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OBLICZA WOJNY

TOM 10 • NARZĘDZIA WOJNY

ŁÓDŹ 2023 • ISBN 978-83-8331-461-7 • s. 223-236

<https://doi.org/10.18778/8331-461-7.13>

DIPLOMATIC TOOLS AND TOOLS OF WAR: ACTIVITIES OF THE POLISH OFFICE IN CASABLANCA DURING SECOND WORLD WAR – A CASE STUDY

Summary. The aim of the article is to present the functioning of the Polish Office in Casablanca as an institution caring for civilian refugees and soldiers located in North Africa. Stanisław Zabiełto was at the head of the network of Polish Offices, while the general supervision over the activities of the Offices in Algiers, Tunis, Casablanca, and Dakar was exercised by Emyrk Hutten-Czapski. The main tasks of the Office were to provide Poles with identity documents, to watch over their living conditions in Casablanca, and in the case of soldiers, monitor the conditions in labour camps or work teams. In addition, the office cooperated with the Polish Red Cross and foreign consulates that assisted in issuing transit visas for Poles in order to evacuate them from North Africa. The Im Fout labour camp was the main centre for demobilised soldiers and former volunteers during the war, who belonged to the so-called '*Groupe des Travailleurs Étrangers*'. Officers and soldiers from the Kasba Tadla labour camp were transferred to Mascara and Saida. By contrast, Missouri Safi, Mogador, and Marrakesh were mostly inhabited by Jews. An important issue of the office was establishing and maintaining proper relations with local authorities. This was mainly to be used in conducting more efficient interventions in matters of placing Poles from camps or work teams. In addition, the Office cooperated with other diplomatic missions in Morocco in order to obtain transit visas for compatriots. The facility in Casablanca also oversaw the evacuation of soldiers. In December 1941, the Offices ceased to function under this name and were transformed into the Bureau of Administration for Poles, without changing the nature of the work carried out, including in Casablanca.

Keywords: Polish Offices in France, Casablanca, evacuation, Second World War, Poles in North Africa

The defeat of France in June 1940 resulted in the transfer of the Polish government-in-exile authorities to London. However, Polish consular outposts remained in the unoccupied part of France in the territory of the Vichy State,

actively operating until September 1940.¹ The situation was similar in the French colonies in North Africa.² On 19 September 1940, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Vichy Government, Paul Baudouin, in a conversation with Feliks Frankowski, who at Philippe Pétain's request had returned to France and on 18 July had taken charge of the Polish embassy as chargé d'affaires, announced that the Polish diplomatic representations had to be closed. Following this announcement, Feliks Frankowski, as chargé d'affaires, started negotiating with French diplomatic representatives to ensure formal care for Poles. The matter was urgent, as passport and visa matters had hitherto been dealt with by consulates, and it was, therefore, necessary to immediately take steps to continue this process, but on a completely different basis. At that time, the so-called Polish Offices were set up to issue identity documents and certificates, thus facilitating the settlement of personal matters before the French authorities. The Polish Offices were headed by Stanisław Zabiełło, the Government Delegate for France. The main centres of these Offices were established in Marseille, Toulouse, Lyon, Nice, Monaco, Algiers, Tunis, Casablanca, Dakar, and Tananarive. Fearing the Germans, the French side demanded that those who had once held consular posts before the break in diplomatic relations not head the Polish Offices. Subsequently, they allowed some consular and embassy staff in the south of France to remain to ensure that passports and identity cards were renewed or exit visas were issued to allow people to leave immediately.³ General supervision of the activities of the Offices in Algiers, Tunis, Casablanca, and Dakar was exercised by Emeryk Hutten-Czapski.

The Polish Offices could be headed by Poles who had lived in France for a long time and were of impeccable character. While they did not enjoy the privileges accorded to members of the diplomatic-consular corps, their identity cards were extended for easier movement within Vichy and North Africa. A delegate of the Polish Red Cross, working with French Red Cross units, could be

¹ A. AMBROCHOWICZ-GAJOWNIK, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża. Konsulat polski w Marsylii w latach 1919–1940*, Warszawa 2019; M. GMURCZYK-WROŃSKA, *Polska – niepotrzebny aliant Francji? (Francja wobec Polski w latach 1938–1944)*, Warszawa 2003.

