

Care for Civilian and Military Refugees in the South of France 1939–1940. Cooperation between the Polish Consulate in Marseille and the Polish Red Cross – Case Study

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to present the care of civilian and military refugees in the years 1939–1940 with the cooperation of the Polish Consulate in Marseille and the Polish Red Cross (PCK). Providing assistance to refugees was one of the key elements of the work carried out by both the Consulate and the PCK. It required considerable flexibility and action on many levels. Until June 1940, most of the care work was carried out by the Consulate. It was only after the defeat of France and the establishment of the PCK delegation in Marseille that responsibilities were divided. The main concern was to raise funds, set up shelters and provide medical care. It would not have been possible to obtain shelters for refugees if it had not been for the cooperation of the Consulate and the PCK with the local authorities. Until June 1940, the attitude of the French authorities towards Polish refugees was more favorable than after the defeat of France. As of September 1940, the Consulate ceased to function and was replaced by the Polish Office (Biuro Polskie), which began cooperating with the PCK delegation in Marseille.

Keywords: Second World War, France, Government in Exile, refugees, Polish Army in France, Poles, Marseille, PCK, Polish Consular Service in France

Introduction

The defeat of Poland in September caused internal chaos not only among the political elite but also among the civilian population. The immediate evacuation of the Polish Government, which was interned in Romania, could not continue its work in France. In view of the situation, a new Government headed by Władysław Sikorski was formed. France, by receiving and providing security for the constituted Polish Government on September 30, 1939, became a place of refuge for Polish citizens.¹ It is worth mentioning

¹ Henryk Batowski, *Polska dyplomacja na obczyźnie 1939–1941* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1991), 55–8; Stanisław Zabiello, *O rząd i granice. Walka dyplomatyczna o sprawę polską w II wojnie światowej*

that on September 7, 1939, Minister of Foreign Affairs Georges-Étienne Bonnet and Ambassador Juliusz Łukasiewicz signed a financial agreement, which was approved by a decree of September 9, by President of France Albert Lebrun. With this document, Poland was granted funds to cover the costs of running its Embassy and Consulates in France for the duration of the war. By June 30, 1940, Poland received the sum of 20,511,956 French francs.²

The French side supported the action of accepting refugees, expecting tangible benefits from the fact that people experienced in the 1939 campaign, as well as specialist cadres, would arrive on their territory. The French Government also envisaged the evacuation of individuals useful to French agriculture and industry, which also resulted in the later impossibility of including a certain group of Poles in the service of the Polish Army.³

The Polish Embassy, headed by Feliks Frankowski as chargé d'affaires (he took the place of Ambassador Juliusz Łukasiewicz), cooperated not only with the Consulates, but also with the Prefectures. At that time, the local authorities emphasized their willingness to help Poles. Subsequently, the Ministry of Social Welfare (MOS) provided financial assistance to refugees arriving from the country, as well as to members of military families, until the defeat of France in June 1940. The distribution of funds was regulated at a meeting of the Council of Ministers on March 1, 1940 in the form of regulations specifying the scope of activities and cooperation between the MOS and Government delegates for the care of refugees and representatives of consular authorities.⁴

(Warsaw: PAX, 1986), 32–9; Tadeusz Wyrwa, *Bezdroża dziejów Polski. Kraj i emigracja po 1 września 1939 r.* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2000), 13–25; Anna Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża. Konsulat polski w Marsylii 1919–1940* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2019), 168; Małgorzata Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji? (Francja wobec Polski w latach 1938–1944)* (Warsaw: Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN, 2003), 186–90; Waldemar Michowicz, “Organizacja polskiego aparatu dyplomatycznego w latach 1918–1939,” in *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, vol. 4, 1918–1939, ed. Piotr Łossowski (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995), 27; Anna Pachowicz, *Towarzystwo Opieki nad Polakami we Francji 1941–1944* (Toruń: Oficyna Wydawnicza Kucharski, 2013), 22; Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, *Z mojego okienka. Fakty i wrażenia z lat 1939–1945*, vol. 1, 1939–1940, ed. Przemysław Marcin Żukowski (Łomianki: LTW, 2013).

