

Displacement and the Second World War: Polish refugees in Africa

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Abstract

This thesis examines the experience of displacement in Africa of refugees from Poland during and after the Second World War. Existing scholarship incorporates this little known episode into the heroic national history of Poland. Polish government authorities and their subject citizens created 'oases of Polishness' in the African wilderness. This thesis resets the focus and investigates the same episode from the perspective of the refugees. It demonstrates that British colonial Africa and Africans played important roles in determining how the refugees experienced and gave meaning to their displacement. While the focus of the historiography to date has been on the nation, this study focuses on refugees and their lived experience of displacement. Seen 'from below', the lives of the women and children in Africa ran different courses, the former reflecting an imagined past, the latter absorbed in the present.

Drawing on a range of English and Polish, archival and published sources, and including a small oral history project with former child refugees, this research explores the everyday lives of the refugees to see how they lived and made sense of their lives. The opening chapter provides historical context by describing where the refugees came from, the circumstances of their removal, and their multiple displacements on the way to Africa. Chapter Two examines British colonial policy on refugees, arguing that the refugees' experience of displacement was governed by the institution of the camp. The following three chapters investigate how the camps were constructed materially and socially, how the refugees lived, how they acted and reacted to the order of the camp, how they were able to shape their own lives. The final chapter follows the refugees into the arena of post-war international refugee relief, illustrating both the longevity and opportunity of displacement.

This study contributes to the new histories of displacement and the Second World War that take quite different experiences into account. It is a history of one group of people swept up by war, repeatedly displaced, and ultimately dispersed to every continent on earth except Antarctica. Its focus is on women and children, an under-represented demographic in studies of war. It challenges the nation-centred approach to the writing of history, lying as it does on the border between the fields of transnational history, refugee history and the history of the Second World War.

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Abbreviations

AAN	Archiwum Akt Nowych (Modern Records Archive - Warsaw)
AN	Archives Nationales (National Archives - Pierrefitte-sur-Seine)
BN	Biblioteka Narodowa (National Library - Warsaw)
BL	British Library (London)
CDZWiP	Centre for the Documentation of Deportations, Expulsions and Resettlements (Centrum Dokumentacji Zsyłek, Wypędzeń i Przesiedleń - Kraków)
CO	Colonial Office
DO	Dominions Office
DP	Displaced Person
EARA	East Africa Refugee Administration
FO	Foreign Office
IRO	International Refugee Organization
ITC	Interim Treasury Committee
MERRA	Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration
MPiOS	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (Polish)
MSZ	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Polish)
MWRiOP	Ministry of Education (Polish)
PCIRO	Preparatory Commission International Refugee Organization
PISM	Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (London)
PRC	Polish Resettlement Corps
PRPwT	Polish Government Legation in Tehran
TNA	The National Archives (Kew)
UN	United Nations
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

Introduction

One morning, a green line appeared on the horizon. This was Africa. We gazed at the inevitable in silence ... The ship laid anchor and we found ourselves floating on a barge towards the shore. It felt as though I had died and Charon was ferrying me across the River Styx to a place from which I would never return.¹ Anna

The train speeds through rolling savannah. Herds of giraffe, antelope, zebra and gazelle graze on the yellow grasslands ... The beauty of this untamed land is irresistible ... Am I reading an adventure story or am I dreaming? Because if I am dreaming, I don't want to wake up.² Barbara

This thesis examines the experience of displacement in the lives of refugees from Poland in British colonial Africa during and after the Second World War. The voices of Anna and Barbara quoted above, register two very different responses to arriving in Africa. Anna, the wife of a doctor and Polish military officer to whom she had bid farewell when his military unit was mobilised in September 1939, arrived in Africa with her two infant daughters and mother. Deported from Poland by the Soviets in April 1940, they had endured two years of extreme hardship in the central Asian Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan before the July 1941 amnesty granted to all Polish citizens detained in the Soviet Union allowed them freedom of movement. They fled and joined the evacuation to Persia of the newly-formed Polish army in 1942. Anna was recovering from typhus, her children were severely malnourished, and her mother's mental state was fragile since the death of her husband, Anna's father, in exile. In Persia, along with tens of thousands of other evacuated Polish women and children they were fed, clothed and given medical care by the occupying British forces before being moved to the most unlikely of destinations, British colonial Africa. Anna's description of her arrival in Africa conveys her sense of helplessness and hopelessness at her prolonged and seemingly endless exile.

Barbara was thirteen years old when she arrived in Africa with her mother and older sister. They too had been deported and survived two long and difficult years in Kazakhstan without Barbara's father, Lwów's Chief Commissioner of Police, whom the Soviets had arrested and imprisoned. They were all released under the amnesty. Barbara's father joined the

¹ Anna Wiciak-Suchnicka, *Drewniane Motyle: Wspomnienie (wojna, wygnanie, osiedlenie)*, London, Veritas Foundation Publication Centre, 1987, p. 200.

² Barbara Porajska, *From the Steppes to the Savannah*, Port Erin, Ham Publishing, 1988, p. 102.

Polish army forming in the Soviet Union and he and his family were evacuated to Persia. Her father left for Iraq with the army while Barbara, her sister and mother found themselves in Africa. In contrast to Anne's sombre mood, Barbara's description of the train journey from the port of Mombasa in Kenya to the family's destination in Uganda tingles with excitement and promise.

Anna and Barbara were just two of an estimated sixty million Europeans uprooted by the Second World War.³ Displacement took many forms. People took flight ahead of advancing armies. They fled in every direction to wherever they believed there was greater safety than at home.⁴ Some fled from one part of the country to another, from city to city or from cities to the countryside. Others crossed borders, leaving behind not only home but also homeland. However, it was state policies of forced population movement that accounted for the vast majority of the displaced. Both Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia used population displacement as a weapon of war, a means of achieving political, economic and military goals.

Under the terms of the August 1939 German-Soviet Non Aggression Treaty, Hitler and Stalin divided Eastern Europe between them. In the Polish lands newly incorporated into the Reich, expulsions of Poles, Jews and Gypsies ran parallel with plans for the 'voluntary' resettlement of millions of *Volksdeutsche* from Eastern Europe (Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic states, Romania).⁵ The German foreign labour programme would later bring millions of workers, male and female, from all over Europe to Germany.⁶ At the end of the war, almost eight million French, Russian, Polish, Belgian, Dutch, Czech, Yugoslav, Italian and Baltic foreign workers, slave labourers, liberated prisoners of war and concentration camps inmates were displaced in Germany alone.⁷ In the Polish territories annexed by the Soviet Union, deportations of 'anti-Soviet elements' during the first twenty-one months of the war saw hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens (Poles, Jews, Ukrainians and Byelorussians) forcibly

³ Malcolm J. Proudfoot, *European Refugees: 1939-1952, A Study of Forced Population Movement*, Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1956, p. 21.

⁴ For example between 200,000 and 300,000 Jews are estimated to have fled eastward from Western and Central Poland ahead of the German advance. See Maciej Siekierski, 'The Jews in Soviet-Occupied Eastern Poland at the end of 1939: Numbers and Distribution', in Norman Davies and Antony Polonsky (eds.), *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939-1946*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1991, pp. 110-115; Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, p. 35.

⁵ Christopher R. Browning, 'Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941', *German Studies Review*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1986, p. 502.

⁶ Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War*, London, Vintage Books, 2011, pp. 11-29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

removed to the Soviet interior.⁸ Following the Soviet invasion of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuanian, tens of thousands of Balts met with the same fate.⁹ The scale of population displacement during the war was unprecedented and massive upheavals continued in its wake as people returned home voluntarily or under population exchange agreements between newly defined states.

The wartime trajectories of some Europeans carried them not only away from home and homeland but also away from Europe. The largest category of people who were displaced from one continent to another were prisoners of war. Over a million Italian prisoners of war were dispersed worldwide to places such as North America, India, and Australia.¹⁰ Refugees too crossed continents to find safety. In 1940, up to six thousand Jewish refugees fled the war in Europe for the Far East having secured transit visas for Japan from the Japanese Consul in Lithuania. They crossed the entire expanse of the Soviet Union by rail, a distance of some five thousand miles, and from Vladivostok sailed for Kobe in Japan, many ending up in Japanese-occupied Shanghai.¹¹ In 1940 and 1941, tens of thousands of Greeks fled first the Italian and then the German invasions of their countries, sailing to the Middle East, where they were maintained by the British military in six refugee camps spread across Syria, Palestine and Egypt.¹² In 1942 twenty thousand Polish deportees who had been evacuated from the Soviet Union to Persia were provided with wartime domicile in British colonial Africa.¹³ These last refugees are the subjects of this study. This thesis will investigate their experience of displacement in Africa to see how they were able to live and give meaning to their lives.

Literature Review

Historians have been slow to engage in the study of refugees. It was not until 1985 that Michael Marrus produced the first major historical work with refugees at its centre.¹⁴ Marrus's work traces the evolution of the refugee phenomenon in Europe beginning in the late

⁸ Stanisław Ciesielski, Grzegorz Hryciuk and Aleksander Srebrakowski (eds.), *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim*, Toruń, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2003, pp. 206-247.

⁹ Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, New York, Central European University Press, 2004, p. 120.

¹⁰ Bob Moore, 'Enforced Diaspora: The Fate of Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War', *War in History*, vol. 22, no. 2, p. 174.

¹¹ Chiune Sugihara, <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/chiune-sugihara>, (accessed 15 April 2017).

¹² Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, pp. 44-46, 95-96.

¹³ Janusz Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego 1942-1950*, Łódź, IPN, 2003, pp. 136-176.

¹⁴ Michael M. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985.

nineteenth century. He is concerned with the movement of refugees into, out of, and across Europe and the impact of that movement on relations between nation states. The development of the European state system, he argues, is inextricably linked to the emergence of mass population displacement, the defining characteristic of modern refugee movements. Some twenty years later, Philip Marfleet called for an end to 'the absence of refugees from most historical work, and the low profile of history in the nascent field of Refugee Studies' arguing that the mass population displacements that are a permanent feature of our contemporary world, need to be understood as historical developments, and that an historical perspective has much to contribute to the current discourse on refugees.¹⁵ This call has been echoed by historians such as Klaus Neumann, Tony Kushner and Peter Gatrell.¹⁶

Over the past decade, the historiography of displacement has grown considerably. Peter Gatrell's recent global history on the making of the modern refugee pursues many central themes of refugee studies, promoting the concept of 'refugeedom' as an interdisciplinary matrix for interrogating the 'problem' of refugees outside national frameworks.¹⁷ Others such as Daniel Cohen, Anna Holian, Ben Shephard and Tara Zahra have focussed on European population displacement in relation to the Second World War, documenting and interpreting the huge wartime and post war flows of people into and out of Germany, the social and political worlds of DP camps, the impact on national and international relations of millions of people 'out of place', the birth of international humanitarianism, and the rebuilding of the lives of lost children.¹⁸ Then there are histories of places such as that by Adam Seipp of the small German farm town of Wildflecken, the site of

¹⁵ Philip Marfleet, 'Refugees and History: Why we must address the past', *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2007, p. 136.

¹⁶ Klaus Neumann, *Refuge Australia: Australia's Humanitarian Record*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2004; Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006; Peter Gatrell, 'Population displacement in the Baltic regions in the twentieth century: from "refugee studies" to refugee history', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, March 2007, pp. 43-60.

¹⁷ Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Other works include, Peter Gatrell, 'Population displacement in the Baltic regions', pp. 43-60; Peter Gatrell, 'Introduction: World Wars and Population Displacement in Europe in the Twentieth Century', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 16, no. 4, November 2007, pp. 415-426; Peter Gatrell, 'Displacing and Re-placing Population in the Two world Wars: Armenia and Poland Compared', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 16, no. 4, November 2007, pp. 511-527; Peter Gatrell, 'Refugees - What's Wrong with History?', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2016, pp. 170-189; Peter Gatrell, 'Refugees and Refugee Studies', *Nationalities Papers, The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, August 2017, pp. 1-10; Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron (eds.), *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands 1935-1950*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

¹⁸ Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012; Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in post war Germany*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2011; Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home*; Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's families after World War II*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2011.

multiple comings and goings of armies and displaced persons during the Second World War.¹⁹

Scholarship on population displacement has recently taken a transnational or global turn as historians acknowledge the limitations of viewing this subject solely through a national lens.²⁰ Paradoxically, it has also been lamented that 'far too many insights about individual refugee crises and responses remain packed away in national boxes, where they are inaccessible to all but a handful of specialists'.²¹ This study set out to remove a particular refugee episode from its nationalist box and in the process discovered a transnational history.

A review of the literature directly relevant to this thesis begins with scholarship published in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when the fall of communism and the restoration of Poland as an independent and democratic state led to a surge of historical enquiry into the Second World War, the Soviet invasion and annexation of Eastern Poland and the displacement of large sections of the Polish population eastward through military capture, conscription, civilian arrest and mass deportation.²² Of the substantive body of literature covering these events, studies by Jan T. Gross and Katherine R. Jolluck are particularly relevant to my research as they cover the first of several displacement experiences of the Poles who would end up in Africa, and their work is primarily based on testimonies of people who experienced this displacement. Both historians made extensive use of the archival

¹⁹ Adam R. Seipp, *Strangers in the Wild Place: Refugees, Americans and a German Town, 1945-1952*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013.

²⁰ Pamela Ballinger, 'Impossible Returns, Enduring Legacies: Recent Historiography of Displacement and the Reconstruction of Europe after World War II', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2013, p. 128.

²¹ Matthew Frank and Jessica Reinisch, 'Refugees and the Nation-State in Europe, 1919-1959', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2014, pp. 479. Further on international history see Jessica Reinisch, 'Introduction: Agents of Internationalism', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2016, pp. 195-205.

²² Daniel Boćkowski, *Czas nadziei: Obywatele Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w ZSRR i opieka nad nimi placówek polskich w latach 1940-1943*, Warszawa, Neriton, 1999; Anna M. Cienciała, Natalia S. Lebedeva and Wojciech Materski, *Katyn: A Crime without Punishment*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007; Stanisław Ciesielski, *Polacy w Kazachstanie w latach 1940-1946: zesłańcy lat wojny*, Wrocław, W Kolorach Tęczy, Wrocław, 1997; Stanisław Ciesielski, Grzegorz Hryciuk, Aleksander Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje radzieckie w okresie II wojny światowej*, Wrocław, Prace Historyczne, 1994; Stanisław Ciesielski, Wojciech Materski i Andrzej Paczkowski, *Represje sowieckie wobec Polaków i obywateli polskich*, Warszawa, Ośrodek Karta, 2000; Albin Głowacki, 'Jeńcy polscy w ZSSR, wrzesień 1939 – lipiec 1941', *Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny*, 1992, no. 3; Albin Głowacki, 'O deportacji osadników wojskowych w głąb ZSSR (w świetle materiałów NKWD)', *Mars*, 1994, vol. 2, pp. 111-144; Albin Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec Polaków na ziemiach wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1939-1941*, Łódź, 1998; Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*, 2nd edn., Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002; Aleksander Gurjanow, *Cztery deportacje 1940-41*, Warszawa, Karta, no. 12, 1994, pp. 114-136; Katherine R. Jolluck, *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union During World War II*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002; Julian Siedlecki, *Losy Polaków w ZSSR w latach 1939-1986*, London, Gryf Publications, 1987; Keith Sword (ed.), *The Soviet Takeover of the Polish Eastern Provinces, 1939-41*, London, Macmillan, 1991; Keith Sword, *Deportation and Exile: Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939-1948*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1994; Piotr Żaroń, *Ludność polska w Związku Radzieckim w czasie II wojny światowej*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990; Zbigniew Żaroń, *Wojenne losy ludności polskiej na obczyźnie w latach 1939-1947*, Warszawa-London, Unicorn, 1994.

holdings of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, California, which contain tens of thousands of personal testimonies written in response to a series of questionnaires that men, women and children were asked to complete upon evacuation from the Soviet Union to Persia. This information was gathered by the Documentation Division of the Polish Army in Exile and is a unique first-hand record of the personal experiences of the deportees both under occupation and in exile.

Gross's landmark study of the experience of ordinary people of the Soviet seizure of power and the imposition of totalitarian rule remains unsurpassed in its description and analysis from the 'bottom up' of developments in Eastern Poland in the first twenty-one months of the war. The subjects of this thesis, Polish refugees in Africa, experienced the sovietisation of which Gross writes at first hand. They were participants in a new and lawless world, an unpredictable and fearful world, where as Gross posits, the public realm was privatized and state authority was administered through the pursuit of private interests. The simple tool of denunciation made everyone simultaneously powerful and vulnerable, subjects of a state of pervasive and random terror.²³ Gross's study covers the destruction wrought upon people and society by Soviet programmes of imprisonment and deportation. He details the four mass deportations that took place in 1940 and 1941 removing hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens to the Soviet Far North, Siberia and Central Asia, including the Poles who were to be refugees in Africa.²⁴

Jolluck has contributed to the scholarship on women's experiences of war arguing that the idea of war as a struggle between two military forces is a myth which denies the reality of women's central involvement. 'Experiences of deportation, forced labour, rape, struggling to keep children alive, and maintaining one's identity in the face of attempts to erase it are not incidental to war, but ... integral to its full story'.²⁵ In her study of Polish women deported to the Soviet Union, Jolluck observes that the lives of the deportees bore little resemblance to those in interwar Poland. Instead of family homes they were crowded into communal living spaces with strangers. The role of breadwinner was now a joint responsibility, with women as well as men required to work long hours at physically demanding jobs in forests, mines and on farms so as to earn meagre food rations for themselves and their children.²⁶ In Polish society, gender roles were steeped in tradition, history and religious belief. A woman's place

²³ Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, pp. 116-122.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-224.

²⁵ Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*, p. xiv.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-43, 85-86, 139-141.

was in the home as wife and mother. Jolluck argues that the loss of home and the imperative of work challenged the sacredness of the family unit and the deportees' sense of self.²⁷

Jolluck is primarily concerned with identity, with the multiple threats to identity presented by a life in exile, and the reactions and transformations which occur in response to these threats. She argues that deported women employed the intertwined concepts of gender and nationality to make sense of what was happening to them and to maintain their 'Polishness'. They differentiated themselves from 'others', refusing to fit in with foreigners, defined by ethnicity and religion as different and inferior. Jolluck argues that Polish women emerged from Soviet exile with a strengthened belief in the God-ordained natural order of things and renewed commitment to fulfilling the traditional female role in the home and in society.²⁸

The scholarship on the Poles who in 1942 were evacuated from the Soviet Union to Iran follows the trail of the Anders' Army, recounting its adventures and exploits.²⁹ By contrast, the civilians, mainly women and children, who were evacuated from the Soviet Union with the army have received little scholarly attention. It appears that wartime civilian evacuees granted domicile in Iran, Africa, India, Mexico and New Zealand do not fit well into Poland's heroic national history. Though memoirs and autobiographies have been written, photographic albums have been published, and oral histories have been recorded, it has often been left to the refugees themselves to document their experience.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 91-98.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 217-219, 242-244, 276-278.

²⁹ Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope: The Anders Army, An Odyssey Across Three Continents*, Osprey Publishing, 2015; Halik Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2012; Harvey Sarner, *General Anders and the Soldiers of the Second Polish Corps*, Cathedral City CA, Brunswick Press, 1998; Melchior Wańkowicz, *Bitwa o Monte Casino*, Warszawa, Prószyński i S-ka, 2009; Zbigniew Wawer, *Armia Generała Władysława Andersa w ZSSR 1941-1942*, Warszawa, Bellona SA, 2012; Piotr Żaroń, *Armia Andersa*, Toruń, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 1996. See also Michael Peszke, 'An Introduction to English-Language Literature on the Polish Armed Forces in World War II,' *The Journal of Military History*, vol. 70, no. 4, 2006, pp. 1029-1064.

³⁰ Maryon Allbrook and Helen Cattalini, *The General Langfitt Story: Polish Refugees Recount their Experiences of Exile, Dispersal and Resettlement*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1995; Irena Beaupré-Stankiewicz, Danuta Waszczuk-Kamieniecka and Jadwiga Lewicka-Howells (eds.), *Isfahan: City of Polish Children*, 3rd edn., Hove, Sussex, Association of Former Pupils of Polish Schools, Isfahan and Lebanon, 1989; Leszek Beldowski et al. (eds.), *Polacy w Indiach, 1942-1948, w świetle dokumentów i wspomnień*, 2nd edn., Warszawa, Kolo Polaków z Indii, 2002; Anuradha Bhattacharjee, *The Second Homeland: Polish Refugees in India*, Los Angeles-New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2012; Alfons Jacewicz, *Santa Rosa: Osiedle polskie w Meksyku*, Londyn, Veritas, 1965; Agnieszka Leliński, 'Uchodźcy polscy w Iranie w latach 1942-1945', *Przegląd Polonijny*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, vol. 19, no. 1, 1993, pp. 69-92; Krystyna Skwarko, *The Invited: The Story of 733 Polish Children who grew up in New Zealand*, Wellington, Millwood Press, 1974.

The leading authority on the civilian evacuees is Polish historian, Janusz Wróbel, who began publishing on this topic in the early 1990s.³¹ His 2003 book, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego 1942-1950* (Polish Exiles from the Soviet Union 1942-1950), published by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, remains the definitive text on the subject. A separate chapter is devoted to each of the countries to which the evacuees were transferred including a chapter on Africa. Wróbel gives an overview of the political and institutional aspects of the Polish Government-in-exile's involvement in the administration of the refugee camps in Africa. His sources are predominantly Polish government records and publications by Polish government officials. Though the Public Records Office (PRO) London is listed as an archival source, British records are seldom cited. Neither is the African context explored, with little information provided about the political, economic or social background of African host territories. Finally, the refugee perspective is largely absent from Wróbel's work. Nevertheless, his scholarship on the topic of the Polish evacuees from the Soviet Union and their worldwide dispersal remains highly important and includes a detailed and comprehensive account of the political and administrative aspects of the sojourn of Polish refugees on African soil. It provides a solid base for further examination of the topic.

A number of historians have focussed on the plight of the children evacuated from the Soviet Union.³² The standard depiction is of children's lost innocence and stolen childhood as a result of deportation and confinement in the Soviet Union. The literature focuses on the efforts of the Polish Government-in-exile to provide the children with a Polish upbringing, to educate and train them to be loyal Polish citizens, and to prepare them for taking an active part in the reconstruction of Poland after the war. A recent article by Ewa Stańczyk interrogates the stereotype of passive victimhood as applied to children and their experiences

³¹ Elżbieta Wróbel and Janusz Wróbel, *Rozproszeni po świecie: Obozy i osiedla uchodźców polskich ze Związku Sowieckiego 1942-1950*, Chicago, 1992; Janusz Wróbel, 'Z dziejów polskiego uchodźstwa w Rodezji Północnej (Zambii) w okresie II wojny światowej', *Przegląd Polonijny*, 1993, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 133-45; Janusz Wróbel, 'Wojenne losy ludności cywilnej ewakuowanej z ZSRR w 1942', *Przegląd Polonijny*, 1995, no. 5, pp. 200-210; Janusz Wróbel, 'Polacy w Afryce Wschodniej i Południowej 1941-1950', *Zeszyty Historyczne*, Paryż, 1996, no. 115, pp. 73-121; Janusz Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*; Janusz Wróbel and Joanna Żelazko (eds.), *Polskie dzieci na tułaczym szlakach 1939-1950*, Warszawa, IPN, 2008.

³² Tadeusz Bugaj, *Dzieci polskie w krajach pozaeuropejskich 1939-1949*, Jelenia Góra, Karkonoskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1984; Witold Chmielewski, 'Szkolnictwo polskie w Afryce środkowo-wschodniej i południowej podczas II wojny światowej', *Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy*, vol. 51, no. 3-4, 2008, pp. 61-74; Witold Chmielewski, 'Działalność wydawnicza polskich władz oświatowych na uchodźstwie w latach 1940-1945', *Przegląd Historyczno-Oświatowy*, vol. 56, no. 1-2, 2013, pp. 5-16; Marek Ney-Krwawicz, *Na pięciu kontynentach: Polskie dzieci, młodzież i szkoły na tułaczym szlakach 1939-1950*, Warszawa, Muzeum Wojska Polskiego, 2014; B. Pancewicz, *Harcerstwo w Afryce: 1941-1949*, Londyn, Harcerska Komisja Historyczna, 1985; Janusz Wróbel and Joanna Żelazko (eds.), *Polskie dzieci na tułaczym szlakach 1939-1950*, Warszawa, IPN, 2008.

of war and displacement.³³ Using the memoirs and reminiscences of Polish children in exile in Persia, India, Africa, New Zealand and Mexico, Stańczyk argues that children were not passive victims but active agents 'able to build peaceful, happy environments away from home often with the help of local populations'.³⁴ The question of children's experiences of displacement in Africa continues to be of interest to scholars.

Lynne Taylor's work also focuses on Polish children, in particular, on a group of orphans who migrated from Africa to Canada.³⁵ In addition to the extensive use of British, Canadian, UNRRA and IRO archives, Taylor interviewed a number of surviving 'children' who shared with her their personal experiences of deportation and displacement. The use not only of official archives but also of oral histories giving voice to the refugees themselves is a distinguishing feature of Taylor's work. What emerges is quite a different view of camp life than that recorded by Polish authorities 'from above', or indeed from that found in memoirs written by 'children' who were not orphans. The harsh discipline of the orphanages and the feeling of 'always being hungry' are stronger memories than going to school or being a scout. The breaching of the camp boundary and participating in life on 'the other side' are also revealed to be part of the everyday lives of teenage boys who had learned to be independent and distrusting of authority as survival techniques in the Soviet Union. This is a unique view into an 'orphan' world of overwhelming loss and seemingly endless challenges. Taylor's study is mainly concerned with the period after the war, when the Poles in Africa were faced with the unenviable task of choosing whether or not to return to Poland. She examines the entanglement of the IRO, the Polish Government, the colonial authorities, Catholic clergy and Polish camp officials in the drama that unfolded over the fate of the Tengeru orphans.

A different approach has been taken by Anna Hejczyk, who has recently written an illustrated social history of one of the camps, Tengeru in Tanganyika, based on interviews and material evidence collected worldwide by the Centrum Dokumentacji Zsyłek, Wypędzeń i Przesiedleń Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego w Krakowie (Centre for the Documentation of Deportations, Expulsions and Resettlements at the Teacher Training University in Krakow).³⁶ Oral history and secondary literature are the bases of this study with little use of official

³³ Ewa Stańczyk, 'Exilic Childhood in Very Foreign Lands: Memoirs of Polish Refugees in World War II', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 2017, pp. 1-14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁵ Lynne Taylor, *Polish Orphans of Tengeru: The Dramatic Story of Their Long Journey to Canada 1941-49*, Toronto, Dundurn Press, 2009. This work has been translated into Polish. See Lynne Taylor, *Polskie sieroty z Tergeru: od Syberii przez Afrykę do Kanady 1941-1949*, Poznań, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, 2010.

³⁶ Anna Hejczyk, *Sybiracy pod Kilimandżaro: Tengeru, Polskie osiedle w Afryce Wschodniej we wspomnieniach jego mieszkańców*, Rzeszów-Kraków, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej i Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny im. Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Krakowie, 2013.

archival sources. Nevertheless as a study of everyday life in the microcosm of one camp it is a welcome contribution to scholarship in this field.

Historians have begun to address the issue of the ethnic diversity of the refugee population in Africa.³⁷ The majority of Polish citizens forcefully removed to the Soviet Union were ethnic Poles. However ethnic Poles were a minority population in Eastern Poland where they were outnumbered by Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Jews all of whom, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, were swept up in the forced removals. The ethnic minorities were recruited to Anders' army and were evacuated to Persia with their families, despite disputed Polish recruitment practices and shifting Soviet definitions of who was and was not a Polish citizen. The literature on the Byelorussians in Africa foregrounds the way in which nationalist politics and troubled relations between ethnic Poles and ethnic Byelorussians of Orthodox faith in interwar Poland resurfaced in the refugee camps.³⁸ However, scholarship on ethnic Ukrainian civilians evacuated to Persia and moved to Africa has not been located during the course of this research despite this ethnic groups was represented in the Anders' army and their families being eligible for evacuation.³⁹ There also appears to be an absence of scholarship on the Polish Jewish deportees who became refugees in Africa though primary sources testify to their presence there.

Polish historians have produced most of the scholarship on Polish refugees in Africa. However, historians of and from Africa have also engaged with this topic. African scholars are not concerned with administration of the camps or the ways in which the Polish government cared for children in exile, but with relations between the refugees and their hosts, both British colonial and African. Samwiri Lwanga-Lunyiigo examines the presence of Polish refugees in Africa during the Second World War in the context of the history of

³⁷ Davies, *Trail of Hope*, pp. 258 - 263.

³⁸ J. Grzybowski, 'Białorusini wśród uchodźców polskich na Środkowym Wschodzie i w Afryce Wschodniej w latach II wojny światowej', *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, Warszawa, 2005, vol. 2, no. 8, pp. 329-345; Antoni Mironowicz, 'Przyczynek do dziejów polskiego prawosławnego duszpasterstwa cywilnego na emigracji w czasie II wojny światowej', *Studia Polonijne*, vol. 30, Lublin, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL & Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, 2009, pp. 205-213; Antoni Mironowicz, *Książd Michał Bożeranow i jego odpowiedź "Ludziom Małym"*, Białystok, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2015; Antoni Mironowicz, 'Białorusini na Bliskim Wschodzie wobec spraw polskich w latach 1941-1945 w świetle pism ks. Michała Bożerianowa', *Humanities and Social Sciences Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 22/2, 2015, pp. 63-86.

³⁹ The actual number of ethnic Ukrainians recruited into Anders' army remains highly contested. See Paweł Gotowiecki and Jakub Żak, 'Nierozwiązany problem, kwestia udziału Ukraińców w walkach 2 Korpusu Polskiego w Włoszech', *VJIK*, 93 (438), 2016; Taras Pylypovych, 'Przyczyny obecności Ukraińców w Armii Polskiej w ZSRR (1941-1942), Armii Polskiej na Wschodzie i 2. Korpusie we Włoszech', *Przegląd Nauk Historycznych*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2014, pp. 243-257.

Uganda as a host and a source of refugees.⁴⁰ His findings present an entirely different view of the Polish refugee experience to that found in the Polish historiography. He interprets the selection of remote locations for the Polish camps as an intentional move on the part of colonial authorities to isolate the refugees from the centres of population as 'an inferior type of white person'. In Lwanga-Lunyiigo's view, this plan failed spectacularly due to the attitude and actions of the refugees, which included engaging in inter-racial sexual relations. In his opinion, the Poles, though white, were not racist and 'saw Africans simply as human beings'.⁴¹

Peter Mwangi Kagwana traces the development of the phenomenon of refugees in British East Africa over the period of the twentieth century.⁴² One of his case studies from the colonial era is that of Polish refugees during the Second World War. He looks through the lens of race and ethnicity at the ways in which the refugees were governed and finds that the desire of colonial authorities to maintain power, prestige and privilege took precedence over humanitarian concerns in determining refugee policies and practices. Mwangi Kagwana describes the Polish refugees who were women, children, and the elderly and disabled, as presenting a 'triple challenge' to British authorities 'related to the fact that they constituted an extraordinary ensemble of femininity, infantility and infirmity'.⁴³ He argues that it was this perceived triple threat that determined where the refugees would be settled and how they would be governed.⁴⁴ A number of articles⁴⁵ have also appeared focussing on the African territory of Southern Rhodesia (today's Zimbabwe) as a host territory for Polish refugees. They examine the racial underpinning of the territory's treatment of refugees from an administrative, propaganda and immigration perspective and conclude, that Southern Rhodesia's post war immigration policy discriminated strongly against Poles who sought to permanently settle in the territory.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Samwiri Lwanga-Lunyiigo, 'Uganda's Long Connection with the Problem of Refugees: From the Polish Refugees of World War II to the Present' in A. G. G. Gingyera-Pincwa (ed.), *Uganda and the Problem of Refugees*, Kampala, Makerere University Press, 1998.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴² Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, *Unwanted in the 'White Highlands': The Politics of Civil Society and the Making of a Refugee, 1902-2002*, PhD Thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2003.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

⁴⁵ Obert Chigume and Joshua Chakawa, 'Media Weapon: An Analysis of how the Rhodesian Government used the Media to Handle the Polish Refugee Issue from 1940 to 1950', *The Dyke*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2014, pp. 93-107; Alois, S. Mlambo, 'Some are more white than others': Racial Chauvinism as a Factor of Rhodesian Immigration Policy, 1890-1963', *Zambezia*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2000, pp. 139-160; Martin R. Rupiah, 'The History of the Establishment of Internment Camps and Refugee Settlements in Southern Rhodesia, 1938-1952', *Zambezia*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1995, pp. 137-152; Baxter Tavuyanago, Muguti Tasara and James Hlongwana, 'Victims of the Rhodesian Immigration Policy: Polish Refugees from the Second World War', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 38, no. 4, December 2012, pp. 951 - 965.

The extant literature incorporates the study of Polish refugees in Africa into a wider study of Polish exiles. It is primarily written by historians of and from Poland in the Polish language and views this episode of displacement through a nationalist lens focussing on the political and institutional aspects of the Polish Government-in-exile's role in creating 'oases of Polishness' in the refugee camps in Africa.⁴⁶ The literature specifically on Polish refugees in Africa is mostly concerned with the lives of children in exile and the efforts of the Polish government to train them to be loyal Polish citizens through its educational institutions and organisations. Primary sources used in the writing of all of the above are almost exclusively those held in official Polish government archives. Taylor considerably broadened the source base to include oral histories of former child refugees plus the archives of international organisations and governments thus adding a totally new perspective to this history. Hers is also the only English-language study. Although Hejczyk's work is a micro-history of one of the camps, it is based primarily on the memories of people who were child refugees thus indirectly making this study about children too. In summary, the Polish Government-in-exile's role in the political and administrative structure that governed the camps and the theme of the Poles as a nation in exile are well covered in the literature. There is a strong emphasis on children in the scholarship, either because they are the focus of the research itself or because they are the primary source base.

There are two distinct areas that have been under-researched. The first area relates to the refugees themselves. The largest demographic group making up almost half of the population in the camps were women. The focus in the literature on the children has relegated women to the background, leaving their experiences largely unexplored and giving the impression that there were no differences between the way women and children experienced and gave meaning to displacement. The smallest demographic groups in the camps, Byelorussians and Jews have also received little scholarly attention resulting in promotion of an image of national unity in the camps that is open to question. The second under-researched area relates to Africa itself. Although Africa is present as a landscape and a 'zoo', the people of Africa are largely absent and seemingly irrelevant in the scholarship. The nationalist lens has failed to capture the presence and importance of key actors, British colonial and African, in the lives of the Polish refugees. At the time the refugees arrived in Africa, it was a continent on which the British imperial project had politically and economically subjugated large sections of the local populations and introduced hierarchical and racially defined

⁴⁶ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, p. 152.

systems of governance. African historians have raised important issues in relation to Polish-African relations, and the racist and/or discriminatory policies and practices of British colonial authorities towards the refugees which call for further investigation. This thesis places refugees at the centre of the study so as to address the gaps and issues identified in the literature and come to a better understanding of the lived experience of displacement.

Scope

The subjects of this study are twenty thousand Polish citizens who were granted wartime domicile in Africa by British colonial authorities following their evacuation from the Soviet Union to Persia. They, and over three hundred thousand others, had been forcibly removed to the Far North, Siberia and Central Asia after the Soviet invasion and annexation of Eastern Poland. They were evacuated with the Polish army which had formed in the Soviet Union following German aggression against the USSR. The army was assigned to serve with the British in the Middle East: the civilians were an unanticipated 'problem'. They were almost entirely women and children, including orphans and were a cross section of Polish society ranging from professionals to illiterates, the elderly to infants, rural and city dwellers, Catholics, Orthodox and Jews.

Geographically this project is located in sub Saharan Africa within the borders of the British colonial territories of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and the Union of South Africa. The territories encompassed a diversity of political, economic and social structures and were home to a myriad of African cultures. Closely connected through the British imperial project, they adopted a cooperative and largely uniform approach to the maintenance and control of refugees.

The period under examination spans almost a decade from 1942 when the first group of Polish refugees arrived in Africa by sea from Iran until the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) closed its Nairobi office, leaving a handful of the refugees in British care. The period of displacement in Africa can be divided into two phases. The first phase, during the war, was a building phase when not only huts, schools, hospitals and churches were constructed but also communities of people. It was the period when the Polish government in exile had a role in the administration of the camps under colonial control and the refugees lived in the belief they would return to a liberated and free Poland. The second phase covers the period after the war when the Polish Government-in-exile was no longer recognised by the

Allies and the refugees found themselves under the administration of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and then the IRO, urged by colonial authorities to leave and by the communist Warsaw government to repatriate.

Sources

This research draws upon a wide range of both archival and published sources, in English and Polish. Material concerning the British and colonial governments' activities has been drawn predominantly from the files of the Foreign Office (FO) and Colonial Office (CO) in The National Archives (TNA), Kew. The equivalent information for the Polish government in exile and Polish authorities on the ground in Africa was located in the Archive of Modern Records (AAN), Warsaw, primarily in the files of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MPiOS) of the Government of the Republic of Poland (in exile) London. I regret being unable to carry out research in the national archives of the African territories which hosted the refugees, where the work of historians from Africa has indicated there are additional relevant holdings.

Material in the British and Polish national archives was used extensively to construct a comprehensive picture of the framework within which British, Polish and colonial governments operated in regard to refugee policy and administration. Minutes of meetings of the East Africa Governors' Conference, and the Directors of Refugees in the territories, as well as monthly reports by Polish school inspectors, doctors and priests, all yielded detailed information about the everyday lives of the refugees and the inner workings of the camps, sometimes in surprising detail. Meal menus, instances of fires and earthquakes, rates of pay, births and deaths, YMCA programmes, and much more information is contained in these archives. Finally, the archives of the IRO at the Archives Nationales (AN) in Paris were the source base for the period after the war when for over four years the IRO maintained the refugees in Africa and strove to resettle them overseas.

The holdings of the archives of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (PISM) in London which contain files on the African camps, were also included in the primary research pool. These provide a picture of daily life in the camps with chronicles, histories, concert programmes, reports and correspondence written by various officials and camp residents. The holdings include photographs of various activities in the camps, and children's school work - poetry, essays and drawings. The British Library (BL), London, and the National Library

(BN), Warsaw, provided access to English-language and Polish-language newspapers published in the 1940s in Nairobi, Kenya.

Published memoirs and oral histories are important historical tools for reconstructing the lives of 'ordinary' people and were used in this project in addition to official archival material. The voices of refugees who are the subjects of this study are heard in these sources and offer insight into the subjective experience of displacement. They act as a counterpoint to the voice of authority found in political and administrative records, and are concerned more with creating meaning than revealing facts.⁴⁷ The oral histories of some of the Poles who experienced the refugee camps in Africa are available from a number of sources.⁴⁸ Paul Sendziuk's work is particularly relevant as all of his interviewees were refugees in Africa, though it is also limited in that interviewees recall whole life stories of which Africa features as a relatively small part. This limitation together with the ready availability and accessibility of former Polish refugees from Africa in my home town, led me to conduct a small oral history project focused exclusively on the experience of displacement in Africa. Participants were recruited from the *Kolo Sybiraków* (Polish Siberian Group) in Western Australia of which I was an associate member. Ten women and two men, aged in their eighties, agreed to take part. The participants were invited to describe their experiences of the material and social world of the refugee camps during a semi-structured interview based on open-ended questions (see Appendix). The oral history project provided the opportunity to hear personal accounts and impressions and to engage in conversation pursuing particular lines of enquiry with former refugees on everyday matters not always deemed interesting or important enough to be included in memoirs. Memoirs of former refugees who were adults in Africa are scarce. The same applies for oral histories. Unfortunately, this is a gap that cannot now be filled. The available oral sources mostly give voice to one section of the refugee population, children.

⁴⁷ See Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, London, Routledge, 1998, pp. 63-74. Also Paula S. Fass, 'The Memoir Problem', *Reviews in American History*, vol. 34, no. 1, March 2005, pp. 107-123; Anna Wylegała, 'Between Biographical Experience and Social Construction of Memory: The Oldest Generation of Poles on the Soviet Occupation and the Soviets', in Anna Wolff-Powęska and Piotr Forecki (eds.), *World War II and Two Occupations: Dilemmas of Polish Memory*, trans. Marta Skowrońska and Blanka Zahorjanova, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang Edition, 2016, pp. 95-115.

⁴⁸ Paul Sendziuk, *Stalin's Poles Oral History Project* [sound recordings], National Library of Australia, 2009. This project includes sixteen interviews with former Polish refugees in Africa recorded in Australia. Some are available [online](#). Other sources for oral histories include: [Centrum Dokumentacji Zsyłek, Wypędzeń i Przesiedleń](#) Krakow, (video recordings available online); Ośrodek KARTA, Archiwum Wschodnie, Warsaw; Kresy Siberia Virtual Museum, [Hall of Testimonies](#) (available online); USC Shoah Foundation, [Visual History Archive Online](#).

A final source of information was photographs. There must have been several avid photographers among the refugees because photographs of the camps and their residents engaged in a wide range of activities abound. Some are highly staged formal photographs while others offer a more relaxed and casual view of camp life. Participants in the oral history project all possessed photographs from Africa and two tomes have been published in recent years by the Fundacja Archiwum Fotograficzne Tułaczy (FAFT) in Warsaw that contain a wealth of visual evidence bearing witness to everyday life in the refugee camps.⁴⁹ One of the areas in which the photographs were particularly informative was in revealing the presence and involvement of the African population in the refugee camps. While there is little evidence in government archives and personal memoirs of the Africans who lived in neighbouring villages or who were employed in the camps, photographs bear witness to their presence and involvement in the lives of the refugees.

Definition of Terms

The terms 'refugee' and 'refugee camp' are commonplace in the contemporary world where 68.5 million people are displaced globally, 25.4 million of them refugees, and non-government relief agencies conduct the business of humanitarian relief on an international scale.⁵⁰ In this thesis the definition of 'refugee' is construed broadly and not confined to particular legal terminologies. There was no universal definition of a refugee in the 1940s. The Covenant of the League of Nations (1919-1946) did not mention refugees, neither did the Atlantic Charter (August 1941) or the UN Declaration (January 1941).⁵¹ The definition of the Geneva Convention relating to the status of Refugees was not formulated until 1951. It states that a refugee is:

'any person who ... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the

⁴⁹ Fundacja Archiwum Fotograficzne Tułaczy (eds.), *Tułacze Dzieci: Exiled Children*, Warszawa, Muza SA, 1995; Fundacja Archiwum Fotograficzne Tułaczy (eds.), *Polska Szkoła na Tułaczyczych Szlakach: Polish Schools along the Exile Trail*, Warszawa, Muza SA, 2004. Fundacja Archiwum Fotograficzne Tułaczy hereafter referred to as FAFT.

⁵⁰ UNHCR, Figures at a Glance, 19 June 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/figures-at-a-glance.html>, (accessed 12 May 2019).

⁵¹ See Jayne Persian, 'Displaced Persons and the Politics of International Categorisation', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2012, pp. 481-496.

country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁵²

Polish citizens forcibly removed to the Soviet Union travelled through categories acquiring different labels with each consecutive displacements. Initially they were prisoners of war, conscripts, arrestees, and deportees. Upon evacuation to Persia they were at first referred to in official British government documents as 'war evacuees'. In mid 1942, due to the increasing number of Poles and Greeks fleeing to the Middle East and the potential risk that they posed to military operations, the British military created the Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration (MERRA) based in Cairo for their administration. From then on, British authorities used the term 'refugees' in relation to civilian Poles in Persia and Africa. The same year, colonial authorities created the East Africa Refugee Administration (EARA), based in Nairobi, which also gave primacy to the term 'refugee'. In the period after the war, UNRRA and the IRO continued to use the term 'refugee' although strictly speaking once registered with these organisations, they became Displaced Persons. The term DP was seldom applied to the Poles in Africa.

The Polish term commonly used in official documents and secondary literature to describe the Poles in Africa is '*uchodźca*'. This can be translated as either 'displaced person, refugee, emigrant, or exile'.⁵³ The most commonly used translation is 'exile'. Another word which appears in the Polish literature on Poles in Africa is '*tulacz*' meaning 'homeless, wandering, exile'.⁵⁴ In terms of self-perception then being 'wanderers in exile' is how the Poles in Africa saw themselves. One of the participants in the oral history project that is part of this project strongly objected to the use of the word 'refugee' to describe herself. It was a word she associated with flight, and stated quite categorically that she had not fled Poland but had been forcibly removed, therefore she was not a refugee.⁵⁵ The word 'refugee' today carries many negative connotations. We might well ask,

What has been done to the word *refugee*? In the beginning the word sounded beautiful. A *refugee* meant 'home'. It welcomed you, protected you gave you warmth and hospitality. Then we added one single phoneme, one letter, *e*,

⁵² UNHCR, Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, A (2), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/3b66c2aa10>, (accessed 12 May 2019).

⁵³ Wiktor Jassem (ed.), *Wielki Słownik Polsko-Angielski*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Wiedza Powszechna, 1982, p. 483

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Patro interviewed by Wanda Warlik, November 2015, Perth, Western Australia.

and the positive term *refuge* became *refugee*, connoting something negative.⁵⁶

This study uses the term 'camps' to describe the places where the refugees were assigned to live. In primary sources of British origin such as colonial reports and official correspondence, the word 'camp' is commonly used, though occasionally, the word 'settlement' appears. For example, in Southern Rhodesia, the title of the person responsible for refugee affairs was the Director of Internment Camps and Refugee Settlements. The norm however was for colonial authorities to use the word 'camp' not 'settlement'. The reverse is true of primary sources of Polish origin where the word '*osiedle*' appears more frequently than the word '*obóz*' in official government and departmental documents. The issue here is not one of translation but of intent. As this study will show, colonial authorities viewed the refugees as a threat to the 'colonial order of things', a threat that needed to be contained and controlled, in camps.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the Polish Government viewed its refugees as 'the nation in exile', a nation that needed to be settled, revived and sustained until returning to the homeland. This difference in the outlook and aims of colonial and Polish authorities is demonstrated throughout this study. In memoirs and oral histories, former refugees use both terms, interchangeably, whether speaking or writing in English or Polish.

The word 'settlement' has a rather general meaning being 'the act of going to live in a new place where few people have lived before, or the place where people have come to live.'⁵⁸ 'Settlement' does not adequately describe either the places where the refugees came to live or the process by which they came to be there. Characteristics such as the lack of choice in deciding where to live, being assigned to live in a place that had a visible boundary and a guarded gate as the only sanctioned point of entry and exit, the requirement to obtain a pass to leave the camp or to be employed outside the camp, the person in charge being called a Camp Commandant and wearing a military uniform, identical housing, food rationing - these are just some of the features that define these places as camps. As this study will show, communities grew within the camps, schools and hospitals and churches were built, and a society resembling that of interwar Poland evolved. However, there is no mistaking that these communities were inside camps. The function of the camp was to contain and control a group

⁵⁶ Eliezer Wiesel, 'The Refugee', in G. MacEoin (ed.), *Sanctuary*, New York, Harper and Row, 1985, p. 10, cited in Emmanuel Marx, 'The Social World of Refugees: A Conceptual Framework', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1990, p. 190.

⁵⁷ The term 'the colonial order of things' is an adaptation of the term 'the national order of things' as used by ethnologist Liisa Malkki in her pioneering work on statelessness and memory among Hutu refugees in Tanzania. See Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

⁵⁸ Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/settlement>, (accessed 1 May 2018).

of people who were temporarily present in a territory and whose place in the social order was indeterminate. They were thus perceived to be a threat, potential disruptors of the 'colonial order of things'. This study argues that the policy of encampment adopted by British colonial authorities had a significant impact on the lived experience of the refugees in Africa that cannot be minimised or sanitised by eschewing the use of the word 'camp'.

The 'camp' has been and continues to be theorised from many different perspectives by countless scholars from multiple disciplines. Reading the literature on 'refugee camps' especially that coming from the nascent field of refugee studies has been a most informative and interesting exercise. This study does not however aim to apply or adopt any one theory to its analysis of the camps for Polish refugees in Africa. If there was one theory that informed my thinking more than others it is that of Erving Goffman on total institutions.⁵⁹ For Goffman living in a total institution meant living, working and socialising in the same place, with the same people, at the same time, under the same authority, in accordance with a single overall plan. The parallels with the refugee camps for Poles in Africa are striking.⁶⁰

Finally, the term Siberia is used in this study to denote the specific province in Russia that is east of the Ural Mountains and comprises most of Northern Asia. When placed in parentheses, 'Siberia' is used symbolically to mean 'a place of exile'. The words Persia and Iran are used interchangeably in this study. The Reza Shah Pahlavi as part of his modernisation campaign changed the name of Persia to Iran in 1935. However, during the Second World War the Allies continued to use the name Persia in communications so as to clearly differentiate the two neighbouring countries of Iran and Iraq. In practice both names appear in source documents while the refugees themselves tend to favour the use of the word 'Persia'.

Survey of Chapters

This thesis begins by providing a brief historical background to the origins of the refugees who are the subject of this study and the circumstances under which they came to be displaced. It covers interwar Poland, the beginning of the Second World War and the forced removal of hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens to the Soviet Union, the Polish-Soviet

⁵⁹ Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, London, Penguin, 1991, p. 17.

⁶⁰ For the application of Goffman's theory of the total institution to the DP camps in post war Germany see Tomas Balkelis, 'Living in the Displaced Persons Camp: Lithuanian War Refugees in the West, 1944-54', in Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron, *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-1950*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 25-47.

Agreement under which the Poles were amnestied and a Polish army was formed on Soviet soil, the evacuation of the army and accompanying civilians to British-occupied Iran, and the decision to provide wartime domicile to twenty thousand of the civilian evacuees in British colonial Africa.

Chapter Two focuses on British colonial Africa and the territories that agreed to host the refugees. It examines the motivations and concerns of British colonial authorities in relation to the presence of refugees in their territories, and the policies and practices that were agreed upon to manage the 'problem' of refugees. This chapter interrogates the policy of encampment, identifying it as a core factor in determining the kinds of lives the refugees were able to live and the meanings they gave to their displacement. It further examines the role of the Polish Government-in-exile in the making of these crucial early decisions, and the division of responsibilities for the refugees between these British, colonial and Polish authorities.

The following chapter is the first of three chapters that investigate the ways in which the refugee camps were constructed materially and socially. Chapter Three focuses on the responsibility of colonial authorities for the provision of the essential needs of shelter, food and clothing. It examines the challenges presented to the women, who made up almost half of the population in the camps, in recreating homes and restoring families in the primitive living conditions and confined spaces of the camp.

Chapter Four focuses on policies and practices in relation to employment, health care, and law and order, and identifies the obstacles and opportunities they presented for the refugees to recover a state of physical and psychological well-being. It examines how these policies and practices influenced the society that evolved within the camp, and despite the containment of the camp, the kinds of behaviours and relations that refugees engaged in outside the limits of the camp with a broad cross section of the wider population.

In Chapter Five, the investigation into the material and social construction of the camps concludes with an analysis of educational services, and the place of religion and culture in shaping the lives of the refugees. These areas were the responsibility of Polish authorities who saw their role as leading 'the nation in exile' and keeping the essence of that nation alive through promoting Polish language, history, literature and culture.

Chapter Six covers the period after the war when a policy of 'wait and see' was adopted by many of the refugees as they were faced with the difficult decision of whether to return to a Poland that was not the Poland they had imagined, or remain, as they saw it, in

exile. It examines their absorption into the new international system of refugee care and control, and discusses the factors that influenced their future paths.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the lived experience of displacement in Africa of refugees from Poland. Gaps in the historiography have indicated that there is a need for research into this phenomenon from new perspectives and in new directions. The following chapters take the refugee perspective and focus on the institution of the camp to illustrate the specificity and complexity of refugee life and the multiple meanings that can be ascribed to displacement. We begin with a survey of the multiple displacements that led to Africa.

Chapter 1 **Historical Background**

A study of how refugees experience displacement, in this case refugees from Poland in British colonial Africa, begins with knowing something of the place from which they came, and the circumstances of their removal. The purpose of this chapter is to provide that background. It is ordered chronologically and divided into four parts. The first part briefly reviews the political, economic and social situation in Poland in the two decades prior to the Second World War with particular reference to Eastern Poland. Part two focuses on the Second World War and the forced removal of hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens from Eastern Poland to the Soviet Union. The third part of this chapter covers the amnesty and evacuation of Poles from the Soviet Union to Allied-occupied Persia in 1942. It examines the motivation of British authorities in deciding to move the evacuees out of Persia to Africa. Finally, this chapter traces the refugees' journey from Persia to Africa via India, focussing on their experience of and responses to British military care and control.

Interwar Poland⁶¹

The refugees in Africa were citizens of the Second Polish Republic (1918-1939). This Republic, invaded by Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939 was a fledgling state. It had rise from the ruins of the First World War and the collapse of the three European empires that had partitioned and ruled over the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1563-1795) for over a hundred years.⁶² The Second Polish Republic's borders were highly contested. Numerous plebiscites were held and wars fought before its final lines were drawn. The war over the eastern border was perhaps the most contentious as the battle there was the latest manifestation of a centuries-old struggle between Poland and Russia over control of the lands that lay between them.

The Polish-Bolshevik War (1919-1920) was fought on and over the *kresy*, the broad sweep of land that extends from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south,

⁶¹ Unless otherwise footnoted, the information in this section is based on Norman Davies, *God's Playground A History of Poland Volume II, 1795 to the Present*, rev. edn., New York, Columbia University Press, 2005, pp. 291-321; and Peter D. Stachura, *Poland, 1918-1945, An Interpretive and Documentary History of the Second Republic*, London, Routledge, 2004.

⁶² Anna Grzeskowiak-Krwawicz, *Queen Liberty: The Concept of Freedom in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, Leiden, Brill, 2012.

through modern day Lithuania, Byelorussia and Ukraine.⁶³ The word *kresy* is more than a geographical designation.⁶⁴ It refers to the historical and cultural heartland of Poland during the era of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and was particularly dear to the Second Republic's Commander-in-Chief, Józef Piłsudski, who dreamed of uniting these lands into a federation of independent states capable of resisting Soviet expansion. The Bolsheviks on the other hand saw the *kresy* as their land link to Europe, 'the bridge over which the Revolution would have to march if it was to spread and survive.'⁶⁵ The Battle for Warsaw, in which the Red Army was 'miraculously' defeated was the decisive battle of the war. The Soviets sued for peace and agreement was reached on the new Polish-Soviet border in the Treaty of Riga. The border was drawn neither as far east as Piłsudski desired nor as far west as the Soviets wished. The *kresy* remained a contested space. The humiliating defeat at Warsaw was not forgotten by the Soviet leadership. Stalin was the Red Army's Commissar on the South-West (Ukrainian) front during the decisive battle for Warsaw and his military decisions were considered to have contributed to the loss. He resigned his post in protest over criticism of his performance by his superiors, including Lenin.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, pandemonium reigned on the Polish political stage. Representatives of almost a hundred different parties stood for election to the first parliament in 1919 and coalitions formed and fell apart with alarming speed.⁶⁷ Parliamentary instability, factionalism and radicalism were the norms of political life. By the end of 1920, the country had sworn in its fifth Prime Minister and in 1922 the first freely elected President was assassinated. The nation lacked a common and unifying vision for the future. Instead, two opposing visions were tearing it apart. One was a nationalist vision of 'Poland for the Poles' espoused by Roman Dmowski and the National Democrats. The other was a vision of a pluralist Poland, a multi-ethnic nation of loyal Polish citizens, inspired by the Polish Commonwealth era and championed by Piłsudski.⁶⁸ By 1925, Piłsudski, frustrated by lack of economic and social progress, and concerned at the growing influence of the political right, staged a military coup

⁶³ For a comprehensive account of the Polish-Bolshevik War see Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War 1919-1920 and 'The Miracle on the Vistula'*, London, Pimlico, 2003.

⁶⁴ For recent historical scholarship on the *kresy* see Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2003; Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003.

⁶⁵ Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star*, p. 29.

⁶⁶ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, London, Vintage Books, 2011, p. 7.

⁶⁷ Robert E. Alvis, *White Eagle, Black Madonna: One Thousand Years of the Polish Catholic Tradition*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2016, p. 193.

⁶⁸ Davies, *God's Playground*, pp. 38-45; Waław Jędrzejewicz, *Piłsudski: A Life for Poland*, New York, Hippocrene Books, 1982; Patrice M. Dąbrowski, 'Uses and Abuses of the Polish Past by Józef Piłsudski and Roman Dmowski', *The Polish Review*, vol. 56, no. 1-2, 2011, pp. 73-109.

that brought parliamentary democracy to its knees and left it there for the remainder of the interwar period. He effectively ruled the country from behind the scenes until his death in 1935, when his *Sanacja* (return to health) regime was inherited by his Generals.

Piłsudski championed the *osadnictwo wojskowe*, a soldier settlement scheme proposed during the Polish-Bolshevik War to fulfil several goals.⁶⁹ Its immediate aim was wartime mobilisation as the Polish Army was outnumbered five to one by Bolshevik forces. In addition, it was a post-war repatriation scheme designed to ease returned soldiers into civilian life. From an economic perspective, it was part of a major overhaul of the agricultural sector based on nationwide land reform. Finally, it aimed to colonise the *kresy*, with its vast tracts of fallow and abandoned land devastated by war, and so secure Poland's eastern border against future threats from the East. The December 1921 parliamentary bill enacting the scheme patriotically passed unanimously and over ninety-nine thousand soldiers lodged applications for land. Nine thousand were successful before the scheme and plans for wider land reform came to a grinding halt.⁷⁰

According to the census of 1921, Poland's population was twenty-seven million, sixty-five per cent of whom were impoverished peasants, working plots of land too small to sustain a single family. At the same time, one per cent of land owners owned fifty per cent of agricultural land.⁷¹ Plans for agricultural reform faltered. Political instability, the dire state of the nation's finances, and the political influence of wealthy estate owners and land owning institutions, combined to frustrate its implementation. In 1939, Poland's population had risen to thirty-five million while the percentage of impoverished peasants was still sixty per cent.⁷² Limited land acquisition and parcellation had a negligible impact on the structure and productivity of the agricultural sector and this in turn hampered the state's overall economic development. Throughout the interwar period, Eastern Poland was referred to as *Polska B*, second class Poland.

Interwar Poland was a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual state. Two thirds of the population were ethnic Poles. The remaining third were Ukrainian (14 per cent), Jewish (9 per cent), Belorussian (3 per cent), German (2 per cent) and other smaller minorities.⁷³ The

⁶⁹ Janina Stobniak-Smogorzewska, *Kresowe Osadnictwo Wojskowe, 1920-1945*, Warszawa, Rytm, 2003; Michał Kacprzak, *Ziemia dla żołnierzy: Problem pozyskania i rozdysponowania gruntów na cele osadnictwa wojskowego na kresach wschodnich 1920-1939*, Łódź, Ibidem, 2009.

⁷⁰ Stobniak-Smogorzewska, *Kresowe osadnictwo wojskowe*, p. 50.

⁷¹ Główny Urząd Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, *Rocznik Statystyczny*, Warszawa, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1930, p. 37.

⁷² Stachura, *Poland, 1918-1945*, p. 46.

⁷³ Davies, *God's Playground*, p. 299.

minorities were concentrated in Eastern Poland where the demographic composition of the population was the reverse of the national picture i.e. ethnic Poles were one third of the population and the national minorities two thirds. In Eastern Poland which had for a hundred and twenty years been part of the Russian Empire, poverty among the national minorities was extreme. By contrast, Polish inhabitants of the *kresy* were traditionally upper and middle class land owners.⁷⁴

Land reform such as that carried out under the soldier settlement scheme did little to right the injustice of unequal land distribution. Although seventy per cent of the *osadniki* (soldier-settlers) came from farming families, only fifteen per cent originated from Eastern Poland. Furthermore, ninety-eight per cent of the *osadniki* were Catholic indicating that the beneficiaries of the scheme were ethnic Poles from Central and Western Poland, not the minorities native to the *kresy*.⁷⁵ The *osadniki* were a privileged group, granted allotments between eighteen and forty-five hectares in size, plots large enough for the operation of commercial farms. The soldier settlement scheme also had a strong colonising character; the soldiers were charged with establishing model farms and 'bringing civilisation' to the *kresy*. Non-military colonisation was also encouraged with land in the east being more affordable than elsewhere in Poland. By the 1930s, approximately three hundred thousand ethnic Poles had moved to the Ukrainian populated *kresy* alone.⁷⁶

The rebirth of Poland had raised the hopes of the minorities for an improvement in their economic situation and the state's failure to deliver on land reform, raised ethnic tensions and added fuel to the fire of nationalist movements. During the Ukrainian revolutionary era (1917-1920) several attempts to establish an independent Ukraine coinciding with peasant uprisings.⁷⁷ The rights of the minorities were enshrined in the Polish Constitution of March 1921. It guaranteed 'to all, without distinction of extraction, nationality, language, race, or religion, full protection of life, liberty, and property'. It recognised every citizen's right 'to preserve his nationality and develop his mother-tongue and national characteristics', and stated that 'freedom of conscience and of religion is guaranteed to all citizens'.⁷⁸ Despite such freedoms guaranteed by the constitution, on a practical level, the minorities remained an

⁷⁴ Peter D. Stachura, 'National Identity and the Ethnic Minorities in Early Inter-War Poland', in Peter D. Stachura (ed.), *Poland Between the Wars, 1918-1939*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1998, pp. 60-86.

⁷⁵ Stobniak-Smogorzewska, *Kresowe osadnictwo wojskowe*, p. 118.

⁷⁶ P. R. Magosci, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples*, 2nd edn., Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 629.

⁷⁷ Magosci, *A History of Ukraine*, pp. 529-530.

⁷⁸ Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 17 March 1921. <http://libr.sejm.gov.pl/tek01/txt/kpol/e1921.html> (accessed 30 March 2019).

economically disadvantaged sector of society. The Ukrainian separatist movement grew in the interwar period and the sabotage and murder campaign undertaken by its illegal military arm, drew vicious reprisals from state authorities in the 1930s. The state was equally suspicious of Byelorussian politicisation, closing down Byelorussian schools and Orthodox churches, and extending its pacification campaign north, to cover the whole of Eastern Poland.⁷⁹

Interwar Poland was home to the largest concentration of Jews in Europe with a Jewish population of around three million. Of these, 1.3 million lived in Eastern Poland where they made up ten per cent of the population. Their characteristics differed to those of other minorities. Most Jews were urban dwellers, unassimilated, and Yiddish speaking. Between twenty-five and forty per cent of the inhabitants of Poland's major cities, Warsaw, Łódź, Krakow, Lwów and Wilno were Jewish and in smaller towns, the percentage was often much higher. There was a small, prosperous Jewish elite, well-represented and highly visible in the entrepreneurial (finance, banking and insurance) and professional classes (medicine, law and publishing), though the majority of Jews were self-employed artisans living in poverty. Anti-Semitism has a long history in the Polish lands which were part of the Tsarist imposed Jewish Pale of Settlement. In the interwar years, it took increasingly virulent forms and by the 1930s included segregation, economic boycotts and extreme violence, all of which increased after Piłsudski's death in 1935.⁸⁰ Paradoxically, the Second Polish Republic had also provided an environment in which Jewish political and cultural life developed a richness and diversity unparalleled elsewhere in the Europe.⁸¹

The majority religion in the Second Republic was Roman Catholicism as most, if not all, ethnic Poles were also Catholic. The national minorities were Protestants, Uniates (Greek Catholic), Orthodox Christians, and Jews. Though the 1921 Constitution did not declare Catholicism as Poland's official religion, Article 114 acknowledged its 'chief position among enfranchised religions'.⁸² The two decades of the Second Republic provided the Church in Poland with conditions under which it was able to recover as an institution after the troubled years of the partitions. Politically, the Catholic clergy tended to support the right wing National Democrats who linked their rallying cry of 'Poland for the Poles' to identifying a true Pole as a Catholic Pole and attacking the minority faiths, especially the non Christian Jews. It

⁷⁹ Davies, *God's Playground*, pp. 300-303. For an excellent reconstruction of the everyday life of an ethnic Polish family in the *kresy* see Matthew Kelly, *Finding Poland: From Tavistock to Hruzdowa and Back Again*, London, Vintage Books, 2011, pp. 18-61.

⁸⁰ Davies, *God's Playground*, p. 192.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 302-303; Stachura, *Poland, 1918-1945*, pp. 79-89.

⁸² Article 114, Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 17 March 1921, <http://libr.sejm.gov.pl/tek01/txt/kpol/e1921.html>, (accessed 30 March 2019).

assumed a highly adversarial stance against perceived enemies of the church and state - socialism, Freemasonry and Judaism.⁸³

Apart from the big question of defining what kind of nation-state Poland would be, there were a multitude of other issues that needed to be addressed in order to integrate the three areas of partitioned Poland - issues relating to the law, health, finance, transport, and postal services, to name but a few. Though limited progress was made in some areas, one area in which much was achieved, was education, with the introduction of free universal education and mandated primary school attendance. While in the Prussian zone education had been compulsory and ninety-nine per cent of children attended school, in the Russian zone it had been voluntary and only one in five children attended primary school. The Second Polish Republic built schools, trained teachers and the rate of illiteracy gradually declined.⁸⁴ In 1931, twenty-eight per cent of the population in the villages was illiterate, though the rate was higher in the *kresy*.⁸⁵ By the end of the 1930s, the national illiteracy rate had been lowered to eighteen per cent.⁸⁶

World War II and forced removal to the Soviet Union

On 23 August 1939, just over a week before Hitler's invasion of Poland, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact, vowing not to attack each other or offer assistance to each others enemies in the event of war.⁸⁷ The pact contained secret clauses outlining the terms under which the two signatories would soon carve up Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union invaded Poland on 17 September 1939 occupying and subsequently annexing over fifty per cent of its territory and assuming control over 11.5 million of its citizens, comprising 4.5 million Ukrainians, 4 million Poles, 1.5 million Byelorussians, 1.3 million Jews, and smaller groups of Lithuanians, Germans and Czechoslovakians.⁸⁸ The Soviets justified their actions

⁸³ Alvis, *White Eagle, Black Madonna*, pp. 192-197.

⁸⁴ Andrzej Garlicki, *Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej Początki*, Wrocław, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996, pp. 118-121.

⁸⁵ Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*, p. 28.

⁸⁶ Roger McL. Harris, *Poles Apart? An Intergenerational Study of Selected Samples of Postwar Polish Immigrants in South Australia*, PhD Thesis, The University of Adelaide, 1976, p. 57.

⁸⁷ Treaty of Nonaggression between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 23 August 1939, *The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/nonagres.asp, (accessed 4 April 2018).

