Escape of Refugees and Escapists Across French-Spanish Border

Reverse Filing
### ESCAPE OF REFUGEES AND ESCAPES ACROSS FRENCH-SPANISH BORDER

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| Letter to War Dept. from Mr. Fehle enc. copy of cable #8286 from Madrid, 7/12/44 | July 16, 1944 | 5 |
Dear Col. Gerhardt:

I am sending you herewith a copy of a cable received from Madrid under date of July 12, 1944, which I believe will be of interest to you.

Very truly yours,

J. W. Pekel
Executive Director

Enclosure

Col. Harrison A. Gerhardt
Executive to the Assistant Secretary of War,
Room 4328A,
Pentagon Building,
Washington, D.C.

PHdb 7/18/44  Pd
SECRET

Distribution of true reading only by special arrangement.

Secretary of State,

Washington,

2126, July 12, 5 p.m.

The Military Attache has advised the Embassy of the contents of a telegram which he has received from Washington stating that there have been discussions between War Department and War Refugee Board concerning reports of interference by civilian Jewish refugees with the escape of Allied airmen into Spain from German territory.

This problem is one with which the Embassy has been seriously concerned since early June when definite evidence of such interference, together with information that at least two groups of American and British airmen had as consequence been intercepted by German patrols, was brought to its attention. The matter was reported by Military Attache to War Department at that time and every effort has since been made to ascertain the circumstances under which the reported interference has taken place.

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72

By R. H. Parks Date SEP 27 1972
July 12, 5 p.m., from Me id.

This question was also discussed at length with Mann of War Refugee Board upon his arrival in Spain and, in order to determine whether operations being carried on by Sequerra under Treasury license W-2155 were in any way responsible for the reported interference, Mann was asked to go to Barcelona to investigate such activities in cooperation with American Consulate General. Results of such investigation have indicated that it is highly unlikely that cases of interference with escape of Allied airmen can be traced to Sequerra's current operations which appear, in fact, to involve few or clandestine activities envisaged under above-stated license but in view of paramount importance attached to escape of such airmen, Sequerra has been impressed with necessity of avoiding any action leading to interference and has agreed to keep Consulate General Barcelona informed in detail concerning his activities.

It appears to be consensus on basis of available evidence that cases of interference so far reported have resulted from individual wealthy Jewish refugees having bought their way into convoys of escaping American and
-3-92426, July 12, 5 p.m., from Madrid.

American and British flyers but it is suggested that organizations in United States concerned with rescue of civilian refugees from German occupied areas be warned that their activities must in no way be permitted to jeopardize the escape of Allied military personnel from such areas.

REPEATED TO LISBON AS 175.

BUTTERWORTH

MRM
WTD
Mr. John W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Department
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Pehle:

Enclosed herewith is a copy of the report submitted by the military attache which you recently requested.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

HARRISON A. GERHARDT
Colonel, General Staff Corps
Executive to Asst Secretary of War

Enc.

DECLASSIFIED
OSD Letter, 5-3-72

JAN 1 2 1973
15 July 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Department
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Pehle:

Enclosed herewith is a copy of the report submitted by the military attache which you recently requested.

Sincerely,

HARRISON A. GERHARDT
Colonel, General Staff Corps
Executive to Asst. Secretary of War

Enc.

DECLASSIFIED
OMB Letter, 5-5-72
JAN 12 1973
The Following Pages Are the Best Available
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1. French.
   Except for small numbers, the majority may be expected to
   remain in France to assist. Those coming through would be old
   people and children, no estimate possible.

d. Collaborative French.
   Large number of these would probably seek refuge in Spain;
   number would probably approximate 2,000.

e. Non-Germans.
   Enclaves, anti-Nazi, probably German agents or saboteurs -
   estimated number 500 to 1,000.

f. Other nationalities.
   No estimate possible, but probably 1,000 or more.

The effects of Allied invasion in France upon Spain

It is believed that any existing fears of invasion by the
Germans would be dispelled immediately, and that the Allies could
therefore expect increased cooperation from the Spanish.

The Spanish authorities fear the re-entry by Spanish Reds;
this fear would, in all probability, be increased by an invasion.
The military authorities are prepared to permit refugees to enter
Spain, but they will be examined carefully before being made
available for transfer. They have stated that plans are prepared
to deal with approximately 25,000 concentration camps for this
number are either ready or are in preparation.

Food.

The Spanish food situation is not good; they are disturbed by
the necessity of feeding this extra number of people who, it is
expected, will enter their country.

Housing.

In the past during the French refugee evacuation through Spain
to North Africa), balsamico (summer resorts) have been utilized
some of these are inoperable (see enclosed map) but could be used.
Itos will be further discussed and suitable arrangements can probably
be made to select better locations more suitable for the proposed
operation.

