin America and the Evanescence of the Good Neighbor Policy," emphasized this willingness as a rare occurrence in history, where there was a combined cooperation united by "a single cause" against the Axis powers (Friedman 2003, 570).

At this point in history, it can be concluded that Peru's reasonings to the collaboration and cooperation with the U.S. to the deportation of German individuals was due to the economic and commercial influenced the U.S. had inserted in the country for the past 5 years (1938 to 1942).

Furthermore, the Monroe Doctrine and the Good Neighbor Policy appeared indirectly in the speeches of Prado y Ugarteche, exposing the influence the U.S. had over the Western Hemisphere.

### *The Organization of American States Conferences (OAS)*

While some historians and researchers like Randall Woods (1975) or Leandro Morgenfeld (2009) argue that the shifting moment in Latin American history, marking the onset of the internment program and collaboration with the U.S., occurred during the Rio Conference of 1942 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I contend that the shift in thinking began as early as 1938 with the Conference of Lima. It is not coincidental that the transition from Peru's neutrality to an ally of the U.S. was announced in January 1942, coinciding with the timing of this meeting. Moreover, it is surprising that these conferences are not extensively documented as they seek to address potential security threats in the Americas. In this section I will explain the analysis of the conferences and their implications, leading to Peru's abandonment of neutrality and the initiation of collaboration in a covert international program aimed at deporting citizens of Japanese, German and Italian ethnicity.

On December 9th, 1938, an OAS Conference met in Lima, Peru. Not mentioned in the current storyline, it helped as a precedent to explain the following events in the Conferences of Panama, Havana, and Rio. Charles G. Fenwick (1939) insist on this, as the conference led to the Principles of Solidarity in the Americas that served as the root of subsequent unspoken conversations for future collaboration (Fenwick 1939, 257). Additionally, this Declaration of Solidarity casts a shadow of the Monroe Doctrine, as it positioned the Western Hemisphere countries as co-partners with the U.S. to uphold mutual interests and security. Randall Woods (2021) in "The Good Neighbor Policy and Argentine Neutralism" suggest that Latin American

countries welcomed these principles as it did not put their countries under the U.S. but in the same line of respects as it seemed that the U.S. seek to treat the Western Hemisphere as a community fighting against security threats (Randall Bennett Woods 2021, 6). Indirectly, Latin America was also welcoming the Good Neighbor Policy as it looked that the U.S. was leaving the ideals to dominate the hemisphere to start a project of reciprocity. The ideals shared in the conference and the declaration signed for the unification of the Western Hemisphere in the case of a threat helped as the roots for the conversations for collective security in the Conferences of Panama, Havana and Rio in the following years.

Leandro Morgenfeld in “La neutralidad argentina y el sistema interamericano: Panama, La Habana y Rio de Janeiro (1939-1942)” explains more in detail the discussion topics in these conferences. Even though it does not particularly relate to Peru, it gives an overview of the discussions in these conferences. The conferences had the goal to discuss neutrality, peace protection and economic cooperation (Morgenfeld 2009, 146; Panama, 1939 1940). A report from the Delegate of the United States to the meeting held in 1939 explains in more detail what happened during that conference. Compared to Prado y Ugarteche’s speech in 1940, it outlines the worrying of the repercussion of the hostilities of the war in the American continent, impacting commerce as well as shipping services (Panama, 1939 1940, 2). What brings the Conference of 1939 held in Panama to the table is the Convention for the Maintenance, Preservation and Reestablishment of Peace. This hold the provision that in the event of peace being endangered of the peace in the American republics, the country participants would consult together to find and adopt methods of peaceful cooperation (Panama, 1939 1940). This signified that Peru’s decision to become a U.S. ally and participate in the deportation program began at this very moment when they participated in the convention, which preceded the events of Pearl

Harbor in 1941. This not only demonstrates that Peru understood the consequences of its cooperation, but also indicates its willingness to adopt methods aimed at fostering both, peace, and economic collaboration for the continent's stability. Peru's agreement to the objectives of the resolution on June 29, 1939, serve as evidence of their commitment to this course of action ("Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1939, The American Republics, Volume V - Office of the Historian" 1939).

