

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

785017

ACC

10000/109/1396

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No. _____

785017

10000/109/1396

ITALIAN INTERNEES, EGYPT
SEPT. 1943-APR. 1944

0034

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

97 *ACAB (for Ex-Comm)*
 30 APR Recd 30 APR Recd
 ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS
 Military Government Section

MGS: 383.7-15

TBJ/jw
 28 April 1944

SUBJECT: Italian Internees.

TO : HQ ACC

Ref this Section's MGS 383-7, attached for your information are copies of despatches from Hon. Ambassador in Cairo of which the Resident Minister's Office here have given this Section a sight and which it is thought would be of interest to you. The Minister's Office state that copies have already been sent to the High Commissioner in Naples so that the information may be available in case the Italian Government raise the question of the treatment of the Italian internees.

For the Chief of Section:

T. B. Jackman
 T. B. JACKMAN
 Major

3430

Incl:
 as above.

*Recd Ship**You may be interested.**Refugees Pro. should be**T.A.P.I.C. after Assen**P.A. W.S.**8/5*

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

10

BRITISH EMBASSY,
CAIRO.

23rd March, 1944.

/MF

No. 331
(60/12/44)

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 972 of 27th October 1943, I have the honour to transmit herewith copies of the conclusions of the International Red Cross Delegates in Cairo on the occasion of their visits to the under-mentioned civilian internment camps and hospital in the Egypt during November and December 1943:

1. Camp d'Internement du Fayed (Secteur des Italiens)
2. Ecole Italienne de Boulac
3. Hopital Italien Umberto
4. Camp d'Internement de Helouan.

2. These reports, copies of which are sent to Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt, and to the Egyptian Government for such action as may be necessary, give a very different picture of the general conditions of internment in Egypt from that painted by Father Hughes, and go a long way to refute the allegations of hardship which he has made.

3. With regard to the question of clothing for internees, I have taken up this and certain other matters e.g. hospital accommodation, with the certain other matters e.g. hospital accommodation, with the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, British Troops in Egypt and also with the Egyptian Government. I enclose a copy of a letter from Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt showing the action taken by the British military authorities on previous reports made by the International Red Cross delegates.

4. General Stone has direct responsibility only for the camp at Fayed and limited responsibility for the camps at Jrbabeh, Tanta, Helwan and Mansoura. He informed me in January 1944 that with regard to these

With regard to the question of clothing for internees, I have taken up this and certain other matters e.g. hospital accommodation, with the certain other matters e.g. hospital accommodation, with the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, British Troops in Egypt and also with the Egyptian Government. I enclose a copy of a letter from Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt showing the action taken by the British military authorities on previous reports made by the International Red Cross delegates.

4. General Stone has direct responsibility only for the camp at Fayed and limited responsibility for the camps at Embabeh, Tanta, Helwan and Mansoura. He informed me in January 1944 that with regard to these latter internment centres he has to rely largely on information supplied by the Under Secretary of State, Ministry of the Interior, and that he was rather doubtful if all the internees under the direct control of the Egyptian Government had sufficient clothing. His staff had however, repeatedly informed the Egyptian authorities that clothing could be supplied at short notice by the British military authorities on demand. I am also informed by General Stone that he recently had all the Italian internees in the Fayed and Bulac camps examined by a British medical board and that he hopes that some of them will be recommended for release on medical grounds by the International Medical Commission. The provision of additional hospital accommodation for sick internees is being arranged by the authorities concerned.

5. In addition to the Italian section of the Fayed Camp there is also a German section in which, according to the International Red Cross delegates, the conditions since the Italian armistice are less satisfactory. The German internees are now confined to their own section and in consequence no longer have all the amenities which they previously enjoyed. It should however be noted that German internees represent less than 100 out of approximately 4000 internees in the Fayed Camp.

I have the honour to be

With the highest respect,

Sir

Your most obedient, humble Servant,

(Sgd.) WILLIAMS

0037

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

COPY

27 October, 1943

88/32/43

Dear Father Hughes,

With reference to my letter No. 88/23/43 of 14th October regarding Italian internees in Egypt, I write to say that we have now obtained the views of the British security authorities about the alleviating measures which you suggest should be adopted. Their views are briefly as follows:

- (a) The number of internees over the age of 45 is considerable and their release as a class would raise a number of difficult questions of employment and maintenance which require a good deal of further study. On the other hand it has already been agreed that all internees over 55 shall be released with the exception of those regarded as a menace to security. Incidentally the cases of all interned Italian women are now being reviewed.
- (b) The competent authorities cannot agree that the loss of one eye automatically entitles an internee to release.

