

CONCENTRATION CAMPS

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION

CASABLANCA

DATE

21 December 1942

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Memorandum for Milton Eisenhower
On REFUGEES.

The situation of the refugees in North Africa has not been improved by our arrival, except in so far as they now have a hope that the enemy will be beaten.

The French authorities in North Africa, still profoundly fascist (though no longer fascist-Nazi) have no solution to offer. They could never help these people without making obeisance to the things they hate in their own society. By this I mean the following: To a Giraud or another of the moguls in North Africa Spanish refugees and Italian anti-fascists spell Popular Front which they still hate in retrospect and fear for the future more than any other peril.

To date no refugees have been released save the very few hundreds in Algeria and Morocco who have joined the Corps Franc. When they do this it is because they are forced into it by circumstances, usually because they have escaped from refugee camps in the first flush of enthusiasm and have no other choice -- they join up or get sent back to face punishment for their impudence in escaping. No refugee in his right mind would join the Corps Franc after the experience of those who joined up to fight for the French in 1939. And this France is not is not yet even the France of Daladier, which is something for us to remember. If we do not remember it, count on the refugees to remember it.

There is no way out for them here, except the Corps Franc and labor battalions, virtual chain gangs. This is most terribly true for the Spaniards and will remain so until Franco jumps into the Axis camp as a paying member, if he does jump. And if that were to happen I cannot see us forming "Loyalist" brigades to fight him. Not yet.

THEREFORE the only solution is for us to devise.

For us alone.

My plea is that we devise it at the earliest. First because we have woefully failed in handling refugee problems to date, second, because our national conscience needs a tonic after events here and third because it would be awkward for us of OWI to have to start broadcasting from North Africa about the Four Freedoms with our friends still in jail and the American flag for all intents and purposes flying over concentration camps.

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My recommendation would be to ship the Spaniards in our empty ships to an American port for transshipment to Mexico. As for the others, they should be given some special protection and support and definitely not forced into corps francs until the policies of France-Afrique become much, much clearer.

Might I remind you that we are not very far from Europe here and despite war conditions word travels. Our protestations will sound very hollow indeed if there are people here whose misery stands in dreadful contradiction to us.

Briefly here is the situation---

SPANIARDS--

In Morocco some ^{two} three thousand are working at Bou Arfa and Colomb Bechar under frightful conditions (see attached memo) There has been some improvement in these camps but they are still unspeakable. At Bou Arfa there are several score of Republican aviators whose technical capacities were widely recognized during the war in Spain. Why should they not be employed as ground crews with our air forces or sent to swell the ranks of the Mexican army?

In Algeria (mostly in the province of Oran) there are some 4000 Spaniards suffering various kinds of internment (see attached memo)

In the jails there are still many.

It is to be noted that Franco is asking for Oran and for much else and that the regime here hates and fears him. They hate his opponents, the Republicans, with even more fervor. Perhaps because of the harm they the French have done to them. This they the French can never forgive.

ITALIANS AND GERMANS

When not in jail these are considered suspect. In Algiers after our troops arrived the police arrested the anti fascists first and the fascists next. On December 8/9/10 the French authorities called upon all Italian citizens to present themselves to the police and to sign an oath of loyalty. This oath was to support the Etat Francais, as against the former oath of 1940 which spoke

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of the Republique Francaise .The Italian fascists had no qualms about signing this.The anti-fascists were less happy. More anti-fascists have vbeen arrested by the police since our arrival than fascists .Our forces dont know the difference and are inclined to share the French police view than the anti-fascistsare the real danger.(Attached a report which I have not had tme to trnslate,gotten up for me by Terracini, a friend of Pacciardi's)

I would go further and say that these people,Spaniards and Italians the bulk of them, should be sããvaged now ~~for~~ never.They could become our implacable enemies. Are we sure that we wont need them ?

J A