In 1940, President Prado y Ugarteche sent a letter declaring its neutrality towards the war in Europe, indicating the country's stance of non-involvement in the conflict (Prado y Ugarteche 1940). It was not until 1942 that Peru decided to finish its relations with the Germany. Prado y Ugarteche's speech does not explicitly state the reasons for this decision, but it can be inferred that the decision was made during the Rio Conference in 1942. From January 15<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>, a meeting between the foreign affairs ministers of the American Republics took place in Rio de Janeiro, where Peru's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alfredo Soli y Muro was in attendance ("Final Act of the Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Relations of the American Republics" 1942). During these meetings, the United States Representative emphasized the importance of the threat to the American Continent, highlighting that was a concern for the United States as well ("Final Act of the Third Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Relations of the American Republics" 1942). In other words, based on policies like the Monroe Doctrine or the Good Neighbor Policy, the U.S. could not remain passive while countries in the Americas were under "attack." These policies underscored the historical framework within which the United States justified its interventions in Latin America, framing its actions as necessary for protecting its own interests and security (Beck 1939, 128). This aspect is important, because, as mentioned before, the reasonings for the U.S. to issue proclamations after the event in Pearl Harbor was not



only to protect the country from war but also to safeguard its economic and military resources. If the Axis Powers were to attack areas in the Americas, it would inevitably affect the U.S., underscoring the importance of the participation of Latin American countries for the success of the program. However, the U.S. Representative lacked any evidence to substantiate claims of a national threat in the Americas (Randall B. Woods 1975).

Peru's transition from neutrality to collaboration with the United States in the Latin American Internment Program was influenced by economic, social, and diplomatic factors, epitomized by President Prado y Ugarteche's speeches and Peru's involvement in international conferences like the Rio Conference of 1942. This shift, while lacking evidence of a direct threat to the Americas, reflected Peru's alignment with broader U.S. objectives, rooted in historical frameworks such as the Monroe Doctrine and the Good Neighbor Policy. These policies provided the ideological foundation for Peru's cooperation with the United States, emphasizing regional stability and mutual defense. However, Peru's decision also raised questions about the extent of the U.S. influence in shaping Latin American foreign policy, highlighting the complex interplay of geopolitical interests and diplomatic considerations during World War II.

### **Counterargument: German Peruvians as a threat to National Security**

After understanding the reasonings for deportation, we can see that the U.S. profound influence in increasing Peru's economy and stability was a reason for deportation and internment. There are historians and researchers than can still argue that Peru's reasoning for cooperation with the U.S. was due to having a national threat in the country. Researchers like Tetsuden Kashima (1997) argue that the national threat was a reason for deportation. While this is dependable, it can be determined as a minor reasoning, furthermore, it implies that having them alienize as a national threat to the country could help Peru grow their stability in the

country. In this part, this paper will review how the counterargument of the sole reason for deportation was because of these “enemy aliens” being a national security threat, helps support my argument by understanding there was not threatened to start with.

By 1936, J. Edgar Hoover oversaw the preparation of reports to identify citizens and legal residents who might pose potential future challenges to the country, with a particular focus on Germans or those with communist sympathies in the United States territory. However, by 1939 the research did not achieve its intended goal due to insufficient information. By September 6<sup>th</sup>, Hoover sent a letter requesting information on “both aliens and citizens” in the U.S. where there was a perceived presence of danger (Hoover 1939). Notably, based on Hoover’s letter request, the information gathered was subjective, lacking specific background details to guide agents in their investigations. According to Athan Theoharis in “The Truman Administration and the Decline of Civil Liberties: The FBI’s success in securing Authorization for a Preventive Detention Program,” Hoover opted to adopt “broad standards” to categorize individuals at distinct levels of risk. However, there was no specific criteria provided for designating individuals to each class (Rafalko 2004, 179). This raises question about how “aliens” were going into a class without conducting background checks. Unfortunately, the information regarding the criteria for assigning a class is not available, prompting speculation about whether such criteria existed at all.

Information about German colonies during this period is almost inexistent. Martinez-Flener (2013) supports this assertion by noting that much of the research conducted thus far has focused on events outside the country, with a predominant focus on Japanese Peruvians. Nonetheless, German Peruvians were known for their significant contribution to commerce in the country. Luis Molina Londono (2017) emphasizes this by highlighting the positive response

from the national citizenry to the growth of the German community in Peru. This stands in contrast to the experiences of Japanese Peruvians. Furthermore, Londoño notes that Germany was experiencing economic growth, reaching a level comparable to that of the U.S. by 1938 (Londoño 2017, 7).

