

MIDDLE EAST CAMPS

602

Middle East Camps  
602

CROSS REFERENCE SHEET

DATE

19 September 1946

CROSS INDEX

Middle East Camp - 602

251 - (Military)

Philippville Camp - 602

Morra Camps - 602

NARC - 602

TO

E. Reesman Fryer

FROM

Keith Aickin and J. Benson Saks

SUMMARY

Arrangements with Militart Authorities and Interested Governments with Regard  
to UNRRA Camps

RECORD FILED

630 - UNRRA

TYPIST

kw

DATE

24 September 1946



*Middle East Camps 602*

3 August 1945

TO: Mr. Alex Daderkin  
FROM: C. M. Pierce  
SUBJECT: UNRRA Responsibility for Refugee Camps in Middle East

Some time ago you asked for my interpretation of the UNRRA responsibility with reference to the refugee camps in the Middle East, North Africa, Iran, India, etc. that were not operated by UNRRA.

I attach herewith for your information a set of documents pertaining to the original takeover of UNRRA responsibility in the Middle East. May I refer you to Governor Lehman's letter of April 3, 1944 addressed to Lord Moyne, Minister Resident in the Middle East. The fourth paragraph of this letter states that UNRRA assumes the responsibility for general supervision of the movement of these refugees within the area. This was confirmed in a letter from A. W. G. Randall of the Foreign Office to Mr. Hugh Jackson dated March 8, 1944. You will note Lord Moyne's letter, in reply to Governor Lehman, under date of April 5, 1944, regrets that UNRRA did not assume more responsibility. A definite stipulation of what UNRRA did assume is contained in Randall's letter of April 18, 1944 to Mr. Jackson, paragraph 4.

In operation UNRRA has never fully assumed the obligations which it undertook on the basis of this agreement. There are district offices established in Iran and Palestine. Actually the control of the movement of refugees is still undertaken by the Minister Resident's office in conjunction with the military, although UNRRA was urged repeatedly to assume this function. There can be little doubt that we are responsible for it until such time as this responsibility is passed on formally to another agency.

If you would like to discuss this matter with me, I would be happy to do so at your convenience.

Attachment

*Cmp*



*Middle East Camps - 602*  
*X Middle East Camps - 636 ✓*  
*X 640 ✓*  
*X 400 - Sayre, Francis B. ✓*

18 June 1945

TO: Francis B. Sayre

FROM: Fred K. Hoehler

SUBJECT: X Some Problems Which You May Encounter in the Middle East.

X There are several pressing problems for UNRRA in the Middle East which undoubtedly will be referred to your attention for suggestions for action on the part of UNRRA. I thought it might be well to suggest what some of these might be so that you might have a certain amount of preparation. Wherever possible I will give you as much background information as we have at present at our disposal.

As a result of the taking over of MERRA by UNRRA on 1 May 1944 UNRRA definitely accepted certain responsibilities which up to that time were a part of the program of the British organization. These responsibilities entailed the operation of refugee camps in Egypt, Palestine and Syria for Greek and Yugoslav refugees numbering approximately 40,000. In addition, MERRA had been responsible for the control of movements of refugees throughout the Middle East, Iran, India and East Africa. UNRRA assumed this responsibility as well, and upon requests of the Member Governments concerned, assumed the responsibility for repatriation of approximately 60,000 Greek and Polish refugees in addition to the 40,000 refugees maintained in UNRRA camps. These additional refugees, for which UNRRA assumed only repatriation responsibility, were Greeks maintained in camps by the Greek Government in Palestine, in and around Jerusalem, and Lebanon, in and around Beirut, in Ethiopia, in camps in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. UNRRA accepted responsibility for repatriation also of Greek refugees in Cyprus maintained by the Cyprus Government, in Belgian Congo, maintained by the Congo Government, and in Tanganyika, maintained by the Territorial Government. To date UNRRA has accepted no responsibility for maintenance of Polish refugees but has, at the request of the Polish Government, accepted responsibility for their repatriation. These refugees are at present located in Iran, in the centers of Teheran, Isfahan, and Ahwaz. These centers are run by a



18 June 1945

Delegatura of the London Polish Government on money borrowed from the British. Other Polish centers coming under the jurisdiction of UNRRA for repatriation purposes are located in India, at Karachi, Jamnagar, Chela, Panchghani, Kolapur. With the exception of Karachi, the Polish camps in India are operated by a Delegatura of the London Polish Government on money borrowed from the British. Karachi Camp is operated by the Indian army. A considerable number of camps for Polish refugees for whom UNRRA has accepted responsibility for repatriation also exist in British territories in East Africa. These territories comprise Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia, and Union of South Africa.

