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Polish Kindergartens in Exile During the World War II

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the article is to outline the activity of the Polish kindergartens in exile during the Second World war. The research methods proper for the history of education were used in the work. Its contents were mainly based on the analysis of archival materials from the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London. The author of the article proved that Polish kindergartens existed in all large colonies of refugees in Iran, India, Palestine, Central-Eastern and Southern Africa, New Zealand, Mexico, and at the the Polish II Corps of general Władysław Anders. The kindergartens mainly took care of orphans and children who, for various reasons, were deprived of parental care. The kindergartens in Austria and Bavaria, supervised by the Polish army, gathered the children of people who were forced to go there during the war and did not manage to get back to Poland yet. Also, they included the children of Home Army (Polish abbreviation: AK) soldiers who came from Poland. A lot of kindergartens worked 24 hours a day. Their main task was to prepare preschool children for studying in the public primary school. Kindergartens were usually organised in school buildings. Despite numerous difficulties, the organisers of those kindergartens did their best to provide them with well-qualified teaching staff. Apart from teachers, teacher's assistants were employed. Kindergartens in exile finished their activity in the years 1945-1947 when particular colonies of Polish refugees were being closed.

Summing up the work of Polish kindergartens in exile, one has to admit that they played an important role in upbringing and caring for the youngest generation of Polish refugees, they protected them against losing the national identity, and gave them the sense of warmth and stability during the war exile. The issue of kindergartens in exile requires further detailed analysis, especially as for their activity in Africa.

The traditions of preschool education in Poland are rich and they were started in the 18th century. At that time, in 1838, the Warsaw Charity Society opened the Department of Shelters for children. A year later Teofil Nowosielski opened the first shelter for children in Warsaw (Dobrzański 1967: 342-342). Further shelters were being opened within the next few years in all the partitioned areas of Poland.

Educational Society which, during the First World War, was named the Polish Educational Society, was particularly active in supporting the development of preschool education in the country. Also, other societies, organizations, as well as individual people – especially landholders, conducted different kinds of shelters for small children (Korzeniowska 2004: 55-61; Sawczuk: 101-109). In the interwar period, the largest number of kindergartens functioned in the school year 1934/36. At that time there were 1876 of them, including 566 kindergartens maintained by the government and local governments, and 1310 private shelters, including those conducted by monastic orders, in which there were 98.200 children (the maximum number of children in those institutions was 103.700 in the school year 1931/32) (Bobrowska-Nowak 1978: 258). At the universities of Poznań, Krakow and Lviv the scholars started studying the education of preschool children (Leżańska 1998: 54).

More and more people were interested in kindergartens. Although the number of those institutions and children attending them was not large, their level of work and role in bringing up the young generation was already strongly rooted in the Polish society. It was expressed in the educational work of the Polish exiles during the Second World War – both in the practical and theoretical activity.

The first initiatives of refugees aiming at the improvement of preschool education in the independent Poland

The educational environment focused around the Polish government in London came up with the idea to use the fact that there were more than 200 Polish teachers staying in Great Britain, especially in Scotland, and those teachers – most of whom served the Polish military units – could learn about the achievements of British educational system in order to use such knowledge in the independent Poland. The

fulfillment of this idea included different types of schools and educational institutions, including preschools. Amalia Maria Stöcker, a pre-war teacher in the schools and preschools of Katowice, who had graduated from the State Seminar for Kindergarten teachers in Mysłowice, lived in Great Britain at that time and put a lot of effort in learning about the British educational experience. She described her motivation in the following manner:

I am interested in bringing up a child in his/her first phase of development, i.e. up to the age of 7 I am willing to analyse each field of pedagogical science to discover their (Scottish) methods through which they teach people kindness, interest in culture, temperance, cheerfulness and serious approach to work, which is noticeable in their society. I would like to transfer all those values ... to Poland and that is why I have enthusiastically started working on this, as in future such values may help to build the Foundation of Poland, i.e. preschool education. (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19.I/13c)

The work of Amalia Maria Stöcker was financially and organizationally supported by the Office of Education and Schooling Affairs by the Polish Government in London, and Dr. Jan Konopnicki, who had just come to Scotland, helped her in terms of methodological issues (Chmielewski 2013a: 42, 43, 55, 56).

Only in 1941, Amalia Maria Stöcker visited a lot of Scottish kindergartens, including those in the working-class districts of Edinburgh. She watched classes conducted by Scottish teachers, participated in teachers' conferences, bought the newest pedagogical books, studied educational toys, and analysed other aids necessary to work with preschool children (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19.I/13c). She actively participated in the works of the team appointed by the Office of Education and Schooling Affairs by the Polish Government in London, which analysed the forms and methods of British, especially Scottish, education system. The work of the team was coordinated by Dr. Jan Konopnicki. Amalia Maria Stöcker was working on the subject: *Kindergartens and Childcare in Great Britain* (another version of the title was: *Kindergartens and Preschool Childcare in Great Britain*). She continued her analysis of preschool education at the studies in Edinburgh which she finished in 1948 (Chmielewski 2013a: 55, 56, 180).

