Spring 1996

The Fort Missoula Internment Facility: An Italian Experience At "Bella Vista"

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CARROLL COLLEGE

THE FORT MISSOULA INTERNMENT FACILITY: AN ITALIAN EXPERIENCE
AT "BELLA VISTA"

A HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY
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HELENA, MONTANA
APRIL 1996
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of History.

Dr. Robert Swartout, Director

Fr. William Greytak, PhD, Reader

Dr. Erik Pratt, Reader
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Selection for my thesis director and readers was an easy task. They have been my mentors during my experience at Carroll College. I must begin by thanking my director, Dr. Robert Swartout, without whose help and criticism this thesis would not have been possible. My readers, Fr. William Greytak and Dr. Erik Pratt, have been particularly patient with my misjudgment of time to complete this work. Their comments, additions, and understanding, on such short notice, were very much appreciated.

My family has been an unending source of support -- always comforting me when I had doubts and assuring me of my ability to succeed in my goals. My parents have aided me throughout my life, contributing to the person I am today.

My research assistant, my mother, has made this work largely possible by spending days sifting through archival materials at the National Archives in Washington. Her efforts made my insights into the Italian experience at “Bella Vista” more complete.

Special thanks to my sister and friend Jamie who continuously supplied me with an idealist, positive outlook. Always attempting to assure me that everything would turn out fine in the end. Despite many roadblocks in the process, she can justifiably can say: “I told you so.”

Finally, I am grateful to my best friend, Matt Eussen, who throughout this process has given me his wisdom, generosity, love, and a realistic outlook on my thesis and life in general.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

America throughout the mid-1930s and into the early 1940s watched on the sidelines as aggressor nations ensured their dominance over Europe. Intense public opinion swayed the government's official position to neutrality. Although this neutral stance toward events in Europe would characterize American foreign policy until December 1941, there was a gradual transformation of policy toward a more biased involvement in world affairs. Public opinion altered in accordance with the changing world situation, from a general position of isolation to Americans viewing the impracticality of remaining impartial during the European conflict. The American public gradually came to realize that one could not be totally neutral when aggressors demolished the very foundations of peace, democracy, and international law. This transformation of public opinion allowed the American government to pursue a more active role in world affairs. During the years 1940-1941 this led, in part, to the adoption of a policy which entailed "all aid to the allies, short of entrance to the war." One example of America's more active role and aid to the Allies was the seizure of Axis vessels and crews in March 1941.

1
Congress, on 30 March 1941, authorized the U.S. Coast Guard to seize Axis controlled merchant vessels, which had been stranded within the territorial waters of the United States for nearly six months. Citing a similar incident which occurred during World War I, Congress justified this action with the claim that some of the Axis crews had deliberately sabotaged their merchant ships and as a result posed a threat to the U.S. ships in the vicinity. Although Congress viewed the World War I incident as a similar event, many of the background circumstances differed greatly. President Wilson had, in fact, seized stranded German vessels during World War I, however, when the vessels were taken into protective custody in 1915, the U.S. was also in a declaration of national emergency. America, in March 1941, unlike its 1915 "precedent," was not in a state of emergency. President Roosevelt, in fact, would not declare a state of emergency until late May 1941.¹

The U.S. action was also believed to be contrary to international law which states that ships may be seized only by warring nations. The German Chargé D'affairs argued that by seizing Axis ships, America had relinquished its position as a neutral. Axis objections were disregarded. U.S. Secretary of State Hull stated that "in damaging their vessels to the detriment of navigation and the safety of our harbors, [Axis seamen] had committed felonies under United States law, in disregard of the hospitality we had extended to them."² In reality, the ship seized were to be transferred to Great Britain as a part of the American Lend-Lease policy. Great Britain, viewed as the last democratic nation in Europe, was losing an extensive number of its vessels to German submarine attacks. In all,
America transferred nearly 1 million tons of Axis ships to the British under Lend-Lease. The overt action of America, although for stated reasons of security, included covert motives. The ship seizures of March 1941 clearly indicated a shift away from isolation and toward a policy of support. America had chosen sides, but had not yet decided when to join the fight.

This paper is divided into two main sections: the first section focuses upon the gradual modification of American neutrality in an effort to effectively adapt to the changing world situation; the second section narrates a story of Italian civilians detained at the Fort Missoula Internment Facility, Missoula, Montana during World War II. Fort Missoula, affectionately known as "Bella Vista" or "Beautiful View," would be the home of over 1000 Italian internees for nearly 3 years. This little known history of Italian internment, interwoven with the contemporary world situation illustrates a little known chapter of World War II—the widespread internment of enemy aliens.

Following World War II, the 1949 Geneva Convention would address the issue of enemy alien internment. Fort Missoula exemplified the characteristics put forth in the 1949 Convention. The Italians held at the fort received excellent treatment. The city of Missoula welcomed the diversity that Italian culture offered. Fort Missoula soon became a model Italian community, complete with democratically elected representatives, entrepreneurial opportunities, regular theatrical and musical performances, athletic tournaments, and gourmet Italian food. Fort Missoula provided the Italians with a vacation from the reality of the war situation; as Frank Guastella, an Italian detainee at the camp, stated: "Some
of us came and found a life. The experience of the Italians at Fort Missoula provides further insight into the events of World War II.
CHAPTER II

\textit{INTER ARMA LEGES SILENT} (In the Clash of Arms the Laws are Silent):

AN EXAMINATION INTO AMERICAN NEUTRALITY

The unstable world order, which developed after World War I, was transformed significantly with the aggressive actions of Germany, Italy and Japan during the 1930s. This increase in aggression directly violating the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact discarded the traditional observance and authority of international law and sought recourse to sheer military means in the execution of national policies. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress, weary of the sudden upsurge in brutality and lawlessness, yet strongly swayed by intense public opinion against interaction in a “European conflict,” adopted legislation which maintained that America would remain neutral. The American public was intensely against any involvement in hostilities which it felt did not and would not directly affect the U.S., and thus advocated the passage of such neutral legislation. The dilemma created was an illusory attempt to legislate peace when 3/7 of the world’s major powers engaged openly in belligerent actions in pursuit of territorial conquest. America’s stance toward the conflict wavered between a combination of diplomatic internationalism and legislative isolationism. Curiously, however, many of America’s actions, policies and positions during this period of neutrality legislation gradually became more
biased toward the world situation. America's official "neutral" stance would finally end on 7 December 1941 when the Japanese military bombed Pearl Harbor. On the following day, 8 December 1941, America declared war on Japan; at this point America formally abandoned its previous neutral position. A few days later Germany and Italy declared war on the U.S.

Through the examination of American "neutrality" legislation, and consequently, the reaction of America to the menacing world situation, one will more fully comprehend the reasoning behind the American government's decision to seize Axis ships during March 1941, nine months before the United States officially entered World War II. For organizational purposes, this historical presentation will have two divisions: The Watershed Years of 1935-1938, and The Erosion of American Neutrality of 1939-1940.

The Watershed Years, 1935-1938

The years 1935-1938 mark a transition point from covert violation of agreements and treaties to an overt aggression against the very foundations of international law. During these years the world, in particular Europe, became divided into three camps: the totalitarian aggressors, the victims and champions of democracy, and those choosing to remain neutral in the growing hostilities. Appeasement was the reality during these years; Great Britain and France believed if Germany and Italy were appeased in their desires, general conflict would not result. The U.S. Congress and President Roosevelt, due to intense public opinion against intervention, proclaimed the first of America's neutrality
legislation in August 1935. Although neutral in a *de jure* fashion, an examination into American reactions to events and official speeches by key personnel presents a *de facto* different picture.

Rumors of Italian intentions in Ethiopia began to spread early in 1934; when military preparations commenced later that year and continued early into 1935, many nations awaited the outcome. In addition, in March 1935, Hitler announced the reformation of the German Air Force and the reinstatement of the military draft for all eligible German males. Both of these actions directly violated the Treaty of Versailles. The League issued condemnations of Germany for overt militaristic actions. Concerning Italian intentions, President Roosevelt, in a correspondence to Benito Mussolini, mentioned that failure of the Italians to utilize pacific means in pursuit of their objectives might “adversely affect all nations.” The international community did not condemn Italian actions against Ethiopia until the Italians invaded Ethiopia in October 1935.

Anti-war sentiment, the Depression, and misinterpretations of the pending situation spurred the Senate to investigate the munitions industry in 1934-1935. The results of the investigation, commonly known as the “Merchant of Death Theory,” intensified the American public sentiment against any interaction in what was viewed as a distant affair. “The Merchants of Death Theory” and general isolationism were reinforced with the Congressional passage of the Neutrality Act on 31 August 1935. Thomas Bailey’s work, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, called the 1935 Neutrality Act an example of “strait-jacket
neutrality influenced tremendously by public opinion about the developing situations. The Act stated two provisions: it warned against travel on belligerent vessels, and it forbade munitions trade between America and nations at war. The 1935 Neutrality Act, viewed as a "double-edged sword," made no distinctions between the aggressor and the victim. Following the President's official recognition of hostilities, the above mentioned provisions would be enacted. Secretary of State Cordell Hull worried that the inelasticity of the neutrality legislation might, in fact, prove insubstantial and that the President would be committed to a particular position or action cited in the Act. Hull believed that different circumstances bred different responses, and restrictions intended to keep the U.S. neutral might have an adverse effect upon American policy.

Following the passage of the 1935 Neutrality Act, the Italo-Ethopian crisis intensified. Hull reiterated the neutral position of the American government on the crisis on 12 September 1935. In summary, Secretary of State Hull stated that the U.S. wanted peace and believed in the right to resolve disputes through peaceful means. Hull also mentioned the unfavorable economic, political, and social ramifications of a conflict upon the international community as a whole. He wanted all nations to remember their pledge to preserve peace and outlaw war as agreed upon in the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928.

On 3 October 1935, Italian offensive forces invaded Ethiopia. Two days later, President Roosevelt applied the provisions of the 1935 Neutrality Act to the
Italian and Ethiopian belligerents, thus making it illegal to trade munitions and other war material with the warring nations and warning U.S. citizens that travel on belligerent vessels would be at their own risk. Reaction from the League of Nations arrived four days later, on 9 October 1935, which called for commercial and financial sanctions to be implemented against Italy. The League requested non-League nations to support the sanctions on Italy. The U.S. Representative to Geneva was advised to inform the League of Nations that the U.S. had already responded to the situation and desired to act independently of the League. The Italo-Ethopian conflict continued until the flight of Emperor Haile Selassie on 2 May 1936. General Italian aggression would continue despite condemnations from other nations until the Italian surrender in 1943.

