



# **The Train to Crystal City: FDR's Secret Prisoner Exchange Program and America's Only Family Internment Camp During World War II**

*Jan Jarboe Russell*

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The dramatic and never-before-told story of a secret FDR-approved American internment camp in Texas during World War II, where thousands of families—many US citizens—were incarcerated.

From 1942 to 1948, trains delivered thousands of civilians from the United States and Latin America to Crystal City, Texas, a small desert town at the southern tip of Texas. The trains carried Japanese, German, Italian immigrants and their American-born children. The only family internment camp during World War II, Crystal City was the center of a government prisoner exchange program called “quiet passage.” During the course of the war, hundreds of prisoners in Crystal City, including their American-born children, were exchanged for other more important Americans—diplomats, businessmen, soldiers, physicians, and missionaries—behind enemy lines in Japan and Germany.

Focusing her story on two American-born teenage girls who were interned, author Jan Jarboe Russell uncovers the details of their years spent in the camp; the struggles of their fathers; their families’ subsequent journeys to war-devastated Germany and Japan; and their years-long attempt to survive and return to the United States, transformed from incarcerated enemies to American loyalists. Their stories of day-to-day life at the camp, from the ten-foot high security fence to the armed guards, daily roll call, and censored mail, have never been told.

Combining big-picture World War II history with a little-known event in American history that has long been kept quiet, *The Train to Crystal City* reveals the war-time hysteria against the Japanese and Germans in America, the secrets of FDR’s tactics to rescue high-profile POWs in Germany and Japan, and how the definition of American citizenship changed under the pressure of war.

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