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THE ACTIVITY OF THE W.R.S.-N.C.W.C. AMERICAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL AND CHARITY ORGANIZATION DURING THE WAR AND POST-WAR PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of man's existence on earth, tyranny and war, political chaos and hatred have forced people to become refugees. There was always a constant migration of people, so until World War II, there was nothing exceptional or disturbing in the phenomenon of forcing individuals and their families to flee from their homelands. The generation of the thirties, forties and fifties of the past century experienced a unique situation in the displacement of peoples, which has no parallel in history on account of the scale of the phenomenon and its forced nature.

Before all of this, families mainly voluntarily migrated from their homelands, deciding to emigrate for family reasons or lack of economic prospects. The massive displacement of families on a large scale was a hallmark of the 20th century. Never before have so many countries become a source of migratory movements or places of refugee activity. During World War II and in the post-war years, up until 1990, the United States received about 850,000 refugees. The dramatic nature of the phenomenon has drawn the extraordinary interest of government authorities, the Catholic Church and other charitable organizations in the United States attempting to amend immigration laws into the United States.

Victims of Italian fascism were the first broken and homeless people to appear; next were exiles, the victims of Nazi racist laws, slave labor, and progressive German terrorism. Finally came the displaced persons of the armed struggle of irreconcilable Soviet Russia in September 1939, taking over eastern Poland. Displaced people appeared on the scene as a result of the Potsdam Agreement and the Allied

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victory, which forced many residents from Central and Eastern Europe to leave their homes now locked behind the Iron Curtain. At present, there are “refugees” who escaped and are constantly escaping in growing numbers from different countries due to political and religious persecution. No matter what we call them, they are all refugees.¹

The task we are undertaking in this paper is to give some information about refugees in the post-war period and the Catholic activity in resettling them to the United States in a ten-year period. From 1947-1957, the Hierarchy of the American Catholic Church, through its Catholic Social Relief Service, the War Relief Services and National Catholic Welfare Conference, made possible the reception of over 210,000 exiles, refugees, defectors, displaced persons and soldiers, including over 80,000 Poles. This activity was focused on Catholic undertakings in the field of various forms of assistance to immigrants. Headbands with a dark blue cross on a white-yellow background, encircled by the inscription “War Relief Services-N.C.W.C.” worn on the clothes of soldiers and civilians in 49 countries had special significance. It pointed to the good will and the help of US Catholics. They were well-known signs for the homeless and hungry. For many, this meant the help of the Catholic Church in the United States.²

THE ROLE OF CATHOLIC SERVICES AND N.C.W.C. ASSISTANCE

NCWC is the abbreviation for the National Catholic Welfare Conference, translated into Polish in various ways: “The National Center for the Catholic Work and Movement in America,” “The American Catholic Social and Charity Organization,” “The Socio-National Catholic Charity Conference” and finally, the most often used in Polish literature is “American Catholic Aid Service to Poles,” SPKP.

¹ M.J. PROUDFOOT, *European Refugees: 1939-1952. A Study in Forced Population-Movement*, Evanston, Illinois 1956, pp. 25-32; H. FASSMANN, R. MUNZ, *European East-West Migration, 1945-1992*, “International Migration Review” Center for Migration Studies Vol. 28, Fall 1994, no. 3, pp. 520-538; A. JAROSZYŃSKA-KIRCHMANN, *The Mobilization of American Polonia for the Cause of the Displaced Persons*, “Polish American Studies” Vol. 58, Spring 2001, no. 1, pp. 29-62.

² Archives of Bishop Aloysius Wycisło in Green Bay, Wisconsin, USA. Further abbreviated AAW, includes the author’s correspondence with Bishop A. Wycisło in 1995-2000, Archives of Fr. Roman Nir, further abbreviated ARN, sign. 100; WYCISŁO ALOYSIUS J., *The Catholic Resettlement Story 1947-1957*, World Refugees and Catholic Resettlement in the United States, Catholic Relief Services National Catholic Welfare Conference, typed manuscript belonging to the author of the ARN, sign. 101, pp. 1-4. Citations in the text are paraphrased by the author and translated from Polish to English (original English texts are not available).

The US Episcopate established the NCWC in 1919. When hostilities in Europe ended, the golden jubilee Congress of the Catholic Episcopate was held in the U.S.A. to discuss and solve the many difficult social problems that emerged after World War I.

During this congress in September 1919, the idea came up to organize an institution operating under the direct authority of the Catholic American Episcopate. It was to coordinate the efforts of Catholics working in the socio-charity field, as well as unite and organize all Catholic initiatives, works and institutions into one central headquarters and Catholic movement. The task of the NCWC was to support existing and create new Catholic works, to help them develop, and to solve problems related with Catholic social work and other issues in the life and ministry of the Church.

Founding the NCWC was also influenced by the suggestions of Pope Benedict XV, who in April 1919 sent a letter to the American Episcopate in which, *inter alia*, he wrote: "Due to your wide influence and your Nation's possibilities, which lives in personal freedom and a Christian civilization, you are predisposed to take the leading role in the reconstruction of peace and order and the reconstruction of social life based on the same principles."

In the years 1919-1939, the N.C.W.C.'s activity was seen in its great achievements in the field of general and vocational education. Social care for employees, retirees, elderly people and orphans was implemented either directly thanks to their own funds or by supporting associations, unions, etc. During this period, the NCWC organized its own social institutions, schools, hospitals, and retirement homes. The NCWC grew enormously, grouping the most prominent representatives of the scientific, political and social work world.

Special NCWC departments included: the organization movement for lay Catholics (men and women); family life; professional life (workers, farmers and others); immigration matters; social action (care for pensioners, the elderly, orphans and the homeless); Catholic publishing houses and the press together with the international press news agency; radio (programs and their broadcasting); law and legislation (defending Catholic interests in Congress and the Senate), including US government departments throughout the nation. The NCWC was thankful to this group for the act of admitting hundreds of thousands of DPs to the United States.³

The outbreak of World War II sent a new cry for charity aid from various areas of the world. A new holocaust began, changing world history. At the annual meeting

³ AAW, sign. 101, pp. 1-3, War Relief Services-N.C.W.C.; Catholic Relief Services, United States Catholic Conference, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland, no sign., further abbreviated ACRSB. All quotations in the text are English paraphrased citations by the translator.

of the American Episcopate on November 16, 1939, the bishops voted that a special committee would be appointed “to study and research all appeals coming from war-hit Catholics from various countries asking the US bishops to raise money to help suffering Catholics in other countries and evenly distribute funds among Catholics to whom this assistance is given.”

On November 12, 1940, after almost a year of studying and examining problems concerning needs, the following decision was made:

The Chairman of the Administrative Board of the NCWC will be authorized to present to all bishops at the plenary meeting of the American Episcopate in Washington a plan to reorganize assistance, which assumed the establishment of individual charity committees dealing with special requests for help and organize collections throughout America by making special appeals to American Catholics.

