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## The International Refugee Organisation’s Resettlement Policy – A New Approach of the International Community to the Refugee Problem in Europe: A Case Study of DPs and Refugees from Poland\*

**Abstrakt:** Międzynarodowa Organizacja do spraw Uchodźców (IRO) działała w latach 1947–1951 jako wyspecjalizowana agencja ONZ. Praca IRO była kontynuacją akcji humanitarnych organizowanych wcześniej na rzecz przesiedleńców (DP, dipisi) i uchodźców przez UNRRA i IGCR. Celem artykułu jest analiza polityki przesiedleńczej IRO jako wyznacznika nowego podejścia społeczności międzynarodowej do postępowania z przesiedleńcami i uchodźcami na przykładzie osób tych kategorii z Polski, którzy stanowili największą grupę narodową objętą opieką IRO w Europie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dipisi, uchodźcy, Międzynarodowa Organizacja do spraw Uchodźców, polscy dipisi, uchodźcy żydowscy.

**Abstract:** The International Refugee Organisation operated between 1947 and 1951 as a UN specialised agency. The IRO’s work was a continuation of the humanitarian actions previously organised for displaced persons (DPs) and refugees by UNRRA and the IGCR. This paper aims to analyse the resettlement policy of the IRO as indicative of the international community’s new approach to handling DPs and refugees, on the example of DPs and refugees from Poland, who constituted the largest national group under IRO care in Europe.

**Key words:** displaced persons, refugees, International Refugee Organisation, resettlement, Polish displaced persons, Jewish refugees.

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## The genesis of the International Refugee Organisation

In many respects, the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) inherited the tasks of protecting and assisting displaced persons and refugees at the international level performed earlier by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR) and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). The IGCR, active in 1938–47, had been created to supply aid initially to refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria but later, from 1943 on, to all European refugees. The main goal of the IGCR's efforts was to provide assistance and relief to refugees forced to leave their country of origin and assist them in their resettlement.<sup>1</sup>

The UNRRA, on the other hand, existed between 1943 and 1947. Its operations mainly centred around the repatriation of displaced persons to their countries of origin and, in the meantime, organising care and maintenance for such persons until a return to their homelands was possible. The other primary task of the UNRRA was to distribute aid, provide relief services and support economic and agricultural rehabilitation, mainly for the benefit of countries damaged by the Second World War.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of that conflict, more than 11,000,000 displaced persons were in liberated Europe alone, not including those of German origin. Of those who were located in Germany, 1,900,000 were Polish nationals. A further 350,000 Poles were registered as 'displaced persons' in Austria.<sup>3</sup> The category of 'displaced persons' included people who, due to the war and decisions taken by the occupation authorities, found themselves outside the borders of the countries of their pre-war residence. Hence, unlike refugees, displaced persons (DPs) were passive objects of the actions undertaken by a third party – in this case, the Axis powers' authorities exercised arbitrary rule over them.

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. T. Sjöberg, *The Powers and the Persecuted: The Refugee Problem and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), 1938–1947*, Lund, 1991; C. Scran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of the Regime*, Oxford, 1998; F.S. Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times, 1920–1946*, Leicester, 1988; M.R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War Through the Cold War*, Philadelphia, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. *UNRRA: The history of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, ed. G. Woodbridge, vols 1–3, New York, 1950; D.G. Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, New York, 2011; Sh. Gemie, F. Reid, L. Humbert, *Outcast Europe: Refugees and Relief Workers in an Era of Total War, 1936–48*, London–New York, 2011. About the UNRRA' action towards Polish displaced persons and Poland, see: J. Łaptos, *Humanitaryzm i polityka. Pomoc UNRRA dla Polski i polskich uchodźców w latach 1944–1947*, Kraków, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> L.W. Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization : A Specialized Agency of the United Nations, Its History and Work, 1946–1952*, London–New York, 1956, p. 20; C. Łuczak, *Polacy w okupowanych Niemczech, 1945–1949*, Poznań, 1993, p. 21; A. Pilch, *Losy Polaków w Austrii po drugiej wojnie światowej, 1945–1955*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 1994, p. 22. See also: M. Wyman, *DP: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951*, Ithaca, 1998.