² Anna Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, “Ośrodki miejskie południowej Francji – miejscem schronienia dla polskich uchodźców w latach 1939–1940,” in *Oblicza wojny. Miasto i wojna*, vol. 3, eds. Witold Jarno and Jarosław Kita (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2021), 195–208.

³ Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji?*, 186–90.

⁴ Archiwum Akt Nowych (*The Central Archives of Modern Records*) [hereafter: AAN], Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Marseille (hereafter: KRPM), 464/834, KRPM to Ministry of Social Welfare in Angers, Marseille, February 1940, p. 81; Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu (Polish Library in Paris) [hereafter: BPP], Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Toulouse (hereafter: KRPT), 41, Polish Embassy in Paris to Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Toulouse on sending the regulations on the organisation of authorities and bodies for the care of refugees adopted by the Council of Ministers on 1 March 1940, Paris 10 April 1940; *Protokoły z posiedzeń Rady Ministrów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, vol. 1, październik 1939 – czerwiec 1940, ed. Wojciech Rojek in cooperate with Andrzej Suchcitz (Kraków: Secesja, 1994), doc. 20a [Proposal of the Ministry of

The defeat of France in June 1940 caused chaos among members of the Polish Government in Exile.⁵ It was then that President Władysław Raczkiewicz, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers, took the decision to evacuate the Polish authorities to the British Isles, in effect obtaining an official *droit de résidence* from the British Government.⁶ The high Polish authorities arrived in London on June 21, 1940, welcomed by Edward Raczynski, then Polish Ambassador to London, together with King George VI.⁷ The evacuation of the Government did not mean the departure of all diplomatic representatives. It was directly related to the need to organize care for the civilian and military population remaining on French soil, and to take steps to evacuate them. Raczkiewicz entrusted this work to Stanisław Kot and General Marian Kukiel.⁸ The former was to take charge of the evacuation of civilians, while the latter of the military. The formal provision of care for the refugees was intended to calm the mood among the refugees, where the successes of the German army were causing feelings of anxiety, uncertainty or even panic. Furthermore, those in the Northern departments of France occupied by Germany found themselves in a tragic situation.

As soon as the evacuation of the Government to the British Isles began, the most urgent matter was to take care of the pre-war emigration residing in the occupied and non-occupied zone (Vichy states), as well as the civilian refugees and soldiers who were arriving constantly. Following the occupation of Paris by the Germans and the signing of the Armistice on June 22, 1940, and the acceptance of German terms, it was only a matter of time before the Polish Consulates in France, which operated in the unoccupied zone, were closed down.⁹ Before this event took place, however, a meeting of the Council of Ministers on June 17, 1940 decided to define the principles and nature of assistance to Polish citizens who were in France.¹⁰ The authorization to organize the relief effort was given to Feliks Chiczewski by Prime Minister Sikorski, after consultation with Marshal

Social Welfare, in coordination with the Minister of the Treasury, at a meeting of the Council of Ministers on the principles of care and assistance for Polish refugees in France], 220; *Protokoły z posiedzeń Rady Ministrów*, doc. 20b [Principles of assistance and care for Polish war refugees in France], 220–2; Pachowicz, *Towarzystwo Opieki nad Polakami*, 22.

⁵ Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji?*.

⁶ Maria Pestkowska, *Za kulisami rządu polskiego na emigracji* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2000), 43.

⁷ Krzysztof Kania, *Edward Bernard Raczynski 1891 – 1993 dyplomata i polityk* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2014), 194; Tadeusz Wyrwa, “Władze RP we Francji. Odbudowa władz Rzeczypospolitej w Paryżu i Angers wrzesień 1939–czerwiec 1940,” in *Władze RP na Obczyźnie podczas II wojny światowej 1939–1945*, ed. Zbigniew Błażyński (London: Polskie Towarzystwo Naukowe na Obczyźnie, 1994), 71.

⁸ Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, *Stanisław Kot 1885–1975. Biografia polityczna* (Warsaw: DiG, 2000), 163.