However, along with the development of the war in Europe and Asia, the complexity of the world’s situation increased, and therefore the task of the Episcopal Committee become more difficult. The hierarchy quickly realized that the charity administration on a global scale was beyond the N.C.W.C. Bishop’s Aid Committee’s capacity. There was a need to create a special agency that represented American Catholics and could “cooperate with government and intergovernmental organizations and existing charitable organizations in other countries, including other American aid organizations.”⁴

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WAR RELIEF SERVICES (NCWC)

On March 5, 1943, the Administrative Board of the American Episcopate set up the War Relief Services – NCWC agency (a new Catholic Relief Service). On July 7, 1943, the WRS-NCWC was registered in the government office in the District of Columbia, and on July 29, its statute and rights were attached. The chairman of the American Episcopal Conference, Cardinal Edward Mooney, Archbishop of Detroit, who announced the establishment of the NCWC’s War Relief Services, emphasized the general task and assumptions of the WRS-NCWC’s activity by stating:

The Administrative Board of the NCWC expressed its readiness to provide post-war assistance to the devastated and hungry people of Europe. This task, however, required funds and cooperation, not only from the Government and the American Red Cross, but

⁴ E. SWANSTROM, *Displaced Persons. A Challenge to American Generosity, War Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference*, New York 1945, p. 10; AAW, sign. 102, pp. 3-4.

also from many social and charitable institutions. He expressed the hope that Catholic, social and charitable institutions would convey a significant impression of sympathy that Americans have for their suffering brothers and that they would be able to provide the help that the Government cannot.⁵

Therefore, the NCWC War Relief Service was to undertake the task of reorganizing Catholic charitable organizations and institutions throughout America and providing all data for contacts with Catholic institutions abroad. The goal of such activities was to distribute post-war aid as effectively as possible. The cardinal mentioned that the institutions of the Catholic Church abroad are in very close contact with the populations of these countries, and in many areas, they are the only centers that are trusted by the local people and others after the war.

At the same time, attempts were made to avoid suspicions of imposing strange patterns of social activities. For this reason, it was necessary to use existing Catholic institutions and their own leadership. In terms of experience and staff, Catholic institutions abroad were a valuable source of cooperation along with the NCWC War Relief Service and other US government institutions.

Cardinal E. Mooney strongly emphasized in his statement that racial differences and national boundaries never stopped Catholics from fulfilling the commandment of brotherly love, and that during the war, the NCWC provided a lot of charitable help to the people of Europe and Asia. Already during the war, since 1939, the Bishops' War Aid Committee assisted victims of wars in many countries. In 1943, they planned to extend foreign aid on a larger scale through the WRS-NCWC. The Bishops' War Aid Committee, after the formulation of the NCWC War Relief Services, continued its activity by coordinating appeals regarding the distribution of money for current needs and financing religious projects, including providing devotional items and liturgical parameters for military chaplains.

On March 13, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed the President's Committee on War Relief Agencies. This committee, by the executive order of July 25, 1942, was definitively established as the President's War Relief Control Board. The functions and tasks of this Board are to control all public fundraising for foreign and domestic assistance concerning the needs arising from the war and to register the licenses of the institutions involved in these undertakings.

The Presidential War Relief Control Board saw the need to unify the approach to the population regarding supporting approved war aid institutions. The result was the establishment of the National War Fund. In Washington, the Adminis-

⁵ ACUA, sign. 489, Minutes of Meeting of Administrative Board, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, D.C., November 12, 1940, pp. 10-14; AAW, sign. 104, The Displaced Persons; ACRSB, The Displaced Persons, the author has no sign.; *The DP Story, The Final Report of the United States Displaced Persons Commission*, Washington 1952, pp. 266-278.

trative Council of the American Episcopate at a special meeting on January 15, 1943, focused its discussion on the National War Fund and recommended that Catholic institutions representing the WRS-NCWC now take part in the National War Fund.

Consequently, on April 28, 1943, the NCWC War Aid Service was authorized to join the NFW by the Presidential War Relief Control Board as one of the sixteen institutions that make up the National War Fund. It was an extremely important undertaking because the WRS-NCWC could use millions of dollars from the Government for its activities.⁶

THE WRS-NCWC'S ACTIVITIES IN 1943-1947

The WRS-NCWC's organizer and first general director was a great friend of Poland, Fr. Monsignor Patrick A. O'Boyle, later Archbishop and Cardinal of Washington. He accomplished great works of mercy for war victims in 48 countries. In less than two years of operation, more than \$30 million was spent on aid. America sent the countries affected by the miseries of war 2,100 train wagons with various necessities, food, clothing, medicine, etc.⁷

At the request of the American hierarchy, the WRS-NCWC immediately sent assistance to the Middle East, Spain, Portugal, North Africa and Mexico to help the victims of World War II. The agency's first project was to help refugees from fascist and communist countries, to provide help and social care for displaced persons, as well as establish sailor assistance clubs that were opened in many key ports in the United States and overseas. Since 1945, spiritual and material care was provided for returning war prisoners, and large-scale assistance to civilians affected by war operations was also initiated. Immediately after the creation of the NCWC War Relief Service, the institution submitted a request for funds to the National War Fund, which at that time was responsible for coordinating fun-

⁶ Department of Archives, Manuscripts, and Museum Collections: National Catholic Welfare Conference/United States Catholic Conference Collection Description. General Description Records 1919-1995, Catholic University of America, Washington. Further abbr. ACUA; E.E. SWANSTRON, *The Displaced Persons – A Challenge*, [in:] *Displaced Persons. Whose Responsibility?*, New York 1946, pp. 17-23.

⁷ M. MCGREGOR, *O'Boyle, Patrick Aloysius (1896-1987)*, [in:] *The Encyclopedia of American Catholic History*, ed. M. Glazer, T. J. Shelley, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1997, pp. 1064-1066; ARN, sign. 102, First Executive Director Archbishop of Washington Patrick Aloysius O'Boyle, 1948, pp. 1-2; *Przyjaciel Polski – Arcybiskupem Washington (P.A.O'Boyle) [Friend of Poland, Archbishop of Washington (P.A. O'Boyle)]*, "Inter-Catholic Press Agency, Inc." Vol. 3, 1948, no. 15, p. 7.

draising in America. The money received was allocated to health programs and rehabilitation.

In the years 1943-1947, the NCWC War Aid Service received over \$15,140,000 from the National War Fund. During the same period, the Episcopal War Aid Committee raised about \$ 3,275,000 for the NCWC War Relief Service to meet other needs not covered by the National War Fund's money. In addition, during the same period, American Catholics donated over \$60,250,000 in various kinds of "natural farm produce" as assistance that was sent overseas by the NCWC-WRS Military Assistance Service.

On January 1, 1947, the American Government dissolved the National War Fund. From that day on, the American Catholic Social and Charitable Organization of the Catholic Bishops WRS-NCWC managed its own fundraising during its annual appeal to American Catholics during Lent. By the end of January 1958, \$49,629,683 had been raised for the NCWC War Relief Service. This happened at annual collections and a campaign for collecting gifts as farm produce, which reached a value of \$145,331,000. From its beginning in 1943 to 1958, American Catholics expressed their help in sending over three and a half billion pounds of parcels worth \$615,510,000 to those in need in 54 countries, with particular emphasis on helping displaced persons refugees.⁸

Immediately after the end of hostilities in 1945, representatives of the NCWC War Relief Service initiated a program of spiritual and material assistance to displaced persons, exiles and refugees. They were the first to distribute gifts among victims of World War II who located in the camps and centers of the American and British occupation zone in Germany. Thus, from the very beginning, as soon as refugee camps were organized, the NCWC Catholic Aid Service was very active in helping displaced persons and refugees. From July 1945 to the end of 1949, almost all collected money and donations of farm produce for the WRS-NCWC were distributed among displaced persons and refugees. As programs developed to help people in various countries, support shipments increased, and despite the growing need to help these people, refugees were constantly receiving a large percentage of various types of goods from the NCWC. Next, due to the improvement of economic conditions especially in Europe, indigenous people needed less support, and once again, the efforts of the Catholic Aid Service of the NCWC were mostly geared towards assisting refugees.