⁸⁸ *Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna*, vol. 5, Warszawa, PWN, 1996, p. 74.

by declaring that the Polish State and its Government had ceased to exist, and they were acting in their own defence and the defence of their Ukrainian and Byelorussian kin.⁸⁹

Within a week of the German attack, Poland's President, the Commander-in-Chief, the Polish government and administration, and their families, departed Warsaw for south-east Poland. Much of the army too retreated eastward. On the night of the 17 September following the Soviet invasion, the Polish Government entourage crossed the border into Romania followed by tens of thousands of Polish soldiers and civilians in the days and weeks that followed.⁹⁰ One officer wounded and captured while fighting his way south to the border with his troops was General Władysław Anders. For almost two years he would be incarcerated in the notorious Lubyanka prison.⁹¹

The Soviets acted quickly to try to legitimize their rule in the newly conquered territories, holding a plebiscite to incorporate Eastern Poland into the Soviet Union as Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine in October 1939. They also acted to pre-empt any real or perceived opposition to communist rule from those it labelled as 'anti-Soviet elements'.⁹² Arrests were widespread. People were arrested not because of anything they had done but because of who they were. Key figures in the political, economic and cultural life of the Second Polish Republic were arrested. Government employees, members of political parties, clergy and church officials, doctors, lawyers and teachers, journalists, authors and publishers, police officers and prison guards, were arrested. Capitalists and so-called 'class enemies' such as wealthy landowners, bankers, industrialists, and merchants were arrested. It is estimated that between September 1939 and June 1941, the NKVD arrested 108,000 people. Of these, 40 per cent were Poles, 22.5 per cent were Ukrainian, 22 per cent were Jewish, and 7.5 per cent were Byelorussian.⁹³ These were interrogated, charged, tried and sentenced to terms in local prisons or the gulag.

Soviet plans for silencing opposition went further than arrests. In the Tsarist tradition, people classified as 'enemies of the state' were deported en masse to the Far North, Siberia and Kazakhstan. The first and largest of four mass Soviet deportations of former Polish

⁸⁹ General Sikorski Historical Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations, 1939-1943*, vol. 1, London, Heinemann, 1961, p. 46. Henceforth GSHI.

⁹⁰ Kochanski, pp. 78-84.

⁹¹ Władysław Anders, *An Army in Exile: The Story of the Second Polish Corps*, London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1949, pp. 10-13.

⁹² Sword (ed.), *The Soviet Takeover of the Polish Eastern Provinces*, p. 306.

⁹³ Stanisław Ciesielski, *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z kresów wschodnich do Polski 1944-1947*, Warszawa, Instytut Historii PAN, 1999, p. 11. Figures are based on incomplete archival records.

citizens targeted soldier-settlers.⁹⁴ The entire families of those who had been given or purchased agricultural land in the eastern provinces of Poland after the Polish-Bolshevik War and those employed as forest rangers were deported en masse. In the early hours of the morning of 10 February 1940, approximately one hundred and forty thousand men, women and children were abruptly taken from their homes, loaded into cattle cars and transported by rail to 'special settlements' in the Soviet interior where they would live under NKVD guard and be utilized as labour in forests and mines.⁹⁵ The property they left behind was nationalized.⁹⁶ As most soldier-settlers were ethnic Poles, 82 per cent of the deportees were Polish, 9 per cent were Ukrainian, and 8 per cent Byelorussian.⁹⁷ The Soviet policy of targeting entire families resulted in large numbers of children being deported and NKVD figures for the end of March 1941 show that forty-four per cent of those in the first deportation of settlers and foresters were under the age of 16.⁹⁸ None of the deportees were formally arrested or charged with committing a crime.

The second deportation on 13 April 1940, targeted a completely different demographic, namely, the families of civilians arrested in the previous seven months together with the families of prisoners of war.⁹⁹ Around one hundred and twenty-five thousand Polish military were taken prisoner by the Red Army in the weeks following the invasion, though their number quickly fell as common soldiers and junior ranks were either released or handed over to German authorities. At the end of 1939, forty thousand remained in captivity. Of these, fifteen thousand were military officers, police and gendarmes held at Kozelsk, Starobelsk, and Ostashkov and it was the families of these prisoners along with other civilian arrestees that the second deportation targeted.¹⁰⁰ Singled out for inclusion were between three hundred, and three thousand prostitutes classed as 'anti-social and dangerous' elements, and their children.¹⁰¹ In total, in this deportation sixty-one thousand people were 'administratively

⁹⁴ N. F. Bugaj, 'Specjalnateczka Stalina: deportacja i reemigracja polaków', *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 107, 1994, pp. 90-92; Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje radzieckie*, p. 208-228.

⁹⁵ Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje radzieckie*, p. 43. For the origins of the 'special settlements' in the Stalinist state see Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

⁹⁶ Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje radzieckie*, p. 41.

⁹⁷ Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje ludności*, pp. 208-228.

⁹⁸ Albin Głowacki, 'Deportacje dzieci i młodzieży w głąb Związku Sowieckiego w latach 1940-1941', in J. and J. Żelazko (eds.), *Polskie dzieci na tulaczyczych szlakach 1939-1950*, Warszawa, IPN, 2008, p. 32.

⁹⁹ Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje ludności*, pp. 238-243.

¹⁰⁰ Cienciala et al. (eds.), *Katyń*, 2007, p. 81.

¹⁰¹ The NKVD in Kazakhstan was instructed to prepare for the reception of two to three thousand prostitutes. However, the records from the Internal Affairs Commission in Byelorussia shows only 307 prostitutes and thirty five children being deported to Kazakhstan. See Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje ludności*, p. 240. NKVD records show 354 prostitutes deported to Kazakhstan. See Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec polaków*, p. 355.

exiled' for a period of ten years to the southern Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan where they lived among the local population in villages and towns and worked on collective and state farms.¹⁰² The deportees were an urban population, mostly women, children and the elderly, ill-suited to agricultural work.¹⁰³ Approximately eighty per cent were ethnic Poles. The remainder were Jews, Ukrainians and Byelorussians.¹⁰⁴

Just two months after the deportation of civilian and military prisoners' families to Kazakhstan, another mass deportation took place, this time of refugees. Eastern Poland had been flooded by large numbers of civilians fleeing the German advance. It is estimated that 200,000 of the 300,000 civilians who fled eastward from Central and Western Poland were Jewish.¹⁰⁵ Soviet authorities struggled to absorb these refugees into the newly created republics of Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia. They encouraged and coerced refugees to move further east into the Soviet interior where there was plenty of work. The numbers who signed up for labour contracts were modest and authorities decided to take more drastic action. A so-called 'loyalty test' was applied to the refugees. They could either accept Soviet citizenship or register to return home. Those who registered and were rejected for return, were targeted for deportation.¹⁰⁶ On the night of 28 June 1940, 78,000 'special settlers-*bieżeńcy*' (refugees) were deported to remote northern and central regions of the Soviet Union where, like the 'special settlers-*osadniki*' before them, they would work in forests and mines.¹⁰⁷ The characteristics of the refugees deported were quite different to those of the previous two deportations. Eighty-five per cent were Jewish, seventy-five per cent were adults, more than half were male. They were urban dwellers, and over eight thousand were highly qualified professionals and specialists, notably doctors and lawyers.¹⁰⁸

Lastly, in May 1941, the Soviets began a final 'cleansing' of the *kresy* targeting those from the categories included in the first three waves who had so far evaded deportation. The fourth mass deportation also targeted anti-Soviet elements in the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia which had fallen into Soviet hands in June 1940. Thirty-five thousand Polish citizens were deported in this final wave, an event overtaken by the German attack on

¹⁰² Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje radzieckie*, p. 64.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁰⁴ Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje ludności*, pp. 238-242.

¹⁰⁵ Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁶ Yosef Litvak, 'The Flight of Refugees from the German-Occupied Territories', in Keith Sword (ed.), *The Soviet Takeover of the Polish Eastern Provinces, 1939-41*, Houndmills, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 60-67; Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje radzieckie*, pp. 52-54.

¹⁰⁷ Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje radzieckie*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 54-57.

the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁹ The total number of Polish citizens deported in the four waves is estimated at 315-330,000. Approximately two hundred thousand were ethnic Poles, over seventy thousand Jews, twenty-five thousand Ukrainians and twenty thousand Byelorussians.¹¹⁰ The exact number of people deported, however, remains a contentious issue. Deportation statistics prior to the 1990s originated from the records of the Polish Government-in-exile and ranged from one to one and half million. An early figure available from Soviet archives puts the number at 387,932 Polish citizens held in confinement or resettled in the Soviet interior at the outbreak of the Russo-German war. This number was dismissed by historians such as Jan Gross and Keith Sword in the late 1980s as being a 'wild guess at best, and more likely a deliberate deception'.¹¹¹ However, a new generation of Polish and Russian historians, with access to some, though not all, Soviet archives, argue for a lower figure, between 315,000 and 380,000.¹¹² In recent years, a general consensus has been reached among scholars, including those at the Polish Government's Institute of National Remembrance, that the deportations concerned somewhere over 300,000 Polish citizens. In 2002, in the preface of the second edition of his book, Gross accepts the revised estimates, while Jolluck in 2002 gives the upper and lower figures and speculates that the true number is somewhere in between.¹¹³ However, controversy over the figures continues. Leading historian, Norman Davies used the 1.5 million figure in 2005, as did Anna Holian in 2011. Furthermore, a secondary school history textbook commissioned by the Polish Ministry of Education in 2004 uses the 1.2 million figure.¹¹⁴

The lower estimates of contemporary scholars appear also to have not made their way into the nation's collective memory. In 2012, at a conference held in Krakow entitled 'From the Frosts of Siberia to the African Sun', to mark the seventieth anniversary of the arrival of Polish refugees in Africa, scholars delivering papers using the revised and lower deportation numbers were repeatedly challenged by conference participants, and some deportees themselves.¹¹⁵ This is an issue which no doubt will continue to be debated by historians for

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 65-67.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

¹¹¹ Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, p. 193; Sword, *Deportation and Exile*, p. 27.

¹¹² See Boćkowski, *Czas Nadziei*; Bugaj, 'Specjalna Teczka Stalina'; Ciesielski et al., *Masowe deportacje ludności*; Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec polaków*; Gurjanov, 'Cztery deportacje 1940-41'; Natalia Lebedeva, 'The Deportation of the Polish Population to the USSR, 1939-41', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 16, no. 1-2, 2000, pp. 28-45.

¹¹³ Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, p. xiv; Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ Davies, *God's Playground*, p. 334; Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, p. 29; Jerzy Topolski, *Historia Polski*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2004, p. 254.

¹¹⁵ Hubert Chudzio (ed.), *Z mrozów Syberii pod słońce Afryki*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Text, Kraków, 2012, pp. 162, 169, 173.

years to come. Nevertheless, it would appear that the myth of millions deported may live on in the imaginations of the Polish diaspora, as evidenced in two recent documentaries, one made in Australia, the other in Canada, which give deportation numbers of one and a half and two million respectively.¹¹⁶

Evacuation to Persia

The Poles evacuated from the Soviet Union during the Second World War owed their salvation to none other than Adolf Hitler and his fateful invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. Though this proved to be a catastrophic error of judgment on his part, it triggered a series of events which culminated in Stalin loosening his grip on hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens forcibly removed to the Soviet Union following the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939. The exodus of over a hundred thousand of their number from 'that inhuman land' was an event without parallel in the annals of Soviet history.

Germany's attack on its ally, the Soviet Union, nullified the Treaty of Non-Aggression they had signed on 23 August 1939, just days before the German invasion of Poland. This Treaty was swiftly replaced by the Anglo-Soviet Agreement of 12 July 1941, and shortly thereafter by the restoration of diplomatic relations between the Polish government in exile and the Soviet Union.¹¹⁷ In signing the Polish-Soviet Agreement on 30 July 1941, the two states pledged 'to render one to another aid and support ... in the war against Hitlerite Germany'. In the same agreement the Soviets consented to 'the formation on the territory of the USSR of a Polish Army ... subordinated in an operational sense to the Supreme Command of the USSR'. A codicil of the Agreement granted an 'amnesty to all Polish citizens (now) detained on Soviet territory either as prisoners of war or on other sufficient grounds'.¹¹⁸ Hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens were to be released from their places of confinement.

A Polish Embassy was opened in Moscow, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MPiOS) set up a special operation to provide welfare relief to the 'amnestied' Polish population. Twenty centres were opened across the Soviet Union, from Archangelsk to Vladivostok, to register, inform and provide welfare relief to the men, women and children

¹¹⁶ *Once My Mother*, dir. Sophie Turkiewicz, Sydney, Change Focus Media, 2014; *Memory is Our Homeland*, dir. Jonathan Durand, Montréal, 2016.

¹¹⁷ The Anglo-Soviet Agreement 12 July 1941, *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, The Yale Law School, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/brsov41.asp>, (accessed 31 March 2014).

¹¹⁸ The Polish-Soviet Agreement 30 July 1941, *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, The Yale School, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/polsov.asp>, (accessed 4 April 2014).

who were no longer required to live in special settlements and camps. The amnesty came into effect on 12 August 1941.¹¹⁹ However, living conditions for the many who chose to travel to the recruitment zones of the Polish army in the south were even more extreme than those in confinement. Arranging transport, finding food and shelter, and not succumbing to illness, were matters of life and death. Children's homes were opened to care for infants, boys and girls, whose parents had died, disappeared, or were no longer able to provide them with the necessities of life.¹²⁰

Recruitment to the Polish Army was based around its headquarters at Buzuluk on the River Volga.¹²¹ Polish General Anders, newly released from prison, was appointed Commander, and the army soon became known colloquially as the Anders' Army.¹²² Men aged eighteen to forty-five enlisted as soldiers. Boys and girls aged fourteen years and over joined as cadets. Women signed up to the Women's Auxiliary Service. Massed around the recruitment and training centres were their families.¹²³

No sooner were Polish-Soviet relations restored than they began to sour. The Soviets were unable to adequately feed, clothe, shelter or arm the Polish troops. The Polish Government was also deeply troubled by the fact that almost the entire Polish officer corps taken captive by the Soviets in September 1939 and eligible for release under the 'amnesty', had not reported for duty.¹²⁴ The officer corps was essential for the training and command of the new army. The Soviets insisted the Polish officers had been released and Stalin ingenuously suggested that perhaps they had 'fled to Manchuria'.¹²⁵ Following consultations with the British, in December 1941 at a meeting between General Władysław Sikorski who was the Polish Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces, General Anders, Joseph Stalin and his Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, Sikorski suggested that the problem of provisioning the Polish army could be partly solved by allowing airmen, seamen and 25,000 land troops to leave the Soviet Union and join the Polish forces being formed in Britain and Egypt under British auspices. Stalin, angered that the Poles were not yet

¹¹⁹ GSHI (ed.), *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, p. 143.

¹²⁰ Keith Sword, *Deportation and Exile*, pp. 88-106.

¹²¹ Anders, *An Army in Exile*, p. 63.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 59; GSHI (ed.), *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, p. 253.

¹²⁴ Mass graves discovered by the German military in April 1943 in the Katyń Forest proved to contain the bodies of some of the 14,500 Polish military and police officers held in prisoner of war camps at Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobelsk who had been executed in the spring of 1940 by the NKVD on direct orders from Stalin. For a detailed reconstruction of these events based on archival Soviet documents see Cienciala et al. (eds.), *Katyn*.

¹²⁵ Zygmunt Bohusz-Szyszko, *Czerwony Sfinks*, Rzym, Polski Dom Wydawniczy, 1946, p. 141; GSHI (ed.), *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, p. 233.

ready to fight alongside the Red Army but were instead proposing an evacuation, replied ‘If the Poles do not want to fight, then let them go ... if they want to, they may go away.’¹²⁶ He then marked out an evacuation route across the Caspian Sea from Krasnovodsk in Turkmenistan to Pahlevi in Allied-occupied Iran.

First Maritime Evacuation from the Soviet Union to Persia

Various circumstances delayed the evacuation and in February 1942, despite the poor physical condition of the Polish army's troops and their lack of training and equipment, they were ordered to the frontline by Soviet military command.¹²⁷ Generals Anders and Sikorski refused to comply with Soviet directives and shortly thereafter were advised that food rations for the Poles would be halved as the Soviets were no longer able to supply full rations to their own troops.¹²⁸ Convinced that starvation threatened tens of thousands of Polish soldiers and their families, Anders flew to Moscow to meet with Stalin and an immediate evacuation was agreed upon.¹²⁹ On 24 March 1942, the British military unit that had been preparing to receive the Polish army in Iran was advised to expect the arrival at Pahlevi from Krasnovodsk of approximately 45,000 Poles over the next eight days at a rate of six thousand a day, and that women and children would be among the evacuees.¹³⁰ Having made initial plans for the weekly reception of two and a half thousand military personnel only, the British were faced, in the words of the evacuation unit's Officer in Charge, Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Ross, ‘with a problem of the first magnitude.’¹³¹ The following day when British military

¹²⁶ GSHI (ed.), *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations 1939-45*, p. 238.

¹²⁷ GSHI (ed.), *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations 1939-45*, p. 277.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-284.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 294-310.

¹³⁰ TNA, FO 371/32630/W9732, Report on Evacuation of Poles from Pahlevi 25 March - 25 April 1942, p. 4. Lieut-Colonel Alexander Ross' forty page report forms the basis of information on the first evacuation from Krasnovodsk to Pahlevi that follows in this study. Ross was the Officer-in-Charge, British Base Evacuation Staff. This report is hereafter referred to as the Ross First Evacuation Report.

¹³¹ Alexander Ross (1897-1949) was born in St Petersburg where his father, a shipbuilding engineer from Newcastle on Tyne, was working on building a fleet for the Tsar. His mother was the daughter of an officer in the Tsarist army. The family returned to England in 1900 where Alexander was educated and in 1915 joined the army and served in Persia during the First World War. He read modern languages at Cambridge after the war before rejoining the army. His postings included Bulgaria, Estonia, Malta, Poland (where he learned Polish), Greece and Turkey. At the beginning of the Second World War he escaped from Bulgaria where he was working under cover and where the Germans condemned him to death, and made his way through Cairo and Iraq to Iran where his involvement with Poles was renewed, an involvement which lasted to the end of his life. After the war, he went to Germany and worked with the Control Commission there. He married his cousin, Tatiana Kotliarevskaya from Omsk. See Beaupré-Stankiewicz et al. (eds.), *Isfahan*, p. 91.

evacuation staff arrived at Pahlevi, the Soviet vessel, *Karl Marx*, was lying off the harbour waiting to offload the first evacuees.¹³²

Anders' order of priority for evacuees was, first the military, followed by children from children's homes, then military families, and lastly, others.¹³³ The decision to include civilians was one that Anders had insisted on in talks with the Soviets.¹³⁴ Alarm bells sounded in London. A shocked British Government had not planned to receive civilians and demanded their evacuation be stopped. The Polish Government called for a halt to civilian evacuations while they sought British approval for their inclusion.¹³⁵ General Anders ignored the flurry of telegrams landing on his desk, and the oil tankers and coal ships of the Soviet Caspian merchant fleet, continued to arrive at Pahlevi and unload their motley human cargo.¹³⁶ As Soviet authorities had agreed to and facilitated the civilian evacuation, the British and Polish governments had little choice but to accept the reality on the ground and improvise and adapt to the unforeseen circumstances. A total of 43,808 Poles comprising 31,189 military personnel and 12,619 civilians arrived in Iran from 25 March to 5 April 1942.¹³⁷

The NKVD organized both the deportation to the Soviet Union and the evacuation from the Soviet Union of the same group of Polish citizens. Efficiency was a common characteristic of both operations as were the inhuman conditions on the merchant ships used to evacuate the Poles mirroring those on the cattle trains used to deport them: overcrowding, exposure to extreme elements, lack of drinking water and food, limited ablution facilities, and the readiness of the ever-present Grim Reaper to cut down the weak and infirm. The British Senior Medical Officer described the situation at Pahlevi as having 'all the potentialities of a disaster of the first magnitude'.¹³⁸ Supplies of food, clothing and shelter for the large number of evacuees arriving by sea, unscheduled and at all hours of the night and day, were inadequate. The weather in northern Persia was unusually cold with a heavy snowfall recorded just a few days before the first evacuees arrived.¹³⁹ Port buildings on loan from Persian authorities could not hold all of the evacuees and the majority of civilians were

¹³² TNA, FO 371/32630/W9732, Ross First Evacuation Report, General Narrative, First Phase, 2. Situation on arrival.

¹³³ Wróbel and Żelazko (eds.), *Polskie dzieci na tulaczyczych szlakach*, p. 257.

¹³⁴ Anders, *An Army in Exile*, pp. 98-100.

¹³⁵ Marian Zgórnjak (ed.), *Protokoły posiedzeń Rady Ministrów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, vol. 4: *grudzień 1941-sierpień 1942*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo Secesja, 1998, pp. 195-197; Żaroń, *Armia Andersa*, pp. 118-119; Anders, *An Army in Exile*, p. 102.

¹³⁶ Bohusz-Szyszko, *Czerwony Sfinks*, p. 243.

¹³⁷ TNA, FO 371/32630/W9732, Ross First Evacuation Report, Appendix B, Table of arrivals at Pahlevi.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, Appendix E, Polish Evacuation, Report by Senior Medical Officer Pahlevi.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, General Narrative, First Phase, 3. Evacuation Begins.

provided with shelter in tents and under tarpaulins strung across two square miles of beach, sectioned off into 'dirty' and 'clean' camps. Disinfestation was a priority as there were fears of the spread to Persia of the typhus epidemic rampant in the southern parts of the Soviet Union. Delousing took place in mobile military bath units, tents, Persian baths, and the Iranryba fish factory (centre of Persia's fish and caviar industry).¹⁴⁰

The process of disinfestation consisted of clipping the hair on the head (except in the case of women) the armpits and the pubes; liberal rubbing in of a strong disinfectant soap and kerosene oil emulsion, and hot shower bath.¹⁴¹

The dehumanizing nature of this process together with the general resistance of the evacuees to being ordered about now they were 'free', resulted in a lack of cooperation by evacuees and confusion among authorities as to how many and which Poles had been deloused. The situation was not helped by Polish military officers who set a precedent by refusing to have their hair clipped. Disinfestation was a major problem for authorities as evacuees mingled with the local population in the town and Persian civilians came freely to the camps. The British persevered using a range of measures and as a last resort barbed wire enclosures to segregate the confirmed deloused ready for onward transport to Tehran from the lousy.¹⁴²

Feeding an unexpected twelve and a half thousand people presented its own problems though the British cure-all of hot tea was available twenty-four hours a day. The evacuees were fed from military supplies and later fresh meat and vegetables purchased from local merchants, who grasping the extraordinariness of the circumstances, raised prices accordingly. Mutton was the most readily available meat and prolonged illness was often the result of the well-intentioned supply of fatty mutton stew to bodies on the brink of starvation. Bread was supplied sporadically with the British diverting wheat imports from military to humanitarian use and local bakers contributing by baking at no cost.¹⁴³

The Iranians provided a small building near the beach for use as a hospital and most of the doctors and nurses came from among the evacuees. One third of the hospitalized were admitted with typhus, while dysentery, pellagra, fevers and respiratory diseases were among the other major causes of admission.¹⁴⁴ Four pregnant women were hospitalised and three births were recorded. Deaths at Pahlevi included sixteen at sea and on the beach, thirty-eight

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., General Narrative, First Phase, 5. Medical Arrangements.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Appendix E, Polish Evacuation, Report by Senior Medical Officer Pahlevi.

¹⁴² Ibid., Appendix E, Polish Evacuation, Report by Senior Medical Officer Pahlevi, Appendix II, Progress of disinfestation of Polish Evacuees.

¹⁴³ Ibid., General Narrative, First Phase, 9. Supplies.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Appendix E, Appendix IV, Polish Evacuation, Hospital Admissions by Diseases - Bandar Pahlevi.

in the hospital and seventeen during the 140 mile road trip over the Elburz mountains from Pahlevi to Kazvin, the overnight stop on the two day journey to Tehran.¹⁴⁵

Polish evacuees in Tehran and Isfahan

Remaining in Pahlevi was not an option. The evacuees had arrived in a country which, like their own, was occupied by foreign powers. The Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran, which had early in the war declared its neutrality, took place on 25 August 1941 for reasons that included the need to secure a military supply route to the Soviet Union from the West, and to protect Britain's interest in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company whose supplies from the Abadan oilfield were essential to the British war effort.¹⁴⁶ Military action in the air, on land and at sea resulted in civilian and military casualties of an estimated six thousand Iranians. British casualties amounted to approximately sixty while the number of Soviet fatalities was fifteen, and eighteen wounded.¹⁴⁷ Resistance was brief and the surrender of the Iranian forces led to the foreign occupation of Iran for the duration of the war. Following the abdication of the Shah and the installation of his son on the throne early in 1942, a Tripartite Treaty of Alliance was signed between Britain, the Soviet Union and Iran.¹⁴⁸ Pahlevi in the north, the Iranian arrival point for Polish evacuees, was in Soviet-occupied Iran and as such was only a transit point for both military and civilian evacuees. The former were relocated to Palestine either overland through Iraq or by sea by way of the Suez Canal. Polish airmen and sailors sailed to Britain to serve in the Polish forces stationed there.

During the four weeks following the evacuation, daily convoys of lorries and buses of all shapes and sizes, driven by Iranians and Armenians, and serviced by Indian and Polish mechanics, wound their way along the treacherous roads of the Elbruz Mountains to Tehran (population five hundred thousand), depositing the civilian evacuees at an unused air force base on the outskirts of the city. The Polish Government's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MPiOS) was charged with responsibility for the evacuees, in liaison with the British army. The Polish Red Cross assisted with medical care and the Shah made a building in the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., General Narrative, First Phase, 5. Medical Arrangements.

¹⁴⁶ For a detailed account of the occupation see Mohammad Gholi Majd, *August 1941: The Anglo-Russian Occupation of Iran and Change of Shabs*, The University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 2012.

¹⁴⁷ Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and its Armed Forces*, Georgetown University Press, 2014, p. 160; Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War: The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*, Lanham, Md., Rowman & Littlefield, 2006, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Ward, *Immortal*, p. 171.

city available for a hospital. The local British community in Tehran, Bagdad and the Abadan oilfields generously donated much needed clothing.¹⁴⁹

By mid July two camps had been established in the grounds of the air force base run by Polish military and civilian officials. The buildings, a former munitions factory and military barracks, fell far short of space to accommodate all of the evacuees and once again tents were erected as shelter. Beds, even in the small camp hospital were in short supply with most patients sleeping on mats on the floor and spilling out into the tented area. The evacuees were supplied with daily food rations from British army supplies supplemented by purchases from the local market. There was relative freedom of movement, though a pass was needed to go into town. There were Polish radio broadcasts. A Polish newspaper was printed. Cultural and religious clubs were formed. A temporary camp for mothers and children was opened just north of Tehran at Yusufabad where the climate was cooler. A network of boarding schools was set up in the ancient capital of Isfahan in collaboration with Catholic and Anglican churches.¹⁵⁰ Though their new circumstances were far from ideal, the travails associated with evacuation and arrival in Iran were viewed by many of the evacuees in relative terms. As Helena recalls:

An enormous happiness swept over everyone as they reached Persian soil, it is quite impossible to describe the feeling. It was the exhilaration of people who had, as it were, returned from the grave.¹⁵¹

Reasons for moving Polish refugees out of Persia

The plan for the Polish army to transit Persia on its way from the Soviet Union to Palestine had been agreed beforehand between the Soviet, British, Polish and Persian governments. There was no plan for what to do with Polish civilians. Uninvited, they were nevertheless received at Pahlevi and swiftly transported out of the Russian zone of occupation to the capital, Tehran. British, Polish and Persian authorities discussed whether to keep the evacuees in Persia or move them away from such close proximity to the war. The British considered possible destinations in the eastern hemisphere for ease of transport, such as the African colonies. Opinions differed as to the best course of action. Polish authorities in Tehran and London were convinced of the need to evacuate their civilians from Persia as quickly as

¹⁴⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/52/12-25, Report of the Representatives of the Polish Government on the welfare provided to Polish civilians evacuated from the Soviet Union from 4 April to 15 July 1942; MPiOS 131/52/33-69, Second report on the activities of the Representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Tehran from 16 July 1942 to 15 September 1942.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Beaupré-Stankiewicz et al. (eds.), *Isfahan*, p. 19.

possible. Count Raczyński, the Polish Ambassador in London wrote to Lord Cadogan, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the British Foreign Office in London stating:

the Polish Minister in Teheran draws attention to the necessity of getting them [Polish civilians] to countries outside Persia. He fears that their lengthened sojourn in Persia might be fraught with grave consequences, both from a political and from an economic point of view. Furthermore, a shortage of food on the spot makes it highly difficult to organize any kind of adequate relief for these people. Our Minister fears that this shortage of food may bring about an unfriendly feeling of the Persian population for the Poles.¹⁵²

The Polish Ambassador requested that the British Government 'designate which country of asylum they would wish these Polish civilians to be sent' and suggested the African territories of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika as the 'most suitable', with India a possible alternative destination.¹⁵³ Lord Cadogan's response was a polite but firm 'no'. Despite the political and economic difficulties which might arise from the presence of the Polish refugees in Persia, he considered that feeding and accommodating them there was less of a problem than doing so in some part of the British Empire. Furthermore, the provision of transport for such a move 'was not feasible in the near future'.¹⁵⁴

However, the issue continued to be debated and within a few weeks, the British Foreign Office requested that the Colonial Office give the removal of Polish civilians from Persia 'urgent consideration' and in particular, pursue the British East Africa option. Several reasons were given for the request. Firstly, there were difficulties with feeding and accommodating the Polish civilians in an area adjacent to the Middle East war zone at a time when the British were already committed to 'feeding the native population' due to existing food shortages. Secondly, as the Polish army was not staying in Iran there was no argument for keeping their families there to be close to them. Thirdly, the British were concerned that relations with the Persian government would be adversely affected by 'unasked guests overstaying their welcome'. Finally, the British in Persia were 'preparing for the worst', the possibility of a further 'break out' of Poles from the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁵ Some in the Foreign Office held particularly strong views on the matter:

¹⁵² TNA, FO 371/32628/W6392, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Memorandum, 24 April 1942.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ TNA, FO 371/32628/W6392, Sir Cadogan, Permanent Under-Secretary at the British Foreign Office London to Count Raczyński, Polish Ambassador London, 4 May 1942.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, FO 371/32628/W6392, A. W. G. Randall, FO, to J. R. Sidebotham, CO, 9 May 1942.

... it would have been difficult to devise a more effective means of wrecking our whole position in Persia than the introduction of this vast swarm of involuntary locusts.¹⁵⁶

As well as political and economic factors, military considerations also came to bear on the situation. The growing problem of refugees in the Middle East and their potential to disrupt military operations led the British to form the Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration (MERRA) in June 1942. Based in Cairo, MERRA assumed responsibility for the movement, maintenance and welfare of refugees arriving in the Middle East and for their evacuation to temporary war domicile overseas. There were at the time 12,500 Polish refugees in Persia and another 15,000 Greek refugees who had fled invading German forces and were scattered in refugee camps throughout the Middle East.¹⁵⁷ Refugee numbers were expected to increase. Allied Middle East Command feared that military operations would be seriously impacted by a looming refugee problem.¹⁵⁸ In early June, the British Minister of State in Cairo wrote to the Foreign Office stating that 'the problem [of refugees in the Middle East] was potentially on so large a scale that it had ceased to be governed primarily by humanitarian considerations, and would have to be dealt with on a military plane.'¹⁵⁹ The original decision for the Polish refugees to remain in Persia was short-lived and replaced by a push to move them out to Africa. The reasons given for the change of mind deserve scrutiny.

The influx of twelve and a half thousand evacuees and the resultant increased demand for a range of goods and services would inevitably have had an impact on the Iranian economy already disrupted by the war and the presence on Iranian soil of approximately 150,000 foreign troops, British, Russian and American.¹⁶⁰ Reeling from the twin terrors of devaluation and inflation and unable to curtail the rampant practices of hoarding and speculation by local merchants, Iran was unable to feed its population of fifteen million.¹⁶¹ The supply of bread was particularly problematic, in part as a result of the occupation of the

¹⁵⁶ TNA, FO 371/32628/6332, Foreign Office Minute, 1 May 1942.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, FO 371/32642/W80864, Minister of State, Cairo to FO, London, 2 June 1942; L. Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization: A Specialized Agency of the United Nations: Its History and Work, 1946-1952*, London, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 14.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/32629/W8377, Minister of State Cairo to Foreign Office, 8 June 1942.

¹⁶⁰ Ward, *Immortal*, pp. 150-156. The British invading force numbered 19,000 while the Soviet invading force numbered 120,000. Americans, though not part of the invading force, arrived in September 1941 to provide a military workforce specializing in road and railway construction. Their numbers in 1942 were insignificant as they initially made extensive use of local labour. By the end of 1943, however, 30,000 American troops were stationed at thirty-six posts across the country.

¹⁶¹ For an analysis of the economic and fiscal policy of the first government of the new shah in light of the foreign occupation see Kamran M. Dadkhah, 'The Iranian Economy during the Second World War,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2001, pp. 181-198; Mohammad Gholi Majd, *August 1941*, p. 27.

grain rich north by the Soviets whose open border policy resulted in the mass movement of Iranian food supplies in the direction of the Soviet Union. The British were already supplementing Iranian food supplies and the arrival of the refugees added to the burden of feeding the civilian population.¹⁶²

Anti-British sentiment among Iranians was long-standing and deeply ingrained as Iran had been the subject of repeated acts of military aggression by the British and the Russians since the nineteenth century, its geo-strategic location making it vital to the security of both the Russian and British empires.¹⁶³ In the economic sphere, the British had effectively reduced Iran to the status of a semi-colony through control of the Bank of Iran, the Abadan oilfields and the country's communications network. The events of the First World War, when the country had been devastated by the invasion and fighting of the armies of the various belligerents, were alive in the memory of the majority of adult Iranians. As a result of the famine of 1917-1919, a direct consequence of the war, two million out of a population of just over ten million had died through starvation and disease.¹⁶⁴ The 1941 Anglo-Soviet occupation was but the latest manifestation of Anglo-Russian rivalry over Iran. The British had every reason to fear the worsening of Anglo-Iranian relations if food supplies for the Iranian population ran short or if there was perceived or real competition between the local population and the Polish refugees for scarce food supplies.

According to Polish authorities, the vast majority of the Iranian population behaved with 'heartfelt goodwill and friendship' towards the Poles.¹⁶⁵ Numerous anecdotes in Polish memoirs tell of the kindness and generosity of Persian people. Iranian families offered to adopt Polish orphans and Iranian companies donated labour and materials to improve camp facilities.¹⁶⁶ The Shah opened up the gardens of one of his palaces as a camp for sick children and lent a building to be used as a hospital for the exclusive use of the evacuees. Even the British acknowledged that the Iranian government 'was behaving unexpectedly well over the arrival and accommodation of the Poles'.¹⁶⁷ They described the Persians' helpful attitude as

¹⁶² Ward, *Immortal*, p. 171.

¹⁶³ Gavin R. G. Hambly, 'The Pahlavi Autocracy: Riza Shah, 1921-41', in P. Avery, G. R. G. Hambly and C. Melville (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 7: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 213-243; Gavin R. G. Hambly, 'Muhammad Riza Shah, 1941-1979', in P. Avery, G. R. G. Hambly and C. Melville (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 7: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 244-294.

¹⁶⁴ Ward, *Immortal*, p. 123.

¹⁶⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/52/10-11, Wiktor Styburski, Tehran to the MPiOS Minister, London, 15 July 1942.

¹⁶⁶ AAN, PRPwT 592/41, British Legation, Tehran to Polish Legation, Tehran, 25 June 1942; PRPwT 592/54/255, A. Diba, Tehran to Major G. W. Kirkland, Tehran, 1 June 1942; PRPwT 592/54/250, Polish Minister to Major G. W. Kirkland, 12 June 1942.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, FO 371/32628/W6392, A. W. G. Randall, FO, London to J. R. Sidebotham, CO, London, 9 May 1942.

‘positively uncanny’¹⁶⁸ but interpreted it as an opportunistic anti-Soviet propaganda exercise. The presence of Polish refugees gave the Iranians an opportunity to show themselves to be a civilized and hospitable people in contrast to the ‘barbarous’ Russians from whom the Poles had fled. And the Russians:

can no longer upset Persian citizens by singing the glories of the Soviet Union while Teheran is full of Poles who were starving in Russia and admitted that Russians in the same circumstances were starving too.¹⁶⁹

The relationship that the Polish evacuee presence did threaten was not the historical and hostile one between Britain and Iran but the newly-formed alliance between Britain and the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁰ In order to promote this relationship, British propaganda portrayed the Poles in Iran as victims of Nazi not Soviet oppression. Churchill asked Anders to order his troops to refrain from openly criticizing the Soviet Union.¹⁷¹ The civilians too received written instructions 'not to gossip or spread stories about their own or others' experiences in the Soviet Union'.¹⁷² The Polish refugees were a political and potential military embarrassment to the British with the supply and transportation of refugee relief in the form of food, clothing and medicine clogging up supply routes of much needed military materials and equipment to the Soviets. The words ‘political and military embarrassment’ used in relation to the Polish refugees were a constant refrain in the British correspondence coming out of Tehran from this time forward. This embarrassment was compounded by the failure of the British, despite repeated and firm representations to the Polish government on the matter, to obtain assurances that there would be no further uncontrolled exodus from the Soviet Union.¹⁷³

Finding wartime domicile for Polish refugees

The first mission of T. H. Preston, MERRA's Chief Executive Officer, was to visit British East Africa in search of wartime domicile for the Polish refugees. The interest of the Governor of Kenya, Sir Henry Moore, in accepting Polish refugees in East Africa had been known since April 1942, when he had asked for a representative of the British refugee

¹⁶⁸ TNA, FO 371/32628/W6200, Sir R. Bullard, Tehran to Minister of State, Cairo, 22 April 1942.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, FO 371/32627/W5303, FO, Teheran to FO, London, 7 April 1942.

¹⁷⁰ For a detailed analysis of British-Soviet relations during 1942 see Anita J. Prazmowska, *Britain and Poland 1939-1943: The Betrayed Ally*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 114-138.

¹⁷¹ Anders, *An Army in Exile*, pp. 122-130.

¹⁷² *Przeczytaj Uważnie*, Ulotka w Archiwum Centrum Dokumentacji Zsyłek, Wypędzeń i Przesiedleń, Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie.

¹⁷³ TNA, FO 371/32628/W6392, A. W. G. Randall, FO, London to J. R. Sidebotham, CO, London, 9 May 1942; FO 371/32629/W8377, Minister of State, Cairo to FO, London, 6 June 1942.

administration to meet with the East African Governors' Conference to discuss the matter. Preston flew to Nairobi and addressed the Conference framing his argument along military and strategic rather than humanitarian lines. He argued that it was imperative to remove the refugees from an area that was a potential theatre of war, where their presence might obstruct military operations and where they were a heavy burden on military rations and supplies. British military command in the Middle East wanted them moved.¹⁷⁴

The Governors discussed some of the difficulties they would face in accepting refugees into their territories such as political objections from the British colonists at being outnumbered by the refugees and suffering economic hardship at their expense, and the physical difficulties of building accommodation at a time when local resources of skilled labour and building materials were totally consumed by the armed forces building programmes which would not be completed for another twelve months. They also pointed out that resources taken up in accommodating the Polish refugees would decrease the colonies' ability to send supplies to the Middle East Supply Centre and this would have to be made clear to them. Having taken these factors into account, the Conference agreed to accept ten thousand Polish refugees and expressed a sympathetic attitude to taking further numbers of Poles in the future should it be required and should the first group of ten thousand prove to be a success.¹⁷⁵

Having achieved some success in East Africa, the British re-examined other possibilities on that continent. Madagascar was ruled out as impracticable and the Belgian Congo had already been approached and agreed to accept some of the Greek refugees.¹⁷⁶ An urgent request sent to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland was expected to be positively received though realistically these territories could not be expected to solve the entire problem.¹⁷⁷ South Africa was ruled out as it was already contributing considerably to the war effort as a military transfer and supply hub and as a place for the training, hospitalization, and rest and recreation of Allied troops. Furthermore, it was already accommodating large numbers of prisoners of war and refugees.¹⁷⁸ It was therefore deemed necessary to look outside Africa to other areas of the British Empire and beyond.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, FO 371/32645/W10393, T. H. Preston, MERRA, Cairo to the Minister of State, Cairo, 20 July 1942.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, FO 371/32645/W10393, Extract from Proceedings of East African Governors' Conference, 26-27 June 1942, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, FO 371/32629/W8377, FO to Minister of State, Cairo, 9 July 1942.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, FO 371/32645/W10393, T. H. Preston, MERRA to Minister of State, Cairo, 20 July 1942.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/32633/W1211, A. W. G. Randall FO to Sir John Stephenson, DO, 12 September 1942.

The British in India were reluctant to agree to taking Polish refugees at this time, though they did agree to a scheme initiated by the Polish Embassy in Bombay, called the Tashkent Scheme, in which, working with the Polish Red Cross and the Jewish Relief Agency, lorries took medicine, food and clothing from Bombay to the amnestied Poles in the southern republics of the Soviet Union and returned to India with some of the children in the homes set up by the Polish embassy's welfare network in the USSR.¹⁷⁹ Five hundred Polish children arrived in April 1942 and were 'adopted' by the Maharaja of Nawangar State, Jamsaheb Digvijaysinghji, who built a home for them at Balachadi financed by charitable funds raised in India.¹⁸⁰

The British were keen to spread the refugee burden beyond the Empire. The United States was approached and replied - 'impossible'.¹⁸¹ Canada declined. Sympathetic responses were received from South America but only Mexico, which was already hosting 16,000 Spanish refugees, made a firm commitment.¹⁸² An unexpected offer from New Zealand to take orphans was gratefully accepted.¹⁸³ Overall, the efforts of the British to find a speedy solution to the problem of Polish refugees in Iran met with the resounding call of 'unwanted' from a succession of its Allies. The Jewish Agency for Palestine cared for the 870 Jewish orphans and cooperated with British authorities for the onward travel to Palestine of 1653 Jewish evacuees.¹⁸⁴

Polish evacuees' attitude to leaving Persia

The British had been reluctant to accept the civilian evacuees into Persia. The evacuees were equally reluctant, and even unwilling, to leave, except to return to Poland. News that transports were being prepared for Africa caused panic. Crowds mobbed administrative buildings - everyone had a reason why their name should not be on the Africa list. The unrest around the departure of the first five hundred led to the British army surrounding the camp at night and in the morning 'assisting' with loading evacuees onto trucks for the first leg of their

¹⁷⁹ Bhattacharjee, *The Second Homeland*, pp. 77-81.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 113-149; Wiesław Stypuła, 'Osiedle dzieci polskich w Balachadi', in Leszek Bełdowski et al. (eds.), *Polacy w Indiach, 1942-1948, w świetle dokumentów i wspomnień*, 2nd edn., Warszawa, Koło Polaków z Indii, 2002, pp. 82-147.

¹⁸¹ TNA, FO 371 32631/W10763, Washington to FO, London, 13 August 1942.

¹⁸² TNA, FO 371 32634/W12990, Mr Bateman, HM Representative, Mexico to FO, London, 25 September 1942.

¹⁸³ Skwarko, *The Invited*, part 2, no. 19.

¹⁸⁴ Devora Omer, *The Tehran Operation: The Rescue of Jewish Children from the Nazis*, Washington DC, B'nai B'rith Books, 1991; Dorit B. Whiteman, *Escape via Siberia: A Jewish Child's Odyssey of Survival*, New York-London, Holmes and Meier, 1999; 'Tehran Children', *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, USHMM, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/tehran-children>, (accessed 1 August 2016).

journey out of Iran.¹⁸⁵ As successive transports were organised, the evacuees continued to resist, using a range of tactics to stay in Iran to the frustration of the British. The attitude of the Poles meant that ships which were in very short supply, sailed from the Persian Gulf with unfilled places as evacuees either avoided being selected or found for transportation.¹⁸⁶

The reasons for the evacuees' unwillingness to leave Iran were numerous. The journey that had taken them from Poland through the Soviet Union to Iran was a long and tortuous one. They were physically and psychologically exhausted and reluctant to embark on another journey into the unknown. They also clung to what remained of the family unit. The majority of adults destined for Africa were women who after the 'amnesty', in circumstances of extreme hardship, had travelled alongside or followed their menfolk south to where the Polish army was being formed. Some families had been evacuated along with the army though many people were left behind. Those in Iran hoped that there would be another evacuation and that they would see lost family again. In Iran, they could also keep in close contact with their fathers, husbands and brothers still in the Middle East, by mail and to even meet up with them when they visited on leave. Arriving in Iran had been a return to civilisation which the evacuees doubted they would find in Africa.¹⁸⁷ The evacuees also believed that repatriation to Poland would be quicker and easier from the Middle East than from Africa.¹⁸⁸

Finally, there were those who had integrated into the social and economic life of Tehran. In June 1942, the London *Times* reported:

The arrival in Teheran of thousands of (these) refugees, destitute though they are and with indescribable adventures behind them, has exerted a marked and quickening influence on the life of the city. Polish notices are seen everywhere, Polish shops have sprung up; and Polish waitresses serve in the cafés and restaurants where Polish musical and artistic performances have become a regular feature.¹⁸⁹

Polish women worked in a broad spectrum of jobs. Some found employment in British and American offices and institutions, some worked in the homes of European and Persian families as nannies and governesses, and some worked as prostitutes. By the end of 1942 there were approximately two thousand Poles living and working in Tehran outside the camp

¹⁸⁵ Bugaj, *Dzieci polskie*, pp. 85-86; Hejczyk, *Sybiracy pod Kilimandżaro*, p. 44.

¹⁸⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/52/31-32, Polish Legation in Tehran to MSZ, London, 8 September 1942.

¹⁸⁷ Allbrook and Cattalini, *The General Langfitt Story*, p. 93.

¹⁸⁸ AAN, PRPwT 592/45/77-78, Correspondence to the MSZ, London, 26 July 1942.

¹⁸⁹ TNA, FO 371/32630/W9732, *London Times*, 20 June 1942.

system.¹⁹⁰ Following lengthy negotiations, Persian authorities granted temporary residency permits for self-supporting Poles to stay in Iran for the duration of the war.¹⁹¹

The majority of evacuees, however, did not achieve economic independence. They could nevertheless delay their departure by finding work deemed as essential inside the camps such as that in hospitals, schools, kitchens and in administration. Resettlement could also be avoided through illness and the British were suspicious and critical of the high hospital admissions rate and indeed of the high staffing levels at the hospital. As a last resort, those unwilling to leave temporarily disappeared as their departure date drew near.¹⁹²

Second maritime evacuation from the Soviet Union to Persia

Meanwhile in the Soviet Union, the Polish army's recruitment numbers continued to grow and despite some help from Britain and the US with uniforms and weapons, food rations fell far short of the levels needed and the accommodation provided was inadequate. This contributed to the steadily worsening physical condition of the troops and accompanying civilians in an area where typhus and malaria were rampant and the death rate ever-rising. Anders was convinced that the army would perish from starvation and disease before it could become an effective fighting force.¹⁹³ At the same time, the British 'urgently required' more troops in the Middle East and 'asked the Polish and Russian governments to make available three Polish divisions numbering forty-four thousand from Russia'.¹⁹⁴ Both governments agreed with the Poles stipulating one condition: 'that troops must be accompanied by their dependents estimated at some thirty thousand'.¹⁹⁵ To this the British reluctantly agreed and a second evacuation was planned.¹⁹⁶ This was a rare event in Soviet history. Stalin allowed people, against whom he had directed a mass imprisonment and deportation campaign, to not only be released from confinement but also to exit the Soviet Union.

The first group of Polish civilians left Tehran bound for Africa on 2 August 1942, and a week later the second evacuation from the Soviet Union began along the same route and in the same manner as the first. On this occasion the Soviets had given notice a few weeks earlier that evacuation was about to begin and the military evacuation staff at Pahlevi, British

¹⁹⁰ AAN, MPiOS 131/52/145, MPiOS Report no. 5, Tehran, 1 to 31 December 1942.

¹⁹¹ AAN, PRPwT 592/45, Management of the evacuation of Polish refugees from Iran, 6 March 1943.

¹⁹² AAN, PRPwT, 592/45, Correspondence to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London from Tehran, 27 July 1943; TNA, FO 371/42865/WR9969, British Embassy, Tehran to A. W. G. Randall, FO, London, 22 August 1944.

¹⁹³ Anders, *An Army in Exile*, pp. 108-110.

¹⁹⁴ TNA, FO 371/32646/W10947, War Cabinet Distribution to United States of America: FO, London to Washington, 30 July 1942.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Anders, *An Army in Exile*, p. 111.

and Polish, had ample time to prepare. The second evacuation accordingly proceeded with considerably greater efficiency than the first. Four hundred four-seater latrines, cook-houses catering for twenty thousand, and shelters for twelve thousand were built and ready for use when the first transport arrived.¹⁹⁷ The majority of evacuees suffering from prolonged malnutrition were in such a bad state that, according to Colonel Ross's report, 'they were hardly able to crawl off the ships.'¹⁹⁸ The rate of arrivals in Pahlevi far exceeded the rate of departures and the maximum figure of forty-two thousand evacuees was reached on 31 August.¹⁹⁹

The rate of illness was five times higher than during the first evacuation and the most prevalent illnesses were dysentery, diarrhoea, deficiency diseases, malaria and typhus.²⁰⁰ The number of deaths recorded at Pahlevi was 568, mostly from malnutrition.²⁰¹ Twenty-six transports arrived over a period of three weeks ending on the 1 September 1942. A total of 69,247 Poles were evacuated, 43,746 military and 25,501 civilian. The civilians comprised 3,759 men, 12,037 women and 9,633 children.²⁰²

Table 1.1 Number of Polish citizens evacuated from the Soviet Union to Persia²⁰³

Evacuation	Dates	Military	Civilian	Total
Maritime 1	from 25.03.1942 to 05.04.1942	31,189	12,619	43,808
Maritime 2	from 11.08.1942 to 01.09.1942	43,746	25,501	69,247
Overland			2,694	2,694
Total		74,935	40,814	115,749

¹⁹⁷ AAN, PRPwT 592/43, Report on the Second Evacuation of Polish troops and civilians from Krasnovodsk to Pahevi, 22 December 1942, Part I, Service Reports, 1. Engineering. Lieut-Colonel Alexander Ross's thirty-three page report is hereafter referred to as the Ross Second Evacuation Report.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., Part I, General Narrative, 5. Transportation from Transcaspia to Persia.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., Part I, General Narrative, 7. The Evacuation at its Peak.

²⁰⁰ Ross Second Evacuation Report, Part II, Service Reports, 4. Medical Services.

²⁰¹ Ibid., Part I, General Narrative, 5. Transportation from Transcaspia to Persia.

²⁰² Ibid., Appendix B, Details of Arrivals by Formations and Categories. Polish figures vary slightly, listing a total of 69,987 including 44,831 military and 25,145 civilians. Civilians comprise 4,013 men, 11,806 women and 9,326 children under the age of 16 yrs. Also listed are 109 deaths and 47 hospitalised in Krasnovodsk. See AAN, PRPwT 592/42/267 for Polish statistics.

²⁰³ TNA, FO 371/32630/W9732, Ross First Evacuation Report, Appendix B, Table of arrivals at Pahlevi; AAN, PRPwT 592/43, Ross Second Evacuation Report, Appendix B, Details of arrivals by formations and categories; TNA, FO 371/42781, Ross Report on Polish Refugees in Persia, April 1942 - December 1943, Part II, Arrival of Polish Refugees, 5. Total arrivals. There is a slight variation in the statistics given in the three Reports of Lt. Col. Ross.

The British succeeded in resettling overseas 23,788 Polish civilian evacuees who arrived in Iran with the Polish army.²⁰⁴ The largest number, around twenty thousand went to Africa. Five and a half thousand went to India, one and a half thousand to Mexico, one and a half thousand to Palestine and seven hundred to New Zealand.²⁰⁵

To Africa via India

The journey to Africa began at the monumental Tehran Central Railway Station.²⁰⁶ There, a specially commandeered passenger train, codenamed Brimfield, waited for lorries full of evacuees to arrive from the camps. They had few personal belongings but each carried a mixed bundle of emotions - loss, fear, anxiety, hope. Some had lost loved ones, family members who had died or been left behind in the Soviet Union. Most felt the loss of husbands, brothers, sons and daughters who had remained in the Middle East with the Polish army. Others grieved for home and homeland. They feared the Red Army soldiers on the streets of Tehran reminding them of the proximity of the Soviet 'paradise' and were equally afraid of the wild places and people of Africa where they were being sent.²⁰⁷ There were those who were exhausted and resigned to whatever fate had in store for them.²⁰⁸ And there were those who rebelled but found themselves boarding the Brimfield anyhow, disempowered by the British political and military imperative to prioritise strategies of war over the wishes of individuals.²⁰⁹ Whatever the particular bundle of emotions each passenger carried, there was a common item in each, a hope that their current circumstances were temporary and they would soon return home to a victorious Poland.

On 2 August 1942, the Brimfield began the first of many journeys between Tehran and Ahwaz in the south. Ahwaz was primarily an oil and military town. It was a permanent base for the Iranian Army, and a temporary base for the occupying British armed forces and growing numbers of American military. It was here that a transit camp had been set up for evacuated Polish air force and navy personnel on their way to the UK. Ahwaz, situated in the

²⁰⁴ Ibid., Part III, Movement Policy, Appendix A, Schedule of departures by ship from Khorramshahr.

²⁰⁵ Leszek Beldowski, 'Przyczyny i trasy wędrówki' in Beldowski et al., *Polacy w Indiach 1942-1948 w świetle dokumentów i wspomnień*, Koło Polaków z Indii, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 3-20; , *Uchodźcy Polscy*, pp. 113, 160, 190, 221.

²⁰⁶ The Tehran Central Railway Station was designed by Polish architect, Władysław Horodecki (1863 -1930). Horodecki is best known for his modernist industrial and public architecture in current day Ukraine where he lived for many years before moving to Warsaw and then later in life to Tehran. He is one of 1,892 Poles buried in Dulab Cemetery, Tehran.

²⁰⁷ Stanisław Patro interviewed by Wanda Warlik, October 2015, Perth, Western Australia; KARTA, AW/II/1072, Testimony of Helena Nikiel.

²⁰⁸ Wiciak-Suchnicka, *Drewniane Motyle*, p. 199.

²⁰⁹ Bugaj, *Dzieci polskie*, pp. 85-86.

middle of a 175 mile stretch of salt desert had an average daily temperature of over forty degrees celsius for more than half of the year and was prone to dry desert storms and hot and humid winds from the Gulf. In these inhospitable weather conditions, the Poles camped out beside an airfield in barracks, stables and tents waiting days, weeks or months for further transport to the Persian Gulf.²¹⁰

From August 1942 to December 1943, twenty-six ships carried 23,788 Poles away from Persia.²¹¹ The main point of departure was Khorramshahr, an ancient port-town on a vast freshwater navigable river, the Karun. Sailing down the channel of the river, some of the Poles wept, others were silent. Janina recalls that as her ship weighed anchor, two Scottish soldiers in full highland regalia appeared on the dock and the plaintive farewell of their bagpipes drifted along with the ship towards the open sea.

The sound of this music did something to us ... big men had tears falling down their faces, young women were crying, old women wept, it affected all of us. I cried too. The music was something I never expected. It did something deep inside me to make me look back at what had happened ... and it made me think of the future. What was going to happen to us?²¹²

Their first port of call was Karachi, a five day journey over a thousand nautical miles through the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea. Ships sailed in convoys due to the presence of enemy submarines. Regular drills for abandoning ship were held and at night the vessels sailed under total blackout. Karachi was a major port city and home to both British and American naval bases. It was an important link in the Lend Lease supply chain and provided logistical support to the Allied forces in the Middle East. It was, however, not prepared for its newfound role as a transit hub for Polish refugees from Persia on their way to the four corners of the earth. When the first four vessels landed over three thousand Polish refugees in Karachi within the space of two weeks, unprepared civil authorities placed them in the hands of the British Army.²¹³

Things did not go well. Housed in primitive conditions in an unused Haji pilgrim camp located in the bazaar district, fed, or as they would claim, underfed on British military rations, the Poles soon protested. For their part, the British military were outraged and

²¹⁰ Leszek Beldowski, 'Przyczyny i trasy wędrówki', in Beldowski et al. (eds.), *Polacy w Indiach*, pp.16-18; Eugenia Wenserska-Krajewska, 'Ahwaz', in Beauprê-Stankiewicz et al. (eds.), *Isfahan*, pp. 355-360.

²¹¹ Ross Report on Polish Refugees in Persia, April 1942 - December 1943, Part III, Movement Policy, 3. Movement by Ship.

²¹² Tim Chappell, *The Persian Blanket: The Life of Janina Milek*, Fremantle, Fremantle Art Centre Press, 2004, p. 148.

²¹³ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, p. 99.

shocked at what they considered to be the insubordination of the Polish men and the lax moral standards of the Polish women. In an effort to improve matters, the British decided to organise a tent camp some twelve miles from Karachi which they euphemistically called the Karachi Country Club. Here, under the fierce sun, camped out in a cactus and stone studded desert, fenced in with barbed wire, kept awake by the mournful howls of hyenas at night, the Poles again protested, this time against being treated, in their eyes, like prisoners of war. After a brutal incident involving British camp personnel, stones were thrown at the soldiers and a group of women confronted the camp commander demanding change. The British hierarchy responded quickly, replacing the entire military staff. The camp's new commanding officer worked closely with the Polish MPiOS representative on the systematic improvement and normalization of life at the 'country club'. The Karachi Country Club closed in October 1945.²¹⁴

During 1942, repeated requests were made of Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, to accept some of the Polish refugees from Persia.²¹⁵ The Viceroy was reluctant to agree as he was faced with far more serious and threatening problems. The fall of neighbouring Burma to the Japanese in May 1942 had heightened the need for internal security and external defence. Recruitment of Indian prisoners of war to fight with the Japanese indicated the ill-will that existed towards the British Raj. In addition to the Anglo-Burmese and Maltese-Balkan refugees who had already arrived in India, refugees from Malaya and Singapore were streaming into the country and half of the one million Indian residents from Burma were also fleeing homewards.²¹⁶

Nevertheless, by the end of 1942, the Viceroy agreed that India would provide wartime domicile to five thousand Poles from Persia.²¹⁷ A second transit camp was organised at a newly built military facility at Malir, fifteen miles from Karachi, and construction began on a second refugee settlement at Valivade, Kolhapur, 300 miles south of Bombay able to hold up to 4,500 refugees. This site was chosen for political reasons, the British preferring to locate the refugees in a princely state over which they had complete control rather than accept the offers of several pro-independence maharajas to welcome the refugees into their territories.²¹⁸ All in all, India provided wartime domicile to some 4,600 Polish refugees -

²¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 99-103.

²¹⁵ TNA, FO 371/32629/W8377, Letter to Brigadier Vale, WO, from FO, London, 11 June 1942.

²¹⁶ Yasmin Khan, *The Raj at War: A People's History of India's Second World War*, London, The Bodley Head, 2015, pp. 98-105.

²¹⁷ TNA, WO 193/216, Secretary of State to Viceroy of India, 25 November 1942.

²¹⁸ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, pp. 94-135.

orphans at Balachadi (Nawangar) and family groups at Valivade.²¹⁹ But for the majority of Polish refugees their contact with India was limited to the transit camp, the Karachi Country Club, where they waited for onward passage to Africa.

Conclusion

Transforming partitioned Poland into a nation state proved to be an extremely challenging task. The Second Polish Republic, born in 1918, was faced with integrating the Polish lands which for over a hundred years had been partitioned and absorbed into three separate empires. Politically and administratively inexperienced, newly elected leaders in the Polish state operated in a radical and chaotic environment. The big question that needed answering was, '*Jaka Polska?*' (What kind of Poland?). The political Right advocated for 'Poland for the Poles' while the political Left championed a pluralist, multi-ethnic nation state. The victim of this debate was democracy with the assassination of the first president, and a military coup a few years later. The political crisis was matched by an economic crisis, with modernisation stymied by lack of direction and know how. Attempted agricultural reform failed and over half of the population were impoverished peasants, most of whom were Ukrainians and Byelorussians living in Eastern Poland where they were the majority population. National independence movements gained increasing popularity and were put down by a brutal pacification campaign in the 1930s. Throughout Poland the interwar period witnessed ongoing Anti-Semitism, with segregation, economic boycotts and pogroms targeting this section of Polish society. The majority of Polish citizens who would become refugees in Africa were deported from the economically depressed and ethnically diverse *kresy* of Eastern Poland. They were newcomers to the land, former soldiers of the Polish-Bolshevik War who were granted or purchased large plots of land that raised them above the level of the impoverished peasants who were their neighbours. Their success as soldiers and farmers made them prime candidates for deportation following the Soviet invasion and annexation of Eastern Poland at the beginning of the Second World War.

One of the ways Eastern Poland was sovietised, was the forced removal of those perceived to be 'enemies of the state' through imprisonment or deportation. Prisoners of war were incarcerated and later joined by civilians who were arrested because they were former employees of the state such as policemen, or leading political and cultural figures, or 'class enemies' such as wealthy landowners or industrialists. Arrests included Polish citizens of all

²¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/51153, Captain A. W. T. Webb Report, 31 August 1946.

ethnicities and religions and are estimated at over a hundred thousand. The deportations happened in four waves each targeting a different demographic. The first and largest group were the soldier-settlers and their families who were forcibly removed to 'special settlements' in the Far North and the Soviet interior to work in forestry and mining. The second wave, deported the families of military and civilian arrestees to Kazakhstan where they were integrated into local communities and worked on state and collective farms. The third group were refugees from West and Central Poland who had fled the German advance and declined Soviet citizenship. Predominantly Jewish, this group shared the fate of the soldier-settlers assigned to work in forests and mines in the Far North and Soviet interior. The fourth and final mass deportation was a cleansing of the *kresy* of 'suspect elements' who had so far avoided the authorities. Mass deportations included Polish citizens of all ethnicities and religions. Though the statistics are disputed, the general consensus among historians is that over three hundred Polish citizens were deported to the Soviet Union during the first twenty-one months of the war.

The unexpected consequence of Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 was the 'amnesty' granted to all Polish citizens detained on Soviet Territory. Poland's ally, Britain, became the Soviet Union's ally, and encouraged a rapprochement between the two stalwart enemies. The resulting Polish-Soviet Agreement allowed for co-operation against the new common enemy - Hitlerite Germany, the formation of a Polish army on Soviet soil, and the amnesty of detained Poles. Men, women and children, released from their places of confinement, flooded south to the Polish army recruitment zone in the Volga region. Within a few months, it was evident to General Anders, who had been appointed to lead the army, and General Sikorski, the Polish Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief, that the Soviets were unable to adequately feed, clothe, shelter, train or equip the Polish forces. In an unprecedented move, Stalin agreed that the army and military families could be evacuated to Allied-occupied Iran, where the army would come under British command. The evacuations took place in spring and autumn of 1942. Over one hundred and fifteen thousand Polish citizens were evacuated of whom around forty thousand were civilians, mostly women and children. The British military alarmed at the number of refugees flooding into the Middle East, draining military supplies and potentially adversely affecting military operations, and concerned at worsening relations with the Persians due to the refugee presence, looked for overseas countries to offer wartime domicile to the refugees. British colonial Africa responded in the affirmative while expressing concerns as to its suitability as a place of indefinite abode for European women and children. The Polish refugees in Iran did not want to go to Africa. They

wanted to stay as close to their menfolk in the army, and to Poland, as possible. They had journeyed far and did not want to go further. They were welcomed by the Iranians who contrary to British fears were hospitable and generous towards them. They feared Africa as uncivilised.

Despite numerous forms of resistance to the move, twenty thousand Polish citizens were taken to Africa. They travelled via India, where their treatment by British colonial authorities led to protests at being treated as prisoners of war. The freedom they had found in Iran appeared to be slipping away.

Chapter 2 **British Colonial Africa**

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the policy of British colonial authorities on refugees, to look into the factors that influenced the formation of that policy, and see how it was put into practice. Though British colonial territories were governed independently of each other they cooperated on matters of mutual interest and benefit. Joint discussions were held pending the arrival of the refugees and joint decisions were made on a refugee regime for their administration. What were the concerns and questions raised and what was the defining principle upon which the refugee regime in British colonial Africa would operate? How did territories decide where the refugees would live and how they would be managed? What role did the Polish Government-in-exile play in these important discussions and decisions? What were the impressions and reactions of the first group of Polish refugees who arrived in Africa from Iran?

The Refugee Regime

During the Second World War, the territories that responded positively to MERRA's request to accept Polish refugees in British East Africa were Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika.²²⁰ Although these three territories were not part of a formal union, they co-operated closely during the war through bodies such as the East African Governors' Conference and the East African Economic Council to coordinate defense matters, labour allocation and food production. The territories that agreed to MERRA's request in Central Africa were Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Malawi), territories that were linked historically and co-operated on matters of common interest through a Governors' Conference based in Salisbury.²²¹ Though there were limited political and economic ties between British East Africa and Central Africa, the two groups worked together and followed common principles and policies in relation to the Polish refugees. The Union of South Africa also

²²⁰ TNA, FO 371/32645/W10393, T. H. Preston to the Office of the Minister of State, Cairo, 20 July 1942.

²²¹ TNA, FO 371/36685/W4258, Sir E. Richards, Nyasaland to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 March 1943. Nyasaland agreed to take one thousand refugees - school boys only, as the country was considered to be entirely unsuitable, from every point of view, for girls. Camps were prepared at various Catholic seminaries for the reception of the schoolboys. The offer to take refugees was withdrawn when to the amazement of Sir Edmund Richards, Governor of the Nyasaland Protectorate (1942-1947), it was discovered that the group assembled at Karachi awaiting transport to Nyasaland consisted of orphans of whom only twenty-five per cent were boys. AAN, MPiOS 131/106/67, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24 January to 31 March 1943.

agreed to take Polish refugees under an independent agreement with the Polish Government.²²²

Colonial Concerns

The twenty thousand Polish refugees provided with temporary domicile in Africa raised a myriad of concerns for colonial authorities. The number of refugees was significant when compared to the European populations of African territories already hosting a wartime influx of Allied military personnel, Italian prisoners of war, and Axis civilian internees, each of whom presented their own administrative challenges. Colonial and Polish authorities were concerned to find suitable locations for the refugees in Africa as the tropical climate and prevalence of malaria made many areas unsuitable for the prolonged sojourn of European women and children. These concerns were played down by the British Government for whom the political and military imperative of moving refugees out of the Middle East was of paramount importance.²²³ Practical problems arose in relation to how the refugees would be housed and fed at a time when building materials for civilian use were virtually non-existent and agricultural production had been recalibrated to meet overseas military demand. There was also the question of the attitude of the white population to refugees. Fearing their decision might prove unpopular, colonial authorities used the media to portray it as a generous gesture and an act of gratitude towards Britain's oldest ally in the war. The *East African Standard*, published in Nairobi, phrased the matter thus:

... large numbers of Polish refugees are to be found a wartime home in Tanganyika and Uganda ... they are the wives and families of some of those gallant, indomitable Polish soldiers who are fighting with the Allied forces in the Middle East. To them we owe a duty. To look after their wives and families will be a privilege.²²⁴

A further dilemma confronted colonial authorities. What was the place of the refugees within an hierarchical colonial society? Though European and 'white', they lacked many of the signifiers of superiority which the British held so dear.²²⁵ The refugees were not British

²²² TNA, FO 371 32647/W11502, Governor Waddington, Lusaka to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 August 1942; FO, 371/32648/W13064, Southern Rhodesia to DO, 26 September 1942.

²²³ TNA, FO 371/32642.W80864, Minister of State, Cairo to Foreign Office, 2 June 1942.

²²⁴ 'Refugees from Persia,' *East African Standard*, 30 June 1942, p. 8. See further, Chigume and Chakawa, 'The Media Weapon', pp. 93-107.