⁹ Aleksander Hall, *Naród i państwo w myśli politycznej Charles’a de Gaulle’a* (Warsaw: Neriton, Rzeszów: Wyższa Szkoła Informatyki i Zarządzania, 2005), 113; Richard Vinen, *France 1934–1970* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 33–5.

¹⁰ Pachowicz, *Towarzystwo Opieki nad Polakami*, 25.

Philippe Petain and Ambassador Howard Kennard. When France broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish Government, consular posts ceased to function, and on September 23, 1940, Polish Offices (Biura Polskie) were established in their place. The Polish Offices were headed by Stanisław Zabiello, the Government Delegate for France.

Providing Assistance to Civilian and Military Refugees

From September 1939, a campaign to organize shelters began in the south of France, with the cooperation of representatives of the Polish Government, the Polish Red Cross and the French local authorities. At the time, the French were favorably disposed towards helping Poles, although they suggested that the majority of refugees should be placed in urban centers with a wide range of hotels or guesthouses closer to the Côte d'Azur, mainly around Nice or Monaco.¹¹

The evacuation action took two routes: by sea and by land. At that time, ships with Polish refugees from Yugoslavia, Athens, Beirut, Oran, Romania, Hungary, Greece and Dakar called at the port of Marseille. On the other hand, Poles were arriving by land via Italy to Modena. It was recorded that between October 1939 and April 1940, 31,727 people passed through the border points. By May 1940, 33,120 people had been evacuated.¹²

Meanwhile, the work of the consular post was extremely busy and demanding. The situation at the time required the Consulate to coordinate its activities on many levels. Moreover, the Polish Red Cross (PCK), which was being established in France at the end of 1939, started to cooperate with the Polish Government and its various bodies, thanks to the permission of the French Red Cross and the legal approval of the Minister of Military Affairs. At that time, the board of the PCK was housed in a house belonging to the foundation of Count Jakub Potocki, donated by the MOS.¹³ The chairman at the time, Aleksander Osiński, sent a letter to the Polish Embassy to encourage consular posts to make contributions to the PCK.¹⁴ The Consulate in Marseille contributed to the organization, while the staff of the consular post in Lille reacted negatively to President Osiński's request.¹⁵

¹¹ Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża*, 168.

¹² Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. Generała Władysława Sikorskiego w Londynie (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London) [hereafter: IPMS], *Armia Polska we Francji* (Polish Army in France) [hereafter: APF], A.IV.4/1/37, Movement of evacuees through border points, p. 90.

¹³ *Polski Czerwony Krzyż we Francji* [The Polish Red Cross in France] 1940, no. 1–2.

¹⁴ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, APP to KRPM about PCK, Paris 31 January 1940, p. 3; AAN, KRPM, 464/914, Aleksander Osiński to APP, Paris 17 January 1940, p. 4.

¹⁵ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Lille (hereafter: KGRPL) to APP, 29 February 1940, p. 10.

In November 1939, the Consulate organized in Marseilles and Toulon, French Committees of Assistance for Refugees from Poland. The presidium consisted of the French local authorities: the Prefect, the Commander of the 15th military district, the Bishop, the Mayor of the city, the President of the Chamber of Commerce and the Presidents of local associations. The aim behind these activities was to acquire buildings from the French authorities for the creation of shelters for refugees. The French authorities then put a military hospital at their disposal and provided free medical care.¹⁶ In addition, French representatives contributed funds to the budget of the Polish Central Committee for War Victim Relief.

