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The Aid of the Polish Government-in-Exile to Jewish Refugees in Spain, 1943–1944, as Reflected in the Archive of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Refugees' Correspondence with Ignacy Schwarzbart*

Abstract: The article discusses the relations between the Polish government-in-exile in England and Polish Jewish refugees stranded in Spain in the years 1943–1944. The study is based principally on previously unexamined correspondence between Jewish refugees in Spain and Ignacy Schwarzbart, the Jewish representative of the Polish National Council in London, which was preserved at the Yad Vashem Archives, and the records of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that are accessible at the Hoover Institution. This article focuses on three thorny issues related to governmental assistance for Jewish refugees: the recognition of their Polish citizenship, the material relief provided to them, and their evacuation from Spain. Polish decision-makers responded to all problems reported by their Jewish compatriots. However, their actions often left Jewish refugees dissatisfied, and their attitudes were considered callous, unjust, and at times outright antisemitic. The author argues that, while some of the shortcomings can be attributed directly to the work of Polish officials in London, such as the bureaucratic sluggishness of some governmental agendas, others arose from wartime constraints that the Polish government was not entirely able to control or influence, such as the deficient communication with its representatives abroad and the inhospitable stance of the international community towards Jewish refugees. The article not only examines the Polish government's attempts to address refugee matters in Spain, but also sheds light on the perspective of the Jewish subjects involved in the described events.

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Słowa kluczowe: Polski rząd na uchodźstwie; żydowscy uchodźcy; Hiszpania; druga wojna światowa; opieka społeczna; obywatelstwo; emigracja.

During the Second World War, Spain, an impoverished country ravaged by its own barely terminated civil war, became a place of refuge for tens of thousands of international refugees.¹ Among them, there were at least a few hundred Jews of Polish origin² who, unable to emigrate from German-dominated Europe legally, did so in secret by crossing the Pyrenees from France to Spain.³

The matter of Polish Jewish refugees in Spain gained momentum in the second half of the war. The massive roundups that shook France in the summer of 1942 and the German occupation, in November 1942, of the “free” zone governed by the collaborationist Vichy regime prompted Jews in France to seek haven outside of the French borders. While many thousands escaped clandestinely to Switzerland,⁴ others turned their attention southward and scaled the Pyrenees to reach Spain. Most of them were detained by the Spanish police and placed in prisons. From there, the men (officially only those of military age, but exceptions were not all

¹ Haim Avni estimated that the total number of Jews who transited through Spain between June 1940 and the fall of 1944 was 37,500, while more recent studies of Josep Calvet suggest that the number of refugees who left France for Spain during the Second World War was 80,000, including around 10,000–12,000 Jews detained by the Spanish authorities: Haim Avni, *Spain, the Jews, and Franco* (Philadelphia, 1982), 9–1, 127; Josep Calvet, *Les muntanyes de la llibertat: el pas d'evadits pels Pirineus durant la Segona Guerra Mundial (1939–1944)* (Barcelona, 2007), 97–98.

² Under the term “of Polish origin,” I include individuals who claimed to have Polish citizenship, were recognized as Polish citizens by the Polish representatives in Spain, or were born in the territories that, as of 1923, formed the Second Polish Republic and did not acquire citizenship of any other country.

³ Stanisław Schimitzek, the leader of the wartime Polish Refugee Aid Committee in Lisbon, estimated that the total number of Polish citizens who managed to transit via Spain throughout the Second World War was from 14,500 to 15,500, including 8,500 soldiers and 6,000–7,000 civilians: Stanisław Schimitzek, *Na krawędzi Europy. Wspomnienia portugalskie 1939–1946* (Warsaw, 1970), 695–696. His numbers were later quoted by Jan Stanisław Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy. Polacy w hiszpańskim obozie internowania w Miranda de Ebro 1940–1945* (Warsaw, 2021), 175. In the Spanish files concerning the refugees detained within the province of Gerona between September 1940 and July 1944, I detected up to 406 Jews of Polish origin: Arxiu Històric de Girona, arch. coll. Govern Civil de Girona. Expedients de frontera i d'investigació.

⁴ Ruth Fivaz-Silbermann, *La fuite en Suisse: Les Juifs à la frontière franco-suisse durant les années de la “Solution finale”* (Paris, 2020).

that rare) were transferred to an internment camp in Miranda de Ebro. Women, children, and the elderly, depending on the province where they were detained, were either granted liberty or remained in prison, segregated according to gender. In the province of Gerona, children were placed in orphanages, awaiting the liberation of their mothers. Some of the detainees faced expulsion to France, although the hitherto research suggests that this measure was not widely used.⁵

Due to the ever-mounting numbers of detained refugees in the country, it was precisely at the turn of 1942 and 1943, as more and more Jewish refugees were fleeing to Spain, that the Spanish authorities started loosening up the grip that they had so far on international exiles. Massive releases were announced in January 1943. The consular representatives of the countries involved were to take care of their citizens, and relief organizations—officially the Spanish Red Cross, but in fact American charities, such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)—were to take care of the stateless. They were not only supposed to support them materially while they were still in the country but also help them emigrate from Spain as quickly as possible.

Numerous researchers dedicated their work to the subject of Polish-Jewish relations during the Second World War. Nevertheless, in contrast to the situation inside the occupied country, only a few historians have studied the activities of the Polish government-in-exile. The author of the most recognized monograph dedicated to this topic is undoubtedly David Engel, who depicts a rather unfavorable image of the treatment that the Polish decision-makers in London afforded to the “Jewish question.”⁶ Dariusz Stola seemed slightly more benign in his evaluation of the Polish

⁵ Jacqueline Adams, “Why Jewish Refugees Were Imprisoned in a Spanish Detention Camp while Fleeing Europe (1940–1945),” *Journal of Modern European History* 21 (2023), 1:110–132; Avni, *Spain, the Jews, and Franco*, 68–127; Calvet, *Les Muntanyes de la llibertat*; id., *Huyendo del Holocausto* (Lleida, 2014); id., “Spain, Refuge for Jews Fleeing Nazism during the Second World War,” in Sara J. Brenneis, Gina Herrmann (eds.), *Spain, the Second World War, and the Holocaust: History and Representation* (Toronto, 2020), 115–124; Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy*, 297–343; Bernd Rother, *Franco y el Holocausto* (Madrid, 2005), 136–148; Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French, and the Jews* (New York, 1993), 256–259.

⁶ David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942* (Chapel Hill–London, 1987); id., *Facing a Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1943–1945* (Chapel Hill–London, 1993). In the conclusion of the first volume of his work, Engel stated that the Polish government in London had consciously excluded their Jewish countrymen from their “universe of obligation”: Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, 203, 212.

government's stance towards their Jewish compatriots.⁷ Both authors, however, only very briefly mentioned the Polish governmental help to the masses of Polish Jewish refugees populating various countries all over the world. They pointed to the general Jewish dissatisfaction and the difficulties leading to this state of affairs, such as the challenging financial situation of the Polish government and the anti-Jewish immigration restrictions around the world.⁸ More recently, Piotr Długołęcki came to a radically different conclusion, stating that "Polish officials and diplomats organized one of the largest relief actions to help Jews, carried out by the state diplomatic services during World War II."⁹

Extensive research has been dedicated to the activity of the Polish representations in the Western European countries such as Switzerland, France, and even Portugal.¹⁰ In this part of the continent, only the Polish wartime mission in Spain has escaped detailed scrutiny. Jan Stanisław Ciechanowski has partially filled this gap but his ample work concentrates on the clandestine evacuation of soldiers via the Iberian Peninsula and only spares a few pages on the particular situation of Polish Jews.¹¹ This has so far been dealt with most extensively by Alicja Gontarek, who focused on the main tasks of the Polish envoy in Madrid, Marian Szumlakowski, regarding the Jewish refugees, such diplomatic and material support and help with emigration from the country. Drawing on the archives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MSZ) preserved at the Hoover Institution, Gontarek concluded that, despite various difficulties and thanks to

⁷ Dariusz Stola, *Nadzieja i Zagłada. Ignacy Schwarzbart – żydowski przedstawiciel w Radzie Narodowej RP (1940–1945)* (Warsaw, 1995).