The structure of international law, and the world situation in general, continued to erode throughout 1935. On Armistice Day, 11 November 1935, Roosevelt reiterated the policy of the U.S., including a determination to steer clear of conflicts and a continued desire to promote peace. Yet also mentioned was a need to use the “strength” of America to strive for peace, that Americans “... could not ‘build walls around ourselves and hide out heads in the sand.” American isolationists questioned the appropriateness of Roosevelt’s statement. The President's position foreshadowed the evolution of American policy toward a more active role in the world situation.

Italian aggression against Ethiopia produced a concern among European nations; Germany, on the other hand, created an intense fear. As U.S. Foreign
Minister to Switzerland Hugh Wilson mentioned to Secretary of State Hull, the European nations were “profoundly afraid of Germany.” In another correspondence Wilson stated that the main concern was over the rapid German rearmament: “that . . . on this scale and in this tempo can be designed only for the purposes of aggression.” Roosevelt, in a message to Congress on 3 January 1936, announced his fear that the situations could lead to a general war. Congress, in response to the President’s message and the pending situation, put forth a Joint Resolution on 29 February 1936 revising the 1935 Neutrality Act. The revised 1936 Neutrality Act prohibited the extension of credit or loans to belligerent nations or to those who supported belligerents.

The world was shocked in March 1936 when German troops reoccupied the Rhineland in direct violation of the Treaty of Versailles and the Treaty of Locarno. Yet characteristic of the decade, the world watched without responding. The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 added to the intensity of the world situation. America desired, once again, to promote peace and avoid involvement in the Spanish civil conflict. In August 1936, American government officials proclaimed a non-involvement policy toward the Spanish Civil War and mentioned that the transfer of munitions or other war material to either faction involved would be against the interest of the U.S. government. Since the U.S. neutrality legislation did not mention any policy about warring factions within nations, it was necessary to revise the previous 1936 Neutrality Act and extend it to civil strife. Congress passed a joint resolution in December 1936 that restricted the transfer or sale of arms to the factions in Spain, which
the President enacted on 6 January 1937. The civil war in Spain soon
devolved into an ideological conflict that involved all of Europe. Although the
major powers pledged non-intervention, intervention became the reality. Paul
Johnson's work, Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties,
stated that the Spanish Civil War was "the first of the ideological proxy-wars" of
Hitler and Mussolini against their communist opponent, Stalin. Although America
pledged non-intervention, nearly 2,500 Americans were involved as both as
medical personnel and military specialists.

President Roosevelt's stance on the numerous incidents of aggression
consisted of a curious mixture of idealism and realism. Although Roosevelt was
a Wilsonian idealist, American public opinion influenced his policy and positions.
When hostilities erupted and the presence of widespread aggression and
lawlessness arose, Roosevelt, as the majority of the American public wished,
announced America's non-involvement and desire to preserve peace. In a much
quoted radio address, the President declared his hatred of war:

I have seen war. I have seen war on land and sea. I have seen blood
running from the wounded. I have seen men coughing out their gassed
lungs. I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed. I
have seen two hundred limping, exhausted men come out of line—the
survivors of a regiment of one thousand that went forward forty-eight
hours before. I have seen children starving. I have seen the agony of
mothers and wives. I hate war.

It is difficult to be an idealist in a world characterized by realism. Peace cannot
be legislated or preserved when the use of force for pursuit of national interests
is prevalent, as it was throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The American public
failed to see that an isolationist mentality would only make it easier for aggressors to overwhelm victims.

As a realist, Roosevelt recognized that the American public needed to comprehend the severity of the dilemma before American policy could be transformed into an active check upon aggression. Although Roosevelt had called upon Americans to “keep emotions under control” from the start of hostilities, he believed it was impractical to remain impartial in viewing the European developments. One could not be totally neutral when aggressors demolished the very foundations of peace, democracy, and international law. Subtle attempts to educate the public on the severity of the problems were made by Roosevelt; for example, a letter dated 20 April 1936 to the Daughters of the American Revolution stated that American defense forces needed to be strengthened to counter the rapidly changing world situation. Secretary of State Hull restated Roosevelt’s statement during a speech he gave on September 1936. Hull declared that it was necessary to increase defenses of America to counter the growing offensive capabilities. He stated that “we would not serve the cause of peace’ if we had inadequate means of self-defense. . . . we must be sure that in our desire for peace we would not appear weak and unable to resist the imposition of force or to protect out just right.” Some reasoned that through an increase in national defense capabilities America would be able to prevent aggression from infiltrating the boundaries of the U.S. Congress often questioned the call of the President and of the Secretary of State to increase
national defenses, wondering if increases were, in fact, necessary to insure American defense or an attempt to supply aid to the Allies.

The 1937 Neutrality Act passed in May 1937, known especially for its Cash and Carry provision, was viewed as yet another attempt to maintain America's neutrality and isolation when the world was at war. In reality, this act was not as neutral as it proclaimed. Although based on the principle of non-intervention similar to the provisions of the previous neutrality legislation, the 1937 Neutrality Act stated that nations could buy American goods (included were war materials) if payment was in cash and the goods were carried on their own ships. This act was an indirect attempt to give aid to the democratic Allied forces, short of direct intervention. The act, viewed as a "come-and-get-it neutrality," favored the cause of the European democratic nations in that the totalitarian aggressor nations would be blockaded by the British and French navies. The importance of the 1937 Neutrality Act was the declared permanence of American neutrality (the Cash and Carry provision of the act would expire in two years) and that travel on belligerent vessels was now illegal.

Japanese aggression against China began early in the 1930s, but depression and domestic opinions prevented a strong U.S. response. Many believed that the Japanese offensive would remain isolated to territorial conquests in China. When Japanese aggression continued and western spheres of influences were threatened, many nations, although they condemned Japanese actions, did little to directly hinder the actions. In mid-1937 the
Japanese increased their military action in the area, but the response was a mere call by the U.S. Secretary of State to utilize a "policy of self-restraint." On 16 July 1937, Secretary of State Hull issued a list of key principles of the U.S. government. Hull sent these principles to other countries for their responses. The fundamentals, as listed in Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941, were: preservation of peace, self-restraint, a return to international law and recognition of treaty obligations, reduction of armaments to insure international security, and respect of the sovereign rights of all nations.

Germany, Italy, and Japan were among the nations that responded to Secretary Hull's note. The responses of the German and Italian governments agreed with the principles put forth in Hull's note and mentioned their belief in peaceful means and the adherence to international law. Japan, however, pointed out that Hull's statements were too idealistic and unattainable in the current state of affairs, especially in the region of the Pacific.

On 5 October 1937, Roosevelt delivered in Chicago the well known Quarantine Speech. Roosevelt compared the aggression to an epidemic that needed to be placed under quarantine by the community of nations. He stated:

The peace, the freedom, the security of 90 percent of the population of the world is being jeopardized by the remaining 10 percent, who are threatening a breakdown of all international order and law. Surely the 90 percent who want to live in peace under law and in accordance with moral standards that have received almost universal acceptance through the centuries, can and must find some way to make their will prevail. . . . There must be positive endeavors to ensure peace.
Roosevelt further stated that "When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease. . . . War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared." The President mentioned that if the situation continued, "let no one imagine that America will escape." The American public had mixed responses to the President's speech; isolationists were against the President's call for "positive endeavors to ensure peace." Those in favor of a collective security stance advocated Roosevelt's "new" more substantial position in world affairs.

Although the views of the American public were divided, the Panay Incident, of 12 December 1937, indicated that a majority was still staunchly in favor of isolation. On 12 December 1937, a U.S. gunboat on patrol on the Yangtze River was bombed by Japanese aviators. The crew men in attempting to escape were met with additional gunfire. Two American citizens were killed. Several were wounded as a result of the incident. However, unlike similar events that contributed to American involvement in World War I, the general public was against any direct recourse and the government requested a formal letter of apology. This desire of the public to avoid hostilities was further evident in the proposal of a constitutional amendment, the Ludlow Amendment, which would require a national referendum to declare a state of war unless America was directly attacked. The Ludlow Amendment was narrowly rejected on 10 January 1938.
German aggression became the dominant concern of the international community following the German Anchluss with Austria in March 1938. Although the German annexation of Austria directly violated the Treaty of Versailles, the international community did little in response, believing that if German desires were appeased, general conflict would not arise. Germany, however, would continue to make demands upon the European democracies. In the fall of 1938 Germany requested the territorial acquisition of the Sudentenland, a mountainous horse-shoe shaped area of Czechoslovakia with a German ethnic majority. Czechoslovakia refused the German requests (the mountains of the Sudenten served as a natural boundary/barrier between Czechoslovakia and Germany). The determination of both Czechoslovakia and Germany prevented any peaceful solution—Czechoslovakia was unwilling to make concessions to German demands, and Germany was unwilling to abandon Sudenten desires. Conflict appeared imminent. Roosevelt, fearing indirect social and economic ramifications if conflict did occur, sent a diplomatic correspondence on 26 September 1938 to Germany, France, Great Britain, and Czechoslovakia which called for the use of peaceful means instead of military aggression. The following day Hitler responded that the Czech government could resolve the crisis by agreeing to German demands. Roosevelt requested again that a peaceful solution be sought. Finally, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany agreed to meet in Munich on 29 September and discuss the problem (neither Czechoslovakia nor the Soviet Union was in attendance).
The decision at Munich, known in hindsight as the "Munich Sellout," resulted in the Czechoslovakian concession of the Sudenten to Germany. Hitler declared after the settlement of Munich that the Sudenten was "the last territorial claim which I [Hitler] have to make in Europe." Hull, on 30 September 1938, mentioned a great sense of relief following the agreement. Roosevelt commended Neville Chamberlain, calling him a "Good Man" for the successful preservation of peace at Munich. Chamberlain, and the rest of the world, believed that he had achieved "peace in our times." Two observers of the Munich Conference from the New York Herald Tribune mentioned that "... before Munich this country's role in world politics was chiefly a chorus, somewhat over given to gloomy gestures and hortatory speech." This statement reveals the belief that Munich marked a transition in American policy.