The issue of preschool education in the future independent Poland was also analysed by professor Tadeusz Sulimirski, the director of the General Department of the Office of Education and Schooling Affairs. In Great Britain, the professor talked to an outstanding psychologist – professor Blatz, the director of the Child Study Institute at the University of Toronto, who was willing to train a few preschool education instructors during a year's course in Canada. In the independent Poland, those people could educate a lot of future kindergarten teachers (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. I/15). Prof. Tadeusz Sulimirski returned to this idea – although in a slightly

different formula – in June 1943, in his work: *Co należy czynić w przyszłości w obrębie Urzędu Oświaty i Spraw Szkolnych?* [What Should Be Done in Future in the Office of Education and Schooling Affairs?] (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A.19. I/17). The problem of bringing up children aged 4 to 7 in three-year kindergartens was discussed at the General Meeting of the Association of Polish Teachers in Great Britain in London (Teachers' Council), which was held from 1 to 3 October 1943 (*Uchwały...* 1944: 12).

The Commission's suggestions for rebuilding and reforming Polish schooling

The activity of preschools was the subject of constant interest and analyses of the Commission for the Organisation of Polish Schooling in the Transitory Period, appointed by the Office of Education and Schooling Affairs on 7th January, by Józef Haller, and the Commission for Reconstruction of Schooling and Educational Reform appointed by the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment by the Polish Government in London, created on 18th November the same year by the minister of religious denominations and public enlightenment – Fr. Zygmunt Kaczyński (Chmielewski 2013a: 70, 137). In order to carry out a thorough analysis of the issue, the Kindergarten Sub-commission was appointed. Its members were as follows: the president Amalia Maria Stöcker, and members – Maria Wyczółkowska and Józefa Zielonka (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. I/11). The results of the works were included in the fourth chapter of the *Theses* prepared by the Commission for the Organisation of Polish Schooling in the Transitory Period. It included the following seven detailed theses concerning the activity of kindergartens in the transitory period in post-war Poland:

IV. *Organisation of kindergartens.* 17. First of all, kindergartens should be organised in the places in which they had been functioning before the war; then in industrial centres, and finally where Germans organised their kindergartens. Moreover, we should aim at organising kindergartens in each town or village in which a school is functioning in the revindicated and eastern regions.

18. Kindergartens should be organised as independent educational institutions, but if it is impossible due to financial conditions or insufficient competences of teachers, kindergartens should be connected with public schools and directly supervised by school principals. If the conditions improve, the kindergartens should be separated from the schools.

19. A preschool education instructor should be employed in each school inspectorate.

20. Within the transitory period, we should, first of all, open the kindergartens for orphans or children without the proper care at home.

21. In the revindicated regions, due to the necessity of preparing children for school, children aged 4-6 (up to the age in which compulsory school begins) have to go to kindergartens in those towns and villages in which kindergartens existed before the war.
22. The establishment and maintenance of kindergartens should be supervised by the local government. Preschool teachers shall be paid by the State Treasury.
23. If there are no qualified teachers in the organised kindergartens, unqualified teachers may be employed and provided with practical workshops and relevant theoretical courses. (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A.19. II/72)

The seventh chapter of the *Theses* entitled *Educating Teachers of Public Schools and Kindergartens* included three detailed suggestions related to educating kindergarten teachers in the three-year transitory period after the end of the war. According to the suggestions, kindergarten teachers were to be educated in Teacher Education Centres. The centres were to conduct a year's courses for preschool teachers, and holiday courses for people who are unqualified but work in different preschool institutions. Also, they were going to organise courses for qualified preschool teachers willing to improve their competences (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. II/72).

In the lecture of Romuald Niewiakowski given in Edinburgh, it was recommended that qualified kindergarten teachers should be additionally trained after the war during a month's holiday courses. It was assumed that

... due to the specific conditions resulting from the war, preschool childcare should be carried out by the best kindergarten teachers. Such teachers have to be educated quickly (1 year). Thus, in the transitory period, those candidates have to be women who completed 4 years of junior high school or another school of equal importance. (IPMS, MWRiOP, A. 19.II/3)

The Commission for Reconstruction of Schooling and Educational Reform, mainly supervised by fr. minister Zygmunt Kaczyński, adopted the theses concerning preschool education as its own (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. II/ 47). The Commission's bodies that analysed the issues of preschool education included the Kindergarten Sub-commission, Public Schooling Sub-commission, and Teacher Education Sub-commission (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A.19. III/58). The concepts concerning preschool education that were formulated in exile have never been implemented in the postwar Poland.