⁸ Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, 88–90, 97–100; Stola, *Nadzieja i Zagłada*, 124–128.

⁹ Piotr Długołęcki, ed., *Confronting the Holocaust: Documents on the Polish Government-in-Exile's Policy Concerning Jews 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2022), VII.

¹⁰ For France, see David Engel, "The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Deportations of Polish Jews from France in 1942," *Yad Vashem Studies* 15 (1983): 91–123; Paweł Korzec, Jacques Burko, *Le Gouvernement polonais en exil et la persécution des Juifs en France en 1942* (Paris, 1997). For Switzerland, see Danuta Drywa, "Działalność Poselstwa RP w Bernie na rzecz polsko-żydowskich uchodźców w latach 1939–1945," in Waldemar Grabowski (ed.), *Okupowana Europa. Podobieństwa i różnice* (Warsaw, 2014), 99–123; Agnieszka Haska, "Proszę Pana Ministra o energiczną interwencję. Aleksander Ładoś (1891–1963) i ratowanie Żydów przez Poselstwo RP w Bernie," *Zagłada Żydów* 11 (2015), 299–309; Isaac Lewin, "Attempts at Rescuing European Jews with the Help of Polish Diplomatic Missions during World War II," *The Polish Review* 22 (1977), 4:3–23; Monika Maniewska, Jędrzej Uszyński, Bartłomiej Zygmunt, *The Ładoś List: An Index of People to Whom the Polish Legation and Jewish Organizations in Switzerland Issued Latin American Passports during the Second World War*, ed. Jakub Kumoch (Warsaw, 2020). For Portugal, see Adam Grzybowski, Jacek Tebinka, *Na wolność przez Lizbonę. Ostatnie okręty polskich nadziei* (Warsaw, 2018).

¹¹ Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy*, 465, 534–538, 636–638.

corrections from his superiors, Szumlakowski performed his assignments “correctly,” at least from the perspective of the Polish political objectives. She admitted, however, that the criteria of the Polish government did not mean that each Jew claiming Polish citizenship would automatically be eligible to receive its support, which could have contributed to the “great and partially justified discontentment” of some Polish Jews.¹²

The present article aims to revisit the subject of relations between the Polish government-in-exile and their agendas abroad and the Jewish refugees stranded in Spain between 1943 and 1944. The stepping stone for this research is the hitherto unexamined correspondence between the refugees and Ignacy Schwarzbart, the Jewish representative at the Polish National Council in London, preserved at the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem. With rare exceptions,¹³ the Jewish exiles’ letters present the behavior of the Polish authorities in Spain as callous, discriminatory, and at times outright antisemitic. Schwarzbart also maintained vivid communication with Jewish relief organizations, such as JDC, which periodically alarmed him about the situation of his compatriots in Spain. The information exchanged between the Jewish refugees and their representatives is confronted with the MSZ’s records preserved at the Hoover Institution. The combination of these two sources allows the researcher to incorporate the “Jewish” perspective on the matter and show the “backstage” of the Polish government-in-exile’s activity. This article focuses on three topics that were the most frequent objects of complaints forwarded to Schwarzbart: (i) recognition of Polish citizenship of the Jewish refugees stranded in Spain; (ii) material relief provided to them; and (iii) the assistance for their emigration from the country. Although the Polish decision-makers addressed all of the above-mentioned issues, only some of them were truly satisfactorily resolved. I argue that the shortcomings can be attributed to factors over which the Polish government had varied degrees of control, such as the bureaucratic sluggishness of certain departments,

¹² Alicja Gontarek, “Działalność Poselstwa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Hiszpanii na rzecz pomocy uchodźcom żydowskim w czasie II wojny światowej (w świetle akt Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych przechowywanych w Archiwum Instytutu Hoovera). Zarys problemu,” *Almanach Historyczny* 23 (2021), 1:261–262.

¹³ For example: Yad Vashem [henceforth: YV], collection: M.2, Archive of Dr. I. Schwarzbart, member of the Polish National Council in Exile, London [henceforth: M.2], call no. 386, letter from Chil G. to Szwarzbart [sic], 12 Apr. 1943; *ibid.*, letter from Chil G. to Szwarzbart [sic], 10 Dec. 1943; *ibid.*, letter from Rubin E. to Schwarzbart, 5 Apr. 1943. The last names of the refugees are redacted to protect their and their family’s privacy.

lack of control over its agendas abroad, and the inhospitable stance of international actors towards Jewish emigrants.

Recognition of the Polish citizenship of Jews

By mid-January 1943, approximately 150 refugees were released from the internment camp in Miranda de Ebro and left for Madrid under the auspices of their national representations.¹⁴ The Polish group included thirty-one Jews, but thirty-six others who had claimed Polish nationality could not leave the camp because, as one eye-witness noted, the Polish consul “mercilessly declared to the Spanish authorities that he does not recognize these thirty people and does not free them.”¹⁵ JDC wrote about it to Ignacy Schwarzbart.¹⁶ After he intervened with the MSZ,¹⁷ Eugeniusz Kobyłecki, the consul and the secretary of the Polish Legation in Madrid, returned to Miranda de Ebro and revised the documents of the concerned Jewish inmates. Twenty-four of them were ultimately released into the custody of the Polish representative.¹⁸ At the beginning of April, eighty Jews in Miranda still awaited their recognition as Polish citizens.¹⁹

The letters of Jewish refugees sent to Schwarzbart describe a double standard applied to Polish Jews and non-Jews regarding the recognition of citizenship. “Those [men] who claimed to be Roman-Catholic and bore Polish surnames were accepted [as Polish] without difficulty,” while the Jews were strictly required to either present valid Polish documents or give proof of their military service in Poland in 1939.²⁰ Those who had emigrated from the country before the war and did not possess a valid Polish passport were in principle rejected based on the Polish Act on

¹⁴ JDC Archives [henceforth: JDC], collection: New York Office Collection 1933–1944 [henceforth: NY 1933–1944], call no. 915, cable from Schwartz to Leavitt, received on 20 Jan. 1943; *ibid.*, cable from Schwartz to Leavitt, received on 21 Jan. 1943.

¹⁵ YV, M.2, call no. 615, cable from Schwartz to Schwarzbart, received on 20 Jan. 1943. The eye-witness account: *ibid.*, call no. 386, letter from David D. to Schwarzbart, 17 Mar. 1942.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, call no. 615, cable from Schwartz to Schwarzbart, 28 Jan. 1943.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, letter from Schwarzbart to MSZ, 4 Feb. 1943.

¹⁸ Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum [henceforth: PISM], collection: Poselstwo RP w Madrycie [henceforth: A.45], call no. 53/3: cable no. 31 from Szumlakowski to London, 15 Feb. 1943 (also in Hoover Institution Archives [henceforth: HIA], collection: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych [henceforth: MSZ], call no. 546/9).

¹⁹ JDC, NY 1933–1944, call no. 915, General Letter no. 89 from Katzki to AJDC New York, 6 Apr. 1943.

²⁰ YV, M.2, call no. 386, hand-written note concerning Majer P., 1 Nov. 1943.