The positive responses which resulted from the Munich settlement placed too much emphasis on Hitler's promises, and failed to realize the pending reality of the world situation.

Despite Hitler's promise to end territorial claims in Europe, German aggression continued. Roosevelt and Hull began to doubt both the wisdom of American isolationism and the continuance of Great Britain's and France's appeasement policies. The period 1935-1938 brimmed with an abundance of both Realpolitik and appeasement. Paul Johnson, author of Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties, characterizes the period as an open "era of international banditry," when realist attributes overwhelmed and challenged the "shaky world order" of the 1920s. The period represented not
only the beginnings of a evolution in American policy, but also a general belief that aggressive forces could be appeased. The years 1939-1941 would reveal the fact that appeasement only fed the hunger of aggression. It was also during this time that a realization was reached that American neutrality, although still an official stance, needed to be adjusted to deal effectively with the changing world situations which threatened the very foundations of democracy and peace.

The Erosion of American Neutrality, 1939-1940

American "neutrality" during this period was affected by legislation such as the 1939 Neutrality Act, the Destroyers for Bases Deal, Lend-Lease Policy (1941), and Bridge of Ships Agreement (1941). In general terms, the position of America toward the situation can be characterized as aid to the Allied democracies short of actual entrance into the conflict. The erosion of neutrality is attributed to the worsening of the world situation. U.S. officials stated that America was neutral, but not indifferent or impartial.

The Munich settlement served as a *modus vivendi* and merely postponed hostilities. In March 1939, Hitler revealed the emptiness of his Munich promise and mobilized German troops against Czechoslovakia. The Allies watched and realized that German aggression--aggression in general--was by no means something to accommodate. Appeasement was abandoned and the Allies became determined to use force against force. After the German offense against Czechoslovakia, Hitler demanded the Polish cession of the free city of Danzig and a road through the Polish Corridor to connect Germany with East
Prussia. Great Britain and France promised to aid Poland if German aggression became a reality.

President Roosevelt attempted to reason with Hitler and Mussolini on the consequences of offensive action. Roosevelt in an April 1939 correspondence mentioned: "You [Hitler] have repeatedly asserted that you and the German people have no desire for war. If this is true, there need be no war." In April Roosevelt also sent to both Hitler and Mussolini a list of 31 independent countries. He requested that neither of them attack the countries listed. If both agreed, Roosevelt, in return, would enter into international trade and armament talks. Neither Hitler nor Mussolini issued a direct, official response to Roosevelt's appeals. Hitler did, however, address Roosevelt's list in a mocking fashion in a 28 April 1939 speech to the German Reichstag, revealing Hitler's view that the U.S. was too occupied with staying out of the issue to pose a real threat.

Germany began in April 1939 to demand concessions from Poland. The Polish government denied all German demands, and pleaded with the international community for assistance. Great Britain and France warned Germany of possible ramifications if it attacked Poland. Roosevelt offered to mediate the dispute to promote a peaceful solution. The Polish government, on 25 August 1939, stated that it was ready and willing to accept such a solution.

The German invasion of Poland began on 1 September 1939; two days later, on 3 September 1939, the governments of Great Britain and France
declared war on Germany and the totalitarian aggressors, officially marking the start of World War II in Europe. President Roosevelt, in response to the war situation, addressed the American public on 3 September 1939. In his “fireside chat” Roosevelt stated:

No man is an island. . . . When peace is broken anywhere, peace is in danger everywhere. . . . Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or conscience. . . . I hope the United States will keep out of this war. I believe it will. And I give you my assurances that every effort of your government will be directed toward that end. . . . As long as it remains within my power to prevent, there will be no Blackout of peace in the United States. . . .

On 5 September 1939, President Roosevelt issued America’s routine declaration of neutrality concerning the situation. Roosevelt stated: “This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well.” Although the general public greatly desired to remain out of war, following the German invasion of Poland and the consequent declaration of World War II, a transition is evident in the opinion of the American people toward the conflict. Some began to believe that American involvement in the fight for democracy was inevitable. A Gallup Poll from October 1939 depicts a transition: 84 percent of the American public were pro-Ally, 2 percent pro-German, and 14 percent without opinion. In November 1939 Congress, after much debate, adopted a revised neutrality act. It ended the general arms embargo on belligerents and prohibited American vessels to travel in war zones.

If 1939 serves as a transformation in the world situation, 1940-1941 should be viewed as a period during which American opinions, policies, and actions evolved. In the presidential annual address to Congress on 3 January
1940, Roosevelt pointed out the distinction between non-involvement and “pretending that this war is none of our business.”

Hitler, early in 1940, eradicated the rights of all neutrals and vowed that neutral rights would not be observed. Following an offensive to the north against Norway and Denmark and then an offensive against the neutral nations of Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg, Germany turned its attention to France. Great Britain sent troops and other forms of military aid to France’s defense. When the British were forced out of France in the Battle of Dunkirk, France called on the U.S. to help. The French plea to Roosevelt to send “clouds of planes” to aid their plight was answered with vocal support and condolence. On 22 June 1940, after 6 weeks of battle, France surrendered to Germany, leaving the last democratic nation in Europe, Great Britain, to face German aggression alone. A massive German offensive, known as the German Blitzkrieg, was directed at Britain. Under the circumstances, the U.S. gradually decided to abandon its previous policies and send all aid possible to Britain, with the hope that American aid would enable the British to combat Germany without the U.S. actually entering the conflict.

American policies and actions following the fall of France were an attempt to thwart German aggression and ensure democracy. Neutrality, which Hitler declared obsolete in 1939, mattered little in a world full of aggression and nonrecognition of international law. The Roosevelt Administration first requested an addition $18 billion to be appropriated for defense purposes. Congress, after a much heated debate, in September 1940 approved the Selective Service and Training Act, which enacted the nation’s first peace time
On 3 September 1940, through an executive agreement, 50 American naval destroyers were transferred to the British Navy; in return, Great Britain agreed to transfer 3 pertinent bases (located on Newfoundland, Bermuda, and Trinidad) to U.S. control. This agreement between Roosevelt and Great Britain, known as the Destroyers-for-Bases Deal, provides an example of a serious breach of American neutrality. By the end of 1940, there was an intense fear that Great Britain, like France, would fall under the aggression of Germany, and that when Britain did surrender Germany would then turn its attention toward America. Roosevelt, in touch with the American public opinion, on 29 December 1940 presented a speech which called on Americans to be prepared to face possible involvement in the future. The President stated that the only nation between America and the Axis Powers was Great Britain. Therefore, support to Britain was a necessity. He further stated that America must “... integrate the war needs of Britain and the other nations resisting aggression ... America must have more ships, more arms, more planes. ...” America must be an “arsenal of democracy.” America would continue to support all nations resisting Axis Powers’ aggression until December 1941, when America would become a victim of such aggression.

The years 1935-1940 represent a transition in the world order and in America’s response to the changing situation. Early attempts to remain neutral, albeit not impartial or indifferent, were thwarted when aggressor nations began a widespread offensive against the world. Adherence to international law disappeared, Realpolitik became the policy. This period witnessed a gradual
shifting of American policy to deal effectively with world situations. Although official American neutrality continued until 8 December 1941, the U.S. gradually adopted a policy of aiding the Allies, short of entrance into the war, until a direct attack on U.S. territory pulled America into the conflict on the side of the Allies.
Fig. 1. The *Euro*. Italian internee Frederico Miniati was a crewman on this Italian vessel before taken into U.S. custody. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 2. This sunken Italian vessel was the result of sabotage by its crew. The saboteurs were prompted to such actions by rumors of the United States seizure of Axis vessels to aid the British war effort. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 3. The arrival of the Italians in Missoula, Montana, after four days travel on the Northern Pacific Railroad. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 4. Internees waiting for mail call in front of their barracks. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 5. A rough Italian "football" match inside the camp compounds.
(Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 6. Roman Catholic mass held for the Italians. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 7. Although away from family, many Italians at the camp made new friendships with the local stray dog population. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 8. A bird’s eye view taken from the balcony of the barracks. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 9. At the fence line, Italian internees observe the world outside the camp. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
Fig. 10. A portrait of Frederico Miniati. (Courtesy of Frederico Miniati)
CHAPTER III
AN EXPERIENCE AT “BELLA VISTA” DURING WORLD WAR II

With the onslaught of the war in Europe, many alien merchant vessels (of Danish, German, and Italian origins) became stranded within the territorial waters of the United States. Unable to return home due to the war situation, these vessels sought refuge within American waters. Complications arose when the merchant sailors began sabotaging their own ships. Fearing wide-spread repercussion for American ships in the vicinity, President Roosevelt ordered their seizure on 30 March 1941, nine months before the U.S. militarily entered World War II. Justification for this action was cited under the precedents set by President Wilson in 1915 and the Espionage Act of 1917. According to the Espionage Act, no ship, foreign or domestic, could be purposefully damaged within American waters. The act stated further that the seizure of sabotaged ships was to be limited to times of emergency. However strained the world situation, America, in early 1941, was not in a state of emergency. This state of emergency restriction, embodied in the Espionage Act, was overlooked and within the first weekend of President Roosevelt’s order, 69 foreign merchant vessels, including crews, were taken into U.S. custody.
Roosevelt called upon the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to examine the occurrences of sabotage. The final FBI report concluded that only 21 of the 69 seized ships were sabotaged. Germany and Italy demanded the return of their confiscated vessels; however, their protests were ignored. Instead, seized ships were to be repaired and used for the Allied war effort. The crews of these merchant vessels posed another problem for the U.S. authorities.

During its extended stay, the visas of the crew had expired. The visas had granted statutory limit of 60 days for merchant sailors. A visa violation of this type normally leads to deportation. The crews of the seized ships were transferred under the authority of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to Ellis Island. Rule 7, Subdivision (I), Paragraph 1 of the Regulations of the Immigration and Naturalization Services was cited as the aliens' violation.

The paragraph states:

Subdivision (i).--Arrest and deportation of seamen.
PARAGRAPH 1. Where a bona fide seamen, serving as such on a vessel arriving at a port of the United States, and permitted to enter the United States temporarily as a nonimmigrant pursuant to division (5) of section 3 of the Immigration Act of 1924 solely in pursuit of his calling as a seaman, engages in any other calling of occupation for hire or profit, or enters into the coastwise trade of the United States, or remains within the United States for more than 60 days after such entry, he shall be deemed to have abandoned his status as a nonimmigrant within the meaning of said division 5 of section 3 of the Immigration Act of 1924, and shall be taken into custody and deported at any time thereafter in accordance with the provisions of section 14 of said act.

