Displaced Persons From Eastern Europe After WWII

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POLISH REFUGEES PLACED AT 100,000

Red Cross Finds Complicated Problem Burdens Nations Harborng War Victims

LITHUANIA ESPECIALLY HIT

12,000 From Mennon Camps First; Then Vilna Brought More—$20,000 in Hungary

By Gordon Corbett, The New York Times

GRINDER, Jan. 16—The numbers and peculiarly complex problems of the Polish refugees who are now scattered through Lithuanian, Latvia, Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia have been authenticated by the first hand report of information gathered in extensive inspection tours by representatives of the American Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies.

The number of "officially recognized" refugees, both military and civilian, is about 340,000. Some 80,000 of these are in Hungary, Rumania and the rest of the countries. There are about 37,000 in Lithuania, 20,000 in Latvia and 3,000 in Yugoslavia.

While the political uncertainty and economic poverty prevailing in those countries that have given refuge to the Polish exiles make any rapid or lasting solution of their refugee problem extremely difficult, the speed and thoroughness of the help of the League has complications, even further the task of assimilating and rehabilitating the refugees, according to Red Cross observers.

The present situation in Lithuania, which is listed as harboring only 17,000 refugees, offers the best example of how incompletely the official figures reflect the actual situation brought about by the political repercussions of the Polish conquest.

Lithuania, one of Europe's poor States with a population of only 2,000,000, received its first refugee when 12,000 Lithuanian nationals entered its borders from the Memel territory after the German occupation in the Spring before the Polish war. In Memel, the Lithuanian Red Cross also led its finest institution, a clinic hospital in which most of its resources had been invested. It was closed after the war and was used by German troops for their own purposes.

In addition to these native refugees, whose care alone severely taxed the little nation's resources, the Lithuanian Red Cross was able to provide about 21,000 Polish refugees, 14,000 of whom were Polish soldiers from the eastern front, and 2,000 civilians to Lithuania. These Poles migrated to the countryside where they were fed and housed in the few huts available.

Then, when Russia invaded Latvia, the Lithuanians found themselves compensated for the Memel by the Russian gift of the territory of Vilna. But on looking into the little nation's territory, it became evident that the Lithuanians found that the Soviet had kept much of the useful agricultural area of the Vilna territory and had contributed between 60,000 and 100,000 Poles along with what remained.

This large group of Poles, who theoretically are not refugees, practically are inhabitants of what is now Latvia. The Lithuanian government has refused to turn them over to the Poles, and has sought to keep them along with the Vilna area.

Lithuania has adopted this course in an effort to maintain the territorial bounds that all former Polish citizens were Polish civil and police officials who were sent into the Vilna area in administrative capacities after 1939. When Vilna was forcibly wrested from Lithuania, by the newly created Poland. To round out the confused picture, an account must be taken of some 22,000 more Polish refugees who have filtered into the Vilna area since the conquest of Poland from both the German and the Russian occupied parts. As a result, the rest of their unfortunate compatriots, these refugees, too, must be cared for by Lithuania.

Thus the 37,000 official Polish refugees in Lithuania add unofficially between 85,000 and 125,000 to their numbers. And still the count is incomplete, for the latest Red Cross report shows that about 300 Polish refugees a day have been trekking into the Vilna area for the last three or four weeks.

This last immigration promises to continue, as it is caused by Russia's recent decision to stop converting worthless debt into rubles—which means that Poles who remain on Soviet territory—and, secondly, by the Czecho-Slovakian refusal to drive the Poles out of the country.

In Latvia, a similar but less complicated refugee situation exists. This little country officially has only 2,000 Polish refugees. Actually, however, 17,000 of the 22,000 young Polish agricultural laborers who migrated annually to Latvia in July for the harvest season and return to Poland in December were caught in Latvia when the war started.

The 30,000 Polish refugees listed for Hungary is an accurate estimate according to American Red Cross investigators. About 30,000 of this number are soldiers and some 13,000 are civilians. Hungary's particular refugee problem is one of housing.

The 30,000 Polish refugees in Rumania, who are divided equally between soldiers and civilians, are comparatively better off than their counterparts as regards treatment, in the opinion of investigators. This is because the former Polish Government had fairly large trade balances of debt securited in Rumania. When the Rumanian Government is now allotting the refugees at the daily rate of 150 lei to men, 80 lei to women and 50 lei to children. It is estimated, too, that about 250 Polish refugees a day, mostly soldiers and men of military age, leave Rumania by boat for either Syria or France to take up arms again against Germany. It is an open secret that they are being aided in this migration from Allied sources, while as a kind of counter-competition others have been induced by Nazi agents to return to German-occupied Poland.
- 100,000 military and civilian Polish refugees
- scattered through Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia
- political uncertainty of these countries makes permanence difficult for refugees
- not technically refugees
- number Ukrainians often skewed, because some recorded as Russian
Churchill acknowledges oppression of Poland

Still not considered refugees
POLISH REFUGEES GIVEN SHELTER IN VACANT HOUSE

But Their Children’s Fate Worries Them.