The UNRRA's ruling bodies were perplexed by the fact that many DPs resisted repatriation to their former homelands in Eastern and Central Europe. The countries of origin of DPs, including the post-war predominantly communist People's Poland, strongly fostered the repatriation of their nationals. Nevertheless, for various reasons, many refugees were opposed to such schemes. Some preferred not to return to their pre-war homelands because they had little trust in the new Soviet-backed regimes, while others were put off by the material hardships of post-war Central and Eastern Europe.

As the mission of UNRRA drew to an end, there was an evident need for a new, prospective international organisation to deal with the still significant number of displaced persons and refugees in both Europe and other parts of the world. In July 1946, the American and British delegates to the Executive Committee of UNRRA proposed setting up a resettlement programme for non-repatriable displaced persons. A new body, christened the 'International Refugee Organization', would oversee this programme. The name was approved by the Executive Committee of UNRRA. However, the decision to expand the scope of aid provided by the international community to include protection for refugees (and not only DPs as before) was the primary reason the Soviet Union withdrew its recognition of UNRRA's authority. Over the next few months, the IGCR signed (or was in the course of preparing to sign) resettlement agreements with Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Great Britain, Netherlands, Morocco, Peru, Tunis, the Union of South Africa and Venezuela. On 3 June 1947, the member states of IGCR decided to transfer all funds, prerogatives and tasks to the IRO as of 1 July 1947. On the same day, the UNRRA followed suit.<sup>4</sup>

## Creation of the IRO and its repatriation activities

The main goals of the International Refugee Organization were to ensure complete relief for DPs and refugees remaining outside the borders of their countries of origin, as well as assist in the repatriation of DPs from different countries who wished to return to their homelands but who had been unable or reluctant to do so (during the functioning of the UNRRA). In this sense, the IRO was continuing the earlier mission of the UNRRA. However, the IRO was also assigned its new brief that greatly modified the logic behind the care and protection provided to DPs and refugees at the international level. This broader remit included implementing a plan of mass resettlement

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<sup>4</sup> Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, pp. 22–23; P. Sękowski, 'Activity of the international community in Europe after the Second World War within the scope of the International Refugee Organization as a model of the aid action towards refugees', *Securitologia* 2017, no. 1, p. 122.

for displaced persons and refugees who did not want to return to their countries of origin, mainly by means of overseas migration (to non-European areas). Furthermore, the IRO provided many refugees under its mandate with legal protection, in this way performing quasi-consular functions. In addition, the IRO searched for lost relatives via a special department called the International Tracing Service.<sup>5</sup>

After lengthy discussions, the Constitution of the IRO was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 15 December 1946. Eighteen countries voted in favour of the creation of the IRO, and five countries were against it. Eighteen other countries abstained. The countries that lent their support for the future IRO were Belgium, Canada, China, Cuba, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippine Republic, the Union of South Africa, Uruguay, the USA and Venezuela. The countries who opposed the resolution were USSR, the Byelorussian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR, Yugoslavia and Poland.<sup>6</sup>

The IRO was to be “a non-permanent organisation [...], a specialised agency to be brought into relationship with the United Nations”.<sup>7</sup> It was set up to tackle the general problem of displaced persons and refugees. It was financed by the 26 signatory states to the IRO Constitution. While the main contributor to the IRO budget was the United States, the IRO’s membership included neither the Soviet Union nor any of the people’s democracies, including Poland. Nevertheless, every member state of the United Nations was eligible to become a member state of the IRO.<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of its mission, the Preparatory Commission of the IRO was to serve solely as a planning office for future action. Still, in 1947 the entity became a fully operational agency. In September 1948, when the fifteenth member of the organisation had ratified its Constitution, the Preparatory Commission of the IRO was officially transformed into the renamed International Refugee Organization.<sup>9</sup>

The repatriation of DPs was the first permanent solution the IRO devised to deal with the plight of displaced persons and refugees. The majority of DPs who wished to return to their country of origin did so between 1945 and 1947 through the agency of the UNRRA. However, some DPs only resolved to

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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g. Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*; R. Ristelhueber, *Au secours des réfugiés: L'œuvre de l'Organisation internationale pour les Réfugiés (OIR)*, Paris, 1951.

<sup>6</sup> Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, Preamble, in: Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, p. 575.

<sup>8</sup> Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, Article 4, in: Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, p. 577.

<sup>9</sup> Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, p. 62.

take this step after 1 July 1947. By the time the UNRRA was dissolved and replaced by the IRO, it was already evident to the international community that repatriation would remain a minor undertaking of the IRO. The majority of DPs and refugees under the organisation's protection had, until then, been waiting for the launch of a new resettlement scheme. Despite this, People's Poland had repatriation missions abroad, and the IRO was in constant touch with them. Indeed, they were among the most active agencies trying to bring displaced citizens home alongside their Yugoslavian and Soviet counterparts.