The following is a list of housing possibilities (see attached
map). This is compiled as a result of past experiences in connection
with similar activities during refugee operations.
on railroad or bus.

Distance from nearest railroad town:

- Madrid: 500
- Barcelona: 1,000
- Huesca: 500
- Zaragoza: 300
- San Sebastian: 500
- Pamplona: 300
- Logroño: 100
- Laredo: 100

These have regular

- Abarri
- Barakaldo
- Vitoria

Others:

- Abarri
- Barakaldo
- Vitoria

Towns and cities west of
San Sebastian. These have

- Abarri
- Barakaldo
- Vitoria

Hotels and pensions in Huesca - during recent refugee operations, the following numbers have been given board and room:

- Madrid: 600
- Barcelona: 1,000
- Pamplona: 500
- Zaragoza: 300
- San Sebastian: 500

and others probably could have been arranged.

Prisons - throughout Spain: Several hundred of persons were detained in prisons, which were unsatisfactory in account of crowding, unsanitary conditions, poor and insufficient food, and the men being treated as prisoners and not as refugees. Supplementary inns were issued when possible, but without proper distribution control. Prisons should not be used.

Other possibilities - "El Pardo": a Palace (one mile from railroad), south of Segovia - in country - in good condition - needs sleeping and feeding equipment. Could house probably 5,000 men.

Recent information from 9-2 Spanish Army to the effect that the Pyrenees' border is being reinforced by two divisions to cover the five principal passes, for the following reasons:

a. To be prepared for any eventuality such as an attempt by the Germans to occupy the territory between the Pyrenees and the Ebro River for strategic reasons.

b. German propaganda has stressed that the Allies' intention is to land at both ends and sides of the Pyrenees.
a. To disarm and intern any belligerent units which may cross the border with intent to force by operations to cross inadvertently.

b. To receive and control refugees.

c. The fear of surging in Catalonia, France or gaspa country can attempt by Spanish beds in France to cross the border in force to take advantage of the invasion.

The principal routes into Spain from France.

There are five sections of the Pyrenees through which aviation personnel and refugees have been and are crossing (see map):

1. Irún - Huesca.
   During the summer months it is possible to cross the Pyrenees unobserved in this section.
   Troops in the area: 1st Military Region with headquarters at Perpignan, 1st Infantry at San Sebastián; 10th Mixed Cavalry at Pamplona, 6th Engineers at San Sebastián, all within 30 miles of the frontier.

2. Navelles - Canfranc.
   The section lies within the VI Military Region. The mountains are high and the country is difficult to cross at all seasons. Troops which will defend the frontier are principally from Pamplona, 2 battalions of the 7th Infantry, 62nd Division.

   The mountains in this section are high and the country is difficult to cross at all seasons. Troops in the area: 2nd Infantry at Perpignan, 1st Infantry at San Sebastián; 10th Mixed Cavalry at Pamplona, 6th Engineers at San Sebastián, all within 30 miles of the frontier.

4. Puigcerda.
   In this section the mountains are high and country difficult; only Artillery has recently moved to Huacar.

5. Port Bou.
   The section part of this section is low near Port Bou, the mountains are difficult.
   Troops in this section are under the IV Military Region with headquarters at Perpignan, 2nd Infantry (2nd Division) and 1st Battalion of 3rd Infantry at Camp, a detachment at Figueras, one battalion at Sardin, 1st and 2nd Cavalry, Artillery Detachment at Roda de Urgell, one machine gun, one mounted battery, one mounted battery at Figueras, one artillery battery at Lleida, one battery at Le Perpignan, one mounted battery at Roda de Urgell, one mounted battery at Figueras, 1st Mounted Infantry (2nd Division) at Roda de Urgell, 6th Cavalry at Lleida.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Issue Description</th>
<th>Quantity/Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24/11/52</td>
<td>5 gallon cases</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/12/52</td>
<td>10 gallon cases</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>20/12/52</td>
<td>15 gallon cases</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/12/52</td>
<td>20 gallon cases</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note: The quantities and rates are approximate and subject to variation. The rates per gallon may vary based on market fluctuations.
MEMORANDUM FOR MAJOR EDWARD H. MILLER, MIS L/O to State Department:

Subject: Assistance to Military Escapes' and Refugees.

Request that the inclosed paraphrase of War Department cable to the
Military Attache, Madrid, Spain, be delivered to Mr. John W. Pehle of
the War Refugee Board.

RUSSELL H. SWEET,
Colonel, G.S.C.,
Chief, Captured Personnel and Material Branch.

1 Incl.
6 July 1944.

MEMORANDUM FOR MAJOR EDWARD H. MILLER, MIS L/O to State Department

Subject: Assistance to Military Escapees and Refugees.

Request that the inclosed paraphrase of War Department cable to the Military Attache, Madrid, Spain, be delivered to Mr. John W. Pohle of the War Refuge Board.