The attorneys of the aliens argued that after a complete examination of all the cases cited in the United States Code Annotated regarding alien seamen, there was not a single case verdict which held that an alien seaman who stayed on his
vessel, within U.S. territorial waters, for a period longer than 60 days violated the laws of the United States. The attorneys recognized the Italian case to be the "first attempt ever made to stretch this rule to such a remarkable extent." It was further stated:

As a matter of law, it would seem to be undoubted that this alien being a seaman and in pursuit of his calling, was entitled as of right to stay within the United States so long as his ship here remained and he was entitled to remain on the said ship notwithstanding the fact that it was within a harbor of the United States.

The attorneys requested that the INS return the alien seamen to their ships and allow them to proceed accordingly to their country of origin. Despite the attorneys' case against the arrests, the INS issued warrants for the alien seamen (Danish excluded). Under normal circumstances the issued warrants would have led directly to deportation, but safe passage—a provision required by international law—could not be guaranteed. In fact, any attempt would be met by the British fleet which was determined to inhibit the safe passage of any vessel carrying "able-bodied men" which might aid the Axis powers in their war effort.

Facilities to house the aliens became necessary. Provisions under the 1929 Geneva Convention required internment facilities to be in a low risk area with conditions provided for the internees similar to the country's own military forces. While preparations were being completed, the seamen remained at Ellis Island or were transferred to local jails. Fort Missoula was the first internment facility completed. Its locality was ideal. Abiding by the 1929 Geneva Convention, Fort Missoula was situated out of harms way, on the southwest
edge of Missoula, Montana, and a location which posed little military or security risk. Another advantage to Fort Missoula was the recent transfer of the 4th Infantry Division to Alaska which left the fort largely inactive. Arrangements to transfer jurisdiction from the Department of the Army to the Department of Justice were completed in April 1941. INS officer Nick Collaer from El Paso, Texas, was named supervisor of the internment facility at Fort Missoula. Collaer rushed preparations for the arrival of Italian internees, scheduled for mid-May 1941.

Among the many duties of Collaer was the assemblage of staff and equipment. Collaer needed both support personnel and guards to run the camp effectively. Employment request letters were sent throughout the United States. H. J. McGhee, a border patrol officer in Arizona, was one of the many who received a request for employment in early 1941. All preparations were made before U.S. entry into World War II. McGhee became one of the Chief Surveillance Guards at Fort Missoula Internment Center. Many inquiries for employment at the camp were made from applicants of all ages. For example, an elderly gentleman, Mr. Virgil R. Fenton, wrote a letter of request to Montana's Governor Sam C. Ford for employment. In the letter, Fenton stated that he was "... now fifty years old, and can be of very little use to the Government... I am unemployed, and would be ready at once for duty at Fort Missoula, if needed." Governor Ford, however, had no jurisdiction over Fort Missoula, and stated that "... the entire matter will be handled by the United States Army... since Fort Missoula is a federal military reservation."
Many were affected by the war situation and were forced to seek other alternatives. Inquires for employment opportunities continued to arrive throughout the three year operation of the fort. Carmine Gigliotti, owner of Sunnyside Service Station, located in Bonners Ferry, Idaho, requested an application in mid-August 1942. He wrote back to Fort Missoula on 21 October 1942, inquiring on the status of his application. His letter stated:

While I realize that I may have to await for my turn, I would very much appreciate it if I knew that I have passed the personal investigation and my application is being considered. The reason for this is that as soon as National Gasoline Ration will go in effect I will have to close up my Station and make plans for the future.18

Fort Missoula appeared to be a safe haven for both the Italians detained and the Americans employed there.

One week before the main body of interned merchant marines were scheduled to arrive, a group of 125 Italians came to finish necessary preparations. Included in this select group was Frank Guastella, who stated that upon his arrival there was no fence constructed to confine the internment at the Fort.19 In fact, one of the first duties assigned to the early arrivals was the building of the fence. Other needed completions were a mess hall, laundry facilities, dormitories and a community area for religious services and theatrical and musical performances.20

Although the fort was not complete, the first main body of Italians arrived on 18 May 1941; this influx increased the number of Italians to 610 internees.21 The internees were transported to Fort Missoula by train; the trip lasted nearly a week.22
Northern Pacific Railroad line, conveniently located next to Fort Missoula. One internee's letter, quoted in the Missoulian, remarked:

The journey (from Ellis Island) was one I had dreamed of for years and then, in an extraordinary way, it came true. . . . No one can complain about the guards. They treat us with every consideration.  

Frank Guastella recalled his initial impression of Fort Missoula when his train arrived at dawn on the morning of 9 May 1941: "It was so beautiful, and so cold." A Missoulian journalist overheard and published in an article one internee's first impression of Fort Missoula: "Che Bella Vista!"—Italian for "What a beautiful view!" "Bella Vista" became the Italian nickname for the Fort Missoula Internment Facility. A translation of a correspondence from Italian internee Sarbia Umberto to his wife eloquently put into words the feelings of many of the detainees. He wrote:

I feel as though I am now in a corner of our beautiful Italy; I am very well, I am healthy and here now I have the sensation to be in a field; I got fatter there [Petersburg Penitentiary] and I will get fatter still here. I recommend to you then to be of good cheer and don't make your blood sour on account of me because I am more than well. . . . In this new place we have more liberty, even though there is a fence; we are all Italians and life seems easier in the community. The only thing we are now awaiting is that the world may return to peace so that we may soon return to our house and live in peace the last few years of our life.  

Another internee, Diodato Brattich, wrote a reassuring letter to his mother upon arrival at Fort Missoula. His letter stated:

. . . they provide us with clothing and other things we need. We eat swell. All those who know me say that I am fatter and that I look better. This place is much more beautiful than any other I have been before. There is not the discipline of the prison and we are all amongst our own people, the guards in the camp we hardly see. . . . I shall teach and probably learn something.
When Stellato Gaetano first arrived at the fort he also wrote a letter to his mother. Gaetano told his mother he felt as if he were "born again"\(^{28}\) after being released from prison and sent to Fort Missoula. He further stated: "ended is the obsession of the bars and guard attendants . . . we return a little to life."\(^{29}\) He said of Fort Missoula: " . . . the air is good, the camp vast and compared to the prison it is Paradise."\(^{30}\) Gaetano asked his mother not to be preoccupied on his account, that "It has been a blue period of monotonous servitude, but a little sun has returned and I hope that soon we will return to our land. . . . Be tranquil, I shall return with the flags to the wind and our truth will be more resplendent (sic) than ever."\(^{31}\) Many of the internees' letters were reassuring both family and friends of their predicament; several were displays of patriotism and opinions contrary to those of the U.S. One internee, Eligio Basadonne, wrote a letter to Reverend Sister Maria Serafina Basadonne which generated questions of intent by the censor. The letter stated:

Dearest sister:

We are allowed 25 lines, and I can in this manner give you my news. I am well but I am within the fence envying he who can be useful and is useful to his country, even with his life in danger. Fate did not in the least favor me by relegating me to this life of inertia and nothingness when my colleagues offer their work and their life for our victory which is much more necessary than life itself.\(^{32}\)

The censor's written reaction to Basadonne's letter stated:

A citizen of another nation who is not subject to the laws of the detaining power, should be afforded the privilege of expressing his opinion with respect to his country in any manner he sees fit, providing that he keeps his remarks within the limits of decency and does not abuse the institutions of the detaining power. I cannot say what the view of this . . . the military Censors will take, but I would like to forward this letter.\(^{33}\)
Those letters which presented an overly nationalistic or differing view from the U.S. standpoint were kept in files for surveillance purposes. This intelligence file was often consulted when deciding if certain aliens were eligible for special privileges. Copies of all letters were translated into English and subject to censorship.

Soon after the first group reached Fort Missoula, the Italian Consul to Seattle, Antonio Toscani Millo, conducted an inspection of the Camp, which demonstrated Italian concern for the Italian nationals being held at Fort Missoula. Consul Millo, pleased with the conditions for the Italian internees, reported favorably back to Italy. Although Consul Millo's report was favorable, propagandized reports, fueled by the world situation, presented the conditions at Fort Missoula as otherwise. Italian newspapers transformed Consul Millo's report; they stated that internees were incarcerated with common criminals and under intense guard by "policemen, most of whom were Jews."34

The First Secretary of the Royal Italian Embassy, Mario Conti, arrived in Fort Missoula during the last week of August 1941. Conti visited the fort to examine accommodations for and treatment of the Italians. He also spoke with large numbers of the internees who had failed to be cooperative and informed all internees at the camp "they MUST cooperate."36 Collaer noticed a significant improvement in the Italians' response, their actions, and their attitude toward internment.36 Upon leaving the fort, First Secretary Conti wrote to Collaer in gratitude for the fort's hospitality. Conti stated:
I wish to thank you for your kind cooperation received from you and your staff. My stay in Missoula has been very agreeable and I shall never forget it. Please convey my thanks to all members of your Staff, and I remain, my dear Mr. N.D. Collaer.37

The Italian government made special efforts to convey their concern for citizens held at Fort Missoula. The general response of the Italian officials who visited the fort centered on ensuring good treatment for the internees, encouraging those held to be examples of model Italian citizens, and insisting that the internees cooperate with the fort personnel.

The U.S. government, specifically the U.S. Surgeon General, also concerned about the welfare of the Italian internees, sent M.S. Lomard, a medical director, to examine the health facilities of the fort. Lomard reported back his assessment of the medical relief provided for the internees. His observations included a call for a responsible medical officer, a trained nurse, and bedside attendants to effectively fulfill the needs of the internees; a concern over the lack of routine physical examinations; and a belief that vaccinations and inoculations for disease prevention needed to be performed.38 Lombard further stated that the war situation could possibly lead to both an increased number of internment facilities, and the need to expand capacities of the established camps. The memo mentioned: “It is believed that the Service will be called to handle the medical problem and it is suggested that the medical service at Fort Missoula be fully organized, so that it may be used later as a guide. . . . At this time only male detainees are in camps, however, the future may call for the medical care of both males and females.”39 Lombard’s description of the
medical facilities of the fort aided in determining the future needs of the fort and the Italian detainees.