²²⁵ Lingelbach, Jochen, 'Polish Refugees in Colonial Eastern Africa (1942-1950): The Use of European Diaspora Sources for the Writing of African Colonial History', in Geert Castryck, Silke Strickrodt and Katja Werthmann (eds.), *Sources and Methods for African History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Adam Jones*, Leipzig,

but an ethnically diverse group of mostly Poles, but also Jews, Byelorussians and Ukrainians. They did not share a common language or religion with the colonizers. They were representative of the full spectrum of interwar Polish society from priests to prostitutes, pharmacists to farmers, tailors to typists. Dispossessed and repeatedly displaced, they arrived in Africa destitute and in a state of abject poverty. None of these markers signalled the natural superiority of the white race in Africa.²²⁶

There were also concerns that the refugees might not share the British mindset in relation to the African colonising project. There was evidence to this effect. In 1941, three hundred Polish military officers stationed in Scotland had volunteered to serve in the Royal West African Frontier Force where there was an officer shortfall. Like the Polish refugees arriving in East Africa a year later, they had no direct experience of race-based colonialism and their approach to inter-racial relations was found to be somewhat different to that of the British. They proved to be 'less colour conscious', employing a more 'familiar approach' to the training of African troops than their British counterparts, and they were 'less inclined to refuse the company of African women'. Churchill nevertheless noted that they had served 'with high credit'.²²⁷ Colonial authorities had reason to question how the Polish refugees would adapt to colonial society.

Deciding on Camps

Having made the decision to accept the Polish refugees into their respective territories, and cognisant of the real and potential issues that accompanied them, colonial authorities were faced with the question of where the refugees should be located and how they would be managed. With little discussion of alternatives and in line with accepted practice by MERRA, camps were the chosen solution. This was a system with which the colonial authorities were familiar, having previously established camps for prisoners of war and internees in their territories. These camps were not designed to punish but 'to contain'. Prisoners of war and internees were placed in camps as they were deemed to be a threat to wartime security. The refugees on the other hand posed a threat to colonial order. They were not permanent arrivals for the purpose of colonisation, settlement or migration. Instead they were temporarily

Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2016, p. 525-528. I have recently learned that the author has completed a PhD in 2018 on Polish Refugees in Africa. The thesis is currently not accessible.

²²⁶ Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1989, pp. 134-161; Mwangi Kagwanja, 'Unwanted in the 'White Highlands'', pp. 197-240.

²²⁷ Michael S. Healy, ' "The Polish White Infusion": Polish Officers in Britain's West African Frontier Force, 1941-1945', *The Polish Review*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1999, pp. 277-293.

admitted into the British African territories during circumstances of war, exceptional circumstances. They came in their thousands and in one territory at least, would outnumber the existing British population. And they were not British. These three factors, their intended temporary sojourn, their large numbers and their non Britishness, contributed to the refugees being viewed as potential threats to the social, economical and political order of the colonies. Containment facilitated control. There was also the very practical consideration of administration. Camps offered the most efficient means of delivering essential services such as shelter, food, clothing and health care to a refugee population.

The refugees did not know what to expect in Africa. They had been forcibly removed to the Soviet Union, where many were confined to special settlements in remote and isolated places. Their release and evacuation to Persia was experienced as a salvation, a rediscovery of freedom and a return to civilisation. Their living conditions in the camps in Persia had been very basic but they were in the modern and sophisticated city of Tehran where regaining a semblance of normal life seemed possible. The move to Africa had been unwelcome and even resisted. Greeted warmly by the British on arrival, the refugees very quickly thereafter found themselves excluded from colonial society, segregated and in their own words, subject to what felt like 'internment'.²²⁸ Displacement in Africa would be governed by the institution of the camp.

Relations between Colonial and Polish Authorities

Although the territory of Poland was under German and Soviet control when the refugees arrived in Africa, the Polish government had reformed in exile, and continued to exercise its authority in matters concerning Polish citizens in Poland and abroad. Based in London since June 1940, this government had played a critical role in the rescue of its citizens from the Soviet Union, and held itself responsible for their ongoing welfare. It envisaged introducing an administrative system in Africa similar to that in Persia where the Polish refugee camps had been run by Polish authorities with British interests represented by a British Liaison Officer.²²⁹ Although Polish authorities accepted that the British would need to take the lead during the first stages of refugee settlement in Africa, they envisaged that the administration of the camps would fairly quickly be handed over to them. To their consternation, the colonial authorities advised that refugees in Africa were solely the responsibility of African Governments:

²²⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/134, Confidential Notes, Attachment 3A, 26 May 1943.

²²⁹ TNA, FO 371/32650/W14678, M. Daszynski, MPiOS, Nairobi to EARA, 17 September 1942.

The East African Governments regard themselves as responsible to H. M. Government in the United Kingdom for the welfare of the Polish refugees for whom they are providing a domicile during the war. In assuming this task, the East African Governments, including Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, will welcome and avail themselves of the advice and assistance of any Polish delegates whom the Polish Government may wish to appoint for this purpose to East Africa, but the executive authority to decide all questions in which the East African Governments may be in any way concerned in discharging their responsibility must remain with them, subject to directions from H. M. Government in the United Kingdom.²³⁰

The colonial authorities in each of the territories worked together to devise a common administrative structure and a common set of regulations to govern camp life. The supreme decision-making body was the East African Governments Conference which set up the East Africa Refugee Administration (EARA), a sub-office of MERRA, within its Secretariat. In addition, each territory appointed a Director for Refugees and introduced Defence Regulations under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act for the administration of the refugee camps.²³¹ The Polish Government in order to maximise its involvement, set up consulates and offices of the MPiOS in each of the host territories.

Relations between Polish government representatives in Africa and British colonial authorities blew hot and cold over the period of the war. The British were initially suspicious of the long-term plans of the Poles and sought repeated assurances from London that once the war was over the Polish refugees would leave. They were afraid that the refugees' ranks had been infiltrated by Soviet communists; apprehensive in relation to the numbers of Jews who might be among the Poles; concerned at the effect on the labour market and the local economies of the influx of a large number of European workers; and anxious about reports of the loose morals of the women. Later, colonial authorities were critical of the burgeoning bureaucracy that the Polish Government established in the capital cities of each of the territories and frustrated by the inefficiencies and pettiness of the inter-ministerial rivalry between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Labour and Social Welfare. Finally, the British detected a lack of appreciation among the Poles of the burden which the territories had assumed in providing sanctuary for them, and a corresponding lack of

²³⁰ Ibid., EARA to M. Daszynski, MPiOS, Nairobi, 19 September 1942.

²³¹ The Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1939 was passed in response to the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 23 August 1939. It gave the British Government widespread powers to create Defence Regulations under which every aspect of everyday life was regulated. Legislation passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom extended to British Crown dependencies and British overseas territories. See Government Notice No. 351 of 1942, Tanganyika. Legal Notice No. 268 of 1942, Uganda, British Library.

gratitude.²³² The Polish government representatives, on the other hand, were reluctant to accept an advisory, rather than a controlling role in matters concerning the refugees, whom they saw first and foremost as Polish citizens, and their expectations and aspirations for the quality of life the refugees would be provided in Africa were at odds with the realistic possibilities of pioneering states at war.

The Directors for Refugees were not new to the role of controlling foreigners on their soil. In most instances they were already responsible for aliens and internees, and saw the refugees as just another category of alien under their control.²³³ They were inclined to treat all three categories of people equally, much to the dismay of Polish authorities for whom the equal treatment of refugees from an Allied nation, with aliens and internees from Axis nations, was incomprehensible. In Uganda, Commissioner Robertson saw no role for any Polish authority on Ugandan soil and Polish ministerial delegates, who were not used to being 'shouted at' and told to 'mind their own business', considered him ill-mannered, dictatorial, and even brutal in his dealings with them.²³⁴ In Northern Rhodesia, the Director of War Evacuees and Camps, Stuart Gore-Browne, outlined a project for the internal organisation of the refugee camps that was a replica of the territory's model for internment camps. Polish authorities balked at the right assigned to Officers in Charge of camps to require refugees to work at essential duties and to punish rule-breakers.²³⁵ The expectations of the Polish authorities in relation to who would be responsible for the refugees and how they would be treated did not align with the colonial authorities' attitudes and plans.

Regulations introduced by the territories for the internal organisation of the camps reinforced the authority of the colonial authorities. The regulations stated that an Officer in Charge, called a Commandant by the Poles, would be appointed for each camp by the Director, and that officer should be British. The Officer in Charge was responsible for appointing camp officials as necessary and issuing Camp Standing Orders dealing with 'hygiene and sanitation; the treatment of sick refugees; fire drill; communal work on camp maintenance; roll call and general routine; correspondence of refugees; general camp

²³² AAN, MPiOS 131/101/234-235, K. Kazimierzak, MPiOS, Nairobi to the Minister, MPiOS, London, 12 December 1943.

²³³ In Kenya, the Director of Aliens and Internees assumed responsibility for the refugees without a change of title. In Uganda, the Director of Aliens and Internees became the Director of Aliens, Internees and Refugees. In Southern Rhodesia, the refugees came under the authority of the Director of Internment Camps and Refugee Settlements.

²³⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/82-93, K. Kazimierzak, MPiOS, Nairobi to the Minister, MPiOS, London, On relations between the MPiOS and British authorities in Uganda, 22 February 1943.

²³⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/79-80, Report of the official visit by Tadeusz Kopec, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24 January to 31 March 1943.

organisation, good order and discipline; and camp shops.²³⁶ It was acknowledged that there would be a role for a shadow Polish administration to provide religious, cultural and educational services in the camps. For this purpose a Polish Camp Leader (PCL), subordinate to the British Officer in Charge, would be appointed in each camp along with other officials as necessary.²³⁷ Responsibilities were thus divided between the colonial and Polish authorities and a two-tiered camp administrative system established.

The Polish Government opened offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Nairobi, each answerable to their respective ministers in London. Former politicians and civil servants, members of the entourage of the government in exile, were flown out from the UK to fill these posts. Unfortunately, the presence of two Polish ministries in Nairobi led to divisive and damaging competition for influence with colonial authorities, and involvement with the refugees. Co-operation between the Polish and British authorities was hampered by this in-fighting and refugee camp life too felt its ill effects. The problem spread as consulates and ministerial offices were opened in all the territories where refugee camps were established - Kampala (Uganda), Dar es Salaam (Tanganyika), Lusaka and Livingstone (Northern Rhodesia), Salisbury (Southern Rhodesia), Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg (South Africa). In 1943, the Polish Ministry of Education and the Polish Treasury also set up offices in East and Central Africa. Colonial authorities were critical of this proliferation of Polish officialdom and saw it as self-interested and self-promoting. In Southern Rhodesia, the local delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross reported:

During a visit to the Polish Refugee Settlements, I found the Administration ... a playground of Polish officialdom. In Salisbury ... Polish officials and semi-officials try to show they are indispensable to the well-being of Polish refugees (but with the aim) of giving civil servants the best possible livelihood until they return to Poland ... it seems Polish Administration does not exist for refugees but refugees are justification to maintain Polish officialdom.²³⁸

More than six months after the arrival of the first refugees, colonial authorities were advised that a special agreement had been reached between the two Ministries defining their respective roles. The Consuls from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were responsible for

²³⁶ TNA, FO 371/36685/W3059, Conference of Directors and Commissioners of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi 9 January 1943, Appendix A: Orders and Directions made by the Director of Refugees.

²³⁷ TNA, FO 371/36685/W3059, Conference of Directors and Commissioners of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi, 9 January 1943.

²³⁸ S482/72/42, G. C. Senn to Prime Minister Huggins, 13 January 1944 in Rupiah, 'The History of the Establishment of Internment Camps and Refugee Settlements in Southern Rhodesia', p. 150.

presenting the views and policy of the Polish Government to the territorial Governors and only the Polish Consul General in Nairobi could deal with the East African Governors' Conference. The Delegates of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare were responsible for the organisation of the life of refugees inside the camps and were authorised to deal directly with EARA.²³⁹ Friction between the two ministries continued for the duration of their operations in Africa due in part to the instability of the Polish government in exile, and rivalry between representatives of different pre-war political parties. The high turnover of Polish ministerial appointees and administrative personnel in Africa also led to a lack of continuity in the work with the refugees.

A Memorandum of Agreement regarding the respective responsibilities of the East African Governments and the Polish Authorities in East Africa was finalised in mid 1943. It defined a hierarchy of relations between British, colonial and Polish governments and instrumentalities.

British Government	⇔	Polish Government
EA Governors' Conference, Nairobi	⇔	MSZ - Consul General, Nairobi
Territorial Governments	⇔	MSZ - Territorial Consuls
EARA	⇔	MPiOS
Directors of Refugees	⇔	MPiOS Territorial Delegates
Camp - Commandant	⇔	Camp - Polish Leaders

In essence, the memorandum reinforced the authority of the East African Governments to decide all questions relating to the welfare of the Polish refugees, while the religious, cultural and educational services of the camps were in the hands of Polish authorities. However, the document went further. It spoke of consultation, cooperation and mutual agreement. It offered the Polish Government assistance in fulfilling its responsibilities towards the refugees; it registered preparedness to provide all possible help to the Polish authorities in working towards the goal of self-sufficiency; it provided for the establishment of a Polish administrative machine within the camps; it prioritised the employment of Polish refugees in the internal British administration of the camps; and finally, it declared Poles eligible for

²³⁹ TNA, FO 371/36686/W12199, M. Wierusz-Kowalski, Polish Consul-General in Nairobi to the Chief Secretary, East African Governors' Conference, Nairobi, 17 July 1943.

appointment as Officers in Charge of camps.²⁴⁰ While maintaining their hold on power over the refugees and refuge camp administration, the colonial authorities provided increased opportunities for the Poles to take part in the management of the camps.

The internal administration of the camp was the responsibility of the Camp Commandant. Appointed by colonial authorities, the Commandant was usually a retired British military or colonial officer recalled to wartime service as Officer in Charge of a prisoner of war, internee or refugee camp. Each Commandant had an administrative team made up of Britons and Poles who filled roles such as that of Quartermaster. Answering to the Commandant was the Polish Camp Leader. These two men worked together in the everyday running of the camp. The PCL also had an administrative team and an Advisory Committee all of whom were Poles. The British Government undertook to provide the initial finance for Polish refugee operations in Africa. All expenses incurred by the colonial governments would be reimbursed by the British Government. The British Treasury had also set up a line of credit to the Polish Government-in-exile, enabling it, among other civilian activities, to pursue their work in the refugee camps. The monies advanced via the line of credit would be reimbursed after the war.²⁴¹

Camp Personnel

The wellbeing of the refugees and the smooth operation of the camps was dependent to a considerable extent upon the attitude and skills of both the British Officer in Charge, or Camp Commandant, as he was more commonly called, and the head of the Polish Administration, the Polish Camp Leader. Both sides experienced difficulties in finding suitable people for the job. The British ideally filled the positions with retired military and colonial officers. However, this was a very limited labour pool as these retirees were already in high demand for service in internment and prisoner of war camps, forcing the British to look further afield among civilians and even 'friendly aliens'. In January 1943, a team of five 'British' staff at Koja, headed by former District Commissioner, Rennie Bere, included one Frenchman and

²⁴⁰ TNA, FO 371/36686/W12199, Memorandum regarding the respective responsibilities of the East African Governments and the Polish Authorities in East Africa for the general welfare of Polish refugees in East Africa and describing the manner in which these responsibilities are to be discharged by the said governments and Polish authorities in collaboration, 29 July 1943, to the Chief Secretary to the Governors' Conference and to the Polish Consul-General.

²⁴¹ TNA, FO 371/32631/W10091, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Sir Henry Moore, Chair of the East African Governors' Conference, 17 July 1942; FO 371/32630/9569, Mr Sidebotham, CO, London to A. W. G. Randall, FO, London, 14 July 1942.

two Dutchmen.²⁴² There were some unfortunate and short-lived appointments to the position of Camp Commandant. At Ifunda, the British were forced to hurriedly replaced a camp commandant whose actions revealed him to be 'psychologically unstable'. At Kidugala, the Camp Commandant took over administering the camp store removing the previous incumbent, an Indian trader, and brought in a new pricing policy that led to an outcry from the camp's residents. He was eventually dismissed for profiteering.²⁴³

Other complaints from the Polish refugees with respect to the British administration of the camps were perhaps more serious. The general perception among the Poles was that camp authorities, demonstrated little awareness or appreciation of the Polish way of life, and had a minimal understanding of the refugees' experience of exile, of being forcibly removed to, and escaping from, the Soviet Union. There were however, some outstandingly successful appointments such as that of Colonel John Minnery at Tengeru. Minnery, a Scot, and long-serving Camp Commandant, was sympathetic and understanding, and worked hard for the good of the refugees earning their respect and affection.²⁴⁴ At Bwana Mkubwa, Captain Shannon Grills, nick-named *kotlecik* (chop) by the children, was a strict yet kind fatherly figure who married one of the refugees and was also a long-serving commandant.²⁴⁵ Although the appointment of Polish Camp Commandants was possible, few Poles were able to meet the pre-requisite of possessing a thorough knowledge of the English language. Though multilingualism was a common feature of Polish society, for historical and cultural reasons, languages such as Russian, German and French were more commonly used than English. Only in some of the smaller camps in Tanganyika did Poles accede to this role - Dr Julian Zamenhof at Kondoia and Kazimierz Chodzikiwicz at Kidugala.²⁴⁶

Polish authorities also struggled to find suitable people to be Camp Leaders.²⁴⁷ Some positions were awarded to Poles with senior civil service experience or higher education qualifications who were resident in Northern Rhodesia as guests of HM Government and had arrived there via Cyprus, not the Soviet Union and Persia. The task of running a refugee camp required, however, particular leadership and community-building skills which were not always present in the Polish élite. At Makindu transit camp, a poet rather reluctantly accepted

²⁴² Rennie Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry, : A Personal Account of Life and work in Uganda between 1930 and 1960*, Cheltenham, Cedar Publishing Ltd, 1990, p. 198.

²⁴³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/127, MPiOS Report, 1 June to 31 July 1943, Nairobi.

²⁴⁴ Hejczyk, *Sybiracy pod Kilimandżaro*, pp. 69-76.

²⁴⁵ Maria Gabiniewicz, 'Bwana M'Kubwa', in FAFT (eds.), *Tulacze Dzieci*, p. 209.

²⁴⁶ Dr Julian Zamenhof's uncle invented Esperanto. See Andrzej Wincewicz et al., 'Language and Medicine in the Zamenhof Family', *Acta med-hist Adriat*, vol. 8 no. 2, 2010, pp. 287-292.

²⁴⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/129, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943.

the post and proved to be an unsympathetic camp leader, even though he himself had shared the ordeal of deportation and exile with the refugees.²⁴⁸ The British also dismissed Polish Camp Leaders they deemed to be unsuitable, one who announced on the day he arrived to take up his position that he and not the British would be running the camp, and another who arrived to take up residence in the designated camp with a woman who was not his wife.²⁴⁹

There were other Polish Leaders though, who are remembered with great affection such as Dr Ferdynand Zarzycki, a retired Brigadier-General and former Minister of Commerce who was the Director of the Secondary Boarding School for Girls, at Diggelfold. The school's 1946 Annual outlines his goals to produce girls with strength of character, who demonstrated stamina and self-discipline, and who possessed physical strength and fitness. To achieve this he introduced:

a strict routine modelled upon military lines and the regimentation of every detail of daily life, daily exercises before breakfast, five meals a day, an after-lunch rest observed in absolute silence, systematic manual work in the gardens, and meticulous medical supervision.²⁵⁰

Despite the rigour and discipline imposed upon the girls in his care, they express in memoirs and recollections a deep-felt respect and gratitude towards 'their' General.²⁵¹ All Camp Commandants and Polish Camp Leaders were male.

In their negotiations with Preston from MERRA in mid 1942, colonial authorities had 'emphasised the importance of English-speaking advance parties of Polish experts arriving in East Africa as soon as possible and well ahead of the refugees themselves.'²⁵² The colonial authorities' desire to include and work with Polish advisers on the task of choosing locations for camps and constructing accommodation was frustrated when no so-called 'experts' arrived before the refugees. It was thus left to colonial authorities to do the best they could in difficult circumstances. They were guided by the principles set by the East African Governors' Conference of 'the necessity of finding cultivatable land, thereby ensuring that the refugees should be self-supporting at the earliest possible date' and 'finding districts where, the Poles, a European and white race, could till the land out of sight of the natives.'²⁵³ Political, economic,

²⁴⁸ Korabiewicz, Waclaw, *Gdzie słoń a gdzie Polska*, Warszawa, Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 1983, p. 87.

²⁴⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/111, MSZ Nairobi to the Minister, MSZ, London, 3 March 1943.

²⁵⁰ Annual Report of Polish Secondary Boarding School at Diggelfold, Southern Rhodesia, 1946, p. 4. Copy in possession of Helena Cieśla.

²⁵¹ Helena Cieśla interviewed by Wanda Warlik, November 2015, Perth, Western Australia; Interview with Stanisław Patro.

²⁵² TNA, FO 371/32645/W10393, T. H. Preston to the Office of the Minister of State, Cairo, 20 July 1942, p. 3.

²⁵³ Ibid.

social and geographic differences between territories meant that there were variations in how these principles were applied.

Territories and Camps

Before proceeding to examine the internal workings of the refugee camps, how British and Polish authorities carried out their respective responsibilities and how the refugees experienced camp life, this section will provide an overview of each of the territories in which the camps were located, noting the attitudes and expectations of the various territorial authorities towards the refugee and the reasons behind their choice of locations for the camps.

Kenya (Colony)

In the late nineteenth century, a combination of commercial and philanthropic interests led to increasing British involvement in East Africa and the establishment of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1895. The British pursuit of development through European settlement and agricultural exports, and their decision to reserve the fertile highlands north of Nairobi for white settlement, led to the formation of a privileged 'white' society. Transformed into a British crown colony in 1920, politics and economics in Kenya continued to be dominated by the white minority who, as shown in the table below, comprised around half of one per cent of the total population.

Table 2.1 Population Statistics for Kenya²⁵⁴

Population	1931	1948
African	not counted	5,251,000
Asian*	43,623	97,687
European	16,812	29,660
Arab	12,166	24,174
Other	1,346	3,325
Total	-	5,405,846

* Asian refers to persons of Indian, Pakistani or Goan origin.

²⁵⁴ The East African Statistical Department, in Michael Adam (ed.), *Indian Africa: Minorities of Indian-Pakistani Origin in Eastern Africa*, Dar es Salaam, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2015, p. 121.

The seeds of the rebellion that would eventually lead to independence in 1963 were sown in the interwar years with growing African protests over issues relating to land and labour.²⁵⁵

Though relatively little military action took place south of the Sahara, Kenya's involvement in the Second World War was considerable. It was an operations base during the East Africa campaign and thereafter a strategic Allied base. It was home to three Royal Air Force bases, four training camps for the King's African Rifles (who served as front line infantry units in North and East Africa, the Middle East and Burma), and nine thousand troops of the Royal West African Frontier Force. The Mombasa-based Eastern Fleet was responsible for guarding Indian Ocean sea lanes.²⁵⁶ Kenya prospered by adjusting its economy to meet the demands of the empire at war. The colony traditionally pursued development through European settlement and agricultural exports, and the settlers of the fertile 'white highlands' were beneficiaries of the booming agricultural sector, exporting coffee and sisal, crops that Africans were not permitted to grow. The war brought social disruption and little economic benefit to the African population with African males conscripted to work on European farms and to serve in the military.²⁵⁷

Sir Henry Monck-Mason Moore, Governor of Kenya (1940-1944), was a strong advocate for accepting the Polish refugees into British East Africa, but not in Kenya which, he argued, was already hosting sixty thousand Italian prisoners of war and fifteen thousand Italian internees, considerably more than the European settler population of just over twenty thousand.²⁵⁸ It seems that Moore agreed in general that 'what we have done for thousands of our enemies we can do gladly for our friends' but not in particular, not in Kenya.²⁵⁹ Mwangi Kagwanja has argued that pressure from the settler population led the Governor to deny the Polish refugees the right to settle in the 'white highlands'. They were 'a triple challenge to European communities in the imperial periphery related to the fact that they constituted an extraordinary ensemble of femininity, infantility and infirmity.'²⁶⁰ On average, forty-six per cent of arrivals were women, forty-five per cent were children under the age of fourteen, and

²⁵⁵ For histories of the end of empire in Kenya see David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2005; Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*, London, Jonathan Cape, 2005.

²⁵⁶ Judith A. Byfield, 'Beyond Impact: Toward a New Historiography of Africa and World War II', in Thomas W. Zeiler and Daniel M. DuBois (eds.), *A Companion to World War II*, Hoboken, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2013, p. 656.

²⁵⁷ Judith A. Byfield, 'Producing for the War', in Judith A. Byfield et al. (eds.), *Africa and World War II*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 36.

²⁵⁸ TNA, FO 371/32645/W10393, T. H. Preston, MERRA to the Minister of State, Cairo, 20 July 1942.

²⁵⁹ 'Refugees from Persia', *East African Standard*, 30 June 1942, p. 8.

²⁶⁰ Mwangi Kagwanja, *Unwanted in the 'White Highlands'*, p. 197.

nine per cent were men, either unfit for military service on medical grounds or elderly.²⁶¹ This argument for Kenyan non-acceptance of the Polish refugees is compelling because Italian prisoners of war were accepted despite sharing with the Poles the features of being 'poor whites' and non-British. The Italians, being male, may have been more acceptable as a potential labour force, and given their prisoner of war status, more subject to the authority of their captors.

Nairobi was the seat of authority on all refugee matters in East Africa. The East Africa Governors' Conference which met monthly, and the East Africa Refugee Administration which co-ordinated the reception, distribution and administration of refugees, were located in Nairobi. It was also the location of the Polish Consulate, the head office of the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare the Polish Ministry of Education and non-government organisations such as the Polish YMCA, the Polish Scouting Association, the Polish Red Cross, and the US based Catholic War Relief Services. The Polish diplomatic and political hierarchy in Nairobi, appointed by the Polish Government-in-exile in London, were members of the Polish intelligentsia and aristocracy whose professional and social standing made them acceptable residents of the Kenyan metropolis. They had followed a different path to Africa than the refugees. Their flight ahead of the German advance into Poland had taken them across Europe to France and then on to the UK with their families and finances largely intact. A nucleus of around fifty Poles operated the Polish administrative machine in Nairobi.²⁶²

Kenya played a key role in the administration of the refugees but its contribution to accommodating them was limited to an inward and outward transit camp, a post-war children's camp, and a home for the elderly and infirm. Most refugees arriving and departing British East Africa came through Mombasa, though the ports at Dar es Salaam and Tanga in Tanganyika were also sometimes used. Makindu, one of eleven camps constructed in Kenya to hold Italian prisoners of war from the East Africa Campaign of June 1940 - November 1941 was designated as a quarantine and sorting centre for arriving refugees as it was conveniently situated on the main rail line from Mombasa to Uganda and northern Tanganyika.²⁶³ In late 1943, at the request of Polish authorities, a section of the camp was set aside to house 'troublesome persons' who were considered to be 'subversive to good order' in

²⁶¹ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, p. 147.

²⁶² Suski, *W służbie publicznej na dwóch kontynentach*, p. 196.

²⁶³ Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, pp. 86-95.

the camps.²⁶⁴ After the war, authorities also opened an outward transit camp at English Point Camp, Mombasa, for refugees departing Africa by sea.²⁶⁵

In early 1943, the Polish Red Cross together with the Catholic Church opened a home for the care of the elderly and infirm. Located on a farm sixteen miles out of Nairobi at Manira, the establishment was run by Brother Jozefat Nowicki of the Holy Ghost Fathers who had served in Africa as a missionary for some forty years. Manira provided specialised care for returned soldiers, including the fitting of artificial limbs crafted by Italian prisoners of war.²⁶⁶ In 1945, Kenyan authorities established a children's camp at an unused air force base at Rongai, one hundred miles northwest of Nairobi. There, a group of twenty Polish nuns, also refugees, cared for about four hundred children, mostly orphans. Rongai operated from early 1945 to August 1947 when the sale of the land forced its closure.²⁶⁷ The two common characteristics of these specialist facilities in Kenya are the involvement of the Catholic Church and their location in the malaria-free 'white highlands'. Those perceived by the British to be most vulnerable were afforded special consideration: children, the elderly, the infirm, and returned soldiers. There was no place in Kenya for refugee women.

Uganda (Protectorate)

Uganda was a reluctant partner in the scheme to provide wartime domicile to Polish refugees in Africa. At the June 1942 Governors' Conference, Sir Charles Cecil Farquharson Dundas, Governor of Uganda (1940-1944), provisionally agreed to accept five thousand Polish refugees, stating that he still needed to be convinced that Uganda was logistically a more suitable location than Kenya, where most supplies for the refugees would need to come from. He argued emphatically that Uganda was climatically unsuitable for Europeans unaccustomed to tropical conditions, particularly women and children, and that he could not provide 'medical, educational and other facilities such as must be afforded to a community of this type.'²⁶⁸ The construction of special accommodation for the refugees was also a problem. Due to import restrictions and the prioritisation of military projects, there were no available supplies of 'water piping, electrical material, cement, corrugated iron, nails, or mosquito

²⁶⁴ TNA, FO 371/36687/W17986, Conference of Directors of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi, 17-18 November 1943; AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS, Nairobi, Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

²⁶⁵ AN, AJ/43/1061/43/1, Brigadier M. S. Lush, Chief of IRO Mission, Middle East, 12 November 1948.

²⁶⁶ 'Dom Inwalidów', *Polak w Afryce*, 16 April 1943, p. 6; 'Podziękowanie Inwalidów', *Polak w Afryce*, 15 August 1943, p. 5.

²⁶⁷ TNA, FO 371/51151/WR1858, Governor of Kenya to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 21 May 1945; FAFT, *Polska Szkoła*, pp. 194-201.

²⁶⁸ TNA, FO 371/32654/W12195, Governor Dundas to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 July 1942.

netting' for civilian projects. London had been informed as early as May 1942 that the only accommodation it was possible to prepare was 'bare camp accommodation of local materials'.²⁶⁹ Dundas wrote in a secret despatch to London:

It will be appreciated that primitive camping conditions, if continued indefinitely, may prove extremely prejudicial to the health of such refugees. I must be allowed to disclaim responsibility for the consequences in this respect and have only agreed most reluctantly to accept these refugees in deference to the over-riding demands of existing war conditions.²⁷⁰

The response expressed concern about providing a suitable standard of accommodation for the Polish refugees while indicating that 'the refugees will by now be well inured to privation.'²⁷¹

Dundas may also have been concerned that Uganda was already home to over four thousand Italian prisoners of war at Jinja on Lake Victoria, and one thousand Italian male internees at Entebbe, the British administrative HQ in Uganda.²⁷² At the same time the British population had fallen considerably below its pre-war figure due to the release for military service of Colonial Office personnel. As shown in the table below, the number of 'whites' in Uganda in 1941 was just over two thousand or 0.05 per cent of the African population. The Polish refugees would outnumber the British in Uganda by three to one.

Table 2.2 Population Statistics for Uganda²⁷³

Population	1941	1948
African	3,844,981	4,917,555
Asian*	18,381	32,215
European	2,186	3,448
Arab	n/a	n/a
Total	-	-

* Asian refers to persons of Indian, Pakistani or Goan origin.

The contrasting attitudes of Moore and Dundas to the Polish refugees are a reflection of the different political, economic and social landscapes in the Colony of Kenya and the

²⁶⁹ TNA, FO 371/32642/W79633, Mr Gurney, Chief Secretary Governors' Conference to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 May 1942.

²⁷⁰ TNA, FO 371/32654/W12195, Governor Dundas to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 July 1942.

²⁷¹ TNA, FO 371/32645/W10577, G. Seel, CO to A. W. G. Randall, FO, 24 July 1942.

²⁷² TNA, FO 371/32654/W12195, Governor of Uganda to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 July 1942.

²⁷³ UBOS (1991) and East African Statistical Department, in Adam (ed.), *Indian Africa*, p. 145.

Protectorate of Uganda. British rule in Uganda was structured around the Uganda Agreement of 1900 between Great Britain and the Kingdom of Buganda which effectively empowered the *kabaka* (king) and some four thousand Christian chiefs by giving them freehold title to land and the responsibility of administering that land and the population on it. Throughout the Protectorate, the principle of 'indirect rule' was applied to the administration of the African population and African chiefs provided the basis of local government including administering the legal and taxation systems. The economy was advanced not through white settlement and plantation agriculture as in Kenya but by legislating African land security and encouraging African agricultural production of export crops such as cotton, sugar cane and coffee.²⁷⁴ There was no place in Uganda for white settlers and Dundas emphasized that the Polish refugees would have to leave immediately after the war or he would not hesitate to deport them.²⁷⁵ Uganda's contribution to the Allied war effort included the enlistment of seventy-seven thousand native soldiers, and its thriving economy enabled the granting of individual and collective loans to Britain including a direct loan of one million pounds sterling and a loan from the Cotton and Coffee Fund of three million pounds sterling.²⁷⁶

In choosing sites for refugee camps, Uganda was guided by the principle of finding good agricultural land for the refugees to grow their own food and become self-sufficient. EARA had also recommended that camp locations be isolated so that the refugees would not be seen working the land, and so lower the prestige of the 'white race' in the eyes of the African population. Another reason for choosing remote locations was the widely held belief within MERRA that 'refugees are a favourite medium for the infiltration of enemy agents'.²⁷⁷

The first location chosen was in the Western Province of Bunyoro at Masindi, just north of the equator, four thousand feet above sea level, between the tropical Budongo Forest, renowned for its huge mahogany trees to the north, and the rolling savannah to the south. Situated between Lake Koja and Lake Alberta, the soil was fertile and the vegetation lush. It was a remote location, twenty-four hours by road and river from the nearest railway station. Here over twelve hundred African labourers began clearing land, boring for water and

²⁷⁴ Robert M. Maxon, *East Africa: An Introductory History*, Morgantown, West Virginia University Press, 1986, pp. 148-159.

²⁷⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/109, M. Wierusz Kowalski Report on tour of Polish camps in East Africa, 3 September to 30 October 1942.

²⁷⁶ Carol Summers, 'Ugandan Politics and World War II (1939-1945)', in Byfield et al., *Africa and World War II*, p. 482.

²⁷⁷ TNA, FO 371/32653/W17397, Memorandum, W. T. Matthews, MERRA Cairo, 25 November 1942.

constructing simple dwellings of local materials in July 1942.²⁷⁸ The camp would eventually house three and a half thousand refugees.

The second location chosen was Koja, a peninsula on Lake Victoria in the eastern province of Buganda. The site was surrounded by water on three sides and two hills enclosed the fourth. Koja was forty miles out of Kampala but not on the railway line. One of the first Englishmen involved in the organisation and building of the Koja settlement, M. Pektory, described it as:

a place densely overgrown with trees, vines and tall grasses. The only residents were wild animals, snakes, birds and monkeys. Along the sandy bays and gently sloping shores of the lake, crocodiles and hippopotami could be seen during the day. At night the air was filled with mosquitos and during the day with tse-tse flies.²⁷⁹

Here, one thousand Africans cleared the land, laid piping and pumping installations to get water from the lake, and built a settlement of simple huts with mud walls and roofs of dried elephant grass to accommodate around three thousand people.²⁸⁰ Though there were only two camps in Uganda, they held almost of third of the refugees.

Tanganyika (Mandated Territory under British Administration)

The largest and most populous of the British East African territories, Tanganyika, was neither a colony nor a protectorate. Its colonial history was linked to German imperialism until it came under British administration as a League of Nations mandated territory in 1920. By this time, violent native hostility to German colonial rule, notably the Maji Maji rebellion of 1905, has been crushed, and education and economic development were promoted as the way forward to peace and prosperity for all. Under British administration, both African agriculture and European settlement were promoted and an export-oriented economy based on primary goods such as sisal, coffee and cotton developed.²⁸¹ The major change that came with British control was a remodelling of the administrative structure with the introduction of indirect rule over the large African population. As shown in the table below, the European population formed approximately 0.15 per cent of the total population of Tanganyika during the Second World War. At the same time there would be two Polish refugees in Tanganyika for every three Europeans.

²⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/32650/W14755, Colonel H. P. Mitchell's Report to W. Strang, FO, London, November 1942.

²⁷⁹ A. Miker, 'Ze słonecznego Iranu nad jezioro Wiktorja', *Polak w Afryce*, 8 Sept 1944, p. 4.

²⁸⁰ Lwanga-Lunyiigo, *Uganda and the Problem of Refugees*, p. 23.

²⁸¹ Maxon, *East Africa*, pp. 169-177.

Table 2.3 Population Statistics for Tanganyika²⁸²

Population	1931	1948
African	5,022,640	7,407,517
Asian*	32,398	46,254
European	8,228	10, 648
Arab	n/a	11,074
Other	n/a	2,184
Total	5,063,266	7,447,677

*Asian refers to persons of Indian or Goan origin.

Tanganyika's economic fortunes fluctuated during the war. It suffered from loss of European markets in the early years and then benefitted from 1942 onwards with the fall of the Far East and the entry of America into the war. The promotion of large scale production of tobacco, cattle, rubber, sisal and pyrethrum favoured white settlers while the drought of 1942/1943 created a food crisis that the Government struggled to overcome. Tanganyika's contribution to the Allied war effort included large-scale conscription of native labour for military service in the King's African Rifle Battalion and the Tanganyikan Naval Volunteer Force. By 1945, native conscription to the military stood at 86,740 and another 85,501 Africans were working as indentured labour on agricultural estates.²⁸³

Tanganyika was far more amenable to accepting Polish refugees than Kenya or Uganda. Sir Wilfrid Edward Francis Jackson, Governor of Tanganyika (1941-1945), advised the Governors' Conference in June 1942 that Tanganyika would take five thousand Polish refugees and was immediately ready to receive one and a half thousand. Jackson planned to establish three small camps in the Southern Highlands and to build a camp for three thousand people near Arusha, the capital of the Northern Province. In the meantime temporary accommodation would be provided at internment camps initially built for Italian women and children. A prisoner of war camp was also available if needed.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Report on the population of Tanganyika, United Nations, September 1949, in Adam (ed.), *Indian Africa*, pp. 105-106.

²⁸³ Nicholas Westcott, 'The Impact of the Second World War on Tanganyika 1939-1949', in David Killingray and Richard Rathbone (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War*, London, Macmillan, 1986, p. 147.

²⁸⁴ 'Tanganyika to give homes to 5,000 Poles', *East African Standard*, 31 July 1942, p. 15.

The first internment camp, capacity five hundred, was situated near the town of Morogoro at the foot of the Uluguru Mountains on the main Dar es Salaam to Dodoma railway line. The camp's location was ideal. It was close to town, on the railway line and situated in the agricultural heartland of Tanganyika. It was also in the missionary hub of Tanganyika, with a monastery and convent nearby and Dutch Catholic priests, nuns and brothers playing an active role in the camp's administration.²⁸⁵ The second internment camp, capacity four hundred, was located at Kondoa in the Central Province, four hours by road (ninety miles) from the nearest railway station at Dodoma. The landscape was bare as the area was semi-arid, and the year the refugees arrived the rains failed causing a prolonged drought.²⁸⁶ The camp's saving grace was its proximity to a long-established Catholic Mission whose Italian priests, brothers and nuns played a key practical and spiritual role in caring for the refugees.²⁸⁷

Two camps were built in the Southern Province at an even greater distance from lines of communication but once again closely associated with missions. It was an eight hour drive (170 miles) from the Dodoma railway station south to the refugee camp at Ifunda, capacity eight hundred. An abundance of fertile volcanic soil, heavy rainfall and a cool climate made it a highly suitable place for European habitation. Nearby was the Tosamaganga Mission, run by the Italian Consolata Fathers and home of Bishop Beltramino. The mission was a hive of industry, a vast complex that included a convent of the Sisters of St Therese, a House of the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Brothers, a seminary, an orphanage, a hospital, a school, and a timber mill. In the vicinity of the camp there was an agricultural station, a large tea plantation and a piggery.²⁸⁸

Five hours (one hundred miles) by road to the south-east of Ifunda, near the town of Njombe in the Southern Highlands, the Kidugala refugee camp, capacity eight hundred, was established on the site of a former German Lutheran Mission.²⁸⁹ It was on one thousand hectares of land complete with gardens and orchards, water reservoirs, a church, and administrative and residential buildings. The camp administration established itself in the existing mission complex and the standard mud huts with elephant grass roofs were built for

²⁸⁵ PISM, KOL 174/4, History of the Morogoro Settlement, 14 October 1946.

²⁸⁶ Killingray, *Africa and the Second World War*, p. 148.

²⁸⁷ PISM, KOL 174/4, History of the Kondoa Settlement.

²⁸⁸ PISM, KOL 174/2, History of the Ifunda Settlement.

²⁸⁹ German Lutheran missionaries were interned by British colonial authorities for the duration of the war whereas German and Italian Catholic missionaries were permitted to continue their work with Catholic bishops as their guarantors. See Marja-Liisa Swantz, *Beyond the Forestline: The Life and Letters of Bengt Sundkler*, Gracewing, Herefordshire, Studia Missionalia SVECANA LXXXIV, 2002, pp. 109 and 120.

the refugees on lower ground. Scenically located in the mountains among lush vegetation with a cool climate and ample water supply from nearby rivers, the major downfall of the location was its isolation.²⁹⁰

In contrast to the isolation of the smaller settlements such as Kondo, Ifunda and Kidugala, the Tanganyikan authorities decided to build a large settlement, capacity four thousand, in the Northern Province of Tanganyika, just fifteen miles from Arusha, the provincial capital, on the railway line that linked Arusha with Tanga, Mombasa and Nairobi. Situated on the northern plains within sight of the permanently snow-capped Mt Kilimanjaro, Arusha was the centre of a small farming community and an important safari centre with something of a Wild West reputation. One of the earliest investors in its development was an Ohio entrepreneur, Kenyon Painter, who among other ventures established the territory's premier coffee estate and set up a coffee research centre at a place called Tengeru.²⁹¹ This was where four thousand Africans were employed to build a settlement for the Polish refugees. Lying in the rolling green foothills of Mt Meru, Tengeru boasted a cool climate, an ample water supply from nearby rivers and volcanic Lake Diluti, and one thousand acres of fertile land.²⁹²

Northern Rhodesia (Protectorate)

Historically, British interest in Northern Rhodesia was linked to the push north into Central Africa by Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in the late nineteenth century in search for gold. The territory that had been granted under Charter to the BSAC was placed under the administration of the British Crown as a protectorate in 1924. However, it was not the discovery of gold but of rich copper deposits in the north-west in 1928, that resulted in the growth of a large mining industry and the economic development of the territory. In the late 1930s, metals accounted for ninety seven per cent of Northern Rhodesia's exports, copper alone for ninety per cent.²⁹³ Poor soil and scarcity of rain meant that agriculture was not an important factor in economic growth. Northern Rhodesia struggled

²⁹⁰ Kondratowicz-Kordas, Leokadia, *Wędrowniczkę z Kidugali*, Kurier Press, Perth, Western Australia, no publication date available, pp. 38-51.

²⁹¹ Brian Herne, *White Hunters: The Golden Age of African Safaris*, New York, Henry Holt & Co., 1999, pp. 201-202.

²⁹² PISM, KOL 174/9A, History of the Polish Tengeru Settlement, Tanganyika, East Africa.

²⁹³ Colonial Reports - Annual. No 1868. Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Northern Rhodesia 1937, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938.

to produce enough of its main crop, maize, to feed its population and the keeping of cattle was severely limited by the presence of the tse tse fly.²⁹⁴

During the war, Northern Rhodesia assumed a huge economic and strategic importance to Britain and her allies as a supplier of raw materials. Britain annually purchased Northern Rhodesia's entire output of copper, satisfying seventy per cent of her needs.²⁹⁵ The corresponding increase in the size of the copperbelt labour force, which doubled between 1939 and 1944, caused major food shortages and resulted in the introduction of food rationing by the mining companies of maize, the staple diet of African workers, and its importation from as far away as Argentina.²⁹⁶ In order to increase domestic food production, conscription of farm labour was introduced in February 1942. This was a rather drastic step which authorities claimed was justified by the 'emergency' created by the war but its devastating flow-on effect on African subsistence food production led to severe hardship in African communities.²⁹⁷

Sir John Waddington, Governor of Northern Rhodesia (1942-1947), agreed to take three thousand Polish refugees into the territory.²⁹⁸ He expressed concern about suitable sites for camps and the types of buildings to be constructed and the Foreign Office in London:

received the impression that the Colonial authorities may be inclined to set the standard of accommodation a little too high ... the Polish refugees contain a fairly large peasant element and all of them, peasants or not, will have come from conditions of great hardship, from cold and starvation in the Soviet Union, so that they will be able to put up with most things.²⁹⁹

Waddington did his best, repeatedly appealing to the military and to the governments of Tanganyika and the Union of South Africa for materials such as timber and iron.³⁰⁰ He also

²⁹⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/76, Report of the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24 January to 31 March 1943.

²⁹⁵ For Northern Rhodesia's crucial role as a source of base metals during the war years see L. Butler, *Copper Empire: Mining and the Colonial State in Northern Rhodesia 1930-1964*, Houndsmill and Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 60 to 193; Byfield, p. 25.

²⁹⁶ Killingray, p. 87.

²⁹⁷ Alfred Tembo, 'Coerced African Labour for Food Production in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) during the Second World War, 1942-1945', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 50-69.

²⁹⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/77, Report of the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24 January to 31 March 1943.

²⁹⁹ TNA, FO 371/32644/W9903/104/48, A. W. G. Randall, FO, London to C. E. Lambert, CO, London, 23 July 1942.

³⁰⁰ TNA, FO 371/32644/W9903, Governor Waddington to East African Governors' Conference, Nairobi, 11 July 1942.

abandoned non-essential civil road and buildings programmes in order to provide staff and materials for the refugee camps.³⁰¹

In Northern Rhodesia the two main camps were built close to towns and along the railway line. Northern Rhodesia's poor soil and low rainfall meant that the goal of refugee self-sufficiency was unattainable and there was therefore no need to hide the refugees from the view of Africans. As they would not be working in the fields, they would not be lowering the prestige of the 'white man' in the eyes of the local population. It was imperative that the refugees be located along the railway line at places where the water supply was guaranteed and transport to the camps of vital goods and services could easily take place.

It was planned to build a camp at Bwana Mkubwa, two hundred miles north of Lusaka, near Ndola, the capital of the copper belt region, on the Lusaka-Ndola railway line. The site of an abandoned mining town, existing concrete foundations could be used for housing and there were established supplies of water and electricity. A second camp for refugees with equal capacity would be built at Lusaka, the newly proclaimed capital of Northern Rhodesia with a white population of around a thousand.³⁰²

The Polish refugee camp at Lusaka, also built by African labour, covered an area of two square kilometres on the outskirts of the capital. It was on flat ground, devoid of vegetation with buildings arranged in a formal grid pattern. Single family huts were made of sun-dried bricks with thatched roofs and asphalt floors. Kitchens and dining rooms, bathrooms and laundries, as well as schools were ready and waiting when the first group of around five hundred refugees arrived in February 1943. Lusaka would eventually hold over one thousand Polish refugees.³⁰³

At Bwana Mkubwa, one and two-roomed rectangular huts with sun-dried brick walls and thatched roofs were erected by African labour in a lush, tropical setting. Jacaranda trees lined the main street and mature banana, mango, and guava trees grew throughout the camp. Kitchens and dining rooms, wash houses and bathrooms, a school and hospital were all ready and waiting when the first group of around five hundred refugees arrived in March 1943. Bwana Mkubwa had the capacity to accommodate one and a half thousand.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ TNA, FO 371/32647/W11502, Governor Waddington to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 August 1942.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ PISM, KOL 174/11, Chronicle of the lives of Polish refugees in Northern Rhodesia, pp. 18-27.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 28-51; Mary-Ann Sandifort, *World War Two: The deportation of Polish refugees to Abercorn camp in Northern Rhodesia*, Masters Dissertation, University of Leiden, 2015, p. 32.

By August 1943, Polish refugees were settled in a third location in Northern Rhodesia, at Abercorn (now Mbala), the administrative centre of the remote Northern province, a coffee growing district. Abercorn was 635 miles from Lusaka by road with no rail link. The remoteness of this location is indicated by the journey the refugees had to travel to get there. Arriving by sea in Dar es Salaam in Tanganyika, they first took a rail journey of 770 miles across the entire breadth of Tanganyika to the end of the line at Kigoma, then a boat trip 430 miles south on Lake Tanganyika to the port of Mpulungu, followed by a twenty seven mile road trip by truck up a steep ascent to Abercorn, two thousand metres above sea level. The climate was good and the setting picturesque, nicknamed by the Poles 'African Switzerland'.³⁰⁵ Square, single-roomed huts for four people were built of local materials, wattle and daub walls with thatched roofs, and laid out in a grid pattern. The accommodation had been built for an earlier group of refugees known as the Cyprus-Poles. The number of refugees in Abercorn was limited to six hundred due to food supply difficulties.³⁰⁶ It was the most remote of all the Polish refugee camps in Africa.

The smallest number of refugees lived at Fort Jameson (now Chipata), the administrative centre of the Eastern Province, a tobacco growing area. Situated on the border with Nyasaland, this was another remote location, with Lusaka and the railway line some four hundred miles away. One hundred and sixty five refugees made up half of the European population living in and around Fort Jameson and the accommodation for refugees was, rather unusually, part of the town itself, having been built for an earlier group of refugees known as the Cyprus-Poles. The houses were of brick with thatched roofs and cement floors. Uniquely, each house had its own bathroom with hot and cold running water. Though kitchens, dining rooms and laundries were communal, and there was no electricity or glass in the windows, the quality of the buildings was the best of all the camps in Northern Rhodesia. The town's scenic location, three and a half thousand metres above sea level in the mountains surrounding Lake Nyasa, also provided a healthy climate for its residents.³⁰⁷

Northern Rhodesia had previously welcomed a group of Polish refugees, over four hundred senior politicians and public servants, prominent private citizens, and their families, who had fled Poland at the time of the German advance and initially been given safe haven in Cyprus. They were moved to Northern Rhodesia in 1941 when Cyprus was no longer deemed

³⁰⁵ Lucjan Królikowski, OFM Conv., *Stolen Childhood: A Saga of Polish War Children*, trans. Kazimierz J. Rozniatowski, New York, Authors Choice Press, 2001, p. 84.

³⁰⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943.

³⁰⁷ PISM, KOL 174/11, Chronicle of the lives of Polish refugees in Northern Rhodesia, pp. 61-70.

safe. As guests of His Majesty's Government they were accommodated in hotels along the railway line between Livingstone and Lusaka at British expense. A special camp was also built for them at Fort Jameson. Those with initiative forged a new life for themselves while others found it difficult to adjust. As the Director of War Evacuees and Camps understood it:

the root of the trouble is that the type of evacuee sent to us is a town-dweller, quite unprepared to make the best of, let alone enjoy, life in what is still a pioneer country.³⁰⁸

Some of the Cyprus-Poles took up leadership roles in the camps built for refugees arriving from Persia.³⁰⁹

Northern Rhodesia hosted over three thousand refugees in four camps, two larger camps in urban centres and two small camps in remote and isolated locations. As the European population numbers in the table below show, 'white' Northern Rhodesians outnumbered the Polish refugees by seven to one, rendering the refugees less visible than in the East African territories.

Table 2.4 Population Statistics for Central Africa³¹⁰

Population 1946	African	European	Asian	Arab	Total
Northern Rhodesia	1,600,000	21,907	1,117	804	1,623,822
Southern Rhodesia	1,600,000	80,500	n/a	n/a	-
Nyasaland	2,340,000	2,300	n/a	n/a	-

Southern Rhodesia (Self-Governing Colony)

The origins of white settlement in Southern Rhodesia, as in Northern Rhodesia, were linked to the BSAC's search for gold. This was relatively successful, and as well as miners, Southern Rhodesia's fertile soil attracted a steady flow of agricultural settlers from South Africa. Tobacco became Southern Rhodesia's major agricultural crop. Prospectors and settlers were overwhelmingly British in origin and the white population grew to become 'the British

³⁰⁸ TNA, FO 371/32632/W12099, S. Gore Brown, Director of War Evacuees and Camps to the Secretary of State, 3 July 1942.

³⁰⁹ For an account of the Cyprus-Poles in Northern Rhodesia see Wróbel, 'Z dziejów polskiego uchodźstwa w Rodezji Północnej', pp. 133-45.

³¹⁰ The Northern Rhodesia Information Department, *The Northern Rhodesia Handbook*, London, 1953, p. 53; Alfred John Wills, *Three Territories: An Introduction to the History of Africa*, Durban, Oxford University Press, 1967, Appendix IV.

heartland of Central Africa.'³¹¹ Southern Rhodesia achieved self-government in 1923, establishing its own parliament and conducting its relations with Britain not through the Colonial Office but through the Dominions Office.

During the Second World War, some fifteen thousand Africans were recruited into combat and labour units of the armed forces in Southern and Northern Rhodesia.³¹² The contribution of Southern Rhodesia to the war effort, however, like that of other African territories, went beyond the provision of manpower. It was identified as a suitable training ground for the British Air Force due to its convenient location away from the battle front and its favourable climate for flight manoeuvres. Southern Rhodesia thus served a unique role as host to the Empire Air Training Scheme. Eleven air bases were constructed and training was provided to fifteen thousand Air Force personnel from across the Empire during the course of the war. Economic benefits flowed to the territory but not to the African population who were instead the subject of a compulsory labour scheme introduced to satisfy the demand for workers that accompanied the Air Force presence.³¹³

The war also created an insatiable demand for strategic minerals and Southern Rhodesia made a significant contribution in this area. It was the world's second largest producer of gold during the war, the third largest producer of chromite and asbestos, and also exported coal, silver and iron.³¹⁴ The expansion of mineral production led to a second forced labour programme to fill the shortage in the mining and agricultural sectors.³¹⁵ This in turn disrupted subsistence agriculture and African society. It is estimated that between fifty thousand and a hundred thousand African males were subject to the forced labour schemes introduced by the Southern Rhodesian government during the course of the war.³¹⁶

From its earliest days, Southern Rhodesia systematically limited immigration of non-British whites.³¹⁷ When it was approached to provide asylum to Polish refugees for the duration of the war, the territory, already housing twelve thousand Italian and German internees and prisoners of war, concerned that the Poles did not share British cultural values,

³¹¹ Barry M. Schutz, 'European Population Patterns, Cultural Persistence and Political Change in Rhodesia', *The Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1973, p. 16.

³¹² Kenneth P. Vickery, 'The Second World War Revival of Forced Labour in the Rhodesias', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, p. 425.

³¹³ Despite the fact that Britain was a signatory of the League of Nations 1930 Convention on Forced Labour, the 'emergency' of the war was deemed to justify the re-introduction of forced labour. See Vickery, 'The Second World War Revival of Forced Labour in the Rhodesias', p. 425.

³¹⁴ Raymond Dumett, 'Africa's Strategic Minerals During the Second World War', *The Journal of African History*, vol. 26, no. 4, p. 397.

³¹⁵ Vickery, 'The Second World War Revival of Forced Labour in the Rhodesias', p. 427.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 431.

³¹⁷ Chigume and Chakawa, *The Dyke*, p. 95.

particularly in relation to race relations, and afraid that there would be Jews and Communists among their number, agreed to accept just one and a half thousand.³¹⁸ The location of refugee settlements was determined by the Government's strategy for the development of rural towns in selected areas of the territory.³¹⁹ The goal was not to isolate the refugees but to enable them to contribute to the territory's economic growth through employment. Southern Rhodesia had the healthiest climate with little incidence of tropical diseases, it was the wealthiest and most economically developed of all the territories, and most importantly from the perspective of the Polish authorities, it offered employment opportunities for women in the Army and Air Force. The Southern Rhodesian authorities even set up a Committee on Employment of Polish Women Evacuees to maximise the benefits of the presence of the refugees.³²⁰

The first transport of 402 Polish refugees destined for Southern Rhodesia arrived at the port of Beira in Portuguese Mozambique on 12 February 1943.³²¹ They travelled three hundred miles by train across Mozambique, crossing into Southern Rhodesia at the border town of Umtali (now Mutare) and then journeyed on to the small rural town of Marandellas (now Marondera). At 5,450 feet above sea level it was the administrative centre for the agricultural district of the same name and was connected by rail and road to the capital Salisbury (now Harare). The town itself had around one hundred European residents.³²² Cattle and tobacco were the main agricultural products. On the periphery of the land designated for white settlement were Native Reserves and it was from one of these areas that the natives were removed and the area adapted and expanded to accommodate the Poles.

Southern Rhodesia was the only territory which actually accommodated the Poles in a township originally built for Africans.³²³ At Marandellas, capacity six hundred, the houses were of kiln-fired brick with cement floors. Some were round and thatched, others were rectangular with tin roofs. The houses stood in rows in a treeless compound where the granite soil made it difficult to grow any kind of garden. Though the accommodation was of superior quality to the wattle and daub, mud-floored huts in most other places, as a result of its formal layout and infertile soil it had a rather stark appearance and created a sombre atmosphere.³²⁴

³¹⁸ TNA, FO 371/36686/W10107, Chief Secretary to Governors' Conference, 15 June 1943.

³¹⁹ Rupiah, 'The History of the Establishment of Internment Camps and Refugee Settlements in Southern Rhodesia', p. 139.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

³²¹ PISM, KOL 174/5, History of the Polish Refugee Settlement in Marandellas, Southern Rhodesia.

³²² Richard Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia, 1890-1965: A History of the Marandellas District*, London, Macmillan, 1983, pp. 8-9.

³²³ Zins, *Poles in Zambezi*, pp. 67 and 69.

³²⁴ PISM, KOL 174/5/101-119, History of the Polish Refugee Settlement in Marandellas, Southern Rhodesia; Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, pp. 181-182.

Rusape, one hundred kilometres south-east of Marandellas, was also situated on the main rail line to Salisbury. It was the trading centre of the Makoni region and the headquarters of the District Commissioner. The camp for the refugees was purpose-built on level ground, near the Rusape River, the railway line and a public road. It was a healthy location with little malaria and no jigger-flea (*tunga penetrans*). In Rusape, capacity six hundred as in Marandellas, the quality of the accommodation was superior to that provided in other territories in Africa. Two-roomed houses were built with kiln-fired brick walls and tin roofs. The camp had electricity and plumbing with particularly impressive bathrooms containing baths, showers, toilets, and hand basins. Like Marandellas, however, its regimental layout with rows of houses around a central square and no gardens gave it an austere look.³²⁵

As there was no land alongside the Marandellas and Rusape camps suitable for farming, the Southern Rhodesian authorities agreed to hand over to the Poles a property called Digglefold, situated eight miles from Marandellas on the road to Salisbury. The property had been repossessed by the Government for unpaid taxes and due to its healthy microclimate handed over the Department of Health to be used as a TB Sanatorium after the war. The homestead and out-buildings became a secondary boarding school for girls and the British agreed to a cost-sharing arrangement with the Poles in running the farm. Unfortunately, they later pulled out citing lack of cooperation and disorganisation on the part of the Poles. The school was left with land to grow vegetables and kept poultry and pigs. At its peak there were 190 students and fifty staff at the school.³²⁶

Southern Rhodesia had by far the largest European population of all the African territories that accepted refugees, as shown in the table above. Yet they took in the smallest number, just 1,200. The territory had never welcomed non-British Europeans as reflected in its immigration policy. It saw itself as the bastion of Englishness in the African heartland and maintained this policy to its own detriment after the war.³²⁷

Union of South Africa

Strategically situated on a global sea transport route, the Union of South Africa played a significant role during the war as a military transit and supply point as well as a hub for military training, and the rest, recreation and hospitalisation of Allied military personnel in need. The arrangement for the Union to accept five hundred Polish orphans from Persia was

³²⁵ PISM, KOL 174/8, A Historical Sketch of Southern Rhodesia, the land where we live, pp. 9-32.

³²⁶ PISM, KOL 174/12, Polish Secondary School at Digglefold, Southern Rhodesia, 1943-1946.

³²⁷ See Mlambo, 'Some are more white than others', pp. 139-160.

made independently of MERRA between General Smuts and the Polish Consul for Pretoria.³²⁸ The Union was already accommodating large numbers of Italian prisoners of war but as a result of 'excellent relations' between the General and the Polish Consul, the 'fine impression' Polish troops on their way to Britain from the Middle East had made during their stay, and the General's admiration for the 'fighting qualities of the Poles' and their 'friendship with South Africans at Tobruk', agreed to take the five hundred children and a small group of adults to care for them.³²⁹

An unused section of a military base three kilometres from the town of Oudtshoorn was set aside to accommodate the children who arrived in March 1943. The MPiOS assumed responsibility for their care and for associated costs.³³⁰ The operation in South Africa was not linked to MERRA or EARA and there were few links, formal or informal with the network of camps in British East and Central Africa.

First Impressions

While the first locations were being chosen and the first camps were being built, the Poles in Persia knew little of what awaited them in Africa. As the two military transport vessels carrying the first group drew close to the African coast in August 1942, they were no doubt apprehensive and somewhat lost. For the mothers, even those who offered little resistance to going to Africa, it was a troubling time. They had not expected another journey, certainly not a journey across thousands of miles to an unknown destination for an indefinite period of time. Women alone shouldered the responsibility for children. All evacuated able-bodied men - fathers, husbands and brothers - had remained in the Middle East, soldiers of the Polish army training with the Allies to do battle with Germany. The first group of one and a half thousand Polish refugees arrived in Africa on board two vessels in late August 1942. There were 38 men, 673 women, and 774 children, 79 of whom were under the age of six. The majority were from farming families. In accordance with plans to have self-sustaining groups travelling to Africa their number included two doctors, four nurses, twelve teachers, three clerks, and two typists.³³¹

With no idea what to expect, there was a collective sigh of relief when they sailed into Dar es Salaam (Tanganyika). It was dusk and the port was quiet. Along the coast stretched a

³²⁸ TNA, FO 371/32650/W14618, A. W. G. Randall, FO to J. N. Wood, MWT, 10 November 1942.

³²⁹ TNA, FO 371 32650/W14755, Polish Refugee Report by Col. H. P. Mitchell, November 1942, Appendix A.

³³⁰ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, pp. 154-158.

³³¹ TNA, FO 371/32646/W11200, Minister of State, Cairo to Nairobi, 15 August 1942.

wide sandy beach and beyond the beach, white villas, lush gardens and expansive green lawns. A church spire stretched above the rooftops. They saw civilisation. They were treated with kindness by the British women in whose care they were placed and appreciated having time to rest after their long journey. They received donated clothing and footwear and were instructed to wear their cork helmets from dawn til dusk. In the residential areas they saw order and cleanliness, in the city centre, the hustle and bustle of commerce. Excursions to the seaside were organised during the day, and in the evening, they watched American movies.³³² Any hopes the Poles might have had that this was the end of their peregrination and that they would be living in this colourful and thriving metropolis were soon shattered. They were destined for inland camps. Nine hundred were allocated to two locations in Tanganyika, Morogoro and Kondoia, and the remaining five hundred to Masindi in Uganda.

Morogoro was 125 miles from Dar es Salaam, and the refugees travelled there on the overnight train. A short distance from the town, at the foot of the Uluguru Mountains beside a Dutch mission stood a camp originally built for the internment of Italian women and children.³³³ It had a welcoming appearance. Trees lined the roads - mangoes, bananas, papayas. Whitewashed, large rectangular buildings made of sun-dried brick with elephant grass roofs and brick floors, were internally divided into family living spaces.³³⁴ An established Catholic presence - nuns, brothers and priests - gave immediate solace and a sense of security.

Half of the group, journeyed on for another 155 miles to Dodoma then climbed onto the backs of lorries for another journey a hundred miles north to the village of Kondoia. A little distance from the village was a camp that had also been built for Italian women and children internees. First impressions were not favourable. Twenty four barracks stood on parade in a stark and colourless landscape, punctuated occasionally by a boab. They had arrived during the dry season in the middle of a drought. Nearby, ominous dark mountains cut sharply into the cloudless sky. The distance and isolation from civilisation was overwhelming. But here too there was a Catholic mission nearby and the Italian missionaries - nuns, brothers and priests - were to make all the difference to the lives of the refugees.³³⁵

³³² Władysława Polakiewicz, 'Śladem naszej tułaczki - rok 1942', *Biuletyn Koła Sybiraków w Zachodniej Australii*, no. 4, 1994, p. 26; PISM, KOL 174/4/16, History of the Kondoia Settlement.

³³³ 'Tanganyika to Give Homes to 5,000 Poles', *East African Standard*, 31 July 1942, p. 15.

³³⁴ PISM, KOL 174/7, History of the Morogoro Settlement; Polakiewicz, *Biuletyn Koła Sybiraków w Zachodniej Australii*, p. 26.

³³⁵ PISM, KOL 174/4, History of the Kondoia Settlement.

Back in Dar es Salaam the remaining refugees destined for Uganda had an overland journey of over eight hundred miles still ahead of them. First they sailed from Dar es Salaam to the thriving port city of Mombasa (Kenya), with its rich history as part of the Indian Ocean trade network that linked East Africa, the Middle East and India. They had little time for taking in the grandeur and beauty of the forts and palaces which spoke of Portuguese and Arab historical dominance of the East African coast, or marvelling at the fantastic diversity of the human race on display - Africans from many tribes, as physically different from each other as they were from the Indian merchants, Arab traders, and British colonials who filled the bustle of the busy streets. Instead, they travelled by train 185 miles to Makindu, one of eleven camps in Kenya for Italian prisoners of war captured during the East Africa Campaign.³³⁶ A highly prized and exploitable resource, many prisoners of war were living outside the camps, paroled to work on private farms, on public works programmes, and in the armed services as cooks, waiters and batmen. Others were transferred to the UK and its dominions overseas where labour was also greatly in demand. Makindu served as a transit camp for Polish refugees on arrival and departure from Africa. It was surrounded by savannah, tall grasses and sparse trees and located inside an animal reserve, popular with the British for viewing wildlife, especially lions. The camp compound was fenced with barbed wire.³³⁷

After resting for two days, the Poles again boarded trains heading further inland with their next scheduled stop at Nairobi from 6:47pm to 7.55pm on Sunday 6 September 1942. The *East Africa Standard* reported:

On Sunday evening there was a strange scene on Nairobi Railway Station ... As dusk fell and the lamps were lit, a long, bright train drew in and faces peered from the windows; round faces rather anxious and unsmiling as though wondering "What next?" ... It was the arrival of refugees from East and West Poland ...³³⁸

Trolleys laden with sandwiches, cakes, milk and fruit awaited them and the initial anxious mood lifted as the children received sweets and toys and began to talk and laugh. The band of the King's African Rifles played in the background. The Acting Governor and his wife were there, as was the Polish Consul, and the ladies from the various women's committees who had

³³⁶ In May 1936, Mussolini proclaimed the formation of *Africa Orientale Italiana (AOI)*, incorporating Abyssinia, Eritrea and Somaliland. In June 1940 he declared war on Britain and France and the ensuing East Africa Campaign was fought from June 1940 to November 1941. Allied victory involved the capture of large numbers of Italian prisoners of war.

³³⁷ Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, p. 87.