² A. AMBROCHOWICZ-GAJOWNIK, *op. cit.*; J. KNOPEK, *Migracje Polaków do Afryki Północnej w XX wieku*, Bydgoszcz 2001; S. ZABIEŁŁO, *Na posterunku we Francji*, Warszawa 1967; J.E. ZAMOJSKI, *Polacy w ruchu oporu we Francji 1940–1945*, Wrocław 1975.

³ A. PACHOWICZ, *Towarzystwo Opieki nad Polakami we Francji 1941–1944*, Toruń 2013, pp. 34–36.

stationed at each Office.⁴ For this reason, from 1 April 1941, cooperation between the Office and the Polish Red Cross delegation was established.

It is worth recalling that there was an honorary consulate operating in Casablanca before the outbreak of war. It functioned until October 1940, at which point it was headed by Paul Étienne Torre,⁵ who in local circles was regarded as a serious, honest, and respectable man with broad contacts, including with the Moroccan authorities. According to the account of Tadeusz Wysocki, who arrived in Casablanca on 27 July 1940, the former consul was a wealthy and influential man in Morocco.⁶ In fact, he continued to feed the post's budget with his own money and helped with the evacuation of demobilised soldiers. Though the Polish Office in Marseille wanted Torre to manage the Casablanca post again, the authorities in Rabat initially did not want to allow it, so an inquiry was sent to Vichy. While waiting for Vichy's decision, however, Rabat pressed Torre to name an alternative candidate. Torre gave his support to Kazimierz Majewski for the head of the Office, and at the same time appointed Alfred Birkenmayer as head of the Polish Red Cross. Although in December 1940 Vichy ultimately granted permission for Paul Torre to head the Office, for unexplained reasons he was passed over in favor of Kazimierz Majewski. According to Major Jan Wysoczański, Torre was eminently suitable for the post and had such extensive and wide-ranging contacts that 'no Pole could achieve this.'⁷ Moreover, it is worth adding that the financial situation of the Office was not satisfactory; the lack of funding prevented its functioning, not only due to low wages but also high prices in North Africa; Torre, as a wealthy and well-known person, would have been able to subsidise the Office's budget.

Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that North Africa was a bastion of Pétain's influence. His governor in the area was Maxime Weygand, who acted as

⁴ The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (hereinafter: PISM), Ministry of Information and Documentation (Ministerstwo Informacji i Dokumentacji) (hereinafter: MID), sign. A.10.4/30, Supreme Commander-in-Chief's Secretariat Branch II (Sztab Naczelnego Wodza Odział II) to the Ministry of Information *in situ*, London, 28 XII 1940; M. GMURCZYK-WROŃSKA, *op. cit.*

⁵ A. AMBROCHOWICZ-GAJOWNIK, *W cieniu Lazurowego Wybrzeża...*, pp. 112–114.

⁶ PISM, Supreme Commander-in-Chief's Secretariat and Ministry of Military Affairs/MON (Sztab Naczelnego Wodza i Ministerstwo Spraw Wojskowych/MON) 1939–1948 [hereinafter: SCS and MMA/MON], sign. A.XII.4/151, part I. Fryderyk Mally to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's Secretariat in London, Report by Major Wysoczański, Lisbon 2 II 1941.

⁷ PISM, SCS and MMA/MON, Sign. A.XII.4/151 part I, Report by Major Wysoczański for the period from 18.12.1940 to 08.02.1941, Casablanca 8 I 1941.

governor-general until November 1941, when North Africa became a battleground in the international war. Hitler, after losing the Battle of Britain, tried to persuade France to go to war against Britain in North Africa but the Vichy government objected.⁸ Nevertheless, British nationals were unwelcome in North Africa and received cold treatment, because the British fleet had attacked and destroyed a French squadron commanded by Admiral Gensoul in July 1940 at Mers el Kebir near Oran as part of 'Operation Catapult.' Of course, this incident also became fuel for intensifying the conflict between the Vichy government and the Free French led by Charles de Gaulle.