⁸ AAW, sign. 105; ACUA, sign. 500, Immigration Bureau/Department 1922-1966; AAW, sign. 107, The Placement and Integration of Refugees in the U.S.A.; ACRSB, Catholic Relief Services, no sign. Available.

In the early post-war months, the western world rejected the demands of the communists that their people would be forced to return to their countries behind the Iron Curtain. Government officials, as well as representatives of American social institutions such as the Catholic Aid Service of the NCWC realized that they should seek a home outside of Europe in the Middle East and the Far East for approximately 1,600,000 people. In addition, the refugee assistance program of the NCWC's Catholic Relief Service in cooperation with the Vatican Migration Office and the Catholic Committee for Refugees of the NCWC played an important role in resettling a significant number of refugees from camps to various parts of the world. This was long before the United States adopted immigration legislation on resettlement opportunities for refugees.

At the beginning of 1946, the NCWC's Catholic Aid Service became a pioneer in opening resettlement offices in five South American countries and maintained close relations with Catholic resettlement groups in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. On December 22, 1945, when President Truman's Executive Order came into effect, the NCWC's Catholic Aid Service, in cooperation with the NCWC's Catholic Refugee Committee, developed a special program to help refugees in Germany, Austria and Italy obtain visas to enter the United States. Limits on the size of the continents introduced by the presidential directives blocked the best efforts of the WRS-NCWC. It was decided that a new program should be initiated leading to the legalization of relevant legislation regarding admitting refugees to the United States.

The WRS-NCWC's annual report for 1946/47 stated: "The refugee problem remains unsolved and is confusing in many cases. There is agreement among Western nations that resettlement is the only solution to this problem ... Only through intense efforts can a new homeland be found for these unfortunate people." In 1946, the Vatican Migration Office was established and began to sketch plans for the reception of refugees by Catholic institutions around the world. They showed strong concern in resolving the refugee problem. Both the Vatican Migration Office and their relevant Catholic institutions appealed to the American Episcopate to take charge of the entire refugee movement.

The American Episcopate, at its annual conference in Washington on November 16, 1946, published a memorial request on behalf of refugees:

A serious problem, which is a challenge for nations, is finding a way to provide help to hundreds of thousands of refugees from persecution and danger in new camps in Central Europe. These victims of injustice have the right to shelter, a right that is sacred in our history and culture. Giving them the opportunity to start a new life without fear is an unavoidable duty of the nations.

All of them, displaced and persecuted, must be treated humanly and without discrimination. An excellent solution to this problem would be to provide them with a full

guarantee of fair rights in their own homeland. Since this solution is not possible, nations must provide them with help that demands basic human rights. It is clear that continually supporting them in the camps is not a solution to the problem, but rather harms them. Forcing them, against their will, to return to their home countries, where great danger awaits them, is inhuman. In accord with the agreement between the Allies, these refugees in camps, who are innocent of any crimes, must return to their home countries. If they are guilty, they should be punished, but they should not become victims of political persecution, for example, because they fought with communists during the war.

Before returning to their native countries, military authorities should let them participate in fair court hearings to prevent great injustice when they are being judged in their countries because they fought against or belonged to underground organizations that fought against Russian communists. Because the tragic decision of the United Nations Committee for Refugees was that all measures would be taken to repatriate the children of refugees to their home countries, it was known that their parents would be judged immediately upon their return, sentenced to long years in prison or even murdered, because during the war, they fought the communist authorities or were allied soldiers (II Corps of General Anders).

We also cannot allow, with an attitude of simple humanity, the alternative, which is forcing refugees to return to their home countries against their will, while referring to the bad economic state, overpopulation and destruction of Germany. With a sense of justice for all those unfortunate men, women and children, and without discriminating against any of the groups, nations must find a way to resettle these people into countries where they will have the opportunity to start a new life. It is encouraging that the President of the United States has publicly promised that he will ask Congress to pass a law that will allow more refugees to enter the United States. If this is done, then the goodness of our country will move other nations to give these unfortunate people a place to stay and a chance to live and enjoy God's laws. Admittedly, the problem is enormous, but the difficulties should be a challenge for nations to constructively resolve things in a humane way, where mercy will do what even justice can not force.

The very clear and concrete attitude of American bishops regarding the reception of refugees in the United States encouraged Catholics in other countries to join this action at the local level.⁹

⁹ ACUA, sign. 502, War Relief Services-N.C.W.C., A Story of War Relief Around the World, Brochure, New York 1946, p.1-2; N.C.W.C. Report to Board of Trustees War Relief Services-N.C.W.C. October 1, 1948 to September 30, 1949, Washington, D.C., pp. 6-17; AAW, sign. 110, The Role of Catholic Relief Services-N.C.W.C., pp. 10-15; ARN, sign. 104, Report to the Board of Trustees, Catholic Relief Services-N.C.W.C. 1946-1947, New York 1947, pp. 5-10.

THE POSITION OF THE NCWC'S NATIONAL CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
ON RURAL LIFE

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference on October 11, 1946, at its 25th Annual Conference in Green Bay, Wisconsin, adopted the following appeal on refugees:

Around one million European refugees who can not be repatriated are expecting permanent resettlement today. The extent of help needed as a temporary measure can not meet the needs of those who can not or do not want to return to their home countries. The United States has already spent millions of dollars in caring for them, as well as thousands of other refugees, now displaced. It is time for our "benevolent" dollars to turn into constructive dollars. This means using funds and energy to permanently help refugees in countries where they can earn their living and be freed from religious, racial and political persecution.

Our United States, which God's Providence blessed with an excess of material wealth and put us in the position of spiritual leadership, must take the initiative and settle refugees. The success of the International Organization for Refugees depends on our full participation. In order to address the refugee problem, immigration should be fully utilized, and where necessary, continents should be revised to meet the urgent need. Many hundreds of thousands of refugees might be admitted to our lands. Adequate distribution carried out through specialized resettlement agencies can avoid the risk of the concentration and dissatisfaction of minority groups.

The National Catholic Rural Life Conference recommends that the reception of immigrant refugees should take place on a wide scale and include various national and professional groups. Without prejudice as to the existing labor market, there are places in many areas of our country for experienced farmers and agricultural workers. Therefore, the conference recommends that the resettlement of homeless Europeans should become a priority for the USA concerning post-war immigration policy. To this end, private institutions can and should cooperate with our government.

The National Catholic Conference on Rural Life strongly urges that the fundamental principles of mercy, justice and the long-established practice of sheltering innocent criminals be maintained in our time. Recognizing that the problem of immigration is broader than the problem of refugees, the Conference recommends an immediate review of discriminatory and selective immigration quotas. The free moral and physical passage of accepted immigrants looking for a place to live and be delivered from overpopulated countries is relatively more important than free trade between nations. Fundamental human rights can not be subordinated to political or ideological goals, nor can they be ignored in our own country by further fueling nationalist immigration policy.¹⁰

¹⁰ ACUA, sign. 503, The National Catholic Rural Life Conference-N.C.W.C., pp. 8-11; AAW, sign. 111, pp. 8-11; ARN, sign. 105, Ogólnokrajowa Katolicka Konferencja Życia Wiejskiego N.C.W.C. [National Catholic Conference on Country Life], pp. 8-10.

THE PROBLEM OF REFUGEES AND ITS IMPORTANCE
FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

Over 1,600,000 refugees were in and outside the camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. Most of them can not or do not want to return to their homeland for fear of religious or political persecution. The Holy See has shown its deep interest in this problem and established the Vatican Migration Office as an international body coordinating and directing all efforts to help and solve this problem. Although resettlement work is primarily the responsibility of the government, the International Refugee Organization did not have the funds or resources to properly carry out its tasks.