Evacuation of the Polish citizens from the “inhumane land” and their settlement in different parts of the world

Preschool have always performed an educational and caring function. The latter became particularly valuable at the time when Polish kindergartens in exile were working. The history of those kindergartens is mainly related to the history of Polish civilians evacuated from the Soviet Union. From March to September 1942, about 40.000 Polish civilians joined the army commanded by general Władysław Anders to leave the “inhumane land” and go to Iran (at that time – Persia) through the Caspian Sea (Wróbel 2003: 42). This huge group of people included almost 20 thousand children and youth – about 15 thousand of them were under 14 years old. First, the refugees settled in Iran, and then – in India, in the Middle East, in English Dominions of Central-Eastern Africa, the Union of Southern Africa, Mexico, New Zealand, and – obviously – in Great Britain. All those settlements were at first supervised and protected by Polish diplomatic and consular institutions in particular countries and territories, and then – by the representations of the Ministry of Labour and Social Care (Polish abbreviation: MPiOS) of the Polish Government in London, which functioned in Teheran (Iran), Bombay (India), Jerusalem in Palestine (the Middle East region), Nairobi in Kenya (a large part of the Central-Eastern and Southern Africa), as well as Santa Rosa in Mexico and Pahiatua in New Zealand. Not only did they deal with social issues, but they also supervised educational and cultural activities. In 1943 and 1944, the supervision over the education of refugees was taken over by the representations of the Office of Education and Schooling Affairs, and then – from 14th July 1943, by the representations of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (MWRiOP) functioning in the same cities and regions as the representations of MPiOS (Chmielewski 2013a: 24, 25). Their competences also included the issues concerning the work and pedagogical supervision over kindergartens. MPiOS still dealt with the issue of buildings and social aspects related to the preschool education. The kindergartens mainly functioned on the basis of the Polish pre-war law, especially the circular no. 51 of the minister of religious denominations and public enlightenment of 30th May 1936 concerning institutions for children at the preschool age (Kotula, Weinert 1946: 704, 705).

Due to the fact that the group of the youngest refugees included a lot of orphans, half-orphans, children whose parents stayed in the “inhumane land,” in Poland, in other settlements, or served in the army, some kindergartens worked 24 hours a day, and all of them paid much attention to caring and health issues. Kindergarten teachers tried to reinforce the national identity of those children, taught them patriotic attitudes and often referred to the Polish traditions of different regions, e.g. Łowicz or Krakow. The kindergartens were usually located in the buildings of public schools,

and they functioned on a similar basis as the contemporary preschool departments in schools. The number of children varied, and, to some extent, it reflected the status of a given settlement which was subject to subsequent decisions on the relocation of the refugees. Also, the number of pupils changed as they grew up and joined the first classes of public schools (Chmielewski 2015: 93-94).

The kindergartens established in the Middle and Central East, India and Africa were at first financed by MPiOP, and later by the Polish educational authorities in exile, as well as by the II Polish Corps of Władysław Anders. On 5th June 1945, British authorities stopped financing the Polish Government's preschool initiatives, as a result of which the kindergartens in exile started to be supported by various organizations, such as The Interim Treasury Committee for Polish Questions – ITC, United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Administration – UNRRA, and International Refugee Organization – IRO. The settlement and kindergarten in Santa Rosa, Mexico, were almost completely financed by the government of the USA and the Polish community living in America (Chmielewski 2015: 26-32, 194, 200). The settlement in Pahiatua was financed by the government of New Zealand which invited the refugees upon its own initiative. The Polish government was only obliged to pay the salaries to the camp employees, including teachers (Skwarko 1972: 52).

The history of the Polish kindergartens in exile was mainly related to the history of the civilians evacuated from the Soviet Union (Chmielewski 2013b: 62, 63).

Iran

After transporting the refugees to India and Africa at the end of 1943, there were 9221 people in Iran, including 3933 in Teheran, 2834 – in Ahvaz, 2338 – in Isfahan, and 66 – in Mashhad. Due to the further evacuation of Polish citizens to Africa and New Zealand, in the middle of 1944 there were 5542 refugees in Iran (Wróbel 2003: 93). There were a lot of children among them. They required immediate and organised help. Public primary and secondary schools, as well as vocational schools were created. In July 1942, in Teheran, two large kindergartens (in camp no. 1 and 2) were created for Polish children evacuated from the Soviet Union. Later, especially in 1943, their number significantly increased (see table 1).