Revocation of Citizenship of 31 March 1938.²¹ This law gave the Polish government the right to strip a person of his or her Polish citizenship if, while abroad, that person acted “to the detriment of the Polish State,” or, residing outside of Poland for over five years, “lost the connection” with the motherland.²² The law was particularly detrimental to Polish Jews: they were the objects of 88.1% of denaturalization requests made by MSZ by mid-April 1939. The Act was ultimately annulled by the Polish President’s decree on 28 November 1941, but the decisions issued thus far remained valid until they were challenged by the aggrieved party.²³ When denied national recognition in the internment camp, Polish Jews were becoming effectively stateless, which cut them off from the material and bureaucratic aid of the Polish consulate and dwindled their chances for a prompt liberation.

JDC representatives contacted Schwarzbart regarding this matter as soon as the problems with citizenship recognitions came to the surface in January 1943. Prompted by Joseph Schwartz, the director of JDC’s European office, Schwarzbart appealed to MSZ to instruct Polish consular offices in Spain to vouch for all Polish men in the camp without exception and have them all released.²⁴ Schwarzbart explained that various Polish exiles stranded in the country had had to “abandon the documents they had, and sometimes assume false names to save themselves” during their flight from France. They desperately needed new passports to emigrate from Spain but lacked the means to prove their Polish origin to local consular representatives. Schwarzbart urged the Ministry to adopt a liberal approach towards the recognition of the refugees’ citizenship and issue “clear instructions” to Polish consulates to provide them with replacement documents or temporary passports.²⁵ Schwarzbart sent a copy of this letter to the Polish Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MPiOS), which later endorsed his request.²⁶ Szmul Zygielbojm, the second Jewish representa-

²¹ Ibid., call no. 385, letter from Aron Dawid L. to Schwarzbart, 29 Mar. 1943.

²² For the English translation of the document, see P[aul] Weis, “Statelessness as a Legal-Political Problem,” in *The Problem of Statelessness* (London, 1944), 7.

²³ Grzegorz Kulka, “Nadawanie, pozbawianie i przywracanie obywatelstwa polskiego w czasie II wojny światowej,” *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 63 (2011), 1:149–150, 152–153, 165–166.

²⁴ YV, M.2, call no. 615, cable from Schwartz to Schwarzbart, received on 20 Jan. 1943.

²⁵ Ibid., letter from Schwarzbart to MSZ, 21 Jan. 1943 (also in HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9).

²⁶ Ibid., copy of a letter from MPiOS to MSZ, 27 Jan. 1943, attached to the letter from Grosfeld to Schwarzbart, 27 Jan. 1943. This letter can be treated as an example of

tive in the Polish National Council, also intervened in this matter at MSZ on 20 January 1943.²⁷ Nine days later, the Polish envoys were ordered to treat individuals unable to decisively prove their Polish citizenship “liberally” and provide them with temporary passports, provided that they spoke Polish and were able to offer “indirect” proofs of citizenship, such as letters from Poland, documents confirming they had resided in or visited the country before the war, recommendations of trustworthy persons, etc.²⁸ Polish Envoy in Madrid, Marian Szumlakowski, also stated that “after the most liberal check of all claims for recognition of Polish citizenship of Jews residing in Madrid, a negative decision was taken in only one case.” All the approved persons received new passports or had the validity of their expired documents extended.²⁹

However, according to JDC, at the beginning of March 1943, Polish authorities in Madrid still refused to accept Jewish refugees’ birth certificates and old Polish passports as a basis for the recognition of their nationality claims.³⁰ Some of them were even told, allegedly by Kobyłecki, that their documents could not be trusted because “Jews know how to obtain papers thanks to their connections.”³¹ Schwarzbart took up this matter once more with the Polish Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Social Welfare: “The different treatment of Polish Jewish citizens is not only fundamentally wrong and inconsistent with the declarations of our Government but also causes very unpleasant political resonances among Polish-Jewish refugees.”³² From the Polish authorities’ perspective, the reasons for such caution were manifold. MSZ was aware that, in the wake

Staćzyk’s intervention in the work of another ministry. Raczyński, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, recalled Stańczyk’s and others’ attempts to exert pressure on his department in his wartime journal: Edward Raczyński, *W sojusznicy Londynie. Dziennik ambasadora 1939–1945* (London, 1960), 138–140, 144, 162–163. See also: Paweł Ceranka, *Urząd Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej 1939–1945* (Warsaw, 2021), 229–230. Further research would allow a better understanding of the competence disputes between MSZ and MPiOS and their influence on the refugees’ welfare in Spain.

²⁷ HIA, MSZ, call no. 514/2, “Notatka,” “Pilne,” 20 Jan. 1943.

²⁸ Ibid., telegram no. 46 from MSZ to Madrid, 29 Jan. 1943.

²⁹ PISM, A.45, call no. 53/3, telegram no. 31 from Szumlakowski to London, 15 Feb. 1943.

³⁰ YV, M.2, call no. 615, telegram from Katzki to Schwarzbart, 24 Feb. 1943; JDC, NY 1933–1944, call no. 915, “Some notes in [sic] present refugee situation in Spain,” Herbert Katzki, 9 Mar. 1942.

³¹ YV, M.2, call no. 386, letter from David D., to Schwarzbart, 17 Mar. 1942.

³² Ibid., call no. 615, letter from Schwarzbart to MPiOS, 5 Mar. 1943; *ibid.* (also in HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9), call no. 615, letter from Schwarzbart to MSZ, FAO Counselor Kraczkiewicz, 5 Mar. 1943 (also in HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9).

of the French defeat in June and July 1940, individuals connected to Polish consulates in France issued passports to people whose Polish nationality was at best dubious, often for money. Such cases were detected in Toulouse, Lourdes, and Perpignan.³³ It was feared that such faulty documents could be used by foreign agents.³⁴ The Polish authorities also suspected that the persons reclaiming their Polish citizenship did it not out of sincere devotion to their motherland but to receive more subsidies and facilitate their emigration.³⁵ For example, it came to the attention of the Polish Legation in Madrid that several Polish Jews in Spain claimed to have Polish citizenship to boost their chances of a prompt evacuation from the Iberian Peninsula. At the same time, they tried to leave the country by other channels, attesting that they were stateless, or, once in Great Britain, they suddenly declared that they had lost their Polish citizenship before the war to avoid joining the Polish Army.³⁶

Schwarzbart took up this matter again in May 1944, this time prompted by the Representation of Polish Jews in Tel Aviv. The Representation complained that Polish Jews who had escaped from Hungary, Belgium, and France, and recently reached Palestine (some of them likely via Spain), were denied Polish passports at the Polish consulates. One excerpt from the letter poignantly exposes the Jewish interpretation of the Polish government's reluctance to recognize them as fellow citizens: "In practice, this means that the bureaucracy now simply kills—although not biologically—but as citizens, even those few Polish citizens who survived and have come here."³⁷ A new, definite procedure was eventually established on 16 June 1944, outlined in MSZ's Circular Order no. 728/44, allowing war refugees to receive new Polish passports in case they could not unequivocally prove their Polish citizenship. MSZ authorized Polish consuls to issue new passports to these persons provided that they knew the Polish language and possessed other, substitute identity documents, such as

³³ HIA, MSZ, call no. 515/6, MSZ's Circular Order no. 728/40, 25 Sept. 1940; *ibid.*, call no. 515/14, letter from Szumlakowski to MSZ, 28 June 1943.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, call no. 514/6, letter from Certified Colonel Mitkiewicz, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Commander-in-Chief, to the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 Sept. 1940.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, call no. 508/8, letter from the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief, Department I, to the Polish General Consulate in London, 7 Aug. 1941; *ibid.*, call no. 551/17, "Sprawozdanie z działalności Placówki Polskiego Czerwonego Krzyża w Barcelonie," Anna Klemensiewicz de Rodón, 25 Mar. 1943, attached to the letter from Szumlakowski to Secretary-General at MSZ, 2 Apr. 1943.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, call no. 515/14, letter from Szumlakowski to MSZ, 28 June 1943.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, call no. 514/2, letter from Schwarzbart to MSZ, 31 May 1944.

birth or marriage certificate, military service book, or driver's license, or if two credible Polish citizens known to the consulate testified that they were indeed Polish citizens.³⁸

The second group struggling for the recognition of their Polish citizenship were Jews who had effectively lost it as a result of the law of 31 March 1938 and felt entitled to its official restoration. Szmul Zygielbojm intervened on their behalf at MSZ on 20 January 1943. He believed that, since the 1938 law had been abolished on 28 November 1941, "currently, under new regulations, [their] citizenship should be restored."³⁹ By the end of 1943, Ignacy Schwarzbart reported a case of 15 such individuals residing in Spain.⁴⁰ Three circular orders issued by MSZ between 1940 and 1942 described the procedure of citizenship restoration.⁴¹ An interested individual had to present, via the Polish consulates, a request to the Polish Ministry of the Interior (MSW), responsible for the duration of the war for the matters of citizenship,⁴² containing "all details relating to the issue of the petitioner's connection with Polish statehood during their stay abroad, in particular: whether they know Polish language, in spoken or written form, whether they took part in the life of a Polish colony abroad, etc."