³³⁸ 'Welcome to Polish Refugees', *East African Standard*, 11 September 1942, p. 6.

organised the refreshments. Speeches was made, there were cheers for the King of England, General Sikorski, and the Governor of Kenya and an emotional rendition of the Polish national anthem before the refugees were back on the train as it steamed out of the station heading further inland.³³⁹

The next stop was the town of Nakuru in the rich agricultural 'white highlands', then Eldoret, a thriving administrative and trading entre in Western Kenya. At 7am on Tuesday 8 September 1942, they arrived at Namasagali in eastern Uganda, the railway terminus of a side line of the Mombasa-Kampala railway. The *East African Standard* reports that the feeding of some 500 refugees required a great effort at this small place where there were only three European women and scarce food supplies. There was hot tea for the adults, milk for the children, and sandwiches and oranges for all. The refugees rested for the morning in the shade of wild fig trees. A hot meal of stew with beans, sweet potatoes and carrots, which had been cooked in thirty large saucepans in an improvised kitchen, was served for lunch in four sittings. At one o'clock they boarded waiting barges that took them up the Victoria Nile and then threaded their way through the papyrus on Lake Koja, a paradise for birds and crocodiles.³⁴⁰

As they travelled further and further into the African interior feelings of disquiet intensified. The women wondered, 'When will this journey end? Why are they taking us so far away? Who will hear us from here?'³⁴¹ From Masindi Port they were travelled by lorry through open grassland, past African villages, banana plantations and into the dense Bunyoro forest, lush with wild figs, date palms, rubber trees, and mahogany thirty metres high and two metres in diameter. Barbara (aged fourteen) rather than feeling tired, was rejuvenated by the experience of the vibrating jungle, the 'extraordinary variety of howls, screams and trills that echo down from the canopy', the troops of monkeys, pandemonium of parrots, and clouds of butterflies.³⁴² Suddenly, the lorry stopped. A cluster of crudely constructed huts stood in a small clearing in the forest. This was their new home. Some women wept. Others prayed, begging the Lord for mercy. Others still were filled with disbelief. It felt like the whole world was conspiring against them.³⁴³

In numerous recollections of arriving in Africa, two features are worthy of note. The first is the contrasting response of children and adults to this new experience. The children are

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ 'Namasagali Greets Polish Refugees', *East African Standard*, 18 September 1942, p. 3.

³⁴¹ Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, pp. 96-99.

³⁴² Porajska, *From the Steppes to the Savannah*, pp. 100-106.

³⁴³ Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, p. 108

enchanted with the natural surroundings, and express delight and wonder at the sights and sounds of the savannah and the jungle. The adults are anxious and afraid. They feel abandoned in a remote and dangerous place, far from civilisation. Or at least that's the way things are remembered by refugees who were children in Africa. From the perspective of old age, they look back and remember Africa as the highlight of their childhood, framed by earlier experiences of exile in Siberia and later experiences of responsible adulthood as migrants in new lands.

The second noteworthy feature of the recollection of arriving in Africa is the 'welcome', the official ceremonies that were held at ports of arrival and railway stations through which the refugees passed. Cups of tea and sandwiches, military bands, welcome speeches by government officials - all made a positive impression on the refugees. The kindness of British women is especially remembered. The refugees experienced what they thought was acceptance into the European world of colonial Africa. Unfortunately, these were but brief interludes on their journey to another world, that of the refugee camp.

Conclusion

British colonial territories in Africa agreed to accept Polish refugees as a further contribution to the war effort to which they were already giving generously, both in terms of military manpower and the vital export of agricultural products and minerals. Economies had been recalibrated, British settlers and companies had benefitted, and the African population had been conscripted and socially dislocated, all in the name of the Empire at war.

The refugees were seen as a burden to be shared. With the refugees came issues of concern and problems to be solved. How would the refugees be housed and fed? Where could they be located that was free of malaria? How would they cope with the tropical climate? Would there be enemy agents among them? How many of them were there? Would they accept the hierarchical race-based structure of colonial society? What was their place in this hierarchy?

All of the territories agreed to the policy of encampment as was standard MERRA operational practice. Each territory decided how many refugees it would accept. The colonies of settlement, Kenya, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia took the least and the colonies of administration, Uganda and Tanganyika, took the most. All agreed to the principle of self-sufficiency in food and remote locations for camps as a way of combatting food shortages and keeping whites working the land out of sight of the African population.

Colonial authorities asserted their authority to make all decisions and to have ultimate responsibility for all matters concerning the refugees in their territories, to which Polish authorities reluctantly agreed. EARA was established based in Nairobi and each territory appointed a Director of Refugees. Each camp would be administered by a British Camp Commandant and his staff who would be responsible for all essential services - shelter, food, clothing, health, security, and employment. A shadow Polish administration would be responsible for education, religion and culture. The British government would reimburse colonial governments for all expenses incurred in relation to the refugees while the Polish government would fund its activities through a British line of credit.

With this framework in place, colonial authorities set about preparing for the refugees' arrival. One of the first decisions to be made concerned the location of camps. This was something each territory decided for itself. In Uganda, the locations of the refugee camps are notable for their remoteness, in Tanganyika for their association with Catholic missions, in Northern Rhodesia for their urban settings, and in Southern Rhodesia for their economic utility. Thousands of Africans were engaged in building the camps.

What were the first impressions of the refugees on arrival in Africa? The memoirs of refugees who were children in Africa describe the thrill of the exotic landscape and its rich wildlife. They also recall the fear and anguish of mothers for whom the 'primitive' and alien environment seemed too much to bear. In the following chapter, this thesis begins its examination of the internal workings of the refugee camps to see how the policies of the authorities played out in practice, how the refugees were able to live and give meaning to their lives.

Chapter 3 The Camp as Home

This chapter is the first of three that investigate the ways in which the camps were constructed materially and socially. The British colonial authorities were responsible for the immediate and essential needs of the refugees for shelter, food and clothing. Authorities anticipated that the sojourn of the refugees would be for a period of at least two years, a rather lengthy, but nevertheless temporary stay.³⁴⁴ Temporary solutions were found to a temporary problem and the measures taken to provide shelter, food and clothing were designed to have minimum impact on the local economy and society. What of the refugees themselves? What were their expectations of Africa? This study has shown that they were unwilling participants in the temporary African resettlement scheme. They had offered overt and covert resistance to leaving Iran yet twenty thousand found themselves on the receiving end of 'hospitality' offered by the British Empire in colonial Africa. Their immediate reaction to arriving in the bustling urban port cities of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam was positive, but as trains took them further and further into the interior, their initial enthusiasm waned. Arriving at primitive camps in isolated locations they were faced with the stark reality of life in Africa as refugees. This chapter examines the effects that the physical structure and location of the camps and the type of accommodation provided had on individual and family life. It looks at the practices adopted by colonial authorities to feed and clothe the refugees and the ways in which the refugees responded in an effort to preserve the familiar and traditional practices of home.

Shelter

For the colonial authorities, providing accommodation in East Africa for large groups of long-term yet temporary residents during wartime presented many challenges. Building supplies were scarce and had to be transported over long distances. There was a shortage of skilled labour due to the prioritisation of military building projects, and the need for haste due to the imminent arrival of the refugees. Military style barracks in existing internment camps provided a roof over the heads of some while huts made from local materials in purpose-built refugee camps were constructed for most.³⁴⁵ This section will examine the type of accommodation provided, the physical layout of the camps, the natural environment

³⁴⁴ 'Address by MPiOS Delegate to the Polish Population in Africa', *Polak w Afryce*, 14 March 1943, p. 1.

³⁴⁵ 'Life in the Settlements', *Polak w Afryce*, 14 March 1943, p. 2.

surrounding the camps, and the concerns and creativity of the refugees in making themselves 'at home'.

Table 3.1 Polish Refugee Camps in Africa

Territory	Camp	General	Transit	Special
Kenya*	English Point		•	
	Makindu		•	
	Rongai			•
N. Rhodesia	Abercorn	•		
	Bwana Mkubwa	•		
	Fort Jameson	•		
	Katambora			•
	Lusaka	•		
S. Africa	Oudtshoorn			•
S. Rhodesia	Digglesfold			•
	Gatooma		•	
	Marandellas	•		
	Rusape	•		
Tanganyika**	Ifunda	•		
	Kidugala	•		
	Kigoma		•	
	Kondoa	•		
	Morogoro		•	
	Tengeru	•		
Uganda	Koja	•		
	Masindi	•		
No. of camps		12	5	4

* Kenya was also home to a rest and rehabilitation home for the elderly and infirm at Manira, just outside Nairobi. This was set up by the Polish Red Cross and the local Catholic Church.³⁴⁶

** In Tanganyika, the Tengeru Camp ran a TB sanatorium at Loliondo, in the foothills of Mt Meru.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ 'The Red Cross in British East Africa', *Polak w Afryce*, 15-24 December 1943, p. 4; Suski, *W służbie publicznej na dwóch kontynentach*, p. 200.

³⁴⁷ Zins, *Polacy w Afryce Wschodniej*, p. 45.

Twenty-one camps were scattered across six African territories (Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa). There were three types of camps: general camps which were purpose-built for the general refugee population; transit camps in existing internment and prisoner of war camps providing temporary accommodation on arrival and departure; and special camps such as children's camps, a girls' boarding school, and a prison camp. This study is primarily concerned with the twelve general camps in Uganda, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia. More than half of the refugees lived in three large camps, Tengeru, Masindi, and Koja. Of the twelve camps that accommodated the general refugee population, eleven were purpose-built and one, Kondoa, had been an internment camp. Three of the camps -Tengeru, Lusaka and Bwana Mkubwa - were near major centres of European settlement and on railway lines, while the remaining nine were in remote locations. The general camps can be further grouped according to population size.

Table 3.2 General Polish Refugee Camps by Population Size³⁴⁸

Territory	Camp	Large (1500-4500)	Medium (750-1500)	Small (Below 750)
N. Rhodesia	Abercorn			600
	Bwana Mkubwa		1250	
	Fort Jameson			200
	Lusaka		1150	
S. Rhodesia	Marandellas			650
	Rusape			650
Tanganyika	Ifunda		800	
	Kidugala		800	
	Kondoa			400
	Tengeru	3500		
Uganda	Koja	2800		
	Masindi	4200		
No. of camps		3	4	5

³⁴⁸ TNA, FO 371/36686/W10108, Reception of Refugees, 15 June 1943.

Thousands of Africans were engaged in building the refugee camps. Six weeks after arriving at Masindi, Barbara writes, 'All around us the natives are working hard. Bit by bit they steal more ground from the jungle. Once the site is cleared they build more huts.'³⁴⁹ Building at Masindi was supervised by two lay brothers from the White Fathers' mission, a Dutchman and an American.³⁵⁰ Colonel Mitchell who visited the Middle East and Africa to report on the Polish refugees to the Foreign Office wrote in his report, 'I visited the camp at Lusaka, which is about two miles from the centre of the town ... The scene was a busy one with hundreds of natives at work.'³⁵¹ At Koja, Commandant Bere utilised 'a labour force of some two thousand Africans' for clearing two kilometres of reeds and bush along the lake shore, road making, and construction. He also had 'a dozen Italian prisoners of war to provide a stiffening of skilled men and bakers.'³⁵² In Tanganyika, not only did one thousand Africans work with the Public Works Department to build Tengeru, but several African tribes, the Waarusha, Meru and Chigga, contributed by provided large quantities of banana thatch for roofs, and a vehicle to transport thousands of cypress poles needed in the building of the settlement.³⁵³

The huts built in the different territories had several common features. Roofs were made of thatched banana leaf or elephant grass and there were no ceilings in the huts. Mud was the common building product for walls. In East Africa, walls were wattle and daub whereas in the Rhodesias hand-made, sun-dried, mud bricks were used. Windows were openings in the walls with no glazing, though there were timber shutters for securing the hut at night. In Uganda and Tanganyika floors were earthen whereas in the Rhodesias, floors were brick paved or made of cement. Generally, the standard of accommodation in Central Africa was superior to that in East Africa.³⁵⁴ The poor quality of the huts in Tanganyika was brought home when a tremor shook earthquake-prone Kidugala, leaving cracks in the walls of almost half of huts in the camp, and causing roofs to leak during heavy rains. Polish authorities blamed the speed with which the huts had been built and the use of unskilled and unsupervised African labour (one supervisor per a thousand workers) and set in motion plans for rebuilding and repairs.³⁵⁵ The issue of earthen floors was particularly contentious

³⁴⁹ Porajska, *From the Steppes to the Savannah*, p. 104

³⁵⁰ Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry*, p. 203.

³⁵¹ TNA, FO 37132650/W14755, Colonel H. P. Mitchell, Polish Refugee Report, Appendix C, November 1942.

³⁵² Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry*, p. 198.

³⁵³ Zins, *Polacy w Afryce Wschodniej*, p. 36.

³⁵⁴ For a description of camps in Northern and Southern Rhodesia see AAN, MPiOS 131/106/65-85, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24 January 19443 to 31 March 1943. For a description of camps in Tanganyika and Uganda see AAN, MPiOS 131/106/20, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 November 1942 to 31 December 1942.

³⁵⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/101, M. Wierusz-Kowalski to Minister Kot, MSZ London, 3 March 1943.

especially after Polish refugees discovered that Italian prisoners of war lived in buildings with timber floors.³⁵⁶ The matter of the floors was raised with colonial authorities who responded that wooden floors were too costly, unhygienic, and could not be adapted to wattle and daub huts. They suggested that the refugees improve their own living conditions by making bricks and paving the floors.³⁵⁷ Improvements were made to the huts over time under the supervision of Polish camp authorities. Roofs were lined internally with mats, floors were brick paved and where bricks were not available, mats were used. As all of the territories except Southern Rhodesia were malarial, mosquito netting was installed in the windows. Due to the weather and white ants this kind of hut was impermanent, not designed to stand more than three or four years

Lighting was provided by kerosene lamps, with electricity available in accommodation for British staff, and administrative and communal buildings.³⁵⁸ Water was pumped from lakes, rivers or underground bores, and accessible from taps located at regular points around the camp. The refugees carried water in buckets from taps to their huts. Drinking water needed to be boiled.³⁵⁹ Communal bathing facilities and laundries were interspersed among the huts, and toilets were rudimentary latrines.³⁶⁰ Sanitary arrangements were elementary. There was no hot water to communal bathrooms and few had showers. In Bwana Mkubwa, taking even a warm bath was nigh on impossible, as filling a concrete trough with hot water, one bucket at a time carried from the communal kitchens where huge coppers of water were kept on the boil, took so many trips that by the time there was enough water in the trough, it had become cold.³⁶¹

The huts built for the refugees were intended primarily as sleeping quarters and typically were square or rectangular in shape with one to two rooms. The exception was at Tengeru where the huts were circular with a five metre diameter. When the Poles raised concerns about being housed in 'African-style huts', colonial authorities responded that circular huts were cheaper to construct. All rooms were furnished with wooden bunks which lined the walls and left just enough room in the middle for a small table and stools. Each person received a kapok mattress, a pillow, a blanket, two sheets, a pillow case, a towel, and a

³⁵⁶ TNA, FO 371/36685/W4883, A. W. G. Randall, FO London to G. F. Seel, CO London, 25 March 1943.

³⁵⁷ TNA, FO 371/36686/W10110, Correspondence from Downing St to E. A. Walker, 9 July 1943.

³⁵⁸ PISM, KOL 174/3, Koja Settlement, Uganda. General Comments - Settlement Administration.

³⁵⁹ Interview with Elizabeth Patro; Kondratowicz-Kordas, *Wędrowniczki z Kidugali*, p. 50.

³⁶⁰ Franciszek Bajak, *Przez Sybir do Afryki: Wspomnienia Frania*, Warszawa, Fundacja Kasisi, 2003, p. 30; Maria Bogdaniec-Półkowska, 'Afryka - kraj lat dziecińczych', in Henryk Dąbkowski (ed.), *Polskie Sybiraczki harcerki w Afryce 1942-1950*, Warszawa, self-published, 2002, p. 39.

³⁶¹ Paula Ciołek interviewed by Wanda Warlik, July 2016, Melbourne, Victoria.

mosquito net. A military-issue bowl, mug, knife, fork and spoon made of tin were also provided. Finally, there was a washing bowl, a bucket and a lantern per room.³⁶²

It was the norm for huts and even rooms to house multiple families. In Koja, three families lived in a three-roomed hut in which Vala, aged fifteen, and her older sister shared a room with their parents.³⁶³ In Kidugala, members of four different families were allocated a two-roomed hut in which Lodzia, aged fifteen, her mother and sister shared a room with a Jewish woman, and two mothers, one with a daughter and the other with a son, shared the second room.³⁶⁴ The lucky few, found they had a one-roomed hut to themselves. The Koznowski and Wiland families, who were allocated their own huts on arriving at Lusaka felt as though they had 'a little bit of independence and privacy again'. They marvelled at toilets that had doors and doors that could be locked.³⁶⁵ For the majority, overcrowding and the resultant lack of privacy was a familiar and unwelcome feature of camp life, one that was intrusive and a continuous strain.³⁶⁶ The internal architecture of the huts, namely, the absence of ceilings, the reduced height of internal walls, and the absence of internal doors, provided little privacy. In addition, the location of kitchens, bathrooms and toilets outside the huts meant that the normally private routines of daily life were open to public scrutiny and comment.

The camps were built as a temporary solution to a civilian crisis caused by the war. From the perspective of the refugees, the accommodation in the camps was an improvement on that experienced during exile in the Soviet Union. In particular, having one's own bed, even a basic camp-style bed, was a joy.³⁶⁷ However, the huts bore little semblance to homes on the farmlands, and in the towns and cities of Poland. The accommodation was primitive and in most cases overcrowded. It presented the women with the challenge of creating a home out of a room in a hut shared with strangers. There were areas inside the camps however, where the accommodation was quite different. British administrative staff and select Poles lived in houses with floors and ceilings, glazed windows, kitchens and bathrooms, electricity

³⁶² PISM, KOL 174/9A, A History of the Tengeru Polish Settlement, Tanganyika, East Africa, p. 3; Ryszard Wiland, *Mother Don't Cry*, Melbourne, Australian Booksellers Association, 2007, p. 141.

³⁶³ Vala Lewicki (Miron), 'No Glimpse of Eden', in Nina and Jan Smenda (eds.), *Unforgettable Memories: Memoirs of Polish Exiles in the Soviet Union, 1940-1942*, Perth (WA), Polish Siberian Group (WA), 1996, p. 34.

³⁶⁴ Leokadia Kondratowicz-Kordas, *Travel without Choice*, Roleystone, Western Australia, Literary House Press, 1991, p. 44.

³⁶⁵ Wiland, *Mother Don't Cry*, p. 143.

³⁶⁶ Suski, *W służbie publicznej na dwóch kontynentach*, p. 209; H. B. M. Murphy, 'The Camps', in H. B. M. Murphy (ed.), *Population and Culture II: Flight and Resettlement*, Paris, UNESCO, 1955, p. 60.

³⁶⁷ Wiland, *Mother Don't Cry*, p. 144; Alicja Filipczak-Puchalska, *Moje Tułacze Wspomnienia: Syberia-Iran-Afryka, 1941-1946*, Szczecin, self-published, 2002, p. 78.

and running water. Their houses were located some distance from the rest of the camp population, often on higher ground.³⁶⁸ The superior living conditions, included the services of African 'house-boys', were enjoyed by the select few.³⁶⁹ At Koja, this group was colloquially known as 'the high life on the hill'. It included doctors, teachers, priests and administrators who held senior positions in the camp's administration.³⁷⁰

The key to membership of this group was employment in a position of authority within the camp which required either a working knowledge of the English language or professional qualifications. Although there were between three and ten times as many women as men in the camps, all of the senior roles were filled by males: there were no female Polish Camp Leaders.³⁷¹ This division of the camp population into two classes mirrored interwar Poland's class structure. There was, however, a heightened awareness of this divide and a sense of its injustice. Women whose husbands were absent at the war, were worse off than the women whose husbands were in Africa on extended leave from the army or not in the army at all. This inequality was felt by the children too. Lusia recalls longing to learn to play the piano but there was only one instrument available for the use of the children in the camp, while there were two additional pianos located in the homes 'on the hill' for the exclusive use of a handful of children. She recalls too her mother treading a weary path each day from their hut to communal supply points, to carry back firewood for the kitchen stove, and buckets of water for cooking and cleaning - no 'house-boy' in sight.³⁷²

The two camps in Uganda were designed by a Polish architect sent out to Africa by the Polish army in Britain.³⁷³ Masindi was made up of six cruciform-shaped villages, stretching for three kilometres along a road that if continued for thousands of miles in the same trajectory would have led to Warsaw. Koja, was designed in the shape of a star. These original designs were the exception and the more common layout, as at Kidugala, was of rows

³⁶⁸ Suski, *W służbie publicznej na dwóch kontynentach*, p. 204.

³⁶⁹ PISM, KOL 174/3, Koja Settlement, Uganda. General Comments - Settlement Administration; FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, p. 350.

³⁷⁰ Porajska, *From the Steppes to the Savannah*, p. 121; Vala Lewicka (Miron), 'No Glimpse of Eden', p. 35; interviewed by Wanda Warlik, November 2015, Perth, Western Australia.

³⁷¹ TNA, FO 371/42865/WR209, East African Governors' Conference to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 July 1944.

³⁷² Interview with Elizabeth Patro.

³⁷³ Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry*, p. 196. Jerzy Skolimowski (1907-1985) studied architecture in Warsaw. He was responsible for the interior design of the ships, MS Piłsudski and MS Batory, and was the architect of the Polish Pavilion at the New York World Trade Fair 1939. A rower, he represented Poland in three Olympiads - Amsterdam, Los Angeles and Berlin. Enlisted in Polish Army in France in 1940, captured and escaped from internment in Switzerland in 1941 to fight at Tobruk in North Africa. In 1942 he designed and supervised the construction of Polish refugee settlements in East Africa. In 1944, he was an officer of the Polish Secret Intelligence Service. After the war he designed the Polish cemetery at Monte Casino, Italy, and worked as an architect in the UK and South Africa. https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerzy_Walerian_Skolimowski

of evenly spaced huts. There was also a military logic to the division of the camps for administrative purposes, into sections and blocks, labelled alphabetically and numerically, so that a person was identified as living in Section E Block 4 or Section H Block 7.³⁷⁴ The camps were either fenced or enclosed by natural barriers, and all arrivals and departures took place via gates guarded by *askaris* (African police).³⁷⁵ At the entrance to each camp stood flagpoles on which the British and Polish flags were raised daily.³⁷⁶ All of these features, identical buildings arranged uniformly in rows, a marked perimeter, a guarded entrance gate, flagpoles, and naming practices, were all attributes of what was designed to be a regimented life.

The camps in Africa were intended to provide the refugees with protection and safety from the ravages of war. This they did. At the same time, they exposed the refugees to an unfamiliar and dangerous natural environment where everything from the climate to the abundant wildlife posed real risks to their health and safety. Pith helmets were mandatory attire in daylight hours to protect against the tropical sun, and long sleeves and trousers were required when out and about in the evenings to guard against mosquito bites and the risk of malaria.³⁷⁷ The wearing of shoes was also mandatory as sand fleas (*tunga penetrans*), colloquially called jiggers, burrowed under the skin of exposed heels and toes, laying eggs which if not removed with a sharp needle, hatched and burrowed deeper into the flesh.³⁷⁸ Butterflies and fireflies did not recognise the camps boundaries but neither did termites, spiders, snakes, lizards and monkeys. Janina awoke on her first morning at Lusaka to find her shoelaces sitting atop a neat pile of what looked like sand. Her shoes had been eaten by white ants.³⁷⁹ Barbara recalls preparing for bed one night to find 'a beautifully-marked snake coiled snugly under my pillow'.³⁸⁰ To keep vermin under control, the grass around the huts was regularly burned running the risk of huts catching fire. Huts were burnt down on more than one occasion at Masindi and a huge fire in Makindu destroyed thirty-seven barracks and injured six boys.³⁸¹

Outside the camps, a range of wild animals added to the danger. At Koja, swimming in Lake Victoria, the natural home of hippopotami and crocodiles, was only permitted under

³⁷⁴ PISM, KOL 174/9B, Drawing showing plan of Polish Settlement Tengeru; Leokadia Kondratowicz-Kordas, *Wędrowniczkę z Kidugali*, Kurier Press, Perth, Western Australia, no publication date available, p. 50.

³⁷⁵ Bogdaniec-Półkowska, 'Afryka - kraj lat dziecińczych', p. 35.

³⁷⁶ FAFT (eds.), *Tulacze Dzieci*, pp. 197, 243; FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, pp. 227, 294.

³⁷⁷ Bogdaniec-Półkowska, *Polskie Sybiraczki harcerki*, p. 35.

³⁷⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/59, Dr Wiktor Bincer, Director of Health, MPiOS Nairobi, 3 May 1943.

³⁷⁹ Chappell, *The Persian Blanket*, p. 157.

³⁸⁰ Porajska, *From the Steppes to the Savannah*, p. 105.

³⁸¹ AAN, MPiOS 131/105/58-62. Report to MPiOS Nairobi on fire at Makindu; Porajska, *From the Steppes to the Savannah*, p. 110.

armed guard though this was a rule most often observed in the breach.³⁸² Though the danger of crocodile attack was constant, in eight years only one boy was taken.³⁸³ The larger animals kept away from the camps but lions in particular were heard roaming at night, especially in Kidugala, colloquially known as 'the kingdom of the lions'.³⁸⁴ When Lodzia returned to Kidgala from boarding school in Tengeru she heard numerous tales of recent lion attacks. The unfortunate victims were usually African children. After the African cook of the camp's maintenance man, a Greek, was taken by a lion, and as lions prefer to hunt at night, visiting the bathroom after dark became a highly hazardous walk.³⁸⁵ At Tengeru, an askari failed to return to his village one night after finishing his shift at the camp. Much later, the son of one of the teachers was out hunting and killed a boa constrictor. The snake was skinned and inside its stomach were found brass buttons and a belt buckle. An askari's uniform consisted of khaki shorts and shirt with metal buttons, a leather belt and a cap. They did not carry guns.³⁸⁶

However, the space outside the camps was also a place of wonder. The vegetation was lush and green. Trees came in strange shapes, like the boab near Kondoa, and amazing sizes like the two metre wide and thirty metre high mahogany at Masindi. The butterfly and bird life was kaleidoscopic. The natural environment had the most positive, and despite the dangers, life-affirming affect on the children. For them, the place outside the camp was a place of excitement and adventure. Girls and boys alike went exploring into the bush, often without the knowledge or approval of the adults. For the mothers, it was first and foremost, a dangerous place where they could not guarantee the safety of their children.³⁸⁷

This was not the first time they had found themselves living in unfamiliar and dangerous circumstances. This was their third successive dislocation - Siberia, Persia, Africa. They were still in exile, in a place where once again they found little, either in the natural or man-made environment, that resembled home. British and Polish authorities speak of a kind of apathy that descended upon the camps as the women struggled to make sense of the

³⁸² Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry*, p. 198.

³⁸³ Teresa Rogińska-Słomińska, 'Polskie osiedle nad jeziorem wiktorii: Kojka-Afryka-Uganda', in Henryk Dąbkowski (ed.), *Polskie Sybiraczki harcerki w Afryce 1942-1950*, Warszawa, self-published, 2002, p. 29; Irena Sikorska, *From Snow to Sunshine*, London, Routh Lodge Press, 2007. p. 81.

³⁸⁴ The most notorious outbreaks of man-eating by lions occurred in the Njombe district of Tanzania. Over 1500 people were killed between 1932 and 1946. Kidugala is situated in the Njombe district. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com.au/animals/man-eating-prides.aspx>

³⁸⁵ Kondratowicz-Kordas, *Travel without Choice*, pp. 52, 142-144.

³⁸⁶ Bajak, *Przez Sybir do Afryki*, pp. 53-54.

³⁸⁷ Interview with Mira; Interview with Elizabeth Patro; Interview with Stanisław Patro.

changed contours of their lives.³⁸⁸ Dr Bincer, the Polish Director of Health for the camps, observed that the 'harshness of the experience in exile had left a marked imprint on the psyche of the refugees, who were extremely sensitive in matters relating to themselves and their families, while at the same time showing a kind of apathy towards everything and everyone else.'³⁸⁹ Koja Camp Commandant, Rennie Bere, noted that the refugees 'had become apathetic as a result of their experiences' but that their interest and participation in community living increased as 'they became more secure'.³⁹⁰ As the women once again embarked on the journey of defining who they were, of regaining their sense of self, they turned towards history and the myth of '*Matka Polka*' (mother-woman) to guide them.

Every Polish woman knows the myth of '*Matka Polka*', a role model of heroic, enterprising, altruistic patriotism'.³⁹¹ To be a Polish mother was to embrace the historical and cultural traditions of Polish womanhood - marriage and motherhood, family and home. Culturally, the myth of *Matka Polka* was linked to the cult of the Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary, patron and queen of Poland.³⁹² Historically, it emerged during the partition era when failed uprisings led to the imprisonment or exile of heads of families involved in the struggle for independence. In the absence of men and with Polish language and culture banned from the public sphere the home became the place where tradition, memory and faith were preserved and maintained.³⁹³ Home was the realm of the women and in imitation of the Holy Mother they assumed the role of *Matka Polka*. It was to this role, that the women in Africa turned to give their lives meaning. They sought to recreate homes, to restore their fractured families, to pass on to their children the traditions and beliefs of their homeland.

Their first efforts turned to transforming their rooms and huts in the image of homes long destroyed. They whitewashed interior and exterior walls.³⁹⁴ They levelled and sealed earthen floors.³⁹⁵ Mosquito nets were hung as curtains and sheets became tablecloths. Outside the huts, gardens were planted. Women who had tended flower or vegetable plots in Poland, turned their minds to recreating them in Africa. Little could be done immediately, but over

³⁸⁸ The concept of 'DP apathy' was coined in the DP camps in Europe after the Second World War. See Eduard Bakis, 'DP Apathy', in H. B. M. Murphy (ed.), *Population and Culture II: Flight and Resettlement*, Paris, UNESCO, 1955, pp. 76-90.

³⁸⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, Dr Wiktor Bincer, Chief Medical Officer's Report, MPiOS Nairobi, 7 May 1943.

³⁹⁰ Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry*, p. 199.

³⁹¹ Elżbieta H. Oleksy, 'Women's Studies in Poland: Problems and Perspectives', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 3-4, 1994, p. 171.

³⁹² Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*, pp. 89, 140-141.

³⁹³ Renata Siemieńska, 'Women and Social Movements in Poland', *Women and Politics*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1986, p. 10.

³⁹⁴ Irena Makowiecka interviewed by Wanda Warlik, November 2015, Perth, Western Australia.

³⁹⁵ Interview with Elizabeth Patro; Wiland, *Mother Don't Cry*, p. 144.

time as donations of seeds and gardening tools arrived from the US, they set to work. They cultivated the soil immediately around the huts, growing roses and zinnias, oleanders and sunflowers.³⁹⁶ Porches were built over the front doors with bench seats for enjoying the outdoors.³⁹⁷ The normality of home was further re-enacted by children adopting pets: dogs, pigeons, rabbits and hens and even monkeys, and chameleons.³⁹⁸

The regimented appearance of the camps was countered to varying degrees by the planting of gardens and trees, and by huts taking on individual characteristics reflecting the personalities of their residents. The camps' architects also had the foresight to locate in each camp a focal point, be it a church, a large spreading tree or simply an open space similar to a town square, where camp residents gathered as a community for celebrations or meetings or to simply catch up with friends. And over time, there were tangible, if symbolic, signs of an affirmation of Polishness. The landscape, natural and built, was appropriated to represent an imagined Poland. Roads within the camps were given Polish names, those belonging to military generals being the most common. At Tengeru, Generals Sikorski, Piłsudski, Komorowski and Sosnkowski were all honoured in this way.³⁹⁹ Geographical features within sight of the camps, such as the two hills at Koja were also given symbolic Polish names, Kraków (the former Polish capital) and Wanda (the Polish princess who drowned rather than marry a German prince).⁴⁰⁰ Kidugala was commonly referred to as the African *Zaolzie*, a popular spa and resort town in the Polish mountains.⁴⁰¹ Monuments featuring the Polish national emblem, the crowned white eagle, were built and maintained with pride.⁴⁰²

Food

In addition to housing the refugees, British colonial authorities were responsible for feeding them. This was an enormous challenge. The course of the war in 1941, namely, German aggression against the Soviet Union, and Japan's entry into the war in the Pacific, had heightened the need for Britain's African colonies to align their economies to the demands of

³⁹⁶ Alicia A. Zarzycki and Stefania Buczak-Zarzycka, *Kwaheri Africa: A Polish Experience 1929-1950 from Deportation to Freedom*, Perth, self-published, 1986, p. 30; Filipczak, *Moje tulacze wspomnienia*, p. 74; Porajska, *From the Steppes to the Savannah*, p. 113.

³⁹⁷ Interview with Elizabeth Patro.

³⁹⁸ FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, pp. 313, 319; Filipczak-Puchalska, *Moje tulacze wspomnienia*, p. 76; Interview with Mira; Interview with Stanisław Patro; KARTA, AW/II/1621/1K, Testimony of Alina Pakulska; KARTA, AW/II/1072, Testimony of Helena Nikiel.

³⁹⁹ PISM, KOL 174/9A, The History of Polish Settlement Tengeru, Tanganyika, East Africa, p. 50.

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Mira; Interview with Elizabeth Patro. See Katarzyna Małkowska, *The Legend of Brave Wanda*, Kraków, Astra, 2005.

⁴⁰¹ Kondratowicz-Kordas, *Travel without Choice*, p. 42.

⁴⁰² FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, pp. 308, 334, 342, 371.

the metropole. The export of food for military consumption coupled with import restrictions, resulted in local populations experiencing food shortages. The arrival of some twenty thousand Polish refugees, increased the demand for food for domestic consumption and had the potential to significantly disrupt domestic food supply.⁴⁰³

In British East Africa, a number of steps were taken to address the problem of feeding the refugees. Firstly, it was decided to appoint the East African War Supplies Board to oversee food supplies. By centralising the co-ordination of competing demands for food, competition was minimised and a fair allocation at a regulated price was assured. The operations of the Board did not extend to Central Africa where the Directors of War Evacuees and Camps organised food supplies to the camps. Secondly, it was decided that each territory would prioritise the local sourcing of food. Thirdly, Polish refugee authorities were strongly encouraged to establish farms and work towards self-sufficiency within six months.⁴⁰⁴

Authorities sought medical advice and determined that the nutritional needs of the refugees would be met by a standard daily intake of 3,258 calories for adults and 2,853 for children. This translated into the supply of the following rations per person.

Table 3.3 Food Rations Per Person, Northern Rhodesia⁴⁰⁵

Daily		Weekly	
Butter	1 oz	Bacon	4 oz
Flour	10 oz	Beans	2 oz
Fruit	3 oz	Cheese	4 oz
Buckwheat	2 oz	Cocoa	1½ oz
Jam	⅔ oz	Oil	3 oz
Meat	6 oz	Rice	2 oz
Milk	¾ pint	Tea	1½ oz
Potatoes	8 oz		
Sugar	1½ oz		
Vegetables	6 oz		

⁴⁰³ TNA, FO 371 32645/W10393, T. H. Preston to the Minister of State, Cairo, 20 July 1942; Suski, *W służbie publicznej na dwóch kontynentach*, p. 203.

⁴⁰⁴ TNA, FO 371/36685/W3059, Conference of Directors and Commissioners of Refugees in East Africa held in Nairobi on the 9th of January 1943, Appendix D.

⁴⁰⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/79, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS, to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24 Jan to 31 March 1943.

Tenders were called for the long-term supply of certain food products. The sheer volume of food required can be gleaned from a snapshot of just one camp's partial needs. Tenders for food supplies for the Bwana Mkubwa camp with a population of between twelve and fourteen hundred called for 386 pounds of fresh meat, 50 gallons of milk, 193 pounds of fresh fruit, and 386 pounds of fresh vegetables daily.⁴⁰⁶

Only Southern Rhodesia was able to regularly supply the recommended food rations.⁴⁰⁷ In other territories certain products were either completely unavailable, available in limited supply or available intermittently. Fresh milk was not available in Uganda because of the tse tse fly's impact on dairy herd health and numbers. There was only one powdered milk factory in East Africa and had its entire output been dedicated for refugee consumption, it would have met only half of Uganda's refugee needs. Condensed milk was therefore imported from Kenya and South Africa.⁴⁰⁸ Fresh milk was available in Northern Rhodesia, however, the Bwana Mkubwa camp was located outside the dairy producing area and transporting milk over long distances meant that it arrived as *zsiadle mleko* (sour milk) a form of milk traditionally consumed in Eastern Europe and considered to be even healthier than fresh milk.⁴⁰⁹

The availability of another staple of the Polish diet, potatoes, was also unpredictable and tapioca was often used as a substitute. The supply of flour was problematic in both Uganda and Tanganyika. Initially, wheat flour was distributed, then cornflour, then manioc (the root of the cassava plant). This had to be put through a lengthy and thorough process of cleaning, grating and pressing to produce an edible course meal. This the refugees did themselves.⁴¹⁰ The supply of fresh vegetables was also a problem, as transport in the backs of lorries over long distances on bush tracks, left the vegetables battered and bruised on arrival and led to a portion being discarded as unsuitable for human consumption.⁴¹¹ The problem with vegetables was partially solved by setting up camp farms.

From the outset, the Nairobi-based East African Governors' Conference stressed the need for a self-supporting food policy for the refugee camps. It was planned that the refugees would grow vegetables, and keep livestock in close proximity to the camps. Yet some six

⁴⁰⁶ TNA, CO 670/9, Northern Rhodesia Government Gazette, Vol. XXXIV, No. 55, 8 December 1944, Lusaka, General Notice No 756 of 1944.

⁴⁰⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/70, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS, to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24 Jan to 31 March 1943.

⁴⁰⁸ TNA, FO 371 36685/W3059/11-13, Conference of Directors and Commissioners of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi, 9 January 1943.

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Paula Ciołek.

⁴¹⁰ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 August 1943, p. 133.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

months after the first refugees arrived, most camps could barely produce fifty per cent of their vegetables needs. Vegetables grown included potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, tomatoes, beetroot, turnips, carrot, peas, eggplant, onion, soya and pumpkin. All of the camps also kept chickens.⁴¹² The output of the camps' farms was far below the expectations of the Governor's Conference in Nairobi. There were practical reasons for the slow uptake of farming by the Poles, like the scarcity of tools and seeds. However, the major reason was the objection of the European population, farmers and administrators to the Poles engaging in agriculture.⁴¹³

The Delegate for the MPiOS travelled extensively and consulted widely with the European population and came to the conclusion that the Polish refugees could not be used to carry out work which hitherto had been the sole domain of African labour. European farmers argued that the Poles, who were only temporarily resident in the territories, had no right to act in a way that would jeopardise the prestige of the white man, and threaten the very foundation of the economy. European doctors argued that Europeans could not undertake heavy work, regularly and for long periods of time in the African sun. Finally, the European population argued on economic grounds that African labour was cheaper than refugee labour.⁴¹⁴ There was evidence to suggest that, at the local level, the settlers did not want the refugees to be involved in food production at all. The large scale development of vegetable gardens by the Poles would reduce access for British farmers to an extremely profitable market for their products - the refugee camps.⁴¹⁵ A situation developed in Kidugala where the British camp commandant ordered that an entire crop of beans remain unharvested. It emerged that he had a vested interest in restricting the camp's food production as, like many of the Camp Commandants, he was a farmer, and in this case, the camp's major supplier of vegetables.⁴¹⁶

Polish authorities in Nairobi were concerned that the prestige of the Polish nation would be lowered in the eyes of the British by Polish women working the land. They also feared that British support for accommodating refugees would be lost if agricultural production by camp farms disrupted the local economy. The feeling in the camps was somewhat different.⁴¹⁷ Polish camp leaders and the refugees themselves, wanted to have some measure of control over their food supply and its quality. They could achieve this by growing

⁴¹² Ibid. p. 138.

⁴¹³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/35, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 November 1942 to 31 December 1942; MPiOS 131/106/43, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 January to 29 February 1943.

⁴¹⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/40, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943.

⁴¹⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/137-138, Confidential Note to CO, 1 April 1943; MPiOS 131/101/181-182, Minutes of meeting held in Office of Aliens and Internees, Dar es Salaam, 9 June 1943.

⁴¹⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/43, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943.

⁴¹⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/36, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 November 1942 to 31 December 1942.

their own food. There was also the very important question of employment. The majority of refugees were from a farming background. Though they were unfamiliar with the African climate and soil, they knew about farming. Farmers' wives in Poland were actively involved in farm work. Growing vegetables, keeping pigs and chickens, milking cows - this was women's work. The Polish women in Africa who chose to be involved in the camp's farms did so to reconnect with self and home, to do something they knew how to do, to feel valued and useful, and to experience even the small degree of independence that came from having a job and earning a wage.

In Uganda, which was not a settler colony, the two large refugee camps, Koja and Masindi, went ahead with efforts to supply their own food. At Koja, a piggery was established where, in the first three years, 2,850 pigs, were slaughtered at the camp butchery and consumed by camp residents as ham, bacon, and *kielbasa* (cured sausage). In the same period, the camp's poultry farm supplied a total of six and a half thousand chickens and geese to the camp kitchens. A winery was established producing nine thousand bottles of wine annually, sold mainly to the European population in Kampala. As fresh milk was only available from native farmers and in very limited quantities, the Poles determined to establish their own dairy herd, trialling different breeds of European cow and twice losing almost their entire stock to an epidemic. They then purchased a variety of local cow and the herd produced two thousand two hundred litres of milk monthly. Though this quantity was insufficient to satisfy all the camps needs, and condensed and powdered milk continued to be imported, it did provide children and the ill with a healthier alternative. The camp farm also grew its own vegetables.⁴¹⁸

The edict from Nairobi to locate the camps where the refugees would not be seen at work by the natives did not achieve its goal. Remote locations had only served to distance the refugees from urban centres, the hub of European populations. Throughout the territories, wherever the camps and camp farms were located, there were African villages in the vicinity and it was impossible to hide white workers from African eyes. The African population not only saw the refugees working on the camp farms, they worked alongside them. African labour camps were set up next to the larger refugee camps, and Africans were assigned to work inside the camps on new building projects, repairs and renovation of existing buildings, controlling the growth of wild vegetation inside the camps to keep down vermin, clearing

⁴¹⁸ PISM, KOL 174/3, Wł. Studzinski, Co-op Report, 25 November 1946.

land for farming, and as farm labour.⁴¹⁹ Africans from nearby villages worked as postmen, as security guards, in the kitchens and hospitals, and as 'house boys'.⁴²⁰ The Poles did not allow the presence of Africans to prevent them from pursuing their goals of self-sufficiency, rather, they found themselves utilising African labour to help achieve this.

The Tengeru camp in Tanganyika had the most successful farm and it was the only camp that became completely self-supporting, largely due to the efforts of the British Camp Commandant, Captain Minnery. Undeterred by the task of carving farmland out of the jungle, he persisted with the agricultural project when the Polish authorities in Nairobi and at the camp were ready to give up, overwhelmed by the obstacles they faced. Bypassing the Polish hierarchy, Minnery looked for and found among the refugees, a capable and enthusiastic agriculturalist in Stefan Zakrzewski and they forged a partnership which saw the camp farm succeed despite the odds. To ensure the longevity of the project, Minnery untypically ordained that Zakrzewski would report directly to him and not to the Polish authorities.⁴²¹

The difficulties that had to be overcome were legion. The only tools available to clear the jungle were axes and *pangas* (African knives). There was a prohibition on keeping cattle in the district due to tse tse fly but Minnery somehow gained permission for a dairy herd to be kept at the camp. He purchased twelve oxen much needed for ploughing to see ten of the oxen, along with their guides, eaten by lions on the two hundred and fifty miles journey to the camp. Snakes, including vipers were manifold. Vegetables succumbed to numerous tropical diseases, and the absence of birds of prey meant that numerous insects thrived on the crops. Some types of vermin were picked out of the soil by hand, chickens were let loose in vegetable patches to eat insects, and poison was used to combat the damage caused by locusts and baboons.⁴²²

The greatest enemy of the cattle were ticks which caused numerous, including fatal, illnesses of the blood, and whose presence was combatted by the labour intensive process of daily removal by hand and bathing the animals in an arsenic solution every five days. When East Coast Fever broke out, only one out of twenty-seven cows survived. By July 1945, sixty-nine acres were under cultivation with crops such as corn and sunflowers, over a hundred

⁴¹⁹ Porajska, *From the Steppes to the Savannah*, p. 108; 'Ruch budowlany w osiedlach', *Polak w Afryce*, 24 November 1943; PISM, KOL 174/9A, History of the Polish Tengeru Settlement, Tanganyka, East Africa, pp. 4-5.

⁴²⁰ Kondratowicz-Kordas, *Travel without Choice*, p. 44; Sikorski, *From Snow to Sunshine*, p. 85; Filipczak-Puchalska, *Moje Tulacze Wspomnienia*, p. 82.

⁴²¹ PISM, KOL 174/9A, Summary of the Agricultural Enterprise at Tengeru Settlement, Stefan Zakrzewski, Agricultural Officer in Charge, 15 July 1946.

⁴²² *Ibid.*

acres were being use as natural grazing ground, and pasture was being cultivated on thirty-three acres. The entire area under cultivations as under irrigation from nearby Lake Diluti. Vegetables and milk were available year round. During the first thirty-two and a half months of the farm's operation, it supplied 1,830,635 pounds of fresh vegetables (tomatoes and cucumbers, beetroot, onions, cabbages) to the refugee camp and the African camp at Tengeru. Its milk production peaked at 4,270 gallons for the month of December 1945, and 1,710 eggs in the month of August 1945. In July 1945 the camp farm possessed 206 European cows, 121 African cows, 48 working oxen, 18 donkeys, 60 sheep, 2 horses (Ali and Kali ridden by the farm manager and his family), and 436 chickens. Farm buildings and equipment were all funded by farm profits. Employed at the farm in a wide variety of roles were 202 women, 54 men and 160 Africans.⁴²³

The overall food situation in the camps was judged by the MPiOS, who paid regular visits to the camps from Nairobi and sent regular reports to the Polish Government in London, as 'satisfactory to good'.⁴²⁴ In 1944, the refugee rations for meat, sugar and eggs were actually higher than those in Britain.⁴²⁵ As the internal economy of the camps developed, a discernible gap emerged between the haves and the have-nots in relation to access to food.⁴²⁶ Those employed in senior positions in the camp and, to a lesser extent, women who received regular advances from their menfolk in the army, could purchase a greater variety and better quality product than those who worked in lower paid positions or those whose only income was their monthly allowance of ten shillings per adult and two and a half shillings per child.⁴²⁷ The 'haves' could shop in town. Regular transport by road was organised from camps to the nearest towns. In larger towns like Kampala, Lusaka and Arusha a full range of food products and luxury items could be bought. Colonial authorities disapproved of the refugees' shopping in towns. In Arusha, the town closest to Tengeru, increased demand raised prices, created shortages for locals, and led to orders being issued prohibiting shops from serving refugees. This occurred in both Arusha and Kampala, two of the three large camps situated close to urban centres.⁴²⁸ The camp's general stores were well stocked and compensated for this loss of shopping rights in large towns. Extra food items could also be purchased from Africa

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/22, MPiOS Nairobi, Report for the period from 1 November 1942 to 31 December 1942.

⁴²⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/103/9-10, MPiOS Nairobi, Report for the period from 1 June 1944 to 31 July 1944.

⁴²⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/240, MPiOS Nairobi to MPiOS London, 12 December 1943.

⁴²⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/6, MPiOS Nairobi, Report for the period to 30 September 1942.

⁴²⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/196, MPiOS Nairobi, Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

markets held regularly at camp gates, and supervised by camp authorities, or by unauthorised visits to African villages.

Beyond the camps' large-scale farming ventures, a popular and inexpensive way of improving access to food was to grow ones own. Many women made the spaces outside their huts into vegetables plots and kept chickens for eggs and meat. Producing food brought purpose to their daily lives, affirming them as good mothers able to provide food for their children. Securing a small degree of independence from the total care of the camp regime also enhanced their sense of self-worth. Those who were dependent on rations only, queued each week to receive their allocation of food items which ensured that no-one went hungry but didn't always bring great satisfaction.⁴²⁹

In all cultures, food plays a role far beyond that of satisfying a basic human need. It 'lies at the heart of social relations'.⁴³⁰ Food is about family and community. The Polish women in Africa cooked for their families. As huts were built of highly flammable materials, and wood fires were used for cooking, kitchens were located some distance from the huts. Women cooked in stand-alone kitchens which varied in size from the very small, such as the individual kitchens that stood behind each hut in Koja, to the very large, such as the communal kitchens in Masindi, Tengeru and Kidugala where groups of thirty to sixty women could prepare meals at any one time.⁴³¹ This practice of each mother cooking for her own family was not supported by Polish camp authorities. They wanted to do away with the practice of regularly distributing food rations from multiple points around the camps to individuals as an inefficient practice that led to squabbles and accusation of unfair distribution practices. They argued that individual cooking wasted time and energy, it resulted in food scraps being spread across a wide terrain attracting rats and other vermin, and it increased the risk of fire.⁴³² But throughout the camps, even at Lusaka and Bwana Mkubwa in Northern Rhodesia where communal kitchens and communal dining halls were the norm, the women circumvented the authorities' preferred communal feeding policy in order to enact a core value, a core belief, that it is the role of a woman and mother to prepare the food for her family. They cooked outdoors 'like gypsies', on campfires or on primus stoves.⁴³³ Despite the

⁴²⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/240, MPiOS Nairobi to MPiOS London, 12 December 1943.

⁴³⁰ Carole Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power*, New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 6.

⁴³¹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/4, MPiOS Nairobi, Report for the period to 30 September 1942; 131/106/43, MPiOS Nairobi, Report for the period 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943.

⁴³² AAN, MPiOS 131/106/132, MPiOS Nairobi, Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943.

⁴³³ Alicja Horbaczewska, 'U podnóża góry Meru', *Wspomnienia Afrykańczyków*, Perth, Western Australia, 1990, p. 9.

many difficulties which shared kitchen facilities presented, and pressure from Polish camp authorities to eliminate individual cooking, the women tenaciously held on to the traditional role of a 'proper' woman and insisted on preparing food for their own families.

Other than in Northern Rhodesia, in Lusaka and Bwana Mkubwa, meals were eaten together as a family in individual huts. Food cooked in external kitchens was carried back to the huts, to the single rooms that were home, to be eaten at the family table. This eating as a family was part of a restorative process, of renewing and strengthening family bonds. Meal time was sacred family time.⁴³⁴ Cooking also brought structure to the women's daily lives and gave them something meaningful to do with the inordinate amount of time they had on their hands.⁴³⁵ The position of the MPiOS on the issue of cooking and eating reveals the extent to which camp society was stratifying.⁴³⁶ In the bi-monthly report to the Minister in London, the MPiOS delegate in Nairobi wrote, 'In all of the settlements, the intelligentsia have organised canteens for themselves. Only *kobiety z ludu* (women of the common people) insist on cooking for their families.'⁴³⁷

Family vegetable plots and the camp farms provided the women with the ingredients they needed to cook traditional Polish food. 'The flavours of their youth continued to hold high value, not in an economic but in an emotional or nostalgic way'.⁴³⁸ Cooking and eating Polish food was a way of enacting Polishness, a way of remembering and connecting with home and homeland. An examination of the menu for Bwana Mkubwa camp shows that although there was a certain monotony in the limited range of dishes prepared, the food was similar to what was eaten at home in Poland. Soups, *pierogi* (dumplings), *kluski* (noodles), *kasza* (buckwheat), feature strongly, with pork and chicken the preferred meats.

⁴³⁴ Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body*, p. 17.

⁴³⁵ Annie Hauck Lawson, *Foodways of three Polish-American families in New York*, PhD Thesis, New York University, 1991, p. 73.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴³⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/132, MPiOS Nairobi, Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 August 1943.

⁴³⁸ Lawson, *Foodways of three Polish-American families in New York*, p. 167.

Table 3.4 Bwana Mkubwa Camp Weekly Menu⁴³⁹

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Day 1	Coffee and butter	Potato soup, <i>bigos</i> *, bread	Meat <i>pierogi</i> , bread and jam, tea
Day 2	Coffee and butter	Cabbage soup, pork cutlet with <i>kluski</i> , bread	Buckwheat with salad, bread and jam, tea
Day 3	Coffee and butter	Vegetable soup, roast chicken with vegetables, bread	<i>Kluski</i> in milk, bread and butter, tea
Day 4	Coffee and butter	Beetroot soup, goulash with beans, bread	Buckwheat <i>pierogi</i> , bread and jam, tea
Day 5	Coffee and butter	Chicken broth, meat and potatoes, bread, fruit	Meat <i>pierogi</i> , bread and butter, tea
Day 6	Coffee and butter	Vegetable soup, buckwheat goulash, bread, fruit	Buckwheat, bread and butter, tea
Day 7	Coffee and butter	Potato soup, chicken with beans, bread	Buckwheat pie, salad, bread and jam, tea

*bigos - sauerkraut and meat stew

In addition, children received bread and jam and tea for morning tea, and bread and butter and milk for afternoon tea.

A revered staple of the Polish diet was bread. It was eaten with every meal and had a central place at the table. As the 'bread of life' it was also a sacred food, the eating of which was experienced as a religious act.⁴⁴⁰ In Africa, no matter how well fed they were, the refugees 'hungred' for bread.⁴⁴¹ Their recurring cry for more bread was not related to physical hunger, but to a craving for the emotional and psychological sustenance that only bread could provide. It was linked to their yearning for a return to a 'proper' life, a normal, happy past, as they imagined it, and bread was central to that life.⁴⁴² Ovens appeared alongside sunflowers and zinnias in the gardens next to huts and whenever flour could be

⁴³⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/229, Bwana Mkubwa menu, August 1944.

⁴⁴⁰ Monica Janowski, 'Food in Traumatic Times: Women, Foodways and Polishness during a Wartime Odyssey', *Food and Foodways: Exploration in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment*, vol. 20, no. 3/4, 2012, p. 333.

⁴⁴¹ 'Life in the Settlements', *Polak w Afryce*, 14 March 1943, p. 2; Chappell, *The Persian Blanket*, p. 157; Bajak, *Przez Sybir*, p. 43; AAN, MPiOS 131/106/65, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopec, Deputy Delegate MPiOS, to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24 Jan to 31 March 1943.

⁴⁴² Janowski, *Food and Foodways*, p. 331.

obtained, the women baked bread. Shopping lists for trips into town with a pass from the Camp Commandant seldom omitted bread.

Clothing

As the refugees travelled by train from their ports of arrival to their inland camps, they were welcomed at various railway stations along the way by the local British community. At Nairobi, concerns were raised at the condition of the refugees' clothing and shoes and a suggestion was made to launch an appeal throughout East Africa for donations. This was met with assurances from Nairobi colonial authorities that this was not necessary as 'the refugees travelled in their oldest clothes' and they had other clothes to wear.⁴⁴³ Central colonial authorities were mistaken and charitable donations from the local communities organised by local authorities were relied upon to clothe the refugees in their first few months in Africa.⁴⁴⁴

The local market's unpreparedness for a huge influx of Europeans and its prioritisation of military over civilian needs meant that it was unable to meet the demand for clothing and footwear coming from the refugee camps.⁴⁴⁵ The only local bulk purchase which the authorities managed to make was for discounted footwear from the Bata Shoe Company's Kenya-based operations.⁴⁴⁶ The rubber-soled canvas-upper sneakers (the Classic Bata Tennis of 1936, one of the best-selling shoes of all time), would be the shoe that many of the refugees, particularly the children would wear for the duration of their time in Africa. Lusia remembers the Bata Tennis as the only shoes she wore, except for hand-me-down leather shoes from her brother. Teenage girls going to Saturday night dances at the camps, transformed their Bata Tennis shoes into dancing shoes by drawing designs on them in coloured chalk.⁴⁴⁷ And a pair of Bata Tennis shoes was all that could find to buy Janina when her leather shoes were eaten by ants while she slept on her first night at the Lusaka camp.⁴⁴⁸

As neither local donations nor the local market could meet the demand for clothing and footwear coming from the refugee camps, authorities turned to overseas donations and purchases instead. Colonial authorities bore the responsibility for providing the refugees with

⁴⁴³ 'The Refugees', *East African Standard*, 11 September 1942, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/ 241, MPiOS Nairobi Report for 12 December 1943.

⁴⁴⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/103/10, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1944 to 31 July 1944.

⁴⁴⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/29, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 November 1942 to 31 December 1942. The Bata Shoe Company, which originated in today's Czech Republic, was one of the first non-British companies to invest in Kenya. In the 1940s, it controlled seventy per cent of the footwear market in British East Africa. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bata_\(company\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bata_(company)), (accessed 15 January 2017).

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with Elizabeth Patro.

⁴⁴⁸ Chappell, *The Persian Blanket*, p. 157.

footwear and clothing, and they enlisted the help of Polish authorities in this task. Orders were placed for fabric and sewing machines from India and requests were made to charitable organisations such as the American Red Cross, and the U.S. War Relief services. In November 1942, the American Red Cross pledged to send a shipment of ten thousand pairs of shoes (sixty per cent for children and forty per cent for women), ten thousand yards of gingham, and ten thousand yards of denim or khaki.⁴⁴⁹ Polish authorities called upon organisations such as the Polish Relief Fund (UK) and *Polonia* (the Polish diaspora) for help. Before long, large quantities of clothing began arriving at African ports.⁴⁵⁰

A central warehouse was set up in Nairobi, jointly run by EARA and the Polish MPiOS. A joint Committee of Supplies was formed to conduct the business of distributing the clothing from Nairobi to the camps.⁴⁵¹ By mid 1943, one warehouse could not hold all of the incoming supplies and the Polish authorities opened a second warehouse. By the end of 1943, the Polish warehouse held sufficient clothing to supply twenty thousand refugees for a year. At this point, the British authorities requested that the Polish authorities assume full responsibility for distribution activities. This they agreed to do from 1 January 1944 under the continuing direction of the joint Committee of Supplies.⁴⁵²

Numerous difficulties were encountered with receiving and distributing goods. Often only a few days notice was given that a shipment of donated clothing was arriving and there were no details about what the shipment contained. Authorities did not know what was in crates until they were opened and found everything from baby clothes to fur coats, all bundled up together.⁴⁵³ Another problem was the mismatch between the goods donated and the needs of the refugees as in the case of a shipment of two thousand slippers from Cairo which turned out to be totally impractical for wearing on the earthen floors and dirt roads of the refugee camps.⁴⁵⁴ There were problems with the security of the goods on arrival and instances of crates being damaged or broken open with a considerable portion of their contents going missing.⁴⁵⁵ The more goods that arrived from the Americas, the more widespread became the black market for second-hand American clothing. In Northern Rhodesia, there were instances

⁴⁴⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/55, MPiOS Nairobi Correspondence relating to American Red Cross, 19 November 1942.

⁴⁵⁰ AAN, MPiOS 131/103/11, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1944 to 31 July 1944.

⁴⁵¹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/134, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943.

⁴⁵² TNA, FO 371/36687/W17986, Minutes of the Conference of Directors of Refugees, Nairobi, 17 & 18 November 1943.

⁴⁵³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/198, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁴⁵⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/134, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943.

⁴⁵⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/29, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 November 1943 and 31 December 1942.

of entire lorries of 'smuggled' goods being repossessed by authorities.⁴⁵⁶ There were problems not only with the arrival of shipments at short notice; the unsuitability of donated goods for the refugees needs; and the security of the goods upon arrival; but also with distribution. From the warehouses in Nairobi, clothing was transported by rail and road to the camps. The further a camp was from Nairobi the less likely it was to receive a fair share of supplies. The two camps in Uganda were the worst off in this regard.⁴⁵⁷

Polish authorities decided on a clothing allowance per person of a hat, three dresses or two sets of shirts and trousers, two pairs of shoes, four changes of underwear, two pair of stockings or socks, a sweater, four handkerchiefs, a set of winter underwear and a coat. These would be provided to the refugees from whatever source was available, donations or purchases, as soon as possible after their arrival. The one item that it was difficult to provide, not only at the beginning but during the entire time the refugees were in Africa, was shoes. What was needed, not only men but also for children and women, were closed-in leather shoes. These were rarely found among the donations. In November 1943, some refugees were still awaiting their first pair of shoes.⁴⁵⁸

In mid 1943, the MPiOS gave instructions that clothing was no longer to be given out free of charge. They gave as their reasons the quarrels and discontent caused by free distribution and considered that the refugees could afford to pay for clothing, though exemptions were granted for the elderly, infirm, women with young children, and orphans.⁴⁵⁹ The British supported the cessation of free distribution of clothing, believing that the local economy was being negatively impacted by money was being hoarded in the camps.⁴⁶⁰ Some families received the regular monthly allowance of ten shillings per adult and two and a half shillings per child, wages from employment within the camp, and remittances sent to them by their menfolk in the army. As well as stockpiling cash, the British believed that some refugees were accumulating goods of value, such silk fabric to take back to Poland. As the refugees were being maintained in Africa at no personal expense, it was considered reasonable that they pay for their clothing.⁴⁶¹

In addition to supplies of donated goods, fabric and sewing machines were purchased and put to good use. Each camp had a sewing workshop employing both men and women. At

⁴⁵⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/241, MPiOS Nairobi Report for 12 December 1943.

⁴⁵⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/103/11, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1944 to 31 July 1944.

⁴⁵⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/199, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁴⁵⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/103/13, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1944 to 31 July 1944.

⁴⁶⁰ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/135, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943.

⁴⁶¹ AAN, MPiOS 131 103/12, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1944 to 31 July 1944.

Koja there were two workshops, one sewing for the camp and the other making goods on order for camp residents and the general public. In the month of February 1944, the camp workshop, which employed forty-one people, produced twenty-five men's suits, one hundred and fourteen women's dresses, fifty-two sets of women's underwear, two hundred and twenty-nine sets of men's underwear, seventy-two school uniforms, and fifty-two blouses. The camps' needs included a large number of uniforms such as school uniforms, scouting uniforms and nursing uniforms all of which were made at the camp workshop. The private workshop employed thirteen workers and was also a training facility for high school students interested in becoming seamstresses and tailors. In 1944 there were seventeen students training in the workshop.⁴⁶² Some camps also had workshops where shoes were made. At the height of operations at the workshop in Tengeru, one hundred and twenty pairs of new shoes were being manufactured each month.⁴⁶³

Conclusion

The colonial governments were responsible for providing shelter, food and clothing for the refugees in Africa. Wartime economic circumstances largely determined how the authorities were able to fulfil these responsibilities. Due to shortages of skilled labour and building materials, the accommodation provided was in primitive huts made of local materials - no floors, ceilings, window panes, electricity or running water. Overcrowding and a lack of privacy limited people's ability to live individual or family lives. The camps were built and organised along military lines and initially had very little to recommend them as places where a community could be built and people could feel at home. Advised by authorities that they could expect to remain in Africa for up to two years, and hoping to return to Poland in the future, the women looked to the past to help define the present. Excluded from British colonial society, they turned instead to reaffirming their Polishness and to recreating an imagined Poland. They drew on the myth of the virtuous, self-sacrificing and patriotic *Matka Polka*, to give meaning to their lives.

The world outside the camp was out of bounds and mothers were fearful of the many natural dangers to be found there. Children, however, responded very differently to adults to the world outside the camps. Although officially a pass was required to leave the camp, the camp's boundaries were easily breached and the children took delight in escapades in the

⁴⁶² 'W Osiedlu Koja', *Polak w Afryce*, 7 April 1944, p. 3.

⁴⁶³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/199, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

wilderness. Despite the many dangers of wild animals, of malaria-carrying mosquitos and water-born parasites, they swam and climbed and jumped and swung into one adventure after another. And very few fell into harm's way.

Colonial governments were also responsible for feeding the refugees. The supply of food was centrally co-ordinated and locally provisioned where possible. In addition to purchased supplies, the camps established farms in order to pursue the goal of self-sufficiency, ordained by central colonial authorities. The success of the farms was limited, as the view from Nairobi was not shared by local settlers and administrators who argued on political, social and economic grounds that Polish women should not engage in food production. The camps' remote locations were meant to keep women working in the fields out of sight of the African population and so prevent a lowering of the prestige of the 'white man' in their eyes. However, most of the camp's locations were remote from urban centres, not from African villages. Not only did the refugees live in the midst of the African population, African men were employed in the camps in construction and even on the farms. The notion of camps' achieving self-sufficiency was fraught with obstacles and only one camp succeeded in growing enough food for its residents. Nevertheless, the farms were important in provided women from a farming background with opportunities to use their skills, earn a wage, and contribute to their own maintenance. The farms were also important in providing the ingredients for cooking Polish food and continuing Polish traditions in the kitchen. Though authorities favoured communal cooking for its economic and efficiency benefits, the women favoured individual cooking, placing food at the heart of their efforts to recover and pass Polish cultural traditions and practices on to their children. The women insisted on cooking for themselves and eating meals in a family setting, in their huts.

As systems of delivering shelter and food were determined, two distinct social groups evolved in the camps. Polish MPiOS authorities refer to these two groups as the intelligentsia and the *lud* (common people). A small number of intelligentsia, mostly male, held senior positions in the camp hierarchy, lived in separate and superior housing with their families, were well remunerated, and could afford to purchase a range of food products in addition to the adequate but limited rations that were distributed to camp residents. There was a heightened awareness of this inequality among the women who made up the majority of the refugees, sensitive as they were to the sacrifices their fathers, husbands and sons in the army were making for the nation while the men in Africa lived in safety and comfort.

Colonial authorities enlisted the help of Polish authorities in acquiring and distributing clothing and footwear to the refugees. Local donations and local purchases were

supplemented by purchases and donations from overseas until clothing supplies, in particular, were adequate. The camps also set up their own sewing rooms with sewing machines and fabric purchased or donated from overseas, and a small number of cobblers worked at shoemaking. The unavailability of suitable footwear, however, continued to be a problem throughout the refugees' sojourn in Africa.

Chapter 4 **The Camp as Society**

This chapter continues the investigation into the ways in which the camps were constructed materially and socially. It examines how the British colonial authorities carried out their responsibilities in relation to three aspects of refugee camp life: health care, employment, and law and order. By the time the refugees arrived in Africa, their bodies had borne the impact of hard labour, hunger and illness in the Soviet Union. Life in the tropics presented new and formidable challenges to their health and safety for which they were ill prepared. How colonial authorities fulfilled their role as health care providers will be scrutinised in this chapter. Beyond the issue of physical health was the question of psychological well-being. Engaging in useful and gainful activity through employment was one way of helping to restore a sense of self-worth and meaning to adult lives. What was the role of the employment policy of colonial authorities in promoting individual well-being and the growth of productive and purposeful communities? Colonial authorities used encampment to exclude the refugees from colonial society and prevent, or at least minimise, unlawful or unwanted behaviour towards or by refugees. They gave Polish authorities the responsibility of administering law and order inside the camps. How did this dual system of control operate? Were the refugees law-abiding members of camp and colonial society?