Between 1945 and 1950, more than 820,000 DPs from the three western-occupied zones of Germany alone were repatriated to Poland within the repatriation schemes organised first by the UNRRA and then by the IRO. This is in addition to the more than 300,000 Poles repatriated during the same period from Belgium, Norway, France and other European and non-European countries. Another category of DPs comprised 600,000 Poles repatriated up to the end of 1945 from the Soviet occupation zones in Germany and Austria.<sup>10</sup>

As far as the IRO is concerned, between 1 July 1947 and 31 December 1951, this organisation contributed to the repatriation of 72,914 DPs and refugees, including 38,047 who returned to their homeland in Poland. Poles constituted more than half (52.2 per cent) of the total repatriated population under the IRO scheme.<sup>11</sup>

### **The IRO takes charge of refugees. A new logic of care and protection of the international community**

The first international definition of refugee status was provided by the Geneva Convention of 1951. Until that time, refugee status had been granted by individual states, except for a small number of refugees under the protection of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees under the League of Nations Protection (until 1946), who held the so-called Nansen passports. On the other hand, the eighteen signatory states to the Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, adopted on 15 December 1946, defined the term 'refugee' in Annex I to this Constitution as follows:

[...] a person who has left, or who is outside of, his country of nationality or of former habitual residence, and who, whether or not he had retained his nationality, belongs to one of the following categories:

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<sup>10</sup> R. Habielski, *Życie społeczne i kulturalne emigracji*, Warszawa, 1999, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> The author's calculations based on: Archives Nationales de France, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (hereinafter: AN), International Refugee Organization (hereinafter: IRO), AJ 43/1257, Final Statistical Report of IRO, July 1947 to December 1951, Refugees repatriated from specified IRO areas, 1 July 1947 – 31 December 1951. See also: Sękowski, 'Activity of the international community', p. 131 (table 2).

- (a) victims of the nazi or fascist regime or of regimes which took part on their side in the second world war, or of the quisling or similar regimes which assisted them against the United Nations, whether enjoying international status as refugees or not;
- (b) Spanish Republicans and other victims of the Falangist regime in Spain, whether enjoying international status as refugees or not;
- (c) persons who were considered 'refugees' before the outbreak of the second world war, for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion.<sup>12</sup>

The term also applied to any individual other than a displaced person "who is outside of his country of nationality of former habitual residence, and who, as a result of events subsequent to the outbreak of the Second World War, is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the Government of his country of nationality or former nationality". According to the IRO Constitution, refugees also included "persons, who having resided in Germany or Austria, and being of Jewish origin or foreigners or stateless persons, were victims of Nazi persecution and were detained in, or were obliged to flee from, and were subsequently returned to, one of those countries as a result of enemy action, or war circumstances, and have not yet been firmly re-settled therein". Last, but not least, refugees were also "unaccompanied children who are war orphans or whose parents have disappeared, and who are outside their countries of origin", being 16 years of age or less.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the IRO's interpretation of what constituted a refugee was so broad that most DPs who refused to be repatriated after 1945, in 1947 (or later), became refugees under IRO protection.

In July 1947, when the IRO came into existence in Europe, 307,433 of its 647,504 charges were Polish nationals. It means that 47.5 per cent of all DPs and refugees under IRO protection in Europe had Polish nationality. Poles were the most numerous national group afforded IRO protection. The second largest ethnic group were Ukrainians – 102,430 DPs and refugees, many of whom were also ex-Polish citizens because, until 1939, they had been living in the former eastern provinces of Poland, annexed by the Soviet Union during the Second World War.<sup>14</sup> In addition, there were 154,333 Jewish refugees under IRO protection in Germany, Austria and Italy as of 31 July 1947. Of this number, 120,986 were Polish citizens. Hence, over 78 per cent of all Jewish refugees in Europe at that time were from Poland.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the entire period of its operations, i.e. from 1947 to 1951, the IRO helped 1,619,008 DPs and refugees from all over the world, including

<sup>12</sup> Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, Annex I: Definitions, in: Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, p. 584.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> AN, IRO, AJ 43/1256, Country of citizenship of Refugees receiving PC IRO Care and Maintenance on 31 July 1947.