In the meantime, Hitler increasingly pressed the Vichy government for greater cooperation, which mandated the surrender of supplies and ammunition to the Germans, use of the French base at Bizerte in Tunisia, and the establishment of a new base for German submarines at Dakar. Furthermore, there were the issues of restricting rations – initially only in mainland France – to safeguard the German economy, which were later extended to North Africa.⁹

The introduction of restrictions in Africa took place from September 1941, when food ration cards and all kinds of other restrictions began to take effect. Warehouses and shops gradually became empty, with no possibility of replenishing stocks. All this was linked to the shipment of food to France in the form of vegetables and fruit, mainly for use by the Germans. A black market began to flourish, and the only oil mine in Morocco was no longer able to keep up with demand. Because French North Africa lacked the raw materials needed to generate electricity and fuel to sustain agriculture, the United States began to supply it with fuel in the form of mazut, oil, and petrol, as well as with medicines and coal.¹⁰

In June 1941, Hitler attacked his former ally the USSR, resulting in further changes to the geopolitical scene. The Soviets started demonstrating to Great Britain their willingness to cooperate with its allies, including Poland. On 3 July, Stalin put forward a proposal to sign anti-German political treaties with the Polish, Czechoslovak, and Yugoslav governments based in London. (It is worth mentioning that Soviet diplomacy did not recognise the Polish government in

⁸ A. HALL, *Naród i państwo w myśli politycznej Charles'a de Gaulle'a*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 136–137.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 253; Ł. JANOWSKI, *Kolonie francuskie w latach 1940–1945*, „Dialogi Polityczne” 2007, no. 8, pp. 45–59.

¹⁰ M.Z. „Rygor” SŁOWIKOWSKI, *W tajnej służbie. Jak polski wywiad dał Aliantom zwycięstwo w Afryce Północnej*, Poznań 2010, pp. 180–181.

exile.) British pressure resulted in Władysław Sikorski signing a treaty with Ambassador Maisky on 30 July 1941.¹¹ General de Gaulle was closely watching the whole operation, wanting to win Stalin and Sikorski over to his own diplomatic game. He, therefore, began to seek to establish relations with the Polish Government in London, although in the initial phase, they were rather sporadic and only began to enter the discussion phase when Polish-Soviet negotiations took place, followed by the signing of the Sikorski-Maisky agreement. At that time, a confidential protocol was signed on 21 October 1941, which referred to the old traditions of the Polish-French alliance. Simultaneously, the French National Committee (*Comité national français* or CNF), led by de Gaulle, established contacts with the Soviets. There is no doubt that de Gaulle wanted to juggle relations with the Soviets, as an alliance with Russia was an integral part of French diplomacy. For this reason, the CNF did not really want to get involved in matters between the Polish government and the Soviet Union. On the Polish side, such contacts between the former allies did not inspire optimism. Moscow's calculations to include de Gaulle in its games were aimed at creating a counterbalance to the British and supporting the French Communists. The USSR recognised the CNF in September 1942.¹²

The defeat of France detained and immobilised in the territory of continental France and its colonies all Polish soldiers and civilian refugees who did not manage to evacuate before the French police forces subordinate to Vichy and the Germans occupied the largest ports. The lack of adequate technical personnel in England, and the continued willingness of soldiers trapped in France to fight, led to a situation where the Polish authorities decided to organise a special evacuation network headed by General Juliusz Kleeberg.¹³ In France, on the initiative of several officers of Branch II of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's Secretariat, an 'F' Branch was established, which quickly developed its activities

¹¹ M. KAMIŃSKI, *Zarys polityki zagranicznej rządu RP na obczyźnie 1939–1945*, [in:] *Władze RP na obczyźnie podczas II wojny światowej*, ed. Z. BŁAŻYŃSKI, Londyn 1994, pp. 681–684; K. KANIŃA, *Edward Bernard Raczyński 1891–1993. Dyplomata i polityk*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 210–211.

¹² A. AMBROCHOWICZ-GAJOWNIK, (commentary) *Dynamika relacji polsko-francuskich w XX i XXI wieku*, [in:] *Historia, Prawda, Teraźniejszość. Jak prowadzić stosunki międzynarodowe w kontekście przeszłości 3.0? Diagnozy, recepty, zapis debat*, eds. D. BĘBNOWSKI, A. GOSZCZYŃSKI, Warszawa 2021, pp. 45–50.