According to Edward N. Barnhart in "Japanese Internees from Peru," the deportation of the Japanese community in Peru during the 1930s was influenced by their economic success, leading to restrictions on the Japanese immigrants to Peru in 1936. Foreign Minister Alberto Ulloa saw their businesses as competition for Peruvian enterprises, fueling social discontent and political support for their removal.(Edward N. Barnhart 1962). Similarly, Luis Molina Londoño suggests that the Good Neighbor Policy, initially intended to strengthen relations with Latin American countries, was later exploited by the U.S. during World War II to control economic and political interests, particularly concerning German businesses in the hemisphere. This suggests that economic motives played a significant role in the formation of the Latin American Program, aiming to eliminate competition from German communities' businesses in the region. Therefore, having these communities eliminated will help the country to recover its stability.

While some may argue that national security concerns were the primary motive behind Peru's collaboration with the U.S., a deeper examination suggests that economic interests were the driving force. As the U.S. intensified its efforts following Pearl Harbor, pressuring Latin American countries like Peru to cooperate in internment measures, the economic motives behind these actions become increasingly evident. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the economic context in which these decisions were made to fully understand the motivations behind them and their implications for affected communities.

## **Memoirs hidden by History**

As emphasized throughout this paper, the secrecy combined with the gap in knowledge of these period in Peruvian history does not only leave a gap in the political and economic reasonings of agreements to the program, but also, the outcomes, the consequences that had repercussions in society. Between the 703 Germans that were taken to the U.S. during the internment program throughout World War II, a total of 16 families were interned in Crystal City Internment Camp. Today, thanks to research made back in 2021 and a recent interview done in April 2024, I was able to localize two individuals whose families were in these programs and their stories were able to be displayed. I would like to emphasize that both families were not interviewed together and that they did not remember each other in the camp.

### *Ilse Fischer*

The story of the Fischer Family started back in 1937 when Walter Fischer, Ilse's father arrived in Lima, Peru to find quality cotton for the company he worked back in Germany (Fischer 2022). He would come and go from Germany to Peru as he had a wife, Thea Fischer, and a newborn son, Juergen, in Germany. By 1938 Walter decided to settle in Lima with his family and by 1942, Ilse was born as a Peruvian citizen (Ilse Fischer 2020). The seamless migration of the Fischer family aligns with the sentiments expressed by Prado Ugarteche in 1940, wherein he emphasized the smooth functioning of migration procedures (Panama, 1939 1940, 3).

In 1944, Walter Fischer was taken by the State Police as they were taking every German to be interned in Internment Camps in the U.S. By this time, the Internment Program was already active in the U.S. as it started in 1942 (“Timeline of Related Events” 2023; “Japanese-American Incarceration During World War II | National Archives” 2024; Millies 2007, 60), and it was just

around the time that it was Fischer's turn. Ilse explains that this was not surprising for her mom as rumor kept spreading in the neighborhood that the government was taking German families as "enemies" to the country, however, the Fischer family did not feel as "enemies" or a national threat to the country at all (Ilse Fischer 2020). Due to the rumor spreading, her father would always have a bag prepared next to the front door. When the day finally came, Thea Fischer was left alone with two children and no financial support (Ilse Fischer 2020). Diana Millies (2007), in her book "Echando Raíces: 180 años de presencia alemana en el Perú," highlights that in October 1944, the German deportation to the U.S. continued. As a result, many Germans sought refuge in the Amazon to evade capture (Millies 2007, 61). Unfortunately, this was not Fischer's case.

After almost two months after the arrest of his father, her mother found a letter in her front door from the U.S. government with the status of her father. The letter also offered the possibility for the family to be taken to a camp named Crystal City Internment Camp where they could be reunited with her father. Ilse's mother accepted the "invitation." Juergen Fischer, Ilse's brother, remembers that a military truck appeared in his house and took them to the Port of Callao, located in the north side of Lima, Peru (Juergen Fischer and Hannelore Bremen 2020). At this time, Ilse was 2 years old. There is no physical report from the Peruvian government that they were taken to Leoncio Prado or to the Port of Callao, nonetheless, there was a report of their arrival to Panama in a Ship Manifest ("USAT Colonel Frederick C. Johnson, October 1944" 2016, 9).