Internees suffering from eye diseases or chronic ailments aggravated by internment are continually being recommended for release and the competent authorities have in fact released hundreds of such cases including many with bad political records. The competent authorities can however only act on the recommendation of the International Medical Commissions in regard to these cases.

/(c)

The Very Reverend Father Hughes,
Charge d'Affaires,
Apostolic Delegation of Egypt and Palestine,
Zamalek,
CAIRO.

3428

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

- (c) Internees reported to be actually suffering from mental disorders are examined by mental specialists and if certified insane or as being subject to fits of insanity are released by the competent authorities.
- (d) All work of a menial nature in the camps such as sweeping and cleaning is done by native labour. Waiters and the kitchen staffs are found from amongst the poorer internees who welcome the opportunity of earning some money for themselves. Their wages vary between LE.2 and LE.3 per month according to the nature of the work done, and are of course in the nature of pocket money since they are maintained absolutely free of charge. It is felt by the competent authorities that any increase in these wages at this stage might well undermine the principle of supply and demand in accordance with which they are presumably fixed. We are informed that this system has worked quite satisfactorily in the past and your suggestion is the first intimation that the British authorities have received of any discontent on the part of the wage earners.

In conclusion may I point out that monthly visits are made to the internment camps by representatives of the British military authorities, Egyptian security authorities, the Swiss Legation and the International Red Cross? These visits have been purposely instituted in order that any complaints from internees may receive prompt attention and to ensure that living conditions are made as comfortable as possible for them in so far as climatic, financial, security and administrative considerations permit.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) TERENCE SHONE.

0039

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

/ MP

COPY

88/23/43

THE BRITISH EMBASSY,
CAIRO

14th October, 1943.

Dear Father Hughes,

I have received from Mr. Casey a copy of your letter of 28th September regarding Italian internees in Egypt.

We are now consulting the British authorities concerned about the measures which you suggest should be adopted, and I will communicate with you again in due course.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd) TERENCE SHONE

The Very Reverend
Father Hughes,
Charge d'Affaires,
Apostolic Delegation of Egypt and
Palestine
Zamalek, Cairo.

3427

/AT

COPY

Office of the Minister of
State,
10 Sharia Tolumbat,
Cairo.

6th October, 1943.

Dear Father Hughes,

Mr. Casey desires me to thank you for your letter of the 28th September regarding the treatment of Italian internees in Egypt.

As this matter is the concern of the Egyptian Government, a copy of your letter is being forwarded to H.M. Embassy, who will no doubt take any action that may be necessary.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd) C.E. YATES

Private Secretary to Minister of State.

The Very Reverend Father Hughes,
Apostolic Delegate,
Cairo.

3426

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

/MP

C O P YApostolic Delegation,
Zamalek, Cairo.

September 28, 1943.

Dear Mr. Casey,

I assume that the final settlement of the Italian Internees problem in Egypt will be part of the general policy of the Government with regard to such internees throughout the Empire. Since it is a complex question, the solution will undoubtedly be a protracted affair.

In the meantime, and in view of the changed situation, I wonder whether something could not be done toward the amelioration of the conditions of civilian internees in Egypt. Personal observations in Uganda, East Africa, Palestine and Egypt have convinced me that the conditions of internment in Egypt have been marked by hardships not common to those other areas.

The Allies are at present enlisting the support of the Italian armed forces against the enemy and are seeking to draw the sympathy of the Italian civilian population to our cause. It appears to me that now, if ever, is the time for a gesture of clemency toward the interned civilians.

Would it not be possible, therefore, in the case of such as are not a proved menace to Security to adopt some such alleviating measures to the following:-

- a) the release of all internees over 45;
- b) the release of those who have lost an eye and those suffering from eye diseases aggravated by prolonged internment in the desert camp at Fayed;
- c) the release of those suffering from chronic ailments worsened by continued internment;
- d) the release of those threatened with or actually suffering from mental disorders;
- e) the payment of a decent wage to those engaged in useful labour in the various camps.