An abandoned 8 room house at Milwaukee avenue and Throop street has remained at the windows again. It is a house filled with drama paired with reality — a product of war.

Chairman of this refuge for homeless Polish men and women who have somehow managed to get to America is the Rev. Boniface Slawie who came here in July, 1939, to study teaching methods in American technical schools. Then suddenly came the September invasion of Poland and the priest has not been able reach home again. His 70 year old father was executed at Darhaut, his brothers were taken to Siberia by the Russians and he had no word of his aged mother. The home is supported by funds from the Polish Roman Catholic union and was furnished by women of the neighborhood.

On Swiss Vacation.

Two of the residents were once married wives of Polish professional men. They were vacationing in Switzerland that summer of 1939 and their small sons were enjoying a stay in Polish Boy Scout camps. The vacation period was coming to an end in September when the invading forces struck. The women could not get to their homes. Their husbands were killed in guerrilla fighting and the boys were evacuated from their camps by the Russians and marched to Siberia.

A man about 30 years old came to the home in such a mental condition that he was moved to the St. Mary of Nazareth hospital. He had been aboard a Polish merchant vessel at the time of the invasion. His entire family was wiped out in Gdynia and when he heard of this he moved westward alone.

Women Find Employment.

The Polish union cares for the refugees who need medical care at St. Mary’s hospital. The others are housed at the Milwaukee avenue hostel until they find employment. Some of the women who were teachers in Poland have organized small language classes. Others do housework, dish washing and any work that can get.

Monthly socials are held in the home and the sparse news of relatives in Poland is shared by the men and women who have been separated and cannot return. The last words the Rev. Slawie had of the folks in Silesia is terse. “The Polish people are very hungry,” the message read.

Worry About Sons.

Most of the occupants of the home are women because the men have either enlisted in the Polish army recently recruited in Canada or in the United States forces. The plight of the women is the welfare of their sons. Some of them have never been heard from. About 300 boys and girls in a remarkable odyssey of endurance and ingenuity arrived somehow in Rhodesia, South Africa, and were taken in by a priest, the Rev. Emil Drobmy at a Polish Catholic mission in Livingston.

The Polish Scout troops on the northwest side started a fund on St. George’s day for this mission. By May 31 there was $800 collected to send to the band of children who were able to escape from all parts of occupied Europe and find a comparative safety in Africa.

Attempt to Move Children.

The Polish embassy is making an effort to move some 10,000 children from occupied countries into Iran. In the meantime the women housed in the temporary refuge on Milwaukee avenue look for work and wait. The home has two kitchens and a number of comfortable bedrooms. The refugees cook their own meals and do the necessary housework.
refugees relocated to Milwaukee
place for homeless Polish men and women
have been through incredible trauma
funded by Polish Roman Catholic Union
furnished by community members
organized language classes
many women found domestic work
Free Choice Put in Refugee Plan

LONDON, Feb. 10. (AP) — The United Nations Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee today adopted its final report on the refugee question, including a provision that no refugee be forced to return to his native country if he has valid objections.

By adopting the “no force” provision, the committee defeated a long campaign by the Slav delegations, which argued that the United Nations should not assist refugees who failed to return to their homelands within four months.

The committee did not interpret what constitutes a “valid” objection and observers said a decision presumably will be made by a committee to be created by the Economic and Social Council, to which the report was submitted.

The report also included a Panamanian proposal that the case of Spanish Republican refugees be dealt with separately and the committee added a recommendation that refugee Spaniards be treated with “particular care and attention.”

- countries impacted by the WWII theoretically received reparations
- non-Jewish DPs expected to return home with in 4 months
- not racially discriminated, so not refugees
- “No Force” allows UN support for DPs with “valid concern”
- did not define
- if returned home, often treated as traitors
- had special stamps on passport signifying time in Germany “valid”
Truman Urges Refugees
Prompt Action
for Refugees

WASHINGTON, July 7 (AP) - President Truman asked Con-
egress again today for prompt action to bring the United States a
substantial number of the 1,000,000 anti-Communist refuge-
es from Eastern Europe who are concentrated in the Western
Allied zones of Germany, Austria and Italy.