In the face of recurring problems with the recognition of refugees' Polish citizenship, on 1 June 1944, Schwarzbart asked Sander Grossman, an exile residing in Barcelona, to assist his compatriots in composing the applications to the consulates and MSW.⁴³ On 30 September, Grossman reported that, in principle, he did not encounter any resilience on the part of the consular officials. The problem, however, was that the refugees had to wait a long time to receive their new passports. Other people, who had previously submitted their documents to the Polish consulate in Madrid for extension, had also been waiting for over eight months to

³⁸ PISM, A.45, call no. 439/2, MSZ's Circular Order no. 728/44, 16 June 1944.

³⁹ HIA, MSZ, call no. 514/2, "Notatka," "Pilne," 20 Jan. 1943.

⁴⁰ YV, M.2, call no. 616, telegram from Donald Hurwitz to Schwarzbart, 13 Jan. 1944. Fifteen Polish refugees struggled with the recognition of their citizenship. I was not able to find more information on this matter, but it seems that a certain Baczyński was sent from London, to whom the refugees concerned should turn for help: *ibid.*, telegram from Schwarzbart to Hurwitz, 24 Jan. 1944; *ibid.*, telegram from Schwarzbart to Hurwitz, 2 Mar. 1944.

⁴¹ They were issued on 20 January 1940, 27 March 1941, and 12 January 1942: Długołęcki, *Confronting the Holocaust*, 25–26, 191; PISM, A.45, call no. 439/2.

⁴² Kulka, "Nadawanie," 166.

⁴³ YV, M.2, call no. 616, letter from Schwarzbart to Grossman, 1 June 1944. Grossman was recommended to Schwarzbart by Alfred Goldstein, who had just arrived in London from Spain and worked for MSW: *ibid.*, letter from Schwarzbart to JDC, 29 Aug. 1944.

get them back. Grossman asked Schwarzbart to intervene with the Polish government to hasten the process.⁴⁴

By the end of December 1944, Grossman had finished his work in Barcelona.⁴⁵ He informed London that “the matter of my activity is favorably treated by the local Consular Office,” thanks to the appreciation of Schwarzbart’s work.⁴⁶ In January 1945, having received appropriate permission from the Spanish authorities, Grossman, his wife, and a secretary traveled to Madrid to continue their work there. In total, Grossman assisted seventy-three refugees in Spain: fifty-six in Barcelona and seventeen in Madrid. Thanks to the interventions at MSZ, eleven refugees from Barcelona had already received their new Polish passports, and Consul Kobyłecki promised to issue the remaining ones within a fortnight.⁴⁷

The documents gathered in Schwarzbart’s archive do not allow us to ascertain the fate of other applications,⁴⁸ but JDC recorded that, until 12 February 1945, a total of fifteen (out of seventy-three) Polish refugees managed to have their citizenship claims recognized, and they had passed under the protection of the Polish Red Cross. JDC complained that the Polish government would not follow up on the matter of Polish citizenship for the next few months, until “an energetic intervention” was made upon the new Polish *chargé d’affaires* in Spain, Józef Potocki, during his journey to Barcelona in May 1945. Ten more refugees were thereafter recognized as Polish nationals and provided with new Polish passports.⁴⁹

Material help provided to Jews by the Polish government

As early as 29 September 1942, Schwarzbart turned to MSZ, sharing news of “a small number of Polish Jews from southern France” who had

⁴⁴ Ibid., letter from Grossman to Schwarzbart, 30 Sept. 1944.

⁴⁵ Ibid., letter from Grossman to Schwarzbart, 20 Dec. 1944.

⁴⁶ Ibid., letter from Grossman to Schwarzbart, 27 Nov. 1944.

⁴⁷ Ibid.: “Tłumaczenie wyimków z Listu Grossmana, Barcelona 22/I-45.”

⁴⁸ They might be found among other similar cases in PISM, collection: Ministry of Internal Affairs [henceforth: A.9], call no. VII/13, referred to by Kulka, “Nadawanie,” 166–167.

⁴⁹ JDC, NY 1933–1944, call no. 886d, “Polish Nationals in Spain,” Harold Trobe to AJDC New York, 12 Feb. 1945; JDC, collection: New York Office Collection 1945–1954 [henceforth: NY 1945–1954], call no. 971, “Rapport sur la semaine du 7 au 13 mai 1945,” no. 10. The numbers of newly recognized Polish citizens mentioned in this report are inexact, either nine, ten, or eleven. The list of newly recognized Polish citizens specifies ten names, so this is the number I retained as the most likely to be correct.

managed to escape to Spain.⁵⁰ Asked by MSZ, Szumlakowski confirmed that around 100 Jewish families had arrived in Spain, mainly in Barcelona and to a lesser extent in Madrid. Forty-five persons who did not have their documents “in order” were interned. Szumlakowski assured that all those who had been recognized as Polish citizens were given a subsidy of 350 to 500 pesetas, paid by the Polish Legation in Madrid and by the Polish Red Cross in Barcelona. Szumlakowski also asked for an additional budget of 50,000 pesetas to cover these expenses.⁵¹ Two weeks later, MPiOS informed MSZ and the Legation in Madrid that they had already requested the money from the Polish Ministry of Finance. The Social Welfare Minister Jan Stańczyk also asked Szumlakowski to “treat refugees as liberally as possible and show them keen interest and kindness.”⁵²

In the last days of 1942, Schwarzbart discussed the situation of Polish Jews in Spain in a meeting with Joseph Schwartz, who at that time visited London. Schwartz complained that the Polish government provided them with a financial aid of only 15 pesetas per day per person, while Polish Christians received a full subsidy (its amount was not mentioned in Schwarzbart’s note from the meeting). Such daily subsidy, according to Schwartz, was gravely insufficient, as lodging and board in Spain cost at least 33 pesetas a day, not to mention the pocket money that the refugees needed to cover their personal expenses.⁵³ Following this meeting, Schwarzbart intervened with MPiOS, asking for “appropriate regulations” to even out the differences between all Polish citizens in Spain: “I know that the Ministry of Social Welfare has repeatedly emphasized the . . . principle of full equality, but I am asking that this principle be also implemented in practice.”⁵⁴ The Ministry instructed the Polish Legation in Madrid to “apply the principle of full equality to Jewish refugees in need of assistance,” to hold a conference with JDC regarding the matter, and possibly increase the monthly subsidy.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, more and sometimes contradictory complaints reached Schwarzbart from JDC in Lisbon. On 15 January 1943, Schwartz sent

⁵⁰ HIA, MSZ, call no. 529/35, letter from Schwarzbart to MSZ, 29 Sept. 1942.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, telegram no. 366 from Szumlakowski to MSZ, 9 Oct. 1942 (copy of the document with some details omitted in the MSZ’s version in PISM, A.45, call no. 53/3).