The Holy See has expressed the hope that the Catholic Church in every country will be able to offer refugees a place, to plan and set up committees or organizations supporting the reception and protection of these people's interests and rights. Everyone looks at the United States and believes that they will play an important role in solving this problem. Before the US Congress approves legislation allowing more refugees to arrive, American charitable and social institutions must ensure that they are able to secure the admission and care of groups in proportion to the religious population of the camps. The most reliable estimate states that 55% of Catholics, 20% of Jews and 25% of Protestants are in refugee camps. The War Relief Service decided to develop a program that will include the postulate of establishing the National Catholic Immigration Council and Diocesan Immigration Councils. Such a developed program will be directed only concerning the immigration of refugees on a larger scale.

The program will need to coordinate Catholic efforts in the United States. This is because if the United States is to play an active role in resolving refugee problems, it is clear that the Catholic Church will need to develop a large-scale national immigration plan. This is one of the most serious problems ever encountered by Catholic authorities in the United States. This problem is so broad in scope and so important that it requires the help of Catholic organizations on a national diocesan scale, as well as at the level of local communities. Only through the close cooperation of all Catholic forces will it be possible to meet this challenge. It is certain that this cooperation will enable significant results to be achieved each year.¹¹

¹¹ ACUA, sign. 504, *The Displaced Persons Problem and its Implications for the Catholic Church in the United States*, p. 10-11; AAW, sign. 112, pp. 9-11; ARN, sign. 106, *Problem uchodźców i jego znaczenie dla Kościoła katolickiego w Stanach Zjednoczonych* [The Problem of Refugees and its Meaning for the Catholic Church in the United States], pp. 10-11.

To implement the national program in the field of immigration, the National Conference Of Catholic Charities was included. Diocesan directors of Catholic Charity Action should play the most important role in this work because they have long-term experience in working with people. Many institutions, such as hospitals, orphanages, nursing homes, childcare centers, seminars, Catholic colleges and universities, etc., need manual labor. In addition, there are difficulties in finding people willing to work as housekeepers, gardeners, painters, plumbers, etc. in rectories and private homes. Diocesan charity directors could do a real favor by supplying qualified refugees for these professions.

The other institution is the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, which through its diocesan directors, can perform many functions in immigration programs, especially through its extensive contacts and functions in American rural communities. In this context, it was important to say that in urban agglomerations there was a significant lack of housing in metropolises and large cities in the United States, while a relatively large number of refugees would find housing in these rural areas. It is also important to note that a significant proportion of refugees are of peasant origin, which will enable them to play a major role in America's rural life.

Large ethnic groups were very interested in bringing in refugees from their nationalities, e.g. Ukrainians or Slovaks. They develop their own programs that aim to immigrate refugees to the United States. It is important to remember that all these national groups are mostly Catholic. National groups in the United States who come from fraternal European nations are refugees from Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

In the first post-war years, the NCWC War Relief Service operated in close cooperation with every national group in the field of bringing over refugees. In the 1950s, these groups made constantly greater demands for bringing more refugees into the United States. It became clear that each group acted in a certain way independently of the others, which contributed to the dispersion and failure of Catholic efforts to bring about an adequate number of refugees and displaced persons into the United States under existing immigration law. All these groups asked the Church to participate in the development of a future plan for the immigration of refugees into the United States. This problem is so urgent that there is no doubt as to the full cooperation of these organizations.

The following nationwide organizations included: the Association of St. Vincent de Paul and fraternal organizations such as the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Council of Catholic Women, the Daughters of Mercy, and the Knights of Columbus. They can be a real help in developing a nationwide plan, accepting refugees into the Catholic community in the United States.

The development of a nationwide large-scale immigration plan for the United States had to be based on the diocese as the primary unit controlling all immigration. The overwhelming majority of dioceses have organized branches of the national organizations mentioned above. In most dioceses, there are a large number of representatives of all national groups, but in smaller dioceses maybe one group will prevail. It is also true that most of the cooperating organizations mentioned above will be present in all dioceses throughout the country. The greatest cooperation between all these groups must take place at the diocesan level.

Pending official government immigration laws, the NCWC Catholic War Relief Service (WRS-NCWC) has developed a joint agreement with the American Catholic Bishops' Refugee Committee to help at least small numbers of refugees be transferred to the United States. The Catholic Committee for Refugees, a permanent NCWC agency affiliated with the NCWC Immigration Office was founded in 1936 by the American Bishops to help refugees under fascist occupation. Later, this committee took responsibility for the emigration of orphans. On December 22, 1954, President Truman issued Immigration Directives, while the Catholic Committee for Refugees provided full documentation for 3,715 refugees who were brought to the United States. From December 1945 to the end of the Presidential Directives on September 30, 1947, the Committee brought 242 orphans from refugee camps to their new homes in the United States.

The NCWC Catholic Relief Service, due to many projects aimed at helping refugees and indigenous peoples affected by the war throughout Europe, had offices and staff who managed these projects in individual countries. Therefore, the WRS-NCWC also represented the Catholic Committee for Refugees overseas. The staff of the NCWC Catholic Relief Service arranged for the placement of orphaned children and representatives of the International Organization for Refugees and the American Committee for the Care of European Children to assist in their emigration.

Members of the staff of the Catholic Relief Service of the NCWC assisted the Council of the United States Committee for the Care of European Children in the United States. They also helped the non-denominational agency dealing with the immigration of orphans under the Presidential Directives of December 22, 1945, and under the Act of Refugees of 1948. The Executive Director of the Catholic Committee for Refugees assisted the same Council of the United States Committee for the Care of European Children and was a member of the Executive Committee of the Catholic Committee for Refugees.

Therefore, there was a close connection between Catholic programs and the US committee that was solely interested in immigrant children. From the total 2,794 orphans brought to the USA between December 1845 and September 1949, there

were 839 Catholic orphans. From September 1949 to the end of December 1957, 2,265 orphans were imported, in cooperation with the Catholic Committee for Refugees and the Catholic Relief Service of the NCWC, the period of terminating cooperation with the United States Government Committee.

Statistically speaking, the Catholic Committee for Refugees, together with the WRS-NCWC in the years 1945-1957 admitted 2,738 orphans into the United States.¹²

REFUGEES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The activities of Catholic Relief (WRS-NCWC) covered 58 countries throughout the world in the years 1945-1957. The mentioned refugees in Asia brings to mind millions of displaced people who live in overcrowded areas and are rejected in these parts of the world. The mention of refugees in the Middle East immediately brings to mind hundreds of thousands of Arabs and related people who were displaced as a result of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948. There were also other refugees, in smaller numbers but also homeless for a longer period of time than the direct victims of this war.

First of all, we must distinguish the largest and probably the most hopeless group of refugees. In 1957, Arab refugees numbered 933,000 people. These are people who lived in what we now call Israel. They fled their homes either because of fear of the Israelites, because Arab propaganda encouraged them to flee, or their farms became a battlefield, or because the State of Israel showed that they were unwanted in that country. Whatever the reason for dirty debates, the fact is that they were homeless and displaced people who are unable or unwilling to return to their former homes.