Italian internees continued to arrive at Fort Missoula: merchant sailors, entertainers, chefs, artists, all charged with visa violations were rounded up and transported to Fort Missoula. The camp soon neared its capacity of 1000 and expansion was necessary to fulfill the needs of the increasing numbers. Collaer requested permission, on 23 May, to expand the Fort's facilities to fulfill the needs of the growing numbers. When Collaer’s request was granted, construction of new dormitories and facilities began both inside and outside the initial fence which surrounded the compound. Some speculate that it was at this point, summer 1941, that the government began its preparation for a new group of detainees, the Japanese-Americans.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, on 7 December 1941, and the U.S. declaration of war the following day, a new FBI policy was implemented. Japanese-Americans, who were viewed as a threat to the security of the United States, were already under close surveillance. Those within a certain distance of the coast or military installation had to be relocated. Japanese-Americans who were “suspicious” or of “questionable character” (that is, subscribing to a Japanese newspaper, speaking out in favor of the Japanese government, being members of an ethnic Japanese organization or teaching Japanese customs) were taken into the custody of the INS and transferred to internment facilities. Fort Missoula was among the many locations. Collaer, supervisor of Fort Missoula’s alien detentions, received a memo on 8 December 1941 which
notified him: "it . . . looks as though you will have more guests [Japanese-Americans]." The Italian internees' response to Fort Missoula's addition was positive. Alfredo Cipolato remembered the Japanese-Americans as "Very quiet, not like the Italians." He recalled that the Italians and the Japanese-Americans, as forced occupants of the same camp, exchanged dinners and attended each others' theatre productions. In an interview with Bill Lang, from the Montana Historical Society, in Helena, Cipolato further stated that when the first Japanese-Americans arrived at Fort Missoula during the winter 1941, there was a barrier separating the housing facilities of the two nationalities. Frederico Miniati, another Italian internee, remembers that there never was a fence around the fort until the Japanese arrived; as he stated, "there was no need."

Cipolato's initial impressions of the Japanese-Americans was that they were "tough old people, but good people with little to do with the war." The treatment of the Japanese-Americans at Fort Missoula, although better in comparison to other internment facilities for the Japanese-Americans, was significantly different from the treatment of the Italian aliens. Much of this harsh treatment was due to the world situation. The bombing of Pearl Harbor had turned the American people against an innocent group within American society. The relationship between the two nationalities seemed positive in both outlook and actions; no hostilities were ever recorded between the two.

During the time that the Italians were at Fort Missoula the greatest problem seemed to be boredom. Frank Brown, a medical officer of the camp,
worried about the morale of the internees. One of the internees, Savoretti, in a memo dated 15 December 1941 warned:

> There has been one suicide and two attempted suicides of detained enemy aliens. Take precautions.49

Dr. Brown further addressed the issue of mental wellness by stating:

In the month of December 1942, there were a total of 1404 sick calls plus 375 days of relief in the post hospital. Considering there are only 1227 Italian detainees, the ratio between sick calls and population is most unreasonable. This is directly attributed to the fact that some of these men have been away from their homes and families for 3 or 4 years, incarcerated in prisons and detained in camps. . . . If these men are not furnished more work and liberties, I dread to think what the conditions will be one year from now.50

To counteract boredom, many activities were available for the internees, such as soccer tournaments, painting pictures, building model ships, singing in the choir, playing musical instruments, acting in theatrical performances, reading literature provided by the camp's library service, fishing in the Bitterroot River,51 and partaking in religious activities. The Italians were also permitted to have canine companions. They fed the strays unwanted and disliked food initially. Later, the dogs received significant portions of the meals of the Italians. According to Mr. Frederico Miniati, some internees had two or three dogs.52 The Italians virtually governed themselves--they established a constitution and held elections for camp representatives. Captain Saglietto was an elected spokesman for the camp; in a speech on October 19, 1942, Capt. Saglietto rallied the Italians to comply with Fort Missoula's guidelines. An interpreter's translation of the speech summarized Capt. Saglietto's words:
he asked them to work and be disciplined so that this camp would become a model to other institutions of this type, . . . he said to demonstrate to the world that they are descendants of a disciplined and heroic people and that they could continue the tradition of the Romans (quoting the latin [sic]saying "Civis Romanus sum" I am a citizen of Rome. . . he asked them to work also because only by showing . . . what stuff the Italians are made of, that he could do things which were at a time impossible to obtain. He cited the fact that while the Americans never furnished the Italians here what they call "Pajamas" it was not possible to ask and obtain not one but 3000 of them.53

Saglietto's speech embodied the general atmosphere at the camp. Internees should attempt to be model citizens and impeccable examples of Italian society, work with instead of against the Fort personnel, and realize the high quality of life they were experiencing. Many of the complaints centered around superficial issues similar to the "Pajama" incident mentioned in Capt. Saglietto's speech. For example, if one internee received a new pair of shoes, they all requested new pairs.

The Italians were provided with many luxuries, even when the people of Missoula and the guards of the camp were unable to obtain necessities. McGhee stated, "The Italians were eating round steak, when I was eating hamburger."54

Upon arrival at the camp, the food supplied was not the typical Italian cuisine. According to Mr. Frederico Miniati, an Italian detainee, instead of meals consisting of pastas and breads, the Italians were provided with "cereals, marmalades and hot dogs."55 Miniati noted, however, that soon after Capt. Sagiletto wrote to the Swiss Legation requesting Italian food, the camp's menu changed toward a more native cuisine. Numerous food items that were scarce or expensive due to the world situation became a regular part of the menu.
The Italians basically ran the kitchen and other areas of the fort unhindered, with duties that included cooking, waiting tables, washing dishes, and collecting garbage. These duties were divided and rotated equally among all the internees. Their cooking habits resulted in numerous accounts of wastefulness. As an example of this wastefulness, the Italian cooking methods caused a drainage problem in December 1942. A work statement described the incident as:

On December 22nd, 1942, the drain in the Italian kitchen became plugged so badly that the Italian crews were unable to cope with the situation, so the under signed (Joseph A. Hoffman and Chris J. Kramer) were called to take care of the problem, of which necessitated working over time. The workmen found about three large size garbage cans of SPAGHETTI in the main sewer line and when it was finally loosened it filled two man holes at a distance of one hundred and fifty feet.

Incidents of waste were also addressed in the INS's Culinary Operation Report by G.A. Foss, an INS inspector. Representatives of the INS frequently visited Fort Missoula to assess the fort's operations. Foss's culinary evaluation prompted Mr. Fraser, officer in charge, to send a response to Mr. W.F. Kelly, assistant commissioner for alien control. Fraser's memo stated that for some time the personnel of Fort Missoula had been aware of the extreme waste involved in the Italians' methods of cooking. Fraser's memo outlined the intended remedy to the problem and put forth several methods of dealing with the waste situation. These included: "... to cut down on the supply of lettuce furnished ... and eliminate celery except as a seasoning. ... cafeteria style of serving ... to see that each Italian takes no more food than he desires, and insist that they eat what they take ... [and] that in every case where there is an
excessive waste of any item, the total pounds of that food shall be cut accordingly. The memo also stated that the fort was attempting to educate the Italians on alternatives cooking methods, to utilize chinaware (versus the former tin bowls), to reduce the coffee ration to the similar ration supplied to U.S. soldiers, and to increase the supply of fresh fruits (due to the limited market availability, Fraser questioned if this would be possible). In closing, Fraser stated:

The entire mess problem has been a complex one ever since this station was put into operation, due to many circumstances, including the peculiar diet habits of Italians as compared with Japanese and German. I realize the situation is not satisfactory and has not yet improved as much as I feel it should, but we will make every effort to bring about the desired changes by handling the situation firmly and intelligently.

It is uncertain whether Fraser's initiatives were successful.

Ann D'Orazi, daughter of a local Missoula Italian grocer (and later wife of Alfredo Cipolato), remembers that her father supplied the Italians weekly with Italian food (such as, pasta, tomato paste, and oil). Although the D'Orazi grocery store supplied the fort with needed weekly goods, due to the large numbers of people to be fed (nearly 2000), there was a need to contact larger suppliers for the necessary material. The Grandinetti Manufacturing Company of Syracuse, New York, was one supplier used during the fort's operation. Fraser sent a memorandum to the Grandinetti Manufacturing Company requesting supplies. The memo mentioned the Italian population of the fort and asked for a quote on a pasta making machine. Other suppliers were contacted and utilized to serve the needs of the large Italian population.
The personnel at Fort Missoula did everything they could to make the Italian experience as easy and enjoyable as possible while preserving the Italian lifestyle. Kathy Witkowsky, former reporter to the Spokesman Review and recent director of the film, Bella Vista, which portrays the internment story, stated that it was the preservation of the Italian culture within the camp which set Fort Missoula apart from other internment facilitates of the time. However, by late 1942, separation from home began to take its toll—one camp official suggested that Italians be given employment opportunities outside the camp. After much discussion, an agreement was reached that allowed Italian internees to be employed.

Employers in the Missoula area happily agreed to hire Italians as workers—partly due to diminished labor force during the war and largely due to the agreement of a wage of 80 cents a day. Initially employment was through the U.S. Forest Service to fight fires. Later work opportunities included the Northern Pacific, the sugar beet harvest, St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula, and as chefs and waiters at local hotels. There were no reports of problems or difficulties during these employment agreements. In a letter to Mr. Maro Peter, U.S. delegate to the International Red Cross, regarding sugar beet employment opportunities, Captain Saglietto, the internees' spokesman, stated:

I have the pleasure to inform you that it has begun under very happy auspices in spite of the far advanced season which minimizes the crop of sugar beets. However, about eighty persons have already gone out to work and owing to the courteous and solicitous interest of Mr. Bert H. Fraser, Officer in Charge at Fort Missoula, I have reason to believe that before long, he will succeed to bring about the possibility of a job for chopping wood outside the fence, thus allowing the employment of a few hundred internees.
This work opportunity, although not utilized by all, aided in improving the Italian morale at Fort Missoula. It was a chance to be outside the confinement of the camp’s fence. The internees actively experienced Missoula and its vicinity and furthered their understanding of the diversity in American society. One Italian internee, Armando Queirolo, described the Missoulans as sympathetic. Queirolo’s letter stated: “Well, all the people around us, are very good persons including the citizens of Missoula who go out of their way to be kind to us.” The Italians were assimilated into the Missoula community; Missoulans welcomed the variety the Italians added to their lives. Montanans viewed the Italians as victims of circumstance. They reached out to the Italians, inviting them into their homes, out for dinner; one employer even took his workers out for beer.

