

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
COMITE D'ASSISTANCE AUX REFUGIES ETRANGERS
34 Rue du Caporal Lughérini
Casablanca (Morocco)

John A. Avery
71 A Algeria

Casablanca, March 12, 1945

The American Jewish Joint
Distribution Committee
270 Madison Avenue
New York 16, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

After an absence of five weeks I have just returned from
Algiers and Philippeville where I went at the request of UNRRA
in order to study the question of repatriation to France.

Following the meetings that I had with the organizations
concerned with this question, I prepared a report on the
situation which I enclose herein for whatever use you can make of
it.

Sincerely yours,

Helene Cazes Benatar
Presidente

R E P O R T

By Mme. Helene Cazes-Benatar

on the repatriation of refugees of UNRRA Centre Jeanne d'Arc in France

All the centres sheltering refugees in the Empire are placed under the control of the Ministry of Refugees and Deportees. Mr. Pierre Frenay is the present Minister.

The decrees defining the jurisdiction of this ministry are dated December 8th, 1943 and April 2, 1944 (copy attached).

In accordance with the terms of these decrees (Art. 2 of the decree of December 8, 1943, paragraph 2), the aim of the Ministry is

to organize the repatriation of refugees by preparing the necessary plans and assuring their execution.

The decree of April 2, 1944 extended the jurisdiction of the Ministry to the following persons:

Stateless persons in France and the Empire

Foreigners and stateless persons who, because of the war had to abandon their homes in France or in the Empire.

Thus the UNRRA centre at Jeanne d'Arc is legally under the control of the Ministry of Refugees or rather the departmental delegate at Constantine who at present is Mr. Boyer.

The refugees at Jeanne d'Arc can be classified into three categories with respect to their repatriation:

1. Those who lived in France before 1939 and who wish to be repatriated to France.

2. Those coming from other countries who wish to be repatriated to their respective country.

3. Those who do not wish to be repatriated to their country or to their old domicile but who wish to emigrate to other countries, such as Palestine, South American countries, etc.

Since the most urgent work is presently concerned with repatriation

to France, this report will deal primarily with my efforts in this matter.

REPATRIATION TO FRANCE

The refugees who are to return to France are placed into two categories:

- a) Those who escaped from Metropolitan France
- b) The refugees classified as civilian refugees

THOSE WHO ESCAPED FROM METROPOLITAN FRANCE:

This category comprises all persons who, at the risk of their lives, crossed the French-Spanish border after November 8, 1942, to serve France, either by enlisting in a military ~~or civil~~ ^{civil} organization working for national defense.

Until February 9, 1945, only people of French nationality who had escaped from Metropolitan France had priority rights for repatriation to France. Since that date, Mr. Rouaix, Administrative Director of the Repatriation Service in Paris sent the following telegram to Commander Legroux:

"We authorize repatriation under general conditions of all those escaped from France, foreigners or stateless, on condition that they had their legal residence in France before 1939".

In accordance with these instructions, the foreigners and stateless people who had escaped from metropolitan France had the same priority rights regarding repatriation as the French nationals pertaining to the same category. This telegram caused a violent ^{controversy} ~~discussion~~ between Captain Marin of the Military Bureau of Circulation in Algiers and the Union of persons who escaped from France. The military authorities refused to classify foreign nationals as "people who had escaped from metropolitan France" because they had not been authorized to do so by the Ministry of War. We found valuable support in Mr. Sala, director of the Union des Evades de France in Algiers. Thanks to his comprehension and his broad views the complete text of the telegram was accepted and one of our proteges,

* "évadés" was able to leave for France to join his wife and child.

The following people who escaped from France are now in Algiers, ready to leave: ORNSTEIN, SIDI, KOIRAN Paul, KOIRAN Serge, GUITZJAIN. At the Jeanne d'Arc center, the records of Schwarz Leon, Givre Maurice and Milstein still have to be examined.

These records must contain, aside from the usual information concerning the civil status:

1 identification card with picture or any other document which may replace it.

1 affidavit issued by the military authorities, or any other evidence confirming the enlistment or the desire of the refugee to enlist in the French Army upon his arrival on the soil of the Empire.

Any document confirming that the refugee had his residence in France before 1939 (receipt for rent paid, income tax return, etc.)

Residence certificate

One or two pictures.

These records may be submitted to the "Union des Evades d'Alger" which will transfer them to Commander LEGROUX, and determine the date of the departure.

CIVILIANS NOT CLASSIFIED IN THE CATEGORY OF THOSE WHO ESCAPED FROM FRANCE:

The repatriation of those refugees from Algeria to France is, at present, contingent upon a telegram dated January 7th, 1945, #61, EMGG Paris, addressed to the Service de Rapatriement² of Algiers.

OFFICIAL TEXT:

"The foreigners to be repatriated from North Africa are not permitted to leave without the approval of the Ministry of the Interior. Individual applications must be addressed to the Ministry of the Interior in Paris and^{be} comprised of name and first name, birth date, former residence in France, place of present destination of the applicant.

*(Persons who succeeded in escaping from France)

-A-

During the numerous meetings I had in Algiers with Captain TESSANDIER, with the Securite Militaire, at the Palais d'Ete in Algiers, with the Delegation of the Ministry of Refugees in Algiers and Constantine, I was told that the refugees classified in the second category will be able to leave North Africa only after the French civilian refugees will have been repatriated. It must be pointed out that the French government has made only three boats available for this repatriation; The "Marechal Lepine", The "Sidi Brahim" and the "Canada". The number of the French civilian refugees is about 60,000. On each trip, 70% of the space of the above mentioned vessels is reserved for the army, navy and aviation personnel. Only 30% of the space is therefore available for civilian refugees which means that 18 months to two years will elapse before the evacuation of the French refugees will be terminated.

After all French and foreign nationals who escaped from metropolitan France, as well as all French civilian refugees will have been repatriated, the residents of the UNRRA center, classified in the second category will be able to depart.

It is absolutely certain that these refugees cannot stay in North Africa for such a long period of time, living the collective lives they are having now, without suffering physically and morally.

In spite of the considerable efforts of the UNRRA administration to render these people happy, they cannot think of anything else but to return at the earliest possible date to their homes and start a normal life again, even if this life should be less comfortable than that offered now by UNRRA. Provision was made after the liberation of France that people who resided in France before 1939, be permitted to return to their homes. If, as I see it, their return to France is impeded only by transportation difficulties, I would suggest:

That the records of all civilian refugees of foreign nationality, sheltered in the Jeanne d'Arc Center be set up as follows:--

- a) Individual application to the Ministry

- b) Proof of residence in France before 1939
- c) Residence certificate
- d) Medical certificate giving the state of health of the

applicant.

These records should be executed in four copies of which one for the Jeanne d'Arc Center will be sent to:

- 1 to the UNRRA in Paris
- 1 to the UNRRA in Algiers

The administration of the UNRRA will gather all these applications and apply for a collective visa in order to be able to organize a transport to France.

At this moment the Paris UNRRA will have to intervene with the Ministry of the Interior to obtain entry permits for France. Thus entry permits will be obtained more easily and the transportations of the refugees could be made on Allied vessels.

A limited number of persons - about 80, might be placed, following an agreement, together or in groups on American, English or French boats, sailing from Algeria to France.

I do not believe that it will be too difficult to obtain permission to repatriate these refugees who should be returned to their homes and reunited with their families.

sh