



CORPORATION

14225 VENTURA BOULEVARD • SHERMAN OAKS, CALIFORNIA 91423
 PHONE: (213) 981-2395 • TELEX: 65-1395 • CABLE: HERVICORP

Most of us were really excited. We walked in three's, then we stopped, and put our bags down. I was going to be on a ship for the first time in my life. A mistake! Once I had boarded an English ship at Antwerp. I mean I would travel on the sea. I saw a big ship near us, but didn't know if that was the one. Its name was a long one - GOUVERNEUR GENERAL JONART - a French Ship. It was fairly large - not comparing it with the Queen Elizabeth or Normandie. Then we walked on the "gangplank" in single file. We were all aboard now. Most of the children went downstairs, but I and some friends remained by the railing. I knew the ship will pull away real soon. I could see hundreds of persons waving. Under myself I already felt a "rumbling noise": It was the giant motors. Then a whistle blew 3 times. The ship began to move sideways, little by little. I was afraid to bend over too much, but I looked down the side of the boat. It was so far down. We could see small dots, the people at the quai. By now the ship went by its own force. The ship seemed to be moving very fast. We were still in the harbor, but were pulling out rapidly. I was looking at the nearby shore. There was one thing I wanted to see; this was the Vieille Chapelle. I knew where to look but I couldn't find that building. It was about 3 miles away from us. There in the distance I saw the Cathedral on a steep hill. It is a famous landmark. NOTRE-DAME DE LA GARDE. At last we were on our way. The wind was fresh. Now I remembered that my friends were probably waving at us now. They saw our ship but we couldn't see them. I did see the rocky hills on which we used to climb, and from it we saw the ships pass by. Now we were on one of those ships. Anyway, I left the railing and went downstairs. It wasn't a luxury boat at all. It was more like a freighter. Well, I couldn't expect luxury now. Just so it was a ship and floated! There wasn't much to do on the ship. We tried to "explore" most of the ship. Food was enough of. During this time we found out where we were heading. It was Africa. Just think, I said to myself- Africa. I never thought I will visit Africa when I was young. But there it was! We were going to arrive there in 2 days. There is very little to tell of this part of our journey. Of course most of us became seasick. It is a terrible feeling. You are all dizzy. There is a little "pot" near each bed. We were hoping to arrive very soon. It was now the day. At about 2 P.M. we saw "rock" in the distance. As we came nearer it became bigger, and stretched out more. It was the continent of Africa at last. The went along side the coast. We couldn't see any people, just rocks and bushes or trees. It was about 2 miles away from us. Although we reached shore, we had to travel for about 4 more hours. It was tiresome. Maybe I will see some "Arabs". We were heading for the port of ORAN, a large city. This was of course the coast of Algeria- French North Africa. Finally we saw Oran. It took a half an hour to dock, and when we docked we were told not to get off the ship. We found out one thing: that bread is not rationed here. A boy and I ran toward the gangplank. Some of the children already had a large loaf of white bread. Near us was a man on the ship. Then we saw an Arab in white clothes coming toward the ship. I tried to run down the gangplank, but a Colonial guard warned me not to. The man on board the ship saw that my friend and I wanted to get bread also.



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When he received his loaves he gave me a half of a loaf for nothing. It was very kind of him. It was really good bread. I had never eaten anything like it in France. It was soft and even warm. No one was allowed to leave the ship. I remember the Spanish children sang Spanish songs. We used to listen to them all the time. We remained on the "Jonart" until 11 O'Clock. Then we were all told to get ready to leave. We all walked down the gangplank, where a bus was waiting for us. The bus took us to a railway yard near Oran. It was pitch dark out now. Our train was already there. We boarded it. It was very comfortable inside. The train began to move and we were on our way. Soon all of us went to our compartments to sleep. I woke up the next morning. It was warm and bright out.

As we passed fields I could see Arabs, and their camels plowing the fields. In a few minutes we reached a town. The train stopped, and many people including us, went out. The name of the town was SIDI-BEL-ABBE6. We went to a restaurant in the small station, and ate some sandwiches, and a drink. My attention took me over to the fence, which separated the station from a nearby street. There I saw some French sailors, and civilians, on our side of the fence. On the other side were a few arab boys. I was interested to see them. They wore long white robes and a red fez on their heads. Some people gave them money to run down the street to a bakery and buy them a bread. Some of them came back with the money and some didn't. The train whistle blew and we boarded the train to be on our way again. The more we stayed on the train the more I hated the trip. The first bad thing was that we didn't have enough water to drink. The train was very slow, and made few stops. Whenever we made a stop we hurried down to find out where we could fill up a few small bottles. When we saw a pump, there were at least 10 other Arabs near it, so we couldn't wait there long. We were allowed to take a small gulp from a cup in order to save most of it. We made another stop at TLEMCEI. It was terribly hot outside. We got a few bottles of water there, and were on our way. Sometimes the land nearby was sandy, and other times shrublike. The town of TAZA was nearing. There we descended and went into the station's cafe. Around us we only saw Arabs, sometimes frenchmen. After eating, we were attracted by a French colonial soldier. Some of us stood around him to look at his rifle. On the bayonet was a "red" reflection from his fez. We asked him if it was blood? I don't remember the exact reply, but he tried to say that the germans "are no good". He amused us a little. We agreed with him. We were called back to the train, and soon were on our way again.

By now it was very late and dark out. I don't know where we were exactly, but it was between the borders of Algeria, which we were leaving, and entering Morrocco. We went into a very highly recommended restaurant near there. After finishing our dinner, we boarded a different train, which was taking us nearer to CASABLANCA. During the trip I discovered that the French colonies in North Africa are very poor. In the midst of a sandy area we would usually see arab families. In the distance were tents in which they lived. Camels and dromedaries were grazing nearby on shrubs. When the train stopped some children would come near the train and we would give them candy or chocolate.