There were two shelters for women and children in Marseille, organized by the nuns of the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul and the Franciscan nuns.¹⁷ In November 1939, the Consulate placed two female doctors (Krystyna Munk, Aleksandra Pizło) and two nurses (Eugenia Mierzejewska, Eugenia Hankiewicz) in a shelter with the Daughters of Charity. The women told the Consul that they really wanted to help those in need, as they had all the qualifications for their profession. The doctors were specialized as surgeons and had worked in hospitals in the Lviv and Kraków districts before being sent to France. In the case of the nurses, the Consulate learned that both ladies had worked at the Garrison Hospital in Radom. The Consulate placed the information at the disposal of the Polish Red Cross so that the organization could issue directives for the employment of these women.¹⁸ In the meantime, Krystyna Munk was assigned to sanitary work on the ship "Warszawa," with the prior consent of the local authorities.¹⁹

The Consulate bore the costs associated with people staying with the nuns. It is worth mentioning that the daily stay amounted to 12 francs per person, including food. It should also be added that the Consulate staff received numerous complaints from the nuns about the reprehensible behavior of women.²⁰ The nuns often ran away from helping their compatriots because their social status was too high for them to take up work in the factories.²¹

¹⁶ AAN, KRPM, 464/572, KGRPM to Central *Polish Committee* for the Relief of War Victims, Marseille, 18 December 1939, p. 6–7. At the time, the prefecture provided three hotels. It is worth mentioning that the consulate was also supported by committees „Les Amis de la Pologne”. For more information, see: Małgorzata Nossowska, *O Francuzce, która pokochała Polskę. Rosa Bailly i stowarzyszenie Les Amis de la Pologne* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2012).

¹⁷ The full name of the Franciscan nuns does not appear in the archival documentation and, at this point, it is difficult for the author to identify from which congregation they belonged.

¹⁸ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, KGRPM to PCK, Marseille, November 1939, p. 72.

¹⁹ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, KGRPM to cpt. Jan Ćwikliński, Marseille 18 December 1939, p. 75–8.

²⁰ AAN, KRPM, 464/834, Anna Zajązkowska to Consul General in Marseille dr Adam Lisiewicz, Marseille 20 May 1940, p. 90–1.

²¹ AAN, KRPM, 464/834, KGRPM to Delegate of the Polish Government for Polish Exile in France, Marseille, 20 May 1940, p. 93; AAN, KRPM, 464/835, Delegation of the Republic of Poland for Polish Exile in France to KRPM, Paris, 5 June 1940, p. 2.

The most important concentrations were in and around Marseille, including the military camp at Carpiagne, and in the departments of Gard and Vaulcuse, which were home to pre-war Polish emigrants or those evacuated from the North of France. The departments of Gard and Bouches-du-Rhône had the largest number of emigrants (1,427) and refugees (2,270).²² In another location, Buis-les-Baronnies (dep. Drôme), the Marseilles Consulate noted that it had managed to place 15 people at the Hotel Luxembourg. In later months, more and more Poles arrived at the hotel. The daily expenses for the refugees and soldiers were covered by the Consulate. They amounted to 7,000 French francs.²³ The Consul sought from the prefecture that Zdzisław Drohocki should start working in the local hotel as administrator and doctor of the center.²⁴ In June 1940, the French authorities specified that the departments of Drôme and Allier were to become the main centers of refuges for civilian refugees.²⁵

The conditions in the shelters and hospitals where the refugees were housed were also monitored by PCK delegates. In the spring of 1940, delegate Wanda Ładzina²⁶ visited the military hospital "Centre de Dermato-Venereologie de la XV Region" in Marseille, where there were about 100 sick Poles, with two Polish nurses on duty. Ładzina was also interested in Polish soldiers placed in military hospitals, especially French ones. She reported that the soldiers asked for a Polish nurse with French language skills to be employed. Their main concern was that she should assist with medical appointments and deal with formal hospital documentation. In addition, they asked the delegate to supply them with newspapers and cigarettes.²⁷ The case was dealt with by the Ministry of Military Affairs, which entrusted the care of the sick to the health personnel of the assembly station in Carpiagne.²⁸ The above-mentioned situations were also of interest to the consular post, so thanks to correspondence with the station commander there, the Consul knew that soldiers sent to the hospital in Marseilles were given an allowance of 30 francs and basic necessities.²⁹

²² Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża*, 169–71; Mieczysław Zygfryd Słowikowski, *W tajnej służbie. Jak polski wywiad dał alianantom zwycięstwo w Afryce Północnej* (Poznań: Rebis, 2011), 47–64.