⁵² *Ibid.*, letter from Grosfeld, MPiOS, to MSZ, 23 Oct. 1942; *ibid.*, telegram no. 164 from Stańczyk to Madrid, 29 Oct. 1942.

⁵³ YV, M.2, call no. 615, “KONFERENCJA z p. Józefem Schwartzem, dyrektorem Jointu na Europę. Londyn, 27/12/1942,” 26 Dec. 1942 [sic].

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, letter from Schwarzbart to MPiOS, 5 Jan. 1943.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, letter from Grosfeld to Schwarzbart, 14 Jan. 1943.

him a telegram that the “Polish representative [in] Spain [was] refusing all assistance [to] Polish Jews[,] referring them to us.”⁵⁶ Two weeks later, Schwartz alarmed Schwarzbart that Szumlakowski was “paying fifty percent maintenance Polish Jewish nationals in Barcelona district but refusing time being contribute anything Madrid area.”⁵⁷ After Herbert Katzki, secretary of the JDC office in Lisbon, complained that wives of Polish Jews evacuated from the camp in Miranda de Ebro to Great Britain had been transferred from Barcelona to Madrid and thus the Polish authorities discontinued offering them material aid,⁵⁸ Schwarzbart wrote again to MPIOS urging them to “issue appropriate instructions to extend assistance to Polish refugees throughout the country.”⁵⁹ Szumlakowski informed his superiors that his office had been paying each Polish citizen residing freely in Madrid a monthly subsidy of 500 pesetas, i.e., “the maximum allowance that Polish citizens receive, of course, regardless of religion.” After several talks, JDC agreed to pay for additional expenses of Polish Jews, not covered by the governmental aid of 500 pesetas. Szumlakowski also explained that, apart from the refugees in Madrid, his office supported around 100 refugees in the Barcelona area with a daily subsidy of 15 pesetas (i.e., around 450 pesetas per month), while JDC paid the rest.⁶⁰ With these explanations at hand, MPIOS wrote to Ignacy Schwarzbart that “Joint’s complaints are unjustified, because all Polish citizens receive equal assistance, regardless of religion and origin.” Echoing Szumlakowski’s complaints, the Ministry remarked that JDC expected the Polish Legation to expand its protection even over those Jews who could not be recognized as Polish citizens.⁶¹ What added to the confusion was that the British government had informed MSZ that JDC was supposed to provide material support to all Jewish refugees in Spain, regardless of their nationality.⁶² Then, on 22 February, the JDC

⁵⁶ Ibid., telegram from Schwartz to Schwarzbart, 15 Jan. 1943.

⁵⁷ Ibid., telegram from Schwartz to Schwarzbart, 28 Jan. 1943.

⁵⁸ Ibid., telegram from Katzki to Schwarzbart, 30 Jan. 1943.

⁵⁹ Ibid., letter from Schwarzbart to MPIOS, 1 Feb. 1943.

⁶⁰ PISM, A.45, call no. 53/3, telegram no. 22 from Szumlakowski to London, 5 Feb. 1943 (also in HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9); HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9, telegram no. 25a from Szumlakowski to MSZ, 8 Feb. 1943. The monthly allowance of 500 pesetas was established on 1 July 1942, “due to the huge increase in prices in Spain.”

⁶¹ YV, M.2, call no. 615, letter from Grosfeld to Schwarzbart, 3 Mar. 1943.

⁶² HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9, note from Marlewski to Potworowski, 6 Feb. 1943.

representative in Spain⁶³ suddenly refused to aid all Jews recognized as Polish citizens in Barcelona, amounting to 150–160 persons.⁶⁴

According to an internal memo prepared by Katzki, by 9 March 1943, all Polish refugees received an equal subsidy of 500 pesetas per month from the Polish consulate. This, however, was not enough to maintain themselves in the country that was getting more and more expensive. Katzki wrote to Schwarzbart: “The problem . . . is not solely one of obtaining of recognition of nationality for Polish Jews but in addition it is one of securing a minimum standard of maintenance for those who are recognized.”⁶⁵ Refugees also wrote to Schwarzbart complaining about the tiny refugee dole:

Our situation is very difficult. Since it is impossible to find an apartment here with access to a kitchen, we are all forced to live in guest houses. Modest lodging costs 20 pesetas a day. We receive 16 pesetas a day [i.e., 500 pesetas per month] from the Polish Red Cross. So where do you get the money to live? Considering the days of fear we had been through, we came here in one garment, worn out by the difficult journey. We are sick, broken in body and spirit, and we are treated with neglect here, Jews differently than others!! . . . You need at least 30 pesetas a day to live here.⁶⁶

In May 1943, the monthly subsidy was still 500 pesetas,⁶⁷ but, by the end of that month, MPIOS ordered Szumlakowski to increase the allowance for all his *protégés* to 600 pesetas, starting on 1 June.⁶⁸ This instruction must have confused Szumlakowski, who asked the Ministry whether all Polish refugees, both civilians and military, were supposed to receive

⁶³ Gontarek incorrectly identified JDC’s representative as Ricardo Sequeira: Gontarek, “Działalność Poselstwa,” 251, 254. In fact, his name was Dr. Samuel Sequerra and he was a Portuguese Jew connected to the Jewish Community in Lisbon, sent to Barcelona as a JDC representative in 1941, under the cover of the Portuguese Red Cross. More information on his and JDC’s activity in Spain in Calvet, *Huyendo*, 245–264; Henrique Sequerra, *Já posso dizer a verdade?* (Lisboa, 2015).

⁶⁴ HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9, telegram no. 42 from Szumlakowski to MSZ, 22 Feb. 1943 (a slightly different version of this telegram in PISM, A.45, call no. 53/3); *ibid.*, telegram no. 38 from Szumlakowski to MSZ, 22 Feb. 1943. Szumlakowski wrote that he also had to increase the monthly subsidy for these refugees to 600 pesetas but it seems that this change was not implemented.

⁶⁵ JDC, NY 1933–1944, call no. 915, “Some notes in [sic] present refugee situation in Spain,” Herbert Katzki, 9 Mar. 1942; YV, M.2, call no. 386, letter from Katzki to Schwarzbart, 8 Apr. 1943.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, postcard from Pinkus E. to Schwarzbart, 16 Feb. 1943.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, postcard from Berta E. to Schwarzbart, 16 May 1943.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, letter from Grosfeld to Schwarzbart, 4 June 1943. Schwarzbart must have received information in this sense before that date, as he had informed Katzki about the subsidy increase already on 26 May 1943: *ibid.*, telegram from Schwarzbart to Katzki, 26 May 1943.

such a subsidy.⁶⁹ He volunteered a lengthy explanation concerning the Legation's expenses for the maintenance of Polish refugees in Spain. It transpired that, while the civilian refugees were so far provided with 500 pesetas per month (which was supposed to increase to 600 pesetas), the military refugees—those who were released from internment camps and prisons and were soon to be evacuated to the Polish Army in Great Britain—received financial aid amounting to a total of 1300–1350 pesetas a month. Szumlakowski argued that prospective soldiers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who would very soon depart to Great Britain, had to be provided with temporary accommodation in hotels, which cost around 800–850 pesetas a month, receive clothing for around 500 pesetas per person, and get modest pocket money of 50 pesetas a week. While Szumlakowski admitted that “in the local circumstances—especially in the capital—it was very difficult to support oneself” for 600 pesetas, he maintained that civilian refugees had a host of advantages over the Polish soldiers. They arrived in Spain in family units, which spread the cost of accommodation between various people. They also had a chance to work on the side and earn additional income. Since they remained in Spain for extended periods, they could find more economic ways of making ends meet. Because of all this, Szumlakowski argued, they should be even “expected” to sustain themselves on a smaller subsidy. He finished his line of reasoning with the following remark: “the military refugees, for the most part, came to Spain without any money, while the civilian refugees, 80% of whom are Jews, in many cases have considerable financial means, and yet they tell everyone that they are being harmed.”⁷⁰

Szumlakowski must have thought that he did his best to protect the interests of his *protégés* in Spain, but MPiOS was furious. It was the first time that the Polish envoy explained the Legation's spending in such detail and admitted to a differentiated treatment between various groups of refugees, to which JDC and Schwarzbart had previously alluded. This discrepancy “discredited not only the Legation in Madrid but [also] the central authorities, and caused serious political damage, contrary to the government's so often emphasized tendency to avoid even the appearance of making religious or racial differences.”⁷¹ To make things

⁶⁹ PISM, A.45, call no. 53/3, telegram no. 118 from Szumlakowski to London, undated.