Table 1. Kindergartens in Iran

July 1942		November 1942		September 1943		November 1944		July 1945	
kindergartens	children	kindergartens	children	kindergartens	children	kindergartens	children	kindergartens	children
2	354	4	405	8	345	4	155	4	107

Source: IPMS, MWRiOP, kol. 548/14, T. Sulimirski, *Polish Education in Exile 1940-1950*.

Apart from Teheran, there were also kindergartens in Isfahan and Ahvaz, where large groups of the Polish citizens lived. The number of children attending those kindergartens constantly changed (e.g. due to the departures of the children to Africa, India, Mexico, New Zealand). A classical example of the “city of Polish children” was Isfahan with its hot climate, but quite good living conditions. Two kindergartens located in the city provided 24-hour care to the children whose parents were not in Iran (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19.II/7; IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19./I-14). There were also older children who attended primary schools, junior high schools, as well as courses in carpentry, ironwork, tailoring, or lace making. All of them were provided with loving care (*Zakłady* 1987: 29; *Przeździecka-Robińska* 1987: 151).

Among them there were many orphans whose parents died in Russia, Pahlevi or Teheran. Other children had only fathers who served in the army, far away. Some of them survived only due to the fact that, after their parents’ death, their slightly older siblings took care of them bravely. On 13th July 1942, a kindergarten in Establishment No. 10 was opened for those children in Isfahan. It included about 110 children, 5 teachers and a few housekeeping employees. Wiktoria Morawska was the principal of the kindergarten. Its building was named “a candy-box” because it looked very nice and was located among picturesque gardens and flower beds. It was full of sunshine and decorated with arabesques. It had bright walls, many windows and glass doors. The children – from babies to preschoolers under 7 – were gathered from the Establishments scattered all around the city [Isfahan – a note by W.Ch.]. After all those terrible experiences, diseases and journeys, they were pale, sad, apathetic and hungry. We had to treat each case individually, with a lot of understanding and love for the kids. The teachers were like mothers for them and, along with their peers, they created one big family. (Wenserska-Krajewska 1987: 151)

Other groups of children and adolescents were coming in the next months, which resulted in the necessity to create new caring and educational establishments. The Establishment No. 8 for children under 7, i.e. the kindergarten in Julfa, was

created (Starzyk 1987: 154). In 1944, the Establishment No. 10 collected children at the preschool age (mainly orphans and half-orphans) who later sailed to New Zealand (Starzyk 1987: 154).

The following are the names of teachers working in the Iranian kindergartens, establishments and boarding schools (the same person often worked with the youngest and the oldest children): Aniela Bauer, Stanisława Bojanowska, Janina Chlebiak, Zofia Gmaj, Zofia Jurewicz, Maria Kłodawa, Felicja Kruszyńska, Maria Lewicka, Maria Nemetz, Janina Pawlik, Łucja Powiecka, Józefa Radomska, Jadwiga Sobieniewska, Maria Sołowiej, Ludmiła Strigłowa, Teresa Szymańska, Zygmunt Tymków, Stanisława Witkowska, Helena Wróblewska, Ewa Zawada, Janina Zielińska (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A.19. II/6).

After the war, the Polish citizens left Iran, and – in 1946 – went to the Middle East and further, to Great Britain and other countries, almost in all the continents. Some refugees returned to Poland. Polish educational institutions, including kindergartens, were closed in Iran.

Palestine

In 1942, gradual evacuation of the refugees from Iran to Palestine took place. Several Polish establishments with Junak and civil schools were created there. The primary and secondary Schools of Young Female Volunteers, as well as Junak auxiliary vocational schools were particularly popular (*Powstanie* 1976: 32-36). In the Middle East – especially in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, a group of Polish university students was also formed (Rymarska-Kosińska 1976: 198, 199). The largest group of refugees – ca. 1000 people, lived in 1944 in Jerusalem. Other settlements in Palestine, which included several hundred Polish citizens, were located in Tel Aviv, Ain Karem and Jaffa (Draus 1993: 113, 114, 118, 119). In the first three of the above mentioned cities, Polish kindergartens were created. At first, two kindergartens were functioning in Palestine. One of them was closed in the middle of 1943, and the other one still functioned in Tel Aviv. It was located in a large room, in a public Palestinian school. The classes were conducted from Monday to Friday, from 8.30 until 12.30. Twenty children participated in them. MWRiOP equipped the kindergarten with table games, toys and paper-cuts. Also, the ministry maintained the place and paid for children's lunches. Jadwiga Barnticka, who completed two years of a pedagogical secondary school, was successfully conducting classes in the kindergarten.