²³ AAN, KRPM, 464/835, Consul General dr Adam Lisiewicz to Polish Embassy RP in Vichy, Marseille, 24 July 1940, p. 63.

²⁴ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, KGRPM to Prefect of the department of Drôme, Marseille, 12 August 1940, p. 49.

²⁵ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, Ministry of Social Welfare to directors of all the shelters of the Ministry of Social Welfare in France, Vichy 8 June 1940, p. 18.

²⁶ For more information, see: Anna Pachowicz, "Posłanka Wanda Ładzina (1880–1966) i jej działalność w Polsce i we Francji," *Przegląd Sejmowy*, no. 3 (2023): 87–105.

²⁷ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, KGRPM to General Board of the PCK in Paris, Marseille, 1 April 1940, p. 14.

²⁸ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, Minister of Military Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, 23 April 1940, p. 17.

²⁹ AAN, KRPM, 464/912, The Commander of the assembly camp station in Carpiagne to KGRPM, Carpiagne, 28 March 1940, p. 35.

Meanwhile, after the defeat of France on June 19, 1940, an organization was set up to take comprehensive care of Polish citizens residing in France, immediately after the departure of the Government. At a conference at the office of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers in Libourne, chaired by Minister Stanisław Kot, it was decided to set up the Committee to Aid Poles in France (*Komitet Pomocy Polakom we Francji*). Minister Kot then proposed that the Committee's responsibilities should include providing assistance to both ex-military and civilians. The premises of the Consulate in Toulouse were chosen as the Committee's headquarters for nearly two months.³⁰ It was to operate on a larger scale than the Consulates still in operation in the south of France, given that consular activity was already being curtailed, as was to be demonstrated by the announced general evacuation of diplomatic and consular officials.³¹

On June 28, 1940, in Toulouse, the executive board of the Polish Red Cross Committee in France was constituted, with Feliks Chiczewski as President, and the Vice-presidents becoming: Anna de Gontaut-Biron and Józef Szymanowski, Stanisław Zabiello as Treasurer and Gustaw Zieliński as Secretary. Elected as members of the Presidium were: Jan Chądzyński, Rev. Zygmunt Kaczyński, Piotr Kalinowski, Wacław Bitner. Due to the range of tasks facing the PCK, field District Delegations were established in Lyon, Toulouse, Marseille and Nice.³² It is worth mentioning that on July 18, at the request of Marshal Philippe Petain, Feliks Frankowski took over as chargé d'affaires at the Polish Embassy, while Aleksander Kawalkowski acted as the embassy's Counsellor in Exile and received a mandate from Frankowski to liaise with the PCK, with the right to participate in meetings of the Presidium.³³

People with a wide range of experience were elected as individual PCK delegates.³⁴ Thus, in Marseille, Witold Obrębski, a long-standing Consul at the consular post in this city, became the Delegate. Obrębski was familiar with the local realities, and made use of his acquaintance with the local authorities to start his work quickly. As a result, the Delegate was able to obtain from French officials a fully equipped English Hospital, with Dr. Nawrotny as its manager.

As soon as the General Board of the Polish Red Cross was constituted, work was divided among the individual members. The Division for Emigration and the Occupied Territories took care of refugees, maintaining contact with demobilized soldiers and

³⁰ Ibid., 26.

³¹ Rutkowski, *Stanisław Kot 1885–1975*, 169.

³² IPMS, Polski Czerwony Krzyż we Francji [dalej: PCK], PRM-K/6, PCK to the General Board of the PCK in London, Vichy, 18 September 1940, p. 22–35; Pachowicz, *Towarzystwo Opieki nad Polakami*, 27.

³³ Ibid., 124–6.