In 1957, Arab refugees were looked after by the United Nations and the Employment Agency for Palestinian refugees, numbering: Gaza 221,058; Jordan 517,388; Lebanon 102,586; and Syria 92,524, with a total of 993,556 people. Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, tens of thousands of refugees of European origin were in the Middle East. These refugees, wanting to avoid the invading German

¹² ACUA, sign. 505, *The Need for a Coordinated Catholic Effort in the United States*, p. 11; AAW, sign. 113, p. 12; ARN, sign. 107, p. 11; ACUA, sign. 506, *The National Conference of Catholic Charities*, pp. 11-14; NCWC Annual Report Department of Social Action. Administrative Board, Washington, D.C. 1949, p. 30; ACUA, sign. 507, NCWC Thirteenth Annual Report October 1, 1948 to September 30, 1949 *The Catholic Committee for Refugees (Including Refugee Children)*. Administrative Board, Washington D.C. 1949, p. 62; ARN, sign. 108, *Ogólnokrajowa Konferencja Dobroczynności Katolickiej N.C.W.C. [National Conference on Catholic Charity]*, pp. 11-14.

forces, fled through the Mediterranean to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Turkey; a few found a place to stay in Iraq and Iran. Most are found in Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon.

The Central and Eastern Aid Administration, later replaced by the United Nations and the Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), published the following statistics of refugees in these countries in 1957. Egypt had the following people: 36,850 Yugoslavians, 13,400 Greeks, and 1,500 Poles. Lebanon admitted 750 Greeks and 575 Poles. Syria accepted 1,000 Greeks. Palestine took in 9750 Greeks, 7,000 Poles, and 3,000 Czechs. Iran had 5,000 Poles, while Iraq admitted 250 Poles. Turkey accepted 32,000 Greeks and 2,500 people from other groups.¹³

THE POLISH SECTION OF THE NCWC WAR RELIEF SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

By establishing a separate **Polish Section** under the WRS-NCWC, its philanthropic action for Poles was initiated in 1943, whose chairman was the field bishop of the Polish Army, Józef Gawlina. Fr. Alojzy Wycisło (later auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago) was delegated from the WRS-NCWC in New York as the director of the “Polish Section” in the field. He immediately went on a journey to England and then to the Middle East.

The activities of the WRS-NCWC for Poles, who were scattered all over the world as a result of the war, gradually covered the countries in which the largest number of Polish refugees and the Polish Army found temporary accommodation, namely: 25 centers in Great Britain, 18 centers in Egypt, 31 centers in Palestine, 4 centers in Iran, 8 centers in India, 3 centers in Kenya, 18 centers in Uganda, 10 centers in Tanganyika, and 11 centers in Rhodesia and South Africa, 36 centers in Italy, and 4 centers in Lebanon.

In addition, the WRS-NCWC took care of Polish refugee centers in Mexico, Polish orphans in New Zealand and the hundreds of thousands of Poles in Western Europe freed from German captivity. As of December 1945, the WRS-NCWC’s help covered Poland until 1950, when the communists liquidated the Church’s “Caritas” and did not allow for its further activity.

¹³ ACUA, sign. 510, *The Refugees in the Middle East*, p. 10-20; AAW, sign. 114, p. 14-16; ARN, sign. 110, *Uchodźcy na Środkowym Wschodzie* [Refugees in the Middle East], pp. 2-3; Annual Report of the Director: United Nations Relief and Works Agency, General Assembly, XIII Session Suppl 14/A/3686, United Nations, New York 1957, pp. 12-13; J. VERNANT, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, United Nations, Geneva 1951, pp. 23-30.

The War Relief Services of the NCWC in the Middle East was mainly expressed as: a) recreational, b) cultural and educational, c) medical (for hospitals and individual patients), d) and general help, including food, clothing, and medicine that were gifts from American Catholics. The campaign was conducted for the Polish Army and civilian refugees, primarily expressed in establishing and running: a) military and civil recreational day-rooms, b) workshops, c) and tea rooms and shops.

In addition to the recreational day-room clubs established and run directly by the WRS-NCWC, individual Departments had "Ward Recreational Rooms and Soldier's Shops" established as needed. These were found in military departments, refugee clusters, and military schools, for the technical school youth and younger volunteers and at civil schools. These WRS-NCWC recreational centers were usually equipped with cultural and educational equipment as well as recreational and entertainment facilities, namely: a) libraries, permanent and mobile, b) magazines, newspapers, weeklies and others, c) radios, d) record players, e) linguaphones, and f) recreational club games.

Readings, talks, academies, including various educational, didactic, patriotic, religious and entertainment events were organized in all WRS-NCWC club rooms run by staff members.

The equipment in the WRS-NCWC common rooms, even those found in the most difficult living conditions like the desert or relief camps, were designed to give people maximum comfort and beautiful aesthetics in order to create a home-style atmosphere, ensuring people complete rest after work.

In order to help soldiers in the most efficient way possible in their often difficult living conditions, such as a desert, the canteens, buffets, tea rooms, and shops organized and run by the WRS-NCWC, the principle of self-sufficiency applied. This means that prices for meals were reduced, and these low prices were adapted to the budgets of a soldier. Thus, he became more strongly associated with WRS-NCWC recreation rooms.¹⁴

EGIPT

A large number of European refugees who served in the Armed Forces in the Middle East were especially present in Egypt, where the Allied armies held large military bases. Most of these refugees are Poles and Yugoslavs, who maintained

¹⁴ ACUA, sign. 511, War Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference, Polish Projects, p. 49; ARN, sign. 110, Polish Section of the War Relief Services-NCWC and its Activities in the Middle East, pp. 1-9.

their military status until they had the opportunity to leave the country. After the Allied Armies invaded Italy and after the German Army left Yugoslavia, most of the Yugoslavs returned to their country. Poles merged with their compatriots in England at the end of 1946. Several hundred refugees remained in Egypt.

The Cold War diplomacy between 1955 and 1957 and the invasion of Egypt by England and France were related to the problem of the Suez Canal. This created a new category of refugees and displaced persons. The independence campaign and nationalism in Egypt had a devastating effect on tens of thousands of Egyptians, whose homes in the Canal region were ruined during a short and unsuccessful war.

The influence of nationalism on ethnic minorities who lived in Egypt for generations was more decisive. According to some reports, differences between Arabs and Jews caused the persecution and expulsion of the Jewish minority from Egypt. A large number of Christians suffered as a result of Egypt's nationalist aspirations. The Copts numbering over a million were the largest religious minority. Syrians and Lebanese numbered about 100,000 and there were 70,000 Greeks, 48,000 Italians, 32,000 British, 19,000 French and several thousand Turks.

A large number of foreigners living in Egypt were not necessarily persecuted. For some time, they worked as various court officers. Their skills, education and influence on the country's internal economy gave them a privileged position. Their assimilation, however, was limited to the purely economic field, which did not strengthen their position in the nation's social and cultural processes.

The biggest and most urgent matter for refugees in the sixties was the problem of homeless people from Palestine. Over 200,000 such refugees were mainly present in the Gaza Strip, which was transferred to the Egyptian administration after the Arab-Israeli war. The United Nations and Employment Agencies, in cooperation with the Egyptian occupation authorities, helped Palestinian refugees in Gaza.¹⁵

THE POLISH SECTION OF THE WRS-NCWC IN EGYPT

In the years 1943-1945, Cairo was the seat of the Directorate of the Polish Section of the WRS-NCWC (WRS-Polish Projects). Its scope covered activities for Polish soldiers and refugees in the following countries: Egypt, Palestine, England, Iran, Africa, India, Italy, Mexico.