<sup>15</sup> Jews receiving IRO Care and Maintenance in Austria, Germany and Italy at 31 July 1947, in: Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, p. 199.

973,753 in the western zones of occupied Germany.<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that many applications for IRO assistance were submitted by individuals seeking eligibility for the IRO's new programme – its resettlement scheme.<sup>17</sup>

### **The IRO Resettlement Scheme – the main component of the international community's new humanitarian policy on refugee matters**

Although resettlement was not the only instrument the IRO utilised to handle DPs and refugees, it was that body's most important and remarkable policy. The resettlement scheme was a follow-up to previous attempts made by IGCR to establish a dual model of aid comprising both mass resettlement and individual migration. The third pillar of the IRO's modified mission was its 'Resettlement Placement Service', which involved, among other things, the placement of individuals that already had prospective employers or sponsors according to the specific needs of the country of destination.<sup>18</sup>

The resettlement scheme was heavily criticised by the Soviet Union and other communist-dominated countries, including the People's Poland. The policy of mass resettlement and the general framework for handling other schemes of resettlement of DPs and refugees under the IRO mandate were embedded in a series of agreements the organisation concluded with the governments of countries of destination. All candidates for resettlement were required to undergo a 'screening' carried out by IRO staff. Those who successfully passed through this phase faced the selection teams of their countries of choice. The often decisive criterion when assessing a refugee's application in such countries was whether or not they possessed valuable vocational skills.

Many countries raised various barriers to entry, such as fixing the maximum number of family members at five persons, the maximum age at 40–45 years or requiring applicants to possess specific vocational skills. When it came to the emigration of family permits (which, in many cases, were difficult to obtain), immigration policy usually required a family seeking

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<sup>16</sup> AN, IRO, AJ 43/1256, Final Statistical Report of IRO, July 1947 to December 1951, Summary of IRO statistics.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, the case study on Polish child refugees in Spain and the attempts to resettle them in the USA: P. Sękowski, 'The Care and Assistance Provided for Polish Child Refugees in Barcelona in the Immediate Post-WWII Period', in: *Migrations, Migrants and Refugees in 19th–21st Centuries in the Interdisciplinary Approach – Selected Topics*, eds P. Sękowski, O. Forcade, and R. Hudemann, Kraków, 2019 (special issue of *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne*, vol. 146, no. 3), pp. 585–605.

<sup>18</sup> Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, p. 368.

resettlement to have an equal number of members that were able and unable to work.<sup>19</sup>

In most cases, the selection teams of destination countries were primarily interested in recruiting labour according to their governments' policies, and the logic they applied was not mainly humanitarian. Emigration to countries other than the USA and Israel was organised almost exclusively according to the needs of the national economy.

Nevertheless, the IRO resettlement scheme helped resolve the plight of the famous 'last million' refugees in post-war Europe. The IRO was responsible for assuring the minimum resettlement conditions that refugees needed to satisfy. Hence, IRO represented the interests of DPs and refugees under its mandate. Only resettlement to the USA and, in some cases, to Great Britain was organised without the full financial support of the IRO.

Once a candidate had been selected for resettlement, they received a visa on a travel document issued with IRO assistance. This paper (or papers) took the form of either a certificate of identity issued by the IRO or a 'London travel document' under the 'London Agreement' of 15 October 1946 (which initially concerned refugees under the IGCR mandate).<sup>20</sup>

The admission of Polish nationals under IRO protection residing in the western zones of occupied Germany was declared by the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Paraguay, Peru, USA and Venezuela. The vast majority of Polish refugees resettled through IRO were relocated from western occupied zones of Germany, but their emigration was also organised from other locations.<sup>21</sup>

The IRO monopolised all aspects of overseas migration. This resettlement was organised on ships and, in extraordinary cases, by air. Throughout the entire period of its activity, a total of 60,308 Poles (civilians and former soldiers) relocated to Australia. Most of them had been cared for in the western-occupied zones of Germany or Austria, while others emigrated from France or western Africa. Until the end of 1951, a further 46,961 Poles had resettled in Canada, including former armed forces members.<sup>22</sup>

Usually, DPs and refugees wished to leave Europe, as the continent had been so severely devastated by the Second World War. The only European country which was a rare exception as a destination of resettlement was

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<sup>19</sup> Pilch, *Losy Polaków w Austrii*, p. 244; J.A. Radomski, *Demobilizacja Polskich Sił Zbrojnych na Zachodzie w latach 1945–1951*, Kraków, 2009, p. 172.