³⁴ Stanisław Zabiello, *Na posterunku we Francji* (Warsaw: PAX, 1967), 113.

establishing relations with Polish communities in the occupied territories and Polish prisoners of war, taking care of schooling and teachers.³⁵

Providing care for the refugees was not an easy matter due to the financial problems piling up. Frankowski was careful to use funds sparingly. In addition, he sought a closer relationship between the PCK delegation and the Consulate in Marseille in order to coordinate care activities.³⁶ In his letter, he made it clear that the Consulates were to continue to care for Polish citizens according to the guidelines and instructions coming from the Polish Embassy in Vichy. He stipulated, however, that pensions and allowances paid regularly up to June 23, 1940 by Consulates should be discontinued, as well as the provision of individual short-term aid in the form of allowances to war refugees from Poland, to families of persons residing outside the country, with the exception of special cases such as allowances for travel abroad or for travel to PCK shelters. He pointed out that the only form of material aid was collective care organized by the PCK, providing food and accommodation in shelters. This aid flowed mainly to those who were destitute, jobless and with health problems. Refugees arriving at field delegations had to receive a certificate from the Consulate beforehand that it was placing them under the care of the PCK. It is worth noting, nevertheless, that this certificate was not binding for the PCK.³⁷ The Consulates were to provide assistance to people from the old émigrés, but in a very sparing manner and rather direct them to the board of the Union of Poles in France (*Związek Polaków we Francji*). Then, from August onwards, the Consulates were to provide assistance to the military.³⁸ From September 1, 1940, though, soldiers of the Polish Army in France came under the care of the Polish Red Cross. Its scope included material aid, cultural and educational activities in the working parties, as well as individual care. For this reason, the Embassy asked for coordination between the PCK and the consular posts.³⁹ Nevertheless, the decisive voice in providing support to refugees was on the side of the PCK.⁴⁰

However, before there was any real cooperation between the PCK delegation and the Consulate in Marseille, the latter provided care for refugees on its own. At the time, its budget was very modest, amounting to around 100,000 francs. Consul Adam Lisiewicz

³⁵ Pachowicz, *Towarzystwo Opieki nad Polakami*, 28.

³⁶ IPMS, PCK, PRM-K/6, Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London, London, 13 September 1940, p. 9; AAN, KRPM, 464/916, PCK to Polish Consulate in Marseille, Toulouse, 15 August 1940, p. 30; BPP, Archive of the PCK in France from the collection of Jozef Jakubowski [hereafter: PCK SJJ], 22, Polish Embassy to the Consuls General of the Republic of Poland in Marseille, Toulouse, Nice, Lyon, Vichy, 8 August 1940, p. 41–2.

³⁷ BPP, PCK SJJ, 22, Division of competences between the consulates and the PCK, p. 46–50.

³⁸ BPP, PCK SJJ, 22, Feliks Chiczewski to Witold Obrębski, PCK delegate, Toulouse, 8 August 1940, p. 67.

³⁹ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, APP to KGRPM, Vichy, 31 August 1940, p. 25.

⁴⁰ AAN, KRPM, 464/835, PCK in Toulouse to PCK in Marseille, Toulouse 15 August 1940, p. 39.

reported that the board of the Polish Red Cross did not yet have any organized shelters and there was no possibility of paying aid to the most needy. The actual activity of the Polish Red Cross did not begin until August 1, 1940.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Marseille post took on the main burden of organizing aid for the refugees, by providing accommodation and issuing food vouchers. From the French side, aid was flowing in the form of donating various kinds of places in hotels, schools, boarding houses and hostels. The Polish side was less able to count on financial assistance. Nevertheless, the Consulate sent a letter to the French director of transport in Marseille, asking for vouchers for 200 liters of petrol to be issued for use by the management of the Accommodation Centre for Polish refugees in La Calade, needed for the trucks made available to the Polish Red Cross delegation in Marseille.⁴² It then worked with the hospital management in Marseille to enable it to supply the PCK's infirmary, located in the English Hospital, with the necessary supplies and pharmaceutical products.⁴³ The site became a center of accommodation for those in need of permanent medical care and was taken over by the PCK delegation in Marseille. Nevertheless, the consular post, in correspondence with the Marseille Prefecture, sought to assign Jakub Polakow to this outpost.⁴⁴

From August 1940, the activities of the PCK delegation in Marseille began to gain real relief dimensions. At that time, the management of the Polish Red Cross allocated 600,000 francs to the Marseilles Consulate.⁴⁵ As a result of the transfer of these funds, an immediate relief operation was launched, which translated into approximately 1,000 people being assisted in the Consulate's district. It was possible to organize temporary accommodation and kitchens where free or low-priced lunches (of 4–6 francs) were served.

