

# American Committee on Italian Migration



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JUDGE JUVENAL MARCHISIO  
*National Chairman*

REV. CAESAR DONANZAN, P.S.S.C.  
*Executive Secretary*

April 21, 1960

Dear Congressman Fogarty:

Just recently, I returned from a trip to Italy and Tunisia. Knowing of your interest in World Refugee Year and our Government's efforts to assist in at least a partial solution of the Refugee problem, under separate cover I have forwarded, for your evaluation, my observations concerning the plight of Italian Nationals in Tunisia and in the Refugee Camps in Italy.

This Analysis, which is documented, is rather lengthy and, knowing that your schedule is onerous and your time therefore limited, I have taken the liberty of summarizing it as follows:

There are 51,702 Italians in Tunisia, more than two-thirds of whom (39,528) are second and third generation born Tunisians with, however, technical Italian citizenship. In addition, there are 10,926 Italian nationals from Tunisia living in Italy. 9,346 of these are existing in precarious conditions outside of camps and 1,580 in camps.

These unfortunate groups fall neither under the classification of 'Refugee' or 'Expellee' and do not benefit by the program of assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, nor by any legislation in countries of possible haven. Incidentally, no more than a maximum of 15 per cent can possibly be absorbed by the Italian economy.

As a result of the Tunisian Government's policy of nationalization - the replacement of all non-Arabs with Arabs - they are being displaced from their usual place of abode. They are forced to leave the country (in five years the total European population has dropped from 300,000 to 77,000) as the Tunisian Government, by its refusal to grant work permits, effects this result without any law technically sequestering their property.

*Agree  
Behring to  
Congressman*

At this writing, there are 1,751 heads of families with 5,003 dependents, totaling 6,754 who have had their businesses, their jobs and their homes entirely taken away. Their only means of livelihood is a dole provided by the Italian Government amounting to 30 cents per person, per day. To this number add 3,775 heads of families with 8,454 dependents, totaling 12,229 who, under present conditions, can earn only an average of \$8.00 per month, per person.

All authorities in Tunisia, including our own Embassy, firmly believe that with the exception of a possible hard-core of 6,000, the 45,000 remaining Italian nationals in Tunisia must leave the country within two and a half years - the alternative is starvation.

This grim picture is worsened by the fact that compensation for properties owned by Italian nationals falls as low as one-fiftieth of the value - 'on a take-it or leave-it basis'. Furthermore, the Tunisian Government does not permit the entry of sorely needed relief materials, such as food, medicine, clothing, etc. for these non-Arab nationals.

In this 'World Refugee Year', Congressman Francis E. Walter has, as you know, introduced legislation which has already passed the House permitting a certain number of Refugees to enter the United States on a parolee status. At the Hearing held on his resolution, H. J. Res. 397 on March 24, 1960, the American Council of Voluntary Agencies For Foreign Service, Inc., and the United States Committee for Refugees requested that its language be modified so that these Italian nationals in Tunisia could be included. These recommendations were not accepted even though there is the precedent that Dutch nationals from Indonesia - in exactly the same position as Italian nationals now find themselves in Tunisia - were the beneficiaries of a law which permitted the entry into this country of some of their number.

It is my thinking that legislation admitting some 1,500 heads of families with their dependents - totaling approximately 5,000 persons in all - would:

1. Confirm the humanitarian interest of the United States in people forced to leave their place of abode because of their nationality.
2. Help correct the overcrowded conditions in Italian Refugee camps by making space available to Tunisians who are arriving at the rate of 200 per week in Italy.

3. Set the precedent for other countries of haven so that they may hopefully follow our example.

I was able to ascertain, during my visits to the camps in Italy and among the Italian nationals in Tunisia, that almost two-thirds of the heads of families and other adults have skills.

With, again, many thanks for your interest, and with warm personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

*Juvenal Marchisio*

Juvenal Marchisio

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