<sup>20</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, pp. 373–74.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., about the resettlement in the USA, under the supervision of the IRO and within the IRO resettlement scheme, of a group of 30 Polish children from Spain, in 1951: Sękowski, 'Care and Assistance', p. 595.

<sup>22</sup> Habielski, *Życie społeczne*, pp. 52–53; Radomski, *Demobilizacja Polskich Sił Zbrojnych*, pp. 165, 167, 169.



France, a traditional country of immigration. Through its specialised national agency, Office national de l'Immigration, 11,850 Poles were allowed to resettle in France in 1948. Far fewer Poles moved to that country after this date.<sup>23</sup>

As some refugees were dissatisfied with the conditions of their resettlement in Europe, especially in Belgium, many of them returned to Germany's western-occupied zones. In such cases, the IRO decided that as long as refugees had not been officially 'resettled', they were still eligible for other resettlement schemes.<sup>24</sup>

The *Displaced Persons Act of 1948* (known as the *DP Act*), enabled 205,000 DPs of Central and Eastern European origin to emigrate to the USA over the next two years. The number of DPs was subsequently extended to 400,000, and the operation was prolonged till 31 December 1951. Thanks to this statute, between July 1948 and December 1951, the USA admitted 106,017 Polish immigrants. By comparison, between July 1947 and June 1948, the IRO only managed to help 4549 Poles resettle in the USA. Among all Polish nationals who managed to find a new home in America, approximately 10,500 were former armed forces members. These 'DPs' also included refugees under IRO protection, including persons of Jewish origin. This was possibly due to a change in the initial fixed rule that an eligible 'DP' must be a displaced person or refugee as defined by Annex I of the IRO Constitution and must have met such criteria before 22 December 1945. This rule excluded many Jewish refugees from Poland who had fled to IRO camps following a Kielce pogrom on 4 July 1946 (as many as around 100,000 Jews arrived in the camps within six months). The Congressional Amendment of 1950 removed this restriction and established a new date – an eligible DP or refugee must have met the eligibility criteria under the IRO protection before 1 January 1949.<sup>25</sup> Between one-fifth and a third (from 70,000 to 100,000) of Jewish refugees from refugee camps (or living outside camps) in the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria or Italy were eventually resettled in the USA.<sup>26</sup>

At the beginning of 1950, there were still 24,877 'hard-core cases' under IRO protection – the elderly and disabled persons – still seeking resettlement: 14,015 of them were living in Germany, 8270 in France and 1644 in

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<sup>23</sup> P. Sękowski, 'Francja wobec polskich uchodźców wojennych i dipisów w pierwszych latach po drugiej wojnie światowej', *Dzieje Najnowsze* 2014, vol. 46, no. 2, p. 81; AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1257, Final Statistical Report of IRO, July 1947 to December 1951, Refugees of specified country of citizenship, last habitual residence or ethnic group departed for resettlement, 1 July 1947 – 31 December 1951.

<sup>24</sup> Wyman, *DP: Europe's Displaced Persons*, p. 189.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195; Radomski, *Demobilizacja Polskich Sił Zbrojnych*, p. 170; Pilch, *Losy Polaków w Austrii*, p. 242.

<sup>26</sup> K. Person, *Dipisi: Żydzi polscy w amerykańskiej i brytyjskiej strefach okupacyjnych Niemiec, 1945–1948*, Warszawa, 2019, p. 301.

Austria. By the end of 1950, this number declined to 11,000.<sup>27</sup> The Israeli effort to reduce the number of ‘hard-core cases’ is worth noting. As the Director General of the IRO wrote: “No Jewish refugee ever has been found to be too sick, too poor, too helpless, for admission and warm welcome by Israel”.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 1. Summary of IRO statistics – all refugees registered and assisted by the IRO and all refugees resettled according to place of departure, 1 July 1947 – 31 December 1951**

	Place of location / Place of departure								TOTAL
	Austria	France	Germany			Italy	Other European areas	Extra-European areas	
			British zone	French zone	US zone				
Total refugees registered and assisted by the IRO	188,498	224,890	326,738	61,426	585,589	106,806	43,622	81,439	<b>1,619,008</b>
Total refugees resettled by the IRO	145,233	31,434	224,261	38,087	457,188	70,535	17,940	54,072	<b>1,038,750</b>

Source: The author’s calculations based on: AN, IRO, AJ 43/1256, Final Statistical Report of IRO, July 1947 to December 1951, Summary of IRO statistics.