RUSSELL H. SWEET,
Colonel, G.S.C.,
Chief, Captured Personnel and Material Branch.

1 Incl.
Reference is made to your cable of 14 June 1944. The situation referred to in this cable was the subject of a talk with Dr. Pehle, the Executive Director of the U.N. Refugee Board. Mr. Pehle, who is fully cooperative, fully agreed that the situation should be rectified whatever steps are necessary. He states that the next Executive Director TIR, Mr. James H. Mann, is now in Spain, and suggests that on arriving at a solution to the problem you contact Mann, tell him of the situation, and ask his help. Pehle agrees with us that there be a full segregation of refugees and escapees, and that military escapees not be mixed with refugees. The Joint Distribution Committee, which Pehle contacted, having full confidence in the judgment of Mann, has instructed Mann to take any actions in JDC operations which are needed to rectify this interference. If it is considered necessary by you and Mann to stop all assistance to refugees across the border from France to Spain in order to protect military escapees, then Mann is authorized to give whatever directions are necessary to the JDC representative in Spain to accomplish this end. However, we are not sure that complete cessation of JDC activities is necessary to insure this protection of escapees. Refugee activities if properly supervised by the JDC should be helpful in furnishing dope which will assist and further movement of military escapees across the French-Spanish border. The movements of refugees before they reach Spain, of course, are not the concern of the JDC, and they may be difficult to control, in that they will more than likely be willing to spend large amounts of money in procuring guides or helpers to help them across the border in spite of the fact that there may be military escapees in the group. Suggest you get together with Mann and advise us of the result of this conference.

ORIGINATOR: G-P
INFORMATION: OPD

DECLASSIFIED

SEP 27 1972
Pharaphrase of Message No. 39146, 1 July 1944, from MIS CP Branch, to Military Attache, American Embassy, Madrid, Spain.

Reference is made to your 313539 of 14 June 1944. The situation referred to in this cable was the subject of a talk with John P. Pehle, who is Executive Director of the War Refugee Board. Mr. Pehle, who is fully cooperative, fully agrees that that the situation should be rectified whatever steps are necessary. He states that the Asst. Executive Director WRB, Mr. James H. Mann, is now in Spain, and suggests that in arriving at a solution to the problem you contact Mann, tell him of the situation, and ask his help. Pehle agrees with us that there be a full segregation of refugees and escapees, and that military escapees not be mixed with refugees. The Joint Distribution Committee, which Pehle contacted, having full confidence in the judgment of Mann, has instructed Mann to make any changes in JDC operations which are needed to rectify this interference. If it is considered necessary by you and Mann to stop all assistance to refugees across the border from France to Spain in order to protect military escapees, then Mann is authorized to give whatever directions are necessary to the JDC representative in Spain to accomplish this end. However, we are not sure that complete cessation of JDC activities is necessary to insure this protection of escapees. Refugee activities if properly supervised by the JDC should be helpful in furnishing dope which will assist and further movement of military escapees across the French-Spanish border. The movements of refugees before they reach Spain, of course, are not the concern of the JDC, and they may be difficult to control, in that they will more than likely be willing to spend large amounts of money in procuring guides or helpers to help them across the border in spite of the fact that there may be military escapees in the group. Suggest you get together with Mann and advise us of the result of this conference.
June 29, 1944.

TO: Lt. Col. Gerhardt
FROM: J. W. Pehle

Attached is a draft of a cable to the Military Attache pursuant to our discussion. Also attached for the information of the War Department are three despatches received from the British with reference to this matter.

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

Attachments

JWPehle:1hh 6/29/44
Reference your no. 12839, June 14.

This matter has been discussed with John W. Pehle, Executive Director War Refugee Board, who is fully cooperative and desires to take all possible action to straighten out situation. He advises that James H. Mann, Assistant Executive Director WRB, is now in Spain and requests that you advise Mann fully of the problem and secure his cooperation in working out a solution.

It is suggested by us and Pehle that there be complete separation of escapees and refugees and that arrangements be made to ensure that refugee groups are not mixed with military escapees. Pehle has conferred with the Joint Distribution Committee which has full confidence in Mann's judgment and which authorizes him to make any changes in JDC operations which are requisite to meeting the situation. If you and Mann both feel that the complete cessation of any activities by the JDC representatives in Spain, looking toward assisting refugees to cross the French-Spanish border, is necessary in order to protect the lives of escapees, Mann is authorized to issue the necessary instructions to that end to the JDC representatives in Spain. It should be pointed out, however, that we are not clear that such action is necessary to accomplish this purpose and suggest that under proper coordination and supervision the representatives of the JDC may as a matter of fact assist by providing information and in other ways help further the movement of escapees over the border.

