

American Friends Service Committee  
Records Relating to Humanitarian Work  
in North Africa, 1942-1945.

Series I  
**Refugee Service**  
Sub-series:  
**Reports [1942]**

Box 1  
Folder 36 of 36

**START**

---

American Friends Service Committee  
1501 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

From Mr. J. A. Mallol  
former director of the Spanish Secretariat,  
now 196 rue de l'Aviation Française Case,  
SPANISH REFUGIES IN NORTH AFRICA PROBLEM

11/20/42

#### ANTECEDENTS

When the spanish civil war ended in March 1939 some thousands of republicans succeeded in reaching the North African coast, some in British vessels, others in spanish fishing boats. Oran was the port where the largest number of these fugitives arrived. A certain number of aviators also arrived with their machines at Algerian aerodromes. The number of persons arriving in Algeria is estimated at seven thousand. To this figure requires to be added about four thousand arriving at Bizerta following on the evacuation of the republican fleet which had left Cartagena with civilians also on board.

The transfer to Algeria and French Morocco of a larger number of spaniards who had taken refuge in France after the evacuation of Catalonia by the republican army increased the number of exiles in North Africa. Oran was the town when the largest number went. From the beginning of the war republicans resident in the spanish zone of Morocco came to Casablanca in large number and when the conflict ended, those resident in Tangier also came to Casablanca .

Besides those who had relations in French Morocco (many of them already french nationality) and who had been able to get released. The others, the great majority, were sent to concentration camps, of which the principal were Boghar, Cherchell, Boghari (departement of Algiers) and Oran , Relizane and Ain-el-Turck (department of Oran).

On the suggestion of french military authorities, many of these who were interned in the concentration camps enrolled in the Foreign Legion with a view to avoid staying in these camps. As a matter of fact when these last were demobilized from the Legion on the occasion of signing of the franco-german armistice, they were taken to labour camps then already organized and it was possible to see in these labour camps veterans decorated at Narvik whose sole reward was to be taken to the african desert.

It did not take long for the french authorities to decide to incorporate this ~~valkxxxxxxx~~ mass of emigrants which the economy of the country could well have absorbed usefully, in to companies of labourers who were sent to make roads in the department of Constantine and



also to Bou Arfa to be employed in the construction of the Transaharien Railway, public works which could not have been undertaken owing to the lack of native labour. Three thousand spaniards were taken to the boundaries of the Sahara, to work under dreadful conditions, far from any inhabited spot, lodged in tents, without water and insufficient food, having to live in atmospheric conditions where the daily temperature varied from under zero to seventy degrees in the sun, and without any consideration for the undreds of them who by a reason of academic distinctions, university studies or technical professional capacity merited a fate other than that of manipulating a pick and shovel for which they received as remuneration one franc fifty per day (fr. 1,50).

The railway line from Bou Arfa to Kenadza is the result of this tiring work, ten and more hours per day, to which were subjected for many months ingeneers, lawyers, judges, doctors, writers, professional soldiers of all ranks, skilled metal workers from the heavy and war industries, workmen from every branch of labour who would have been better employed in work more *fitting* to their special capacities and professional knowledge.

Later a certain number of labourers were called upon to work in the mines of Djerada and Kenadza and to complete the first portion of the above mentioned railway. Many of the labourers from Bou Arfa and also Colomb Bechar were sent to Aim Fout near Settat to construct a dam, very hard work even for those used to manual labour.

Let us leave aside penalties inflicted on our compatriots and the barbarous and unjust punishment to which they were subjected by their guards moors and senegaleses. The inagnities suffered by those who were sent to the Disciplinary battalions of Eoun Doufla for slight faults of discipline or for having tried to escape were according to what we have heard worse than those in the concentration camps in Germany.

In due course and as the work was going ~~on~~ on and qualified men were required many of those who had special knowledge, metal workers builders of tractors and motor vehiculs, carpenters, etc. were placed in better remunerated posts and at present those working as mere labourers are not large in number, as soon as they were taken from menial tasks and given posts which were better remuneration they wise premium varaying between 16 and 20 francs per day.

In Mexico City a body was set up with a wiew to helping spanish republican immigrants and and agreement with the Mexican government



this body began to organize shipments to Vera Cruz and to take advantage of the good will of the portuguese companies who offered to send them vessels to Casablanca to take spanish immigrants to Vera Cruz. From November of last year two chartered boats and five partially chartered boats evacuated some three thousand spaniards residents in France, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. A certain number of these immigrants were taken from concentration camps.

#### PRESENT POSITION

As working conditions in the camps at Bou Arfa and Colomb Bechar became better owing to the encreased work, it was noted that labourers were placed in better posts and were better treated no doubt due to the examplary behaviour of the spaniards who more than once deserved praise from their chiefs. At the present moment there are some two thousand internes working not only in the above mentioned places but also in the mines of Djerada and Kenadza, on the dam at Ain Fout and at Settat.

There is besides a rest and convalescent camp at Oued-el-Akreuch (Rabat) where convalescents are sent from the labour camps. The majority come from Ain Fout suffering from Malaria.

There is also an internment camp at Sidi-el-Ayachi (Azenmour) where the internes do not work as they are composed of those unfit for manual labour and women and children. The treatment and food are relatively good.