Although most of the experience at Fort Missoula were positive, there were underlying sources of division which created tensions. Such tension included the division among officers and the enlisted men and the presence of both fascist and anti-fascist elements within the camp. The first division, between officers and enlisted men, was divulged in a statement sent to Collaer, the supervisor of the camp, by Vittorio Masoni on behalf of the lower crewmen. The translated report stated that the Italian officers at the camp were discriminating against the enlisted men. The enlisted men, according to the report, were suffering from the extreme cold due to insufficient clothing, while the officers hoarded much of the supplies for themselves. The report also called for
a joined mess hall which would serve the needs of all the internees. No recorded action was found in response to this inquiry.

A second, and more serious, issue arose regarding the intense division between the fascist and anti-fascist elements within the camp. Many of the alien seamen comprised the fascist element, whereas the anti-fascist group included those aliens who had resided in America with expired visas. Much of the tension between these two groups is evident in the letters of the internees, all of which were routinely censored and translated. Some of the favorable letters have been already mentioned; others were viewed as fascist, objectionable and contrary to the interest of the United States. In reality, many of these letters vented frustration toward the war. For example, one letter, from Ciro Salaria to an acquaintance, declared: "There are three things I love with all my life, they are my country, you and my mother, for them I would do anything and nothing shall bend my indomitable [sic]. I will do everything I can that is possible for my country, you, and my mother." In another letter, Salaria stated: "My heart that gnaws at itself for such forced inactivity. . . . Tell Marko that my one desire is that he grows quickly and learns to handle a gun. . . . Seek to be calm and serene and be proud of Joseph who is now fighting for our country as also our father is fighting and likewise our children are combating."

Umberto Cataldi, an internee and advocate of fascism, requested a black shirt from his Godmother:
The favor I am asking of you is that if you have a black shirt or else you can dye one of those belonging to your son as long as it is all black, to send me this mourning shirt you will be doing me a great favor. If, however, you do not have one and you cannot dye one belonging to your son, please let me know because I need it for the 20th of this month. Please do not forget because I am waiting.

Supposedly there was to be an organized fascist rally within the camp in late October 1942. Capt. Saglietto in a 19 October 1942 speech to the internees spoke about a celebration planned for 28 October 1942 and said: “the program calls for the donning of the Black shirt by all...” Saglietto's speech provided a brief overview of the planned celebration:

They will go out in Fascist garb at 7, later there will be the celebration of the Mass in the camp proper, and afterward a who banner will be presented, for future consignment, to the Federation of People of the sea or some such organization, the banner to be enclosed in a case is now under construction.

Saglietto told all who had not done so that there was still time to get a black shirt and take part in the celebration. It appears that Umberto Cataldi's request to his Godmother was not for the mourning shirt, but rather for a black shirt to partake in the planned fascist celebration.

More directly evident of this division between fascist and anti-fascist elements was an affair that became known as the "Dr. Smiley incident." This split between internees led to many verbal clashes regarding ideological differences. One memorandum stated:

For several months bitter feelings has [sic] been growing between the fascist and the anti-fascist at this detention station. It is impossible to stop discussions on politics, and arguments were becoming more and more numerous. Both the former and present spokesmen of the Italians had written and mentioned verbally that the "Communists" should be removed or eventually trouble would occur within the camp.
However, these clashes were isolated to political discussions until the "Dr. Smiley incident" of 3 September 1942. As one letter following the incident stated, "it only took the unfortunate posting of a letter on the bulletin board to start the fight."  

Dr. Smiley was the first assigned medical officer of the fort. Upon receiving a letter from an internee which was derogatory toward the Italian government and complimented the Americans for the kind treatment received, Dr. Smiley posted the letter. Two members of the post hospital's personnel intervened, fearing that Visini, an internee belonging to the anti-fascist element and the author of the letter, might be in danger if the letter was read by the fascist element within the camp. Dr. Smiley, however, mentioned he wanted all to see that at least someone appreciated the treatment given by the camp to the internees. The confidential letter from the anti-fascist internee was posted on the hospital bulletin board. A fascist internee read the posted letter, made hundreds of copies, and passed the copies out to his fellow internees, which resulted in widespread violence throughout the camp. A memo regarding the incident stated:

... they were read by hundreds of the detainees, which produced a mob spirit and Visini [the writer of the letter] was called from his barracks and beaten. Reboa, Giusto and Arcuri attempted to come to his rescue and were also beaten. De Biasi was dragged from his bed later and beaten because he is [sic] accused as being a Communist. Upon information of the detainee spokesman, Captain P. S. Saglietto, detainees Spadaro, Baralli, Corti, Sorano, Ruilina, Paliaga, Muti and Kiraz were removed for their own protection to the Guard House, as they were all regarded as Communists or friends of the Communists by the remainder of the detainees, and there is no doubt that they would have been beaten with serious consequences."
As a result of this incident, Dr. Smiley, nearing retirement, was immediately removed from duty and placed on the inactive list. Those contributing to the outbreak of violence were punished and the injured were hospitalized.

These two divisions provided another outlook on camp life. "Bella Vista" might have been a beautiful view, but both negative and positive experiences occurred. One internee summarized the Italian experience at Fort Missoula in a letter to a friend:

In this vast camp you have the sensation that you are living in a gigantic ship which is engaged to make a long trip and whose arrival is unknown. My life passes in very much different conditions from those which I lived before.79

On the other hand, Alfredo Cipolato offered this description: "If there would have been women, it would have been paradise. We had everything we needed."80

The Italians were removed from the alien enemy category on Columbus Day, 12 October 1943, in response to the Allied liberation of Italy. Although the Italians were removed from the enemy alien category, some Italians would remain under the jurisdiction of the Fort Missoula Internment Facility until the fort was official closed on 15 May 1944.81 The previous Regulation Controlling Travel and Other Conduct of Aliens of Enemy Nationalities was amended to take into account the change of Italian status. The amended regulation also exempted Italian aliens from the previous restrictions on travel. These restrictions included obeying 8:00 o'clock curfew, carrying an Alien Enemy Certificate of Identification, restricting ownership of cameras and short-wave radios, and restricting travel on and around military or secure areas. Although the regulation was amended to
exclude the Italians, certain provisions remained in place. The attached memorandum stated that

Mr. Enis [director of alien enemy control units] emphasized that this announcement will not change the status of Italians who have been interned or paroled by the Attorney General, and those Italian aliens who were paroled after their arrest as potentially dangerous aliens must still respect and obey the order and conditions of parole. The protection of out internal security and safety . . . demands that the Department of Justice continue to arrest and intern, if necessary, those few Italians who have proven, or who may hereafter show, their disloyalty to the United States.82

Many of the Italians interned at Fort Missoula were returned to Ellis Island to prepare for their departure back to Italy. Ironically, many refused to board the ship, preferring to remain in America. As Frank Guastella stated: "Some of us came and found a life."83 Others feared their return would cause family tensions. John Pelle, one Italian internee of Fort Missoula, stated: "Ninety percent of American people don't know how good this country is . . . ."84 John Pelle, like many other internees, decided to remain in America and settled in the Spokane area. Of those who chose to remain in America, many opted to work for the railroad or joined the military. Alfredo Cipolato married the daughter of the Italian grocer who supplied the camp during internment. He calls America home now and states that he has two birthdays, the first the day he was born in Italy, 5 October 1912, and the second the day he began his new life in America, on 25 April 1940.

The Italian encounter at Fort Missoula overall was a positive experience. Many welcomed the opportunity to be secluded from the turmoil of the world situation. Fort Missoula introduced the Italians to the diversity of American life.
The three years of internment transformed both the lives of the Italians and the town of Missoula, Montana. A community was formed. Respect and trust were present on both sides. The chief surveillance officer later mentioned that the jobs of the guards could have been performed by a "boy scout." Alfredo Cipolato recalls the "Not so bad" treatment they received at the fort as being much better than his experience at Ellis Island. Bert Frazier, a guard at Fort Missoula, mentioned that many of the internees at the fort were "fascists who had their eyes opened and now want to live in this country."

Over a half a century has passed since the Italian internment experience at "Bella Vista" ended. The former internment buildings and land have been transformed into other uses. The University of Montana utilizes some of the former camp buildings as maintenance and storage facilities. The Montana National Guard and the United States Forest Service are located within other buildings. A section of the former camp's land comprises The Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, which dedicates itself to portraying and informing the community on the history of Missoula. Amazingly, few displays recount the story of the internment facility. Allan Mathews, Missoula's historic preservation officer, stated:

It's probably the most important historic event that occurred here locally in the last century. We should put together some of this history that's been swept under the rug. It's a real opportunity to examine how easily our freedoms are taken away from us, in a country where we hold those freedoms so dear.
The occurrences at Fort Missoula during World War II must not be forgotten. Although the buildings have been transferred to alternative uses, the memories of the camp live on in the hearts of the internees, many of whom found a new life and home during their three-year stay in "Bella Vista."
CHAPTER IV
IMPLICATIONS FROM THE FORT MISSOULA EXPERIENCE

The impact of widespread internment facilities, similar to the facility at Fort Missoula, was significant. Previous to World War II, there had been no specific international agreement to govern the status of civilians during war.\(^1\) With the end of World War II, regulations were developed to establish acceptable standards for noncombatants during times of war. As a result of the frequent internment practice of World War II, a practice which began during World War I, the international community realized the need for regulations to set a standard for the status and treatment of civilians during times of conflict. Specifically of interest to the Fort Missoula example were guidelines to govern the detention process. The convention which established the necessary codes of conduct was the 1949 Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians Persons in Time of War. This convention directly addressed the inhumanities which occurred during World War II.