¹³ J. ZAMOJSKI, *Polska morska akcja ewakuacyjna z Afryki Północnej i Francji do Gibraltaru – 1941–1942*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 1981, no. 1–2, pp. 348–349.

by providing valuable information on the situation in the occupied zone. Thanks to the organisational efforts of this branch, further intelligence posts were established in Paris and North Africa. The 'AFR' branch was established in Algiers in the autumn of 1940 by Major Zygfryd Słowikowski,¹⁴ who, among other things, conducted observations of the evacuation operations being carried out from the Moroccan area. Kleeberg, on the other hand, was very much counting on the support and assistance that would help in enabling the transfer of soldiers to North Africa – so much so that, hoping for extensive cooperation with Weygand, Kleeberg even sent Lt. Colonel Kamionko to Algiers. Nevertheless, meetings with the French military officer did not yield the expected results.¹⁵

Due to its location, the Polish Office in Casablanca carried out many tasks related to the organisation and logistical support for Polish soldiers and civilians who were being transferred to the United Kingdom via this route, and at the same time organised assistance for those who, for various reasons, remained in the French colony and worked in transit camps. For this reason, from December 1940 Polish soldiers were successively transferred to North Africa, and the French authorities responded to their influx by setting up camps.¹⁶ The evacuation through Africa was carried out with the help of Major Jan Wysoczański and the former consul Paul Torre.¹⁷ By March 1941, 800 officers and privates had been evacuated to North Africa.¹⁸

Meanwhile, on 21 March 1941, restrictions were imposed on foreigners in Morocco, mainly men aged between 18 and 55, who were unable to return to their home country and were living at the expense of the protectorate of Morocco: such individuals would be placed in labour camps, where they would provide unpaid work. This decree also included Polish men – demobilised legionaries, former volunteers of the Polish army in France, and civilian

¹⁴ A. PEPEŁOŃSKI, *Zarys rozwoju organizacyjnego polskiego wywiadu wojskowego w latach 1914–1945*, „Słupskie Studia Historyczne” 2000, no. 8, pp. 179–192.

¹⁵ M. GMURCZYK-WROŃSKA, *op. cit.*, pp. 468–469; J. ZAMOJSKI, *Polska morska...*

¹⁶ PISM, SCS and MMA/MON, sign. A.XII.4/140 part I, General Juliusz Kleeberg to the Commander-in-Chief in London, Marseille 7 III 1941; PISM, SCS and MMA/MON, sign. A.XII.4/170, part I, Head of Evacuation from France to the Commander-in-Chief in London, Marseille 9 II 1941.

¹⁷ PISM, SCS and MMA/MON, sign. A.XII.4/142, General Juliusz Kleeberg to the Commander-in-Chief in London, Marseille 16 II 1941.

¹⁸ PISM, SCS and MMA/MON, sign. A.XII.4/140, part I, Major S. Gustowski on evacuation work in France, Africa, and Spain, London 23 VI 1941.

refugees being supported by the Polish Red Cross.¹⁹ On 31 March 1941, a new decree was issued, this time on the creation of work squads – units could recruit as ‘volunteers’ and those who had received unemployment benefits for 10 days. In addition, penal labour camps were established for individuals who, having committed various minor or major offences, left their place of employment without permission. In these penal labour camps, people were provided with accommodation and food, but were not paid any wages.²⁰ Both the work squads and the labour camps fell under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of Communications, Industrial Production, and Labour. Furthermore, people who had an unregulated residency status in Morocco were forced to leave its territory within eight days of the issuing of the decree; if they failed to do so, they were forcibly placed in work squads. Jews were also sent to work in the squads. These decrees did not apply to women and children, so they could exercise the so-called ‘right of allocation’ – although, in general, it was supposed to apply only to French citizens.²¹ What, then, was the right of allocation?

As soon as the French authorities moved to Vichy, the management board of the Polish Red Cross requested that Polish refugees be granted benefits on the same terms as those paid to French citizens. This was the so-called allocation decree, which provided for the payment of small sums of money. While it was intended mainly for French and Belgian nationals, it also covered the Poles based on a statement issued by the Minister for Refugees. However, it was not a formal agreement that the French government was obliged to fulfil; the allocations were paid by the municipal offices and included a list of so-called ‘permanent refugees’ on the basis of residence and allocation of place of residence according to lists and ID cards, as well as ‘temporary refugees’ according to numerical (quantity) lists. The Vichy government was initially sceptical of the idea, but eventually agreed to pay the benefits. Any problems with their payment were supposed to be reported immediately to the prefecture and resolved by the

¹⁹ The Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych) [hereinafter: CAMR], Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Casablanca [hereinafter: HCRPC], sign. 79, Report No. 2 for the reporting period 16–31 March 1941, Casablanca 1 IV 1941.

²⁰ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 186, Kazimierz Majewski to Mr Delegate for Africa of the General Director of the Polish Offices in Algiers, Casablanca 7 IV 1941, folio 48–49.