Overall, 44 per cent of all Polish nationals that benefited from the opportunities provided by the IRO resettlement scheme moved to USA or Canada. Another 17 per cent relocated to Australia, and 17 per cent remained in Europe. The vast majority of the 15 per cent of Polish nationals who took up residence in Asia covered the Jewish emigration to Israel. More than 5 per cent of resettled Poles moved to South or Central America. As far as Polish Jews are concerned, two-thirds of them found a home in Israel.<sup>29</sup>

Of 1,038,750 DPs and refugees resettled by the IRO around the world, 357,635 were Polish nationals. Poles constituted 34.5 per cent of all resettled persons, including Jewish refugees of Polish nationality. The number of Jewish refugees resettled by the IRO totalled 231,548, i.e. 22.3 per cent of all resettled DPs and refugees. As mentioned above, the majority of these were Polish citizens. The main destination countries for Poles relocated under the IRO mandate (including Jewish refugees from Poland) were the USA, Australia, Israel and Canada.

<sup>27</sup> Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, pp. 483, 492.

<sup>28</sup> Wyman, *DP: Europe’s Displaced Persons*, p. 203.

<sup>29</sup> AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1257, Final Statistical Report of IRO, July 1947 to December 1951, Refugees of specified country of citizenship, last habitual residence or ethnic group departed for resettlement, 1 July 1947 – 31 December 1951; K. Kersten, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej po II wojnie światowej*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk, 1974, pp. 250–51.

**Table 2. Resettlement of Polish DPs and refugees by IRO, 1 July 1947 – 31 December 1951**

Country of destination	Number of resettled Poles	Percentage of resettled Poles (%)
USA	110,566	30,9
Australia	60,308	16,9
Israel	54,904	15,4
Canada	46,961	13,1
Great Britain	35,780	10,0
France	11,882	3,3
Belgium	10,378	2,9
Brazil	7,770	2,2
Argentina	6,563	1,8
The Netherlands	2,969	0,9
Venezuela	2,814	0,8
Paraguay	1,433	0,4
New Zealand	847	0,2
All African destinations	1,361	0,4
Other South and Central American destinations	1,788	0,5
Other European destinations	1,062	0,3
Other Asian destinations	18	less than 0,1
Miscellaneous and not reported	231	–
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>357,635</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: The author's calculations based on: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1257, Final Statistical Report of IRO, July 1947 to December 1951, Refugees of specified country of citizenship, last habitual residence or ethnic group departed for resettlement, 1 July 1947 – 31 December 1951; K. Kersten, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej po II wojnie światowej*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk, 1974, pp. 250–51.

The IRO resettlement programme was terminated on 1 February 1952. The following month IRO entered into a period of liquidation. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees took over its tasks.

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The IRO's resettlement scheme was that organisation's flagship programme. According to the official historian of the IRO, Louise Holborn, the scheme was "probably the greatest organized transoceanic exodus in history".<sup>30</sup> Overall, the IRO's overseas migration operations may be regarded as a success, while many of its resettlement efforts in Europe were transitional. The IRO's work deserves to be remembered, not only because the organisation

<sup>30</sup> Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, p. 469.

**Table 3. Summary of the IRO resettlement scheme by country of destination, 1 July 1947 – 31 December 1951**

Country of destination	Country of citizenship, last habitual residence or ethnic group			
	Poland	All others resettled refugees	Jewish refugees*	TOTAL
USA	110,566	218,285	64,930	<b>328,851</b>
Australia	60,308	121,851	8,172	<b>182,159</b>
Israel	54,904	77,205	130,408	<b>132,109</b>
Canada	46,961	76,518	16,021	<b>123,479</b>
Great Britain	35,780	50,566	586	<b>86,346</b>
South and Central American countries	20,368	79,129	6,602	<b>99,497</b>
African countries	1,361	2,380	212	<b>3,741</b>
Other European countries	26,291	46,141	3,797	<b>72,432</b>
Other Asian countries	18	2,844	6	<b>2,862</b>
New Zealand	847	3,990	104	<b>4,837</b>
Miscellaneous and not reported	231	2,206	710	<b>2,437</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>357,635</b>	<b>681,115</b>	<b>231,548</b>	<b>1,038,750</b>

\* Jewish refugees are included in the preceding columns. This column encompasses, among others, Polish Jews together with Jewish refugees from elsewhere.