Health

The state of health of the refugees arriving in Africa was directly related to their experiences in the Soviet Union. Men, women and even children, had laboured outdoors in extreme weather conditions for long hours each day. They had lived in crowded accommodation in unsanitary conditions with insufficient food. Things worsened after the amnesty. In the southern republics of the Soviet Union where they gathered around the newly formed Polish army, they succumbed to typhus, typhoid, malaria, dysentery, rheumatism and pneumonia, with measles and whooping cough also prevalent among the children. There were 639 deaths recorded at the port of Pahlevi, the arrival point in Iran of the evacuees.⁴⁶⁴ Fortunately, far fewer deaths were recorded at points of arrival in Africa. In the ports of Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and Beira where, from September to December 1942, a succession of Allied vessels

⁴⁶⁴ TNA, FO 371 32630/W9732, Ross First Evacuation Report, Appendix IV; AAN, PRPwT 592/43/317, Ross Second Evacuation Report.

brought the first ten thousand Poles to Africa, fourteen deaths were recorded, four at sea and ten in hospitals shortly after arrival.⁴⁶⁵

The refugees faced new challenges to their health in Africa. Firstly, the climate was completely different to anything they had known before. The proximity of the camps to the equator and the resultant exposure to the penetrating rays of the sun, the year round high temperatures, the heavy rainfall during the wet season and accompanying humidity - all of these factors impacted negatively on their already compromised health. Various measures were taken to minimise the influence of the climate. The higher the altitude the cooler the climate and this was taken into consideration when choosing the locations for the camps. Pith helmets were issued en route in India and medical authorities in Africa strove to educate the refugees on the necessity of wearing them. To some extent the huts constructed also tempered the effect of the heat though they did little to overcome the high humidity.⁴⁶⁶ Tropical ulcers were the most commonly treated condition in the clinics and hospitals in the camps.⁴⁶⁷

Secondly, malaria was a constant scourge. It was the cause of one third of all deaths in the first six months of the refugees' sojourn in Africa.⁴⁶⁸ To prevent those who did not have malaria from catching it, mosquito nets were provided for every bed, fines were issued to those who went outdoors after dark with their arms and legs exposed, and mosquito breeding grounds were regularly cleared. Serious cases were hospitalised and treated with quinine. In June 1944 ten per cent of the refugees in East Africa were ill with malaria and the highest incidents were in the two camps in Uganda.⁴⁶⁹

Thirdly, parasites invaded unsuspecting bodies, some causing inconvenience, others pain and even death. Almost every child experienced the painful inflammation caused by the *tunga penetrans* (jigger or sand flea) burrowing under the skin of the soles of their feet and especially under toe nails. The children soon became quite adept at using a needle to remove the sack of flea's eggs without it breaking open. Hookworms were also a problem as their eggs and larvae thrived in soil where sanitary provisions were basic and living conditions primitive. Preventative measures such as wearing shoes were difficult to enforce with children and in any event there was an ongoing shortage of shoes. The fact that many huts had earthen floors, that toilets were little more than a hole in the ground, and that huts were not connected to the water supply, did not help the situation. A less visible parasite was the schistosomiasis-

⁴⁶⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 November 1942 to 31 December 1942.

⁴⁶⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, Report of the Director of Health, MPiOS Nairobi, 7 May 1943, pp. 59-60.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁶⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/103/14, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1944 to 31 July 1944.

causing worm that lived in the lakes and rivers and in unfiltered water such as that used for showering. This worm burrowed into the skin and moved through the blood to the liver and the bowels to lay eggs. Months or years would pass before symptoms were experienced and without timely treatment permanent damage could be caused to affected organs and result in death. Telling children living under the tropical sun not to swim in the rivers and lakes of Africa was an edict often ignored.⁴⁷⁰ At Koja on Lake Victoria, the incidence of bilharzia peaked in 1946 with sixty-one cases diagnosed.⁴⁷¹

Finally, there was the risk of infectious diseases. The refugees were vaccinated against yellow fever and typhoid but once again sanitation was key to preventing new instances of life-threatening illnesses such as dysentery from occurring. Toilets in most camps were built just ten metres from huts and consisted of a hole or ditch covered by boards with openings sealed by wooden covers. If the covers were not airtight it was impossible to keep flies under control. And these same flies needed to be kept away from food. Camps employed sanitary inspectors to ensure that all that could be done was done to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and hospital records show that they were not a serious problem.⁴⁷²

Finding doctors to work in Africa was a problem for the entire period of the refugees' sojourn there. At the end of 1942 there were twelve doctors at work in the six refugees camps in Uganda and Tanganyika, caring for ten thousand refugees.⁴⁷³ This was far short of the number that authorities considered was needed and finding additional doctors became a matter of extreme urgency. The British employed local doctors to try to fill the gap but in mid 1943 after the Rhodesias had also taken in Polish refugees and the number of camps had grown to eleven, the number of doctors had only risen to thirteen. At the time there were 13,385 refugees in Africa: 6,996 women, 5,479 children and 910 men. Efforts were made to source Polish doctors from the UK and Palestine though these were slow in arriving. Twelve military doctors promised from the Middle East had not yet arrived in mid 1944.⁴⁷⁴

The shortage of doctors led to some interesting appointments. The remote Abercorn camp in north east Northern Rhodesia had no doctor for the first year. The role of Chief Medical Officer was initially filled by an optician and then by a naturalist whose passion was

⁴⁷⁰ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, Report of the Director of Health, MPiOS Nairobi, 7 May 1943, pp. 59, 61.

⁴⁷¹ PISM, KOL 174/3, A History of the Development of Hospital Services in Koja 1942-1946, p. 4.

⁴⁷² AAN, MPiOS 131/106, Report of the Director of Health, MPiOS Nairobi, 7 May 1943, p. 61.

⁴⁷³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi report for the period from 1 November 1943 to 31 December 1942, p. 19a.

⁴⁷⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/103, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1944 to 31 July 1944, pp. 8, 12, 13.

the collection of butterflies.⁴⁷⁵ At Lusaka, a medical imposter was discovered. The Chief Medical Officer reported to the Director of Health in Nairobi that his deputy, 'a beautiful doe-eyed brunette' called Dr Rachowa, knew nothing about medicine. She claimed to be the wife of Colonel Rachow, a prisoner of war at Murnau, and to have completed her medical training at the University of Krakow. Her story was rather confused as she also claimed to have undertaken music studies at the Conservatorium of Music in Vienna, and to have completed both studies in the space of three years. Colonel Rachow responded to correspondence confirming that he had a wife in Poland with whom he was in regular contact. Dr Rachowa graciously resigned and went on to star in theatrical performances at the camp, playing the piano accordion and singing in the style of Marlena Deitrich.⁴⁷⁶

In addition to the shortage of qualified medical staff, there was also an acute lack of medication, medical equipment and even basic items such as bandages, dressings, disinfectant and tonics.⁴⁷⁷ The supply of medical equipment and materials was coordinated between the British, who were responsible for provision of the health service, and the Poles who delivered the service. The main sources of supply were the American Red Cross, colonial authorities through the territorial health services, and purchases made overseas by Polish authorities. Orders were not quickly filled and the delivery of American Red Cross supplies promised in November 1942 was still awaited nine months later.⁴⁷⁸

Despite the shortage of doctors, medicines and equipment, the British colonial authorities endeavoured to meet their responsibility to provide adequate health care for the refugees. Hospitals and clinics were set up in each of the general camps, their capacity and sophistication depending upon the camp's population size and the particular qualifications and skills of medical staff. The first group of six hundred refugees to arrive at the Koja camp were fortunate to have a doctor and a nurse among their number. Dr Goldberg set up a clinic and conducted home visits while the first wing of a new hospital was built. Timber framed with mud walls and a thatch roof, this was opened in January 1943 and consisted of two wards with twenty beds in each and an office, but no electricity or sewerage. A bucket system was used for toilets and the only washing facilities were hand basins. Six months later the hospital had doubled in size. It was connected to electricity, had its own kitchen, and an office block that included a laboratory, a pharmacy, and a first-aid station. In February 1944 a children's

⁴⁷⁵ Królikowski, *Skradzione dzieciństwo*, p. 132.

⁴⁷⁶ Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, p. 170.

⁴⁷⁷ TNA, FO 371/32650/W14755, Polish Refugees Report, Colonel H. P. Mitchell, November 1942, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/57, Report of the Director of Health, MPiOS Nairobi, 7 May 1943.

wing built of brick was opened with another forty beds. A fourth wing was added in April of the same year with seven double rooms and a birthing room. A new kitchen and laundry were added with running water. The hospital was completed in mid 1945 with the addition of two bathrooms with hot and cold running water, an operating theatre, an eye clinic, and a chapel. Other doctors who worked at Koja were Dr Kaluska, Dr Starczewski, Dr Melzak, Dr Frankel and Dr Turk, a gynaecologist.⁴⁷⁹ The construction of a 128 bed hospital with specialist facilities, and the professional services of dedicated doctors to provide health care for the Polish refugees at Koja (population 2,658 in 1945) was a remarkable achievement.

Records of the medical services provided at Koja provide information about their size and nature. As shown in the table below, the refugees made frequent and regular visits to the camp's hospital, outpatients clinics and dental surgery. By far the most common disease during all of the years the camp was operational, was malaria, with thousands of cases diagnosed and treated. Trachoma, found in areas of overcrowding with poor sanitation, was also a recurring problem. The same conditions led to outbreaks of typhus in the refugee camps in Africa, though these were minor compared to those in Persia and the southern regions of the Soviet Union where large numbers had died. Koja's location on the shores of Lake Victoria made swimming an attractive pastime. Though on guard against crocodiles and hippopotami, in 1946 it was discovered that over sixty refugees had fallen victim to infectious parasitic worms that inhabited the lake, and contracted bilharzia. This was an illness that carried long term consequences for many. Finally, a record of births and deaths shows that the former considerably and consistently outnumbered the latter resulting in a natural population increase in the camps. The fact that the mortality rate in this camp was one third of that in pre-war Poland speaks well for the quality of health care provided in the camp.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ PISM, KOL 174/3, A History of the Development of Hospital Services in Koja 1942-1946, pp. 2-3. An estimated half of interwar Poland's doctors were Jewish. See Robert E. Alvis, *White Eagle, Black Madonna*, p. 208.

⁴⁸⁰ United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook 1948*, New York., 1949.

Table 4.1 Medical Statistics for Koja Camp, Uganda⁴⁸¹

	1943	1944	1945	1946
Visits				
Outpatients clinic	7,995	10,108	4,619	2,963
Camp hospital	2,096	4,953	3,473	1,703
Dental surgery	6,905	n/a	15,813	7,176
Cases				
Trachoma	41	30	48	2
Malaria	2,967	6,654	3,124	1,326
Typhus	-	44	15	-
Venereal disease	-	1	-	1
Bilharzia	-	-	-	61
Births	30	41	34	18
Deaths	11	10	9	10

Employment

As the first refugees arrived in Africa by sea from Karachi, Michał Wierusz-Kowalski, the newly appointed Polish Consul General for East Africa, arrived by air from London tasked with investigating employment opportunities for the refugees. Following a two month tour of the territories and an extensive meeting schedule with key members of the colonial administration and leading figures in industry and agriculture, he put forward a proposal to the East Africa Governors' Conference that would see Poland play a role in the development of agriculture and related industries in East Africa.⁴⁸² He envisaged Polish input into the modernisation of primary production through the importation of the latest farm machinery and equipment from the US under the terms of the Lend-Lease agreement.⁴⁸³ He proposed that

⁴⁸¹ Table compiled from information in PISM, KOL 174/3, A History of the Development of Hospital Services in Koja 1942-1946.

⁴⁸² AAN, MPiOS 131/109, M. Wierusz-Kowalski Report on tour of Polish camps in East Africa, 3 September 1943 to 30 October 1943, pp. 1-6.

⁴⁸³ AAN, MPiOS 131/110, Proposal from MPiOS Minister Stańczyk on the organization of Polish Settlements in East Africa, November 1942, p. 24. The Lend-Lease Act, passed by the US Congress in March 1941, was the basis for forty-two aid agreements signed with Allied nations during World War II, seen as important for the defence of the United States.

three hundred experienced and skilled agriculturalists be released from the Polish army to spearhead agricultural projects and provide leadership and training to the refugees.⁴⁸⁴ He identified opportunities for the processing of primary products such as milk and meat, the industrial production of vegetables, and the development of ceramics, paper, and textile industries.⁴⁸⁵ Wierusz-Kowalski argued that it was completely unsatisfactory for the refugees to simply 'vegetate' in Africa.⁴⁸⁶ Expecting no more than self-sufficiency would, as he put it, 'reduce them to the level of the Africans'.⁴⁸⁷ He saw the refugees as a huge labour reserve, able to work, and take the skills and experience they acquired in Africa back to Poland after the war.

Parallel with these plans for mechanising agriculture and developing secondary industries, Wierusz-Kowalski saw the need for most of the camps to be relocated to areas where the soil was better suited for agriculture, the climate more conducive to European settlement, and the economic structure more advanced, namely, Kenya.⁴⁸⁸ He asked the Polish government to set aside funds for the lease or purchase of land for large-scale agricultural production, the setting up of processing facilities in the vicinity of the camps and cottage industries inside the camps.⁴⁸⁹ Wierusz-Kowalski's visionary plan for the role of Polish enterprise and Polish labour in support of the Allied war effort and the economic development of East Africa did not come to fruition. Where he saw opportunities, British authorities saw economic and social disruption. They would not approve the purchase of land by the Poles anywhere in East Africa and would not accept the refugees into the white settler colony of Kenya. They had no intention of integrating the Poles into the economic life of their territories and were suspicious of Wierusz-Kowalski's long term goals. The sojourn of the Poles in Africa was a temporary solution to a wartime problem. There was no logic to their taking root as they would soon be leaving. If integration into and expansion of the local economy was not an option, Polish officials decided that they would provide as many jobs as possible within the camps themselves.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 26.

⁴⁸⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/109, M. Wierusz-Kowalski Report on tour of Polish camps in East Africa, 3 September 1943 to 30 October 1943, pp. 13, 58.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63; AAN, MPiOS 131/110, Proposal from MPiOS Minister Stańczyk on the organization of Polish Settlements in East Africa, November 1942, p. 19.

⁴⁸⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/109, M. Wierusz-Kowalski Report on tour of Polish camps in East Africa, 3 September 1943 to 30 October 1943, pp. 51-52; AAN, MPiOS 131/110, Proposal from MPiOS Minister Stańczyk on the organization of Polish Settlements in East Africa, November 1942, p. 25.

Internal Employment

The Polish administration of the camps was run by the Polish Camp Leader. The MPiOS nominated, and the colonial authorities approved, appointments to this and all other leadership roles. Positions as Polish Camp Leaders were not chosen from among the refugees themselves but were filled by officers on temporary assignment from the Polish army, from the Cyprus Poles based in Northern Rhodesia, or from the Polish political and cultural elite in London. The Polish Camp Leader answered to the British Camp Commandant, who relied heavily upon him, and it was always a him, to run the everyday life of the camp. The MPiOS in Nairobi also nominated each camp's Chief of Police, Inspector of Education, Director of Cultural Welfare, and Director of Labour. These positions were open to Poles who had come to Africa by way of deportation to the Soviet Union.⁴⁹⁰

A list sent to London in 1945 of Polish engineers and technicians currently holding leadership positions in the camps in Africa included the following senior personnel at Koja: Tadeusz Zamoytel, aged 53, a graduate of agricultural college in Moscow now Chief of Police; Jan Plopa, aged 58, a Berlin building school graduate now Director of Labour; and Marian Sulkowicz, aged 35, a Paris automotive school graduate now responsible for water and electricity supply. Five of the seventy engineers and technicians on the list were female. Fifty one year old Maria Drummer, a graduate of St Petersburg Agricultural College, was the farm manager at Masindi, while three of the women worked as teachers, and one was unemployed.⁴⁹¹ Women in senior leadership roles were the exception in Africa, as was the interwar cultural norm in Poland. The appointment of a woman, Zdzisława Wójcik, to the role of Commander of the Polish Scouts in Africa, met with general disapproval at MPiOS head office in Nairobi and among Polish camp leaders, though their lack of co-operation and at times outright hostility did not prevent her from carrying out a demanding role with great success.⁴⁹²

The camps offered employment in education with teaching positions available to both males and females. Every camp had a primary school. The larger camps had secondary schools, some with boarding facilities. There were also specialist music schools and numerous trade schools. All of these schools needed teachers and when the number of qualified teachers fell well short of requirements, the positions were opened up to others. Engineers and

⁴⁹⁰ TNA, FO 371/36686/W12199, M. Wierusz-Kowalski, Polish Consul in Nairobi to the Chief Secretary, East African Governors' Conference, Nairobi, 17 July 1943.

⁴⁹¹ AAN, MPiOS 131/107/31-36, Telegraph from MPiOS Nairobi to MPiOS London, 12 April 1945.

⁴⁹² Anna Herbich, *Dziewczyny z Siberii: Prawdziwe Historie*, Kraków, Znak Horyzont, 2015, p. 288.

technicians, botanists and foresters, soil scientists and architects, priests and nuns, and others who had no formal qualifications, were all employed as teachers.⁴⁹³ This led to a rather mixed learning experience for the camps' children. Mira, aged twelve, living in Koja with her mother, recalls, 'We had very good teachers and very bad teachers and the best teachers were not always professional teachers.' She remembers being spellbound listening to tales of Babylon, Egypt and Rome from one of her teachers who, though not a teacher by profession, and the ugliest woman Mira had ever seen, had a passion for Ancient History that transformed her when she shared with her spellbound pupils her love of the Classics.⁴⁹⁴ In Tanganyika, between half and two thirds of those employed as teachers had no teaching qualifications.⁴⁹⁵ For women interested in caring for children, there was also work in the camps' kindergartens, orphanages and boarding schools.⁴⁹⁶

Polish doctors were recruited from the UK, the Middle East and local doctors were also employed when there was a shortfall. There was a shortage of qualified nursing staff which created an opportunity for women in the camps to learn nursing on-the-job or complete formal training and become accredited nurses. At Koja, the only British medical staff member, Nurse Bell, together with Dr Frankel Bell provided formal training in the form of a course of study which twenty-eight women completed in October 1943. Two further courses were completed by thirty-five candidates in 1944. This resulted in an improvement in the quality of service provided by the hospital and provided much sought after employment for camp residents. The hospital employed a considerable number of other staff to perform a range of duties, such as cleaning, cooking, and doing the laundry, as well as one person to sew and repair hospital linen.⁴⁹⁷

The acute shortage of men in the camps meant that women were not restricted to working in teaching, childcare, and nursing and were able to find employment in roles not traditionally held by women. The camp's internal police service employed males who were mostly elderly and infirm but who nevertheless took their duties very seriously. At Kidugala, an elderly man aged well over sixty, paralysed from the waist down in a mining accident, joined the camp's police service. Despite his disability, he could move around on crutches

⁴⁹³ Józefa, Grześkowiak-Kierzkiewicz, 'Lusackie gimnazjum i jego nauczyciele', FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, p. 379.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Mira.

⁴⁹⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/110/129, MSZ Dar es Salaam to MSZ London, 31 March 1944; Bugaj, *Dzieci polskie*, p. 99.

⁴⁹⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/140, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943. There were 818 children in orphanages in Tengeru and Masindi in mid 1943.

⁴⁹⁷ PISM, KOL 174/3, A History of the Development of Hospital Services in Koja 1942-1946; KARTA, AW/I/30, Testimony of Stanisława Bednarczyk.

with speed and often caught up with and fined children who ventured outdoors without hats.⁴⁹⁸ In the same camp, Zofia, a mother of three, also found employment in the police service and proudly wore her khaki uniform, with an armband in the red and white colours of Poland, as she patrolled the roads and paths of the camp, enforcing camp regulations.⁴⁹⁹ There were advantages to police work, one of which was a permanent leave pass. In Masindi, Maria worked as a policewoman and used her relative freedom of movement to frequent African markets and Hindu shops. There she sourced products not available in the camps, for her own use and for on-selling to others. She, together with another policewoman, built-up a lucrative side business by purchasing beef and making and selling *kielbasa* (cured sausage). It was rumoured that her colleague returned to Poland after the war laden with gold sovereigns.⁵⁰⁰

The camps' administration provided numerous employment opportunities. Group Leaders and Section Leaders were needed. Positions as shopkeepers and warehouse managers, book-keepers, typists and cashiers, were paid positions open to the willing and able, and mostly filled by women. One of the most sensitive and trustworthy positions in the camps was that of Polish Red Cross representative. Julia, mother of two, wife of a Polish military officer taken as a prisoner of war, was appointed to this position at Bwana Mkubwa. Her responsibilities included registering camp residents, initiating searches for lost family members, and distributing mail arriving from family in Poland, from POW camps, from soldiers in the Polish army, and the dreaded official military letters advising of the death of a husband or son.⁵⁰¹ Julia did not omit anyone from the scope of her work. She made every effort to win the trust of a small group of girls in their late teens who had managed to leave the camp and were working as prostitutes in the nearby mining town of Ndola. They were reluctant to talk to her and resisted her attempts to convince them to return to the camp and to school. One of the girls, Jadzia, aged 17, confided:

I need money. I have to set myself up somehow because I can never go back to Poland. I can never see my mother again. I wouldn't be able to lie to her, and if she found out what they did to me, her heart would break. I was 14 years old, when [following Soviet arrest] during interrogation, I was repeatedly raped on a table as a number of men sitting around it, watched on and laughed. And then ... Perhaps what I am doing now is wrong, but at least I am doing it of my own free will.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁸ Kondratowicz-Kordas, *Travel without Choice*, p. 87.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵⁰⁰ KARTA, AW/II/1184, Testimony of Maria Pagacz.

⁵⁰¹ Filipczak-Puchalska, *Moje Tulacze Wspomnienia*, p. 80.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Colonial authorities had determined that the camps should be self-sufficient and farming activity was begun at each camp. Vegetable gardens were established and depending on particular camp circumstances, poultry, pigs, and cows were kept. Many of the women were the wives of soldier-settlers who had been granted land in the east of Poland after the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1918-1921. They were experienced farmers and welcomed the opportunity of once again working on the land. The tropical climate limited the number of hours they could work outdoors each day and African labour was employed to work alongside them. Paradoxically, colonial authorities in Nairobi wanted the camps to be self-sufficient yet did not want the women to be seen doing work that was normally carried out by native Africans. This was nigh impossible when African villages were located near camps and Africans worked in the camps. There were also protests from plantation owners who wanted to maintain access to the lucrative refugee camp market.⁵⁰³ The irreconcilable goals of colonial governments and settler communities contributed to the limited success of camp farms and to limited employment opportunities in agriculture for the refugee women.

As well as the availability of employment in the administrative, welfare and food production sections of the camps, workshops were set up for tradesmen such as blacksmiths, carpenters, cobblers, tailors, and saddlers. While the workshops provided employment for males, women engaged in cottage industries such as knitting, spinning, weaving, sewing and embroidery.⁵⁰⁴ The MPiOS did not expect these workshops and cottage industries to operate at a profit. They were nevertheless considered to be worthwhile enterprises in combatting idleness and boredom and in giving the refugees useful employment and a wage.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/43, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943.

⁵⁰⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/200-205, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁵⁰⁵ Suski, *W służbie publicznej na dwóch kontynentach*, p. 206.

Table 4.2 Rates of Monthly Payment for Workers in Camps⁵⁰⁶

Occupation	Settlement Population	Rate in Shillings
Polish Camp Leaders	3,500	500
Polish Camp Leaders	1,500	450
Polish Camp Leaders	800	
Director of Education	3,500	400
Head doctor	3,500	
Head doctor	1,500	350
Director of Education	1,500	325
Doctors and dentists	-	
Professors	-	
Priests	-	
Book-keepers	3,500	200
Secretaries	3,500	
Directors of elementary schools	-	
Cashiers	-	
Book-keepers	1,500	150
Group Leaders	-	
Teachers		
Qualified nurses		
Leaders of workshops		100
Gardeners		
Attendants of cattle		
Typists		
Clerks		70
Managers of canteens		
Carpenters		
Masons		
Shoemakers		
Barbers		50
Chief cooks		
Seamstresses		
Nurses (not qualified)		
Washer-women		
Workers (strenuous work)		40
Sweepers		
Cook-helpers		30
Guards		
Messenger boys		
Servants		20

⁵⁰⁶ TNA, FO 371/36685/W3059, Conference of Directors and Commissioners of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi, 9 January 1943, Attachment B.

Some camps, such as Marandellas, recorded full employment. Out of a total camp population of 433, all 186 employable adults were employed. Colonial authorities used the Polish refugees to meet needs created by Southern Rhodesia's wartime maintenance of internees and prisoners of war. The Marandellas shoe-making workshop made footwear for large numbers of Italian prisoners of war and a straw hat-making enterprise fulfilled large orders for internment camps. The camp's dressmaking workshop made women's clothing for an English clientele with a waiting list several months long. Uganda also provided some work in local industries such as cotton, with 122 women employed at spinning wheels and ten on weaving looms.⁵⁰⁷ However, most camps were unable to provide internal employment for all of their residents. Between a third and a half of the employable Polish refugees in Africa were unemployed. Statistics from mid 1943 show that small camps such as Marandellas, Ifunda and Kondoia had full employment, while the medium to large sized camps such as Bwana Mkubwa, Tengeru, and Masindi had the highest unemployment, 74, 60 and 35 per cent respectively.⁵⁰⁸

Many of the camps relied heavily upon the qualifications and skills of Jewish refugees to provide essential administrative and professional services. At Tengeru, the British administrative team was exclusively Jewish, three out of five doctors were Jewish, as was the camp's pharmacist.⁵⁰⁹ The majority of the Jewish Polish refugees in Africa were assimilated, educated, urban professionals and skilled technicians.⁵¹⁰ Trades included bookbinders and bakers, shoe-makers and saddlers, locksmiths and furriers. Notably absent were agriculturalists. There was a fifty-fifty balance of males and females and relatively few children.⁵¹¹

External Employment

The employment of Polish refugees outside the camps was strictly controlled by colonial authorities with an intending employer entering into a contract with the Commissioner of Refugees. The Commissioner selected the best person for the work offered and the employer was required to sign a bond for three hundred shillings, undertake to pay an agreed wage;

⁵⁰⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943, p. 137.

⁵⁰⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/111, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943, Attachment 11.

⁵⁰⁹ PISM, KOL 174/9A, History of the Polish Settlement, Tanganyika, East Africa - Israeli Parish in Tengeru, pp. 1-2.

⁵¹⁰ Alvis, *White Eagle, Black Madonna*, p. 208. An estimated half of interwar Poland's doctors, a third of its lawyers and a quarter of its journalists were Jewish.

⁵¹¹ AN, AJ/43/787/34/2, Correspondence from H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to The Secretary, Kenya Jewish Council for Training & Settlement, Nairobi, 25 August 1949.

offer fourteen days leave per annum; provide board, lodging and medical care; and ensure the moral and physical welfare of the employee.⁵¹² Refugees wanting to work outside the camps also had to gain the approval of Polish camp authorities.⁵¹³

Kenya offered the most employment opportunities for men. There were vacancies for fit men on farms and in factories, and administrative work was also available to adult males with qualifications and English language skills.⁵¹⁴ The Bata Shoe Company provided employment to three adults and a traineeship to six boys in their footwear manufacturing plant, and other factories in Kenya employed Polish workers.⁵¹⁵ There was also work in the mining industry in Northern Rhodesia where Jerzy Banasz, a 34 year old mechanic and Ignacy Fischer, a 42 year old mining engineer found employment in the copper mines, while Wacław Jamrot, a 52 year old forester found work at a rubber plantation.⁵¹⁶ In reality, there were many more jobs than there were men qualified or able to take them up. Factors preventing more men from finding external employment were a limited knowledge of the English language and being elderly or physically unfit for work.

External employment opportunities for women were also mostly in Kenya. When the refugees first arrived in Africa, there were fifty registered vacancies for nursemaids and governesses to work on farms and in private homes for English families, with the preference for qualified nurses to be paid one hundred shillings per month.⁵¹⁷ The employment of Polish women in this capacity was, however, limited by their lack of knowledge of English, the shortage of qualified nurses, and the need for all available nursing personnel to work in camp hospitals. There was also the fact that many of the women were mothers with their own children to care for. Over time, as English was taught in the camp schools and teenagers matured into young women, more of these vacancies were filled by unqualified nurses at reduced wages.⁵¹⁸ Overall, few Polish refugees were successful in securing external employment. In Northern Rhodesia, a year after the refugees began arriving in Africa, out of a refugee population of 1,841 of whom roughly half were employable, seventy-six were employed externally, i.e. eight per cent.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹² TNA, FO 371/36685/W3059, Directors and Commissioners of Refugees Conference in Nairobi, 9 January 1943, pp. 14-15.

⁵¹³ AAN, MPiOS 131/110/182, Scheme for the Organisation of Polish Refugee Camps in East Africa.

⁵¹⁴ TNA, FO 371/32650/W14755, Polish Refugee Report by Col. H. P. Mitchell, November 1942, p. 8.

⁵¹⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/ 111, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 March 1943 to 1 May 1943.

⁵¹⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/107/31-36, Telegraph from MPiOS Nairobi to MPiOS London, 12 April 1945.

⁵¹⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/251, Consul General Nairobi to Minister Kot, Cairo, 5 March 1943.

⁵¹⁸ Taylor, *Polish Orphans of Tengeru*, p. 73.

⁵¹⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/166, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943.

The best opportunity, both in terms of the number of employees sought, the training provided and prospects for the future, came from the British and Polish military forces. Shortly after the refugees arrived in Africa, the Southern Rhodesian Women's Air Service indicated it was looking for up to eight hundred Polish women to replace men in a range of positions such as book-keepers, storekeepers, military transport drivers, and telephone operators.⁵²⁰ At the same time, five hundred to eight hundred civilian employees were sought by the Royal Air Force (RAF) to work at aerodromes in Kenya. They too would replace men and work in general and aircraft maintenance.⁵²¹ The women would be housed in barracks, provided with rations and uniforms, and paid a wage. For single women, wanting to get away from the isolation and boredom of the refugee camps, employment with the British military was an appealing prospect.

The first thirty-nine hand-picked recruits from Tengeru arrived at the Eastleigh RAF base outside Nairobi in April 1943.⁵²² The following month their number had risen to seventy.⁵²³ In August 1943, the British Air Ministry commenced recruiting two thousand women for service in the Polish Air Force and the British Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in the UK as office workers, chauffeurs, policewomen, and in the meteorological service.⁵²⁴ The recruitment drive signed up 681 Polish women. Thirty-six boys were recruited for the Junior Mechanical Air Force School in the UK, departing in October 1943.⁵²⁵ Recruitment for service in the Polish and British air forces in the UK continued throughout 1943 and 1944. In June 1944, appeals were made for women to join the Polish Women's Auxiliary Service, to serve as nurses with the Polish Army in Italy and to join the Polish forces preparing in Scotland for the invasion of mainland Europe.⁵²⁶ In January 1945, the Polish Ministry of Defense commenced a recruitment drive for 318 candidates, aged nineteen to forty-five, for the Polish Navy's Women's Auxiliary, with training to be provided in the UK.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁰ TNA, FO 371/32650/W14755, Polish Refugee Report by Col. H. P. Mitchell, November 1942.

⁵²¹ TNA, FO 371/36685/W3059, Conference of the Commissioners and Directors of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi, 9 January 1943.

⁵²² 'Uchodźczynie Polskie pracują dla RAF', *Polak w Afryce*, 16 April 1943, p. 4.

⁵²³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/111, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 March 1943 to 31 May 1943.

⁵²⁴ 'Służba Lotnicza Kobiet', *Polak w Afryce*, 15 August 1943, p. 4.

⁵²⁵ TNA, FO 371/36687/W13025, Correspondence from Downing St to Colonial Office, 8 September 1943; AAN, MPiOS 131/106/141, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943.

⁵²⁶ 'Do Osiedli', *Polak w Afryce*, 18 June 1944, p. 3.

⁵²⁷ 'Ogłoszenie', *Polak w Afryce*, 1 January 1945, p. 4.

Law and Order

Stealing a bottle of vinegar from a Hindu shop, potatoes from the camp farm, blankets from a washing line, or cash from under a mattress: these were the kinds of relatively minor property thefts that took place in and around the camps. Other offenses relating to family and the community included neglecting to care adequately for children, avoiding work obligations, gossiping and spreading rumours, defaming others, and inciting rebellion against camp authorities. There were also a range of behaviours carried out exclusively by men in the camp, such as pedalling illicitly distilled alcohol, being drunk and disorderly, fighting with fists and knives, and assaulting the camp police, which both disturbed the peace, and caused physical harm to people and property. Lastly, some breaches of law and order took place outside the camps, namely, burglaries, pimping and prostitution. These were the kinds of offences that were committed by Polish refugees during their prolonged sojourn in Africa.⁵²⁸

Camps and Towns

All Poles in Africa were subject to the laws of the territory in which they lived, and they could be arrested, tried, fined and imprisoned under those laws. Colonial authorities decided to leave the organisation of the internal discipline of the camps to Polish authorities and only intervene when territorial laws were broken. In effect, the refugees were doubly policed, once by existing criminal codes and once by Polish authorities who introduced their own disciplinary regulations and established their own policing and punishment mechanisms. The Polish regulations applied to all camp residents aged fourteen and above and related to matters of public order, prostitution, public health and safety, private property and life, the responsible care of children, and camp standing orders (e.g. following instructions, fulfilling work obligations, fraternising with Africans, and being in absentia without permission). There was also a scale of consequences for offenders.⁵²⁹

To police the conduct of the refugees, an internal Polish police service was formed employing both policemen and policewomen. The police were provided with basic training,

⁵²⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/185-7, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943; MPiOS 131/111/10-13, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943, Attachments 3A and 3B; AAN MPiOS 131/106/171, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943.

⁵²⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/110/44-49, Regulations for the Orderly Conduct of Residents of Polish Settlements in Africa issued by order of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, 22 February 1943.

uniforms, whistles, torches, and batons.⁵³⁰ The Polish Chief of Police in each camp, prosecuted cases against alleged offenders before the camp's Law and Order Commission. The Commission was chaired by the Polish Camp Leader and made up of at least three members of an elected Settlement Council. Decisions of the Commission could be appealed to the camp's Controlling Law and Order Commission (Polish Camp Leader and British Camp Commandant) and ultimately to an external Appeals Commission (Director of Refugees, Polish Consul, and MPiOS Delegate). Minor offences could be punished by Section Leaders, who were responsible for up to 160 people, or Group Leaders, responsible for five or six sections.⁵³¹

There was a serious flaw in the Polish system, however, as it did not confer upon Polish authorities the power to fine or imprison offenders. This was the exclusive domain of the territorial law courts. Something of a toothless tiger, Polish disciplinary authorities could only impose on offenders administrative sanctions such as reprimand, public reprimand and warning, halting allowances, and transferring culprits from one camp to another.⁵³² These sanctions were adequate for dealing with the majority of relatively minor disciplinary misdemeanours committed by camp residents. However, although Polish authorities described the refugees as 'all decent, honest folk' they qualified that assessment by adding, 'apart from some criminals and prostitutes who were exiled together with the rest of the population by the Russians and who are today in East Africa'.⁵³³ These 'criminals and prostitutes' were at the heart of problems that emerged in the camps, exacerbated by the shortage of suitable Polish administrative and professional staff willing to take up leadership roles and adequately manage the diverse camp population. As early as January 1943, the MPiOS had requested that East African authorities organise two special camps, one in Uganda and one in Tanganyika, where the regulations would be different from those in the ordinary camps and where persons committing serious offences could be isolated.⁵³⁴ Negotiations with the British reached their conclusion ten months later with a compromise. The British wired off an area on the edge of the transit camp at Makindu, Kenya, as a special segregation camp with the capacity to hold

⁵³⁰ PISM, KOL 174/8/29, Chronicle of the Polish Settlement at Rusape, Southern Rhodesia, November 1946.

⁵³¹ AAN, MPiOS 131/110/53-62, Procedures for the Administration of Order.

⁵³² AAN, MPiOS 131/101/73-75, Correspondence from Polish Consul General, Nairobi to EARA, 27 January 1943.

⁵³³ AAN, MPiOS 131110/167, General Remarks, MPiOS Nairobi.

⁵³⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/101/73-75, Correspondence from Polish Consul General, Nairobi to EARA, 27 January 1943.

up to forty males. They declined to take prostitutes and advised that each territory would have to deal with their own.⁵³⁵

In mid 1943, it was discovered that two transports of refugees that had arrived in Africa from Karachi included a large percentage of 'factious felons'.⁵³⁶ This 'anti-social element' earned a reputation in the camps as drunkards, thieves, rabblers, rousers, pimps and prostitutes, and presented an ongoing challenge to camp and colonial authorities. In Southern Rhodesia they were swiftly dealt with by the courts. In Northern Rhodesia, where there were no prisons for Europeans, the courts were inclined to issue light sentences and the men held in detention in hotels wrote back to the Lusaka camp that they were living in luxury. They claimed that they had 'a room with a private bathroom and an African servant, that they went for walks in the city's park and ate food from the finest restaurants.' They encouraged others to join them.⁵³⁷ The incidence of theft peaked in Lusaka with fifteen cases being heard in 1943 alone.⁵³⁸ In Northern Rhodesia, at Lusaka and Bwana Mkubwa, rebellions against camp authorities, including the use of violence against camp leaders and internal camp police, led to hospitalisation of the victims and arrest by territorial police of the perpetrators.⁵³⁹ One of the ringleaders, who it was rumoured had carried out a lucrative burglary in Tehran, ran a gambling ring in the Lusaka camp and always had plenty of money, though he did not work. Arrested for burglary of a jewellery store in Lusaka, he was sentenced to three and a half years in prison which he served in Southern Rhodesia.⁵⁴⁰

In addition to the criminals and prostitutes who came as refugees to Africa, there was another group who threatened the internal discipline of the camps. Polish authorities had requested that the army release three hundred men with agricultural qualifications to take the lead in setting up camp farms.⁵⁴¹ Among these men was a small number of 'unruly elements' who it was conjectured the army had opportunistically removed from their ranks.⁵⁴² Unable or unwilling to reconcile themselves to refugee camp life, the men led revolts against established

⁵³⁵ TNA, FO 371/36687/W17986, Conference of Directors of Refugees in East Africa, held in Nairobi on the 17 and 18 November 1943; AAN, MPiOS 131/106/180, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁵³⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943, p. 160.

⁵³⁷ Ibid. p. 164-172.

⁵³⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/185-7, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁵³⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943, p. 164-172.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 160.

⁵⁴¹ TNA, FO 31/32653/W17131, Secretary of State for the Colonies to East African Governors' Conference, 17 December 1942.

⁵⁴² AAN, MPiOS 131/106/50, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943.

camp authorities. They spread rumours, made false accusations, and incited violence against camp leaders with the goal of taking over the camps themselves.⁵⁴³ Territorial police were called in to try and restore law and order. In Northern Rhodesia, colonial authorities agreed to a request from Polish authorities for the establishment of a segregation camp for 'recalcitrant Poles'.⁵⁴⁴ The aim was rehabilitation rather than punishment, and every effort was made, and no expense spared, to provide ideal conditions for the reform of its residents. The site purchased was a remote rural property at Katambora. Living quarters were in a grand colonial manor, high on a hill overlooking the Zambezi River. The grounds featured beautifully trimmed lawns and sported tennis and croquet courts. Hundreds of books were imported for the library and carpentry and metalwork workshops were set up. Ideal living conditions were intended to ennoble the residents and inspire them to give up their criminal ways. The cultured isolation did not have the desired effect and neither did the surrounding jungle, populated by lions and leopards, serve to confine them. The venture was a complete failure as residents harassed and harangued the camp's authorities with a litany of complaints and demands, going as far as protesting their treatment to the League for the Protection of Human Rights in Geneva. The camp commandant, a retired military captain, resigned, his reputation completely ruined by accusations of beatings and torture made against him. The camp's doctor fled and vowed never to return. The camp was closed.⁵⁴⁵

Relations with Africans

Locating the majority of refugee camps in remote areas and confining the movement of refugees to the space inside the camp was intended to restrict relations with the wider community and limit unwanted behaviour by or towards the refugees. The boundary of each camp was marked by a fence with a guarded gate as the entry and exit point. This boundary was rarely transgressed by Africans whose one legitimate reason for being inside a camp was employment. Africans from the villages around the camps were employed to carry out a range of duties such as guarding the gates, delivering mail, assisting in camp kitchens and laundries, chopping wood, cleaning the church, and as 'houseboys' for the camp's elite. Africans completed major construction projects, building huts, schools, churches, hospitals, offices and

⁵⁴³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/180, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁵⁴⁴ TNA, FO 371/42865/WR775, Correspondence from Governor Waddington, Lusaka to the Secretary of State, London, 28 July 1944.

⁵⁴⁵ TNA, CO 795/132/4/22, Correspondence from Governor Waddington, Lusaka to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 July 1944; PISM, KOL 174/11, Chronicle of the Lives of Polish Refugees in Northern Rhodesia, pp. 70-74; Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, pp. 136-143.

stores. They kept malaria-carrying mosquitos and venomous snakes at bay by regularly clearing the vegetation around the huts and around the camp perimeter. They were agricultural labourers on the camp farms, working in the fields, dairies, piggeries and butcheries which supplied food to the camps.⁵⁴⁶ The Native Labour Policy espoused by territorial Governors 'considered it desirable to eliminate as far as possible the employment of native labour in the camps'. However, in light of the fact that most of the refugees were women and children, they recognized 'that certain essential duties must be performed by natives.'⁵⁴⁷ As a result, Africans were a constant presence in the camps and in the lives of the refugees.

There were very few occasions when Africans entered the camps without permission. One exception was at Tengeru where the men and women of the Masai tribe, whose wealth was in cattle and who were not camp employees, regularly strolled in a superior manner along well worn tracks through the camp.⁵⁴⁸ There are few documented instances of offences committed by Africans against Poles. A MPiOS report covering the period from 1 August to 1 December 1943, shows that only one of the twelve camps recorded stealing by Africans during that period. Thefts were usually of food, clothing or money.⁵⁴⁹ Chance encounters outside the camp also sometimes led to theft. In one case, two Polish women walking outside the camp at Marandellas, encountered a young African male, who threatened them and demanded the watch that Maria, a section leader in her fifties was wearing. Maria was afraid and handed it over. The theft was reported to the Camp Commandant, the culprit was identified and beaten as punishment, and the watch returned.⁵⁵⁰ At Kidugala, there was an occasion when Africans with spears broke into the refugees' huts at night frightening the sleeping and stealing whatever they could quickly get their hands on before running away.⁵⁵¹

In contrast to the regular incidents of drunken brawls, knife fights and even beatings of women perpetrated by Poles on Poles, the archives contain very little evidence of physical violence between Poles and Africans.⁵⁵² The MPiOS report on security at all of the camps for

⁵⁴⁶ FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, pp. 236, 237, 252, 299, 331, 335, 350; Hejczyk, *Sybiracy pod Kilimandżaro*, pp. 67, 90; Tadeusz Piotrowski (ed.), *The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World*, London, McFarland & Company, 2004, p. 162.

⁵⁴⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/110/74, Conference of Directors of Refugees, November 1943.

⁵⁴⁸ KARTA, AW/II/1072, Testimony of Helena Nikiel; Hejczyk, *Sybiracy pod Kilimandżaro*, p. 66.

⁵⁴⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/186, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943.

⁵⁵⁰ KARTA, AW/II/943, Testimony of Maria Dybczyńska.

⁵⁵¹ Piotrowski, *The Polish Deportees of World War II*, pp. 162-63.

⁵⁵² AAN, MPiOS 131/106/171, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943.

the period 1 August to 1 December 1943 records that at the Tengeru camp a police woman was assaulted by an African for which he was punished, while at Ifunda an African was beaten by the police, no punishment recorded. In a separate incident at Tengeru, five Africans had attacked a young Polish woman for which they had been punished.⁵⁵³ In the same period, colonial authorities in Southern Rhodesia warned the Polish consul in Salisbury against opening the Diggfold Boarding School for girls while construction was ongoing and African workers were resident onsite. They were concerned for the safety of the girls due to the recent attempted rape in Southern Rhodesia of two Polish girls by African males.⁵⁵⁴ The issue of violence perpetrated by Africans on Poles does not feature in the minutes of the meetings of the East African Governors Conferences or meetings of the Directors of Refugees, and it would seem logical to assume that such instances were indeed rare.⁵⁵⁵

In addition to employing local villagers, the larger camps also made use of conscripted African labour. With the acute shortage of healthy adult males among the refugees, this labour was integral to many aspects of the camps' operations.⁵⁵⁶ An African Labour Camp with two thousand African workers was situated alongside Koja, population around three thousand, on the shores of Lake Victoria.⁵⁵⁷ Alina, who was eight years old when she arrived at Koja, remembers smiling African labourers singing melodiously as they marched to work each morning, drumming out a rhythm on their upturned buckets.⁵⁵⁸ Compared to African labourers, the Poles lived a privileged life. The refugees were the beneficiaries of a welfare system that provided them with free accommodation, food, clothing, health care, and education. In addition, they received a monthly allowance of ten shillings per adult and two and a half shillings per child. The maximum a worker in a labour camp could earn per month, was fifteen shillings with the sole 'benefit' of free camp accommodation.⁵⁵⁹ A white factory worker earned seventeen to twenty pounds per month.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/186, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁵⁵⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/155, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943.

⁵⁵⁵ See John Pape, 'Black and White: The "Perils of Sex" in Colonial Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4, December 1990, pp. 699-720. Pape argues that in Southern Rhodesia, the 'black peril' was a manufactured phenomenon and sexual assaults on white women by black men were rare.

⁵⁵⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/110/74, Conference of Directors of Refugees, November 1943.

⁵⁵⁷ Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry*, p. 198.

⁵⁵⁸ KARTA, AW/II/1621/1K, Testimony of Alina Pakulska.

⁵⁵⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/13, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 30 September 1942 to 27 October 1942.

⁵⁶⁰ The East African shilling was the standard unit of currency used in BEA in the 1940s. There were twenty shillings in one pound.

It is unlikely that the British could have anticipated that the safety of Polish refugees in Uganda would be threatened by a peak in labour agitation in the mid 1940s.⁵⁶¹ In January 1945, the first general strike in Uganda began with domestic servants in Entebbe and quickly spread to Kampala's Public Works Department and then railway, bus, post and telegraph workers.⁵⁶² At Kojja the workers at the African labour camp went on strike, barricading the only access road to the camp with a sabotaged lorry and felled trees, and presenting Mr MacDonald, the Kojja Refugee Camp Commandant, with demands for better working conditions and increased wages. The strikers threatened to slit the throats of the '*polanda*' if their demands were not met.⁵⁶³ The camp went into lockdown, schools closed and everyone was instructed to remain indoors. A platoon of the Kings African Rifles (KAR) was sent from Jinja to deal with the crisis. In the ensuing confrontation between the KAR and what the *East African Standard* called 'a riotous mob' armed with sticks, clubs and iron rods, thirty two shots were fired leading to the deaths of four of the rioters and the wounding of eleven others. The leaders of the strike action were arrested, and imprisoned or banished. The strikers returned to work.⁵⁶⁴ A subsequent colonial enquiry came to the conclusion that workers had been manipulated by a number of African leaders who had engineered the territory-wide strike for their own political gain.⁵⁶⁵

The refugees exited the camps without a pass far more often than the Africans entered without permission. Africans were not prevented from entering by the physical barrier of the fence, but by its symbolism as a marker of not only difference but also superiority. The refugees took far less notice of the fence. The main reason they left the camp was to purchase

⁵⁶¹ Carolyn A. Brown, 'African Labour in the Making of World War II', in Byfield et al, (eds.), *Africa and World War II*, pp. 43-66.

⁵⁶² For more on the rise of organised labour and the nationalist movement in 1940s Uganda see Mahmood Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda*, Nairobi, Heinemann Educational Books, 1983, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁶³ Bogdaniec-Półkowska, 'Afryka - Kraj lat dziecinnych', in Dąbkowski (ed.), *Polskie Sybiraczki Harcerki*, p. 44.

⁵⁶⁴ 'Serious Labour Strike in Uganda: Special Police Called Out', *The East African Standard*, 19 January 1945; 'Uganda Strike: Military Open Fire on Riotous Mob', *The East African Standard*, 24 January 1945; 'Sequel to Riots in Uganda: Governor Orders Deportation of Katikiro', *The East African Standard*, 9 March 1945; TNA, WO 276/84, Statements concerning opening fire on mob at Kojja Labour Camp: 249815 Lieut. John Barker Heaton O.C. Detachment 28K. KAR; 6548437 Sgt Alastair Hooker of the No. 9 Company ITC. Jinja; Mr J. McDonald, Camp Commandant, Kojja Refugee Settlement; N/1570 3 Cpl Kiprotich Mingeny of C Company 28K KAR; N/16845 Cpl. Kimabwai Milgo of C Company 28K KAR; N/7097 Cpl Mario Omwony of C Company 28K KAR; N/15045 L/Cp. Killu Katunga of C Company 28K KAR; 191770 Pte Erunasani Odwa of C Company 28K KAR; N/4649 Sgt Maweu Kitenge of C Company 28K KAR; N/28128 L/Cpl Oyulo Akind of C Company 28K KAR.

⁵⁶⁵ Gardner Thompson, 'Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945', *African Affairs*, vol. 91, no. 365, October 1992, pp. 605-624. Thompson argues that colonial authorities failed to adequately interpret the strikes. His position is that they were a manifestation of the economic impact of the Second World War on Uganda.

food which was not part of their rations and not available in the camp's canteen. In most places fruit was abundant and cheap and served as a nutritious way of satisfying calls from children who, after the experience of hunger in Russia, constantly wanted more to eat.⁵⁶⁶ Eggs, flour and butter were indispensable in the Polish kitchen and often in short supply or unavailable in the camps, as was meat. Those with money or something to barter went looking for these foods. Visits by Poles to African villages were banned by camp authorities yet they occurred regularly. One or two women and their children would sneak out of the camp as a group. The camp gates were guarded by the internal Polish camp police but the entire fence line was not. This made it relatively easy to get out and walk to the nearest African village or Hindu shop if it was not too far away. Often, a group of children, small and nimble and always willing to leave the confinement of the camp, would be sent on a shopping errand by their mothers. Children in particular enjoyed the cat and mouse game they played with the guards, for whom they showed little respect. On rare occasions, they were caught and much to their chagrin, the food that was destined for their dinner pot that night were confiscated and found its way onto the dinner plate of the police instead.⁵⁶⁷ The women and children also visited shops at crossroads nearby or in to nearest town. The Hindus who ran these shops had a reputation for being honest and charming, and they quickly learned enough Polish to be able to communicate with their customers.⁵⁶⁸

Children, especially those in their teens, loved to play outside the confines of the camp, away from the regimentation and discipline of camp life. They would slip away from the care of mothers, or in the case of orphans, from supervisors, and head off to climb rocks and hills, swim in rivers and lakes, swing from trees, collect butterflies or water lilies, and generally enjoy the freedom of the outdoors.⁵⁶⁹ The children's adventures took them to African villages where their appearance seems to have been tolerated. Franek, a rather impetuous teenager who did not do well at school and was regularly beaten by his mother for reasons he did not understand, undertook to run away to live with the Masai. As night fell on the village, an elderly African urged him to go home, saying '*kwenda, kwenda*' (go, go home). When he realised Franek intended to stay, he took him by the hand and walked him back to the camp.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁶ Taylor, *Polish Orphans of Tengeru*, pp. 67-68; Bogdaniec-Półkowska, *Polskie Sybiraczki*, p. 43; Bajak, *Przez Sybir do Afryki*, p. 42; Interview with Paula Ciolek.

⁵⁶⁷ Interview with Elizabeth Patro.

⁵⁶⁸ KARTA, AW/II/1184, Testimony of Maria Pagacz; Interview with Irena Makowiecka.

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with Stanisław Patro.

⁵⁷⁰ Bajak, *Przez Sybir do Afryki*, p. 43.

Prostitution

An issue that was raised repeatedly, both by colonial and Polish authorities, was prostitution. By the end of 1942, ten thousand refugees, mostly women and children had arrived in the territories of Uganda and Tanganyika. In mid 1943, it was estimated that there were about fifty women at Tengeru actively engaging in prostitution, and a lesser number scattered throughout the other camps.⁵⁷¹ Among their number were some classified by the British as 'professional prostitutes' and others to whom the label 'prostitute' was applied because of their alleged licentious or promiscuous behaviour whether of a commercial nature or not. The core of this group were women who were deported as convicted prostitutes from eastern Poland, and who after the amnesty had joined the civilian evacuation of military families to Iran.⁵⁷² Some were then included in the groups shipped to Africa. The problems they presented to colonial society were recognised early. In January 1943, the Nairobi Conference of the Directors and Commissioners of Refugees formally requested that the Minister of State in Cairo and the British authorities in Tehran ensure the exclusion of prostitutes from further consignments of refugees to Africa.⁵⁷³

In most of British colonial Africa, prostitution was not a criminal offence. However, it was viewed as an offence against morality and a threat to social order. Despite the control and authority that British authorities yielded over the refugee population, this proved to be a difficult task. Prostitutes clearly flouted the regulations around needing a pass from the Camp Commandant to leave the camp. Polish camp police were faced with a difficult task when a camp, such as Tengeru, had over three thousand inhabitants and was spread over a large area. The women's clientele came from among Greek farmers, Hindu shopkeepers, army transports that regularly passed along the public road nearby, and the internment camp of three thousand Italian males situated in the nearest town, Arusha.⁵⁷⁴

At Tanganyika, unable to prevent the women from leaving the space of the camps, Polish and British authorities organised joint night patrols in Arusha, hoping to find the women and return them to the camp. Polish camp authorities struggled to find a permanent solution to this problem as administrative sanctions proved entirely ineffective in controlling

⁵⁷¹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/129, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943.

⁵⁷² AAN, MPiOS 131/106/112, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 March 1943 to 31 May 1943; Cieselski et al, *Masowe deportacje ludności*, p. 240; Głowacki, *Sowieci wobec polaków*, p. 355.

⁵⁷³ TNA, FO 371/36685/W3059, Conference of Directors and Commissioners of Refugees, Nairobi, 9 January 1943, p. 7.

⁵⁷⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 August 1943; MPiOS 131/107/10, Report on conflict between the Director of the Orphanage at Tengeru and Fr. Śliwowski, 1 August 1944.

this behaviour. The most they could do was refer individuals concerned to the Director of Refugees, who could use his authority to move the prostitutes to another camp. In some camps, the women worked with pimps, and in other camps, it was alleged that guards were financially compensated for turning a blind eye to the comings and goings of select female camp residents.⁵⁷⁵

In Lusaka, the Women's Institute, led by the wife of a Methodist minister, wrote to the Director of Refugees, Gore-Browne, concerned that 'Polish peasant women from the Lusaka refugee camp were providing clandestine services for the white officers and enlisted men of the two military battalions stationed nearby.'⁵⁷⁶ Gore-Browne raised with Polish authorities the many problems caused by 'Polish women going for walks outside the camp at night'. There were no white police in Northern Rhodesia, making the task of policing the activities of white women, problematic. Here too, Polish camp security guards were assigned to patrol the streets of Lusaka at night and Gore-Browne exercised his authority to move offenders away from the capital to more isolated refugee camps.⁵⁷⁷

In the isolated refugee camps of Uganda the issue of illicit relations between Polish women and African men, led colonial authorities to threaten to halt future refugee arrivals.⁵⁷⁸ Though there was some sympathy for the limited social environment in which the female refugees, mostly women and adolescent girls, found themselves, namely, outnumbering the males by five to one on average, the discovery that some of the women were engaging in illicit relations with African males caused outrage. They were labelled prostitutes, and characterised as predators. The Camp Commandant at Koja reported,

I cannot help feeling sympathy with a young African policeman whose character is ruined by the experienced importunities of a degraded street walker from some Polish town.⁵⁷⁹

Similar incidents occurred at Masindi where two women were caught in the askari sleeping quarters. The Camp Commandant called for a supply of barbed wire to assist him in isolating the women whom he called, 'mental cases'.⁵⁸⁰ Faced with the problem of sexual relations between white women and African men, the judiciary enlisted the support of medical science,

⁵⁷⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/169, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943.

⁵⁷⁶ Robert I. Rotberg, *Black Heart: Gore-Browne and the Politics of Multiracial Zambia*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977, p. 237.

⁵⁷⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/164, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943.

⁵⁷⁸ TNA, FO 371/43865/WR163, Correspondence from CO to FO, London, 8 July 1944.

⁵⁷⁹ Lwanga-Lunyiigo, 'Uganda's long connection with the problem of refugees', p. 27.

⁵⁸⁰ Lwanga-Lunyiigo, *Uganda and the Problem of Refugees*, p. 28.

particularly psychiatry, in restraining them. Medically certified as 'feeble-minded', a category between criminality and insanity, the 'degenerate' women were either hospitalised, removed to segregated areas of the camps where they could not contaminate others, or removed from the refugee camps altogether.⁵⁸¹ Polish authorities estimated that the core of prostitutes in East Africa consisted of forty women, while there were thirty in the two Rhodesias. It was estimated the number of male criminals was the same.⁵⁸²

As well as children and women, adult males were also not easily confined within the boundaries of the refugee camp. In Uganda, where drinking alcohol was widely accepted by both genders of most African tribes, some men from the refugee camps made their way, under cover of night, to African villages to drink cheap and readily *waragi*, a type of home-brewed banana gin.⁵⁸³ Mixing freely with the Africans, white adult males crossed not only the physical boundary of the camp designed to separate them from British colonial society, they also transgressed the racial boundary that asserted the superiority and therefore the legitimacy of white rule. Yet the fraternising of Polish men with Africans did not cause the same degree of concern or censure as the 'immorality' of intimate relations between Polish women and black men. It simply does not appear in colonial correspondence or reports relating to the Polish refugee camps.

Conclusion

Providing health care to the refugees in Africa was a huge challenge for British colonial authorities. They exercised their responsibility by working closely with the Polish administration in delivering this care. Shortages of personnel, medicines, and equipment, were an ongoing issue. Polish doctors were imported from the UK and the Middle East and nurses were trained in situ. The American Red Cross was instrumental in supplying medicines and equipment. Camp hospitals were built and clinics opened. Colonial authorities filled in gaps with local doctors and local supplies where possible. The refugees faced threats to their health that were specific to Africa: the tropical climate, malaria, parasites, and infectious diseases. Women and children struggled to return to and maintain full health, weakened as they were by the experience of exile in the Soviet Union. The range and quality of medical

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., p. 27. See also Oliver Phillips, 'The "perils" of sex and the panics of race: the danger of interracial sex in colonial Southern Rhodesia', in Sylvia Tamale, *African Sexualities: A Reader*, Cape Town, Pambazuka Press, 2011, pp. 101-115.

⁵⁸² *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, p. 150.

⁵⁸³ Lwanga-Lunyiigo, *Uganda and the Problem of Refugees*, p. 26.

services varied from camp to camp, but health care was a priority everywhere. It was a responsibility that was jointly and cooperatively carried out by British and Polish authorities.

Employment was an area in which the British authorities in Africa and the Polish government in London had different ideas. The Poles had grand plans for agricultural and manufacturing enterprises which would boost African economies and contribute to the Allied war effort. Colonial governments viewed the refugees as *bouches inutiles*. Their concern was not with how the refugees would be employed but how they would be fed. This way of thinking minimised a perceived burden rather than maximised a potential opportunity. As a result of the British colonial attitude, Polish authorities set about creating employment opportunities inside the camps. However, even after jobs were created in camp administration, schools, hospitals, the police service, kitchens, laundries, and farms, between a third and a half of adults classified as employable, were unemployed. A social hierarchy emerged at the top of which were the Polish non refugees, the political and intellectual elite who held senior posts in the capital cities and less often in, the camps. The second category were the doctors, priests, head masters and farm managers who like the first category were almost exclusively male. The third category were the cooks, cleaners and farm workers, predominantly female, and lastly, there was the most numerous category, the unemployed. Inactivity and total dependence on aid characterised this last group. For some young women, however, the war that had taken them to Africa also gave them the best opportunity for starting anew. The British and Polish armed forces in Africa and the UK recruited, trained and offered employment to hundreds of women who were open to creating a new life for themselves, outside the confines of the camps.

Theft, leaving camp without a pass, and not fulfilling voluntary work obligations, were the main recurring breaches of camp regulations that the Polish internal camp police had to contend with. However, there were also more serious offences such as drunkenness, brawling, and inciting violence against camp authorities, propagated by a small number of men that were of major concern in the camps and required the intervention of the territorial police and the colonial justice system. Criminal behaviour spilled out into the towns with burglary a major issue. At the request of Polish authorities, a special segregation camp capable of holding up to forty men was attached to the transit camp Makindu in Kenya, for the worst culprits. Camps also had segregated areas where offenders could be held in the short term. The issue that most outraged colonial authorities was prostitution, an offence not against law but against morality. They enlisted medical science to label Polish women who engaged in 'illicit relations' with Africans in particular, as 'feeble minded', needing hospitalisation or

confinement in rehabilitation centres. The idea of the natural superiority of the 'white race' was challenged by women's work, but not work in the fields.

Chapter 5 The Camp as Nation

This chapter concludes the examination of the ways in which the refugee camps were constructed and functioned by exploring three aspects of the refugee experience: cultural and social life, education, and religion. Previous chapters have focussed on the responsibilities of colonial authorities in the provision of essential services such as health, food and accommodation. This chapter focuses on the areas for which Polish authorities had sole responsibility. Although Poland had disappeared from the map of Europe, the Polish Government continued to function in exile and held itself responsible for its citizens. It played an active role in the administration of the refugee camps in Africa and elsewhere. While colonial authorities were responsible for the maintenance of people, Polish authorities saw themselves as responsible for the maintenance of the nation. How did they fulfil this responsibility? What role did education and religion play in recreating Poland in the camps and were the national and religious minorities included in the polonising project?

Culture

On May 3rd 1943, the Theatre Royal in Nairobi was the venue of a concert celebrating Constitution Day, one of the most important Polish national holidays. The full house of Nairobi residents included many distinguished guests, such as the Governor of Kenya and his wife, senior British military and colonial officers, the Polish Consul General, and Polish Government representatives in Africa. The highlight of the show was the renowned Polish-Jewish violinist, Bronisław Fryling, whose rendition of pieces by Polish composers - Chopin, Wienakowski, Karłowski and Szymanowski, greatly impressed the audience.⁵⁸⁴ In his address to those gathered, the Polish Consul General spoke of the significance of Constitution Day as a celebration of the first democratic constitution proclaimed in Europe in 1791. He affirmed Poland's ongoing commitment to fighting for freedom and democracy, emphasising the Polish armed forces involvement in fighting with the Allies against Nazi Germany, in Norway,

⁵⁸⁴ 'Bronisław Fryling', *The South African Jewish Chronicle*, 20 September 1946; USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive, Interview 38381 with Marysia Reagle (Potok), wife of Dr Fryling, (accessed at Melbourne Jewish Holocaust Museum, 12 July 2017). Dr Bronisław Fryling survived deportation to the Soviet Union along with his two precious violins, a Stradivarius and a Pressender. He was the founder and director of the Kenya Conservatoire of Music which opened in Nairobi June 1944 and is today the country's leading School of Music.

France, North Africa, and in the skies over Britain.⁵⁸⁵ His speech was broadcast on Nairobi radio, and the celebrations were widely covered by *The East African Standard* which dedicating a number of pages to reporting on the concert and informing readers of the richness of Polish culture, history and tradition. It also reported on the concert held a few days earlier in which Polish children from the children's home at Tengeru, dressed in colourful national costumes had delighted the full house at the same theatre with their skilled performance of Polish folk songs and regional dances.⁵⁸⁶

Polish culture was enacted in Africa through a calendar of national holidays celebrated by theatrical, musical and religious events. Anniversaries of historical events were celebrated, from victory over the Teutonic Knights in the Battle of Grunwald in 1410 to King Jan Sobieski's role in halting the Ottoman empire's advance across Europe at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. Historical figures were celebrated from the revolutionary Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746-1817) to the founder of the Second Polish Republic, Marshall Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935). Celebrating *imieniny* (name days) was a daily event with dates such as 27 June, the name day of Władysław, celebrating living heroes such as Władysław Rackiewicz (President of the Polish Government-in-exile), Władysław Sikorski (Prime Minister of the Polish Government-in-exile and Commander in Chief of the Polish Armed Forces), and Władysław Anders (Commander of the Polish Army in the East). Commemorations by the Polish community in Africa of historical events and national figures were patriotic events, demonstrating loyalty and allegiance to Poland. They were also an opportunity to share with guests, such as British political and military officials, and neighbouring farmers and townsfolk, Poland's rich cultural heritage.

RKO (Directorate of Culture)

Throughout the camps in Africa, a special section of the MPiOS, the *Referat Kulturalno-Oświatowy* (Directorate of Culture) was responsible for the revival and maintenance of Polish culture. This was an élite led programme that aspired to unify the camp population as a single national community. The nation's political and cultural élite saw itself as having inherited a duty that originated with the 1830 unsuccessful uprising in partitioned Poland against the rule of the Tsarist Empire, and the resulting exile of the insurrectionist leaders in the West. Their mission in exile was to 'lead the nation from abroad'. It was their duty to inspire and

⁵⁸⁵ 'Obchod 3-go Maja', *Polak w Afryce*, 15 May 1943, p. 2; 'Kobiety Angielskie do Kobiet Polskich we Wschodniej Afryce', *Polak w Afryce*, 15 May 1943, p. 5; Zins, *Polacy w Afryce Wschodniej*, p. 51.

⁵⁸⁶ 'Niezwyczajna Delegacja', *Polak w Afryce*, 15 May 1943, p. 4.

strengthen the Polish people, to continue the struggle for a free Poland, and 'to preserve and develop Polish national culture, language, traditions and history'.⁵⁸⁷ The camp assisted in this task by containing and segregating the refugees from outside cultural influence.⁵⁸⁸

The Cultural Director in each camp, shouldered this responsibility. Unfortunately, there were few 'elite' among the refugees and even fewer willing to move to Africa from the Middle East or the UK. As a result, the role of Cultural Director was often filled by someone who held a leadership role in the camp in some other capacity.⁵⁸⁹ At Marandellas in Southern Rhodesia, with a population of around five hundred, the first Cultural Director was the camp's priest, an academic with a wealth of experience in pastoral care. He began by turning one of the camp's dining halls into a *świątlica* (community centre) which became the hub of community life. Over time it was furnished with a radio for people to gather around and listen to Polish broadcasts from Nairobi, and a library where books could be borrowed and discussed. The Polish newspaper from Nairobi, *Polak w Afryce*, was delivered and available for all to read. A stage was built at one end of the hall where concerts were held to celebrate national and religious holidays. As the camp was not far from the town of Marandellas and less than fifty miles from the capital, Salisbury, celebrations were regularly attended by distinguished guests, such as the Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister, and the Catholic Bishop of Salisbury, as well as the general settler community.⁵⁹⁰

After a year, in February 1944, the role of Cultural Director passed to the school's headmaster. Under his leadership greater emphasis was placed on adult education and on preparing the camp's residents to contribute to the rebuilding of Poland after the war. Lectures and discussions were held on Polish literature and history as well as the Polish political system and public service, and current affairs. Courses were held in book-keeping and typing, and English language classes were held. The RKO was greatly assisted in expanding its activities by the Polish YMCA, which was able to supply the furniture and equipment necessary for the adult education programme. The YMCA also provided indoor games such as ping pong, chess, checkers, ludo and lotto for all to play as well as outdoor sporting facilities and equipment for activities such as volley ball and gymnastics.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁷ Anna D. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2004, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸⁸ Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, p. 3.

⁵⁸⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 March 1943 to 31 May 1943, p. 95.

⁵⁹⁰ PISM, KOL 174/5, RKO Marandellas Report on the activities of the RKO for the period 1 February 1943 to 31 July 1945, p. 123.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124; PISM, KOL 174/5, History of the Polish Refugee Settlement in Marandellas, Southern Rhodesia, p. 108.