²¹ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 40, Kazimierz Majewski to Mr Delegate for Africa of the General Director of the Polish Offices in Algiers, Casablanca 6 IV 1941, folio 23.

Polish Red Cross.²² In addition, the French authorities announced that civilian refugees would be able to receive medical care for children under one year of age with free medicines and allocated milk rations.²³

According to the findings of the Polish Office in Casablanca, there were 486 Polish nationals in the whole of Morocco, including 56 permanent residents, 160 veterans, 160 civilian refugees, and 110 persons on the Trans-Saharan Railway. This figure was calculated in May 1941, but it was nevertheless believed that there were many more Poles in Morocco not covered by the data collected by the Office.²⁴ In Casablanca, there were mainly civilian refugees, while in Kasba Tadla, within the so-called *Groupe des Travailleurs Étrangers* and the Berguent-Bou Arfa-Colomb Bechar/Algeria line, there were 320 Poles enlisted in work squads. Primarily Jews were grouped in Missouri Safi, Mogador, and Marrakesh, as this area was designated as their mandatory place of residence.²⁵ According to another estimate of Polish citizens in Morocco carried out a few months later, only 250 people remained in total, including 90 demobilised soldiers and civilian workers in the work squads in Im Fout, Settat, and Bou Arfa, about 100 Jewish Polish citizens held in various camps, and a handful of citizens under the care of the Office.²⁶

Taking care of the Poles who remained in Berguent became an urgent task for the Office, as there was a shortage of food and medical supplies as well as clothing and essential toiletries. Therefore, the Office immediately entered into talks with the French authorities to have them relocated. Very important matter

²² The Polish Library in Paris, Archive of the Polish Red Cross in France from the legacy of Józef Jakubowski, sign. 27, Report on the activities of the Polish Consulate in Toulouse to the Polish Embassy in Vichy, Toulouse 2 VIII 1940 r.; A. AMBROCHOWICZ-GAJOWNIK, *Ośrodki miejskie południowej Francji – miejscem schronienia dla polskich uchodźców w latach 1939–1940*, [in:] *Oblicza wojny*, vol. 3: *Miasto i wojna*, eds. W. JARNO, J. KITA, Łódź 2021, pp. 195–208. In the south of France, allocations were paid mainly in the department of Haute Garonne. On the Riviera (departments Var, Bouches-du-Rhône, and Alpes Maritimes), allocations were smaller because in this area it was easier to get a place in hostels and receive food.

²³ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 79, Report No. 2 for the reporting period 16–31 March 1941, Casablanca 1 IV 1941.

²⁴ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 79, Report No. 34 for the reporting period 1–31 May 1941, Casablanca 31 V 1941.

²⁵ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 79, Report No. 3 for the reporting period 1–15 April 1941, Casablanca 15 IV 1941.

²⁶ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 78, Letter from Kazimierz Majewski to Mr Delegate for Africa, Casablanca 18 X 1941.

was the relocation of the demobilised Polish officers from the Kasba Tadla camp to Mascara and ordinary soldiers to the Saida camp. Another urgent issue became regulating the status of former veterans from the Polish army in France and moving them to Mascara and Saida camps in September 1941.

Nevertheless, it was not until the beginning of December 1941 that the Polish Office was finally able to declare the permanent residence of Poles staying in camps or work squads. This was not only due to the result of the Office's intervention but also actions taken by the French authorities who were assigning the Polish nationals to work. Therefore, during the war, the main centre for demobilised soldiers and ex-volunteers became the camp at Im Fout, located on the Oued river where Poles (59 individuals) worked mainly on the dam. They were employed by the *Groupe des Travailleurs Étrangers*, as were the people (including 7 Polish citizens) working in Settat on the construction of the stone barracks. As part of the same group, 16 Polish nationals worked making charcoal in the forests near Moulay Bouazza. In Oued Zem, 3 former legionaries were staying in a transit centre, and in Oued Akreuch (in the Rabat area) a centre was set up for men unable to work in the *Groupes des Travailleurs*. They mainly performed light, even clerical work, and some were in prison or hospitalised.²⁷ The Polish Office sought the improvement of sanitary conditions for the Poles and their material status to be regulated at a later date so that they could return to their families or evacuate from Africa.