In a special message to the House and Senate, Mr. Truman
asked early enactment of legis-
lation to make effective this gov-
ernment’s pledge of support to the
United Nations’ internation-
al refugee organization.

Congress already has sanctioned American participation in the
IRO, but the President pointed out that special legis-
lation to increase the existing im-
migration quotas for Eastern Europe is needed before any-
thing practical can be done.

‘Duty Is Plain’

“Our plain duty requires that we join with other nations in
solving this tragic problem,” he said, reminding the legis-
lators that other countries in Western
Europe and Latin America al-
ready have thrown open their
doors to large numbers of dis-
placed persons.

A House Judiciary Committee
is holding hearings on a bill to ad-
mit 400,000 refugees over a
four-year period, but it is doubt-
ed the measure will be reported
out at this session. Some Re-
publican leaders have taken the
position that the problem must
wait until Congress can get a
clearer picture of the political
setup in Europe.

Mr. Truman emphasized that
he was not asking for a genera-

TRUMAN URGES
REFUGEE AID

Continued From First Page

revision of the immigration law
but merely a change in the pres-
ent “wholly inadequate” entry
quotas for Eastern Europeans.
Those admitted under this pro-
posal, he said, still would have
to meet the rigid requirements
of the existing law.

No Number Set

He did not set any specific
number to be admitted, but he
said the great majority would
be people from the northern Bal-
tic areas, Poland, the Russian
Ukraine and Yugoslavia.

“These are people who oppose
totalitarian rule, and who, be-
cause of their burning faith in
the principles of freedom and
democracy, have suffered under
privat иon and hardship,” he said.

“Because they are not Com-
munists and are opposed to Com-
munism, they have staunchly
resisted all efforts to induce them
to return to Communist-con-
trolled areas. In addition, they
were our individual Allies dur-
ing the war.”

The President said it would
be “unthinkable” to keep these
homeless people in the refugee
camps where the United States
and Britain established them at
the war’s end or to turn them
loose on Germany’s already
overstretched economy.

“This government,” he added,
“has been in a really resisting
any proposal to send these people
back to their former homes by
force, where it is evident that
their unwillingness to return is
based upon political considera-
tions or fear of persecution.”

Alumni to Meet

The Los Angeles branch of the
Valparaiso University Alumni
Association will meet at 8 p.m.
Wednesday at the First Lu-
theran Parish Hall, 688 N. Los
Robles Ave., Pasadena.

- Truman to bring “substantial” number of Eastern European refugees
- IRO- international Refugee Organization
  - specialized UN agency
- bill to admit 400,000 over 4 years
- president didn’t specify a number
- doesn’t want change to laws, just increase the number accepted
May 16, 1948
Los Angeles Times

Adopted Refugee Family Welcomed by Claremont

CLAREMONT, May 15—The Sawycka family became Claremonters here today, beginning a new life under the friendly auspices and help of the Claremont Community Council.

Elizabeth Engel, 20 months old, made the first neighborhood call of welcome.

Mrs. Adelia Sawycka and her daughters, Tetiana, 25, and Natasha, 17, and her mother, Mrs. Elisabeth Gineko, arrived here yesterday after a trip which brought them from a displaced persons’ camp in Vienna within the month.

Claremont’s Co-ordinating Council’s program to “adopt” a European family and to assist it in adjustment to life in the United States materialized rapidly. Alverda Lerrigo, niece of George Lerrigo of Claremont, who is in the Vienna office of the International Refugee Organization, recommended the Sawycka family as the first family to be adopted under the Claremont plan.

The Sawyckas are no novices in the matter of displacement. Mrs. Sawycka and her mother, born in Russian Ukraine, fled from the Bolsheviks in 1917 to Warsaw. In 1944 they were forced to flee Warsaw and were captured in Vienna by the Nazis.

With the help of the Claremont Co-ordinating Council, which is headed by O. C. Keesey, housing and employment has already been found for them.

• Claremont Co-ordinating Committee to “adopt” European families
• came from DP camp in Vienna
• community supporting refugee family
• housing and employment has already been found
200 European DPs arrived in LA by boat

- Very rough trip; people were injured
- most left for another city within an hour of arriving
- expect to take up old jobs... eventually
1,500,000 Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians that Russia has forced into labor camps

vote to elect UN high commissioner to handle refugee issues after IRO ends

rejected proposal that forced UN members to send DPs back to Russian controlled territory
More Resources

- [http://remember.org/educate/dingell](http://remember.org/educate/dingell)