Source: The author's calculations based on: AN, IRO, ref. AJ 43/1257, Final Statistical Report of the IRO, July 1947 to December 1951.

and its programmes are still confused – even in the academic literature – with those of the UNRRA, which dissolved in mid-1947 without embarking on any such scheme.

In the immediate post-war period, Poles constituted the largest national group of displaced persons and refugees eligible for aid and protection, first under the mandate of the UNRRA and then of the IRO (during the entire period of 1945–51). The predominance of Poles among refugees falling under the mandate of the international community in the key period following the Second World War has not only attracted insufficient attention in international historiography but is also rarely touched upon in public debate both in Poland and abroad.

Due to the phenomenon's scale, the plight of Polish DPs and refugees in the late 1940s and early 1950s deserves much greater exposure in both Polish and global consciousness. Despite having the opportunity under the UNRRA's and then IRO's repatriation scheme to return to People's Poland, many displaced Polish citizens found support at the supra-state level through the aid and protection provided initially by the UNRRA and later by the IRO

in Europe. During the tenure of the International Refugee Organization in 1947–51, hundreds of thousands of Poles were classified as 'refugees' by that institution and took advantage of the opportunity to be resettled abroad, in most cases outside of Europe, the expense being covered by the international community.

## Summary

The International Refugee Organization (IRO), operating between 1947 and 1951, was the first specialised agency of the United Nations. In many respects, the IRO's operations continued humanitarian actions for displaced persons (DPs) and refugees carried out by the United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Administration (UNRRA) and the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees (IGCR). Although the DPs' countries of origin actively supported the post-war repatriation of their citizens, many of those people did not want to return to their homelands, either because they mistrusted the new Communist-dominated authorities in the Central and Eastern European countries or due to the enormous economic problems of the region, hard-hit during the Second World War. In addition, soon after the war, many Jews left Central Europe, especially Poland, for fear of widespread anti-Semitism and because they did not adhere to the socio-political changes in the so-called people's democracies. Under these circumstances, the international community turned to a new solution to the problem of huge numbers of DPs and refugees in postwar Europe: settlement action in countries other than the country of origin. This article aims to analyze the IRO's settlement policy as a manifestation of the international community's new approach to the issue of DPS and refugees in Europe. The text focuses on the DPs and refugees from Poland, who constituted Europe's largest nationality group under the IRO's care.

## **Polityka przesiedleńcza Międzynarodowej Organizacji ds. Uchodźców – nowe podejście społeczności międzynarodowej do problemu uchodźców w Europie: studium przypadku przesiedleńców i uchodźców z Polski**

Międzynarodowa Organizacja do spraw Uchodźców (IRO), działająca w latach 1947–1951, była pierwszą wyspecjalizowaną agendą Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych. W wielu aspektach aktywność IRO stanowiła kontynuację akcji humanitarnej wobec ludności przemieszczonej (dipisów) i uchodźców, realizowanej przez Administrację Narodów Zjednoczonych do spraw Pomocy i Odbudowy (UNRRA) i Międzyrządowy Komitet do spraw Uchodźców (IGCR). Mimo że państwa pochodzenia dipisów aktywnie wspierały powojenne repatriacje swoich obywateli, wielu z nich nie chciało wracać do ojczyzny z powodu braku zaufania do nowych, zdominowanych przez komunistów władz w państwach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej bądź ze względu na ogromne problemy gospodarcze tego regionu, ciężko doświadczonego w czasie II wojny światowej. Co więcej, bezpośrednio po wojnie wielu Żydów opuszczało Europę Środkową, szczególnie Polskę, w obawie przed szeroko rozpowszechnionym antysemityzmem, a także z powodu braku poparcia dla przemian społeczno-politycznych w krajach tzw. demokracji ludowej. W tych okolicznościach społeczność międzynarodowa znalazła nowe rozwiązanie problemu mas dipisów i uchodźców w powojennej Europie w postaci akcji osiedleńczej w krajach innych niż państwo pochodzenia. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza polityki osiedleńczej IRO jako przejawu nowego podejścia społeczności międzynarodowej wobec zagadnienia dipisów i uchodźców w Europie. Tekst koncentruje się na przykładzie dipisów i uchodźców z Polski, którzy stanowili najliczniejszą grupę narodowościową pod opieką IRO w Europie.

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