Gradually, the WRS-NCWC's assistance and work in these areas were included in the organizational framework and carried out with the help of its own staff. The Statute of the Institution was prepared, called the Polish Catholic Aid Service. It is

¹⁵ ACUA, sign. 512, Egypt [Egipt], pp. 8-10; AAW, sign. 116, Egypt [Egipt], pp. 3-5.

expressed by the name of the organization, "War Relief Services-National Welfare Conference" abbreviated W.R.S.-N.C.W.C.

The Polish title for the Polish section is "Relief Service for Catholic Poles" (S.P.K.P.). The "War Relief Service" as one of the departments of the N.C.W.C. was directly subordinate to the American Episcopate and includes, inter alia, charity work for Polish civilian refugees as well as help for the army. The Polish Section of S.P.K.P. follows the regulations and management of the N.C.W.C.

The SPKP's activities among the civilian population and in the army are under the control of the Polish Field Bishop as their "Chairman." The executive director for the work of the Polish section is the Director, delegated on behalf of the American Episcopate. Fr. Alojzy Wycisło was nominated for this position.

The goal of the SPKP organization was to help Polish civilians in exile and in the army: a) by organizing and running Catholic Recreation Rooms, rest homes, hospitals, orphans, etc., including charity and social work wherever Poles were found and there was a need for help. The priority in meeting needs was decided by the American Episcopate Delegate; b) they were to create conditions for the Polish clergy to help civilians or the army, carrying out all their plans in cooperation with the clergy.

The special nature of the work of the SPKP organization is based on providing non-profit assistance in the full sense of charity work. Any income obtained in common rooms, rest homes, etc., remains in these particular facilities for their further development or is allocated with the consent of the WRS Representative for other purposes of the given housing estate or department. When meeting people's needs, the basic work and task of employees is to carry out the entire action in a Catholic spirit, taking into account both physical and moral aspects.

The technical side of work among civilians and in the army is carried out by the SPKP on the basis of "Cooperation Guidelines" developed and agreed on by the American Episcopate Delegate along with the respective of the relevant authorities. Only a Roman Catholic person can be an SPKP employee: a) the American Episcopate Delegate must ensure that people of high moral standards are allowed to work in the SPKP; b) SPKP employees must care for the good reputation of the SPKP and give a living example of the Catholic spirit.

As far as funds are concerned, the SPKP draws its funds from the US Government Department's "National War Fund" thanks to the efforts of the American Episcopate. It has committed itself to providing appropriate funds to run SPKP shares. After the liquidation of the "National War Fund" in 1947, the funds only came from American Catholics, which were collected during appeals by the American Episcopate. The Statute, Organizational Instruction, Service Regulations, and WRS-NCWC cooperation guidelines were developed and signed by the Chief Executive of the WRS-NCWC in the USA, Fr. Mon. Patrick O'Boyle, Director of the Polish

Section of the WRS-NCWC, Fr. Alojzy Wycisło, Field Bishop Józef Gawlin and Lt. Col. Ryczel on behalf of the military authorities of the 2nd Corps. These documents were legalized by the Polish and British military authorities on June 30, 1944.¹⁶

In the first place, transports from America reached the WRS-NCWC's Headquarters in Cairo: medicine, vitamins, medical instruments, microscopes, diathermy, surgical tools, sports games, club furniture, deckchairs, books, nutrients, typewriters, sewing machines, carpentry and other tools, along with clothes, underwear, blankets, mosquito nets, toothpaste, etc.

In the years 1944-1947, a total of 15 sea shipments came to Egypt from America, including 7 sent by the WRS-NCWC, while the remaining 8 shipments were gifts of the American Polonia Council's American Relief for Poland. These gifts from the WRS-NCWC warehouses in Egypt were shipped to the following countries: 23 transports to Italy; 7 to France; 2 to African; 1 to German. Transports sent by rail included 4 to Palestine and 2 to Lebanon. The action of establishing WRS-NCWC common rooms in Egypt (in military units) was quick.

In addition to its own facilities, which are managed and administered by its own staff, the WRS-NCWC also helps or completely organizes common rooms for individual Departments or military schools. Along with the ongoing club activity, assistance was developed in this area for equipment sent from the USA or purchased locally. Thus, military hospitals received valuable help in medical equipment, apparatus, tools, microscopes, medicine and vitamins, including financial assistance. Finally, the WRS-NCWC also financed the launched in Heliopolis "WRS-NCWC Recreation Home" for PSK volunteers and the PCK Sisters, in which over 450 patients spent their vacation for rehabilitation.

Financial support and equipment was given to the Junacy (technical training for youth) schools in Maadi, Heliopolis, Tel-El-Kebir. In addition to common rooms, they also received school aids, musical instruments and sports equipment, as well

¹⁶ Statut Służby Pomocy Katolickiej Polakom. Generalna Dyrekcja [Statute of the Relief Efforts to Catholic Poles. General Directorate]. War Relief Services-NCWC. Polish Section; Ogólna Instytucja Organizacyjna (wewnętrzna) Instytucji „Służba Pomocy Katolickiej Polakom”. [General Interior Organizational Instructions for the "Relief Services for Catholic Poles"]. Uzgodniona z władzami duszpasterstwa 20 stycznia 1945 r. Ks. Alojzy Wycisło – Delegat i Generalny Dyrektor WRS dla Spraw Polskich. Ks. bp Józef Gawlina, Biskup Polowy WP; Przepisy służbowe dla pracowników War Relief Services-NCWC. Służby Pomocy Katolickiej Polakom na terenie Środkowego Wschodu. Ks. A.J. Wycisło. Field Director WRS-NCWC, Kair 1946. [Agreement with the Pastoral Authorities on January 20, 1945. Fr. Alojzy Wycisło – Delegate and General Director of the WRS for Polish Affairs. Bishop Józef Gawlina, Field Bishop of the Polish Army; Service Regulations for Employees of the NCWC War Relief Services. Catholic Aid Services to Poles in the Middle East. Fr. A.J. Wycisło. Field Director of the WRS-NCWC, Cairo 1946].

as cash for the purchase of housing equipment, such as beds, mattresses, sheets, etc. Military orchestras received sets of wind or string musical instruments imported from the USA. As a result, the entire military hospital had radio speakers, and megaphones were installed in all rooms and in the courtyard. The headquarters of the Polish Red Cross in Cairo received useful financial assistance and medication.

Many Departments received sewing machines. The Railway Battalion received a traveling cinema. In the 1944/45 financial year, the WRS-NCWC's financial contribution in cash to the Middle East amounted to over one million dollars, not counting the help provided to them in equipment and goods. Independent of the above-mentioned assistance action, the Delegation in Cairo carried out the action of sending parcels to Poland in the Middle East, with one of them, the so-called "Egyptian," being sent from WRS warehouses in Egypt, and the other so-called "CARE" (Co-operative for American Remittance to Europe) from the USA. From July 1945 to April 1948, the WRS-NCWC's delegate to the Middle East was Fr. Jan Achtabowski.¹⁷

LEBANON

A relatively small country, Lebanon also had refugees. Thousands of Europeans found a place to stay there during World War II. Over 135,000 refugees from Palestine, victims of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, were received in Lebanon. Virtually all Christian refugees from Palestine, about 30,000, settled in Lebanon. The Lebanese Christian community willingly accepted these refugees, which is why most of them found jobs and homes and could be considered permanently displaced. Therefore, American immigration files even from 1953 did not qualify these displaced persons as refugees based on the conditions agreed upon with the UNRRA.

Other refugees included a considerable number of Poles, Greeks, Yugoslavs, Albanians and Italians in Lebanon. Most of them, with the exception of 4,000 Poles, are repatriates. From among all these Poles, only 300 remained until June 1957, and others, with the help of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) emigrated to England, the United States and other countries.