In May 1944, the role of Cultural Director was taken over by a military officer on extended leave from the army. A second officer formed a vibrant theatrical troupe and his wife began teaching ballet and folk dancing to the children. Musical instruments were acquired - a piano, a guitar, and a banjo, as well as a gramophone and records. The concert stage was enlarged and drama, choral and instrumental performances were held monthly. By October 1944 it was decided that the camp's cultural activities had outgrown the dining hall and a bigger and better community centre was needed. The building of *Dom Polski* (Polish House) was substantially funded by War Relief Services and was completed in July 1945. It was a large brick building with a large community recreation room, a separate theatre and a number of additional rooms used for the RKO office, the YMCA office, the Polish Red Cross post office, the library, a canteen, a hair dressing salon and tailors' and dressmakers' workshops.⁵⁹² The achievements of the RKO in Marandellas are a testament to both the individuals who took on the role of cultural leadership and to the camp's residents who actively participated in the cultural programme.

In the relative freedom and safety of the refugee camps, the well-being of loved ones in the Polish armed forces and the fate of those remaining in Poland and the Soviet Union was never far from mind. A regular feature of many cultural gatherings was the collection of donations for various war causes. Many camp residents donated from their meagre monthly allowances, while others who were employed or received remittances from abroad were able to contribute more generously. Donations were forwarded to the Polish Red Cross for distribution. In June 1943, the Red Cross received 1,088 shillings from the Ifunda camp for Polish children left behind in the Soviet Union.⁵⁹³ In October 1944, Kondoia raised 1,000 shillings for Christmas gifts for fighting soldiers and Masindi collected 2,211 shillings for residents of Warsaw imprisoned in Pruszkow after the Warsaw Uprising.⁵⁹⁴ In June 1945, Koja camp donated 1,000 pounds, which included the camp co-operative's dividend payments and profits for the month, as aid to those released from concentration camps in Poland.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹² PISM, KOL 174/5, RKO Marandellas Report on the activities of the RKO for the period February 1943 to 31 July 1945, p. 124-127; KOL 174/5, History of the Polish Refugee Settlement in Marandellas, Southern Rhodesia, p. 109.

⁵⁹³ 'Komunikat Czrewnego Krzyża', *Polak w Afryce*, 22 June 1943, p. 4.

⁵⁹⁴ 'Z Osiedli...', *Polak w Afryce*, 15 October 1944, p. 2; 'Z Osiedli...', *Polak w Afryce*, 29 October 1944, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁵ 'Z Osiedli...', *Polak w Afryce*, 10 June 1945, p. 4.

YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association)

The RKO was greatly assisted in its work by the Polish YMCA whose presence in the refugee camps in Africa was a natural extension of its interwar work in Poland. The American YMCA arrived in Poland from France with Polish General Haller's Blue Army in 1919 to continue the work it had carried out in the First World War throughout Europe of providing moral and material support to fighting soldiers.⁵⁹⁶ In Poland, in addition to its presence on the battlefields of the Polish *kresy*, where military action did not cease until 1921, its mandate was extended to supporting prisoners of war, repatriated soldiers and abandoned children. The organisation grew rapidly and ninety YMCA centres were established across Poland. It earned the respect and affection of many people in Poland, and was warmly referred to as *Ciocia Ymca* (Auntie Imcha).⁵⁹⁷

In the 1920s, the Director General, Paul Super, agreed to advise the Poles on the establishment of a independent YMCA in Poland and the Polish YMCA was born. Mr Super, known colloquially as 'Pan Superowski', became its Director General and Piłsudski, its number one cardholder. Mr Super continued to serve as Director General for the entire interwar period, enlisting American philanthropists to support the Association. When the activities of the Polish YMCA were outlawed under German occupation, Mr Super placed himself at the service of the Polish Government and the Polish YMCA continued its work among the Polish diaspora in Romania, France, and England; in prisoner of war camps; and wherever Polish military units were based.⁵⁹⁸

At the request of the MPiOS, the Polish YMCA extended its operations to include the refugee camps in Africa. A representative for Africa was appointed in May 1943 and within a year YMCA centres had been set up in almost all of the camps.⁵⁹⁹ Funding was provided jointly by the MPiOS and the YMCA in the USA and Canada, and staff were chosen and trained from among the refugees. The British supported the work of the YMCA in the camps and assigned them a building wherever possible.⁶⁰⁰ Much of the adult education in the camps was organised by the YMCA. They offered a range of courses in sewing, typing, bookkeeping, driving, Polish literacy, and English language courses for adults while the

⁵⁹⁶ For brief biography of General Józef Haller see

https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/haller_jozef, (accessed 13 April 2018).

⁵⁹⁷ Związek Młodzieży Chrześcijańskiej 'Polska YMCA', <http://www.ymca.pl/html/polska/index.php>, (accessed 13 April 2018).

⁵⁹⁸ Jan Baranski, 'Polska YMKA', *Polak w Afryce*, 1 August 1944, p. 3; Jan Baranski, 'Polska YMKA', *Polak w Afryce*, 10 August 1944, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/104, Polish YMCA in Africa Report for July 1944, p. 177.

⁶⁰⁰ AAN, MPiOS 131/104, Polish YMCA in Africa Report for February 1944, p. 67.

Polish Ministry of Education ran vocational courses in trades such as metalwork and carpentry.

Strong relations between the Polish YMCA and its counterpart in America played a key role in its success in the refugee camps in Africa. From America came gramophones and musical instruments; soccer balls and playground swings; chess and domino sets; typewriters and sewing machines. This supply of material and equipment not readily available in Africa, facilitated the provision of a range of educational, sporting and social programmes of which the refugees were the beneficiaries. Saturday night YMCA dances were particularly popular with the youth. Andrzej recalls the timber floor of the Lusaka camp's YMCA building as being a great surface for dancing the tango, foxtrot and waltz as well as Polish favourites such as the polka and *kujawiak* (folk dance).⁶⁰¹ Male attendees at the dances held in the camps were considerably outnumbered by females and highly in demand as dance partners.

Marriages

The gender imbalance at the dances was a reflection of the gender imbalance in the refugee population. At the Koja camp with a peak population of around 2,750 in 1945, adult males made up fourteen per cent of the population and adult females fifty per cent. Furthermore, only four per cent of the adult males in the camp were aged between sixteen and forty.⁶⁰² Young women's social lives and opportunities for relationships with the opposite sex, were limited. In the first year of camp operations there were only twenty-five marriages among a total refugee population of over fifteen thousand.⁶⁰³ Occasionally Polish women married non-Poles from outside the camps and moved to live in towns or on farms.⁶⁰⁴ For these women marriage was both a way out of the confines of the camps and, depending on who one married, a means of acceptance into white colonial society. At Bwana Mkubwa, one of the women married retired Captain Grills, who served there as the British Camp Commandant for five years until the camp's closure. At Koja it was love at first sight for David Gillett, a British biologist, stationed at the agricultural post on the hill overlooking the camp. Assisting with the arrival of the first group of refugees, he helped young Irena off the bus and smitten, proposed to her then and there. By the time the second group of refugees arrived a few

⁶⁰¹ Andrzej Szujecki, 'Lusaka', in Piotrowski (ed.), *The Polish Deportees of World War II*, p. 167.

⁶⁰² PISM, KOL 174/3, Order Commission in Koja, November 1946, p. 2.

⁶⁰³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/176-177, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁶⁰⁴ PISM, KOL 174/3, R. Królikowski, 'Dlaczego wyjazd rodzin z Afryki ulega opóźnieniu', *Dziennik Polski*, 12 October 1948.

months later, Irena and David were on their honeymoon.⁶⁰⁵ There were also marriages between the Polish recruits to the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) stationed at Eastleigh RAF base near Nairobi and those in similar service at Thornhill and Heany RAF bases near Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia, and members of the British armed forces.⁶⁰⁶

In Tanganyika the locals included a number of settlers of Greek origin. Greeks had arrived in East Africa in two waves, the first during the building of the railways in the late nineteenth century and the second after the Greco-Turkish war of 1921-22. By the 1940s many managed or owned coffee plantations in the Arusha district where the Tengeru camp was located, or tobacco plantations in the Southern Highlands where the Ifunda and Kidugala camps were situated.⁶⁰⁷ Greeks were considered to be Balkan rather than European and they were not accepted as equals in white colonial society. This had little impact on their relations with the refugees and a number of Polish women married Greek farmers. Another group with whom the refugees interacted was Italian prisoners of war, some of whom were paroled to work on farms, in construction and road building, or at the refugee camps. They met and formed relationships with Polish women, sometimes resulting in the birth of children out of wedlock.⁶⁰⁸ There were instances too where Polish women married Indians. At Masindi, one of the nurses had a child by the Hindu merchant contracted to supply food to the camp's hospital, an event that was followed by their marriage.⁶⁰⁹

In January 1943, just a few months after the first refugees arrived in East Africa, the Conference of the Directors of Refugees considered the question of marriages and concluded, 'There was no objection to suitable marriages' and 'in the case of mixed or undesirable marriages the Polish authorities would do all in their power to prevent such occurrences.'⁶¹⁰ The stated intent was 'to prevent mixed marriages between Polish women and non-European male residents of East Africa' and 'to protect them [Polish women] from marriages with European male residents who were known to be bad characters or to have no steady source of

⁶⁰⁵ Interview with Mira.

⁶⁰⁶ 'Polskie WAAFki w Rodezji', *Polak w Afryce*, 16 June 1944, p. 2; KOL 174/8, Southern Rhodesia: Historical Sketch, p. 13.

⁶⁰⁷ The land on which the Tengeru camp was built was leased from a Greek farmer, and the building of the camp was originally assigned to a Greek contractor. See AN, AJ/43/787/34/2; AAN, MPiOS 131/101, MPiOS Nairobi Report March 1943, p. 106.

⁶⁰⁸ PISM, KOL 174/9B; Australian film maker, Sofia Turkiewicz's biographical film, *Once My Mother*, traces her mother's journey from Poland, through the Soviet Union, Iran and Africa to Australia and reveals the circumstances of Sofia's birth in Africa, and the Italian prisoner of war who was her father.

⁶⁰⁹ KARTA, AW II/1072, Testimony of Helena Nikiel.

⁶¹⁰ TNA, FO 372/36685/W3059, Conference of Directors and Commissioners of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi, 9 January 1943, p. 7.

income'.⁶¹¹ In reality, the power of the Polish authorities was limited to the confines of the camp and it could be easily circumvented by marrying outside the camp. In Fort Jameson, only one of six marriages was carried out by a priest.⁶¹²

One of the consequences of choosing to marry a non-Polish local resident was to forego returning to Poland. In making this decision, individuals moved beyond the bounds of the collective identity of 'a nation in exile' to 'inhabiting multiple, shifting identities'.⁶¹³ Marriage to someone outside the Polish community and moving out of the national framework of the camp was looked upon unfavourably by Polish authorities. They were no doubt concerned for the well-being of their young female citizens but there was also an element of disapproval, a view that these women were not living up to the image of *Matka Polka*, the mother and wife sacrificing all for the nation. They were viewed as 'an impure, problematic element' of the "total community" of ... [Polish] refugees 'heroized as people in exile'.⁶¹⁴ Assimilation into colonial society was not part of the Polish authorities' plan for their citizens. By the end of the year they took the rather heavy handed approach of requesting that the laws of the Territories be amended to prevent District Officers or ministers of religion from performing a marriage in which Polish citizens were involved without obtaining the prior consent in writing of the Polish Consul of the Territory concerned.⁶¹⁵ The Colonial Office did not support the request advising that the measures proposed 'are not in accordance with the practice or the law in this country or any other British Territory'.⁶¹⁶ Where the opportunity arose and individuals were open to exploring new relations and associations or were simply determined to change their life circumstances, marriages continued to occur.

Polish Scouting Association

My best memories of Africa are of scouting. Exotic Africa delighted us with the beauty and richness of its shapes and colours. It was as though we - exiled Polish children - were living in a fairy tale.⁶¹⁷ Alina

⁶¹¹ TNA, FO 371/42865/WR97, Correspondence from Downing St to E. A. Walker, CO, 5 July 1944.

⁶¹² PISM, KOL 174/11, Chronicle of the Lives of Polish Refugees in Northern Rhodesia, Africa, p. 70.

⁶¹³ Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, p. 3.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ TNA, FO 371/36687/W17986, Conference of Directors of Refugees in East Africa held in Nairobi on the 17th and 18th November 1943.

⁶¹⁶ TNA, FO 371/42865/WR1038, Oliver Stanely, Colonial Office to Governor Jackson, Tanganyika Territory, 5 September 1944.

⁶¹⁷ Alina Gwardys Kulpińska, 'Moje Wspomnienia Harcerskie', in Dąbkowski (ed.), *Polskie Sybiraczki Harcerki*, p. 122.

In the memories of Polish children who grew up in Africa, scouting is inextricably linked with a wondrous experience of the African landscape, its flora and fauna. In this 'fairy tale' world, they recovered something of their stolen childhood. After the trauma of deportation and the hardship of life in the Soviet Union, they learnt the fun of playing, the excitement of exploring, and the wonder of the natural world.

In Poland, as in England, scouting grew from military roots. Baden-Powell's 1908 publication *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship*, an adaptation of his Boer War soldiers' handbook *Aids for Scouting*, was translated into Polish in 1910 and distributed widely in partitioned Poland.⁶¹⁸ The Polish independence movement saw Baden-Powell's youth programme as ideally suited for preparing Polish youth to become brave soldiers and model citizens. Polonised versions of scouting began operating openly in Austrian-controlled Poland and underground in the Russian- and Prussian-controlled areas. The role of Polish Scouting in the First World War and during the battles fought over the delineation of the Second Polish Republic's borders from 1918-1921 was primarily to provide aid to civilian and military victims of war. Its popularity waned somewhat during the interwar years but was re-ignited with the advent of the Second World War as Polish youth, too young to enlist in the armed forces, looked for ways of being of service to their country. During the war, Polish Scouting went underground and operated under the code name, *Szare Szeregi* (Grey Ranks).⁶¹⁹

Scouting sprang up and developed in the trail of Anders' army. It attracted children in the Tehran evacuee camps and was popular among the youth who joined the Cadet Corps and moved with the army to Palestine. Among the Polish children who were sent from Iran to Africa, some were already scouts while others were keen to join. Membership was voluntary yet at the peak of its operations from 1944 to 1946, Polish Scouting had almost five thousand members. One of the attractions of scouting lay in its close association with the military. Many of the children had fathers, brothers and uncles in the armed forces and being a scout drew them closer to the absent men in their lives. Like soldiers, scouts swore allegiance to God and country, wore uniforms, learned to salute and march, and were expected to be disciplined and self-sacrificing. With the motto of 'be prepared', scouting was preparation for a call to arms and a return to post war Poland. The second attraction was the opportunity for

⁶¹⁸ Rediscover Polish Scouting, https://issuu.com/zhp_pl/docs/rediscoverpolishscouting/7, (accessed 5 January 2016).

⁶¹⁹ Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego, odkryw harcerstwo, historia harcerstwa, <https://zhp.pl/ozhp/historia-harcerstwa/>, (accessed 25 February 2018).

adventure that not only scouting but scouting in Africa provided. As Lord Baden-Powell himself said, 'Life without adventure would be deadly dull.'⁶²⁰ And there was little prospect of life as a scout in Africa being 'deadly dull'. Scouting fired the imaginations of the young, and provided them with fun and adventure to counterbalance the weight of past experiences. As Janina reflected, 'Scouting was the school where we learnt to forget the hell of deportation to Siberia.'⁶²¹

In Africa, the majority of the Polish Scouts were girls and their commanders were female.⁶²² Zdzisława Wójcik, a twenty-six year old university student from Poznan, who had fled eastward from the advancing German forces and been deported from Lwów for refusing Soviet citizenship, was among the evacuees who arrived in Iran in 1942. While in Tehran, she was selected to take command of Polish Scouting in Africa by Professor Kot, the Chief Minister for Eastern Affairs in the Polish Government-in-exile.⁶²³ Although Wójcik had been a senior scout in Poland, she felt under-qualified and ill-prepared to assume this role but was told there were no males available, and it was her duty to 'step up'. She was later to write that after the loss of homeland and loved ones, it was 'working with Polish children in Africa [that] gave my life meaning'.⁶²⁴

Armed with a Russian language topographical handbook for Soviet Pioneers (the Soviet Union's equivalent of the Boy Scouts), an English language handbook on camping for English Scouts, French language natural history textbooks, a watch, compass and water flask, all of which she managed to purchase in Tehran, and wearing a grey cotton dress adapted to vaguely resemble a scouting uniform, she arrived in Africa in December 1942.⁶²⁵ Wójcik was not warmly received at the Polish government offices in Nairobi where she was the only female employed in a role that did not involve secretarial or domestic duties and was considerably younger than her fellow male government appointees, many of whom had held senior positions in the government or public service in pre-war Poland. She did however win

⁶²⁰ Scouts, be prepared..., <http://scouts.org.uk/about-us/heritage/lord-baden-powell/>, (accessed 10 February 2018).

⁶²¹ Henryk Dąbkowski (ed.), *Polskie Sybiraczki Harcerki w Afryce 1942-1950*, Warszawa, 2002, p. 186.

⁶²² Polish Scouting is open to male and female members. There are no separate 'boy scout' and 'girl guide' organisations. The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association is called the *Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego* (ZHP). Guides and Scouts are called *harcerki* and *harcerze*.

⁶²³ Herbich (ed.), *Dziewczyny z Syberii*, pp. 263-294; Hm. Zdzisława Wójcik, *Afryka lat czterdziestych we wspomnieniach instruktorki harcerskiej*, Warszawa, Nakładem Koła Harcerki i Harcerzy z Lat Dawnych w Londynie, 1997.

⁶²⁴ Herbich (ed.), *Dziewczyny z Syberii*, p. 288.

⁶²⁵ Wójcik, *Afryka lat czterdziestych*, p. 6.

the confidence and support of colonial authorities who had little time for what they considered to be the 'petty rivalry' that characterized the Polish administration in Africa.⁶²⁶

Wójcik spent little time in her Nairobi office, embarking on a tour of the camps where one and a half thousand children had already signed up to be scouts.⁶²⁷ She travelled thousands of miles by train, bus, car, lorry, boat and plane to impose a degree of order on what was up until then a random collection of scouting troops led by well-intentioned adults, some with little actual knowledge or experience of scouting. In all the camps, a lack of scouting manuals and qualified instructors was a major problem that was not overcome until late 1944 when five Polish Scouting instructors were released from the army to tour the African camps and conduct leadership training. In the meantime, in true scouting fashion, the best was made of a difficult situation.

A highlight of scouting activities were the camps organized during the school holidays at nearby Catholic Missions and European farms. Thirty scouts from Kidugala spent a week camping at the Italian Catholic mission at Kipengere during the January 1944 school holidays. Their grueling day-long trek up Mount Pangulidala was rewarded by breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside from the summit.⁶²⁸ From Tengeru, scouts were welcome and regular campers at Momela farm near Mt Meru, the property on Mrs Trappe and her adult son, Rolf. The passing parade of wild animals that emerged from the jungle in the evenings to drink from the lakes that dotted the property was much anticipated with elephants sightings a real treat. The safety of the children was ensured by the Trappes who provided armed African guards to protect the campers at night.⁶²⁹ It is no wonder that scouting is recalled so fondly in memoirs of childhood in Africa. Baden-Powell's last words could have been written specifically for the refugee children who arrived in Africa shortly after his death in Kenya in 1941:

Nature study will show you how full of beautiful and wonderful things God has made the world for you to enjoy. Be contented with what you have got and make the best of it.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶²⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 November 1942 to 31 December 1942.

⁶²⁸ Leokadia Kondratowicz-Kordas (ed.), *Wędrowniczki z Kidugali*, pp. 56-58.

⁶²⁹ Alicia A. Zurzycki and Stefania Buczak-Zarzycka, *Kwaheri Africa: A Polish experience 1939-1950, from deportation to freedom*, self published, Perth, Western Australia, 1986, p. 43; Pancewicz, *Harcerstwo w Afryce 1941-1949*, p. 51.

⁶³⁰ 'Baden-Powell, Chief Scout of the World', *Scouts be prepared*, no. 1, March 2008, http://scouts.org.uk/media/52831/baden_powell.pdf, (accessed 10 February 2018).

Scouting, provided the children with a sanctioned escape from the confines of the camp and the opportunity to explore the natural world. It was also one of the few chances they had for interacting with neighbouring English children. The British in Africa were very positively disposed towards Polish Scouting and repeatedly proposed that Polish scouts join their organization. This proposition was politely declined by the Poles who felt that the Polish Scouting Association needed to maintain its distinct Polish character. Their resolve to remain independent was hardened when they learned that the proposed scouting oath included service to 'God and Country, the country in which we are currently guests!' A Polish scout's allegiance could only be to Poland, and the two associations resolved to work in tandem.⁶³¹

The Scouts and Guides Associations of Kenya, Uganda, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa all forged close links with Polish scouting. Many joint camps were held including on the banks of the Zambezi River, at Victoria Falls, at Luanshya in Northern Rhodesia, at Digglefold and Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia, and on a promontory of Lake Victoria near Kampala in Uganda. The Uganda camp was attended by British Girl Guides from Kenya and Uganda, and Polish *harcerki* from the two Uganda refugee camps. Each day began with drum reveille and the hoisting of colours, and then a full programme of learning and practicing various scouting skills such as knotting and splicing, observation, stalking, tracking, signaling, and first-aid. A mobile cinema visited the camp one day and on another the Commodore and Members of the Victoria Nyaza Sailing Club organized an afternoon's sailing on the lake. Each evening a camp fire was lit and the girls entertained each other with singing and dancing, and games such as charades. The Polish scouts were particularly impressed with the Scottish highland dancing which they had not seen before. The campfires ended with the singing of 'Taps', first in English, then in Polish. This song signals the end of day and is traditionally sung around a campfire.

Day is done.
Gone the sun
from the lakes, from the hills, from the sky.
All is well,
Safely rest,
God is nigh.

Several distinguished guests visited the camp including the Governor of Uganda and his wife, the President of the Uganda Girl Guides Association, the Director of Refugees; and the

⁶³¹ Pancewicz, *Harcerstwo w Afryce 1941-1949*, pp. 65-66; AAN, MPiOS 131/113, Polish Consul General, Lusaka, to Polish Scouting Headquarters, London, 21 July 1943, p. 24.

kabaka (king) of the Kingdom of Buganda in whose Kingdom the Koja camp and the scouting camp were located.⁶³²

Life as a scout was not all fun and games. The concept of duty - to community, to nation, to God - lies at the heart of scouting. Duty took many practical forms. In all of the camps scouts were an essential part of formal national and religious ceremonies, dressed in their smart uniforms they marched, saluted, raised the flag, and were generally responsible for keeping order. At Masindi, scouts visited the camp hospital to relay radio announcements to patients, they took responsibility for making the crosses for the graves in the camp cemetery, and they carried out household chores for the aged.⁶³³

Polish Scouting worked tirelessly to shape the national identity of Polish children in Africa. It spoke directly to the children of forming in their daily lives in exile 'an atmosphere of family, a stronghold of Polish culture based on the very best of Polish tradition'. It called for the nurturing of the Polish language as a 'national treasure'. It promoted the idea that the Polish scout was united with the Polish soldier in the fight for the freedom of Poland. It rallied the children to action with cries such as: 'We too are mobilizing to do battle. Take up your books as though they were rifles, and march forward to learn and be educated.'⁶³⁴

Education

Many of the children arriving in Africa had not attended school since leaving Poland. In the Soviet Union, an estimated forty per cent had joined adults working in the forests and mines to earn food for themselves and their families.⁶³⁵ Those who went to school in the special settlements where they lived or in a nearby village had Russian teachers. They learnt the Cyrillic not the Latin alphabet and to read and write in Russian not Polish. They learnt to sing the *Internationale* not the Polish national anthem. Stalin's portrait hung in every Soviet classroom and teachers affectionately referred to him as 'Uncle Joe'. Religion was presented as evil.⁶³⁶ Polish authorities were faced with the task of filling huge gaps in the children's knowledge and overturning years of Soviet indoctrination.

⁶³² 'English-Polish Guide Camp on Lake Victoria', *The East African Standard*, 15 August 1943; Pancewicz, *Harcerstwo w Afryce*, p. 67; 'Obóz Harcerski Angielsko-Polski', *Polak w Afryce*, 9 September 1943, p. 2.

⁶³³ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943, p. 144.

⁶³⁴ 'ZHP Programme for 1944', in Tadeusz Truchanowicz, *Od Brygady Karpackiej do Tengeru: z dziejów harcerstwa polskiego na Wschodzie 1940-1948*, Warszawa, Harcerska Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1991, pp. 168-174.

⁶³⁵ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, p. 38.

⁶³⁶ Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*, pp. 118-120; Esther Hautzig, *The Endless Steppe*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Puffin Plus, 1986, pp. 77-84, 96, 143.

Education in the camps was the direct responsibility of Polish authorities. Their attitude to giving the children not only an education but a Polish education was encapsulated in the 1944 New Year's message sent from the President of Poland to the children in Africa, printed in the children's supplement of the Nairobi-based Polish newspaper, *Polak w Afryce*. It read:

You, children in exile, possess a priceless treasure: freedom. Though there may be times when you are overcome with sadness, do not forget that there are millions of children in Poland who are not free. Many of them were unable to celebrate Christmas. They do not have warm clothing or food and are not permitted to attend Polish schools. You must take full advantage of your freedom. Remember that among all Polish children, only you, children in exile, have access to a Polish education. You must study not only for yourselves but in the name of all Polish children.⁶³⁷

Despite these fine sentiments, an entire year passed before anyone from the Polish Ministry of Education arrived in Africa from London. In the interim, the MPiOS assumed responsibility for setting up schools and finding teachers.⁶³⁸ The education model adopted mirrored that of interwar Poland where education reform in 1932 had established universal free education, and mandated six years of primary school attendance.⁶³⁹ Pre-school was available from the age of three, and primary school began at age seven. Secondary school was divided into four years of *gimnazjum* (lower secondary) from age twelve, followed by two years of *lyceum* (upper secondary). A new curriculum was designed to support a national education, instilling in children their rights and responsibilities as citizens of the Second Polish Republic.⁶⁴⁰ Education was also seen by the newly created Second Republic as a means of nation-building. The school calendar included mandated commemorations of historic events and illustrious individuals, celebrated with religious ceremonies, speeches by dignitaries and theatrical events by school children. The curriculum reflected the belief that 'apart from armed struggle, cultural life represented an equally important factor in the process of national survival'.⁶⁴¹

Within a few months of the first ten thousand refugees arriving in Africa, in January 1943, 3,531 children were attending school in six camps in British East Africa.

⁶³⁷ *Polak w Afryce - Płomyczek Afrykański*, no. 19, 1 to 8 January 1944.

⁶³⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/178, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943.

⁶³⁹ Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych (ISAP), Dz.U. 1932 nr 38 poz. 389, Ustawa z dnia 11 Marca 1932r. o ustroju szkolnictwa. <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19320380389>, (accessed 1 January 2018).

⁶⁴⁰ Leszek Zasztowo, 'Recent Studies in Polish Education in the Interwar Period', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3, Fall 1990, pp. 390-391.

⁶⁴¹ Dorota Wojtas, *Learning to become Polish: Education, National Identity and Citizenship in Interwar Poland, 1918-1939*, PhD Thesis, Brandeis University, 2003, p. 174.

Table 5.1 Number of Students in Primary School Grades (I–VI) in Uganda and Tanganyika, Jan 1943⁶⁴²

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
Uganda (1786 students)							
Koja	135	71	77	57	60	46	446
Masindi	365	375	185	190	140	85	1340
Tanganyika (1745 students)							
Ifunda	84	42	28	41	33	49	277
Kidugala	82	52	57	35	25	15	266
Kondoa	30	15	30	30	20	22	147
Tengeru	371	152	179	181	119	53	1055
Total	1067	707	556	534	397	270	3531

Children were assigned to a particular grade based on their performance in an entrance examination, not their age. The large number of students in Grade I, four times greater than in Grade VI, reflects the number of eight, nine and ten year olds who needed to begin their Polish education at the beginning. Once the schools were established, some children were encouraged to undertake *skoczki* or accelerated learning programmes so as to make up for lost time.⁶⁴³ Stan was a bright student who was behind in his schooling and encouraged by his Grade V teacher to complete Grades V and VI in one year. Children normally attended school for five hours daily, from 8 am to 1 pm. Stan attended school in Grade V in the mornings and received private lessons at Grade VI level at his teacher's home in the afternoons along with a small group of other students.⁶⁴⁴

The refugee camps were separated by vast distances and many were in remote locations. Though primary schools operated in all of the camps, secondary schools were only available in larger camps and *internaty* (boarding facilities) were built so that children from smaller camps could attend. The main centres of secondary education were at Masindi in Uganda, Tengeru in Tanganyika, Lusaka in Northern Rhodesia and Diggelfold in Southern Rhodesia. Student numbers in secondary school were low as they were in Poland. The

⁶⁴² AAN, MPiOS 131/106/41, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943.

⁶⁴³ Zarzycki and Buczak-Zarzycka, *Kwaheri Africa*, p. 30.

⁶⁴⁴ Interview with Stanisław Patro.

education reforms introduced in interwar Poland were a huge step forward for the nation, however, implementation was slow and by 1939, the majority of Polish children were receiving only four years of primary education.⁶⁴⁵ Attendance at secondary school was rare for children living in the rural areas of Poland.⁶⁴⁶

In January 1943 there were 318 students enrolled in secondary schools in East Africa compared to 3531 in primary schools.⁶⁴⁷ A year later, the numbers had increased but the proportion of secondary to primary school students had only slightly improved, 667 in secondary and 5021 in primary schools.⁶⁴⁸ There were few young people aged fourteen to eighteen in Africa in the early years, as boys and girls who were, or claimed to be, in this age group had joined the Polish army's cadet corps in the Soviet Union. Three thousand boys and five hundred girls aged fourteen to eighteen left Iran in 1942 for Palestine and Egypt to be educated by the Polish army at cadet schools there.⁶⁴⁹ The large number of boys who signed up for the cadets resulted in the number of girls in Africa far exceeding that of boys.

As a consequence of the centralisation of secondary education teenagers were separated from their mothers to live in an institutional setting. The *internat* experience, though, was a positive one for most of the youngsters.⁶⁵⁰ Stan, who lived at the Marandellas camp with his mother, grandmother and aunt, was fourteen years old when he moved to the *internat* at Lusaka. He recalls the days being full of activity shared with friends - school, sport, scouts, the luxury of being fed six times a day (breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, supper) and the freedom of being away from the ever watchful eyes of his three motherly carers.⁶⁵¹ The Polish Ministry of Education offered some boys the opportunity to gain an English education by providing scholarship-funded places at colleges in South Africa.⁶⁵² Jan, one of seventy-four boys awarded this privilege, rather reluctantly left his mother and sister in Tengeru to attend Pietermaritzburg College. Though 'the boarding school rigour was pretty severe' and the food was 'scarce and bland', he found life in Natal far more enjoyable than life in the camp. He appreciated being in a cultured environment where he was accepted by white society and had the opportunity to master the English language.⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁵ Harris, *Poles Apart?* p. 52.

⁶⁴⁶ Davies, *God's Playground*, p. 310.

⁶⁴⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/41, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943.

⁶⁴⁸ 'Polish Education in East and South Africa', *Polak w Afryce*, 1 January 1944, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁹ Bugaj, *Dzieci polskie*, p. 69.

⁶⁵⁰ Interview with Helena Cieśla; Filipczak-Puchalska, *Moje Tulacze Wspomnienia*, pp. 112-127.

⁶⁵¹ Interview with Stanisław Patro. Stan's two brothers had died at Pahlevi, Iran.

⁶⁵² Chmielewski, 'Szkolnictwo polskie w Afryce', p. 74; Wiktor Ostrowski, *Safari przez czarny ląd: Szkice z podróży po Kenyi, Tanganicy, Ugandzie i wyspie Zanzibar*, London, Gryf, 1947, p. 304.

⁶⁵³ Allbrook and Cattalini, *The General Langfitt Story*, p. 89.

The camps also offered technical and vocational secondary education in mechanical, agricultural, commercial and sewing schools. Enrolments were lower than in the mainstream schools. Attending school in the camps could not compete with the far more attractive option offered by the recruitment programmes run in 1943 and 1944 by the British and Polish armed services for service in Kenya, Southern Rhodesia and the UK.⁶⁵⁴ For those with musical aspirations there were specialist music schools at Tengeru and Kidugala. Tengeru's music school had almost two hundred students. Amassing an extraordinary collection of classical instruments donated by the local population and overseas charitable organisations, the school's orchestra performed at many of the camp's national celebrations and commemorations. At Kidugala, thirty students were taught to play the piano by a graduate of the Lwów Conservatorium of Music, who in order to set up her music school in this remote location embarked on a mission of faith to locate a piano. She traversed the countryside on her bicycle calling at nearby farms until she found not one but two pianos for the use of her highly motivated pupils.⁶⁵⁵

Education was not limited to children. Numerous adult short courses were run by the YMCA with embroidery and photography being particularly popular. Some adults learned to drive, others to type, and others still pursued an interest in foreign languages.⁶⁵⁶ There was also a concerted effort to address the issue of illiteracy among the adult population. The 1931 Polish census showed national illiteracy at twenty eight per cent in rural Poland and fifty per cent in rural Eastern Poland. The rate among women was even higher.⁶⁵⁷ At Masindi, twenty adults took part in a six month literacy course; at Ifunda seventeen adults completed beginners literacy classes and enrolled in Level Two, while girl scouts at Tengeru volunteered to form a special study group to assist adults learning to read and write.⁶⁵⁸

There were many difficulties which had to be overcome by Polish authorities in providing camp children with an education. At first there were no textbooks, no pens, no paper, and few teachers. No school buildings had been built as planning programmes had prioritised the construction of housing and there were few spaces suitable for use as

⁶⁵⁴ TNA, FO 371/32650/W14755, Polish Refugees Report by Col. H. P. Mitchell, November 1942; FO 371/36685/W3059, Conference of the Commissioners and Directors of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi, 9 January 1943; 'Służba Lotnicza Kobiet', *Polak w Afryce*, 15 August 1943, p. 4; 'Do Osiedli', *Polak w Afryce*, 18 June 1944, p. 3; 'Ogłoszenie', *Polak w Afryce*, 1 January 1945, p. 4.

⁶⁵⁵ Jerzy Tomaszek, 'Nauka muzyki w buszu', in FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, p. 322; PISM, KOL 174/6A, Report on Polish YMCA activities in Masindi.

⁶⁵⁶ PISM, KOL 174/8/22, Chronicle of the Polish Refugee Settlement at Rusape, Southern Rhodesia.

⁶⁵⁷ Jolluck, *Exile and Identity*, p. 28.

⁶⁵⁸ PISM, KOL 174/6A/13, History of Polish Exile in Africa, Polish Settlement Masindi, Bunyoro, Uganda, Education; KOL 174/2/65 Development of Education in Ifunda; Ostrowski, *Safari przez czarny ląd*, p. 300.

classrooms. Lessons took place under the trees, in residential huts and where available, in dining halls. At Tengeru, children carried their foldable camping stools from their huts to the shade of a huge jacaranda tree where they gathered to begin lessons each morning.⁶⁵⁹ With no text books or indeed any books, 'teachers' mined their memories for educational matter to pass on to their pupils. In these circumstances, story telling, the singing of military, religious and patriotic songs, folk dancing, and reciting poetry, featured strongly in lesson plans. Polish publishing houses were set up in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to print Polish literature and school textbooks for the Poles in exile but it was over six months before the first 1400 textbooks arrived in Africa from Jerusalem.⁶⁶⁰ Over a year after the first refugees arrived in Africa there were still classes where the only textbook available for the entire class was held by the teacher. Alicia recalls her class of twenty sharing three text books that were passed from student to student, each sitting up at evening by the light of a kerosene lamp copying page after page of text like a medieval scribe in a scriptorium.⁶⁶¹ To overcome the shortage of teaching and learning materials, bulk orders were placed with the American Red Cross for essential school supplies. In November 1942, this included a request for 12,000 pencils and 3,000 erasers; 6,000 stylus pens, 12,000 nibs, 20 gallons of ink, and 250 cartons of chalk. These supplies were intended to last six months.⁶⁶²

Ideally, each group of refugees leaving Iran included teachers. However, few teachers were willing to leave the bustling metropolis of Tehran or the ancient beauty of Isfahan for the remote and primitive refugee camps in Africa. The number of teachers arriving in Africa was well below that needed and the appointment of 'teachers' who were not qualified was common. In Tengeru, one of the larger camps with an extensive educational facilities including kindergartens, primary schools, lower and upper secondary schools, and vocational schools, of the eighty-eight teachers employed in 1944, only thirty-one possessed teaching qualifications i.e. thirty-five per cent.⁶⁶³ At the same time, there was a surplus of qualified teachers in Iran. With desperate appeals coming from Nairobi, the Polish Ministry of Education in London ordered that any teacher in Iran who did not have full-time employment as a teacher should be directed to Africa. Anyone refusing to be relocated would be

⁶⁵⁹ Zdzisława Wójcik, 'Wstęp: Afryka', in FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, p. 186.

⁶⁶⁰ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/102, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 March 1943 to 31 May 1943. Further see Chmielewski, 'Działalność wydawnicza', pp. 5-16.

⁶⁶¹ Zarzycki and Buczak-Zarzycka, *Kwaheri Africa*, p. 31.

⁶⁶² AAN 131/106/55, Request sent to Washington via the American Red Cross from the MPiOS Nairobi in November 1942.

⁶⁶³ Bugaj, *Dzieci Polskie*, p. 99. For additional statistics see Chmielewski, 'Szkolnictwo polskie w Afryce', p. 64.

dismissed.⁶⁶⁴ Over a twenty month period, seventy-six teachers not working full-time as teachers in Iran were dismissed, resigned, enlisted in the army or went to New Zealand or India. Seven chose to go to Africa.⁶⁶⁵ An open letter in *Polak w Afryce* also appealed to the intelligentsia in Palestine to answer the call to work among the refugees in Africa, to serve Poland by educating its youth and preparing them for their future role in the reconstruction of their homeland.⁶⁶⁶ Unfortunately, neither appeals nor orders had the desired effect. Two years later the situation had not improved at Tengeru: in fact it had worsened, with forty-six out of one hundred and twenty-two 'teachers' having no teaching qualifications, i.e. thirty-eight per cent.⁶⁶⁷

Secondary school teachers who were not qualified to teach were often memorable characters. History at the secondary school in Lusaka was taught by a former Piłsudski legionnaire who had fought in the Polish-Bolshevik War, and forged a career as a journalist and writer in Lwów in the interwar years. Mathematics was taught by a no-nonsense lawyer who in the absence of a text book wrote his own, and demanded extremely high standards, rarely awarding the top mark of five to any of his students. The Biology teacher was a passionate entomologist whom the students assisted in amassing an extraordinary collection of African insects. The position of Director of the Girls *Internat* was held by a champion archer, the winner of a silver medal at the pre-war Olympics, who established a popular archery club at the school.⁶⁶⁸

The lack of qualified teachers willing to work in Africa was undoubtedly the major factor impacting the quality of the education provided. Few students had the opportunity to complete upper secondary school or even lower secondary school. Of the estimated seven and a half thousand children who were educated in Africa, only 1,340 or eighteen per cent progressed to secondary school.⁶⁶⁹ Few of those who attended secondary school completed the full six years of study and passed matriculation exams. The best results were achieved at primary school level where, at a bare minimum, literacy and numeracy skills were acquired by all. However many grades of education a child completed, whether they were taught by

⁶⁶⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/93/14-15, Correspondence between the Polish Boards of Education in London and Nairobi, May 1944; MPiOS 131/103/14, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period 1 June 1944 to 31 August 1944.

⁶⁶⁵ PISM, A 74/14-17, List of teachers dismissed or evacuated from Iran between 10 April 1943 and 31 January 1945.

⁶⁶⁶ 'Letter to the Editor', *Polak w Afryce*, 7 May 1944, p. 4.

⁶⁶⁷ Bugaj, *Dzieci Polskie*, p. 99.

⁶⁶⁸ Grześkowiak-Kierzkiewicz, 'Lusackie gimnazjum i jego nauczyciele', in FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, pp. 377-379.

⁶⁶⁹ Zdzisława Wójcik, 'Sytuacja szkolnictwa w polskich osiedlach uchodźczych', in FAFT (eds.), *Tulacze Dzieci*, p. 292; FAFT (eds.), *Polska Szkoła*, pp. 234, 313; Ostrowski, *Safari przez czarny ląd*, pp. 303-304.

qualified or unqualified teachers, the education they received was nationalistic and religious in character, placing a strong emphasis on Polish language, history and civics.

A primary school textbook entitled, *Polak Mały* (A Little Pole), contained stories, poems and songs on religious and patriotic themes. An extract from the epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* by Poland's national poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who was himself exiled to Russia in the 1820s, opens with the lines, *Kiedyż nam Pan Bóg wrócić z wędrówki dozwoli i znowu dom zamieszkać na ojczyściej roli* (When, O Lord, will you release us from this wandering to live once again in our native land). Notes to the teacher state, 'If possible, bolster this section with pictures of fields and cities ... with national dances and outfits ... The children must understand and love their Fatherland, to which they will return from these wanderings.'⁶⁷⁰

The emphasis on the transmission of Polish language and culture, on reclaiming and sustaining Polish identity and on preparing the children for eventual return to Poland led to the place of English in the curriculum being undervalued by Polish authorities. The general attitude was that 'knowledge of the English language was not essential ... we were, after all, bound for our homeland.'⁶⁷¹ The teaching of English was not completely abandoned and British authorities did what they could to help source people from the local community for this task. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers and potential applicants were encouraged to view the work as 'an opportunity of rendering national service of real importance.'⁶⁷² Some British Camp Commandants were involved in teaching English to the children. The much-loved Camp Commandant at Kondoia, retired Major Draught, is remembered for giving lessons on the veranda of his home in his free time.⁶⁷³ Some of the camps were fortunate enough to have resident and qualified English teachers. In May 1943, Lettice Jowitt from the Society of Friends arrived in Nairobi offering assistance to colonial authorities in the care of refugees. Colonial authorities suggested that the Quakers could best assist by supplying English teachers. As a result, The Quakers provided five qualified teachers in the three largest camps, Tengeru, Masindi and Koja. The teachers were led by Mrs Jowitt herself, who organised for dictionaries and textbooks to be sent from London and the

⁶⁷⁰ Magdalena H. Gross, 'Reclaiming the Nation: Polish Schooling in Exile During the Second World War', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 3, August 2013, p. 249.

⁶⁷¹ 'Account of Jadwiga Morawiecka-Zaborowska', in Piotrowski (ed.), *The Polish Deportees of World War II*, p. 158.

⁶⁷² 'English Teachers Wanted', *East African Standard*, 23 July 1943, p. 4.

⁶⁷³ PISM, KOL 174/4, History of the Kondoia Settlement, p. 18.

USA.⁶⁷⁴ There were also well-meaning volunteers such as Mrs Willy at Lusaka, who cycled to the camp from her farm nearby to give English lessons to children. Unfortunately, her teaching method was limited to poetry recitations which students mastered without understanding much of what they were saying.⁶⁷⁵

Some camp residents though did show an interest in learning English.⁶⁷⁶ At Kidugala, forty people working in camp administration, in warehouses, schools and community centres were enrolled in English lessons.⁶⁷⁷ At Masindi, a Quaker, Miss Gillard, taught in the school and also provided lessons to five Polish teachers eager to learn and be of assistance to her.⁶⁷⁸ At Rusape, English classes were held three to four hours a week in the evenings for fee-paying adults.⁶⁷⁹ At Ifunda, twenty-four adults completed an English course in October 1945 and another seventeen completed the course six months later in April 1945.⁶⁸⁰ An opportunity to play a part in furthering knowledge of English was missed by the editors of the Polish newspaper, *Polak w Afyce*, published in Nairobi and distributed to the camps. The paper included a regular feature called 'Let's Learn Swahili' not 'Let's Learn English'. The feature consisted of translations of Swahili phrases into Polish. How exactly this was to be of benefit to Polish refugees, strongly discouraged from mixing with the African population, is unclear. Furthermore, phrases such as 'Good day sir', 'May I enter', 'I need water for shaving', 'This water is too hot', 'Is breakfast ready?' 'Serve it now', were of absolutely no use to the eighty per cent of refugees who were women and children or most refugees who did not have African servants.⁶⁸¹

Religion

The forced removal of Polish citizens following the invasion and annexation of Eastern Poland by the Soviet Union in 1939 encompassed Polish citizens of various faiths. There was a general correlation between the ethnicity and religion of interwar Polish citizens: Poles were usually Roman Catholic, Ukrainians were usually Greek Catholic and Byelorussians were

⁶⁷⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period 1 March 1943 to 31 May 1943, p. 104; MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943, p. 209; Lettice Jowitt, 'With Polish Refugees in Africa', *Friends' Quarterly Examiner*, vol. 79, no. 313, 1945, pp. 8-11.

⁶⁷⁵ Grześkowiak-Kierzkiewicz, 'Lusackie gimnazjum i jego nauczyciele', in FAFT, *Polska Szkoła*, p. 379.

⁶⁷⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period 1 June 1943 to 31 July 1943, p. 141.

⁶⁷⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period 1 November 1942 to 31 December 1942, p. 24.

⁶⁷⁸ PISM, KOL 174/6A, The Establishment and Development of the Gimnazjum at Masindi, p. 3.

⁶⁷⁹ PISM, KOL 174/8, Chronicle of the Polish Refugee Settlement in Rusape, Southern Rhodesia, pp. 21-22.

⁶⁸⁰ PISM, KOL 174/2, The Development of Education in Ifunda, pp. 65, 67.

⁶⁸¹ 'Let's learn Swahili', *Polak w Afryce*, 15 August 1943, p. 6; 'Let's learn Swahili', *Polak w Afryce*, 1 January 1944, p. 3.

usually of the Orthodox faith. It is estimated that 52 per cent of deportees were ethnic Poles (Roman Catholic), 30 per cent were Jewish and 18 per cent were Ukrainian and Byelorussian (Greek Catholic and Eastern Orthodox).⁶⁸² The evacuation of the Anders' army and accompanying civilians from the Soviet Union to Iran also included members of various religions though the citizenship policy of the Soviets and the recruitment practices of the Polish military strongly favoured the evacuation of ethnic Poles, and therefore, Roman Catholics. Despite this, there were 1,397 Byelorussian soldiers and at least two thousand Byelorussian civilians of the Eastern Orthodox faith among the evacuees.⁶⁸³ There were also between six and seven thousand Polish Jews of whom over two thousand were civilians.⁶⁸⁴ Thus, approximately ninety per cent of civilians evacuated were Catholic, five per cent were Jewish, and five per cent were Orthodox Christians. Though the vast majority of Polish citizens who were granted temporary domicile by the British in Africa were Roman Catholic, there were Jews and Orthodox Christians among them reflecting the religious diversity of the population in interwar Poland and the shared experience of deportation and evacuation.

Roman Catholic

The free and open practice of the Catholic faith restored a familiar and comforting rhythm to the lives of the majority of refugees. Janina reflected that in Poland: 'The year was woven into the Church calendar and the traditions that came with it ... Year after year as I was growing up, it was always the same.'⁶⁸⁵ Nothing had been the same though in the Soviet Union and it was only when they settled in Africa that the colourful thread of religious practice set down in the liturgical calendar was once again woven into the refugees' lives. As exiles from a country erased from the map of Europe, taking shelter in a distant continent, there was little of which they could be certain. But they knew that the days, weeks and months ahead would be filled with the rituals and traditions of the Catholic faith and the Church's liturgical calendar. And

⁶⁸² Gross, *Revolution from Abroad*, p. xxiii. These figures relate to deportees only and do not include prisoners of war, civilian arrestees and military conscripts all of whom underwent various kinds of forced removal to the Soviet Union from Sept 1939 to June 1941.

⁶⁸³ Grzybowski, 'Białorusini wśród uchodźców polskich', p. 330. Pawluczuk gives the figure of 28 officers and 2136 soldiers of Orthodox faith in the Polish military in November 1943, see Urszula Pawluczuk, 'Wydawnictwo Prawosławnego Duszpasterstwa w Afryce w latach 1943-1945', in Marzanna Kuczyńska (ed.), *Latopisy Akademii Supraskiej 7*, Białystok, Fundacja Oikonomis, 2016, p. 254. The higher figure for 1943 may be the result of Byelorussians who identified themselves as ethnic Poles in order to be evacuated, revealing their Byelorussian ethnicity once they were safely out of the Soviet Union.

⁶⁸⁴ Mark Edele and Wanda Warlik, 'Saved by Stalin?' in Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossman (eds.), *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2017, p. 113.

⁶⁸⁵ Chappell, *The Persian Blanket*, p. 37.

they knew that the sacraments were once again available to them to mark their journey through life. Babies would be baptised, children would receive their First Holy Communion, young people would be confirmed and adults would marry. And at the end of their lives there would be a priest present to anoint and bury them.⁶⁸⁶

Catholicism had deeply permeated Polish culture, its traditions and customs, to the extent that religious practice and cultural practice were often experienced as one. As the refugees' first Christmas in Africa approached, the Catholic priest and the British Camp Commandant at Tengeru, called upon the generosity of the local community to make this both a Catholic and Polish event.⁶⁸⁷ Central to the celebration of a Polish Christmas is the Christmas Eve meal or *wigilia*, rich in symbolism and meaning. Somehow, in remote Africa, at a time of wartime food shortages, the necessary ingredients were found to prepare the traditional twelve course meal, a course for each of the twelve apostles. Fish was imported from coastal Dar es Salaam, two hundred miles away, and beetroot for the *barszcz* (beetroot soup), white flour for the *pierogi* (dumplings), and poppy seeds for the *makowiec* (poppy seed cake) all miraculously appeared at the camp in the days leading up to Christmas.⁶⁸⁸

As evening approached, straw, symbolic of the humble birth of Christ in a manger, was sprinkled on the tables before white table cloths were laid, and a customary extra place set, should anyone arrive unexpectedly. This last tradition has layers of meaning - pagan, Christian and historical. Perhaps the most poignant under the circumstances of the first Christmas in Africa related to the January Uprising of 1863. Massive deportations to Siberia followed this tumultuous event in Polish history and the extra place at the *wigilia* table became a way of remembering those who had been deported east and of expressing hope that they would soon return.⁶⁸⁹ This tradition had extra meaning for the five hundred and twenty unaccompanied children and many incomplete families celebrating Christmas 1942 in Tengeru. The meal began with the appearance of the first star in the sky, symbolising the star of Bethlehem, and the celebration culminated with everyone making their way to church for *pasterka* (Midnight Mass).⁶⁹⁰

Though the refugees drew comfort and strength from traditional Polish religious celebrations, it was also on these days that people most felt the absence of family and longed

⁶⁸⁶ For a discussion of Catholicism's embeddedness in Polish culture see, Alvis, *White Eagle, Black Madonna*, pp. 124-126.

⁶⁸⁷ 'Korespondencja z Osiedla', *Polak w Afryce*, 14 March 1943, p. 3.

⁶⁸⁸ <http://culture.pl/en/article/the-12-dishes-of-polish-christmas>, (accessed 14 January 2018).

⁶⁸⁹ <http://culture.pl/en/article/why-do-poles-leave-one-chair-empty-on-christmas-eve>, (accessed 14 January 2018).

⁶⁹⁰ 'Korespondencja z Osiedla', *Polak w Afryce*, 14 March 1943, p. 3.

for their former homes. As the Polish Camp Leader at Tengeru wished each family a Merry Christmas and a speedy return to Poland on that first Christmas in 1942, he could not help but notice that 'the mood was one of sadness, everyone's thoughts taking them back to their suffering country.'⁶⁹¹ That same Christmas, a young girl wrote to her father stationed somewhere in the Middle East:

My dearest father, It seems that ages have passed since I last saw you, that we were in a different world, a pre-war world now permanently lost. Please don't think that I doubt we will return to our homeland. No, I believe we will return and that we will see each other again ... Night is falling. The first star has appeared ... Did I mention it is *wigilia*? I can hear the sound of Christmas carols coming first from one hut, then from another. In the dining room the tables are being set. We will place a chair for you at our table and there will be *oplatek* on your plate. Why are you so far away? Are you thinking of me? When will I see you again? ⁶⁹²

Teachers noticed that children often recalled their experiences in Siberia and wrote of the loss of home and family in their essays, regardless of the topic set. Asked to write about her First Holy Communion, Zofia in Grade III wrote:

I will remember this special day all my life. I offered my first confession and Holy Communion for the peaceful repose of the soul of my dearest father who died in the army. I prayed for him during the entire Mass and it seemed to me that he could see and hear me. I wore a white dress and a garland of flowers in my hair. ⁶⁹³

Danuta in Grade VI wrote:

I got up in the morning and put on the lovely clothes mama had prepared for me ... Holy Mass was beautiful. I prayed to Saint Teresa throughout the entire mass to petition Our Lord on my behalf, that my father would be found as soon as possible and that Poland would be liberated. ⁶⁹⁴

The Church played an influential role in the lives of the predominantly female and juvenile camp community. It was involved in every aspect of camp life and assumed particular responsibility for guarding the morality of the women and youth. Some priests are remembered as being strict disciplinarians, patrolling camp roads at night with their torches ablaze in search of 'sinners', keeping count of how many times who danced with whom at Catholic socials, and naming and shaming from the pulpit on Sundays those who had

⁶⁹¹ PISM, KOL 174/9A, History of the Tengeru Polish Settlement, Tanganyika, East Africa, p. 16.

⁶⁹² 'Korespondencja z Osiedli', *Polak w Afryce*, 14 March 1943, p. 3.

⁶⁹³ PISM, KOL 174/6B, Zofia Szmidt, First Holy Communion, Masindi.

⁶⁹⁴ PISM, KOL 174/6B, Danuta Bilar, Essay on First Holy Communion, Masindi.

supposedly engaged in immoral liaisons during the week.⁶⁹⁵ There was also a militarisation of religious observance. At Tengeru, children were required to wear school uniforms, gather at a rallying point and march, four by four to Sunday Mass. A separate Mass was held for adults.⁶⁹⁶ Going to church on Sunday was no longer a family occasion. Beyond attending Mass, the refugees were encouraged to become members of various lay societies and organisations, such as Catholic Action, the Solidarity of Mary, the Eucharistic Crusade, and the Living Rosary.⁶⁹⁷ Practicing the Catholic faith was an ordered and organised group activity often accompanied by the wearing of uniforms and marching in public processions.

The beginning of the Catholic Church's ministry to the refugees in Africa was not easy. The Roman Catholics were not integrated into local parishes but belonged to the diocese of General Józef Gawlina, Field Bishop of the Polish Armed Forces.⁶⁹⁸ His diocese was defined demographically rather than geographically and included the Polish army and military families. Finding priests for the refugee camps in Africa was difficult as the two hundred priests evacuated from the Soviet Union were mostly absorbed as chaplains into the military.⁶⁹⁹ No priests accompanied the first groups of refugees to Africa. At Kondoa, Italian missionaries, Passionist priests and nuns, adopted the refugees and Fr. Benedetto Barbaranelli became their pastor, impressing all with the speed with which he learned Polish.⁷⁰⁰ At Morogoro, the refugees were placed in the care of Dutch Missionaries of the Holy Ghost, whose Bishop's House and a community of brothers and priests was located in the Uluguru hills above the refugee camp.⁷⁰¹ At Tengeru, an English priest drove out to the camp from Arusha each Sunday to say Mass on a temporary altar set up in the shade of a huge tree.⁷⁰² Masindi in Uganda was fortunate to be situated not far from a mission of the Society of

⁶⁹⁵ Maria Kopij, 'Małpi Gaj w Tengeru' in Koło Sybiraków (WA) (eds.), *Wspomnienia 'Afrykanczyków' 40-Lecie Przyjazdu do Australii*, Perth, Western Australia, self-published, 2007, p. 13; Interview with Stanisław Patro; Interview with Elizabeth Patro.

⁶⁹⁶ Teresa Litynska (Gierke), 'Niedziela w Tengeru', in Koło Sybiraków (eds.), *Wspomnienia 'Afrykanczyków'*, p. 8.

⁶⁹⁷ Alvis, *White Eagle, Black Madonna*, pp. 201-205.

⁶⁹⁸ Józef Gawlina was born in 1892 in the Prussian part of partitioned Poland. He was conscripted into the Prussian Army during the First World War, saw active duty, was injured and taken prisoner. After the war he completed theological studies and was appointed to various pastoral and administrative roles within the Church. In 1933 he was appointed Field Bishop of the Polish Army by Piłsudski. Nicknamed the 'bishop-nomad' he went wherever the Army was - France, Egypt, USSR, Iran, Palestine, Italy, UK. He was awarded the Virtuti Militaris for his service at Monte Casino. His diocese was constantly being expanded and eventually included not only the Polish Army but the worldwide Polish diaspora. He died in 1964. See <https://archiwum-ordynariat.wp.mil.pl/pl/19.html>, (accessed 24 January 2018).

⁶⁹⁹ Piotr Majka, Ks., *General Józef Gawlina: Biskup Polowy*, Warszawa, Bellona, 2017, pp. 77, 109, 116, 119.

⁷⁰⁰ PISM, KOL 174/4, History of the Kondoa Settlement, pp. 16-22.

⁷⁰¹ Władysława Polakiewicz, 'Śladem naszej tułaczki rok 1942', *Biuletyn Koła Sybiraków w Zachodniej Australii*, Perth, Western Australia, 1994, pp. 26-28.

⁷⁰² PISM, KOL 174/9A, History of the Tengeru Polish Settlement, Tanganyika, East Africa, p. 8.

Missionaries of Africa, commonly known as the White Fathers because of the long white robes they wore. One of its priests was Polish and he provided much needed practical assistance in setting up the refugee camp as well as filling the role of camp priest.⁷⁰³

By the end of 1942, the first two Polish priests had arrived from the Middle East to work among ten thousand refugees living in six permanent and two transit camps spread across three East African territories. They based themselves at the two largest camps, Tengeru and Masindi, and filed an urgent request with Bishop Gawlina for at least ten more priests.⁷⁰⁴ The Catholic Bishop in Lusaka offered to provide Polish Jesuit missionaries for the refugee camps in Rhodesia. By the end of 1943, all of the camps, except Kondoia, were served by a Catholic priest. Some of the priests had shared the deportation experience with the refugees, others had served on the field of battle in Poland, France or North Africa, while those from the African missions and volunteers from North America had no direct experience of the war. This rather motley group was led by Fr Dzieduszycki who was appointed to oversee the Church's ministry to the refugees in East Africa, a position he held until May 1944, when he moved to Digglesford and assumed responsibility for the refugees in Central and Southern Africa.⁷⁰⁵ Fr Slapa, newly arrived from India, took over responsibility for East Africa.⁷⁰⁶

Some of the Polish clergy took a rather extreme stance in relation to other Christian religions. At Bwana Mkubwa, an Anglican bible was publicly burned when the young Catholic missionary priest there discovered that a local Englishman had given it to one of the refugees.⁷⁰⁷ At Masindi, teachers were publicly admonished from the pulpit for using a Baptist bible as a Polish language textbook and the camp's Cultural Director, who had supplied the bible, was dismissed.⁷⁰⁸ The Catholic clergy's attitude towards the YMCA was also largely negative. They endeavoured to turn the refugee youth against the Association in some camps and in others to take over its operations.⁷⁰⁹ Official guidelines were drawn up by the YMCA and Catholic Church leadership, calling for greater tolerance and prohibiting priests from belonging to or attacking the YMCA.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰³ Bugaj, *Dzieci Polskie*, p. 213.

⁷⁰⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943, p. 41. A third priest had arrived with them but for unknown reasons was suspended.

⁷⁰⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 30 September 1942 to 27 October 1942, p. 7.

⁷⁰⁶ Hejczyk, *Sybiracy pod Kilimandżaro*, p. 116.

⁷⁰⁷ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, Report on the official visit by Tadeusz Kopeć, Deputy Delegate MPiOS to Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 8 September 1943 to 9 October 1943, p. 171.

⁷⁰⁸ Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, p. 103; Bugaj, *Dzieci Polskie*, p. 212.

⁷⁰⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/104, Polish YMCA in Africa Report for the month of April 1944, p. 112.

⁷¹⁰ AAN, MPiOS 131/104, Polish YMCA in Africa Report for the month of August 1944, p. 207; Polish YMCA in Africa Report for the month of November 1944, pp. 224-225.

At some of the camps, missionary priests were determined to have churches built and were highly critical of camp authorities who had other priorities such as the building of housing and schools. The Catholic priest at Lusaka launched an unrelenting assault on the good character of Polish camp leaders who did not support his church-building plans, accusing them of immorality, bribery and corruption, and inciting camp residents to rebel against their leadership. When the priest joined forces with a group of 'trouble-making' men whom the Polish army had sent on extended leave to Africa, the situation became highly volatile and senior Polish and British authorities were called in to restore order. The priest was removed from his post on the recommendation of the Director of War Refugees and Camps in Northern Rhodesia.⁷¹¹ A similar situation developed at Abercorn with similar results.⁷¹² Despite these troubles, Polish missionaries continued to minister in the refugee camps for the duration of war.

There were also instances where the priests who were appointed to work in Africa proved to be highly unsuitable for the role. British authorities demanded the removal of the priest from the Ifunda camp following outright rebellion against the Polish camp leadership.⁷¹³ The British Camp Commandant responded to threats of violence by moving eight Polish members of the camp's administration to a hotel in the nearest town for their safety. He was then attacked from the pulpit, his authority ridiculed, his morality questioned.⁷¹⁴ The priest was recalled to the army after an investigation revealed that he had previously been assessed in Iran as unsuitable for working with civilians.⁷¹⁵ Another priest was removed from Kojia following formal complaints that he was having a demoralising effect on camp residents with his improper conduct towards women including an alleged attempted rape.⁷¹⁶ Despite the difficulties in finding Polish Catholic priests to minister to the Poles in the refugee camps, no consideration was given by Polish authorities to using priests of other nationalities.

⁷¹¹ AAN, MPiOS 131/104, Extract - On the matter of pastoral appointments in the settlements, Secretary General to ks. Bishop J. Gawlina. 29 January 1944, p. 21; AAN 131/106, Report on a tour of settlements in Northern and Southern Rhodesia from 8 September to 9 October 1943, p. 164.

⁷¹² AAN, MPiOS 131/104, Extract - On the matter of pastoral appointments in the settlements, Secretary General to ks. Bishop J. Gawlina. 29 January 1944, p. 21.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

⁷¹⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 August 1943 to 1 December 1943, pp. 194-195.

⁷¹⁵ AAN, MPiOS 131/110, MPiOS Nairobi to MPiOS London, 3 July 1944, pp. 97, 147.

⁷¹⁶ AAN, MPiOS 131/104/138, MPiOS Nairobi to the Minister for Polish Affairs in the East, Cairo, 31 May 1944.

As the camps grew in size and at the urging of the clergy, Polish camp authorities gradually turned their efforts to the construction of churches. The architecture of the church buildings varied from camp to camp. Their one common feature was their placement in a prominent position in the camp, most often in the middle or on elevated ground, thus reinforcing the centrality and importance of faith in the people's lives. About a year after the first refugees arrived at Masindi, construction of the church designed by Polish camp leader and renowned architect, Jerzy Skolimowski, was well underway. The design, size, and building material all indicate that it was intended to have a life well beyond that of the refugee camp. Its construction was in the hands of two lay brothers from the White Fathers Mission nearby and this cooperation with the mission may have influenced the building of a permanent church at the camp, one that the missionaries could use after the refugees had departed.⁷¹⁷ The words engraved above the main door. *Euntes Docete Omnes Gentes* (Go and teach all nations) foretell a missionary destiny for the church.

The Romanesque style church has an imposing presence not only because of its large size and elevated position, but because it was also markedly European in design and construction.⁷¹⁸ It was intended as a symbol of civilisation and permanence in an otherwise primitive landscape. The Church had many Polish features. It was named in honour of Our Lady Queen of Poland. High above the entrance was the Polish coat of arms, a crowned white eagle in a red field, and the words *Polonia Semper Fidelis* (Poland ever faithful) were engraved over the main doors. Efforts were also made to Polish the interior as indicated in an article that appeared in East Africa's fortnightly Polish newspaper.

The Church Building Committee in the settlement of Masindi in Uganda, wanting to give the church currently being built the most Polish character possible, appeals to all readers who have in their possession photographs, drawings or descriptions of the interior of Polish churches, to forward these materials to the Committee ... features such as the altar, pulpit, confessionals, candlesticks, lamps, Stations of the Cross, pictures of Saints and Patrons of Poland etc., in a Polish style.⁷¹⁹

The church was built as a lasting reminder to the colonial and African populations of Uganda of the sojourn of Polish wartime exiles in Africa. An inscription beside the front doors in Polish, English, Latin and Bunyoro states, 'This church has been built in honour of the

⁷¹⁷ Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry*, p. 203.

⁷¹⁸ The first Catholic churches built in Poland were built at the end of the Romanesque period in the twelfth century. They were characterized by thick load bearing walls, rounded arches and small windows just like the church at Masindi.

⁷¹⁹ 'Budowa Kościoła w Masindi', *Polak w Afryce*, 22 October 1944, p. 4.

Blessed Mary Ever Virgin, crowned Queen of Poland, by Poles in exile journeying towards their liberated homeland, 1943-1945.'

The church at Rusape (Southern Rhodesia) stands in complete contrast to the church at Masindi. When Fr. Siemaszko arrived at Rusape with the first group of refugees in February 1943, the congregation gathered to pray in the middle of the camp, where three simple shelters with thatched conical roofs and open walls provided protection from the sun and rain. Then a community centre was built, a shared space, where religious services, get-togethers, meetings and dances were held. However, neither of these structures was suitable to permanently house the Blessed Sacrament so Fr. Siemaszko came up with the idea of converting the existing African-style shelters into a church. He enclosed the central shelter with timber and left the shelters on either side open as a space for his parishioners. When termites devoured the wooden wall he replaced it with one made of brick. He described the church as 'poor but neat inside with a brick altar, a harmonium to one side, and brick benches around the wall for the elderly.' The church was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and it was anticipated that it would eventually belong to the Triashill Mission nearby.⁷²⁰ If the Masindi church was a grand public symbol of Catholicism and Polish patriotism, the Rusape church was an expression of poverty and humility and the adaptability of a community in exile.

Eastern Orthodox

Fr. Bożerianow, an Orthodox priest and deportee, arrived in Africa from Iran in mid 1943 and immediately set about organising an Orthodox parish there. His parishioners included the Orthodox community in the refugee camps in East and Central Africa, and the local Orthodox community. Nine hundred Orthodox Christians departed Iran for Africa in October 1942 and were scattered throughout the camps in Uganda and Tanganyika.⁷²¹ Fr. Bożerianow based himself at Tengeru, where his parishioners numbered 159 in March 1944 and over three hundred in October 1945.⁷²² Under his direction, an Orthodox church and community centre were built, two choirs were formed, a fortnightly newspaper, *Promyk Prawosławny*

⁷²⁰ PISM, KOL 174/8, Chronicle of the Polish Settlement at Rusape, Southern Rhodesia, pp. 14-15.