The Office also cared for passengers going on a further journey with a stopover in Casablanca. In such cases, the Office negotiated for them convenient conditions for temporary shelter and in addition checked identity documents and visas enabling the Poles to travel within Morocco. As part of its administrative work, the Office also tried to arrange through other consulates exit visas for Poles going to other parts of the world, which sometimes was not easy – such individuals were placed in the appropriate camps while the matter was being settled. This group also included Polish citizens of the Jewish faith who had money to emigrate to the USA. Therefore, in the autumn of 1941, the French authorities ordered a census of the Jewish population residing in North Africa.²⁸

²⁷ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 186, Zbigniew Błażyński to Mr Delegate for Africa of the General Director of the Polish Offices in Algiers, Casablanca 22 XII 1941.

²⁸ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 78, General Directorate of Polish Offices in France, Kazimierz Sosnicki to Mr Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Delegate for Africa of the General Director of Polish Offices in Algiers, Vichy 22 IX 1941.

Sometimes, however, the tasks supervised by Major Jan Wysoczański associated with the evacuation of the Poles did not end with success or encountered serious obstacles. For instance, during one of such covert operations soldiers from Camp Mascara who were to be evacuated on a ship coming from Gibraltar were captured by the gendarmerie and sent back to the camp – having learnt about this Major Wysoczański suspended the action and proposed waiting two weeks in order to get an idea of the actions and reactions of the French authorities.²⁹ Overall, according to Major Zygmunt Strutyński, 400 servicemen were successfully evacuated to Africa, 20% of whom were sent back to France by the French authorities to the camps as deserters.³⁰ However, these figures do not coincide with statistics kept by Major Stanisław Gustowski, who gave a figure of around 800 soldiers at the end of March 1942.

Meanwhile, the Polish Offices operated under this name continuously in Vichy and the territories recognising its jurisdiction until 1941, when the German authorities finally realised the true nature of their activities. At that point, they were renamed the Offices for Polish Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the head of the *Contrôle des Étrangers*, Abbel Verdier, whose work was directed by French nationals, with Polish diplomats officially acting only as technical advisers.³¹ German demands meant that the French could no longer maintain the Polish Offices, and they made efforts to change their form somewhat, renaming these outposts *Bureaux d'Administration des Polonais* (Polish Administration Offices). It is worth pointing out here that Stanisław Zabięło's memoirs state that the Polish Offices did not change their name in North Africa – which is misleading information.³² The situation of other countries' offices was a bit different. The Belgian Office operated under the protection of the American consulate, while the Dutch and Norwegian offices were under the protection of the Swedish consulate.³³

²⁹ W. GRABOWSKI, *Polska Misja Morska w rejonie Morza Śródziemnego w czasie II wojny światowej*, „Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy” 2015, no. 16/2, pp. 91–114; M.Z. „Rygor” SŁOWIKOWSKI, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–193.

³⁰ PISM, SCS and MMA/MON, sign. A.XII.4/141 B part II, Major Zygmunt Strutyński to Colonel Fryderyk Mally in Lisbon, Gibraltar 19 XI 1941.

³¹ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 78, Zbigniew Błażyński to Mr Delegate for Africa of the General Director of the Polish Offices in Algiers, Casablanca 9 I 1942.

³² S. ZABIĘŁO, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

³³ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 78, Zbigniew Błażyński to Mr Delegate for Africa of the General Director of the Polish Offices in Algiers, Casablanca 22 XII 1941.

In the case of the Polish outposts, the French did not want to aggravate the Germans and decided to review the Office's archives to check whether it was collecting political documentation. In response, the Office's staff declared that they did not conduct political affairs, and as soon as the reorganisation was completed, the French representatives calmly accepted this information. The French also reviewed the Office's archives but found it mainly contained Poles' personal files and administrative records.³⁴

In the case of the Casablanca office, it was undoubtedly important to appoint a new head following the reorganisation. At the time, the acting head was Zbigniew Błażyński, who had replaced Kazimierz Majewski when he left the Office in November 1941. As the new head of the Polish Administration Office could not be a person who had held a diplomatic-consular post, the matter became somewhat complicated; nevertheless, on 6 January 1942 the French authorities appointed Paul Étienne Torre the new head. Zbigniew Błażyński informed the Polish authorities of this fact and submitted the inventory, cash box, and archive to Mr Torre. As Błażyński was leaving for Lisbon, it was now necessary to appoint a new acting deputy head of the Office.³⁵ This role was given to Edward Przesmycki, who received some instructions from Błażyński concerning the management of the Office and information regarding the most important people in the French administration, with a view to establishing friendly relations. Edward Przesmycki was also given charge of matters relating to the running of the Welfare Society for the Poles in France (*Groupement d'Assistance aux Polonais en France* GAPF) centre.³⁶ The Office continued to cooperate actively with the Polish Red Cross and later with the Welfare Society for the Poles in France,³⁷ although its activities were gradually diminished from the time of the occupation of Casablanca by Allied forces as part of 'Operation Torch,' and finally ceased when a Polish diplomatic post was established in Algiers in 1943.