Special attention is called to the internment camps at Missouri (Morocco) and Djelfa (Algeria), where are sent those termed "dangerous", the conditions of living in these camps are really horrible specially in the latter. There is also at Berrouaghia (Algiers) an other colony of refugees "dangerous" to a lesser degree. It requires to be noted that the denunciation by any evil-intentioned person is sufficient reason for the authorities to send to such camps those alleged or to be disturbing public order.

Attention is also to be drawn to the larger number of political prisoners who are imprisoned in the jails at Oran, Algiers, Casablanca and Port Lyautey. Implicated in supposed plots against the security of the State, they have been condemned to severe sentences. There are more than one hundred spanish victims of the wave of political reaction which enemy elements of the United nations has unchained in North Africa.

There still remains in Maritime prison at Casablanca six immigrants who were arrested at the port when they were endeavouring to leave for



Gibraltar in a fishing-boat. The arrest took place last May and the refugees have not yet been judged. Prior to this two other lots of spaniards succeeded in leaving for Gibraltar from Casablanca and Fedala. They are all working in the arsenal or form part of crews of vessels in the British marine marchant service.

In Casablanca and in the surroundings district a large number of spanish immigrants live clandestinely, made up of those who have succeeded in getting away from the concentration camps or who remain hidden in order not to be taken to such camps. The majority follow agricultural pursuits and having no papers of identity may be considered outlaws. Besides the camps already mention are others at Suzzoni-Boghari (Algiers) and Saida (Oran) where the internees are comprised of those over forty eight of age and those unfit for work.

The labour camps which since their formation 1939 shortly before the war broke outhad an essentially military character when the armistice was sign they were reorganized they passed under the control of the Direction de la Production Industrielle at Rabat. There remained at disposal of authorities the military personel demobilised and these kept many of the old military characteristics such as the discipline and organisation. Today they constitute two large groups "Bou Arfa" and "Columb Bechar". Under the control of the D. P. I. and include the personnel which used to work in Algerian territory. The D. P. I. furnished workers to enterprises like the Transaharien Railway, Mining companies and others which utilised this cheap labour seeing they were not obliged to pay their legal wages. In these exceptional cases where a spaniard obtains a contract for working out side the camps (only specially qualified men obtained approval for this) the worker are not quite free but as detached and still under the control of the management of the D/ P. I. to whose authority he remains subjected his principals pay to the said organisation a daily premium of twenty francs.

Parentatically, doubtless in view of the old military character of these labour groups and for some reason unknown, those who escape from the camps arrested by the police and put at the disposal at the military authorities at Casablanca. The general in command at Casablanca orders their transfer to Bou Arfa on arrival they are sent to a disciplinary battalion.

#### WHAT THE POLITICAL EMIGRANTS WANT

The occupation of North Africa by the liberating forces has been



welcomed with great joy by the spanish political emigrants who consider that the presence of the americans here to liberate the country from a possible nazi menace might also put an end to the antijudicial and inhuman situation to which for so long they themselves have been subjected.

If when the war broke out there was some motive for mobilising political exiles, once the armistice was signed the treatment that was being meted out to them contrary to the most elementary rules of International law ought not to have been continued subsequently.

Their liberation will offset to some extent the great injustice inflicted on our numerous compatriots and will be a clear demonstration of the fact that the principles for which the generous american nation and her allies are fighting are applicable wherever her armies triumph over the enemies of Liberty and Right.

The very illustrious President Roosevelt recently proclaimed that political prisoners in North Africa will be liberated. The spanish republican who for more than three years have been deprived of their liberty in african labour camps, those detained in Missouri and Djelfa, those who lie in jails for supposed political offenses, those who can not work in day light and who hide themselves as if they were delinquents trust that they will be free men again and are sure of obtaining through the intervention of the american authorities the splendid realisation of what they legitimately hope for.

With arms in their hands, many of them, in common with their military naval and aviators comrades who had the luck to leave for Mexico where they already occupy posts in the combattant forces; the majority in a better utilisation of their capacities and aptitudes doing the work which is required of them, and all actuating with desire to bring to the common task the crashing of nazism their full enthusiastic assistance.

We resume our hopes in the following conclusions which we have the honour to set forth before the military authorities of the United States of America in Africa.

1 st. Remission of all penalties imposed for offenses of political nature and suspension of the judicial or administrative proceeding in course except for ordinary offenses and consequently putting in liberty of political offenders. It being understood that those interned by the Administration fall under this category (I mean those of Missouri, Djelfa and Berroughaia).

2 nd. Complete demobilisation of those interned in labour camps



and their complete freedom subject always to the provisions of laws of the country and principles of International Right.

3 rd. Freedom of work for the emigrants to be treated on the same plane as their compatriots established here having regard to international agreements.

Casablanca the 20th November 1942

-----  
( RAPPORT PRESENTED TO THE AMERICAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES IN NORTH AFRICA BY MR. ALONSO MALLOL. DELEGATE OF SPANISH EMIGRATION TO MEXICO. FORMERLY, GENERAL DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY IN SPAIN.)

American Friends Service Committee  
Records Relating to Humanitarian Work  
in North Africa, 1942-1945.

Series I  
**Refugee Service**  
Sub-series:  
**Reports [1942]**

Box 1  
Folder 36 of 36

END

---

American Friends Service Committee  
1501 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102



American Friends Service Committee  
Records Relating to Humanitarian Work  
in North Africa, 1942-1945.

BOX 1 of 14

END

---

American Friends Service Committee  
1501 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102