The representation of MWRiOP aimed at opening another establishment and restoring the work of the kindergarten that had been closed not so long before. It was assumed that in both newly opened preschool institutions about 30 children shall participate in the classes (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A.19. II/115). The initiatives that were

taken brought good results. On 1st September 1944 there were three kindergartens located in the buildings of Palestinian public schools: a kindergarten in Tel Aviv (28 children), Jerusalem (26 children) and Ain Karem (8 children). Next year, the kindergarten in Ain Karem was closed due to the lack of children, so only two establishments remained: Jerusalem (34 children) and Tel Aviv. The latter only included 14 children, because the children of Jewish parents were partially moved to similar Jewish institutions. The staff of the kindergartens consisted of: Tel Aviv – Jadwiga Bartnicka (Dahlke) and Zofia Gallotówna (assistant), Ain Karem – Zofia Miziniak (teacher) and Jadwiga Wodzicka (assistant), Jerusalem – Celina Buszyna (director), Janina Pawłowska (teacher). The teachers usually performed the function of kindergarten principals (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19.II/6; IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. III/11).

Also, it has to be noted that due to the inflow of refugees to Lebanon, in 1945/46 Polish authorities tried to open kindergartens in Souk and Ajaltoun in Lebanon (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. III/11).

In the opinion of the parents, the Palestinian kindergartens performed their tasks very well. According to the educational authorities, the classes were on a high level, according to the pedagogical requirements. The kindergarten in Jerusalem had the best educational results and the largest number of children (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. III/11). It was a Junak establishment located in the old part of the city. Its buildings and equipment were appropriate. The teachers were patriots and often referred to the national tradition and the history of Poland. According to 5-year-old Danusia, the Junak kindergarten was bright and spacious. It consisted of three large rooms and a kitchen. There were colourful pictures on the walls and flowers in each room. On the shelves there were toys and board games. Every day, the children prayed together, took some physical exercise and recited poems. While playing in the playground, the children made sand buildings, e.g. Krak Mound, and the teacher told them stories about Kraków, the former capital of Poland. The children were fed with, e.g. sandwiches, a mug of hot milk, as well as peeled bananas and apples. The children felt well in the kindergarten; they played, sang, and tried to make friends, but they always missed their families and they were looking forward to their fathers' return from the army. According to an anonymous author who described the photos, this waiting was what made the kindergarten different from similar places (*Nasze Przedszkole* 1945: 4).

India

The first transports of refugees – 586 children (orphans and half-orphans) came to Jamnagar near Balachadi, India, in May 1942 (Maresch [Polonik] 2002: 47). On 1st October 1943, the number of the refugees in the whole sub-continent increased to

3886 (AAN, MPiOS, sign. 85). Three months later, on 31st December the same year, in several settlements and camps in India, the number of Polish citizens was the largest – 5246 (AAN, MPiOS, sign. 85), but soon – on 31st January 1944, the number of refugees from Poland decreased to 4426 (836 of them left, including 797 to Eastern Africa) (AAN, MPiOS, sign. 85). There were a lot of young people evacuated to India from the Soviet Union – especially girls, as well as women and preschool and school children. Some of the youngest children were accommodated in kindergartens. In Valivade, near Kolhapur, in May 1943 there were two establishments of this type for 50 children, conducted by two kindergarten teachers (AAN, MPiOS, sign. 85). Soon the number of kindergartens increased (see table 2).

Table 2. Polish kindergartens in India according to the status on 31 July 1943

Settlement, camp	Kindergartens	Children	Teachers
Karachi Country Club (camp)	1	50	2
Malir (camp)	1	25	1
Valivade	2	*	*
Jamnagar	1	45	2

*No data. Source: AAN, MPiOS, sign. 85. *Report of the Representation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Care for the time up to the end of May 1943*, k. 86 a. *ibidem*, *educational data valid on 31 July 1943*, k. 52.

In September 1943, there were 81 Polish children in Indian kindergartens. According to the information given by Michał Goławski, the director of the Polish Educational Action in India at that time, a few months before, the number of children included in organized forms of preschool education was higher (it is confirmed by the data included in table 2). The number decreased due to the fact that some children went to the settlement of Santa Rosa in Mexico. Also, constant displacement of children and adolescents in newly created camps and settlements resulted in the fact that the number of children in the kindergartens was changing all the time (IPMS, Representation of MWRiOP in India, sign. A.23/16).

Table 3. Children in preschool education in India at the end of 1943

Settlement	children	teachers	including unqualified teachers
Valivade	135	6	2
Karachi	26	2	1
Jamnagar	45	2	1

Source: IPMS, Representation of MWRiOP in India, sign. A. 23/16, *the representative's report for the 4th quarter of 1943*.