These measures would not necessarily anticipate any general Government decision nor would they commit the Government to any specific policy: but they would, I am sure, have definite value in establishing the good will and confidence which Government desires.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) A. HUGHES

3425

The Rt. Hon. R.G. Casey, B.C.C., M.C.
Minister of State
Cairo.

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

HOPITAL ITALIEN UMBERTOConclusion:-

L'hopital it lien peut etre regarde comme le meilleur lieu d'internement en EGYPTTE et, bien qu'il ne contienne que des malades, le moral des internes y est excellent, a part les cas de psychasthenie.

Les internes, a tous points de vue, sont bien traites et eux-memes le reconnaissent. Il est naturel que l'hopital italien soit renomme et que les internes de tous les camps en Egypte demandent lorsqu'ils sont malades, a etre envoyes a cet hopital. Comme ces malades sont trop nombreux il faut souhaites que la proposition d'installer un camp dans le terrain vague adjacent a l'hopital se realise, ce sera un resultat tres appreciable.

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

C O P YECOLE ITALIENNE DE BOULACConclusions -

Les internes sont traites d'une maniere tres satisfaisante au camp de Boulac. La solde journaliere a ete augmentee a partir du 12 octobre 1943 de PT.13.- a PT.17.-. Nous intervenons aupres des Autorites competentes afin que les vetements demandes soient fournis aux internes le plus rapidement possible.

Le medecin du camp fait tout son possible pour ameliorer l'etat de sante des internes, mais la longue detention ebranle le moral de ceux-ci. Plusieurs internes attendent avec impatience leur liberation ou leur transfert a l'Hopital Italien pour suivre un traitement qui ne peut etre organise dans le camp meme.

Nous faisons egalement des demarches aupres des Autorites competentes afin que la franchise postale soit accordee aux internes et que le Gouvernement egyptien participe a l'entretien des batiments.

Nous avons eu l'occasion de nous entretenir longuement avec les hommes de confiance du camp et notre visite nous a laisse une impression tres satisfaisante de ce camp.

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

C O P YC O P Y

/PDP

CAMP D'INTERNEMENT DU FAYED.Secteur des Italiens.Conclusions

Le camp de Fayed est certainement un des camps d'internes les mieux organisés en Egypte. La discipline, basée sur des principes militaires, s'est avérée la seule capable d'obtenir les excellents résultats que nous avons pu constater: ordre, hygiène, propreté, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur des habitations, distribution régulière des vivres, travail, sports et distractions; elle témoigne de l'excellence des principes directeurs adoptés dans ce camp. Toutefois, la durée prolongée de l'internement a ébranlé dans plusieurs cas le moral des internes. Les cas de psychasthénie et même de neurasthénie sont très fréquents étant donné que la majeure partie des internes sont jeunes. Nous pensons que si les internes pouvaient être occupés davantage à des travaux réguliers, leur état moral s'améliorerait. Nous ferons des démarches dans ce sens auprès des Autorités compétentes.

3422

0045

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

C O P Y

C O P Y

CAMP D'INTERNEMENT DE HELOUAN.

Conclusions:-

Outre les ameliorations deja observees lors de notre visite du 17 juillet 1943, on peut mentionner avec plaisir la fourniture de medicaments et de materiel dentaire. D'autre part, la salle des spectacles a ete amenee en salle de reunion ou peuvent s'assembler les internes. Les installations sanitaires du camp fonctionnent normalement. Il n'y a pas eu de plaintes graves formulees par les internes. Les subsides alloues aux internes par la Puissance Protectrice permettent d'acheter un supplement de nourriture. Les internes attendent avec impatience des vetements pour l'hiver et des demarches sont faites a ce propos. Le moral des internes semble s'etre ameliore. Plusieurs internes ages ayant passe la visite de la Commission Medicale ont ete liberes ces derniers temps. Cet exemple a redonne l'espoir a d'autres internes ages ou malades de voir bientot prendre fin leur internement.

3421

COPY

E/2/69722/A

The Chancery,
British Embassy,
Cairo.

Headquarters,
British Troops in Egypt,
Cairo.

20th January 1944.

With reference to your letters 325/20/43 of 29th October, forwarding copies of reports by the International Red Cross Delegates dated April/May 1943 and 325/24/43 of 18th December forwarding reports of June 1943, the following observations are made:-

1. German School - Boulac.

The previous report of March 1943 stated that the food is of good quality and sufficient, for over and above the allowance of Ft 13 per head there is an ample subsidy from the Swedish Legation.

