



Jay Allen (1900–1972) was an American journalist who reported on the Spanish Civil War & WWII.

He worked for the Chicago Tribune and NANA. In this article from *Survey Graphic* (Nov. 1939), he covers the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Spanish Republican refugees who were stuck in French concentration camps after fleeing Franco's Spain. This is an excerpt.

Spain in France — 2063 schoolteachers, 2440 printers, 2809 electricians, 5922 woodworkers, 10,272 mechanics, 45,918 peasants. Also dentists, engineers, surgeons, architects . . . and a hundred thousand old people and children

Photograph by Ione Robinson

Hostages of Appeasement

by JAY ALLEN

"The experiment which opened to such bright hopes in the spring of 1931 has been destroyed . . . chiefly by the fact that it was born into a fiercely illiberal world which betrayed it at every step."—*New York Herald Tribune*, February 7, 1939.

RESURRECTION OF THE SPANISH REPUBLIC IS NOT ON THE war program of the Allies.

Mr. Chamberlain has expressed his regrets to Czechoslovakia and to Poland and promised them that they will rise again. The way things are shaping up even this is a large order. But there was also Spain. It may well be that the redemption of Czechoslovakia and of Poland will call for a military triumph on a grand scale over the conquerors who now hold them. It is not so with Spain. For the Spanish Republic lies physically, as well as in a moral sense, on the hands of those who betrayed it. It can be saved by humanitarian endeavor, not by battle. For on French soil are close to 300,000 refugees—the flower and sap of the Republic and the sole hope of the millions still in Spain under General Franco's ruthless improvisations. Save them and the Spanish Republic is saved for the future, no matter what the political exigencies that maintain the generalissimo precariously in power for a time.

[...]

France, at war, finds them an even greater problem. The children are being sent back to Spain when Franco authorities, claiming the parents to be there, ask for them. And remember that Franco's punitive "Law of Political Responsibilities" applies to everyone down to the age of fourteen. All adults are under fearful pressure to go back. Franco has promised immunity from his "purification" processes if they are not guilty of what he calls "crime." The sincerity of such an amnesty would have to be checked on the spot by an international commission which would see to it that Franco's definition of crime would not endanger the refugees. Since being a freemason or a democrat or a socialist is defined as crime in the statutes of Nationalist Spain, an amnesty might prove to be a very frail guarantee indeed. Of the 82,000 refugee militiamen, France has taken only 16,000 into industry and agriculture; 24,000 are in labor battalions; and 42,000 are still in concentration camps, where they have been for over eight months. One hundred thousand old men, women and children are also in camps. These are official French figures.

The point is not so much that these heroes of the first and, to date, only real war against fascism in Europe have sunk deeper into misery. It is that their hopes have been blighted. Their own carefully devised plans to transplant their republic to the New World, there to keep it alive



Three photographs courtesy of Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign
 Men from abandoned Spanish colonies, such as those at the Barcenes refugee camp, are in labor battalions at 50 centimes a day



A relief truck arrives at the Villenoves camp near Meaux

all of Europe, and often in those early days you saw Spain pictured as a bull standing bloody but defiant, with a Hitler caught on one horn and a Mussolini on the other. That was in the days before the thing called Non-Intervention was shown up to be the beginnings of the formula for surrender that in its later, more brutal, aspects came to be called Appeasement. There were still many illusions in Spain then.

The responsibility had been still more clearly underlined by President Roosevelt who, a few weeks before in his message to Congress, admitted that our "neutrality" had favored the aggressor. "During those eight years from 1931," he said, "many of our people clung to the hope that the innate decency of mankind would protect the unprepared who showed their innate trust in mankind. Today we are all wiser and sadder." The Spaniards had shown their innate trust. For had they not legislated their neutrality *in aeternum* by writing the League Covenant and the Kellogg Pact into their Constitution in 1931?

IN FRANCE THEY WERE HERDED INTO CONCENTRATION CAMPS, quarantined for having fought too long and too well for democracy. Darker days were to come, as appeasement tightened. The Spanish Republic's gold that might have kept them sheltered and fed was sent back to Franco. The generalissimo became a favorite with nice people. The United States came forward with a loan of \$13,500,000 dollars for the Spanish dictator and the U. S. State Department admits no knowledge of executions.

until the day when it should live again at home, have been cut short. Yesterday *victims* of appeasement, today they are *hostages* of appeasement; held thus to please General Franco who, if he so deigns, can one day become the glorious ally of the embattled democracies. There is little hope of a change in the French attitude. Help must come from some other countries

which are not yet so desperately engaged in the struggle for democracy as to have to make such strategic capitulations in its name.

The Spain That Was

FROM BELOW THE PYRENEES COMES the echo of the firing squads cleaning up the unfinished business encouraged by the Non-Intervention Committee, and the day may well come, and soon, when General Franco will ask a price for joining in the crusade to save democracy.

All this is a far cry from the epic days of the defense of Madrid in 1936. The Spanish Republicans were very proud then. They were sure, then, that they were fending off the menace for



Photograph by Ine Robinson
 Not afraid to look into the sky — these Spanish children have found a sanctuary at the Morelia settlement, in Mexico

In this country, for some reason, efforts by certain groups to label all Spanish refugee relief activity as something bordering on subversion have been for a time more successful than elsewhere. This factor, together with the shift of interest and the uncertainties of the outbreak of the war, resulted in a ruinous falling off of contributions. In England and France the war has brought down the

contributions almost to zero. No funds can be sent from England for such purposes, and in France general mobilization has paralyzed most of the relief work.