In terms of organisation, the kindergartens were connected with the public schools, and their teachers were supervised by the school principals. The preschool establishments were the places in which the children were prepared for the first grade of school. Four out of ten kindergarten employees in India were unqualified. In order to improve this situation, the representative of MWRiOP in Bombay, Michał Goławski, decided to organize a holiday course for kindergarten (IPMS, Representation of MWRiOP in India, sign. A.23/16). On 2nd January 1944, in the sub-continent of India there were 5 kindergartens with 221 Polish children (IPMS, MSZ, sign. A.11E/705; Tomaszewska [Loszek], Pniewska 2002: 404). All the establishments were well equipped with toys and games. The classes, conducted by the teacher, took place in the morning in classrooms and outdoors. In the afternoon, the children were supervised by nannies who watched the children playing in the sand box, or walked with them in the neighbourhood. The principal of the kindergarten in Balachadi-Jamnagar was Janina Dobrostańska. Six Polish children in this establishment were under 24-hour care. All the children underwent periodic medical examinations and dental treatment. On the basis of the doctor's instruction, every day the children were given appropriate amounts of fish oil, vitamins and calcium. Since malaria gradually disappeared in the region, the doctor stopped giving them quinine, but they were vaccinated against cholera and smallpox. All the children were gaining weight. The kindergarten took active part in the life of the environment, e.g. on 29th January 1944 the children made a performance in the local cultural centre, during which they recited poems, sang, danced and played different roles (AAN, MPiOS, sign. 86). At the end of January 1944 the kindergarten in this settlement included 26 Polish children and 2 Anglo-Indian children (AAN, MPiOS, sign. 86).

In the school year 1945/1946 in India there were only three Polish kindergartens in Valivade. They functioned by the Primary School No. 1 (20 children), Primary School No. 2 (23 children), and Primary School No. 3 (21 children). There was one head teacher (headmaster) in each kindergarten (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A.19. III/16). As the preschool children grew up and went to the first class of the primary

school, their number in the kindergartens decreased. In some reports those institutions were treated as one kindergarten. The head teachers received the same salaries as ordinary teachers, and they were subject to the principals of the primary schools. The kindergarten teachers included Zofia Hołub, Stefania Mazurkiewicz, Maria Skibińska and Alina Żabina (Tomaszewska [Loszek], Pniewska 2002: 404).

Due to the fact that the Polish citizens started left the hospitable Indian land in 1947, the kindergartens were closed.

Central-Eastern and Southern Africa

In Africa, Polish refugees lived in settlements that were made especially for them. They were transported to Africa from the Middle and Central East, and from India. The general number of refugees and inhabitants of particular settlements was gradually increasing. The first Polish refugees (the so-called Cyprian group) came to Northern Rhodesia in the middle of August 1941 (Wróbel, Wróbel 1992: 142). During the World War II, about 1300 Poles came to Northern Africa (Maghreb) (Knopek 2000: 81). On 27th August 1942, 1400 refugees arrived in the Tanga port in Eastern Africa. The same year, in October, the number of Polish refugees in the area was close to 10 thousand (Chmielewski 2008: 61). On 3rd December 1944 in the Central-Eastern and Southern Africa there was 18.245 Polish citizens, including 7924 children and adolescents (Wróbel 2003: 160). According to one of the supervisors of the young generation of Poles in Africa, – Fr. Łucjan Z. Królikowski OFMConv, in 1940s of the 20th century about 19 thousand Polish people moved to and out of Africa at different times (the largest group of Poles in Tengeru included almost 4 thousand people) (Królikowski 2008: 136). There were a lot of children and young people among the Polish citizens in Central-Eastern Africa. They constituted from 40% to more than 50% inhabitants of 22 settlements created for them in several countries and British Dominions (Chmielewski 2008: 62). The demographic structure of the Polish community in Africa required the creation of a schooling and caring system there, which was not easy in such unstable conditions. Polish citizens needed institutions such as orphanages, various kinds of schools, as well as a number of kindergartens (Chmielewski 2008: 66, 67; Wróbel, Wróbel 1992: 162-164). The location of kindergartens in Africa, and the number of their children in particular years is presented in table 4.

Table 4. Kindergartens in Central-Eastern and Southern Africa in 1943-1946

Country	Settlement	1943		1944		1945		1946	
		kindergartens	children	kindergartens	children	kindergartens	children	kindergartens	children
Uganda*	Masindi	1	166	1	88	1	86	2	80
	Koja	1	94	1	82	1	54	3	57
Tanganyika	Ifunda	1	26	1	18	1	19	1	12
	Kindugala	1	24	1	32	1	23	1	23
	Kondea	1	23	-	-	-	-	1	19
	Morogoro	-	-	1	20	1	35	-	-
	Tengeru	4	130	1	93	1	70	1	79
Northern Rhodesia	Abercorn	-	-	1	21	1	18	1	13
	Bwana M'Kubwa	1	22	1	30	1	15	1	24
	Lusaka	1	50	1	16	1	17	1	24
Southern Rhodesia	Marandellas	1	22	1	11	1	16	1	13
	Rusape	1	25	1	20	1	21	1	23
Kenya	Rongai	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	14
Union of Southern Africa	Oudthoroon	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	-
Total		13	582	12	437	11	374	15	381

* The names of countries are as they were at that time. Source: IPMS, MWRiOP, kol. 548/14, T. Sulimirski, *Polish education in exile 1940-1950*; W. Chmielewski 2008: 61.