The Italian experience at Fort Missoula fortunately was an exception. Many of the other World War II internment facilities included inhumane conditions and disregard for human rights. As a result of the World War II experience, nations sought to create provisions regarding rules of warfare and
treatment of noncombatants during hostilities. Fort Missoula, similar to many other American internment facilities, far surpassed the requirements of international laws of its time and, surprisingly, met several of the post-war requirements. The general atmosphere of the facility was one of dignity and respect for human rights and liberties. The personnel sought to make the experiences of the Italians as comfortable and enjoyable as possible. Although some viewed their experience away from their homeland as a disappointment, many saw Fort Missoula as a “bella vista” far away from the turmoil of the world situation.

Many still question American actions prior to World War II. The gradual shift of American public opinion coincided with increase aggression in Europe. As this threat became more tangible, public opinion transformed gradually allowing for a more active U.S. foreign policy. Attempting to delay entrance into the war for as long as possible, American policy entered an “all aid to the Allies” phase. This aid, as described throughout the second chapter, also led to the seizure of Axis ships to be used for the British war effort.

The account of Fort Missoula provides both insight into and recognition of a widely unknown chapter of American history. The implication of the Italian experience, although not direct, is far reaching, both internationally and domestically. American acts of unneutrality, precedents for the treatment of aliens, and the personal experiences of the Italians who lived at the fort portray an event during the early years of the war of which few know. These lessons of
the past remain relevant to today in the Geneva Convention, other articles of international law, and the memories of those who lived and served at the camp.
CHAPTER I: NOTES


CHAPTER II: NOTES


2 Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota was the head of the investigation that concluded that munitions manufactures and financial institutions relationships to the Allies caused American entrance into World War I. Several sources examine the topic. Wayne S. Cole, Roosevelt & the Isolationists, 1932-46 (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 141; Bailey and Ryan, Hitler vs. Roosevelt: The Undeclared Naval War, 12.


4 It is important to note that the 1935 Neutrality Act did not distinguish between the aggressor and the victim. Therefore, it is often regarded as a double-edged sword. Jerry K. Sweeney and Margaret B. Denning, A Handbook of American Diplomacy (Boulder Colo.: Westview Press, 1993), 35; Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People, 701; Bailey and Ryan, Hitler vs. Roosevelt: The Undeclared Naval War, 11-12; Allen W. Dulles and Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Can America Stay Neutral? (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), 55.

5 Dulles and Armstrong. Can America Stay Neutral?, 93.
6 Ibid., 84.


8 Ibid., 29.

9 Ibid., 30; Dulles and Armstrong, *Can America Stay Neutral?*, 81.

10 It is important to note that the U.S. never acknowledged Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia. U.S. Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941*, 30, 32.

11 Dulles and Armstrong, *Can America Stay Neutral?*, 95.


13 Ibid., 35.

14 Ibid.


17 Ibid., 35-36; Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 701.


21 Ibid., 330.


26 This statement is from Bernard Baruch; the 1937 Cash and Carry provision represents America's *de jure* attempt to appear neutral, when the *de facto* reality was indirect aid to the Allies. Dulles and Armstrong, *Can America Stay Neutral?*, 75.


26 U.S. Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941*, 44.

29 Ibid., 44-45.

30 Ibid., 45.


33 Vieth, *Diplomacy of the Depression*, 81.

34 Ibid., 51.

35 The Ludlow Amendment, if passed, would have severely inhibited the executive's ability to conduct foreign policy. However, public opinion was deeply in favor of preserving its neutral ideals. The Amendment was narrowly rejected by the House of Representatives by a vote of 201 against and 188 pro-passage. Ibid., 52; Vieth, *Diplomacy of the Depression*, 80; Sweeney and Denning, *A Handbook of American Diplomacy*, 60.


40 Vieth, *Diplomacy of the Depression*, 84.

41 Ibid.


47 Roosevelt’s use of this metaphor, attributed to John Dunne, symbolizes the great interdependency of the situation—-one nation is effected by policies and actions outside of its territorial boundaries. Bailey and Ryan, *Hitler vs. Roosevelt: The Undeclared Naval War*, 28.

48 Ibid.


52 A violation of international law which states that every sovereign nation has the right to remain neutral toward a situation. Observance of international
law was abandoned at the start of 1930s with the outbreak of aggressive forces. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 712.

53 Ibid., 717.

54 Ironically, Hitler arranged for the French surrender to be in the same location and railroad car that the Germans surrendered in nearly 22 years before.

55 Thomas A. Bailey's work makes reference to the vast difference between pre- and post-Hitler international law.


57 There was an added clause in the Selective Service and Training Act of September 1940. Land troops could not be deployed to areas outside the Western Hemisphere. Ibid.; U.S. Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941*, 81.


59 The actions and policies of the Roosevelt Administration for a long time had been sensitive to American public opinion.


CHAPTER III: NOTES


3 Buchel, "Bella Vista," 1-3.

4 James R. Beverley and Jose Lopez Baralt, *Brief of Alien* to United States Department of Justice, no date, 1-2, Copy at the United States
Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 84, Box 70, 641200-38. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

5 Ibid., 8.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 2-3.


9 The 1929 Geneva Convention was strictly upheld at Fort Missoula and other U.S. internment facilities. Each Italian internee at Fort Missoula was to receive a copy of the 1929 Convention in his native language. Any questions or complaints regarding the Geneva Convention could be referred to a representative of the International Red Cross. W.F. Kelly, assistant commissioner for alien control, to Officer in Charge, Fort Missoula Internment Facility, no date, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 15, 1014 E. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

10 List of Italian Seamen Still Detained in Penitentiaries, to Fort Missoula, Mont., 14 October 1942, Copy at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 23, 1022 F. National Archives, Suitland, Md.


16 Montana Historical Society Archives, Governor Sam C. Ford Administrative Papers. Manuscript Collection 35, Box 95, Folder 8.

17 Ibid.
18 Carmine Gigliotti, to Supervisor of Aliens, Fort Missoula, Mont., 21 October 1942, Copy of Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 1, 1000E. National Archives, Suitland, Md.


22 Ibid., 9.

23 Ibid.


25 The term "Bella Vista" was found in every source which referred to the Fort. "Bella Vista" in Italian means beautiful view. First overheard and reported in the Missoula (Montana) Missoulian, 9 May 1941.

26 Sarbia Umberto to his wife, 6 October 1942, Translation of letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1013 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

27 Diodato Brattich, to his mother, 6 October 1942, Translation of letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1013 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

28 Stellato Gaetano, to his mother, 7 October 1942, Translated letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1013 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.
32 Eligio Basadonne, to Reverend Sister Maria Serafina Basadonne, no date, Translation at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, File 1013 H. National Archives, Suitland, Md. Italics in original.

33 Ibid.


35 N.D. Collaer, supervisor of alien detentions, to Mr. W.F. Kelly, chief supervisor of border patrol, 26 August 1941, Memorandum at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 6, 1000 FM. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

36 Ibid.

37 Mario Conti, first secretary of the Royal Italian Embassy, to N.D. Collaer, supervisor of alien detentions, 25 August 1941, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 6, 1000 FM. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

38 Lombard's report gave a brief description of the medical facility at Fort Missoula. His comments included:

The regular sixty bed post hospital at this time is undergoing extensive repairs incident to a fire which occurred during the Army occupancy. It is anticipated that this building will be made ready in about 30 days, at which time the liberal equipment, supplies of drugs and other hospital materials, now in storage, will be placed in use. The list is quite complete... At the present time, sick detainees are hospitalized in a small frame building located within the wire fence inclosure and near the barracks... The bulk of the clinical activities is being conducted by detainee Dr. Cuomo, who lives in the infirmary... While the actual work is being met as it arises, the whole medical problem is believed to be wanting... M.S. Lomard, medical director of U.S.P.H.S., to the United States Surgeon General, U.S. Public Health Service, regarding a visit to Fort Missoula, 4 September 1941, Copy at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 3, 1000 FM. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

39 Ibid.

41 Then new dormitories, proposed by Collaer, were to include an officer's barrack. An Italian internee Mr. DeLuca drew a proposed set floor plans (copy included in the appendix) for the officers' barracks. Collaer, after examining the plans, questioned DeLuca if the intent was to have each eight foot room "to accommodate two officers or just one." N.D. Collaer, supervisor of alien detentions, to Mr. DeLuca, Italian internee, 12 August 1941, Crew Memorandum No. 18, Copy at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 1, 1000 B. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

42 According to international law, interned nationalities' dormitories had to be separated. This separation could, as in the case of Fort Missoula, be by a fence.

43 It must be remembered that Collaer's 23 May request was 7 months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Although the Japanese-Americans, and other persons of Axis origin, were under intense supervision at this time, no proof can support the claim. Nonetheless, immediately following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, on 7 December 1941, there was a massive internment of Japanese-Americans. Both Buchel, "Bella Vista," 10 and Van Volkenburg, "An Alien Place" subscribe to this view.

44 The presence of Japanese-Americans at Fort Missoula was covered in a variety of sources. Buchel, "Bella Vista," 24-25; Van Volkenburg, "An Alien Place," 1-151; Syvertson, "Fort Missoula Became Home," sec. C-1; Cipolato interview by Bill Lang.

45 P.R. McLaughlin, assistant supervisor of alien detentions, Los Angeles, Calif., to N.D. Collaer, supervisor of alien detentions, Fort Missoula, Mont., 8 December 1941, United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 7, File 1000U. National Archives, Suitland, Md.


47 Mr. Frederico Miniati, Italian internee, interview by the author, 29 March 1996, personal conversation, Helena, Mont.

48 Cipolato interview by Bill Lang.

49 Although separation from home and the situation, in general, would lead one to assume that numerous desperate attempts occurred, there is no other
record of suicide or attempted suicides at Fort Missoula. Also, the name Savoretti has not been located in other official documents. The memo cited proposes the need for awareness of the problem, but it does not appear that the problem was a wide-spread or frequent issue to be dealt with at Fort Missoula.

Savoretti, to Supervisor of Alien Detentions, 15 December 1941, Memorandum at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 7, 1000 U. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

50 Buchel, "Bella Vista," 17.

51 The Italians frequently fished in the Bitterroot River. In May 1942, J.S. McFarland, Montana State Fish and Game Warden, addressed the Italian fishing activities. McFarland stated in his memo to Mr. P.R. McLaughlin, acting supervisor of alien detentions, that the Fish and Game Commission was greatly concerned over the large numbers of fish the Italians were catching. McFarland requested that prompt attention be directed toward the fishing incidents. McFarland's memo stated:

Since this department is supported by the revenue derived from the sale of licenses, perhaps the internees would be willing to purchase an Alien Fishing License which sells for $10.00. I can hardly disagree with the sportsmen that it is not fair for anyone to catch fish, which are propagated with their funds, unless they are the holder of a fishing license.