It is worth adding that, at that time, the actions of the Polish authorities catered for over 5,000 refugees from Poland, as well as demobilized soldiers, whose number was estimated at around 12,000. Support was also extended to engineers (300 in number) who were destitute at that time and who were brought in specially from Romania and Hungary to

⁴¹ *Dokumenty Rządu RP na Obczyźnie. Suplementy do tomów I–VIII Protokołów posiedzeń Rady Ministrów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej: październik 1939–sierpień 1945*, ed. Wojciech Rojek in cooperation with Andrzej Suchcitz (Kraków: Secesja, 2010), doc. 41B: [Report on the activities of the Polish Red Cross in France at the time of the evacuation of the Polish army to Great Britain], 45–50.

⁴² AAN, KRPM, 464/914, KGRPM to director of transport in Marseille, Marseille, 6 September 1940, p. 26.

⁴³ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, KGRPM to Monsieur le Directeur de la Santé Hôpital Lévy, Marseille, Marseille, 6 September 1940, p. 27.

⁴⁴ AAN, KRPM, 464/914, KGRPM to the Prefect of the Department of Bouches-du-Rhône, Marseille, 12 September 1940, p. 52–3. Polakow (born 22 October 1894 in Łódź) held a medical diploma issued on December 15, 1923 by the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Warsaw, and in accordance with the law in force in Poland, he had been practising as a specialist in internal diseases (in particular infectious diseases) and children's diseases since 1923.

⁴⁵ BPP, PCK SJJ, 22, PCK to Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Vichy, Toulouse, 8 August 1940, p. 53.

be employed in the war industry.⁴⁶ The Consulate in Marseille also attended to specialists dismissed from the war industry, in particular from the aviation industry. Their registration was carried out by the PCK delegate in Toulouse.⁴⁷ These people could not hope for any employment in France. As a result, the Consul began to hold talks with staff at the Portuguese and Spanish Consulates. He asked for short-term exit visas to be issued, with the assurance that their departure would be financed by the Polish authorities.⁴⁸ The response coming from these outposts, although sympathetic, was nonetheless negative. At that point, a group of war industry workers began to urgently seek travel to the United States, thus asking the Consulate to intervene in their case. Unfortunately, here too, the Marseille post encountered resistance from the American Consulate.⁴⁹ In mid-August 1940, it was estimated that eight million francs were required to be spent on relief operations for refugees, permanent emigrants, demobilized soldiers, white-collar workers and families.⁵⁰

It should be mentioned that from June 1940, the French local authorities began to take a negative attitude towards Polish refugees. The Vichy authorities issued a new circular stating that those Poles who “displeased” a French administration official could be locked up in a camp.⁵¹ At the time, the aim of the French was to make it difficult to stay on their territory. They hid behind top-down decisions coming from the German authorities. Moreover, it was not always easy for refugees to obtain exit visas, and permission to stay in the South of France was issued for a short period. Polish consular officials believed that the French local administration was treating Poles much worse than other foreigners, and they urged Feliks Frankowski to get the embassy and the PCK to start negotiations with the Vichy authorities.⁵² The interaction between the Consulates and the PCK was important insofar as when the consular posts did not have sufficient knowledge of refugees or old emigrants, then the information would come from the delegation.⁵³ Meanwhile, the Third Reich pressured the French side to break diplomatic-consular relations with the emigration authorities. It also argued in favor of placing the demobilized in labor camps without issuing visas to leave France.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ IPMS, PCK, PRM-K/6, Polish Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London, Vichy, 15 August 1940, p. 10–2.

⁴⁷ AAN, KRPM, 464/916, PCK in Toulouse to KGRPM, Toulouse, 30 July 1940, p. 190.