According to the data included in table 4, the largest group of Polish children in Africa was in 1943, i.e. at the beginning of the settlement of Poles in that continent. Their number was gradually decreasing, as the eldest preschool years went to primary schools. Most preschool children lived in Masindi, Koji and Tengeru. In 1946, in Masindi and Koji the number of kindergartens noticeably increased. It was because at the end of time when Polish refugees stayed in Africa, those settlements played the

function of collective settlements. The refugees from other African locations were gathered there, and then they could go to the countries of permanent residence. It particularly applied to Koji which played the role of such a collective settlement until 1948. Due to hot weather, the children in Koji were wearing “tropical helmets” (Sulkiewicz 1995: 150). The forms and methods of work in the African kindergartens were similar to those in other Polish kindergartens in exile.

Mexico

Another country to which Polish refugees came was Mexico. Due to the negotiations between general Władysław Sikorski – the Polish Prime Minister, and the Mexican government, at the end of December 1942, 1432 people came to the Santa Rosa settlement in July and November 1943 (Chmielewski 2015: 22-26, 40, 42, 43). There were 574 children (40%) among them. The opening of the kindergarten, which consisted of one room of 42 m², was celebrated on 16th August 1943. The largest number of children attending the kindergarten was in November 1943 – 52 preschoolers, including 21 girls (Chmielewski 2015: 43, 90, 91). “All the children came from the eastern parts of Poland The group of children included 6 orphans and 10 half-orphans (total 31%) (7 children had no mothers, 3 children had not fathers). Twenty-five children had fathers in the army, the fathers of 2 of them died, and 10 of them lost at least one parent in the Soviet Union” (Chmielewski 2015: 92). The principal of the kindergarten was a qualified teacher Florentyna Kulibaba. Kazimiera Klimek helped her as a nanny (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A.19.II/6).

At the end of 1945, 17 children stayed in the kindergarten. In 1946, the establishment was closed by its current principal – Stanisława Łukaszczyk. The kindergarten was generously financed by the National Catholic Welfare Conference from the USA. Two activists from the Polish community in America were particularly efficient in organising such support: Renata Rączkowska and Helena Sadowska. The whole Santa Rosa settlement was closed on 31st December 1946 (Chmielewski 2015: 92-94, 194).

New Zealand

In 1944, 733 children and 105 adults – mainly teachers and carers – arrived in New Zealand. All of them were placed in the Pahiatua camp on 1st November (IPMS, MSZ, sign. A. 11. E/1202). Two primary schools, a junior high school, a tailoring course and a kindergarten was created there (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. III/17). The kindergarten worked 24 hours a day. It offered beds for 56 children. The kindergarten was located in one of the camp barracks. There was a corridor in the middle of

the barrack. On one side boys were living and sleeping, and on the other side – girls. The staff members had their rooms in the kindergarten building, but the teachers and nannies often slept in the barrack with the children. At first, Jadwiga Tietze was the principal of the kindergarten, and then – Salomea Surynt. The educational and caring tasks were fulfilled by the following teachers and nannies: Maria Bednarska, Stanisława Lewandowska, Katarzyna Łakoma, Maria Węgrzyn, and the librarian Anna Teresa Rubisz (Skwarko 1972: 130, 131, 163; Manterys et al. 2006: 192, 194). A lot of time was dedicated to upbringing. It is because a lot of children were orphans or had their parents in the army, in the Soviet Union, or in Polish refugee camps located in different regions of the world. Thus, working with the children was difficult and the teachers tried to care for them like mothers. Here is a fragment of the memories of a woman who supervised sleeping boys in the kindergarten in Pahiatua:

In the morning I woke them up and took them to the bathroom. Some of them were not able to get dressed on their own, so I helped them. In winter the boys were wearing stockings and socks on top of them. At that time rubber garters were used. The boys were constantly losing them and I lost a lot of time to find them. Then I told the boys to stand in two rows, we prayed and sang: *Kiedy ranne wstają zorze* [When the Sun Rises – a religious morning song]. Then, I led the children in pairs to the dining room. They only had half an hour to eat breakfast. Some children were only sitting and looking at the plate. Sometimes I did not manage to feed all of them. Every three weeks I had to supervise older boys who were to wash up after the meals. Sometimes the boys managed to run away and I had to wash up myself. When it was done, I called the cook to check the dishes. If he found a greasy plate, he told me to wash everything anew. It was a huge burden, because in the barrack I still had to make the beds, wash the floors, and wash the children's clothes almost every day. After lunch, the kindergarten children went to sleep. At that time, Mrs Lewandowska had a rest, too, and I watched the kids. Some of them slept, but others were making noise. I had to put a lot of effort into keeping them quiet. (Manterys et al. 2006: 195, 196)