⁷⁰ PISM, collection: Sztab NW i MSWojsk/MON, Biuro Ogólno-Organizacyjne MON [henceforth: A.XII.4], call no. 161, letter from Szumlakowski to MPiOS, 11 June 1943.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, copy of a letter from MPiOS to MSZ, 22 June 1943 (also in HIA, MSZ, call no. 551/7). Ciechanowski briefly mentions this episode in his book, siding with the stance

worse, according to information from Katzki, forwarded to the Ministry by Schwarzbart,⁷² as of 11 June, Szumlakowski still had not increased the allocation for Polish refugees in Spain. Following Szumlakowski's remark that 600 pesetas were insufficient to sustain a dignified existence in the country, the Ministry announced that, beginning on 1 July 1943, all free Polish refugees in Spain were to receive a monthly allowance of 700 pesetas.⁷³

On 1 July 1943, Schwarzbart informed JDC in Lisbon that "certain misunderstandings [that had] occurred between the Ministry [of Social Welfare] and the [Polish] delegation on the spot" regarding the subsidies paid to refugees in Spain had been solved. "The Ministry of Social Welfare," Schwarzbart noted, "showed really a lot of good will in the matter."⁷⁴

But this did not mean the end of trouble for Marian Szumlakowski. Since the very first weeks after the French-German armistice, he had been one of the most criticized MSZ employees. The Polish military regularly accused him of sabotaging the clandestine evacuation of Polish soldiers from France via Spain and Portugal to Great Britain and mismanagement of funds.⁷⁵ He was also highly unpopular among his compatriots detained in Spain, who criticized his haughtiness and negligence of their situation.⁷⁶ While historians dispute the legitimacy of these claims,⁷⁷ the Polish

of Szumlakowski that the unique and urgent character of the military evacuation justified the higher volume of expenses than the one required for the maintenance of the civilian (mostly Jewish) refugees: Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy*, 363–367.

⁷² YV, M.2, call no. 386, letter from Schwarzbart to MPIOS, 12 June 1943.

⁷³ PISM, A.XII.4, call no. 161, copy of a letter from MPIOS to MSZ, 22 June 1943. MSZ sent a letter to Szumlakowski about the expected increase on 9 July 1943: HIA, MSZ, call no. 551/7.

⁷⁴ YV, M.2, call no. 386, letter from Schwarzbart to JDC, 1 July 1943.

⁷⁵ PISM, A.XII.4, call no. 161, letter from Liebich to MSZ, 21 Aug. 1943; additional documents on the matter in HIA, MSZ, call no. 518/4, 551/7, 551/10, 551/19; Tadeusz Wyrwa, "Poselstwo R.P. w Madrycie w latach 1940–1944," *Zeszyty Historyczne* 95 (1991), 56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 58–59; Schimitzek, *Na krawędzi Europy*, 535; Ryszard Dalecki, "Na marginesie wspomnień z hiszpańskiego obozu Miranda de Ebro," *Studia Historyczne* 23 (1980), 2:300–301; Ryszard Nuszkiewicz, *Uparci* (Warsaw, 1983), 63; Jan Kazimierz Sawicki, Stanisław Andrzej Sobiś, *Na alianckich szlakach: 1939–1946* (Gdańsk, 1985), 132.

⁷⁷ Ciechanowski presents a more positive evaluation of Szumlakowski's activity. He claims that the Polish clandestine evacuation failed because of its inefficient and flawed organization by the Polish military authorities who, in turn, put all the blame on Szumlakowski to cover up their mistakes. Ciechanowski also considers the Polish envoy's attempts to release the imprisoned Poles as timely and effective, but fruitless due to the inability of MSZ to acquire emigration visas or tackle the refugee problem with the Spanish authorities in London. His activity was also hampered by the German influence on the Spanish

government considered recalling Szumlakowski as early as February 1942 but feared that the Spanish authorities would not admit another envoy, leaving the country without any Polish representation at all.⁷⁸ In January 1942, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the German pressure, did, in fact, announce the closure of the Polish Legation in Madrid and Polish consulates in Spain,⁷⁹ although it turned out to be partial and did not majorly influence the administration of Polish material aid to refugees.⁸⁰ The issue of unequal payment of subsidies to Polish *protégés* in Spain seems to have been the last straw that made the Polish decision-makers in London take some action against Szumlakowski. By the end of July 1943, MPiOS sent Fr. Leon Broel-Platter to Madrid as its delegate and an official representative of the Polish Red Cross in Spain. Broel-Platter's task was to take over the so-called Welfare Department of the Polish Legation in Madrid, so far presided over either by Szumlakowski or his wife.⁸¹ At the beginning of 1944, the Polish envoy was dismissed and eventually replaced by Count Józef Potocki as the new head of the Polish Legation in Madrid.⁸²

Evacuation of Polish Jews from Spain

Another issue discussed by Joseph Schwartz at the meeting with Ignacy Schwarzbart in December 1942, was the evacuation of Polish Jews from Spain. According to Schwartz, the Polish government managed to obtain 375 visas for its nationals “but, as it seems, for none of the Jews.”⁸³

government. One of the political reasons for Szumlakowski's disgrace within the Polish circles was his critique of the Sikorski–Mayski agreement of July 1941: Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy*, 124–127, 212–213, 584–617.

⁷⁸ Marian Żgórniak, Wojciech Rojek, Andrzej Suchcitz, eds., *Protokoły posiedzeń Rady Ministrów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, vol. 4: Grudzień 1941 – Sierpień 1942 (Kraków, 1998), 40–41, 147.

⁷⁹ Mateusz Gajda, “Antypolska działalność niemieckiej dyplomacji w Hiszpanii w latach 1939–1943,” *Dzieje Najnowsze* 51 (2019), 3:157–177.

⁸⁰ Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy*, 461.

⁸¹ PISM, A.XII.4, call no. 161, copy of the letter from Gen. Kukiel to the Board of the Polish Red Cross, 5 July 1943, attached to the cover letter from Kukiel to Grosfeld, 5 July 1943; *ibid.*, copy of the letter from Potworowski to MPiOS, 8 July 1943; *ibid.*, letter from Kamiński to the Director of Evacuation Outpost in Lisbon, 15 July 1943; *ibid.*, letter from MPiOS to the General Organizational Office of the Polish Ministry of National Defense, 15 July 1943.

⁸² Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy*, 145–146, 150–155, 161–169.

⁸³ YV, M.2, call no. 615, “KONFERENCJA z p. Józefem Schwartzem, dyrektorem Jointu na Europę. Londyn, 27/12/1942,” 26 Dec. 1942 [sic].