In practice, however, it may be very difficult to control the activities of refugees on the French side of the border who undoubtedly offer any guides available large sums of money to bring them across even though escapees are in the party. Such individual acts of refugees are not, of course, the responsibility or subject to the control of the JDC.

Please report back after discussion with Mann.
June 25, 1944.

Dear John:

Will you please call me
as soon as you have read these?

G.L. Warren.
Mr. Eden

Lord Halifax

8 p.m., June 20, 1944
3:17 p.m. " 20, "

Following received from Madrid tel. No. 942 of June 19 repeated to Barcelona.

Your tel. No. 745.

Incidents referred to in my tel. No. 926 resulted from precisely this process i.e. Jews tempted the guides working for a British organisation to take a large party of civilians and luggage at the same time by offering greatly inflated prices.

2. Actually inflated prices matter less than slowing up and consequent interception of parties of British and U.S. airmen. Since sending my tel. No. 925 I have heard of another case (in the Western Pyrenees) where one of our parties of 17 strong was combined with a party of 37 civilians (with luggage); it was in consequence intercepted by German guards, two R.A.F. officers, one Flight Lieutenant and one American being caught. All except 5 civilians were caught as well.

3. I have also asked Mr. Farquhar for his comments on your telegram.

Mr. Eden

Lord Halifax

2:55 p.m., June 10, 1944

10:26 a.m., " " "

Followed, received from Madrid tel. No. 925 of June 15. Begins.

By tel. No. 494.

Evidence is accumulating that efforts being made by these Jewish organisations to help Jewish civilians out of France are seriously prejudicing the chance of British and U.S. airmen.

2. On two occasions recently parties of airmen entering Spain in the Eastern Pyrenees came to grief on the French side of the frontier owing to the inclusion of such refugees in the party, one R.A.F. Flight Sergeant and five U.S. Air Force being captured by the Germans. Since then another party of R.A.F. crossing further west ran altogether unnecessary risks by the inclusion of Jewish civilians, whose luggage had to be carried by R.A.F. officers and who even refused to share their food with our men.

3. To put an end to such a state of affairs I would recommend that the strongest pressure be put on the headquarters of these Jewish organisations in London and Washington and that agents in the field be orders under no circumstances to help such refugees.

4. Mr. Lichtenstein of the Jewish Agency has recently been visiting refugees who have arrived by the routes in question. I would be interested to know if he is authorized to arrange such clandestine escapes; if so, I should oppose any further journeys by him to Spain; which he has asked me to facilitate.

5. Please repeat to Washington as my tel. No. 233.

DECLASSIFIED

By Authority of British

Gov’t. telegram 1/12-72

By R.H.P. Date SEP 27 1944
Dr. Eden

Lord Halifax

4:50 p.m. June 16th, 1944.

2:13 p.m. " " 

Addressed to Madrid telegram 745 June 15th repeated to Washington.

Washington telegram 3042 to Foreign Office repeated to you as telegram 201 paragraph 1.

I presume that the "straight payment of pesetas to certain Spanish guides" has been made by representatives of Joint at Barcelona. Guides are used to rescue British and American service personnel and there is little doubt that in limited areas in which this type of work is possible these guides are the same people whoever pays them.

2. If services of these guides are in request from different directions they may auction them to highest bidder. British authorities and Joint may thus bid against one another. Both parties will suffer from enhanced prices demanded and British authorities will have their available supply of guides reduced to the extent that Joint may outbid them.

3. Please telegraph your views.

DECLASSIFIED
By Authority of British

Gov't telegram 1-12-72
By R H P Date SEP 27 1972
June 24, 1940

Colonel Gerhardt of the War Department handed to me today a cable from the Military Attache in Madrid, which is attached. He said that the military movement in question was handled primarily by the British and no word had been received from the British as yet as to any difficulty. He suggested that we ought not to mix the movements of escapees and refugees to which I fully agreed. I told him we would get in touch with him about the matter after discussing it with the JDC.

Later today I mentioned the matter to George Warren. He told me that Thorold of the British Embassy was sending to him several letters relating to the same matter which seemed to raise the same issue perhaps in a somewhat more specific way. I told Warren I would send him a copy of the cable received from the Military Attache in Madrid and clear with him the reply to be sent through military channels. This was entirely agreeable to Warren.
June 24, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES:

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(Signed) J.W. Pehle

JWP:mgt 6/24/44
PARAPHRASE

FROM: U.S. M.A. Madrid
TO: War Department 14 June 1944
Nr. 12529

Operations of Schwartz, American Joint Distribution Committee (stateless refugees) interfering with Escapee (military) in Barcelona area. Strongly urge representations be made to committee through State to prevent interference. Escapees (military) complain refugees probably by paying large amounts mixed with escapee groups and endangered their safety as they were not able to keep up. They insisted on carrying large quantities of belongings and persuaded the guides to delay. The M/A is investigating further.