The kindergarten was functioning for a few years. Every year the number of children decreased, because as they grew up, they were moved to the first classes of primary schools. At the end of the last quarter of 1945, the kindergarten group only included 48 children, including 27 girls (IPMS, MSZ, sign. A. 11. E/504). In February 1946, only 22 children were attending the kindergarten (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. III/17). In 1947, the issue of adjusting the children and adolescents to living in New Zealand appeared. Polish educational institutions were being closed. Learning English became very important in the education of the young generation. In the first quarter of 1949, the government of New Zealand closed the Polish settlement in Pahiatua (IPMS, MSZ, sign. A. 11.E/1202).

II Polish Corps

The kindergartens organised and supervised by the educational authorities (command) of the II Polish Corps were particularly interesting. Two of those establishments, located in Palestine (we have already mentioned them – Jerusalem and Ain Karem), were subject both to civil and military authorities.

The II Corps kindergartens in Italy, Austria and Germany were only subject to the military Educational Department commanded by lieutenant colonel – professor Jerzy Stanisław Aleksandrowicz (before the war he was a member-correspondent of the Polish Academy of Learning, a rector of the Academy of Veterinary in Lviv, and – for a short time – an undersecretary of the state in MWRiOP) who, at the same time, was a representative of MWRiOP in London dealing with the army of Anders. The kindergartens created in Austria and Bavaria, and other establishments supervised by the Polish army, included the children of parents who were forced to move to those countries during the war and have not yet managed to get back to Poland, as well as the children of AK soldiers who came to those countries from Poland (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19.IV/4). Table 5 presents the condition of the II Corps kindergartens a few months before the corps left Italy.

Table 5. The kindergartens supervised by the Department of Education of the II Corps – status on 16th February 1946

Country	The number of		
	kindergartens	children	teachers
Italy (Barletta, Trani)	2	129	no data
Austria	10	201	15
Germany (Bavaria)	3	75	3
Palestine	2	48	5
Total	17	453	23

Source: IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19.III/28, *Report on the arrival of Polish kindergarten children and teachers in Great Britain, after they had been moved from Italy and Middle East*; ibidem, sign. A. 19. IV/4, *Report on educational work in the II Corps and camps for civilians protected by II Corps*.

While analysing the data from table 5, we have to admit that the number of army's kindergartens and children attending them was large, taking into account the difficult post-war reality. Austria was particularly active in this respect. Also, in Italy the

number of children included in the organised form of preschool education was high. After evacuating the army of Anders from Italy to Great Britain, those kindergartens were closed, especially because they were no longer financed by UNRRA.

In the first half of 1946, there were several kindergartens in France. According to the data of the Department of Education of ITC, directed by Tadeusz Sulimirski, there were 33 kindergartens with 1859 children there. There was also one kindergarten (with 11 children) in Algiers (IPMS, MWRiOP, sign. A. 19. III/ 116 – part I). According to such data, one may say that, in the Western Europe, there were a lot of children in the institutionalised preschool education, subject to the Polish government in London.

Conclusion

To sum it up, we can say that the Polish authorities in exile and the refugees themselves truly cared for the youngest generation of Poles who were forced to live abroad during the war. In each large settlement of the Polish citizens kindergartens were opened. Not only did they aim at providing the proper care and upbringing to the children, but they also maintained the pupils' national identity and prepared them to return to Poland after the war. It is confirmed by scarce but reliable information on the fulfillment of educational curricula in the kindergartens. It is also proved by the patriotic atmosphere in the Polish settlements and camps abroad, in which Polish preschool children grew up. It was of great importance, because many of those children were orphans, half-orphans, or so-called "detached" ones, i.e. children living far from their parents, often without the opportunity to see them again.

It is worth mentioning that the kindergartens were created in the area of the representations of all London educational authorities and the representations of the Ministry of Labour and Social Care in Iran, Jerusalem, Bombay, Nairobi, Santa Rosa and Pahiataua. It is confirmed by the archival materials quoted in this article. Sometimes the establishments were opened despite the lack of proper buildings, teachers and educational aids. Some of them employed unqualified but devoted people who often took care of the children 24 hours a day. The outline of kindergarten education in exile, presented in this article, requires further, detailed research resulting in extensive publications.

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