Prompted by this news, Schwarzbart wrote to MPiOS, asking that the government officials seek out emigration possibilities for Polish Jews stranded in Spain. He noted: "The lack of action of our Government in this regard is interpreted by the Governments of other countries as a sign of our Government's indifference to the fate of Polish refugees Jews."⁸⁴

On 14 January, Ludwik Grosfeld, general secretary of MPiOS, attested, asking Schwarzbart for utmost discretion:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already intervened several times . . . with the British authorities and with the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who deals with the cases of all refugees from Spain. The British authorities take a favorable stance; however, they believe that the evacuation cannot be implemented at present for many reasons. In addition, directing refugees from Spain and Tangier to French North Africa is being considered. Talks have been held on this matter with the Americans, who are postponing the discussion until the end of hostilities in North Africa. Only then can Africa become an asylum area for refugees on a larger scale.⁸⁵

Schwarzbart appealed to the Polish authorities again on 23 March 1943. He wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edward Raczyński, about around 500 or more Polish Jews in Spain, of whom 160 were said to be at the time in prison "under horrible conditions," 180 in Madrid, and the remainder (around 160) in Barcelona. He urged the Polish government to secure emigration visas for all Polish Jewish citizens in Spain, to prevent the situation in which, "under German pressure, mass arrests of people now free would follow," or even a "compulsory deportation to Poland" of the detained compatriots.⁸⁶

Raczyński replied on 31 March. He informed Schwarzbart about the negotiations, ongoing since November 1942, and concerning asylum for Polish citizens remaining in Spain. The destinations considered were French North Africa, Jamaica, and Madagascar. "We negotiate directly with the Mexican Government," but "the shipping does not . . . appear probable at the moment." The countries of South America also did not give much promise for offering a haven for Jewish refugees.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid., letter from Schwarzbart to MPiOS, 5 Jan. 1943.

⁸⁵ Ibid., letter from Grosfeld to Schwarzbart, 14 Jan. 1943.

⁸⁶ Ibid., letter from Schwarzbart to Raczyński, 23 Mar. 1943 (also in HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9).

⁸⁷ Ibid., letter from Raczyński to Schwarzbart, 31 Mar. 1943 (also in HIA, MSZ, call no. 546/9).

These two letters highlight the state of utter dependence of the Polish government on the endorsement of the Allied authorities and the willingness of potential destination countries to admit war refugees. Poland was not only entirely occupied but also did not have any colonies in other parts of the globe. Such overseas territories gave other occupied countries, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, the possibility to expedite their compatriots there and to exert pressure on the governments whose citizens lived under their colonial auspices. The Polish authorities, deprived of such leverage, could only count on their diplomatic skills and the goodwill of the international community.⁸⁸

In this respect, the closest Polish ally, since the beginning of the war, was Great Britain. Still, only “servicemen on active duty, their families, and the people summoned by the [Polish] Government in London,” as well as technicians and engineers valuable for military industries, could expect to be granted permission to enter this country with relative ease.⁸⁹ The evacuation of able-bodied men intended for enlisting into the Polish Army and the specialists essential for the war effort was certainly the number-one goal of the Polish government.⁹⁰ Even so, the refugees’ pleas directed to Ignacy Schwarzbart attest that, at the beginning of 1943, all men released from the Spanish internment camp in Miranda de Ebro were, after a few days, evacuated to Great Britain, regardless of their religion, age, or fitness for military service. David D., one of the refugees who accused Polish representation in Spain of favoring the emigration of Christian Poles, was himself released from Miranda owing to the protection of the Polish Legation in Madrid, along with thirty other Polish Jews. They were all evacuated to England even though some of them, including David D., could not be incorporated into the Polish Army.⁹¹ Moreover, as was already

⁸⁸ Długołęcki, *Confronting the Holocaust*, XXIII; Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz*, 97–98.

⁸⁹ “Letter from the Envoy in Lisbon to the Consul General in New York: clarification of the situation of refugees in Portugal,” Dubicz-Penther to the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in New York, 3 January 1941, quoted in Długołęcki, *Confronting the Holocaust*, 144–146.

⁹⁰ This point of view was reported, for example, by Stanisław Schimitzek, the coordinator of the Polish Refugee Aid Committee in Portugal, but also by certain Jewish refugees in Spain: Schimitzek, *Na krawędzi Europy*, 302–303; USC Shoah Foundation [henceforth: USC], Visual History Archive [henceforth: VHA], call no. 14294, interview with Salomon Berenholz, by Peggy Frankston, 3 May 1996; *ibid.*, call no. 9779, interview with Menachem (Max) Doktorczyk, by Lisa Timoner, 9 Dec. 1995.

⁹¹ YV, M.2, call no. 386, letter from David D., London, to Schwarzbart, 17 Mar. 1942; *ibid.*, letter from David D., London, to MPiOS, 27 Apr. 1943; *ibid.*, letter from Katzki to

mentioned, some military-age Jewish men evacuated from Spain refused to enlist in the army.⁹² In March 1943, Szumlakowski warned MSZ that the British authorities in Spain felt reluctant towards the evacuation of Polish Jews who were not in the military “because difficulties arose with some of the Jews who had been evacuated.”⁹³

In these circumstances, the crucial task of MSZ and its envoys worldwide was negotiating special entry quotas for Polish refugees on the Iberian Peninsula. Most of these schemes fell through: the main obstacles were the reluctance of foreign governments to admit Jews, transportation shortages, and the high costs of the refugees’ maintenance in the destination countries, which had to be granted by the already financially strained Polish government. In September 1942, Szumlakowski held talks with the Argentinian and Chilean representatives in Spain regarding the evacuation of Polish citizens, but it was not until the following year that small numbers of refugees could settle there. Chile, however, barred its entry to Jews.⁹⁴ In 1943, Mexico offered 500 visas for Poles, but ultimately they were only meant for the Poles released from the gulags in the Soviet interior and evacuated to the Middle East following the Sikorski–Mayski agreement.⁹⁵ Until 1943, around 300–400 Poles were able to emigrate from Portugal to Canada⁹⁶ or Jamaica⁹⁷ thanks to the support of the Polish government. Still, as the wave of releases was sweeping through Spain, in March 1943, Szumlakowski warned MSZ of “a serious problem of maintaining over 300 Polish Jewish citizens who have no chance of leaving.”⁹⁸

Schwarzbart, 29 Jan. 1943. Ciechanowski highlights that, although the evacuation of Jews unfit for military service angered the British military authorities, the Polish government carried it out “prioritizing the humanitarian aspect of this issue”: Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy*, 637–638.

⁹² For example, two Jewish men, Icchok A. and Abraham T., explicitly claimed to be Polish citizens when their release from the internment camp in Miranda de Ebro was under consideration. When they reached England, they changed their mind, stating that they had lost their Polish citizenship in 1939 and refusing to join the Polish Army: YV, M.2, call no. 615, telegram from Schwartz to Schwarzbart, 28 Jan. 1943; *ibid.*, call no. 386, letter from Grosfeld to Schwarzbart and Zygielbojm, 11 May 1943.

⁹³ PISM, A.45, call no. 53/3, telegram no. 45 from Szumlakowski to London, 1 Mar. 1943.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, telegram no. 360 from Szumlakowski to London, 29 Sept. 1942.

⁹⁵ YV, M.2, call no. 386, letter from MSZ to Schwarzbart, 6 May 1943.

⁹⁶ Around 70 Polish refugees from Portugal emigrated to Canada by the end of June 1941: Schimitzek, *Na krawędzi Europy*, 353.

⁹⁷ Around 170 Polish refugees left Portugal for Jamaica in January 1942: *ibid.*, 453.

⁹⁸ PISM, A.45, call no. 53/3, telegram no. 45 from Szumlakowski to London, 1 Mar. 1943.