⁷²¹ Grzybowski, 'Białorusini wśród uchodźców polskich', p. 340.

⁷²² 'Min. Strasburger w Osiedlach Tanganyiki', *Polak w Afryce*, 22 Kwietnia 1944, p. 4; PISM KOL 174/9A, History of the Tengeru Polish Settlement, p. 8; Grzybowski, 'Białorusini wśród uchodźców polskich', p. 341 gives the figure of over 400 but does not cite a source or date.

(Orthodox Light), was published, and prayer books and catechisms were printed and distributed to the camps in Africa and to the Polish armed services.⁷²³

Though Catholic and Orthodox Polish citizens had undergone the same deportation experience at the hands of the Soviets, and men of both religions were fighting side by side in the Polish Army, antagonism towards Orthodox Christians by some in the Catholic community was a visible feature of camp life in Africa. The historic association of the Polish nation with Catholicism and its partitioning between its non-Catholic, eastern and western neighbours, had ingrained in the psyche of ethnic Poles a deep suspicion of all non-Catholics as enemies of the Polish state. Eastern Orthodoxy was associated with Russia and the Byelorussian Orthodox Christians in the refugee camps found themselves accused of being pro-Soviet. Orthodox Christians were insulted, called names, and told to 'go back to Russia where they belonged'. Some Polish teachers discriminated against Orthodox children in the classroom and aggression between Catholic and Orthodox youths led to incidents of violence and bloodshed. Anti-Orthodox sentiment peaked with the vandalising of the Orthodox church including irreparably damaging the altar.⁷²⁴ Polish consular officials in Nairobi blamed the Catholic clergy for fuelling antagonism towards Fr. Bożerianow and his parishioners.

Fr Bożerianow had been politically active in Iran, strongly supporting Byelorussian loyalty to the Polish Government in exile. However, he considered that he had been unjustly treated there by Polish military authorities, who highly suspicious of his activities, had placed him under surveillance, interrogated him, and even briefly detained him, leaving the priest disheartened and disillusioned with the Polish government and its commitment to the religious freedoms enshrined in the constitution.⁷²⁵ During a visit by Fr. Bożerianow to Koja in mid 1945, the hut in which he was staying was burnt to the ground though he fortunately escaped unharmed.⁷²⁶ When the British government withdrew its recognition of the Polish Government-in-exile in July 1945, Fr Bożerianow's publications and proclamations became increasingly anti-Catholic, anti the Second Polish Republic and anti the Polish Home Army.⁷²⁷ He planned to return to Poland, but following hospitalisation in Dar es Salaam for kidney disease, died in Tengeru in August 1946, aged thirty-five.⁷²⁸

⁷²³ Antoni Mironowicz, 'Przyczynę do dziejów Polskiego Prawosławnego Duszpasterstwa Cywilnego na emigracji w czasie II wojny światowej', *Studia Polonijne*, vol. 30, Lublin, 2009, pp. 210-211.

⁷²⁴ Grzybowski, 'Białorusini wśród uchodźców polskich', pp. 341-342.

⁷²⁵ Antoni Mironowicz, *Ks. Michał Bożerianow i jego odpowiedź 'ludziom małym'*, Białystok, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2015.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

⁷²⁷ PISM, KOL 174/9A, Orthodox Parish and Church in Tengeru, M. Bożerianow, p. 3.

⁷²⁸ Mironowicz, *Ks. Michał Bożerianow*, p. 69.

Jewish

Among the Polish citizens provided with wartime domicile in Africa were a number of Polish Jews. The majority of Jewish civilians evacuated from the Soviet Union were destined for Palestine, however, sixty families or around one hundred and fifty individuals went to Africa. There they settled in camps in Uganda and Tanganyika and some took up positions in the Polish administrative headquarters in Nairobi.⁷²⁹ The Polish government in London had instructed Polish authorities in the countries where its citizens were granted wartime domicile that 'Polish citizens regardless of their ethnicity or religion should be treated equally, i.e. have access to the same benefits and assistance'.⁷³⁰ The focus of Jewish religious observance was at Tengeru. A small building was provided for religious services until a synagogue, jointly funded by the MPiOS and the Nairobi Hebrew Congregation, was built in 1944. The Nairobi Congregation also provided a rabbi to visit the camp regularly and supplied *matzot* (unleavened flatbread) which the British transported to the camp free of charge. At its peak, the Jewish population at the Tengeru camp was fifty five with the number diminishing over time due to conscription of young men into the Polish armed forces, the movement of people between camps, marriages with local residents, and five deaths.⁷³¹

There were no recorded regular disturbances between Polish Catholics and Polish Jews at Tengeru such as those that characterised Catholic-Orthodox relations. There were however problematic relations between the Polish camp leadership and the World Jewish Congress (WJC) representative, a lawyer who did not acknowledge the authority of the Polish administration and repeatedly bypassed it to deal directly with the British on matters concerning the welfare of the Polish Jewish community.⁷³² One such matter was the request for a separate camp for Polish Jews. EARA considered this request and decided that 'until the percentage of Jews increased considerably there was no case for considering such accommodation'.⁷³³ Polish authorities were not in favour of a separate camp for Jewish Poles on the grounds that it was completely against their stated goal of the equal treatment of all its citizens.⁷³⁴

⁷²⁹ Julius Carlebach, *The Jews of Nairobi: 1903-1962*, Nairobi, The Nairobi Hebrew Congregation, 1962, p. 61.

⁷³⁰ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, p. 89.

⁷³¹ PISM, KOL 174/9A, History of the Tengeru Polish Settlement, Tanganyika, East Africa - Israeli Community in Tengeru, pp. 1-2; Hejczyk, *Sybiracy pod Kilimandżaro*, pp. 129, 159-163.

⁷³² AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report for the period from 1 January 1943 to 29 February 1943, p. 47-48.

⁷³³ TNA, FO 371/36685/W3059, Conference of Directors and Commissioners of Refugees in East Africa, Nairobi, 9 January 1943, p. 7.

⁷³⁴ AAN, MPiOS 131/106, MPiOS Nairobi Report 1 January to 29 February 1943, p. 48.

Virulent anti-Semitism surfaced at one of the camps as recorded by the Camp Commandant at Koja. Michał Makowski, was a Warsaw architect and one of two Polish military officers sent to advise colonial authorities on the establishment of the settlements for refugees in East Africa. He and Rennie Bere, the District Commissioner who was appointed Camp Commandant at Koja, formed a strong relationship based on their shared enthusiasm for mountaineering. Bere was unprepared for the day when

... a rumour spread through the settlement that Michael was a Jew ... two or three hundred extremely tough-looking peasant women armed with picks, shovels and axes, started to rampage around the settlement shouting 'Juda, Juda, Makowski Juda!' and demanding Michael's blood. It was an ugly scene and these harridans, who looked like extras from a film about the French Revolution, took some quietening down. Eventually I managed to assure them that Michael was not a Jew, but the mere suggestion of a Jew being set in authority over them was enough to set these women off.⁷³⁵

'Stories ... of gross discrimination by the Poles against the Jews, of hardship and suffering' were investigated in September 1943 by a representative of the Kenyan and South African Jewish communities who was granted permission by British authorities to conduct an extensive tour of the camps. He found that there was little basis for what he called 'rumours', and that 'most of these people were quite happy and contented to be where they were. Apart from religious requirements, they made few requests for help or assistance.' The greatest concern arising from the tour was the fate of six Jewish orphans who were found to be among the refugees. Following prolonged negotiations with the British authorities these children travelled to Palestine.⁷³⁶

Conclusion

In the history of Poland, national survival has depended as much on culture, language and tradition, as it has on armed struggle. During the Second World War, the exiled Polish Government aimed to create in the refugee camps in Africa, a space where national culture, language, traditions and history, elements they believed to be key in securing the life of the nation, could be nurtured and thrive. Cultural directors in the camps created community centres where people came to learn, formally and informally, about the world, their nation and themselves. Radios and newspapers were links to the outside world while libraries provided opportunities for personal growth through reading and discussion. Practical skills were

⁷³⁵ Bere, *A Cuckoo's Parting Cry*, p. 201.

⁷³⁶ Carlebach, *The Jews of Nairobi*, p. 61.

acquired and shared. The centres were also the place where theatrical, musical and dance groups rehearsed and performed in accordance with a calendar of national and religious holidays. Working with young people was greatly aided by the presence in the camps of the YMCA which with financial and material assistance from the American YMCA, provided training and employment to youth workers and supplied a veritable treasure of sporting and recreational equipment for the young and the young at heart to enjoy.

Education also played an important role in passing on to the large number of children in the camps, a love of homeland and an appreciation of Polish culture. These elements were woven into the curriculum with a great emphasis placed on the teaching of language, literature and history. The tardiness of the Polish Ministry of Education in establishing a presence in Africa, the ongoing difficulties with sourcing textbooks, and the reluctance of qualified Polish teachers to go to Africa, resulted in a very mixed educational experience for refugee children. Though the number of schools built and the number of children attending elementary schools was creditable, the quality of education provided is open to question. The other institution that nurtured Polishness in the children was Polish scouting. Highly patriotic in character, this organisation was extremely popular and thrived in the exotic locations of the refugee camps in Africa. Scouting also gave the children breathing space outside the camps, facilitated close encounters with nature in all its glory, and acted as a bridge for interacting with local British youth and the broader colonial society.

Polish citizens belonging to the ethnic and religious minorities in the camps formed small but active communities. Although they were supported by Polish Government policies of ethnic and religious tolerance, as in interwar Poland, they did not always enjoy harmonious relations with the wider camp community. The overwhelming majority of the refugees in Africa were Roman Catholic. They were not integrated into local Catholic parishes but, as military families, fell within the remit of the Poland's Chief Military Chaplain. The Church administration prioritised the provision of Polish priests which resulted in Polish missionaries already in Africa, military chaplains, and volunteers from America making up the bulk of priests working in the refugee camps. The emergence of serious issues relating to the inability or unwillingness of some of the clergy, particularly the missionaries, to accept the secular authorities in the camps, and the lack of training and preparedness of others, particularly military chaplains, for working as pastors with a civilian population, did not deter Polish Church authorities from continuing to engage Polish priests only to work with the refugees. As with education and health care, there was simply a shortage of qualified professional staff willing to come to Africa. Despite the difficulties in some of the camps with some of the

priests, the Catholic faith provided many of the refugees with solace and comfort and was an avenue of hope for the future. Polish culture was tightly interwoven with Catholic belief and practice, each serving to reinforce and enhance the other.

Chapter 6 Repatriation and Resettlement

The focus of this chapter is on the effect on the refugees in Africa of the particular circumstances in which Poland found itself at the end of the war, militarily liberated by the Red Army and politically assigned to the Soviet sphere of influence. The much longed for return to Poland took on a new meaning when post war Poland was assigned to the Soviet sphere of influence. This chapter will examine the absorption of the refugees into the new and evolving international system of refugee care and control. It looks at British and colonial governments' post war attitudes and practices in relation to the refugees, UNRRA and the IRO's discharge of their responsibilities towards the refugees, and the refugees' agency in determining where they would next be placed.

World War II – 1944 onwards

By 1944, daily life in the refugee camps in Africa had assumed a regular rhythm and predictable routine. For the menfolk of the Polish families in Africa who had joined Anders' army, 1944 was the year they first saw active duty. Following evacuation from the Soviet Union in 1942, they had undergone military training in the Middle East and transferred to Italy in December 1943 to join the Allies in the Italian Campaign. Their first major battle was fought in May 1944 at Monte Cassino. It was also their bloodiest battle with victory achieved at a cost of 860 dead and 2,800 wounded.⁷³⁷ For each fallen soldier, a letter was dispatched by Polish Military Command to a wife or mother, somewhere in Africa. 'It is with deep regret that we write to inform you ...' The arrival of these dreaded letters at the refugee camps added a new dimension to the experience of war for these refugee families: the death of loved ones on the battlefield. For the next twelve months the letters continued to arrive as the Allies fought their way northward culminating in the defeat of the German forces at Bologna and German surrender in May 1945.

Among the Poles in Africa, 1944 was a year of great expectations. On receiving news of the June Allied invasion of Western Europe, the usually mild-mannered Polish Consul in Lusaka distributed hugs and kisses to his office staff exclaiming, 'The Americans have landed in France. The Nazis are retreating. We will soon be returning to Poland!' He drove at speed to the Lusaka refugee camp where it seemed the entire population was gathered at the

⁷³⁷ Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed*, pp. 466-475.

entrance gates, cheering and shouting 'We're going home! We're going back to Poland!' In his impromptu address to the refugees, the Consul spoke of the plans that would soon be made for repatriation and called on everyone to prepare to return to Poland, to play their part in its reconstruction.⁷³⁸

The year 1944 was also a year of bitter disappointments. Though victories against Nazi Germany on the Western Front were celebrated in the camps, and there was pride at the involvement of the Polish armed forces on the battlefields of Italy, France, Belgium and Holland, there was also anxiety over the 'liberation' of Poland by the Soviets. The Red Army crossed the eastern border of pre-war Poland in January 1944 and gradually advanced westward. By July 1944 the Soviets had installed a Polish Committee of National Liberation in Lublin (known as the Lublin Committee), a counterpoint to the Polish Government-in-exile. In August, Soviet forces had advanced as far as Warsaw, where they paused on the eastern bank of the River Vistula and observed the defeat of the Polish Home Army and the destruction of the Polish capital city during the failed Warsaw Uprising.⁷³⁹ The Red Army's failure to militarily support the Warsaw Uprising, highlighted the question of Soviet intentions with regard to the restoration of Poland's sovereignty and independence.

During 1944, Britain began negotiations for handing over responsibility for the Polish refugees in Africa to UNRRA. This international agency had been created in November 1943 as the Allies, increasingly confident of victory over Germany following military successes in North Africa and the Soviet Union, began planning for the post war transition to peace. Forty-four nations, including the Soviet Union, were signatories to an Agreement which pledged that

... immediately upon the liberation of any area by the armed forces of the United Nations or as a consequence of retreat of the enemy, the population thereof shall receive aid and relief from their sufferings, food, clothing and shelter, aid in the prevention of pestilence and in the recovery of the health of the people, and that preparation and arrangements shall be made for the return of prisoners and exiles to their homes.⁷⁴⁰

Britain sought to hand over the cost of financing the Polish refugees in the Middle East, India and Africa to UNRRA, costs that were an estimated £600,000 per annum in the East African

⁷³⁸ Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, pp. 164-166.

⁷³⁹ For a detailed account of the Warsaw Uprising see Norman Davies, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw*, New York, Penguin Books, 2003.

⁷⁴⁰ Preamble to the Agreement for United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 9 November 1943, <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1943/431109a.html>, (accessed 29 August 2018).

territories alone.⁷⁴¹ Theoretically this expense was being borne by the Polish Government-in-exile to whom the British Treasury provided funds via lines of credit. However, the course of military and political events in Eastern Europe made it increasingly unlikely that the Polish Government-in-exile would return to Poland and the British Treasury admitted, 'We know that it is unlikely that we shall ever get our money back.'⁷⁴²

Progress on an agreement with UNRRA was slow. The British Government worked to convince the Polish Government-in-exile of the benefits of UNRRA's involvement, namely, that the Polish Government too would be relieved of the expense of refugee maintenance, and the refugees would be assured of assistance with repatriation.⁷⁴³ The Polish Government-in-exile uncertain of its own future and that of the Polish state, procrastinated on the matter of transferring responsibility for the refugees from British to international hands. UNRRA was also unprepared for the task of providing care and maintenance for twenty thousand refugees on the African continent for an indefinite period of time, and for transporting them thousands of miles to their repatriation destination, Poland. They feared that the costs involved would be astronomical.⁷⁴⁴ Before making any commitments, they sent a specialist in displaced persons affairs from the U.S. to Africa to better assess the nature and scale of the situation.

The visit of S. K. Jacobs to Africa was an unmitigated disaster. He arrived at Tengeru in January 1945, virtually unannounced, with the intention of carrying out the registration of the refugees. The general mood in the camp was one of uncertainty about the future and fear of forced movement. Pre-war Eastern Poland, the lands from which the majority of refugees had been deported, was firmly under Soviet control, and the Lublin Committee had been recognised by the Soviet Union as the legitimate provisional government of Poland. The refugees were unsure and suspicious of UNRRA's goals and of anyone from an organisation of which the USSR was a member. Jacobs, oblivious to the mood in the camp, met with Polish camp leaders and then with the camp's teachers to ask for assistance in conducting the registration the following morning.⁷⁴⁵

There was great disquiet in the camp that night. 'We know all about these sudden registrations', the refugees said, recalling undergoing a similar process prior to their deportation to the Soviet Union. 'We don't want to go back to a Poland ruled by the Lublin government', they exclaimed remembering their life under communist rule before and during

⁷⁴¹ TNA, CO 986/167/1/34, Memorandum written by A. W. G. Randall, FO, London, 25 April 1944.

⁷⁴² TNA, FO 371/42866/WR1730, Treasury to FO, London, 10 November 1944.

⁷⁴³ TNA, FO 371/42865/WR1183, British Delegation in Montreal to FO, London, 23 September 1944.

⁷⁴⁴ TNA, CO 968/167/1/34, Distributed at Foreign Office Meeting, 25 April 1944.

⁷⁴⁵ PISM, KOL 174/9A, A History of the Tengeru Polish Settlement, Tanganyika, East Africa, p. 37.

their deportation. Many had received letters from their menfolk in the army warning them against providing information that might lead to another involuntary movement. The following morning, the camp's residents, including teachers, refused to take part in the UNRRA registration. Not one refugee was registered.⁷⁴⁶ The minds of the refugees were filled with unanswered questions. Who wanted this information and why? The forms asked them to name their 'permanent place of abode' but was it safe to name a place that had been annexed by the Soviet Union? Would they be forced to return there even if it was not in Poland? Fear of the Soviet Union based on bitter personal experience, uncertainty over Poland's political future, and distrust of UNRRA, tainted by its association with the Soviet Union and its sole goal of repatriation, led to strong resistance to registration.⁷⁴⁷

Jacobs left the camp annoyed at having wasted his time and convinced that the majority of the refugees were:

... ignorant and illiterate peasants, with no idea what was in store for them, having been bombarded by anti-Soviet and anti-UNRRA propaganda, and isolated as they were from the outside world.⁷⁴⁸

He visited other camps, where his attempts at registration met with varying degrees of success. At Masindi, it was not until the Polish Consul for Uganda and the camp's Catholic priest spoke out in support of UNRRA that the refugees agreed to be registered, though even then forms were only partially completed and crucial questions were left unanswered. None of the forms were signed.⁷⁴⁹ At Morogoro, the refugees told Jacobs that they would register with his organisation 'when Poland was free and the Red Army and Soviet secret police had departed'.⁷⁵⁰ Despite radio broadcasts from Polish headquarters in Nairobi and articles in Polish newspapers on the welfare work of UNRRA, its role in reuniting families, and in assisting voluntary repatriation, UNRRA was unable to gain the trust of most of the refugees.⁷⁵¹

In March 1945, the Northern Rhodesian Polish Consul's vehicle once again made its way towards the Lusaka refugee camp following the arrival of momentous news. This time, the Consul travelled slowly, deep in thought as he prepared to speak to the Polish refugees. It had been decided by the 'Big Three' at Yalta that Poland's pre-war borders would not be

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 38-41.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 42-48.

⁷⁴⁸ Taylor, *Polish Orphans of Tengeru*, p 78.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

⁷⁵⁰ PISM, KOL 174/7, A History of the Morogoro Settlement, p. 6.

⁷⁵¹ 'Co to jest UNRRA?' *Polak w Afryce*, 25 January 1945, p. 2; 'Komunikat Kons. Gen. w Nairobi', *Polak w Afryce*, 24 April 1945, p. 2.

restored and that the territory the Soviet Union had invaded in 1939 and subsequently annexed, would remain part of the Soviet Union. Eastern Poland, the *kresy* which the majority of the Poles in Africa called home, would not be part of Poland after the war.⁷⁵² The lament that went up in the camp as the Consul arrived echoed the despair of the *kresowiaki* (people of the borderlands), 'Dear God! Where will we go now?' They fell to their knees, as if begging the Consul to somehow rescue them. An elderly forester, grey-haired and bearded, cried, 'We've had enough of being shoved about from place to place! We're not asking for any favours! We simply want to go back to where we came from, where we belong, to our homes!' The Consul called for calm and urged the refugees to trust in the good intentions of the peace-makers and to patiently await further developments. Nothing could lift the mood of despair and disillusionment that had settled over the camp and an uneasy quiet accompanied him on the drive back to Lusaka.⁷⁵³

British post war responsibility for camps in Africa

Given the refugees' distrust of UNRRA and their fear of forced removal to the Soviet Union or a Soviet-controlled Poland, it is not surprising that the war in Europe ended with the responsibility for the Polish refugees in Africa still firmly in the hands of the British Government. Teresa recalls:

There was little joy in our camp when the war ended ... We already knew that the part of Poland from which we came would no longer belong to Poland. In other words, that we had nowhere to return to. The hope of returning home vanished and sorrow and bitterness remained.⁷⁵⁴

Worse was yet to come. On 5 July 1945 Britain formally recognized the Soviet sponsored Lublin Committee as the legitimate provisional government of Poland, pending the holding of free and unfettered elections. The Polish Government-in-exile was officially defunct.⁷⁵⁵ As we have seen, this government had been a lifeline for the refugees in Africa. Where the British had provided shelter, food and medical care, Polish authorities had tried to provide a place where Polish culture, language, religion, and education were promoted and contributed

⁷⁵² The Yalta Conference, February 1945, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/yalta.asp>, (accessed 7 July 2018); Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed*, pp. 499-508.

⁷⁵³ Korabiewicz, *Gdzie słoń*, pp. 167-168.

⁷⁵⁴ Rogińska-Słomińska, 'Koja: Polskie Osiedle nad Jeziozem Wiktorii', p. 147.

⁷⁵⁵ The Polish Government-in-exile continued to regard itself as the legitimate government of Poland, its authority drawn from Article 24 of the Constitution of the pre-war Second Polish Republic. It continued to exist as a government in exile until 1991 when the office of the President of the Second Republic was handed over to the first democratically elected President of the Third Polish Republic, Lech Wałęsa.

to the resetting of dislocated lives. The Polish Government-in-exile had offered the refugees a degree of security and surety, a connection between the past and the future. It had provided leadership and structure to their lives in exile. In contrast, the Polish (Warsaw) Government because of its close political association with the Soviet Union, the state that had forcibly dispossessed and removed them from their homeland, was distrusted and feared.

The British Government set up an Interim Treasury Committee on Polish Affairs (ITC) to 'supervise the orderly dismantling of the Polish machinery of state and the liquidation of its assets'.⁷⁵⁶ In order to best wind-down the activities of the Polish Government-in-exile, including the maintenance of Polish refugees scattered across the British Empire, the British engaged the exiled Polish Government's ambassador in London to lead a team of former Polish government officials to work at the ITC. Though unintended by the British, the presence within the ITC of former Polish Government-in-exile representatives, served to prolong its influence in British political circles and to maintain its contact with Polish refugees worldwide. Officially, Polish consulates and departmental offices, such as that of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education, and the Treasury, ceased to operate in Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam, Lusaka, Salisbury, Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town. A select few former consuls and ministerial representatives were re-badged as Polish Advisers and Polish Liaison Officers to work for EARA and the Directors of Refugees in each of the territories.⁷⁵⁷

The British took sole control of the Polish refugee camps in Africa on 1 August 1945.⁷⁵⁸ Colonial authorities continued to administer the camps so as to cause minimal disruption to internal operations. The shift from joint British-Polish responsibility to sole British responsibility was accompanied by a shift in priorities. The Polish Government-in-exile had spared little expense in 'caring' for the refugees in Africa. It had financed education, and the practice of religious and cultural life. The British government on the other hand, increasingly aware that there was little chance of recovering any of the £26 million it had provided via the civilian line of credit to the Polish government in exile, was determined that post-war expenditure on administering and maintaining the Polish refugees in Africa would

⁷⁵⁶ Norman Davies, Jan Ciechanowski and Keith Sword, *The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain: 1939-1950*, London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1989, p. 222.

⁷⁵⁷ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, p. 236.

⁷⁵⁸ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, Director Repatriation Division to Chief of Middle East Office, Cairo, 3 December 1945.

be limited.⁷⁵⁹ To this end they introduced a range of cost-saving measures and within six months expenditure had been 'greatly reduced'.⁷⁶⁰

One of the key changes introduced was in employment policy. Polish authorities had employed as many refugees as possible in the camps in order to nurture their sense of purpose and self-worth and to provide them with an opportunity to improve their standard of living. British authorities, on the other hand, cut employment levels and conditions in order to reduce costs. Many Polish camp administrative staff lost their jobs as did tradespeople (blacksmiths and metalworkers, carpenters and joiners, tailors and shoemakers) employed in camp workshops which were heavily subsidised and not operating at a profit.⁷⁶¹ Other workers experienced changes to their conditions of employment. In the Tanganyika camps, maternity allowances were withdrawn as, it was argued, this benefit was not available to non-Polish residents of the territory.⁷⁶² New contracts were drawn up for teachers with no sick leave and holiday entitlements reduced to one month per annum.⁷⁶³

Fortunately for the refugees, the downturn in employment levels inside the camps was balanced to some extent by an increase in external employment opportunities. The British realised that they could make even further savings by allowing refugees to work and live outside the camps. Within six months of the move to sole British control there were almost one thousand Polish refugees employed externally in a variety of roles, predominantly clerical and domestic.⁷⁶⁴ Kazik finished mechanical school at Tengeru at age eighteen and found it relatively easy to find work. He was a water-pump station attendant in Kenya, a mechanic at a garage near Tengeru, then worked in a timber mill also near the camp. He left the mill when he realised that 'they didn't want a worker, they wanted someone who would supply them with females' and found work as a tractor driver on a farm, and then as a farm supervisor.⁷⁶⁵

To make further savings, the British drastically cut both the building budget and the number of African labourers employed in the camps. At Tengeru, the number dropped from six hundred to two hundred and fifty. Colonial authorities also began the process of camp consolidation and closure. The first camp to close was Morogoro as it was needed for the

⁷⁵⁹ Keith Sword, 'The Resettlement of Poles in Britain, 1945-50, Appendix 2: Polish debts and the Anglo-Polish financial agreement', in Davies et al (eds.), *The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain*, p. 460.

⁷⁶⁰ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, Emerson Holcomb, Director, Repatriation Division to Brigadier T. T. Waddington, Chief of Middle East Office, Report and Recommendations on Trip to East Africa, 3 December 1945, p 2.

⁷⁶¹ PISM, KOL 174/11, Chronicle of the Lives of Polish Refugees in Northern Rhodesia, p. 51.

⁷⁶² PISM, KOL 174/9A, A History of the Tengeru Polish Settlement, Tanganyika, East Africa, p. 71.

⁷⁶³ PISM, KOL 174/2, The Development of Schooling in Ifunda, p. 67.

⁷⁶⁴ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, Emerson Holcomb, Director Repatriation Division to Brigadier T. T. Waddington, Chief of Middle East Office, Report and Recommendations on Trip to East Africa, 3 December 1945, p. 5.

⁷⁶⁵ Albrook and Cattalini, *The General Langfitt Story*, p. 93.

housing and training of demobilised African soldiers. The Poles had no choice but to accept that their 'little Poland' would no longer exist. A final concert was held, the precious carved image of Our Lady of Ostrobrama from the camp's chapel was gifted to Polish Mother Amabilis, at the nearby Ngologe Mission, and a monument was built at the Morogoro town cemetery in memory of the Polish refugees who were buried there. Weekly transports relocated the elderly and sick to Kondoa and others climbed aboard trucks bound for Kidugala and Ifunda. The last group of forty refugees celebrated Christmas 1945 and vacated the camp on 2 January 1946.⁷⁶⁶ In Southern Rhodesia, funding was withdrawn from the 2,500-acre farm at the Secondary Girls' Boarding School, Digglefold and the land was reassigned to the neighbouring Government Agricultural Research Station.⁷⁶⁷

The end of the war did not signal the swift return of the Polish refugees from Africa to their homeland. More than six months after the war ended, over eighteen thousand remained in camps, scattered across Africa, and there was little indication that they would be leaving soon. Their demographic composition, number and distribution is shown in the following table.

⁷⁶⁶ PISM, KOL 174/7, A History of the Morogoro Settlement, p. 8.

⁷⁶⁷ PISM, KOL 174/1, General location and detailed plan of Digglefold, p. 17; Annual Report of Polish Secondary School at Digglefold, Southern Rhodesia, 1946, p. 80.

Table 6.1 Number and Distribution of Polish Refugees in African Camps, Dec 1945⁷⁶⁸

Territory	Camp	Men	Women	Under 16 Years	Camp Total	Territorial Total
Uganda	Masindi	372	1691	1289	3352	6056
	Koja	397	1361	946	2704	
Tanganyika	Tengeru	497	2082	1466	4045	6677
	Kidugala	94	512	353	959	
	Ifunda	105	547	277	929	
	Kondoa	39	212	164	415	
	Morogoro	60	186	71	319	
	Kigoma	-	3	-	3	
	Dar es salaam	4	3	-	7	
N. Rhodesia	Abercorn	93	286	209	588	3403
	Bwana Mkubwa	265	655	507	1427	
	Lusaka	185	656	382	1223	
	Fort Jameson	37	103	25	165	
S. Rhodesia	Rusape	85	392	292	769	1509
	Marandellas	84	339	215	638	
	Diggelfold	11	84	7	102	
Kenya	Makindu	43	65	23	131	549
	Rongai	13	96	309	418	
Total*		2384	9275	6535	18194	18194

*Polish refugees not included in the above table are five hundred at Oudtshoorn, South Africa, and over seven hundred who were transferred from India to Africa in 1948.

The Defence (War Evacuees) Regulations 1943 set out the legal framework under which the Polish refugees were granted temporary abode in East and Central Africa. These Regulations expired in February 1946 and new legislation was required to cover the ongoing care and maintenance of the refugees, as well as their removal. To this end the War Refugees (Control

⁷⁶⁸ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, Emerson Holcomb, Director, Repatriation Division to Brigadier T. T. Waddington, Chief of Middle East Office, Report and Recommendations on Trip to East Africa, 3 December 1945, p. 4.

and Expulsion) Ordinance was passed in July 1946. This legislation largely mirrored the 1943 regulations with respect to the powers it gave colonial authorities and the administrative structure it established for the care and maintenance of the refugees. However, it included an additional clause which spoke to the concern of colonial authorities that not all refugees would 'voluntarily cooperate in the arrangements for their departure'.⁷⁶⁹ Clause 10 outlined the conditions under which refugees could be arrested and deported from the East African territories. It stated:

Where any war refugee has received notice from the Director or the Camp Commandant of the camp in which he is residing that arrangements have been or are being, made for his removal from the Colony at a time and by a vessel (or other means of conveyance) specified in such notice and thereafter such war refugee refuses or neglects to leave the Colony at the time and in the manner specified in such notice, it shall be lawful for the Governor, by order under his hand, to direct that such war refugee shall be arrested and deported from the Colony in such manner as the Governor may direct.⁷⁷⁰

Whereas colonial authorities believed that at least eighty per cent of the refugees would willingly return to Poland given the opportunity, they made provisions for the expulsion of those who refused or neglected to leave the Colony after being given due notice.⁷⁷¹ The legislation sent a clear signal to the British Government that the non-fulfilment of the British guarantee to remove all refugees would not be tolerated by colonial governments. The British Government had meanwhile successfully negotiated for UNRRA to assume responsibility for the refugees and, it was hoped, to arrange for their repatriation as soon as practicable.

The British had sole responsibility for the Polish refugee camps in Africa from 1 August 1945 until 31 July 1946, during which time the pervading attitude among the refugees was to 'wait and see'. Information came to them from a range of sources. Broadcasts of Polish radio programmes from Nairobi continued until 1947 funded indirectly by the ITC and providing a voice for the Polish Government-in-exile. The weekly newspaper *Polak w Afryce* which had been funded by the MPiOS ceased publication in July 1945 but was quickly replaced by *Głos Polski* funded by the London-based, Polish Press Fund. Modelled on *Polak w Afryce*, this newspaper was published until 1948. The Catholic Church also published a fortnightly newspaper, *Nasz Przyjaciel*, until 1947, and numerous other notices and

⁷⁶⁹ TNA, CO 968/168, Legal Report, War Refugees (Control and Expulsion) Ordinance 1946.

⁷⁷⁰ TNA, CO 968/168, War Refugees (Control and Expulsion) Ordinance 1946, Article 10 (1).

⁷⁷¹ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, Emerson Holcomb, Director, Repatriation Division to Brigadier T. T. Waddington, Chief of Middle East Office, Report and Recommendations on Trip to East Africa, 3 December 1945, p. 4.

communiqués were issued from Nairobi directly targeting the Polish refugee population.⁷⁷² The postal service managed by the Red Cross continued to deliver personal news from Poland and the Polish army. As one month rolled into the next, the refugees collected snippets of information, like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle, which they assembled into a picture of their future. Finding lost family members was a key piece of the puzzle.

As early as September 1944, the Polish Provisional Government had signed repatriation treaties with the Soviet Republics of Lithuania, Byelorussia and Ukraine that saw approximately 1,200,000 ethnic Poles and 55,000 Polish Jews repatriated between 1944 and 1948.⁷⁷³ A further treaty was signed in July 1945 under which approximately 140,000 ethnic Poles and 120,000 Jews were repatriated to Poland from other parts of the Soviet Union including Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.⁷⁷⁴ Over ninety per cent of the repatriations from the east took place in 1945 and 1946 during which time the refugees in Africa were waiting to hear if among this heaving mass of over one and a half million people moving into Poland from the east, there were members of their families. Family might also be traced in Germany where there were eight million displaced persons immediately after the war. Over a million were still in DP camps at the end of 1945, nearly half of whom were Poles.⁷⁷⁵ For many Polish refugees in Africa, deciding where the next and final leg of their journey would take them was often contingent upon finding family.

The future of the Polish armed forces also took time to resolve. In May 1945 the combined Polish armed forces (army, air force and navy) numbered almost two hundred thousand, in the UK, France, Germany, Italy and the Middle East.⁷⁷⁶ The Polish Second Corps, largely made up of the menfolk of the Polish families in Africa, remained in Italy. Following British withdrawal of recognition of the Polish Government-in-exile, lengthy and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations took place for the transfer of Polish armed forces in the West to the Polish (Warsaw) Government. Instead, the British War Office assumed direct responsibility for the Polish armed forces anticipating that the majority of its members would lodge individual applications for repatriation, as required by the Warsaw authorities, and voluntarily return to Poland.

⁷⁷² Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy*, pp. 171-172.

⁷⁷³ Jan Czerniakiewicz, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR 1944-1948*, Warszawa, PWN, 1987, p. 54. The text of the treaties is available in both Polish and Russian at Rzeczpospolita Polska, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Internetowa baza traktatowa, <https://traktaty.msz.gov.pl/>, (accessed 12 May 2015).

⁷⁷⁴ Robert Wyszynski, 'Przesiedlenia ludności polskiej z ZSRR w latach 1920-1960', *Studia BAS*, no. 2 (34), 2013, p. 121.

⁷⁷⁵ Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, p. 3; Cohen, *In War's Wake*, p. 5.

⁷⁷⁶ Kochanski, *The Eagle Unbowed*, pp. 553-554. By July 1945 the number had risen to 228,000 due to the enlistment of ex-Wermacht Poles and liberated prisoners of war.

In a statement made in the House of Commons by Prime Minister Churchill on 27 February 1945, following a meeting with Anders in which the Prime Minister had been reminded of the Polish sense of betrayal and abandonment by the Allies at Yalta, Churchill stated:

His Majesty's Government will never forget the debt they owe to the Polish troops who have served them so valiantly, and for all those who have fought under our command I earnestly hope that it may be possible to offer the citizenship and freedom of the British Empire, if they so desire. ...we should think it an honour to have such faithful and valiant warriors dwelling among us as if they were men of our own blood.⁷⁷⁷

These words planted the seed for the creation of the Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC), a special non-combatant unit of the British Armed Forces. Demobilisation from the Polish Armed Forces was accompanied by the opportunity for relocation to the UK where former soldiers could join the PRC for up to two years, and receive assistance to either settle there permanently, repatriate to Poland or migrate overseas. Over a period of six months beginning in May 1946, 137,000 soldiers from the Polish Second Corps were transferred from Italy to the UK, followed by Polish troops from Germany and the Middle East.⁷⁷⁸ Although almost half of the members of the Polish Armed Forces in the West, 105,000 soldiers, returned to Poland, very few of the men who had been forcibly removed from Eastern Poland to the Soviet Union and had enlisted there in Anders Army did so.⁷⁷⁹ Of these men, only 310 chose repatriation.⁷⁸⁰ The remainder stayed in the West awaiting the results of the 'free and unfettered elections' to be held in Poland on an unspecified date. Their only comfort was the fact that under the family reunification provisions of the Polish Resettlement Bill, families of members of the PRC were eligible to join them in the UK.

The women and children in Africa were strongly motivated in their decision-making by the desire to be reunited with family. If their menfolk were traced in Poland then most often, they too returned to Poland. If their fathers and husbands had been demobilised to the UK, then they too chose to go to the UK. Family reunion motivated the destination choice of many refugees leaving Africa. Another factor influencing the decision-making was the

⁷⁷⁷ Sword, 'The Resettlement of Poles in Britain, 1945-50', in Davies et al., *The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain*, p. 232.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 249; PISM, A.44.310/3, Polish Emigration Bureau, Rome, p. 73. This document gives the number of soldiers of the Polish Second Corps transferred to the UK as 93,000. A further 15,000 went from Italy to Poland, 5,000 migrated from Italy elsewhere and 3,800 remained in Italy to migrate overseas over the next few years. Statistics relate to the end of 1946.

⁷⁷⁹ Davies, 'The Growth of the Polish Community in Britain, 1939-1950', in Davies et al., *The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain*, p. 79.

⁷⁸⁰ Anders, *An Army in Exile*, p. 287.

refugees' self-identification as 'refugees from communism'.⁷⁸¹ In Africa, as in the DP camps in Germany, refugees found themselves subject to politically motivated pro and anti repatriation propaganda. The Polish (Warsaw) Government publicly urged the refugees in Poland to return to Poland but had little direct contact with them. There was no Polish consulate in Nairobi and it would appear that few if any refugees had communist leanings or were inclined to be formally associated with the Polish post-war pro-Soviet regime. The Polish (Warsaw) Government, none too happy that the British had maintained control of the Polish armed forces and were assisting soldiers choosing not to return to Poland to settle elsewhere, accused them of forcibly preventing their return. As tensions grew between the Polish (Warsaw) Government and the British government, the London newspaper, *Dziennik Polski* (Polish Daily) published an article in which it was reported:

The Warsaw Radio announced that 20,000 Polish refugees have been sequestered in concentration camps in Africa ... They are cut off from the rest of the world, and are not allowed to listen to the wireless, and those who tried to contact the Warsaw government have been severely punished. Conditions in these camps are frightful. The refugees live in wooden huts and do not receive any bread.⁷⁸²

The influence of the Polish (Warsaw) Government on the refugees was limited. Not so the Polish Government-in-exile which had direct links to the camps through their former representatives now employed by the colonial authorities. The Catholic Church was also a powerful anti-communist voice and the Polish clergy in Africa were uncompromising in their opposition to repatriation.

Patriotic fervour was so high in some camps that hostile confrontations broke out between proponents and opponents of repatriation. At Marandellas, where there was a strong anti-return movement led by former Polish Government-in-exile representatives, the Camp Commandant felt compelled to issue a formal order banning demonstrations and defending democratic freedoms.

Here, there is democracy and each man and woman has a right to his or her political opinions, be it Communism, conservatism or any other. All those

⁷⁸¹ There are certain parallels between motivations for non-return to Poland in camps in Africa and Germany. The main difference being that the refugees in Africa had directly experienced Soviet Communism whereas the Poles in Germany had not. For more on political explanations for non-repatriation see Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, pp. 81-88.

⁷⁸² TNA, FO 371 57780/1236, Governor of Uganda to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 April 1946.

wishing to return to Poland and those who do not want to return have an equal right to expressing their will, without anyone interfering.⁷⁸³

Breaching this order could lead to expulsion from the settlement.

The refugees also joined various political organisations that sprang up in the camps. The Union of North Eastern Polish Lands and the Union of South Eastern Polish Lands with headquarters in London established branches in the major camps as early as March 1945 and boasted a robust membership.⁷⁸⁴ The Union of Poles in Africa was formed in Livingstone with the backing of the Union of Poles Abroad. The strongest organisation was the Polish Civic Committee based in Nairobi whose membership read like a who's who of the former Polish government and diplomatic corps in Africa. In May 1946, this Committee, with the support of the majority of Polish camp authorities, issued the East Africa Governor's Conference with a memorandum which stated:

the majority of Polish refugees in Africa do not recognise the so called Provisional Government in Warsaw and considers the members of that organisation to be Russian agents ... The majority of Polish refugees will not return to Poland under the current circumstances.⁷⁸⁵

It was clear that the belief of the colonial authorities that eighty per cent of the refugees would choose to voluntarily return to Poland was erroneous.

UNRRA in Africa

On 1 August 1946, responsibility for the Polish refugees in Africa, as well as those in the Middle East and India, passed to UNRRA.⁷⁸⁶ In order to cause minimum disruption to camp life, it was agreed that UNRRA's responsibility would be primarily financial and that the day to day administration of the camps would remain in the hands of the colonial authorities, albeit under the general supervision and direction of UNRRA representatives. Colonial governments would recover the cost of providing for the care and maintenance of the refugees from HMG who would in turn receive the sum of £4.15.0 per refugee per month from

⁷⁸³ Henryk Zins, *Poles in Zambezi*, Harare, Kloyes Enterprises Zimbabwe, 2007, pp. 88-9.

⁷⁸⁴ PISM, KOL 174/6A, Resolution of the Union of North Eastern Polish Lands at Masindi, 17 September 1946.

⁷⁸⁵ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, p. 237.

⁷⁸⁶ TNA, CO 968/167, Director General UNRRA, Geneva to the Under Secretary of State, FO, London, 7 August 1946.

UNRRA. The organisation would also fund the repatriation of those refugees who elected to return to Poland. UNRRA's operations were due to close on 31 December 1946.⁷⁸⁷

Time was of the essence if the common repatriation goal of the British Government and UNRRA was to be achieved. The strength of support for the Polish Government-in-exile and the presence in the camps of organised and active anti-repatriation organisations made this goal a difficult task. In order for the pro-repatriation case to be put to the refugees, UNRRA and the British government undertook to allow representatives of the Polish (Warsaw) Government into the African territories. In the autumn of 1946, the Polish (Warsaw) Government sent one of its repatriation officers from its Middle East headquarters in Cairo to set up an office in Nairobi. Anticipating the difficulty of the task ahead, Tadeusz Jacobson, adopted a diplomatic and cautious approach. In Nairobi, he met with Polish liaison officers working for EARA and the Directors of Refugees, and with the Catholic Church hierarchy responsible for the priests in the refugee camps. He hoped to at least secure their neutrality, if not their support. He sent an open letter to the camps providing the refugees with information on the principles and goals of the Polish government's repatriation programme, painting a realistic yet promising picture of their future lives in Poland.⁷⁸⁸

Despite his best efforts, his camp visits were characterised by vocal and at times hostile resistance. At a meeting in Tengeru, the repatriation officer's information session with the refugees gathered in the community hall was interrupted by the unexpected appearance of the camp's priest and a group of altar boys dressed in rags and carrying picks and shovels slowly trudging across the stage. At this stark reminder of the experience of forced labour in the Soviet Union, some people 'gasp[ed] aloud as if in pain', others stood and sang *Sto Lat*, (One Hundred Years), a traditional hymn for long life, this time directed at the Polish nation. Others threw whatever missiles came to hand at the Warsaw repatriation officer who beat a hasty exit from the stage and quietly left the camp that night.⁷⁸⁹ Not long after this visit, in January 1947, the first post war 'free and unfettered' elections were held in Poland, returning a communist government.

The ongoing problem of the existence of large numbers of displaced persons in refugee camps worldwide led to UNRRA's operations being extended until 30 June 1947.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁷ TNA, CO 968/167, UNRRA to FO London, 7 August 1946; George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, vol. I, New York, Columbia University Press, 1950, p. 155.

⁷⁸⁸ Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, pp. 239-41.

⁷⁸⁹ Zarzycki and Buczak-Zarzycka, *Kwaheri Africa*, p. 50.

⁷⁹⁰ Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, p. 312.

The results of its first six months work in East Africa were disappointing with 17,762 Polish refugees remaining in Africa.⁷⁹¹ The Polish (Warsaw) Government too was disappointed with these numbers and in an effort to counter the anti-repatriation propaganda in the African camps, decided to invite a delegation of Poles from Africa to visit Poland, to see with their own eyes the opportunities for building a new life in their homeland. Two priests and a school inspector were chosen to make a two-week trip at the end of May 1947. The Polish (Warsaw) Government was particularly keen to take them on a tour of Western Poland to the lands acquired from Germany in the redrawing of Poland's borders. Residents of pre-war Eastern Poland were being resettled in post-war Western Poland, territory relatively unscathed by war, where living conditions and employment opportunities were good. They also assured the delegation from the camps that women, children and the ill would be adequately cared for by the state. The visitors toured cities and towns, industrial plants and educational institutions. They met with government officials, were interviewed by the press and reunited with members of their own families as well as some of the Poles already repatriated from Africa. The delegation's visit to Poland had little effect on repatriation numbers.⁷⁹² Personal factors weighed heavily in decision-making even when political and economic considerations were portrayed in a positive light.

UNRRA's responsibility for the Polish refugee camps in Africa was relatively short, from 1 August 1946 to 31 June 1947. During that time 1,696 Poles, less than ten per cent of the refugee population, were repatriated.⁷⁹³ Sixteen year old Lilka and her mother, the Polish Red Cross representative in Bwana Mkubwa, were among those who decided to return even though an English family had offered to adopt Lilka and promised to obtain residency in Africa for her mother. Discovering lost family members in Poland sealed their fate. 'I longed for my homeland, my father and my sister. I did not want to hear of staying in the West. I wanted to return to Poland.'⁷⁹⁴ They would go home without Lilka's grandfather who was lost in the Soviet Union at a remote railway station during the long trek south to Anders army, and Lilka's younger brother who had died in Africa, electrocuted when he climbed to the top of a power pole while skylarking with friends.⁷⁹⁵

Having registered for repatriation with UNRRA, Lilka and her mother were labelled communists, victimised and harassed by camp officials loyal to the Polish Government-in-

⁷⁹¹ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, Polish Refugees as at 1 February 1947.

⁷⁹² Wróbel, *Uchodźcy Polscy ze Związku Sowieckiego*, pp 243-245.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁷⁹⁴ Filipczak, *Moje Tulacze Wspomnienia*, p. 127.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 84-92.

exile who regarded repatriation as a betrayal of the ongoing fight for the freedom and independence of Poland. This did not deter mother and daughter who bid a sad farewell to friends with whom they had shared camp life in Bwana for almost four years, paid a last visit to the camp cemetery, and set out on the long journey home. Departing Bwana in December 1946, they travelled by train to the port of Beira in Mozambique, then on a British ocean liner to Mombasa, Kenya, where they waited two and a half months for a vessel to take them to Italy, from whence they would travel by train to Poland.⁷⁹⁶

At Mombasa outward bound refugees were accommodated at English Point, a British Navy Rest and Recreation Camp (capacity 750) repurposed as a refugee transit centre. The camp was located in twenty-six acres of lush green gardens, its roads were lined with coconut palms and mango trees, and it was just a short stroll away from the popular Nyali swimming beach. Although accommodation was in barracks and overcrowding was at times a problem, life at English Point Camp had many of the features of a holiday camp. The refugees had relative freedom of movement and were at their leisure to enjoy the sun, sea and sand, take sightseeing trips into the bustling and colourful Mombasa town centre by day, and in the evening go dancing or watch a movie at one of the camp's two cinemas.⁷⁹⁷ For Jerzy, a teenager on his way back to Poland with his two brothers and mother, 'Mombasa was the most splendid holiday of my life'.⁷⁹⁸

Under UNRRA, the living conditions in the camps in Africa gradually declined as the ITC looked for ways to decrease its expenditure from £5.8.0 to £4.15.0 per person per month, the sum UNRRA had agreed to provide.⁷⁹⁹ Once again they targeted employment in the camps, re-examining staff numbers, wage levels, work contracts, and working conditions. They also reviewed the salaries and functions of the Polish staff attached to EARA and found these to be 'excessive'. The Chief Polish Adviser to EARA was receiving a salary of £1,700 per annum, the equivalent of the EARA Deputy Commissioner. It was also discovered that the ITC was paying large salaries to territorial advisers whose main activities were closely linked to the Polish Government-in-exile.⁸⁰⁰ The ITC was thus inadvertently financially supporting the Polish Government-in-exile in maintaining its influence over the refugees and

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 129-139.

⁷⁹⁷ AN, AJ/43/1061/43/1, Brigadier M. S. Lush, Chief of IRO Mission Middle East, 12 November 1948; KARTA, AW/II/1621/1K, Testimony of Alina Pakulska; KARTA, AW/II/1072, Testimony of Helena Nikiel.

⁷⁹⁸ KARTA, AW/II/2498, Testimony of Jerzy Wielębnowski.

⁷⁹⁹ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, Emerson Holcomb, Director, Repatriation Division, UNRRA to Brigadier T. T. Waddington, Chief of Middle East Office, UNRRA, 29 December 1945.

⁸⁰⁰ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, L. Findlay, Director of Relief Services, UNRRA to Brigadier T. T. Waddington, Chief of Middle East Office, UNRRA, 24 September 1946.

it was not until the dissolution of the ITC in March 1947 that this influence showed signs of diminishing.

Financial constraints also led to Manira (Kenya) closing its doors in November 1946. Manira was an old age home for sole and aged refugees, a convalescent centre where patients discharged from the Nairobi hospital could recuperate before returning to their camps, and a rehabilitation centre where men who had lost limbs in the war could be fitted with prosthetics. The Polish Red Cross had been instrumental in the establishment and financing of this 'home' and when funding was no longer available, an appeal was made to EARA for assistance. This was turned down with EARA suggesting that 'these old people could now be sent to the camps' and convalescent cases could be cared for by the Salvation Army in Nairobi.⁸⁰¹ Manira was an example of the special care that the Polish Government-in-exile was able to offer to some of the most needy refugees and its closure was evidence of the different attitudes and goals of UNRRA and the British Government in relation to the care and maintenance of the refugees.

A few months later, in February 1947, the Southern Rhodesian government closed its three refugee settlements of Rusape, Marandellas and Diggelfold, and transferred some 1,500 refugees to Prisoner of War Camp No. 3, five miles south of the town of Gatooma. The settlements at Marandellas and Rusape were taken over by the respective Town Management Boards for African housing.⁸⁰² The buildings at the Diggelfold farm passed into the hands of the Department of Health to be used as a sanatorium for TB sufferers.⁸⁰³ The Southern Rhodesian government led the push to remove refugees from the British African territories by shutting down camps which for four years had accommodated Polish refugees.

The Gatooma Camp had been built to hold Italian prisoners of war and its miserable living conditions led the visiting Vatican's Apostolic Delegate from Pretoria to describe it as 'a second Belsen'.⁸⁰⁴ Arriving at the empty camp, Józefa, a first year high school student, recalls that the place was in a terrible state. Buildings were dilapidated with plaster peeling off walls, and some of the barracks looked as though they had been set on fire. Piles of rubble and rubbish lay about the place and the camp was completely devoid of vegetation.⁸⁰⁵ The

⁸⁰¹ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, E. B. Belcher, EARA to Chief of Middle East Office, UNRRA, 7 October 1946.

⁸⁰² Tavuyanago et al., 'Victims of the Rhodesian Immigration Policy', p. 958.

⁸⁰³ PISM, KOL 174/12, Polish Secondary School at Diggelfold, Southern Rhodesia, 1943-1946, p. 24.

⁸⁰⁴ AN, AJ/43/790/55/2/E.AFR, M. S. Lush, Chief of Mission Middle East, IRO, 27 November 1947, p. 4. Bergen-Belsen (1940-1945) was a prisoner of war and Nazi concentration camp in Germany in which over 50,000 people died.

⁸⁰⁵ PISM, KOL 174/14, Józefa Pawlus, 'Our life in Gatooma in 1948', in 1948 Report on the 1948 School Year at Gatooma, Southern Rhodesia, pp. 20-21.

Poles complained at the rundown state of the camp, at the poor sanitary conditions, and the climate in the region where Gatooma was located. They argued, to no avail, that it was not a suitable place for habitation by European women, children and the elderly. Their arguments were validated when a few months after relocation, malaria emerged as a major health issue among the camp population but this did not lead to relocation of the refugees.⁸⁰⁶

As well as the unfavourable living conditions, the Poles also complained of 'improper treatment' by colonial camp officials. Inadequate food supplies had led to twenty per cent of the children recording significant weight loss. Polish doctors at the camp calculated that the calorie intake per day per person was 1800 calories rather than the established norm in the refugee camps of 2800. They also recorded an alarming rise in the incidence of TB. Some six months after the refugees arrived at Gatooma, the Ministry of Justice was finally forced to investigate resulting in damning findings. It was discovered that funding for the maintenance of the refugees in Southern Rhodesia had fallen to £3.16.0 per person per month, whereas UNRRA was providing the sum of £4.15.0.⁸⁰⁷ The Ministry's report singled out its own chief accountant as the person at the heart of the problem, his actions motivated by a desire to be rid of the Poles.

As UNRRA's operations drew to a close, there was growing disquiet among colonial authorities and the British populations in the territories at the continued presence of the Polish refugees. When it closed its doors on 30 June 1947, there were still 17,281 Polish refugees in Africa.⁸⁰⁸ Colonial governments had been assured by London that the refugees required wartime domicile only, yet two years after the war, over ninety per cent remained in British Africa.

IRO in Africa

The successor to UNRRA, the IRO began operations on 1 July 1947, and provided continuity to the international effort of maintaining displaced persons and assisting them to return to their countries of origin.⁸⁰⁹ With a membership of twenty-six states it was considerably smaller than UNRRA while its mandate was broader. In creating the IRO, the UN had recognised that there were large numbers of DPs who were either unable or unwilling to repatriate and the IRO's mandate was not only 'to encourage and assist repatriation in every

⁸⁰⁶ Zins, *Poles in Zambezi*, pp. 83-84.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁸⁰⁸ AN, AJ/43/787/33/3, Polish Refugees as at 1 July 1947.

⁸⁰⁹ Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, p. 315.

way possible', but also 'to facilitate re-establishment in the countries of temporary residence and to facilitate emigration to and resettlement in other countries.'⁸¹⁰ The expanded mandate was vehemently opposed by the Soviet Union who chose not to become a member of the Organisation.⁸¹¹

In Africa, the IRO inherited from UNRRA, the financial responsibility for the care and maintenance of the Polish refugees while colonial authorities continued to administer the camps under the IRO's direction. The refugees' attitude towards the IRO was more positive than it had been towards its predecessor because of its expanded mandate and the absence of the USSR from its membership. However, the numbers returning to Poland were a mere trickle and holding out little hope for this trickle to increase, the IRO turned its attention to facilitating the resettlement of the Polish refugees in other countries. The establishment of the Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC) and the demobilisation and transfer of the soldiers of the Second Polish Corps from Italy to the UK, created the opportunity for many of the refugees in Africa to also be resettled in the UK under the PRC's family reunion provisions.

Operation Polejump

There were eighteen separate categories under which a refugee in Africa qualified for resettlement in the UK as a dependent of a member of the Polish Armed Forces. The Resettlement Act defined the term 'dependent' broadly to include wives and children, parents and grandparents, brothers and brothers-in-law, sisters and sisters-in-law, cousins, nephews and nieces, grandchildren, widows and orphans, and step-relatives.⁸¹² As military families had been given priority for evacuation from the Soviet Union, it was anticipated that almost all of the refugees in Africa would qualify for resettlement to the UK. However, for a variety of reasons a large number of families were either ineligible or unwilling to move. The provisions of the Polish Resettlement Act applied only to the families of Polish soldiers who had served under British Command. There were however in Africa a number of widows and children of men who had died in the Soviet Union, mostly as a result of the typhoid epidemic that had raged through the southern republics where the recruitment and training centres of Anders' army were located. These women and children were not eligible for UK resettlement. There were also instances when the fine detail of some of the provisions of the Act relating to age or

⁸¹⁰ AN, AJ/43/790/55/2/E.AFR, Policy Background, PCIRO East Africa Office, 2 November 1947.

⁸¹¹ Marrus, *The Unwanted*, pp. 324, 342.

⁸¹² R. Królikowski, 'Wiadomości uchodźcze, Komunikat Nr. 3 Oficera Łącznikowego przy E. A. Command', *Głos Polski*, 23 May 1948, p. 10; AN, AJ/43/16/314/56/2, Statement on the Polish Refugee Situation in the Middle East in September 1946.

marital status excluded just one member of a family. These families often chose to stay put and await further developments rather than leave one member behind.⁸¹³ Finally, the chaos and desperation that had accompanied the exit from the Soviet Union had seen women and children evacuated who had no links to the army but were saved by the kindness of strangers. These women and children were ineligible for the UK.

Code-named Operation Polejump, the transfer of Polish military families from Africa to the UK occurred over a twelve month period from November 1947 to November 1948. Around a thousand refugees travelled to the UK by air. Beginning in April 1948, planes carrying forty passengers departed twice weekly from the Eastleigh Air Base outside Nairobi bound for Croydon, near London. The War Office had agreed to the use of these planes by the IRO rather than having them return empty after flying Italian workers to Nairobi to work on the expansion of the Mackinnen Road military base, outside Mombasa.⁸¹⁴ Another eight and a half thousand refugees travelled to the UK by ship. The limited availability of ocean transport during the early stages of the operation made logistics a challenge. Refugees had to be ready for departure at short notice and this caused a problem at English Point Camp, Mombasa. At full capacity it could only provide accommodation for six hundred people in barracks, and another hundred and twenty in emergency tenting. Overcrowding became a major issue, jeopardising hygiene standards, and water and sanitary arrangements, and it was feared that not only the health of the refugees was at risk but also that of the local residents. The Army, from whom the camp had been leased, was approached to urgently build additional barracks, latrines and ablution blocks.⁸¹⁵

On the authority of the Executive Secretary of the IRO in Geneva, the IRO's Chief Officer in the Middle East, Brigadier Lush, communicated to his representatives in Africa that 'every effort must be made to liquidate the refugee question in Africa during 1948.'⁸¹⁶ Operation Polejump accounted for more than half of the refugee population but the question remained of what to do with the rest. Their mass resettlement overseas was nigh impossible while selection teams from countries such as Canada and Australia were exclusively recruiting in DP camps in Europe. From the IRO's perspective, the logical solution to this problem was to move the refugees ineligible for Operation Polejump to camps in Europe

⁸¹³ AN, AJ 43/616/42/1/Middle East Trip - May, June 1948, Report by Sir Arthur Rucker, Appendix E, Polish Civic Committee, Nairobi to PCIRO, Geneva, 11 June 1948.

⁸¹⁴ R. Królikowski, 'Operation Polejump', *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 14, 1968, pp. 165-166.

⁸¹⁵ AN, AJ/43/1055/34/2, PCIRO Nairobi to Director of Aliens, Internees and War Refugees, Nairobi, 17 March 1948.

⁸¹⁶ AN, AJ/43/790/55/2/E.AFR, Brigadier M. S. Lush, IRO Chief of Mission, Middle East to East Africa Governments, 27 November 1947.

where they would be readily accessible to migration recruitment teams. The plan to vacate and close the camps in Africa was to run at the same time as Operation Polejump so that the directive to solve the refugee problem in Africa in 1948 could be achieved.

When rumours circulated in early 1948 that a mass movement to Lindau, a DP camp in French-occupied Germany, was being planned, the response from the refugees was unequivocally negative. They feared that once in Germany, they would be pressured to migrate overseas under labour contracts which would see families split and the 'unemployables' left behind to an unknown fate. Concerns were also raised about the capacity of the IRO to adequately provide care in the DP camps in Germany for the most vulnerable, the elderly, ill and orphans. After more than five years living in the camps in Africa the refugees were reluctant to begin a journey into the unknown arguing instead for remaining in Africa until their final destination was certain.⁸¹⁷

The Catholic clergy in the camps in Africa had been actively searching for overseas countries to accept the Polish refugees in Africa, en masse. The Republic of Ireland, a fellow Catholic state was approached but was unable to assist due to existing problems with overpopulation.⁸¹⁸ There was also considerable interest in Argentina but bungled initial group emigration from Europe jeopardised the chances for success of applications from the refugees in Africa. The Vatican also played a part in the search for migration destinations for the Poles in Africa being fully informed of the plight of this group of refugees by the Polish clergy in the camps. The refugees' stance against being moved to Europe was supported by the Vatican who argued their case with the IRO. The Lindau plan was abandoned.⁸¹⁹

Operation Cherry

The IRO held on to the notion that those who had decided against repatriation and were not eligible for Polejump would be better placed to explore resettlement options in DP camps in Europe and decided to run a 'test operation' codenamed Operation Cherry. Volunteers were enlisted to relocate to France where they would have the opportunity to settle permanently or migrate further afield. Between April and June 1948, 620 refugees were relocated to France. On arriving at Marseilles they were taken to nearby *Camp Du Grand Arenas*, a former troop

⁸¹⁷ PISM, A.44.310/3/76 & 77, Fr. Rogiński, Tengeru to Polish Ambassador to the Vatican, 31 March and 9 April 1948.

⁸¹⁸ PISM, A.44.310/3/78, Fr. Rogiński, Tengeru to the President of the Republic of Eire, 13 October 1947; A.44.310/3/80, Polish Ambassador to the Vatican to Fr. Rogiński, Tengeru, 19 April 1948.

⁸¹⁹ PISM, A.44.310/3/76 & 77, Fr. Rogiński, Tengeru to Polish Ambassador to the Vatican, 31 March and 9 April 1948.

transit camp on the outskirts of the city.⁸²⁰ There, the *l'Office National de l'Immigration* (ONI) took two months to process the refugees with the disappointing result of resettling only 169 in provincial France.⁸²¹

Operation Cherry was hampered by a lack of clearly defined goals, inadequate planning, and inefficient procedures. The language barrier had played a role in the poor resettlement results as had the lack of information provided to the Poles in Africa about living and working conditions in France. The refugees considered themselves to have been tricked by the IRO into leaving Africa as they had expected to find employment commensurate with their skills and qualifications but had only been offered work as agricultural labourers and domestics. At the same time, the French were not impressed with the Poles, whom they considered to be so accustomed to community living and welfare dependency that they lacked any enthusiasm for finding employment and starting new and independent lives. The French were also critical of what they considered to be the low moral standards of many of the single women, and surprised at the large sums of cash and capital some of the Poles possessed in the form of ivory and reptile skins.⁸²² The Operation Cherry refugees did not fit the profile of the destitute and desperate DPs crammed into the IRO camps in Europe.

The visits to *Camp Du Grand Arenas* of international missions on labour recruitment drives led to just over a third of the Operation Cherry refugees being chosen for migration: 147 went to Canada, 45 to the UK, and 17 to Venezuela. The remainder continued to be welfare dependent: 173 were temporarily placed in Catholic Welfare Centres throughout France and 69 were enrolled at the Catholic College in Lille. Seventeen had expressed a wish to return to Poland and French authorities hoped that they might convince more to do so.⁸²³ The 'test operation' relocating the refugees from Africa to France in order to facilitate their pursuit of resettlement opportunities was not considered to have been successful enough to be repeated.

⁸²⁰ During the Second World War the camp was used to accommodate American troops in transit. In 1945 the camp underwent a facelift with a grand building project undertaken on the 13 hectare site. Eighty barracks were built to accommodate 10,000 refugees at a time, specifically Jewish refugees on their way to Palestine. <http://www.tourisme-marseille.com/fiche/le-camp-grand-arenas-cite-du-nouvel-arenas-de-marseille/>, (accessed 16 October 2018).

⁸²¹ AN, AJ/43/787/34/4, Final Report on Operation Kenya, Mazargues, 10 July 1948.

⁸²² Ibid., pp. 2-3

⁸²³ Ibid., pp. 5-9.

Operation Upheaval

During 1948, colonial governments in Africa applied increasing pressure on the British for the removal of the refugees, and the IRO was under growing internal strain to end its African operations. The view that 'the only road to resettlement leads through Europe' continued to dominate IRO thinking and in July 1948 a new destination was explored, Italy. Unofficially code-named Operation Upheaval, this short-lived plan was indefinitely postponed due to the 'violent opposition of the Poles' and 'the reluctance of the Italian Government'. 'The people's fear of moving to Italy is very real and almost pathological' wrote Arnold Curtis, the IRO's Chief of Mission, East Africa, in a report to headquarters in Geneva. He explained that the refugees thought they would be stranded in Italy, a focal point of communism, and if a war broke out they would once more be subject to Russian domination. They argued for remaining in and resettling from Africa.⁸²⁴ The Italian Government's reluctance to agree to the operation was based on the well-founded concern that among the refugees would be the chronically ill, the disabled, and the aged and infirm, all of whom were unlikely to be chosen for emigration and would therefore become a burden on the Italian state.

Westward Ho!

The only selection mission to visit Africa in 1948 was a British team which arrived as Operation Polejump was drawing to a close, providing an opportunity for those who had not qualified as military families, to resettle in the UK as European Voluntary Workers (EVW).⁸²⁵ Under a EVW scheme called Westward Ho! the British Ministry of Labour was recruiting DPs from the IRO camps in Europe to fill an acute labour shortage in the UK. Men were needed for manual work in agriculture, coal-mining, and the iron and steel industries. Women were required for the cotton, wool and rayon industries and for laundries, domestic work and nursing. At the IRO's request the scheme was extended to include the Polish refugees in the Middle East and Africa.⁸²⁶ A recruitment team travelled to Africa in September 1948, especially targeting the young women in the camps as recruitment in Europe was attracting mostly males. The IRO's policy of camp amalgamation had during 1948 reduced the number of camps in Africa to four, Koja in Uganda, Tengeru in Tanganyika, Lusaka in Northern

⁸²⁴ AN, AJ/43/135, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission IRO, East Africa to Director General IRO, Geneva, 9 February 1949.

⁸²⁵ Between 1946 and 1949, under the EVW labour migration and refugee resettlement schemes code-named Balt, Cygnet, and Westward Ho! 74,511 DPs migrated to the UK. Of these 14,018 were Poles. See John Allan Tannahill, *European Voluntary Workers in Britain*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1958, p. 30.

⁸²⁶ AN, AJ/43/266/269/73, A Rouse, Ministry of Labour, London to Arthur Rucker, IRO Geneva, 29 October 1948.

Rhodesia and Gatooma in Southern Rhodesia. The total refugee population at this time was 5,579. The team recruited 215 women and Mr Ball from the Ministry of Labour, though disappointed at the small number of applicants, reported:

I am very satisfied with the quality of those we have recruited, particularly some 70 girls from the Polish Orphanage in Tengeru. These are all young and have been well looked after and disciplined.⁸²⁷

The Westward Ho! group was flown to the UK over the next few weeks and provided with free meals, accommodation, and pocket money until they were placed in work where they would be paid the same wages and employed under the same conditions as British workers.⁸²⁸ The Polish Resettlement Act had placed certain age and marital restrictions on the eligibility of young women for resettlement in the UK and family groups had chosen to remain in Africa rather than leave these women behind. By applying for admission to the UK under the Westward Ho! scheme, these women also freed up their families to move to the UK under Operation Polejump.

