

N. Africa

MEMORANDUM

INTERNEES, REFUGEES, and PERSONS IN
FORCED RESIDENCE IN ALGERIA

American Consulate General
Algiers, Algeria,
Aug. 13, 1942

Persons in Algeria not free to leave the country and under varying degrees of restraint, fall into a number of categories. The main classifications are believed to be:

1.- Military, naval, and air officers and men, of countries considered by the Axis powers as belligerants. These amount to about 370 British, 5 Greeks, 300 Poles, and 1 American. The American citizen crashed in Algeria in a British R.A.F plane. These receive support through the American Consulate General except the Poles, who are helped by a Polish organization, and the Greeks.

2.- Merchant seamen landed from vessels seized by the French authorities or in the case of the British, cast ashore from bombed merchant vessels. Of these there are about 43 British(interned) and 55 Norwegian, 22 Danes, 30 Dutch, 6 Yugoslavs, 1 Icelander, all in forced residence, and 5 Poles (interned). The British draw all the support and comforts they are allowed to receive, through this office, from their governments. The Poles have a delegate here and receive considerable aid through him. The Norwegians, Dutch, Yugoslavs and Danes are assisted officially, but it is not known to what extent, presumably for the account of the shipowners. Clothing and footwear may be needed.

3.- Persons who have reached Algeria in various ways and who, generally, for lack of employment and because of military age are interned or kept in supervised residence within certain areas within which, however, they are free to circulate. The Consulate's only information concerning these relates to about 20 Belgians. ~~These 42 are assisted~~ and 20 Poles, both receiving assistance.

4.- Discharged soldiers of the French Foreign Legion who have no employment and who are employed at a miserable daily remuneration in so-called labor camps. There is little information concerning these other than there are about 42 Belgians. These 42 are assisted.

5.- A few British subjects, civilians, who for various reasons have been either interned (of these there are 3) or sent to a forced residence in small towns and cities in the interior (of these there are 11). These are supported like other British in Algeria.

6.- Political, racial, or religious refugees from Germany, Austria, and Poland generally of Jewish race or "Aryan" opponents of the present German regime, who were at one time either volunteers in the French Foreign Legion and who were released upon the Armistice or who joined the battalions of so-called "prestataires"--persons furnishing labor in lieu of the military service for which they were not fitted. These ex-Foreign Legionnaires are to be sharply distinguished from the discharged "legionnaires" who were in the Legion before the war.. The majority of these are in internment or labor camps. They undoubtedly need much Help of all kinds.

7.- Numbers of former Spanish "Reds" refugees sent to North Africa from similar refugee camps in France, Dargeles, for instance. There are also about 130 Poles at Djelfa, former Loyalist soldiers. All these, it is believed, are very badly off. Naturally most are suspected of being Communists.

8: - About 230 Polish women and children, chiefly wives and children of Polish officers, who were originally brought to Algeria from Rumania in the summer of 1939, where they had arrived as refugees from conquered Poland. These are well taken care of.

The American Consulate General made inquiries, some time ago, as to the numbers in categories 6 and 7, but was refused the information.

Officially the American Consulate General at Algiers is charged only with the actual protection of the interests of the British, civilians, merchant seamen and military (including Dominion subjects). Informally, such assistance as was possible unofficially has been given to the persons charged with aiding the various other nationalities, such as the Greek, Polish and Norwegian, Consuls, the Belgian and Dutch Consuls General, and the Polish Consul, all of whom have now been forbidden to function as such by the Government at Vichy. Consequently the Consulate General is approximately informed as to the numbers of nationals as given above.

No persons have been included in the figures given who are free and allowed to earn their own living.

Conditions vary greatly from camp to camp. There is room for improvement in all. Those in category 2 are free within certain physical boundaries but need funds and clothing. The labor camps are reported to be bad as are the camps where men in categories 3, 4, 5, and 7 are confined. Anyone having had some experience of French camps in Metropolitan France would be able to form an opinion.

The main problem in regard to all internees in Algeria is not primarily mere financial support. Even given funds the internees can not purchase even the simplest requirements of ordinary life such as, for instance, clothing, underclothing, summer and winter footwear, soap (especially important), toilet paper, tobacco, and simple medical remedies (such as quinine, disinfectants for wounds, gauze, surgeon's plaster, absorbent cotton and so on).