After being taken to the Port, they boarded a ship that took them through the Panama Canal, the Gulf of Mexico to finish at the Port of New Orleans, which aligns with the report of October 1944 by Colonel Johnson ("USAT Colonel Frederick C. Johnson, October 1944" 2016, 9). Once they were there, they were taken by train to Crystal City. Ilse remembers these times as

“happy moments.” Ilse explains that they had all the accommodations they could ask for food, education, and living amenities with electricity and water. Her father got a job in the camp as a merchant with a small food market, and her brother was able to go to school. Ilse remembered that she was baptized in the camp and that her brother would have a presentation in the camp’s education institution. They lived there until a year after the war, but their life in the camp was not as sad as some people might think, this is sustained by Millies (2207) or Dietze (2016) which emphasized that the life at Crystal City Internment Camp was healthy, and the lives of its internees were not endangered.

In 1946, Ilse explains that families in the camp had three options: They could be repatriated to Germany, they could return to their original country in Latin America, or if they could not afford the trip or did not want to be repatriated to Germany, they would have to stay indefinitely in Crystal City Internment Camp. For the Fischer’s, returning to Germany was not an option as relatives in Bremen, Germany advise them not to do so as the country was facing a political, social, and economic crisis. Fortunately, the Fischer family had the funds to return to Lima, and by late 1946, they were sent back to the country.

By their arrival in Lima, the Fischer’s moved to a new house located in San Antonio, Miraflores. They were able to obtain some of their valuables that were given to friends before going to the camp. While they were growing up, the topic of conversation would always be centered around their experience in the internment camp. Juergen Fischer remembered that while growing up, he realized that Japanese Americans and Latin Americans received an economic compensation due to their internment. Because of this, Juergen sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice regarding the family’s eligibility for the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. Unfortunately, they were never able to receive any compensation as they were not of Japanese

ethnicity (Juergen Fischer and Hannelore Bremen 2020). There has not been any formal apology or economic compensation from the U.S. or Peru for the unjust internment of these families.

When Ilse, aged 30, decided to visit Texas with her family, she carried with her a baptism booklet from her time at the camp, eager to delve into her past and find answers to her lingering questions. Full of anticipation, she set out to visit the Crystal City internment camp, hoping to gain insight into her family's history. However, upon arrival, the tour guide denied the presence of German internees at the camp, leaving Ilse bewildered. Armed with her baptism booklet, a tangible reminder of her internment experience at the age of 3, she confronted the guide, challenging the denial of her past reality and leaving the guide at a loss for words.

### *Else Bottger*

The story of Else Bottger, Emma Bottger's niece, was told by Otto Bottger, cousin of Else. Otto emphasizes that Else Bottger's mistake was to go on a trip to spend her holidays with her family and aunt Emma.

"And Manuel Prado Ugarteche can rot in hell for what it made us suffer," Those were the words of Emma Bottger, which she always repeated to her nephew, Otto Bottger, every time they spoke of the event, of the agony of being in the Crystal City Internment Camp in Texas during World War II (Otto Bottger 2020). This camp was one of many that took away families and individuals from Latin countries as "prisoners" and "traitors."

Navy cadet Walter Sackmann and his wife Emma Bottger had a peaceful life in their home in Lima. Their 18-year-old daughter often spent time with her cousin Else Bottger, who was only 12 years old and visiting Lima from Oxapampa, located in Peru's Amazon. Rumors spread throughout the neighborhood that German families were being targeted as enemies.

Without warning, the State Police forcibly entered the Sackmann-Bottger residence rounding up the entire family, including their niece Else. In the chaos, the police also seized numerous belongings from the house, many of which were never returned. There is no physical report or letter that can justify the reasoning behind these actions from the State Police of the Peruvian Government. Furthermore, the targeting as enemies and the stealing of belongings and raids were carried out without justification.

The family was taken to the Leoncio Prado Military School in Callao without any explanation or consent. This statement aligns to the Fischer statement too. The Bottger-Sackmann couple, bewildered and frustrated, asked for help to clarify that Else, their niece visiting from Oxapampa, was not supposed to be there. "My uncles tried to explain to the police that my cousin did not have to be there, but they still didn't understand," Otto recounted. Despite their efforts, nothing could be done, and after a few weeks of staying at the school, they were forced to leave the country aboard a ship bound for the United States.