From the very commencement of its work with the Polish refugees in Africa, the IRO, a temporary agency with limited funds, informed the refugees that life in the camps could not continue indefinitely, and it was both essential and urgent that they choose from among the options available to them where their future lay. To further its goal of re-establishing refugees and closing the camps, the IRO considered that funds 'must be deflected from care and maintenance to movement, and grants for subsistence may have to be drastically reduced.'⁸²⁹ Reductions in spending were widespread and included restricting eligibility for free clothing and pocket money; discontinuing free dental treatment; reducing employment numbers in the camps; cutting wages by twenty per cent; reducing per capita costs from £4.15.0 to £4.10.0; and amalgamating camps.⁸³⁰ The number of camps was reduced to two by December 1948, Koja in Uganda and Tengeru in Tanganyika. Over the first eighteen months of the IRO's operations in Africa the number of refugees decreased from 15,838 to 4,280. From an administrative perspective, IRO HQ in the Middle East was closed down 31 December 1948 from which date IRO Nairobi reported directly to IRO Geneva.⁸³¹

⁸²⁷ AN, AJ/ 43/266/269, G. E. D. Ball, Ministry of Labour Report, 25 October 1948.

⁸²⁸ AN, AJ/43/266/269/12, Westward Ho! Volunteer Scheme for Recruitment of Displaced Persons for Employment in Great Britain. Pamphlet.

⁸²⁹ AN, AJ/43/790/55/2/E.AFR, IRO Policy Background Paper, 2 November 1947, p. 3.

⁸³⁰ AN, AJ/43/1055/34/3, IRO Lusaka to IRO Nairobi, 26 September 1947.

⁸³¹ AN, AJ 43/616/42/1/Middle East, IRO Office of Planning and Field Services Report on Situation in the Middle East, 30 November 1948.

In some camps the introduction of cost-cutting measures had serious consequences. Towards the end of 1948, the state of health of many of the residents of Koja, Uganda, had shown a marked decline and an independent medical specialist was called in to assess the situation. His discovery that malnutrition was the cause of the problem surprised the IRO whose position was that 'one would not expect to need any great quantity of food in the warm and relaxing climate of the Lake Victoria shore'.⁸³² Just a few months earlier, the IRO's representative in charge of recruitment for Westward Ho! had visited the camp reporting that the refugees 'have been well looked after' and his 'first impression was not so much of a refugee camp as of a group of Europeans holidaying on the Riviera'.⁸³³ Nevertheless, malnutrition was found to be at the core of the declining health of the refugees, a problem that was overcome by the increasing of rations by nearly fifty per cent.⁸³⁴

While the IRO made every effort to enlist the refugees in group settlement schemes, the refugees themselves were also pursuing individual resettlement opportunities. Those who had family connections or who were able to find sponsors overseas, lodged individual applications for migration. Their destinations were as diverse as Japan, Haiti, Egypt, Argentina, New Zealand, Morocco and Sweden. Many had dreamt of migrating to America. Unfortunately, this dream was shattered as the US Displaced Person Bill (1948) provided for the acceptance of some two hundred thousand displaced persons into the USA but limited selection to displaced persons located in Germany, Austria or Italy in 1945. The refugees in Africa were thus ineligible.⁸³⁵ Less than a hundred succeeded in migrating to the USA independently, while the total number of individual resettlements numbered 1,761.⁸³⁶

Local Resettlement

The IRO continued to encourage repatriation to Poland and to place its hopes in group settlement schemes overseas. It also explored a third option, local resettlement.⁸³⁷ Officially, colonial governments opposed this option and as early as 1946 passed legislation authorising the forced removal of refugees who would not depart voluntarily. Yet in the years after the

⁸³² AN, AJ/43/135, East Africa Mission - Final Report, Brigadier M. S. Lush, Chief of Mission IRO Middle East Headquarters to Director General, IRO Headquarters Geneva, 2 November 1950.

⁸³³ AN, AJ/43/266/269, G. E. D. Ball to Arthur Rucker, Director General IRO Geneva, 25 October, 1948.

⁸³⁴ AN, AJ/43/135, East Africa Mission - Final Report, Brigadier M. S. Lush, Chief of Mission IRO Middle East Headquarters to Director General IRO Headquarters, Geneva, 2 November 1950.

⁸³⁵ US Displaced Persons Bill (1948), <http://library.uwb.edu/Static/USimmigration/62%20stat%201009.pdf>, (accessed 20 October 2018). The Bill was extended in 1950 with an increased quota of 415,000.

⁸³⁶ AN, AJ 43/135, IRO East Africa Final Report, 2 November 1950.

⁸³⁷ AN, AJ/43/790/55/2/E.AF, H. A. Curtis, Senior IRO Representative in East Africa and Rhodesia to all IRO Representatives in East Africa and Rhodesia, 8 October 1947.

war it was common practice for refugees to be used to fill gaps in the local labour markets, in the cotton industry in Southern Rhodesia, as vegetable sorters in Tanganyika and as nurses and nursemaid in all five territories. The IRO seized on the economic utility of the refugees and urged the local governments to end the practice of temporarily employing refugees outside the camps and instead to offer residency permits to those who could obtain secure work contracts.⁸³⁸

The intransigent front of the Colonial Governments towards absorption was broken by Kenya which agreed in early 1948 to admit up to three hundred Polish refugees as permanent residents. Kenya's motivation was primarily humanitarian though the Advisory Committee appointed to consider applications took into account each applicants 'quality and value to the Colony'. Applications from single young women willing to work as nurse-maids flooded in to the Committee, who decided that the territory could easily accept between fifty and sixty of these applicants. The East Africa Women's League (EAWL) undertook to arrange their employment and ensure that their wages and work conditions were satisfactory. Concerned that the young women should have a place that provided them with security and protection, and which served as a link 'to their own people and their own church', the Committee enlisted the support of the Mother Superior of the Loreto Convent in Nairobi who agreed to operate a small hostel for the women.⁸³⁹

The Kenyan Public Works Department (PWD) set up an employment scheme, recruiting twenty-four Polish tradesmen (joiners, bricklayers, carpenters and metalworkers) to form a building gang. The men's first assignment was to build their own homes and they were allocated plots of land and building materials for this purpose. Having successfully completed this task, their ongoing employment was secured and they were able to apply for their families to join them. There were forty-eight men, women and children in the first group settled in Kenya under the PWD scheme and other groups followed.⁸⁴⁰

Finally, the Committee showed considerable compassion in assessing applications from individuals who for reasons of physical disability were highly unlikely to be accepted elsewhere. Thirty-eight year old Jan had a 'crippled' right foot. He was a skilled watchmaker and admitted into Kenya with his wife and two children to work at a watchmaking firm in the town of Nakuru. Józef, aged forty-seven, and his wife were granted residence in Kenya and

⁸³⁸ AN, AJ/43/1062/45/2, EARA Nairobi to IRO Middle East HQ, Cairo, 28 August 1947.

⁸³⁹ AN, AJ/43/1062/45/2, H. A. Curtis, Senior PCIRO Representative, East Africa and Rhodesia to Chief of Mission PCIRO, Cairo, 15 July 1948.

⁸⁴⁰ AN, AJ/43/788/45/2, Member for Law and Order, The Secretariat, Nairobi to Senior IRO Representative, East Africa and Rhodesia, 30 June 1948.

employed as accountant and housekeeper at a Nairobi hotel. Józef had a 'crippled' right hand and his wife was lame. The *pièce de résistance* was another Józef, aged fifty-eight, a highly skilled mason living at Tengeru who was perpetually intoxicated and suspected of being the chief operator of the camp's illicit stills. Józef's friends in the PWD lobbied for him to be given an opportunity to join them. The bus trip from Arusha to Nairobi served to sober him up and after special arrangements were made in relation to access to his wages, he settled down to work to the complete satisfaction of his employer. He was subsequently placed in charge of a gang of masons, all Poles, building a new control tower at the Nairobi airport.⁸⁴¹

In Southern Rhodesia, the idea of resettling refugees locally was strongly supported by Major F. J. Bagshawe, Commandant in the territory's refugee settlements since 1943. Highly sympathetic to the plight of the refugees, he publicly defended their anti-repatriation stance and used the media to advocate on their behalf. He attempted to explain the historical and political background of the refugees' decision not to return to Poland, telling the readership of *The New Rhodesia* that 'if Poland were free, not a Pole would remain in Africa: they would go home if they had to walk!'⁸⁴² While there was little sign that the opposition to the continued presence of the refugees in Southern Rhodesia was abating, Major Bagshawe suggested a plan for the permanent resettlement of a group of four hundred Polish soldiers and their families in Southern Rhodesia. He proposed that they be given small holdings of farmland as well as assistance in the form of basic supplies, equipment and livestock. The Rhodesian Government rejected Major Bagshawe's plan outright and when the one and a half thousand refugees from Rusape, Marandellas and Diggelfold were consolidated into one camp at Gatooma, the Major's services were dispensed with.⁸⁴³

Opposition to the continued presence of the refugees in Southern Rhodesia showed no sign of abating as the colony pursued a population policy of cultural and ethnic unity, aspiring to becoming 'a British heartland in Central Africa'.⁸⁴⁴ Strict immigration quotas were in place for non-British migrants and for Poles the quota was set at one hundred per annum. However, to the disappointment of the IRO, the British Government, and the refugees themselves, further legislation was passed which effectively made the quota worthless. A deposit of £200 was required for each individual migrant, a sum which was beyond the means of many of the

⁸⁴¹ AN, AJ/43/1062/45/2, M. S. Lush to Acting Director General IRO, 7 November 1949.

⁸⁴² F. J. Bagshawe, 'God save the Poles', *The New Rhodesian*, 13 December 1946, pp. 5 and 7.

⁸⁴³ Tavuyanago et al., 'Victims of the Rhodesian Immigration Policy', p. 963.

⁸⁴⁴ Schutz, 'European Population Patterns, Cultural Persistence and Political Change in Rhodesia', p. 15. See also Mlambo, 'Some are more white than others', pp. 139-160.

refugees.⁸⁴⁵ While the post-war boom in migration into Southern Rhodesia saw the white population almost double by 1950 to around 112,000 only 118 of these were Polish refugees.⁸⁴⁶ The actions of the government were in line with general public sentiment concerning aliens, and Poles in particular, who were considered to be not 'the right type' of immigrant. A subscriber to *The New Rhodesian* in 1946 wrote:

... many of the Poles do not rise to the height of civilization and refinement as the British. The Poles are a bunch of peasants whose skill and efficiency is little above that of the native.⁸⁴⁷

The refugees were, nevertheless, hired as temporary labour and in some instances exploited. Sixty women from the Gatooma camp were employed at a textile factory at nearby Eiffel Flats in 1947. They were paid a wage of five to ten pounds a month when the average wage of a native African was over twenty pounds a month. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Justice investigated the low wages paid to Polish women not only in the textile industry but also those working as nurses, usherettes and shop assistants, and concluded:

we are perfectly satisfied that the reason for the low wages paid to Poles in employment is mainly due to their standard of work which is such that they are not worth more than sub-economic wages. In other words, they are not fitted to do work of a higher standard than that usually performed by the indigenous African in this Colony.⁸⁴⁸

The Poles were considered to be culturally inferior, economically superfluous, and socially a threat to the established order. They were undesirable as permanent residents in the colony.

Uganda was not a settler colony and had a white population of just 3,500. There, the Governor responded to approaches by the IRO for permanent residency for Polish refugees by advising that any of the refugees wishing to permanently remain in Uganda should apply for an Entry Permit in accordance with the provisions of the Immigration (Control) Ordinance 1947. The IRO was informed that no special quota would be set for the Poles and that 'the Governor holds out little hope that more than an extremely small number of individual applications are likely to succeed.'⁸⁴⁹ Numerous applicants were turned down, even those of people employed by the Electricity Board which had set up a works and training programme

⁸⁴⁵ AN, AJ/43/1062/45/2/E.AF, Telegram from H. A. Curtis to M. S. Lush, 23 July 1948.

⁸⁴⁶ AN, AJ/43/789/46/1, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission IRO, East Africa to Director General IRO HQ, Geneva, 10 February 1950.

⁸⁴⁷ Chigume and Chakawa, 'The Media Weapon', p. 104.

⁸⁴⁸ AN, AJ 43/1062/45/2,/79-80, Office of Minister of Internal Affairs and Justice, Salisbury to Brigadier Lush, IRO, Cairo, 4 December 1947.

⁸⁴⁹ AN, AJ/43/789/45/2/UGAN, R. A. K. Hill, Director of Refugees, Uganda to the IRO Representative for Uganda, 3 January 1949.

specifically for Polish refugees. The men received low wages but signed up in the hope that it would lead to permanent residency. Unfortunately, this was not to be. Mietek, aged 21, with excellent English and Swahili language skills and working as an overhead lines-man supporting himself and his mother, aged 46, was refused permanent residency. Józef, aged 43, working as a store-keeper and supervisor of African labour, supporting himself and his wife, aged 36, was refused permanent residency. Adolf, aged 20, working repairing overhead electricity lines, a graduate of mechanical school speaking excellent English and Swahili, whose sister, aged 23, worked in the accounting office at the Koja camp, and whose mother was a skilled dressmaker, was refused permanent residency. Though the Uganda Electricity Board was pleased with the performance of its Polish employees, the work and training programme was discontinued by mutual consent.⁸⁵⁰ IRO records reveal that just ten Polish refugees were admitted as permanent residents in Uganda.⁸⁵¹

In mid-1948 Tanganyika declared it would admit up to two hundred and fifty persons in family units and also consider applications from individuals.⁸⁵² Northern Rhodesia followed suit setting a quota of three hundred. However, the largest group that settled permanently in East and Central Africa did so not because of government policy or laws relating to immigration but as a result of demographics. The refugee population was predominantly female while the colonial population was mostly male. There were 318 marriages throughout the territories of Polish women to local residents from the colonial service and the military, as well as farmers and miners. It was a common occurrence for the IRO representatives in Northern and Southern Rhodesia to receive letters from lonely prospectors looking for wives. Such proposals were posted on the camp's notice boards and led to the local settlement of a number of young Polish women.⁸⁵³

⁸⁵⁰ AN, AJ/43/1062/45/2, M. S. Lush, IRO Cairo to A. W. H. Wilkinson, FO London, 17 June 1949.

⁸⁵¹ AN, AJ 43/135, IRO East Africa Mission Final Report, 2 November 1950.

⁸⁵² AN, AJ/43/1062/45/2, The Member for Law and Order, Dar es Salaam to the Representative IRO, Nairobi, 9 July 1948.

⁸⁵³ AN, AJ/43/135, East Africa Mission Final Report, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to Director-General, IRO Headquarters Geneva, 2 November 1950.

Table 6.2 Number of Poles Accepted as Migrants in Africa, Feb 1950⁸⁵⁴

Territories	Total Population 1935–36	European Population 1948–49	Number of Poles Accepted as Migrants
Kenya	3,084,351	30,000	298
N. Rhodesia	1,378,000	13,000	302
S. Rhodesia	1,289,000	67,000	116
Tanganyika	5,138,080	11,000	230
Uganda	1,603,257	2,000	10
Local Marriages			318
Total			1,374

It was during 1948 that most of the remainder of the refugees were resettled, either repatriating to Poland, moving to the UK with Operation Polejump, individually migrating to other countries, or being accepted as permanent residents in East and Central Africa. As 1949 dawned the IRO was still responsible for over four thousand Polish refugees in East Africa living in two camps, Koja in Uganda and Tengeru in Tanganyika.⁸⁵⁵ The prospects ahead of these refugees were bleak. No countries were willing to go to the expense of sending selection missions to Africa when the DP camps in Europe still held rich pickings.

Overseas Resettlement

Churchill's statement to the British parliament that he hoped to be able to offer Polish soldiers and their families 'the citizenship and freedom of the British Empire' led to pressure being applied to Dominions and British Commonwealth territories to include the Poles in Africa in their recruitment drives. Canada and Australia were recruiting in the DP camps in Europe and they were eventually convinced to send selection teams to Africa at the IRO's expense.

⁸⁵⁴ AN, AJ/43/135, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission IRO East Africa to Director General IRO, Geneva, 9 February 1949; AJ/43/789/46/1, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission IRO East Africa to Director General IRO HQ, Geneva, 10 February 1950.

⁸⁵⁵ AN, AJ/43/616/42/1, International Refugee Organization, East African Mission, Monthly Narrative Report, January 1949.

Canada

Canada's immigration policy before 1946 was highly selective and restrictive.⁸⁵⁶ This was relaxed somewhat due to increased labour demand associated with post-war economic growth. Motivated by economic rather than humanitarian concerns, the Canadian government had in 1946/47 accepted 4,527 Polish ex-servicemen from Italy and the UK into Canada when cheap labour provided by German prisoners of war had come to an end.⁸⁵⁷ Some of these Poles had families in Africa and under the 1946 Close Relatives Immigration Scheme they were able to bring them to Canada. The Canadians also sent Selection Missions to the DP camps in Germany where between 1946 and 1952, they recruited 165,000 migrants, 39,000 of whom were Polish. In late June 1949, a seven-person Canadian Selection Mission arrived in Africa to recruit single women for domestic service and nursing, and single men for mining, logging and agriculture. Only applicants aged between eighteen and forty years of age would be considered. Young men and women were encouraged to part with parents and siblings who could later apply to migrate to Canada under the family migration scheme.⁸⁵⁸

The IRO, which was funding the Mission's Africa trip, found that there were many hurdles to overcome before and during the Canadian visit. Described as 'prima donnas' in an internal IRO memo, the Canadian personnel's departure was delayed by inoculation omissions which in turn cut short their time in Africa. Worried about the tropical climate they asked to be provided with 'thin clothing', and concerned for their personal safety they refused to board private planes in Africa that had been especially chartered for them.⁸⁵⁹

During the selection process the requirement for medical screening for TB, venereal disease and physical deformities placed a heavy load on local health services. Local doctors were seconded to carry out medical examinations in the camps, and hospital and laboratory staff in the towns of Arusha near the Tengeru camp and Kampala some distance from the Koja camp, worked long hours to process a huge volume of medical files in a very short time. The isolation of the camps in Africa and the rushed nature of the visit also caused problems that called for creative solutions. When x-ray plates ordered from London by the IRO,

⁸⁵⁶ Until 1946, Canada's immigration policy only allowed the entry of British subjects (either by birth or naturalization), U.S. citizens, wives and unmarried children under eighteen years or fiancées of Canadian citizens (providing they were not Asian), and agriculturalists with sufficient funds to acquire a farm. Christian Lieb, *Moving West: German-Speaking Immigration to British Columbia, 1945-1961*, PhD Thesis, University of Victoria, 2008, p. 189.

⁸⁵⁷ Martin Thornton, 'The Resettlement in Canada of 4,527 Polish ex-servicemen, 1946-47', *Immigration Minorities*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1989, pp. 235-251.

⁸⁵⁸ AN, AJ/43/790/55/2/E.AFR, Brigadier M. S. Lush to D. C. Stephen, IRO Beirut, 9 June 1949.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Geneva, did not arrive on time, the entire stocks available in Nairobi and Mombasa hospitals were flown in for the use of the selection team, and when Canadian Certificates of Identity did not arrive on time from Germany, the IRO office in Nairobi 'forged and had printed a large number of travel documents' to overcome this problem.⁸⁶⁰

The Canadians travelled first to Koja, in Uganda, where 'very nearly everyone came forward who had the remotest chance of being selected, and the selectors did what they could to fit the applicants into their rather rigid categories.'⁸⁶¹ Prior to the Canadians' arrival, the IRO had carried out its own assessment of the resettlement prospects of the refugees and held out considerable hope for the success of many of the applicants.

Table 6.3 Resettlement Prospects of Polish Refugees in Africa, Feb 1949⁸⁶²

Resettlement Prospects	Koja Uganda	Tengeru Tanganyika
Excellent	341	1350
Fair	390	753
Borderline	276	550
Hardcore	329	1166
Total	1330	3819

Over half of the 1,330 refugees in Koja had 'fair' to 'excellent' resettlement prospects according to the IRO survey. The Canadians selected 120, a disappointing number, but as almost all were members of family units there were good prospects that a further 130 would be accepted into Canada at a later date under the family migration scheme.⁸⁶³

After Koja, the Canadians visited Tengeru in Tanganyika, an experience which led Mr Sharrer, one of the representatives of the Canadian Ministry of Labour, to write a report to his superiors full of horror and dismay. Familiar with the misery and chaos of the refugee camps in Germany, he was shocked to find what appeared to be 'a small but thriving Polish town reproduced in rural Africa'. In Germany he had met with refugees desperate for the

⁸⁶⁰ AN, AJ/43/789/46/1, H. A. Curtis, IRO Nairobi to Brigadier M. S. Lush, Special Adviser on Middle East Affairs, IRO HQ Geneva, 1 July 1949; AJ/43/790/55/2/E.AFR, M. S. Lush to D. C. Stephen, IRO Beirut, 9 June 1949.

⁸⁶¹ AN, AJ/43/789/46/1, H. A. Curtis, IRO Nairobi to Brigadier M.S. Lush, Special Adviser on Middle East Affairs, IRO HQ Geneva, 1 July 1949.

⁸⁶² AN, AJ/1062/51/3, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission IRO East Africa to Director General IRO HQ Geneva, 21 February 1949.

⁸⁶³ AN, AJ/43/789/46/1, H. A. Curtis, IRO Nairobi to Brigadier M. S. Lush, Special Adviser on Middle East Affairs, IRO HQ Geneva, 1 July 1949.

opportunity to start a new life, while in Tengeru many of the refugees had not even applied to migrate to Canada. His report described the refugees as 'content to live a life of leisure with most of the manual work being done for them by native Africans'. Taken on a tour of the camp with its many social and recreational facilities, entertained by a concert put on by clean and neatly dressed school children, and hosted to an evening banquet to which some of the women wore evening dress, Mr Sharrer was appalled at what he considered to be an 'ostentatious display of well-being'. The IRO sprang to the Polish refugees' defence, outlining the eight-year history of the Tengeru camp and praising the Poles for 'doing so much with so little'.⁸⁶⁴ Privately they acknowledged that the refugees in Tengeru were not 'movement-minded' and the camp's British Commandant and staff had adopted a rather *laissez-faire* attitude which did not help the IRO in its pressing need to close the camps.⁸⁶⁵

Motivated by economic rather than humanitarian concerns, the Canadian Mission applied strict selection criteria to recruit young, healthy and mostly single men and women for resettlement as unskilled labour in Canada. Just a week after the Mission flew out of Nairobi, 463 refugees were on a train bound for the port of Mombasa where they would board the 'General Black' to begin the long journey to their new home.⁸⁶⁶

A second group of Polish refugees arrived in Canada from Africa in September 1949 under a special immigration quota created by the Canadian Government in August 1948. Motivated by humanitarian concerns, the Canadian Government undertook to accept one thousand orphans into Canada and assigned the Catholic Immigrant Aid Society to implement the scheme. The one thousand orphans included 123 from Africa.⁸⁶⁷

Over one thousand unaccompanied children evacuated from the Soviet Union found refuge in Africa. The largest number, 824, arrived from Persia in 1942 and were placed in orphanages at the Tengeru and Masindi camps.⁸⁶⁸ Another five hundred from Persia went to South Africa in 1943 under an agreement negotiated without British involvement, between the Polish Government in exile and the Government of the Union of South Africa.⁸⁶⁹ A group

⁸⁶⁴ Irene Tomaszewski, 'From the Snows of Siberia to the Snows of Kilimanjaro', in *Cosmopolitan Review*, Spring 2009, <http://cosmopolitanreview.com/category/archives/2009-spring/>, (accessed 17 January 2014).

⁸⁶⁵ AN, AJ/43/787/31/12, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to Brigadier M. S. Lush, Special Adviser on Middle East Affairs, IRO London, 10 August 1949.

⁸⁶⁶ AN, AJ/43/135, East Africa Mission - Final Report, H. A. Curtis, Senior IRO Representative, East Africa and Rhodesia to Director-General IRO HQ, Geneva, 2 November 1950; Tomaszewski, 'From the Snows of Siberia to the Snows of Kilimanjaro', *Cosmopolitan Review*.

⁸⁶⁷ Lynne Taylor, *Polish Orphans of Tengeru*, p. 92.

⁸⁶⁸ AAN, MPiOS 131/106/22-23, MPiOS Nairobi Report, November to December 1942; 131/106/140, MPiOS Nairobi Report, June to August 1943.

⁸⁶⁹ AAN, MPiOS 131/115, Polish Consul General, Pretoria to the MPiOS, London, 19 May 1943.

of orphans from the so-called Sappers' Orphanage in Persia arrived in East Africa in June 1944 in the care of nineteen Sisters of Nazareth and settled in Morogoro.⁸⁷⁰ Finally, a small number of unaccompanied children were among 720 Polish refugees transferred to East Africa from India in March 1948 when the refugee camps there closed.⁸⁷¹

On arriving in Africa, some of the unaccompanied children were reunited with family members from whom they had been separated for months or years. Others had to wait until after the war to find family who were traced in Poland or elsewhere. Many who had arrived in Africa as minors lost their 'unaccompanied child' status once they reached the age of majority which the IRO considered to be sixteen. Towards the end of 1948 when the IRO was working hard to repatriate or resettle all of the refugees and close the camps, there remained between one hundred and one hundred and fifty orphans and unaccompanied children still living in Africa, gathered in the children's home at Tengeru in Tanganyika.⁸⁷²

The question before the IRO was whether the children should be repatriated to Poland or resettled elsewhere. The IRO's mandate was to return unaccompanied children to their country of origin if all efforts to locate family failed, although in deciding on each case the 'best interests of the children' were to be taken into account.⁸⁷³ The Polish (Warsaw) Government pursued the repatriation of the children while the Board of Guardians with legal responsibility for the orphans strongly resisted this move.⁸⁷⁴ The Board had been established with the support of the local Catholic Church in 1946 in anticipation of this very problem. The children were mostly teenagers and expressed no wish to return to Poland. The IRO therefore decided to pursue resettlement opportunities and to move the children to Italy where they could be readily available to be interviewed and medically screened by visiting migration missions. Organisations in two countries, the Women's Voluntary Services in the UK, and the Catholic Immigrant Aid Society in Canada, lodged proposals with their governments to accept the children.

Afraid of the long arm of the Polish Government and fearful that the children, once outside British controlled territory, could be forced to repatriate, the Board of Guardians

⁸⁷⁰ PISM, KOL 174/7, History of the Morogoro Settlement, Polish Settlement Leader, Kondoia, 4 October 1946.

⁸⁷¹ AN, AJ/43/135, East Africa Mission - Final Report from H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO, East Africa, to the Director General, IRO HQ, Geneva, 2 November 1950.

⁸⁷² Królikowski, *Stolen Childhood*, p. 177.

⁸⁷³ Lynne Taylor, *In the Children's Best Interests: Unaccompanied Children in American-Occupied Germany, 1945-1952*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2017, p. 204. See also Zahra, *The Lost Children*.

⁸⁷⁴ AN, AJ/43/1057/39/133-134, In His Majesty's High Court of Tanganyika at Dar es Salaam, Miscellaneous, Civil Cause No. 9 of 1946, Sgd. Judge L. Lloyd-Blood, Issued 12 August 1946; AJ/43/1057/39/97-98, H. A. Curtis, Senior PCIRO Representative, East Africa and Rhodesia to Chief of Mission, PCIRO Cairo, 21 February 1948.

requested a three-month delay in any plans to move the children out of Africa to allow time for Canada and the UK to decide on the proposals before them. As there was no guarantee that either country would take the children, the IRO insisted that the move to Italy proceed and set a deadline of 1 May 1949 for this to occur. The deadline came and went. The trucks that arrived at Tengeru to pick up the children and take them to the Arusha train station waited all morning and then rumbled away empty. The train reserved to carry the children to Mombasa was cancelled. Not one child could be found. The IRO threatened to withdraw funding from the children as lack of cooperation with repatriation or resettlement plans made them ineligible for IRO assistance.

Relentless pressure was brought to bear on the Board of Guardians by the IRO and colonial authorities and they finally and reluctantly agreed to the removal of the children. The children left Africa on 3 June 1949 bound for Italy. For the next three months and even after their arrival in Canada in September 1949, they were the subject of much media and diplomatic attention. The Polish Government used their case to illustrate what it considered to be the West's determination to prevent the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Poles. The IRO, the UK, Italy and Canada were all stridently denounced in Soviet propaganda. As late as 1949, the IRO was formally denounced on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly by the Polish Government for 'kidnapping' the Polish orphans from Tengeru.⁸⁷⁵

Over seven hundred Polish refugees from Africa migrated to Canada. The Canadian Mission recruited 463 unskilled labourers, a number of whom lodged applications for family members from the African camps to join them in Canada, once they were settled there. There were also more than 123 orphans and unaccompanied children who were accepted by Canada on humanitarian grounds.

Australia

Meanwhile, the IRO prepared for the arrival of the Australian Mission. After the Canadian Mission's criticism of the Tengeru camp, and the international controversy caused by the movement of the unaccompanied children to Canada, it held out hope that its experience with the Australian Mission and the resettlement of refugees in Australia would flow more smoothly.

The war in the Pacific brought home to Australia its defence vulnerabilities: it was a large island nation with a population of just seven million. After the war, the Australian

⁸⁷⁵ For a detailed historical account of these events see Taylor, *Polish Orphans of Tengeru*.

Government embarked on a massive nation-building programme with population growth and economic development as key goals. It set a population growth target of two per cent per annum and turned to immigration to meet this goal. The Department of Immigration was established in July 1945 and Australia entered into a number of agreements with the United Kingdom, its traditional source of immigrants, offering free and assisted passage to British ex-servicemen and their families, and selected civilians. When the supply of immigrants from the UK ran dry, there was a major shift in Australia's migration policy, and the Government extended its recruitment beyond Britain's shores to Europe. In July 1947, Australia entered into an agreement with the IRO to resettle displaced persons and sent its first selection team to Germany. Under the Australian Displaced Persons Resettlement Scheme migrants were admitted to Australia as indentured labour, bound to work for two years in whatever employment they were allocated on arrival by the Government Employment Services. Men would work as labourers, women as domestics. Between 1948 and 1953 a third (sixty thousand) of all refugees who came to Australia under the IRO programme were Poles.⁸⁷⁶

During 1948 and into 1949, the IRO repeatedly requested that Australian consider recruiting Poles from Africa whom they described as 'very good types'.⁸⁷⁷ In Australia, Catholic Archbishop Tweedy of Hobart took up the cause of the Polish refugees in Africa and made numerous representation to Arthur Calwell, the Minister for Immigration, on their behalf. In 1947 and 1948, 796 Polish ex-servicemen, members of the Polish Resettlement Corps in the UK had migrated to Australia under a special arrangement between the UK and Australian governments to work for the Tasmanian Hydro Electric Commission.⁸⁷⁸ They, together with the Catholic clergy in the African refugee camps who engaged in detailed correspondence with the Archbishop, alerted him to the plight of the Polish refugees in Africa and enlisted his support.⁸⁷⁹ Other church and community organisations such as The Polish Welfare Office in Sydney, and the Australian Catholic Immigration Office also lobbied the Government on behalf of the Polish refugees in Africa.⁸⁸⁰ The IRO, whose operations were

⁸⁷⁶ James Jupp (ed.), *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation: Its People and Their Origins*, Oakleigh, Victoria, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 622-5; Egon F. Kunz, *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians*, Sydney, ANU Press, 1988, pp. 11-22, 78-85; Jayne Persian, 'Chifley liked them Blond': DP Immigrants for Australia', *History Australia*, vol. 12 no. 2, 2015, pp. 80-101.

⁸⁷⁷ NAA, A455, 255/1/3, To Army from Amber, AMM 747, for Heyes from Galleghan.

⁸⁷⁸ Eileen O'Brien, *Tasmania Transformed or Transportation Revisited? Immigration to Tasmania, 1945-1955*, Masters Dissertation, University of Tasmania, 1992, pp. 17-21.

⁸⁷⁹ NAA, A455, 255/1/3, Dr. B. Polionis and T. Labocha to the Archbishop of Tasmania, 20 December 1948; Rev. A. Wierzbiński, Polish Camp Tengeru to Archbishop Tweedy, Hobart, 24 November 1948.

⁸⁸⁰ NAA, A445, 255/1/3, Director, Polish Welfare Office, Sydney to The Secretary, Department of Immigration, 3 August 1949; T. H. E. Heyes, Secretary, Ministry of Immigration, to The Reverent Father W. A. Nicol, Director, Australian Catholic Immigration, 9 September 1949.

due to close on 30 June 1950, applied continuing and persistent pressure to the Australian Government appealing to its humanitarian instincts and offering it incentives to send a migrant selection team to Africa. The tipping point was reached when the IRO offered to meet the entire cost of sending an Australian Selection Team to East Africa in addition to the standard arrangement of financing the movement of the refugees and providing the necessary shipping.⁸⁸¹

The Australian Selection Team arrived in East Africa in November 1949, some four months after the Canadian Commission. It consisted of two Immigration Officers, a Medical Officer and a Security Officer who flew on Qantas Airways from Sydney on the 'kangaroo route' with stops at Darwin, Singapore, Calcutta, and Karachi before arriving at Cairo on 31 October 1949. The team processed applications in Egypt and Lebanon before proceeding to the main recruitment area of East Africa. Selection began in Tengeru Camp on 3 November 1949 and was completed by 30 November.

The IRO had extensively counselled the refugees following their less than enthusiastic response to the visiting Canadian Mission and this time the response was 'magnificent'. Almost the entire camp of 1,750 persons presented for selection.⁸⁸² The reasons given for applying to migrate to Australia included the desire 'to avoid the cold of Canada', to 'get as far away from Russia as possible', and to 'go somewhere free'. Not a lot was known about Australia, but the shelves of the camp library was scoured for information. The refugees learnt about Australian aborigines, strange wild animals, and the warm weather, and it seemed that Australia was not that different from Africa. Sixteen-year-old Bogdan whose family was rejected for Australia because of the ill health and advanced age of some of its members decided to go to Australia alone. 'To me Australia was a place to go. It was very exotic, very far away and a place to see'.⁸⁸³ Janina, twenty-eight years of age and single, was devoted to her elderly mother who was the only member of her family with her in Africa. Janina was devastated when her mother decided to return to Poland to be reunited with family there. Janina refused to return and chose Australia instead. 'I want to be free, to be free for the rest of my life,' she said. The freedom that mattered to her was personal rather than political. She didn't want to marry and she didn't want to hear the village gossips criticising her for not fulfilling her natural role in society as wife and mother. She had little time for the Catholic

⁸⁸¹ AN, AJ/43/788/42/2, International Refugee Organization, Resettlement Division, Geneva to IRO Nairobi, Beirut, Cairo, 13 September 1949.

⁸⁸² AN, AJ/43/788/42/2, Australian Selection in East Africa, Progress Report from IRO Nairobi to Director-General IRO HQ Geneva, 24 November 1949.

⁸⁸³ Allbrook & Cattalini, *The General Langfitt Story*, pp. 106-7; Wiland, *Mother Don't Cry*, pp. 161-2.

Church, the wealth of the institution, the superstitious beliefs of its practitioners, and the ignorance and intrusiveness of the clergy. She valued her personal independence above all and she was believed she had the skills and determination to make a new a life for herself in Australia.⁸⁸⁴

The IRO waved a carrot and a stick. It assured the refugees that 'no country offers more attractive settlement or employment opportunities' than Australia and 'no country extends a more hearty and more generous welcome'.⁸⁸⁵ It also issued a formal declaration stating:

From those refugees who are making no effort to re-establish themselves, H. M. Government must withdraw all assistance including the right of asylum. Such persons cannot expect and will not be permitted to live on international charity indefinitely. British charity will certainly not be extended to them ... To all refugees who fail to be selected by Australia ... H. M. Government counsel to give most earnest consideration to repatriation.⁸⁸⁶

Contrary to the experience with the Canadians, the IRO found the Australians to be 'an exceptionally good team' with a 'refreshing attitude', 'keenly concerned with making constructive efforts to solve the refugee problem.' These efforts included broadening their selection criteria; raising the upper age limit for heads of families to fifty years; accepting families with up to three children below working age; and accepting unaccompanied women with young children. They also provided advice on how families could assist each other in meeting selection criteria, such as entering into voluntary arrangements for the care and maintenance of underage or elderly family members. The efficiency of the Australian team was also impressive with between one hundred and fifty and two hundred people interviewed each day and an average of seventy six people medically examined daily.⁸⁸⁷ The Australian medical officer wrote in his report on Tengeru,

I have been most impressed with the Polish people of this Camp. They are very fine types and, I am sure, will make good New Australians. The children are remarkably healthy and fine, intelligent physical types. The children and adolescents would compare more than favourably with any

⁸⁸⁴ Chappell, *The Persian Blanket*, pp. 167-8, 172-8.

⁸⁸⁵ AN, AJ/43/788/42/2, Notes on Conference held in London 1-2 November 1948, Resettlement of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Australia, Issued for the Information and Guidance of IRO Field Officers in all areas.

⁸⁸⁶ AN, AJ/43/789/46/1, A. W. H. Wilkinson, FO London to Brigadier M. S. Lush, IRO Geneva, 3 November 1949.

⁸⁸⁷ AN, AJ/43/788/42/2, Australian Selection in East Africa - Progress Report from IRO Nairobi to Director General IRO HQ Geneva, 24 November 1949.

cross-section of Australians of similar age groups The accepted migrants consist principally of women, children and adolescents.⁸⁸⁸

Recruitment was nevertheless carried out with the employability of applicants in mind. Males had to be 'prepared to undertake unskilled manual work and females hospital, domestic and factory work.' Over-age parents were accepted provided 'they were fit for their age' and that there was 'a net gain in employables from the family group'.

The Australian Mission to Africa was issued with clear selection guidelines. One of these guidelines states that:

Selection of Jewish displaced persons be limited to the present 15% of total selections which operates in the selection of displaced persons in Germany.⁸⁸⁹

Approximately ninety of the Polish refugees for whom the IRO provided care and maintenance in the African territories were Jewish. None were repatriated to Poland. Over half, 47, were resettled locally: 25 in Kenya, 17 in Tanganyika, 3 in Southern Rhodesia, and 2 in Northern Rhodesia.⁸⁹⁰ The Australian Mission accepted approximately thirty Jews, well below the fifteen per cent limit set by the Immigration Department, and the remainder made plans for individual resettlement overseas.⁸⁹¹ The preferred overseas destination was Australia, followed by the USA, NZ, and the UK. One family of three planned to migrate to Israel and several other families agreed to move to Israel if their applications to go elsewhere were unsuccessful.⁸⁹²

At Tengeru, the Australian team assessed applications from 1,756 people and accepted 913.⁸⁹³ On completing their work at Tengeru, they moved on to Koja from 5 to 15 December where 727 persons were presented to the Mission and 308 were accepted.⁸⁹⁴ The total accepted from both camps was 1,221. On 4 February 1950, the 'USAT General Langfitt', a former US troop carrier, sailed from Mombasa for Fremantle, Western Australia, with 1,179

⁸⁸⁸ AN, AJ/43/788/42/2, Medical Report on Tengeru, Arusha, Dr. Bryan Mathieson, Senior Medical Officer, 1 December 1949.

⁸⁸⁹ NAA, A445, 255/1/3/128, Memo, Assistant Secretary, Encouraged Division, Department of Immigration, 8 September 1949, p. 2.

⁸⁹⁰ AN, AJ/43/787/34/2, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to the Secretary, Kenya Jewish Council for Training & Resettlement, Nairobi, 25 August 1949.

⁸⁹¹ AN, AJ/43/788/42/2, A. W. Joynes, Australian Selection Mission to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, Canberra, 3 December 1949.

⁸⁹² AN, AJ/43/787/34/2, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to the Secretary, Kenya Jewish Council for Training & Resettlement, Nairobi, 25 August 1949.

⁸⁹³ NAA, A445, 255/1/3/12, Alan W. Joynes, Australian Selection Team, Cairo, to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, Canberra, 23 December 1949.

⁸⁹⁴ NAA, A445, 255/1/3/30, A. W. Joynes, Australian Selection Mission, Koja Camp to the Secretary, Department of Immigration, Canberra, 13 December 1949.

Polish refugees on board. Mr Kemp, the Welfare and Information Officer with the Department of Immigration and member of the Selection Mission sailed with them. It was the General Langfitt's fourth trip carrying displaced persons to Australia, the first three trips sailing from Naples for Melbourne.

Residue

The IRO and the British Government had long been discussing the fate of the anticipated 'residue', the refugees left behind after those chosen by overseas missions had departed. Following the recruitment drives of the Canadian and Australian missions, 1,698 refugees remained in Africa in March 1950.⁸⁹⁵ The 'residue' were a confounding collection of characters. They included the lone aged, chronically ill, and physically handicapped, as well as refugees whose behaviour or family situation rendered them unacceptable for resettlement. There were irregular families, illegitimate children, and adults awaiting finalisation of divorce proceedings.⁸⁹⁶ There were sixteen criminals whose crimes included attempted murder, grievous bodily harm, assault, forgery and theft. Undesirables also included prostitutes and habitual drunkards.⁸⁹⁷ The ill and infirm included TB sufferers, syphilis cases, epileptics, the near-blind, deaf mutes, several adults without one or more limbs and fifteen 'mental cases' in institutional care.⁸⁹⁸

The British Government and the IRO made every effort to convince the colonial governments to absorb the remaining refugees into the population of East Africa. This was rejected outright.⁸⁹⁹ After lengthy debate and having explored every other available option, HMG reluctantly decided to send a UK Mission to East Africa to examine the 'residue' and make further selections for resettlement to the UK. The problem of disposing of these refugees delayed the closure of the IRO Nairobi office from 30 June to 31 October 1950.

A three-person UK Mission visited East Africa from 19 May to 6 July 1950. They described the Tengeru refugees as 'by and large ... pretty poor specimens. Inert and bovine they have done nothing for years and intend continuing thus.' The Mission found that few of the refugees had learnt English and concluded that 'the vast majority will remain in hostels as

⁸⁹⁵ TNA, CO 822/145/5, From East Africa High Commission, 7 March 1950.

⁸⁹⁶ AN, AJ/43/789/46/2, A. Lidie Fite, IRO Welfare Officer, Analysis of "Hardcore", 2 January to 19 March 1949,

⁸⁹⁷ TNA, CO 822/145/5, T. W. E. Roche, H. M. Chief Immigration Officer, Report of the British Mission to East Africa on Polish Refugees, 6 July 1950.

⁸⁹⁸ TNA, CO 822/145/5/42, Appendix to Memorandum by the Home Secretary on Admission of Additional Displaced Persons into the United Kingdom, March 1950.

⁸⁹⁹ TNA, CO 822/145/5/42, Memorandum by the Home Secretary on Admission of Additional Displaced Persons into the United Kingdom, March 1950.

completely useless members of British society.⁹⁰⁰ Despite this rather damning assessment, the Mission selected 1,460 for entry into the UK and arranged with the IRO for transportation to commence the following month.⁹⁰¹ Individual overseas and local resettlement continued to reduce the numbers and the 'residue' finally moved en masse to the UK was 1285. They did not include medical, security and criminal categories or their dependents whose future was still being negotiated.⁹⁰²

When the Nairobi IRO Office closed its doors on 31 October 1950 there were 266 Polish refugees remaining in East Africa, the 'hard core', divided almost equally between Koja and Tengeru. In his final report, the IRO's Chief Officer in Nairobi described the camps as 'depressing places with much too high a proportion of invalids and undesirables to make for a healthy community life'. In his view it was in the best interest of the refugees and the general public for the camps to be closed as soon as possible and for all remaining refugees to be admitted into the UK where they could be sorted out on arrival. The British however, declined to accept the IRO's advice and put its weight instead behind negotiating with Tanganyika to accept all the 'mental' and TB cases, and Uganda the bed-ridden. The criminal and otherwise undesirable cases and their dependents had been removed from the IRO register and earmarked for deportation to Poland.⁹⁰³

Colonial governments continued to reject the British proposal that they absorb the 'hard core' into their territories and reiterated their request that the British Government adhere to its original undertaking that no refugees would remain in East Africa.⁹⁰⁴ The 266 'hard core' cases were still in Africa in July 1951, an entire year after the UK Mission's visit to address the issue of the residue of refugees in East Africa. The majority of these, 173, had been granted visas for the UK but to the frustration of the colonial authorities there were endless delays in arranging shipping for them. The colonial governments advised the FO that if there were no IRO vessels calling at Mombasa or Dar es Salaam in the near future, they would themselves arrange private shipping with costs to be borne by the IRO. A number of

⁹⁰⁰ TNA, CO 822/145/5, T. W. E. Roche, H. M. Chief Immigration Officer, Report of the British Mission to East Africa on Polish Refugees, 6 July 1950.

⁹⁰¹ AN, AJ/43/790/57/1, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to Brig. Cyrus Greenslade, Chief of IRO London Office, 20 July 1950.

⁹⁰² TNA, CO/822/145/5/126, Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Chairman of the East Africa High Commission, 27 July 1950.

⁹⁰³ AN, AJ/43/135, East Africa Mission Final Report, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to Director-General, IRO Headquarters Geneva, 2 November 1950.

⁹⁰⁴ AN, AJ/43/135, East Africa Mission Final Report, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to Director-General, IRO Headquarters Geneva, 2 November 1950.

'special cases' remained to be decided upon.⁹⁰⁵ When the IRO ended its operational phase on 31 January 1952, there were twenty five Polish refugees remaining in Africa being maintained by the UK Government.⁹⁰⁶

Table 6.4 Countries of Destination and Numbers Resettled Under IRO, Oct 1950⁹⁰⁷

Country	Number	Country	Number
Argentina	104	Mexico	1
Australia	1,226	Middle East (military transfers)	127
Austria	1	Morocco	1
Belgium	4	Netherlands	2
Brazil	5	New Zealand	9
Canada	792	Northern Rhodesia	302
Dominican Republic	2	Poland	1,795
Egypt	3	Southern Rhodesia	116
Eritrea	1	South Africa	16
France (1) Individual resettlement	16	Sweden	2
(2) Transfer for presentation to selection missions	545	Tanganyika	230
Germany	3	Uganda	10
Haiti	3	United Kingdom (1) Individual resettlement, Westward Ho! and transfers (2) Operation Polejump	1,638 9,491
India	1	United States of America	31
Ireland	2	Venezuela	8
Israel	10	Local Marriages	318
Italy	8	Still on Strength	266
Japan	1		
Kenya	298		
Lebanon	45	Total	17,493

⁹⁰⁵ AN, AJ/43/1206-1207, W. P. Dawson to A. W. H. Wilkinson, FO, 17 July 1951.

⁹⁰⁶ Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, pp. 490, 564.

⁹⁰⁷ AN, AJ/43/135/1, East Africa Mission Final Report, H. A. Curtis, Chief of Mission, IRO East Africa to Director-General, IRO Headquarters Geneva, 2 November 1950.

Conclusion

The tide of the war had turned by 1944 and a succession of military and political events renewed feelings of both hope and despair in the refugees in Africa. Militarily, the Italian Campaign and the Allied invasion of Western Europe augured well for the ultimate defeat of Nazi Germany. At the same time the failed Warsaw Uprising and the 'liberation' of Poland by the Red Army saw the nation once again under Soviet occupation. Despair grew as political events unfolded in 1945. In January, a Soviet-sponsored provisional government was declared in Poland, and in July, it was recognised by Britain as the legitimate government of Poland. Allied conferences at Yalta in February and Potsdam in August, redrew Poland's borders, and pre-war Eastern Poland annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939, remained in the Soviet Union. The refugees' long-held hope of returning to an imagined Poland was shattered, for the answer to the question, *Jaka Polska?* was now *'Komunistyczna Polska'*.

The war was over and colonial governments proceeded to hold the British Government to account over the agreement on the wartime domicile of Polish refugees in Africa. British efforts to shift responsibility for the refugees to UNRRA took twelve months to materialise due in large part to the refugees' unwillingness to co-operate. 'Who to trust?' was now the question the refugees asked themselves. They would 'wait and see'. Refugees reflected on the politics and economics of return while waiting for news of family in Poland, and in the Polish army. Family reunion was the main motivation for leaving Africa. For more than five years after the war, UNRRA and then the IRO took responsibility for facilitating the movement of refugees to destinations of their choice. Approximately half of the refugees were reunited with family who were members of the Polish armed forces demobilised to the UK. Almost one in five were reunited with family in Poland. Just over a third eventually chose resettlement overseas. The motivations for migrating to a new country were a combination of personal, political and economic. While the lived experience of communism during occupation and deportation remained forefront in the minds of mothers, the children and young people were attracted by the opportunity of building new lives in the West. Almost a thousand refugees were accepted permanently into the African territories under strict regulations. The 'residue' of one and half thousand were reluctantly accepted by the UK.

The maintenance of the refugees after the war, firstly by the British without the involvement of the Polish government, then UNRRA, and finally the IRO, involved a

diminution of living standards in the camps and the curtailment of many of the services previously provided by the Polish Government-in-exile for the refugees. Colonial authorities were complicit in this decline in care, determined to finally rid their territories of the 'problem' of refugees.

Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with examining the experience of displacement in Africa of refugees from Poland during and after the Second World War. It aimed to take this episode of displacement out of its 'nationalist box' and examine it afresh from a new perspective, a refugee perspective. Viewing displacement through the eyes of the refugees has cast a light on actors and issues that have hitherto been on the periphery of historical enquiry into this episode. It revealed that the attitudes and policy decisions of British colonial authorities in host territories were crucial to the management and welfare of the refugees. In particular, the decision to accommodate the refugees in camps, and the choice of camp locations, had a significant impact on the displacement experience. The refugee perspective brought into focus the 'place' in which the refugees were 'matter out of place', namely British colonial Africa, and revealed the crucial contribution of African labour not only to the construction but also to the ongoing functioning of the camps. Further it affirmed the heterogeneity of the camp population and the complexity of social relations that were part of refugee life both inside and sometimes outside the camps. Finally, a focus on the lived experience and everyday practice of camp life brought into stark contrast the meaning that the two main groups in the refugee population, women and children, assigned to the experience of displacement: exile for one and freedom for the other.

Both before and after making their decision to provide wartime domicile to the Polish refugees in Persia, British colonial authorities devoted considerable energy to discussing issues and concerns associated with the maintenance of refugees in their territories. Issues such as food and shelter, climate and health, the response of the British community to this potential 'burden', and the refugees' understanding of and place in a colonial society. There was virtually no discussion on the question of how the refugees would be accommodated. Camps were the solution. MERRA had set the precedent by housing Greek refugees in camps in the Middle East, and EARA, its subsidiary, appears to have automatically fallen in with that practice. British African territories were experienced in running prisoner of war camps and internment camps, and refugee camps were simply added to their list. Military and civilian prisoners and internees were in camps for reasons of security i.e. they were a perceived threat due to their Axis nation origins. What kind of threat did the controlled arrival of a defined number of refugees from an Allied nation for the purpose of temporary abode pose? Especially, as these particular refugees were women, children and the elderly? This

study has suggested that the refugees were a threat to the 'colonial order of things' - political order, economic order, and social order. This answer does not seem entirely satisfactory and the question, 'Why camps?' continues to resonate not only in relation to the Poles in Africa but in relation to refugees everywhere.

For the refugees then, displacement in Africa was experienced as the camp. The purpose of the camp was containment and it was therefore a space with a boundary. There were no barbed wire fences but always a built or natural boundary that clearly marked off the space within from the space without. Living in the camp identified one as 'other', as not belonging in the wider community. Permission or a pass was required for anyone to enter or exit the camp. At an individual level, lack of freedom of movement created the dependency of refugees on colonial authorities for almost every aspect of their lives. It also stifled spontaneity. Activities such as walking to the Asian shop at the crossroads to buy flour or across the field to the African village for fruit could not be undertaken without planning and permission. The boundary infantilised adults who were required to seek approval from camp authorities for the most basic of daily activities. As might be expected, in every camp boundaries were transgressed by adults and children alike, but it was always at the risk of being 'caught' doing 'something wrong' and being subject to 'punishment'.

The camp not only limited individual action, it also limited social interaction. The camp segregated the refugee population from the wider community. There were organised, formal national celebrations when local military and government officials and the neighbouring farmers were invited to the camps to join in festivities. There were organised visits to Catholic missions. The scouts bivouacked on farms. If the camp was situated not too far from a town, the camp truck carried a group of refugees to the movies or shopping on a Saturday afternoon. But informal opportunities for social interaction with those outside the camp were limited. In the field of employment, it was theoretically possible for a refugee with permission to be employed outside the camp but in practice, there were just a handful of cases where this actually occurred during the war years. Living in a camp meant living, working and socialising in the same place, with the same people, at the same time, under the same authority, in accordance with a single overall plan. This study has not argued that the refugees were inmates of a total institution but it is not difficult to understand how the young women in particular described living in a camp as living 'in an open prison' and even 'being buried alive.'⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁸ KARTA, AW 943, Testimony of Maria Dybczyńska; Interview with Irena Makowiecka.

The containment of the refugees in camps and their resultant social and cultural seclusion from colonial society also served to reinforce their collective identity. The Polish refugees in the camps in Africa strongly identified as 'a nation in exile.' Their sense of belonging in and to Poland was repeatedly articulated in the enactment of culture - the words of the hymns they sang, the plays they chose to perform, the national costumes they dressed up in, the language they spoke, the books they read. They saw their forced removal from Poland as a grave injustice. They had not fled, they had not abandoned Poland, they had been forced into exile. The focus of routine activities such as education for the children, literacy classes for adults, scouting, nursing training, and employment experience, was preparation for the return from exile, the return to Poland. Though it was not the purpose of the camp, a by-product of camp living was the strengthening of a collective national identity.

It would be erroneous to imply that Polishness was at the heart of every refugees' *raison d'être* or that being part of a collective identity was something to which everyone aspired. The demographic composition of the refugee population was a reflection of the population of interwar Poland. There were tensions and troubles between individuals and groups as there would have been had they been living in towns, villages or farms in Poland. In Africa ethnic Poles were jealous of Jews who secured prestigious jobs working for the English administration in the camps, while the formal representative of the Jewish community held the Polish administration in disdain and asked colonial authorities for a separate camp for Jews. The Polish government contributed funding for the building of an Orthodox church which ethnically Polish youth repeatedly vandalised, twice destroying the altar. Drunkenness and violent brawling broke out where illicit stills pumped out cheap liquor. Prostitutes plied their trade in African askari quarters and on the streets of larger towns. Missionary priests led protests and soldiers 'on leave' organised coups against the camp secular authorities. And in one of the territories, the legal system could not keep up with the cases of burglaries and assaults that accumulated in the courtroom involving Polish men. Though refugees shared a common citizenship and deportation experience, they remained a heterogeneous collection of individuals and groups with varying degrees of commitment to the camp community and the nationalist cause.

Women, wives and mothers, were the largest group in the camps, making up close to half the total population. With strength and fortitude and sometimes good fortune, these women survived 'Siberia'. They arrived in Africa with nothing but what remained of their families. Many children were missing, deceased or lost or still in the Soviet Union. With no personal input, the women were assigned to a territory, a camp, and a hut in Africa. Displaced

from Poland to Africa they could not have felt further from home, physically or culturally. Disorientated, their priority was caring for the family for whom they now had sole responsibility. Chapter Three investigated the provision of shelter, food and clothing to the refugees, essential needs which were the responsibility of colonial authorities. Shelter was primitive and overcrowded but caring for a family meant creating a home so the women set to work inside and outside the African huts. White-washed walls, curtains, flowerbeds, and pets were small but symbolic reminders of home. Basic food items were rationed and available in adequate supply. A mother's central role in preparing food for the family and the importance of eating together as a family were two core features of family life that were challenged by the preferred camp practice of communal kitchens and dining rooms. The women resisted, lighting little campfires outside their huts on which to cook the family meal if need be, and camp authorities reluctantly acquiesced to their will. Not only did the women cook their own meals but they endeavoured to cook Polish food with produce from camp farms and from their own vegetables plots planted around the huts. They shaped their displacement into an image of home.

Polish women in the camps, inspired by the myth of *Matka Polka* adapted to and reshaped the primitive shelters and basic food rations into family homes and Polish meals. Daily life began to resemble family life again. Friendships grew in the huts and gardens as people, contained in a defined space and segregated from outside society, came to know and trust each other. The man was the traditional head in a Polish household but with husbands absent, the camp administration and particularly its leaders, British and Polish, assumed responsibility for tasks normally carried out by husbands and fathers, tasks such as providing a home and putting food on the table. They became father figures by being present when fathers were absent. And the rules and regulations of the camp were the authority in the women's lives, not absent husbands. Though there were very few men in the camps, the militaristic and patriarchal structure of camp governance endowed them with complete authority.

Polish interwar society reproduced itself in the camps. The investigation carried out in Chapter Four into employment, health, and law and order in the camps revealed that everyone did not live in primitive mud huts. Some lived in houses with window panes and timber floors located not in what looked like a military compound but in a separate elevated part of the camp. Not everyone had to trudge with a bucket to the tap at the end of the road for water. Some had African servants. Higher education and resultant employment in senior positions in the camp created a small group of 'haves' and a large group of 'have nots'. A reluctance on the

part of colonial authorities to allow the refugees to work outside the camp led to the Polish authorities creating as many jobs as they could inside the camps in schools, hospitals, community centres, workshops and on camp farms. Leadership positions obviously went to the educated who lived in superior accommodation and with commensurate salaries could afford to purchase fine clothes and have African servants to cook and clean for them. Knowledge of the English language guaranteed a superior status in the camp as communications with the British administration were indispensable. If Siberia had a levelling effect on the deported population, then Africa restored a social hierarchy echoing that of interwar Poland.

As in any society, there were those who struggled to find their place. It was an unfortunate reality that between a third and half of employable women in the camp were unemployed. Their only income in many cases was the modest monthly allowance paid to each refugee by Polish authorities. These women had a lot of time on their hands, time to think, to remember, to grieve, and time to long for a return to a Poland that no longer existed except in their imaginations. These were not happy women. However, displacement and the camp also offered opportunities for inventing new lives. Between the educated leadership and the mass of unemployed, were women who grasped the opportunity that displacement provided to learn new skills or put existing experience to work in a range of employment positions in the camp. Some trained as nurses and worked in the hospital, others learnt typing and bookkeeping and worked in administration, others still became police women, or storekeepers, or YMCA youth workers, or cooks, or volunteered to teach when there was a shortage of qualified school teachers. The more adventurous young women found a way out of the camp leaving their families and the familiar Polishness of the camp community to serve in the British and Polish armed forces in Africa and Britain. A few, despite the restrictions on interacting with the local community, left the camp to marry.

It would be remiss not to acknowledge that one in five adults in the camps was male. As illustrated in Chapter Four, men featured in the camps in contrasting roles, either as leaders or as rebels, brawlers and burglars. There was a third group though who were men who because of their age or disability were not in the army. Prioritised for employment, these men worked as policemen, or sanitary inspectors, or were tradesmen, carpenters and mechanics, cobblers and tailors, gainfully employed in the camp's workshops. Their experience of displacement was quite different to that of women, free as most were of family responsibilities and spoilt for choice when it came to female companionship. This study has focussed primarily on the experiences of women and children as they were the overwhelming

majority of the residents in the camps leaving the experience of civilian males and wartime displacement for others to pursue.

Refugee children and the care provided to them by Polish authorities dominates the extant literature on the displacement experience in Africa. Almost all of the memoirs are written by refugees who were children in Africa. Throughout this thesis, and especially in the sections covering scouting and schooling, the voices of the children have been heard. The words of Mira perhaps best sum up how many of the children experienced displacement in Africa, 'I wasn't hungry, I was warm and I was free and I was with my mother. Nothing else mattered'.⁹⁰⁹ Food was important to the children. They had all experienced hunger in the Soviet Union. In the African camps they knew that they had a guaranteed food supply with no conditions attached. There may not have been a great variety of food but there would always be three meals a day and mothers would make sure to always have something extra available like fruit which was plentiful and cheap. The climate in Africa was warm. Though it carried its own risks it was not as extreme as the freezing cold of Siberian winters. 'I was free'. This is an interesting comment for a child to make. Mira was eleven when she arrived in Africa. Whether the reference is to political freedom or personal freedom is not clear. 'I was with my mother'. Children experienced the camp as a safe place for themselves and for their family. Being with one's mother brought a sense of security and stability to life and the risks of losing one's mother were far slimmer in Africa. Informed by their deportation experiences, children in Africa felt safe and secure and loved. One group of children whose experiences differed were the orphans and children from the children's homes. Their access to food often left them wanting more and the variable quality of care in the homes left some without adults with whom to bond. Children enjoyed being in Africa and were far more open to exploring its landscape and encountering its people than the adults. Whether they belonged to the scouts or not, whether they had permission or not, they regularly left the camp to be part of a wild and wonderful world beyond the camp boundary. Many acquired the basics of Swahili through contact with the African population in the camps and in the villages. Children lived in and enjoyed the present.

The strong emphasis in the camps on Polish culture, on Polish language, history and traditions is an indication of the overarching meaning Polish authorities and the refugees themselves ascribed to their displacement, that of exile. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the education system, the Polish Scouting Association, the Catholic Church all placed great

⁹⁰⁹ Interview with Mira.

emphasis on restoring and maintaining national identity. The idea that individual suffering was part of the greater travails of the nation and the belief in the power of redemption sustained the Poles over long years of foreign domination and oppression. Displacement and exile would end with the rebirth of the nation and return to Poland. This belief in the return to a free Poland was also relayed from the Polish Government in exile and the Polish armed forces. Despite all of the political and military indicators pointing to an uncertain future for post war Poland, Polish authorities and Polish exiles continued to believe.

This thesis contributes to the growing literature on displacement and the Second World War by investigating the wartime sojourn in British colonial Africa of refugees from Poland. It illustrates the early use of refugee camps by the British during the war, and tells of the novel contribution made by British colonial Africa to the Allied war effort. Both of these areas are under-researched as is the role played by African populations in this 'European refugees in Africa' episode. Taking a refugee rather than a national perspective, this study has demonstrated that lives are shaped by encampment, that communities grow in camps, and that there are multiple experiences and meanings to displacement.

Appendix

Oral History Project

Interviewees

Cieśla, Helena, November 2015.

Ciołek Paula, July 2016.

Cwecz Janina, January 2016.

Dąbrowska Danuta, February 2016.

Dąbrowski Zbyszek, February 2016.

Makowiecka Irena, November 2015.

Mira (surname withheld by request), November 2015.

Okulicz Irena, January 2016.

Patro Elizabeth, November 2015.

Patro Stanisław, October 2015.

Polakiewicz Władysława, January 2016.

Woźniak Sabina, November 2015.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of participant: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email (optional): _____

Conditions of the interview:

I (the interviewee) have read the information provided and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this interview, realizing that I may stop the interview at any time, and that I may withdraw from the project at any time prior to submission of the research for publication, without reason or prejudice.

I understand that the interview may be transcribed and edited, and that the transcript or parts of the transcript may be published.

I agree that the interviewer may provide access to the recording and/or transcript to researchers and other interested parties and deposit the interview and/or transcript in the State Library Heritage Oral History Collection for preservation and unrestricted public access including availability on the internet through the State Library website.

I assign ownership and copyright in the recording and material transcribed from the recording to the interviewer.

I may make special conditions about my interview, as detailed below:

I (the participant) have read the information provided and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I acknowledge the above as the conditions which will govern the interview, its recording, transcription, subsequent use and preservation.

Signed

Date

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by the University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any person considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with researchers at any time. In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of researchers may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing hreo-research@uwa.edu.au All research participants are entitled to retain a copy of the Participant Information Form and the Participant Consent Form relating to this research project.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Research is currently being undertaken at the University of Western Australia into Poles in Africa during and after the Second World War. The research is being carried out by Wanda Warlik, a PhD candidate, under the supervision of Professor Mark Edele, Professor of History in the School of Humanities at the University. The research is designed to gather information that will be used in the writing of a PhD thesis, the publication of articles, and the presentation of a conference paper.

The aim of the research project is the writing of a social history of the temporary settlements in British colonial Africa that were 'home' to Poles who had been deported to the Soviet Union and later evacuated via Iran to Africa, to see what kind of society evolved in the settlements, what kind of lives people were able to lead, and how they understood their lives. The topics to be explored include shelter, food and clothing, education, health, religion, recreation, law and order, relations with the wider community, and rehabilitation.

The research includes an **oral history project** i.e. interviews with the people who lived in the African settlements during and after the war. These interviews along with written memoirs and autobiographies constitute invaluable primary source material for the project, allowing the voice of the settlement residents to be heard. Other sources of information which will be consulted in the project are the official archives of the national governments (British and Polish) and the international humanitarian agencies (UNRRA and IRO) that were involved in establishing, administering and funding the settlements.

You have been approached to take part in this interview project because of your unique position as a deportee from Poland who found refuge in Africa during and/or after the Second World War. **The interview will focus specifically on your experiences in Africa.**

Interviews will take place during 2014 and 2015. It is expected that each person will be interviewed for no more than three hours in total. Sound recordings will be made of the interviews and when the project is complete, these will be deposited at the J S Battye Library, part of the State Library of Western Australia which collects and preserves the oral history of Western Australia. Participants will be given a digital copy of the interview upon request.

Please feel free to ask questions at any time, about the project or the way in which the information gathered in your interview will be used. You are also free to withdraw from the project at any time prior to submission for publication without having to provide a reason for doing so.

My contact details are: Wanda Warlik
 Email: wanda.warlik@research.uwa.edu.au
 Mobile phone: 0439 286 792

QUESTIONNAIRE/SURVEY INSTRUMENT

This semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire will be used as a guide for the interviews. The purpose is to gather impressions about the ten primary areas listed below.

Introductory question

Can you tell me when you came to Africa and where you lived in Africa?

Issues to be explored and an opening question for each issue:

Shelter

Can you describe the house you lived in and what other buildings were there in the camp?

Food

What food did you eat, who prepared it and where did you eat it?

Clothing

What kind of clothes did you have and where did they come from?

Education

Did you go to school and did you like going to school?

Health

Did the camp have a doctor/hospital? Were you ever ill or in need of medical treatment?

Religion

What religion(s) were practiced in the camp?

Recreation

What did you do after school and on weekends?

Law and Order

Who was in charge of the camp and did anyone cause trouble?

Relations with wider community

How often did you leave the camp and where did you go? What contact did you have with native Africans?

Rehabilitation

How did you decide which country to settle in permanently after the war?

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<https://www.britishpathe.com/search/query/Search>

South African Sanctuary for Polish Refugees (1939) 4 min 42 sec

New Homes for Poles in Lusaka (1940-1949) 1 min 20 sec

Polish Refugees Flee Poland and Arrive in Refugee Camps in Iran (Persia) 1943, 6 min

Poles in Persia (1943) 5 min 23 sec

Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCz9Mnlyx3ZmSJQ9iOWA8Kuw>

SIK 091 - Dzieci (Children) [in Middle East], 18 min 9 sec

SIK 1227 - Polish Refugees in Persia, 5 min 11 sec

SIK1277 - Polish Refugees in Africa - Lusaka, Tengeru, 12 min 16 sec

SIK 1317 - Polish Refugees in India, 4 min 1 sec

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