The foregoing enumeration of categories of persons detained in one form or another in Algeria is not given as exhaustive nor are the numbers of persons in the various classes offered as more than reasonably accurate, except in regard to the British, Dominion and American nationals in categories 1, 2, and 5.

KENADSA

(16)

2^e Enlèvement du drapeau américain le 12/II/1942/

Un drapeau américain (+ drapeau français de même format) a été hissé au grand mat de Kénadsa, dans la nuit du 11 au 12 novembre par un inconnu. On a accusé les T.E. d'être l'auteur de cette "provocation". (Le lendemain de l'invitation faite par Darlan à Alger, de pavoyer aux couleurs américaines et françaises.....)(Naturellement, il est hors de question d'attribuer ce fait aux malheureux T.E. qui, s'ils avaient possédé un chiffon, quel qu'il fut, s'en fussent servi en guise de linge. En outre, un drapeau américain aurait valu à celui chez lequel il aurait pu être découvert la Discipline...et ses si souvent funestes conséquences.

Le jeudi 12 à 8 heures ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ce drapeau a été enlevé au cours d'une véritable démonstration. (Sous-officier, goumiers armés, arrestation de plusieurs T.E. qui avaient élevé de faibles protestations.

Le 12 à 14 heures, devant des T.E. rassemblés, incidents décisifs.

1^o refus d'écouter le Capitaine Chef de Poste, si les goumiers en armes ne quittaient pas immédiatement l'endroit du rassemblement.

2^o Répliques très fortes de l'Avocat-Général SCHEK au Capitaine:

"Non, nous vous dites aujourd'hui notre "ami"? VOUS ÊTES NOTRE ENNEMI, COMME MOI JE SUIS LE VÔtre. Nous avons été des "SÂLES ETRANGERS" jusqu'à ce jour, ET NOUS NE L'OUBLIERONS PAS.

"Churchill et Roosevelt sont entrés en Afrique du Nord pour y continuer la guerre et y porter la liberté aux opprimés. Nous ne sommes plus des T.E., nous sommes des "messieurs"..."

Plusieurs ordres d'arrêter le Docteur Schnek ont été retirés, devant la certitude que tout le travail à la Houillère s'arrêterait. ~~xxxxxxxx~~ Le Docteur Schnek n'est nullement un révolutionnaire, ni un professionnel ni un dilettante de l'agitation, c'est un juriste bourgeois qui faisait profession à Vienne de dresser le réquisitoire des criminels.

Un mémorandum, daénotographié puis dactylographié a été rédigé. Le Docteur Schnek est une forte personnalité qui dispose d'appuis nombreux dans les pays anglo-saxons.

Des informations et un dossier complets auraient été envoyé au Consulat Américain avec précisions et photos.

Le lundi 16 novembre, le Capitaine de Coulange a refusé un sauf-conduit à deux T.E. se réclamant de la nationalité Amérique et Britannique et désireux de rallier les troupes auxquelles ils sont appelés à se joindre.

3^o

Résultats

De la tension créée par le Chef de Poste, ou par sa faute, a sorti une espèce d'armistice en vertu des termes duquel les T.E. se sont vu déclarer libres à Kénadsa en attendant que des précisions soient données sur la "dissolution du groupement de Travailleurs Etrangers". Cela me semble fort prématuré: on n'accordera certainement pas la liberté aux étrangers, actuellement internés au Groupement de Travailleurs, et refusant de s'engager.

Pendant ce même temps, à Colomb-Béchar, au Groupe N° 2, la discipline a été renforcée.... (A Saïda, les Travailleurs appartenant au "roupe N° I ont été arrêtés et parqués dans des cellules le dimanche même où l'action américaine s'est déc arée ~~xxx~~ en Algérie.... Peut-on imaginer l'état d'esprit d'hommes libres, internés après s'être engagés, avoir été traité à cette occasion de la manière que l'on sait et voyant le régime du "roupe de T.E. se terminant par une arrestation non motivée, se prolongeant UNE SEMAINE....)