About 135,000 Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon and, with the exception of a group of Christian refugees, most of them lived and received funding in order to

¹⁷ R. NIR, *Materiały archiwalne Sekcji Polskiej War Relief Services – National Catholic Welfare Conference w Orchard Lake i Londynie*, [in:] *Materiały XXI Sesji Stałej Konferencji Muzeów, Archiwów i Bibliotek Polskich na Zachodzie 23-26 września 1999* [Archives of the Polish Section of the War Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference in Orchard Lake and London, [in:] *Materials from the XXI Section of the Conference on Polish Museums, Archives and Libraries in the East Sept 23-26, 1999*], Rzym-Kraków 1999, pp. 215-224.

live in special camps. Palestinian refugees of Lebanese origin enjoyed a privileged position. Other refugees, for example, could not claim Lebanese citizenship or permanent residence. Employment was a serious problem for them, and that is why many of them reported their willingness to immigrate to other countries.¹⁸

The headquarters of the WRS-NCWC Directorate in Lebanon was Beirut, and in 1945 the director became Fr. Franciszek Zaorski. Activity in this area was initiated in 1945 and expanded successively with the transfer of Polish refugees from Persia to Lebanon, about 5,000 people. A special "Bonfire Club" was established in Beirut for Polish students, which also housed the WRS after-school club. Tailoring and sewing courses were organized for the lady students. Assistance in food was given to refugees, students and the Polish Red Cross.¹⁹

PALESTINE

In the post-war years, there were about 9,750 Greeks, 7,000 Poles and 3,000 Czechs in Palestine, as well as a small number of other Europeans. After 1948, the Greeks were, for the most part, repatriated to their country. Poles, half of whom were children, joined their parents when the Polish Resettlement Corps was formed in England in 1947. Poles who remained in Palestine in 1948-1956 took advantage of the resettlement programs to the United States, Canada, Australia and countries in Latin America. The Czechs were also repatriated, and a very small number of them moved together with Poles to other countries.

With the founding of a new Israeli state, hundreds of Europeans who did not profess Judaism moved as Jews to flee the countries behind the Iron Curtain and accompany their family members to the new nation. Since June 1957, about 300 of these Christian refugees have asked Catholic institutions in Palestine for help in emigration.²⁰

THE POLISH SECTION OF THE WRS-NCWC IN PALESTINE

The years 1944/45 see the most intense development of the WRS-NCWC's activity in Palestine. In the first phase of work, from July 1943 to May 1944, the

¹⁸ ACUA, sign. 513, Lebanon, pp. 7-10; J. VERNANT, *The Refugee in the Post-War*, United Nations, Geneva 1951, p. 257.

¹⁹ AAW, sign. 119, pp.1-5; ARN, sign. 112, Liban [Lebanon], pp. 3-4.

²⁰ ACUA, sign. 516, Palestine, pp. 1-2; AAW, sign. 120, Palestine, pp. 3-4; ARN, sign. 113, Palestyna [Palestine], pp. 6-7.

WRS-NCWC operated in this area among Poles, as if unofficially, without a strict organizational framework and without its own staff. The work was based solely on the cooperation of chaplain priests and volunteers. Assistance during this period in relation to Polish refugee activity was expressed in short-term charity, support and various aids. The movement partly invested in the cultural field, such as the “In the Name of God” publishing house, and other minor religious publications were financed.

The common rooms that were created during this period in the army and schools were called “Catholic Youth Clubs,” without disclosing their proper founder, meaning the WRS-NCWC. Fr. Prelate T. Reginek, and later Fr. Dean Brandys, were the directors of the WRS-NCWC during this initial period in Palestine. Fr. J. Achtabowski was appointed director by the WRS-NCWC headquarters from July 1944 until April 1948, meaning until the end of the WRS’ activity.

Palestine was one of the most difficult areas to work in, because here, the WRS had to proceed in terms of multiple needs closely adapt to them. There were different types of club rooms, such as military clubs, those in military schools, civilian centers, in Maternity Homes, scouts, etc., as well as workshops and training centers. In a relatively short time, 32 common rooms for the army, schools and refugees were opened in Palestine, including tea rooms, shops, workshops and the army’s barber shops were also organized.

Despite the multitude of adversities and deficiencies concerning various equipment and devices, the work was always carried out to the end. The WRS recreation rooms had all the necessary equipment and club accessories. The issue of suitable club rooms was of great importance, and so all efforts were made to make them luminous and spacious. They were located in the best places in a given town or camp.

When equipping common rooms with equipment, care was taken to ensure that the furniture and equipment were uniform. The entire equipment of a WRS club room consisted of: a) club games, chess, checkers, ping pong, volleyball and other games; b) club or traveling libraries from the WRS Directorate; c) radios, a turntable with concert and dance records; d) a linguaphone for learning foreign languages; e) Polish and foreign language magazines; f) interior decoration, paintings, tablecloths, curtains, the WRS-NCWC emblem, and Poland’s eagle and flag.

Regardless of club life, expressed in cultural, educational, didactics and upbringing programs as well as recreation and entertainment, there were also soldier’s clubs and school cafeterias or shops. Prices were kept as low as possible and adapted to the soldier’s finances. Meals included various types of dishes, sandwiches and sweets, usually homemade.

The above description is the full outline of the picture of a typical WRS-NCWC common room in Palestine. It is a typical plan for all common rooms as to their

arrangement, but does not concern the nature, plans or postulates implemented in them. Military and civilian clubs generally differed from each other. Yet recreation clubs for technical training youth and younger volunteers, as well as club rooms in civilian or special scouting schools, were strictly adapted to their conditions and needs in terms of equipment and programs implemented in them.

The common room required careful maintenance, and the implementation of its program required not only constant vigilance on the part of the day-room lady, but also experience and most importantly care in this hard and responsible work. Club work included the most important issues in the club's life, which were: events or competitions organized by the club room; team games with the sports or entertainment equipment located in the club room; organizing concerts and festivals using their own resources or even involving a performer; lectures, readings, talks, singing lessons and club choir performances. This responsible work was done by brave day-room club ladies for the WRS-NCWC, with devotion, enthusiasm and cooperation in this area to build up the youth's characters.

Along with the club room project, which continued uninterrupted under constantly changing conditions caused by movement in the field, meaning changes in the places where military units stopped, or in refugee centers, the "movement" of the WRS accompanied its club rooms, which opened new ones; the action was carried out to help and care for people according to the conditions in Palestine.²¹

Medical assistance brought about great silent blessings. It was provided to military hospitals and outpatient clinics both in terms of medical equipment, devices as well as with medicines and vitamins. In exceptional cases, despite the fact that there were no special funds for this purpose, seriously ill patients were assisted in the form of special treatment, such as for performing operations, etc.²²

Workshop-studios were promoted by the WRS-NCWC in Palestine from the very beginning of the organization's activity in this area. They were an idea for organizing workshops for refugees based on the principles of self-sufficiency. A carpentry workshop was opened at the refugee center in Bethlehem at the expense of the WRS-NCWC, which was handed over to the Social Welfare Delegation. This workshop was then moved to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, workshops were opened in a specially rented house for the following work sections: a tailor, shoemaker, leather goods and an artistic workshop. In addition, there was a sewing shop in Ain-Karen and a locksmith's workshop in Bethlehem.

²¹ APOL, sign. 105, pp. 4-5; APOL, sign. 106, Palestyna. Świetlice WRS-NCWC, p. 6.