The Minister of the Interior was reminded about the question of clothing and early in December an indent from him was received.

We offered POW clothing after taking up the matter with the Embassy (Mr. Tomlyn) and, on 23rd January 1944 the following was issued to the Egyptian authorities:-

1329 Shirts
1244 prs drawers
1603 prs socks
805 prs boots
836 towels
325 jerseys

2. Italian School - Boulac.

We have arranged to supply, through military channels, any urgent medical necessities. Recently a military medical board examined a large number of the Internees and many were recommended for re-examination by the International Medical Commission with a view to their release.

3. Payed Camp - (German Section).

On 27th October 1943 there was an issue of:-

2. Italian School - Boulac.

We have arranged to supply, through military channels, any urgent medical necessities. Recently a military medical board examined a large number of the Internees and many were recommended for re-examination by the International Medical Commission with a view to their release.

3. Payed Camp - (German Section).

On 27th October 1943 there was an issue of:-

4000 prs sandals
3500 shirts
3500 jerseys
3500 prs trousers

With regard to the water supply the Military Medical authorities consider it to be quite adequate. The internees do not like showers, which accounts for the building erected not being fitted, they prefer to use bowls and tins in their own huts for washing.

The DMS is fully satisfied that there are ample drugs and all internees are able to see a medical specialist on request

4. Payed Camp - (Italian Section).

The same remarks apply as for the German Section. In addition the internees were recently examined by a Military Medical Board and a number were recommended for re-examination by the International Medical Commission with a view to their being released should there be no security objection.

5. Internment Camp Embaben - Ramsees City.

The same remarks regarding clothing apply as for the German School i.e., that early in December the Minister of the Interior submitted an indent for items of clothing and that on 23rd January,

WD/

785017

Declassified E.O. 12356 Section 3.3/NND No.

WD released certain articles of clothing to them on payment.

If the suggestion that the full scale of accommodation at Holy Families School Helwan could be utilised (our letter E/2/68913/A of 12th January refers) and if a number of aged and sick were released as has already been recommended it is probable that this camp could be closed down. This would obviate the complaint that it is not a very suitable one for elderly internees.

6. Convent of Tersa - Giza.

The hot-water and drainage systems are being attended to by the Royal Engineers.

The Medical authorities are satisfied that the complaint regarding the allowance of PT 15 per day not being sufficient for food is unwarranted. Meals have been inspected and all the inmates looked well nourished and some were actually fat.

The sanitary discipline of these priests leaves much to be desired.

7. Italian Hospital - Umberto

As in 5 above recommendations have been made to SIMA for release of certain aged and sick.

8. Tantah Camp No. 1.

See para. 1 re clothing.

An extra Internee Doctor was posted to this camp on 24th November last.

9. Tantah Camp No. 2.

Same remarks as to clothing.

10. Female Camp - Mansourah.

The ration allowance has been increased from PT 10 to PT 15 per diem.

The necessary drugs etc are supplied free but special medicines have to be paid for and it is difficult to see how this rule could be altered as demands would probably be made for all kinds of unessential items.

No assistance can be rendered with regard to the supply of female clothing.

10. Female Camp - Mensourah.

The ration allowance has been increased from PT 10 to PT 15 per diem.

The necessary drugs etc are supplied free but special medicines have to be paid for and it is difficult to see how this rule could be altered as demands would probably be made for all kinds of unessential items.

No assistance can be rendered with regard to the supply of female clothing.

11. Holy Families School - Helwan

A medical board visited the camp in August. The stock of medical comforts was found to be suitable. Arrangements were made for more stock mixtures and special Italian preparations to be supplied and also dental preparations. There were 3 Italian doctors in the camp.

Rations were found to be satisfactory and some special diets were ordered for a few sick patients.

See para 1 re clothing.

12. General. There is little doubt that the clothing recently asked for by Hassan Rifeat Pasha for the winter issue to Boulac, Embabeh, Helwan and Tanta cannot really cover all the needs of the Internees. An effort will be made to get the Egyptian Government to issue more in the very near future.

It is considered that a large proportion of those Internees of over military age and those who are, by reason of sickness or ailments, of no use to us eventually for employment for the war effort should be released.

(Sgd) W.I. Tolpitt. (?)
Lieutenant Colonel
Assistant Adjutant General.

0050