McLaughlin investigated McFarland's concerns and found that the internees had been doing a little fishing in the Bitterroot River while on work detail in the vicinity. McLaughlin responded to McFarland with his findings. McLaughlin stated:

It was found that a few suckers had been caught out of the river, and this office did not consider the matter of sufficient importance to merit our official attention. It is not believed that the catching of a few suckers in this stream would constitute any serious offense against that game laws of the State of Montana or seriously deplete game fish which are propagated with sportsmen's funds.

McLaughlin further informed McFarland that U.S. Army enlisted men and Civilian Conservation Corps enlistees, formerly stationed at Fort Missoula, had previously fished in the Bitterroot River without hindrance from the Commission. Surprisingly, both groups caught larger quantities than the current Italian catch. McLaughlin questioned if either incidences had resulted in similar inquires. Upon receipt of McLaughlin's letter, McFarland responded that the current Italian incident had be brought to his attention, and therefore he was forced to investigate the situation. It is uncertain what action was taken on the issue.

70
Miniati mentioned that when the Italians arrived the cuisine provided consisted of hot dogs and cereals which were greatly disliked in the camp. Instead of eating the food provided, the Italians choose to feed the stray dogs, and by doing so, they made instant friends. The INS representatives soon complained about the numerous canines in the fort and insisted that each be provided with a dog house. Failure to build dog houses would result in the dog’s removal. Several INS reports addressed the dog problem; Mr. Fraser, officer in charge, answered threats of dog removal with an acknowledgment of the problem. Fraser stated, in one memo, that “Perhaps they (the dogs) are a nuisance, but to deprive the aliens of their pets would be a rather cruel blow.” (Bert H. Fraser, officer in charge, 31 March 1943, to Mr. W.F. Kelly, assistant commissioner for alien control, Memorandum regarding the Culinary Operations Report by G.A. Foss at United States Department of Justice Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 1, 1000 C. National Archives, Suitland, Md.) Mr. Frederico Miniati, Italian internee, interview by the author, 29 March 1996, personal conversation, Helena, Mont.

Translated speech of Captain Saglietto, spokesman of the internees at Fort Missoula, 19 October 1942, United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 17, 1016 A. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

H. J. McGhee interview by the author.

According to Miniati, it was only after Capt. Sagiletto, his captain and spokesman of the camp, wrote a letter of request to the Swiss Legislation, that it was agreed that Italian-type food be provided. Miniati also mentioned that the Italians refused to eat the hot dogs and instead would feed them to stray dogs which wandered onto the fort. Mr. Frederico Miniati, Italian internee, interview by the author, 29 March 1996, personal conversation, Helena, Mont.

Miniati stated that each detainee had a specific job which he performed on a rotating schedule (one week on, two weeks off). His job was garbage collection which entailed emptying all trash cans of the fort into a truck and then driving the refuge to a location outside the fort’s parameters. Miniati mentioned that the work was easy and few complained about their duties. Mr. Frederico
Miniati, Italian internee, interview by the author, 29 March 1996, personal conversation, Helena, Mont.

57 Joseph A. Hoffman and Chris J. Kramer, no date, to Fort Missoula, Signed Work statement at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 1, 1000 C. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

58 Bert H. Fraser, officer in charge, 31 March 1943, to Mr. W.F. Kelly, assistant commissioner for alien control, Memorandum regarding the Culinary Operations Report by G.A. Foss at United States Department of Justice Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 1, 1000 C. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 There was a tomato paste shortage during the fort’s operation. Tomato paste was a heavily used item at Fort Missoula. The impact of this tomato paste shortage had extreme ramifications for the Italians’ cooking method and menu. A telegram describes the intensity of the shortage, stating that “the entire western market including Chicago indicates no other supply now available until next August.” P.R. McLaughlin, assistant supervisor of alien detentions, to W.H. Wagner, Immigration and Naturalization Service, no date, Telegram copy at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 7, 1000 U. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

62 Alfredo Cipolato interview by Bill Lang.

63 It appears as if the head personnel of the fort attempted to create a positive environment for the Italians detained. While desiring that the adjustment to fort life be easy, this memo indicates that cost was a considered factor. There was no documentation found of the pasta machine being purchased or if the Grandinetti Manufacturing Company was utilized for this purchase or for other needed supplies. Bert H. Fraser, officer in charge, Fort Missoula, Mont., to the Grandinetti Manufacturing Company, Syracuse, N. Y., 12 May 1943, Document at the United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 1, 1000 C. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

"900 Italian Seamen That Have Been Released in Parole and Placed to Work", trans. A. J. D'Orazi, at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1013 H. National Archives, Suitland, Md.


Captain P. S. Saglietto, spokesperson of the internees, to Mr. Maro Peter, U.S. delegate to the International Red Cross Committee, 24 November 1942, Copy at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 23, 1022 F. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

Armando Queirolo, to Maria Teresa Queirolo, 13 April 1943, Translation of letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1013 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

Bert H. Fraser, Officer in Charge at Fort Missoula, to Mr. W. F. Kelly, assistant commissioner for alien control, 3 March 1943, Copy at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 17, 1017 D. National Archives, Suitland, Md. The INS prohibited the use of alcohol by internees. Therefore, there were massive orders for dried fruit from which alcohol could be made. Some of the internees who worked in the bakery stole dried raisins for this purpose. Sullivan, "Memories," sec. E-7; Alfredo Cipolato interview by Bill Lang.

It was stated that the report was sent by Vittorio Masoni, but was signed Vittorio Moroni. The translator, in a postscript, mentioned that, "I do not find Moroni in my list." It is uncertain whether the correct name was ever found. Vittorio Masoni, member of the lower crew, to Supervisor of Alien Detentions, 31 January 1942, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 29, 1036 A. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

Ciro Salaris, internee, to Nella de' Bartolomeo, 15 April 1943, trans. D'Orazie, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 25, 1025 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.
Ciro Salaris, internee, to Eleonora Margonelli, 16 April 1943, trans. D'Orazie, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 25, 1025 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

The interpreter stated: "This is the only translation possible because of the very poor Italian employed in the writing of the letter, however, this is exactly what he says." Umberto Cataldi, internee, to Mrs. Carolina Cancelliere, his Godmother, 7 October 1942, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1013 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

The intent of the 28 October 1942 celebration was "to pardon those would had erred and the bringing home therefore of those who were banished from Italy proper and placed in concentration." Translated speech of Captain Saglietto, spokesman of the internees at Fort Missoula, 19 October 1942.

Capt. Saglietto was well known for his oratorical power. In many of his speeches, Saglietto focused on the greatness and virtues of the Italian race. He also called upon all to display personal pride in self, others, and most of all, country. Ibid.

B. H. Fraser, officer in charge, to Mr. Kelly, chief supervisor of the border patrol, 4 September 1942, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 17, 1017 D. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

B. H. Fraser, officer in charge, to Doctor Marion Lombard, medical director of the U. S. Public Health Service, 5 September 1942, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 17, 1017 D. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

This memorandum was in response to an attack on detainees over fascist and anti-fascist factions within the camp. The author of this letter, Raymond H. Thomason, stated he was not present when this occurred, but he did arrive shortly thereafter. Raymond H. Thomason, chief liaison officer, to Officer in Charge, 4 September 1942, Letter at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 17, 1017 D. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

Giacomo Alesai, internee, to Mr. Latona, his friend, 7 October (no year given), Translation at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment
Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1013 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

80 Alfredo Cipolato interview by Bill Lang.

81 A memorandum from Bert H. Fraser, officer in charge of Fort Missoula, dated 12 March 1944 notified all fort employees: "on May 15, 1944 and thereafter, jurisdiction over all Italian seamen and civilian internees who have been under Fort Missoula will be transferred to Mr. D. W. Brewster, District Director, Immigration and Naturalization Service . . . Fort Missoula has been closed as an Immigration and Naturalization Service Internment Camp and will soon be turned back to the War Department." The order which removed the Italians from the enemy alien list stated: "By the action of the Attorney General Biddle, with the approval of President Roosevelt, all Italian aliens loyal to the United States will no longer be treated as alien enemies, and will be free to carry on the usual activities of residents of the United States who are not classified as alien enemies." The order became effective on Monday, 19 October 1942 and until that date Italians were required to obey all previous regulations. Bert H. Fraser, officer in charge, Fort Missoula, Mont., to fort employees, Fort Missoula, Mont., 12 May 1944, copy of memorandum held at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 7, 1000 U. National Archives, Suitland, Md; Mr. Edward J. Ennis, director of alien enemy control unit, to all United States attorneys and marshals, 12 October 1942, Circular No. 3737, Copy at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1012 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.

82 Mr. Edward J. Ennis, director of alien enemy control unit, to all United States attorneys and marshals, 12 October 1942, Circular No. 3737, Copy at United States Department of Justice, Files for Internment Camps Operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Record Group 85, Box 16, 1012 I. National Archives, Suitland, Md.


CHAPTER IV: NOTES

1 The 1929 Geneva Convention focused mainly on the status and rights of prisoners of war. Although during World War II the 1929 Convention was utilized as a guideline, no specific codification of international law dealt solely with the issue of enemy aliens.

2 The Geneva Convention of 1949 on the Protection of Civilians During Times of War contained several key concepts regarding the status of aliens residing within enemy territories during times of conflict. Essentially, these concepts can be found in Articles XXXV-XLVI, of the above mentioned convention. Much of the agreement at Geneva was influenced greatly by international precedent regarding the issues of aliens. For example, Article XXXV establishes a grace period without hindrance. This can be linked to doctrines of DeVattel put forth in his book, Law of Nations. Also included within the convention's provisions in Articles XLI-XXLIII was the right of a nation to intern an enemy nationality residing within its boundaries, if it deems necessary for national security. This concept can be traced directly back to Grotius's belief that aliens could be interned, if necessary, for national security, but had to be released following the cessation of the conflict. L. Friedman, The Law of War: A Documentary History, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1972), 641; G. Von Glahn, Law Among Nations: An Introduction to Public International Law, 7th ed. (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1996), 608.
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