³⁴ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 78, Zbigniew Błażyński to Mr Delegate for Africa of the General Director of the Polish Offices in Algiers, Casablanca 24 XII 1941.

³⁵ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 78, Zbigniew Błażyński to Mr Delegate for Africa of the General Director of the Polish Offices in Algiers, Casablanca 8 I 1942.

³⁶ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 80, Edward Przesmycki to Mr Delegate for Africa of the General Director of the Polish Offices in Algiers, Casablanca 7 II 1942, folio 44–45.

³⁷ CAMR, HCRPC, sign. 40, Society for the Protection of Poles Centre in Casablanca: Record of the taking over of the PCK-TOP Casablanca Centre's inventory, Casablanca 15 XI 1941, folio 7.

The establishment of the Polish Office in Casablanca in place of the honorary consulate was extremely important for the Polish authorities to continue administrative work and care for the Poles residing in the area. The Office's staff played a key role in running its operations and held the fate of the Polish citizens in their hands. This was primarily done by maintaining good relations with the local authorities. Furthermore, by cooperating with the French authorities and other consulates, the Polish Office in Casablanca obtained a great deal of assistance with the evacuation of Polish refugees and soldiers and taking care of their living conditions in camps or work squads. Although the Polish Office in Casablanca operated on completely different principles than the former consulate, its general intention was to provide help for the Poles staying in the area. Thanks to the courtesy of the French authorities at the end of 1941, it was still possible to continue the Polish Offices' tasks in the French jurisdiction, although these activities were now carried out under French supervision.

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NARZĘDZIA DYPLMATYCZNE, A NARZĘDZIA WOJNY. DZIAŁALNOŚĆ BIURA POLSKIEGO W CASABLANCE W OKRESIE II WOJNY ŚWIATOWEJ – A CASE STUDY

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie funkcjonowania Biura Polskiego w Casablance, jako placówki sprawującej opiekę nad uchodźcami cywilnymi oraz żołnierzami znajdującymi się na terenie Afryki Północnej. Na czele sieci Biur Polskich stał Stanisław Zabiełło, zaś ogólny nadzór nad działalnością Biur w Algierze, Tunisie, Casablance i Dakarze sprawował Emeryk Hutten-Czapski. Do głównych zadań biura należało dbanie o zaopatrywanie Polaków w dokumenty tożsamości, czuwanie nad ich warunkami egzystencji w Casablance, zaś w przypadku żołnierzy – w obozach czy drużynach pracy. Dodatkowo biuro współpracowało

z Polskim Czerwonym Krzyżem oraz zagranicznymi konsulatami, które pomagały w wystawianiu wiz tranzytowych dla Polaków w celu ich ewakuacji z Afryki Północnej. Głównym ośrodkiem dla zdemobilizowanych żołnierzy i byłych ochotników w okresie wojny, był obóz w Im Fout. Przynależeli do tzw. Groupement Special des Travailleurs. Oficerowie oraz żołnierze z obozu z Kasba Tadla zostali przeniesieni do miejscowości Mascara oraz do Saïda. Natomiast w Missouri Safi, Mogador i Marakesh głównie zamieszkiwali Żydzi. Ważną kwestią biura było nawiązanie i utrzymanie poprawnych relacji z władzami miejscowymi. Głównie miało to posłużyć w prowadzeniu sprawniejszej interwencji w sprawach umieszczania Polaków z obozów czy drużynach pracy. Ponadto biuro współpracowało z innymi placówkami dyplomatycznymi na terenie Maroka w celu pozyskiwania dla rodaków wiz tranzytowych. Placówka w Casablance przyglądała się również akcji ewakuacyjnej żołnierzy. Od grudnia 1941 r. Biura przestały funkcjonować pod tą nazwą i przekształcono je na Biura Administracji nad Polakami, nie zmieniając charakteru prowadzonych prac, w tym w Casablance.

Słowa kluczowe: Biura Polskie we Francji, Casablanca, ewakuacja, II wojna światowa, Polacy w Afryce Północnej