

Summer Welles Papers
Box 161 Folder 13
Europe Files
France, Conversations with French
Ambassador

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE:

November 4, 1940

SUBJECT: Gratitude of French Government for services rendered to French prisoners of war in Germany by U. S. officials

PARTICIPANTS: The French Ambassador, Mr. Gaston Henry-Haye; the Under Secretary, Mr. Welles

COPIES TO: S, A-B, Eu, PA/D

11-4-40

*** 1-1403

The French Ambassador called to see me this morning.

The Ambassador read to me a message he had received from his Government expressing in effusive terms the gratitude of the French Government for the services rendered to the French prisoners of war in Germany by officials of the United States and concluded by stating that through an arrangement just concluded with the German Government, French representatives from now on would be afforded the opportunity of inspecting and taking care of French prisoners of war in German territory. I asked the Ambassador to be good enough

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to convey this information to the Department by means of an official communication.

See also:

Delivery of text of message sent to
President Roosevelt by Marshal Petain;
Release of blocked funds;
Conversations to take place between
General Bonavita and Admiral Greenlade.

U:SW:DMK

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE:
November 25, 1940

SUBJECT: Spanish refugees in France.

PARTICIPANTS: The French Ambassador, Mr. Gaston Henry-Haye;
the Under Secretary, Mr. Welles.

COPIES TO: ¹²⁻² S, A-B, PA/D, Eu ¹⁻²⁷

*** 1-1408

The French Ambassador called to see me at my request.

The Ambassador brought up the question of Spanish refugees in France. He stated that some days ago the Mexican Ambassador had called to see him to inform him that if the French Government would grant exit visas to Spanish political refugees in France, the Mexican Government would obtain from other Latin American Republics steamers flying the flags of American Republics to transport Spanish refugees from France to Mexico. He said the Mexican Ambassador had also stated that the United States had agreed to send vessels under the

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American flag to France to transport Spanish refugees to Mexico. The Ambassador said that his Government had agreed in principle to the evacuation of Spanish refugees from France to Mexico and he now wished to know exactly what the United States Government was willing to do in the case.

I stated to the Ambassador that the information he gave to me was a matter of some surprise. I said that many weeks ago, possibly as much as three months ago, the Mexican Ambassador had informed me that the President of Mexico was considering a project of this character. I had thereupon called to the attention of the Ambassador the fact that it would be very difficult for the United States Government to obtain the ships necessary for such a purpose; that the cost would be exceedingly large and that there were no funds with which such a step could be undertaken unless the Congress of the United States appropriated the money for that purpose. I had told the Mexican Ambassador that I saw no reason to believe that the Congress at this moment would be inclined to appropriate the large sums necessary and that before taking the matter up with the President I would like to have more specific information from the Mexican Government as to the precise plans it had in mind. I

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said to the French Ambassador that since that time the Mexican Ambassador had never again communicated with me on this subject and that I had therefore believed the matter had been dropped.

The French Ambassador did not seem particularly surprised by the statement I made to him and inquired what other American Republics would have the shipping necessary to carry out such a large scale of evacuation of refugees. I replied that to the best of my knowledge the only two republics which had any ocean merchant shipping of importance were Chile and Brazil and that it was my very definite belief that at this time the merchant shipping of both of those republics was urgently required for commercial purposes.

The Ambassador then put forward the suggestion that if the United States Government decided later through the Red Cross to send medical supplies and shipments of milk, et cetera, for the relief of the children of France, those ships on their return journey might transport Spanish refugees. I said that I would be very glad to discuss this question with the appropriate authorities here and with the Chairman of the Red Cross and I would later let the Ambassador know of their reactions. I stated that in that connection the Ambassador undoubtedly knew of the

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great shock it had been to public opinion in the United States to be informed from press reports that the French authorities had turned over to the Spanish authorities Spanish political refugees who had taken refuge in France and who had later been executed in Spain. I said that this was so utterly at variance with the magnificent traditional policy of France to give refuge to political refugees that I wondered if such action had been taken under duress. The Ambassador immediately replied that he had been in communication with his Government on this subject. He was apparently fully familiar with the circumstances attendant upon the execution of Companys in Barcelona and of certain other political exiles from Spain. The Ambassador stated that he could give me the most positive and official assurance that not one of these Spanish refugees had been turned over to Spain by the French Government. He stated that every one of them had been captured by the Germans in occupied France and that Companys himself had been seized by German authorities near Biarritz and then turned over to the Spanish authorities. He emphatically denied that the French Government had either knowledge of or participated in these acts.

See also:

Situation in Martinique;
Censoring of official French mail by British
authorities in the Azores and Bermuda;
German-Jewish refugees in France;
Situation in French Indochina.

U:SW:DMK

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE:

November 25, 1940

SUBJECT: German-Jewish refugees in France

PARTICIPANTS: The French Ambassador, Mr. Gaston Henry-Haye;
the Under Secretary, Mr. Welles

COPIES TO:

¹²⁻²
¹¹⁻²⁷
S, A-B, PA/D, Eu

*** 1-1400

11-25-40

The French Ambassador called to see me at my request.

The Ambassador said that the Department of State had already been apprised of the position of the French Government that the United States do what it could to stimulate the departure from France and the resettlement of the German-Jewish refugees now in France. He said that at the present time there were over 3,500,000 German-Jewish refugees in France and that the burden of feeding and looking after these people was already more than the French economy could stand. The Ambassador

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made no very prolonged or urgent presentation of this case but merely asked that the question be given as favorable consideration as might be possible.

See also:

Situation in Martinique;
Censoring of official French mail by
British authorities in the Azores
and Bermuda;
Spanish refugees in France;
Situation in French Indochina.

U:SW:DMK