⁴⁸ AAN, KRPM, 464/357, KGRPM to the Portuguese and Spanish Consulate in Marseille, Marseille, 18 July 1940, p. 9–10.

⁴⁹ AAN, KRPM, 464/357, KGRPM to the Group of former war industry workers, Marseille, 6 August 1940, p. 24.

⁵⁰ BPP, PCK SJJ, 22, PCK to Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Vichy, Toulouse, 8 August 1940, p. 53.

⁵¹ Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża*, 252–3.

⁵² BPP, PCK SJJ, 6, KRPM to the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Vichy, Marseille, 10 September 1940, p. 32–3.

⁵³ Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, *Ośrodki miejskie*, 195–208.

⁵⁴ Gmurczyk-Wrońska, *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji?*, 401.

After June 1940, the situation of Polish soldiers was extremely difficult. There were 3,000 Polish soldiers in France, and between 1,000 and 1,500 officers. The majority of officers and non-commissioned officers (about 1,000 people) were in Camp de Carpiagne. This camp was moved to Garrigues near Nîmes in October 1940.⁵⁵ At the time, the process of demobilizing Polish soldiers was unclear, and the local authorities had no clearly defined guidelines on the matter. It was not until July 19, 1940 that General Henri Cailault defined the principles of demobilization. The action was handled by the French military authorities in the presence of an employee of the consular posts operating in the South of France (Lyon, Marseille and Toulouse).⁵⁶ Therefore, soldiers fearing to be sent to the camps reported to the Consulate for assistance. The post, in cooperation with the Consulate in Toulouse, signaled to the top-down authorities that soldiers had made their way to North Africa or the United States. The Consulate then also cooperated with an evacuation post headed by Major Mieczysław Zygfryd Słowikowski, alias "Rygor." He acted on the orders of General Juliusz Kleeberg. In the meantime, it was agreed that a Central Directorate would be established in Marseille, which was also to deal with the evacuation by sea. At the end of September, the transfer of soldiers was hampered by the Portuguese and Spanish borders, so it was decided that Słowikowski would take care of the transfer of soldiers by sea to North Africa.⁵⁷ It is worth mentioning that from September the PCK took over the care of war refugees, demobilized soldiers.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The provision of aid to civilian and military refugees by the Polish Consulate in Marseille as well as by the Polish Red Cross was the most urgent matter, yet extremely difficult. The financial resources were disproportionate to the scale of the problem the Polish

⁵⁵ Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża*, 252.

⁵⁶ Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône w Marsylii (hereafter: AdBdR), Préparation militaire et recrutement de l'armée. Préfecture, 1800–1940, 1 R 885, Le Général Voisin, a Monsieur le Préfet des Bouches-du-Rhône, 11 November 1940.

⁵⁷ IPMS, SNW and Ministry of Military Affairs/Ministry of Defence, A.XII.4/125, Report on the activities of the evacuation desk for the month of September 1940; Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża*, 253–4; Słowikowski, *W tajnej służbie*, 47–51; Anna Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, "Diplomatic Tools and Tools of War: Activities of the Polish Office in Casablanca During Second World War – A Case Study," in *Oblicza wojny. Narzędzia*, vol. 10, ed. Magdalena Pogońska-Pol (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2023), 223–36.

⁵⁸ BPP, PCK SJJ, 5, PCK to Presidency of the Council of Ministers in London, Toulouse, 3 September 1940, p. 127–8.

state had to face. In addition, the dependence on French authorities meant that all the actions of the Polish authorities were under control, which was particularly evident after June 1940. Cooperation between the Consulate and the Polish Red Cross was important and vital, although in the initial phase, the balance of assistance tipped in favor of the consular post. It was only after August 1940 that it was possible to speak of real support from the PCK delegation in Marseille, which relieved much of the work of the Consulate. It is worth emphasizing that providing assistance to civilian refugees and soldiers was a challenging and extremely difficult task, all the more so as the operations were carried out under difficult wartime conditions. It was a great help for the Consulate and the Polish Red Cross to obtain numerous places of refuge and to be able to create new ones, thanks to French support.

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