The only trace of a successful emigration of larger groups of Jewish refugees from Spain mediated by the Polish government seems to be the evacuation of Poles unfit for military service (of whom Jews made a lion's share)⁹⁹ to French Morocco. As reported in the above-mentioned letters from MSZ and MPiOS to Schwarzbart, the negotiations between the Polish government and the Allies on the subject of asylum in French North Africa began by the end of 1942. Because of the dynamic situation in those territories following the Allied landing in November 1942,¹⁰⁰ the evacuation of Polish refugees could only start in May 1943. By September of that year, sixty-four Poles had arrived in French Morocco,¹⁰¹ and a report of 22 May 1944 spoke of a total of seventy-eight evacuated Poles.¹⁰²

This scheme also suffered its ups and downs: in August 1943, the French authorities turned back to Gibraltar a group of twelve refugees who had just arrived in Casablanca.¹⁰³ With British support, they were eventually admitted to North Africa, but the attitude of the French authorities towards further evacuation remained "reluctant." According to the local Polish representatives, the reasons for this were the uncertain Polish citizenship of the evacuated refugees and their alleged communist ideology, which, as the Polish authorities admitted, were often the basis of their qualification as unfit for service in the Polish army and evacuation to England.¹⁰⁴ The French unofficially alleged that the unique reason for their objection to admit more of them into North Africa was that they were "a restless element, difficult to put into an appropriate framework and being a material burden for social welfare."¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ HIA, MSZ, call no. 155/9, a note beginning with "W rozmowie ze mną w Foreign Office dn. 15.III. r.b....", M. Budny, Polish Embassy in London, written around 15 Mar. 1944; *ibid.*, call no. 155/11, letter from Dziarczykowski to MSZ, 22 May 1944: out of 78 Polish refugees who arrived to French Morocco from Spain in May 1943, 65 were Jewish.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, call no. 551/7, letter from the British Embassy to MSZ, 14 Dec. 1942.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, call no. 154/26, letter from Secretary-General, MSZ, to the Polish Ministry of National Defense, 15 Nov. 1943.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, call no. 155/11, letter from Dziarczykowski, Polish Viceconsul in Casablanca, to MSZ, 22 May 1944.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, call no. 154/26, letter from Major General Kukiel, Minister of the National Defense, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 19 Aug. 1943.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, letter from Załęski, MSZ, to Ministry of National Defense, 25 Sept. 1943; *ibid.*, telegram no. 151 from Czapski, Polish Consul-General in Algiers, to MSZ, 3 Oct. 1943; *ibid.*, call no. 155/11, letter from Czapski to MSZ, 21 Oct. 1943.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, call no. 155/9, a note beginning with "W rozmowie ze mną w Foreign Office dn. 15.III. r.b....", M. Budny, Polish Embassy in London, written around 15 Mar. 1944.

Edward Przesmycki, who was recalled to MSZ in London from the Polish Consulate in Casablanca at the beginning of 1944,¹⁰⁶ did not agree with the arguments given by the French. He claimed that the refugees were not “restless,” but simply “inconvenient” to the French authorities in North Africa because they did not want to go to work companies where they would be badly paid and exploited. Przesmycki also argued that the French authorities in principle disliked foreigners and did not want to put extra work into assuring the control of this additional population in Morocco. Finally, he noted that Polish refugees could not be a burden to the French social services, since the Polish government provided them with material aid fulfilling the commitment made by the Polish Embassy in Algiers.¹⁰⁷ According to the report of Sławomir Dziarczykowski, Polish Viceconsul in Casablanca, out of seventy-eight Polish refugees evacuated to North Africa from Spain, only twelve were of “doubtful” Polish citizenship, six were not recognized as Polish citizens, and only six of them—former soldiers of the International Brigades and not Jewish refugees who were forced to escape from France—were classified as communists.¹⁰⁸

The disagreements between the French and the Polish authorities were eventually smoothed out and additional groups of Polish refugees were allowed to enter North Africa. A report of 20 September 1944 speaks of a total of 153 Poles who had arrived there from Spain. Of them, five eventually joined the Polish Army, five enrolled in the British Pioneers Corps, and thirty-five volunteered for the French Army. Two people went to Algiers, where they had found a job, three emigrated to the United States, and five more left for Palestine. The ninety-seven persons remaining in Morocco were “mostly artisans” who managed to find employment thanks to the Polish Consulate in Casablanca and the Jewish emigration organization HICEM.¹⁰⁹

Other Polish refugees, who could not (or did not want to) be evacuated to Great Britain or French Morocco, had to rely on themselves. The Polish Envoys around the world were obliged by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, August Zaleski, to support individual visa applications

¹⁰⁶ Ceranka, *Urząd Ministerstwa*, 29, 334 note 939.

¹⁰⁷ HIA, MSZ, call no. 155/9, “Uwagi do notatki z dn. 17.III.1944 r.,” Edward Przesmycki, 25 Mar. 1944.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, call no. 155/11, letter from Dziarczykowski to MSZ, 22 May 1944; *ibid.*, call no. 154/26, letter from Liebich, Ministry of National Defense, to MSZ, 22 Nov. 1943.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, call no. 155/11, letter from Dziarczykowski to MSZ, 20 Sept. 1944.

of their *protégés* as early as September 1940.¹¹⁰ Those who were not able to secure emigration visas on their own, had to wait until 1944 for other major evacuation schemes, to Canada and Palestine, to take off, under the auspices of the Canadian government and the Jewish Agency for Palestine.¹¹¹

Conclusions

The present article offered an analysis of three areas of contention between Polish Jewish refugees in Spain and the Polish government-in-exile during the latter half of the Second World War: recognition of the Polish citizenship of Jews, material support to refugees, and their evacuation from the Iberian Peninsula. The Polish government took various steps to respond to the refugees' pleas. Still, Ignacy Schwarzbart's correspondence with the Jewish exiles and Jewish leaders on the ground proves that, more often than not, Polish decision-makers in London and their representatives in Spain failed to meet the expectations of their Jewish compatriots. Polish Jews complained about the double standards in the treatment of Jewish and non-Jewish Polish refugees, the government's inflexibility towards the challenging and exceptional conditions that the war brought on them, and the negligence of the matters crucial for their well-being and safety.

To what can we attribute this failure? The reasons seem to be threefold. First of all, certain agendas of the Polish government showed sluggishness and lack of initiative in dealing with the refugees' problems. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for instance, took many months to regulate the recognition of the Jews' Polish citizenship and the delivery of their new identity documents. Secondly, the Polish government, with its division of labor and responsibilities between different ministries, lacked effective control over its employees abroad. This led to months of misleading communication, for example between MPiOS and the Polish Envoy in Madrid, Marian Szumlakowski, regarding the monthly subsidies paid out to Polish refugees in Spain. And lastly, regarding the evacuation of its nationals, the Polish government depended on the leaders of potential destination countries, generally unsympathetic towards the plight of millions of uprooted people,

¹¹⁰ PISM, A.45, call no. 53/1, telegram no. 322 from London, 27 Sept. 1940; also quoted in Długołęcki, *Confronting the Holocaust*, 120, note 85.

¹¹¹ The evacuation of Jewish refugees from Spain to these places is well documented in JDC, NY 1933–1944, call nos. 916, 917. Some information about Polish Jews included in these schemes is in HIA, MSZ, call nos. 155/10, 155/12.

and especially Jews. Without safe havens outside of Europe, the Polish authorities could only try to maintain their compatriots in equally inhospitable transit countries, such as Spain.

It is essential, however, to bear in mind the Polish government-in-exile's limitations. Deprived of its territory, with severely limited financial means, it was utterly dependent on the support of its Allies and the goodwill of other countries hosting its institutions and nationals. Finally, it would be useful to understand the personal attitudes of the various Polish representatives in Spain towards Jewish refugees and their influence on the quality of service provided to those refugees. Additional research on the work of the Polish mission in Spain, and especially the role of Szumla-kowski¹¹² and his closest coworkers, such as Eugeniusz Kobyłecki, could certainly shed more light on the effectiveness of governmental aid to Polish Jewish exiles.

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