²² AAW, sign. 121, Palestyna WRS-NCWC. Pomoc medyczna [The WRS-NCWC in Palestine. Medical Help], p. 6.

The main idea when starting these workshops was to give something to those who were looking for an activity and income, especially the handicapped or those released from the army. Meanwhile, these places were intended to be interesting professional schools for new trades. The workshops fulfilled their assignments in many fields: they provided some of the refugees work and income, thanks to which many of them regained courage and became self-sufficient, even setting up their own workplaces. In the WRS workshop in Jerusalem, shoes collected by refugees in Palestine and intended for compatriots freed from German camps were gelled for free. Sewing equipment and machines were put into service in the refugee and army training lessons.

School aids were given to schools and young students, such as school supplies and recreational equipment, balls, volleyballs, and games. Moreover, the WRS-NCWC financed school trips to the Holy Land, Lebanon and Egypt. There was help in organizing courses, and in addition textbooks, typewriters and accessories for academic work were provided. Duplicates (mimeographs), turntables with records for learning foreign languages (linguaphones), maps, paintings and sewing machines were provided. Musical instruments supplied by the WRS, imported from America, were a real attraction for their bands. Polish students were given clothing from American as gifts and other basic necessities.

At the headquarters of the WRS in Jerusalem, a representative Club Room was established with a spacious premise, consisting of three rooms and a large hall, whose walls were decorated with divisional badges of the Polish Army in the East. Youth and elders were happy to be in the club houses. Various events were organized here for schools. A canteen and a buffet were regularly in service.²³

The Central Library in Jerusalem was located in the Club's Recreation room. It was named the "Springs" and contained over 1,500 books, most often purchased from private owners. The library's research department had many original and rare Polish works.

The movable library was intended for the WRS-NCWC's after-school clubs and mostly contained fiction and school books. It was intended to be a moving library in several sets, placed in specially made boxes covered with sheet metal with locks. These sets of books traveled from day-room to day-room in Palestine and Lebanon. The "movable library" conceived in this way was dictated by the specific conditions in which refugees lived in camps and housing estates. Moreover, it contained a limited number of books in Polish. By dividing the book collection into several sets, it was possible to serve many camps and centers with libraries at the same time.

²³ ACUA, sign. 520, Palestine, pp. 3-5.

Several documentary films were prepared as reports during the course of the celebration and events related to the life of Polish refugees in the Holy Land, at the expense of the WRS-NCWC in Palestine.²⁴

IRAN-IRAQ

Iran provided a place to stay for around 1,300 Polish orphans, primarily in Isfahan, as well as for around 1,500 adults and children in Ahwaz. Tehran provided camp tents for 2,700 Poles when these refugees arrived in Russia in the summer of 1942. Many adults from this group joined the Anders Army before the Italian invasion. Women and Children were transported to India and East Africa, and later to England. Some joined contingents to Mexico through India to finally receive a permanent home in the United States.²⁵

In Iran, the headquarters of the WRS-NCWC's Directorate was located in Tehran. In 1943/44, Apostolic Delegate Archbishop A. Marina was the head of the Directorate from 1944/45 until refugees were evacuated to Lebanon. This action was led by Fr. Chaplain A. Góralik.

The WRS-NCWC's actions in this area were conducted in cooperation with charity institutions already existing there, which consisted in: a) running a Catholic Action House for the sick and elderly, b) running an inexpensive food bar in Tehran for Polish refugees, c) running a Polish shelter for orphans, d) providing financial assistance for the treatment and care of the sick in hospitals and sanatoriums, e) assistance for Polish schools, accessories, games, sports equipment, etc., f) providing assistance to the sewing workshop and art workshop run by refugees.

Iraq accepted a smaller number of Polish refugees who remained in this country for only a short period of time. Like the refugees in Iran, those who were able joined the Anders Army, and the others moved to East Africa and later to England.²⁶

TURKEY

About 35,000 or more Greek refugees fled to Turkey or other parts of the Middle East when German and Italian forces invaded their homeland. Most of these

²⁴ ACUA, sign. 521, War Relief Services-NCWC, Palestine, pp. 10-13; AAW, sign. 122, pp. 69-73; ARN, sign. 115, pp. 4-7; R. NtR, *Katolickie duszpasterstwo polskie w Palestynie w latach 1940-1946* [Catholic Ministries to Poles in Palestine in 1940-1946], „Rocznik Archiwum Polonii” Vol. 1, 2003, pp. 11-40.

²⁵ ACUA, sign. 530, Iran-Iraq, pp. 3-4; AAW, sign. 132, Iran, Iraq, pp. 4-5.

²⁶ ARN, sign. 120, p. 8.

refugees were repatriated after the war. Yugoslavs, Poles and other European victims of World War II were among the refugees looking for a place to stay in Turkey. They were estimated to number around 2,500 people. When the possibility for them to emigrate opened up after the war, at least 25% of these refugees, with the help of emigration institutions, found a new home in different parts of the world.

Regarding the refugees in the Middle East, the problem concerns a large number of displaced people in this unhappy region of the world. In 1947, the United Nations organized a mechanism to care for Palestinian refugees. The UN thought the problem was only temporary, and people were convinced that within a few months or a year, refugees would return to their homes or start a new life in other parts of the Arab world. To date, camps for Palestinian refugees are full and only a few have found opportunities for resettlement to nearby countries or overseas.

The problem of refugees in the Middle East still extends into the indefinite future, especially since a long-term solution has not yet been developed. Agencies operating in the United Nations and many other volunteer institutions, including the Palestinian Papal Mission led by the NCWC Aid to the Middle East, are concerned that their activities have so far not solved anything. A lot of good has been done, but improving the state of the people living there is another matter.

Any difficulties related to solving the problem of Palestinian refugees are rooted in the situation related to opposing attitudes between Arabs and Jews:

Until efforts are made to bring them back to a normal way of life, these Arab refugees will be a spark igniting tensions in the Middle East and be the main reason for rejecting Arabs in the West ... Israel cannot be expected to maintain a large number of hostile Arabs ... Their resettlement to other parts of the Arab world seems to be the only alternative.²⁷

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²⁷ ACUA, sign. 530, Turkey, pp. 7-9; AAW, sign. 137, Turkey, pp. 2-5; ARN, sign. 125, Turcja [Turkey], pp. 8-9.

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THE ACTIVITIES OF THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHARITY SOCIAL ORGANIZATION WRS-NCWC DURING THE WAR AND THE POSTWAR PERIOD

Summary

The goal of the article is to present a general outline of the activities of the American Catholic Charity Social Organization, the War Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference and its select aspects in some countries during the Second World War and the following years. It is intended to encourage other researchers to undertake further research on the topic.

Key words: World War II; American Catholic Charity Social Organization; American Polonia; American Episcopate

DZIAŁALNOŚĆ AMERYKAŃSKIEJ KATOLICKIEJ ORGANIZACJI
W CZASIE WOJNY I W OKRESIE POWOJENNYM

Streszczenie

Celem tego artykułu jest przedstawienie ogólnego zarysu działalności Amerykańskiej Katolickiej Organizacji Charytatywnej i Społecznej – War Relief Services-National Catholic Welfare Conference, a także jej wybranych aspektów w niektórych krajach podczas drugiej wojny światowej i kolejnych lat. Ma on zachęcić innych badaczy do podjęcia dalszych badań na ten temat.

Słowa kluczowe: II wojna światowa; American Catholic Charity Social Organization – Amerykańska Katolicka Charytatywna Organizacja Społeczna; amerykańska Polonia; amerykański episkopat

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