From the Port of Callao, they passed through the Gulf of Mexico, Panama, and finally arrived in the United States. Else told her cousin: "There was a moment when they took us on deck to show that it was a ship with civilians to other military ships that were crossing, that way they would not target the ship" (Otto Bottger 2020). Compared to the Fischer family, there is no report from either countries about their deportation, or arrival to the U.S. During their stay in Crystal City Interment Camp, they did not suffer any difficulties. "The Germans in the camp were treated a thousand times better than the Japanese" commented Otto when he explained about the infrastructure and the living conditions that his relatives had. "My uncle could go to work outside the camp as a pharmacist and come back, my cousins could study." There were no



problems with these factors, and so the family stayed for a year, living in suitable conditions as commented by Dietze (2016) and Ilse Fischer (2020).

Otto explains that when the war ended, the Camp authorities gave the detainees the same options as commented by Ilse: They could return to their countries in Latin America, but with their funds, or they could be repatriated to Germany by the U.S. State. Fortunately, the Sackmann-Bottger family had the resources to return to Peru. As the Fischer Family, they were able to leave the U.S. safely. Unfortunately, there are no physical reports from their dismissal found in archives. Once they returned to Peru, they decided to go to Oxapampa, since they had family that could take them in. Months later, Walter Sackmann was able to get a job as an electrician and later returned to Lima.

The experiences of the Fischer family, alongside the Bottger-Sackmann family and their niece Else, shed light on the indiscriminate and unjust treatment endured by individuals of German descent in Peru during World War II. These personal narratives expose the human cost of wartime hysteria and government policies driven by fear and self-interest. The narratives highlight the nature of internment and deportation, where families were uprooted from their homes without explanation or recourse. Moreover, there is no reports or digital or physical archives in Peru from this period. During my visit to Peru in April 2024, I explored the Public Libraries, German High School Alexander von Humboldt, and Germania Club in search of answers. Unfortunately, I found no actual documents to fill the gap or support their stories. When I inquired, staff members responded with statements like "those documents are not available as they are too old," "that did not happen," or even "those records do not exist." Through these accounts, we are reminded of the importance of preserving individual dignity and human rights,

even in times of conflict. These stories serve as reminders of the enduring legacy of wartime injustice and the resilience of those who endured it.

## **Conclusion**

The reasonings for Peru's collaboration in the internment, deportation, and detainment of Germans Peruvians during World War II extend beyond the perception of them as national threat. The country's pre-war circumstances, marked by economic decline stemming from the Great Depression, social unrest, and political upheaval, left Peru susceptible to external influence. Pressures from the U.S., including trade agreements and discreet conferences, facilitated Peru's compliance with these programs (Randall B. Woods 1975). However, the decisions made by the Peruvian government to engage in this cooperation adversely affected the German community, which had not posed any threat to the nation. Furthermore, their stories have been neglected by the government, unlike those of Japanese Peruvians, who have received historical recognition and apologies (Martínez-Flener 2013; Sakuda and Sep 2011 2011). Oral histories such as those shared by Ilse Fischer and Otto Bottger illustrate that these individuals were civilians with no ties to the conflict in Europe, rendering their internment and loss of freedom unjustified. Peru's cooperation was driven by the need to restore stability, but it is imperative to acknowledge and rectify the silencing of these narratives in historical discourse.

While this paper has sought to uncover the reasons behind Peru's cooperation, there are still areas requiring further investigation. For instance, little is known about the camps in the Port of Callao and Leoncio Prado Militar High School, as described by Fischer and Bottger in their oral testimonies. This aspect of history presents a promising avenue for research. Additionally, a comparison of other oral testimonies could offer valuable insights into the experiences of the German community. Moreover, understanding why the German community has not received an

apology or financial compensation is crucial. Despite indications that they did not face mistreatment during internment, there are other untold stories that deserve recognition, and their loss of freedom demands redress. For instance, recovering those reports, documents, and files that have been “lost” and are not open for public exploration.

Future research on the German Peruvian experience should be grounded in the understanding that there is no evidence supporting the notion that their internment was primarily due to their status as a national threat. Additionally, it is essential to recognize that their stories and experiences remain unexposed. Any study that fails to acknowledge these facts and includes the experiences of this community within the context of the Peruvian Internment Program would be inherently flawed and invalid.

This paper also prompts the question: why have the Peruvian government, historians, and researchers avoided addressing the experiences of German Peruvians? Why have they remained silent regarding the deportation of individuals who posed no threat to the country? This research underscores the need for further exploration of this period. By studying the German Peruvian community, we can uncover valuable lessons and experiences that challenge Peru's participation during World War II. It is my hope that this paper encourages a deeper acknowledgment of the German Peruvian community and prompts reflection among Peruvians about their own history.

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