Therefore UNRRA accepted responsibility for the care and maintenance of refugees in UNRRA camps as follows:

El Shatt	25,000 partisan Yugoslavs
Tolumbat	3,000 partisan Yugoslavs
Moses Wells	3,000 Greeks
El Arish	300 Royalist Yugoslavs
Museriat	6,000 Dodecanese and 2,000 Greeks
Aleppo	500 Greeks and mixed nationalities.

The additional responsibilities for repatriation only involve 1,000 Greeks in and near Beirut, 1000 Greeks in and near Jerusalem, approximately 6,000 Greeks and Dodecanese in Cyprus, approximately 4500 Poles in Iran, approximately 5,500 Poles in India, approximately 17,000 Poles in East Africa, approximately 1500 Greeks in Ethiopia, approximately 2500 Greeks in Belgian Congo and approximately 500 Greeks in Tanganyika.

In addition, UNRRA has accepted responsibility for repatriation of certain Poles in residences in Palestine numbering from 12 to 20 thousand. These Poles are not in camps but are supported on cash monthly grants by a Delegatura of the Polish London Government, on money borrowed from the British. Not all these Poles are supported on such cash grants but the estimated number of Polish refugees in Palestine is extremely difficult to obtain and the figures which might be supplied by the Polish Consul General to Jerusalem are unreliable. Recently UNRRA has been requested to repatriate approximately 2,000 Czechs from Palestine.

Beginning in April of 1945 UNRRA started to repatriate the Greeks and partisan Yugoslavs. The present schedules contemplate that the total group of partisan Yugoslavs who wish repatriation will be returned home by the middle of August. By early fall all the Greeks in the UNRRA camps should be repatriated. This will leave a residual group in the UNRRA camps in the Middle East of 300 Royalist Yugoslavs, approximately 6,000 Dodecanese, and in the neighborhood of 1,000 partisan Yugoslavs who do not wish repatriation. The Dodecanese cannot be repatriated



18 June 1945

at this time because of the conditions in the Dodecanese Islands. Until the food situation is materially improved and until certainly the Islands are rehabilitated, any material repatriation of the Dodecanese will be difficult. For example, 1,500 refugees in Nuseriat are from the Island of Kastelorizo and there are only 12 houses on this island still standing.

The repatriation of refugees from Cyprus should be accomplished either simultaneously with the repatriation of the Greeks from the Middle East or follow very soon in the wake of such repatriation. The UNRRA camps will probably be required for transit purposes for the Greek refugees, at least for those being repatriated from Ethiopia, Belgian Congo and Tanganyika. It will be extremely difficult if not impossible to secure shipping going directly from East African ports to the Greek Islands to which these people belong. Therefore camps for stateless and Dodecanese in the Middle East in addition to transit facilities for repatriation will be required.

No difficulties need be anticipated for repatriation of the Greeks. The residual problems will be rehabilitation of the Dodecanese Islands to receive those refugees, disposition of the Royalist and the dissident partisan Yugoslav refugees and disposition of the Polish refugees. The 300 Royalist Yugoslav refugees have been officially declared stateless by the Yugoslav Government. The individual refugees concerned have been referred to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. The dissident Partisan refugees will undoubtedly also be declared stateless and must be referred to the Intergovernmental Committee.

The Polish problem represents one which will be brought forcefully to you at once. Without exception all the Poles are at present maintained on money borrowed from the British Government. For your information, these Poles are largely from the eastern part of Poland, which has been acquired by USSR. When Germany invaded Poland from the west, USSR advanced from the East. Approximately a million Poles were taken into central Russia. As a result of an agreement between the British Government, the Polish Government in London, and USSR, potential recruits for the Polish army plus their families were released from Russia to Iran. These recruits have formed a great majority of the Polish troops which fought with the Allied armies in Italy. The refugees in Palestine, Iran, India, and East Africa for the most part represent relatives of members of the Polish army. Both the recruits in the Polish army and the refugees in the camps and elsewhere have very strong resentment against USSR as a result of the treatment they allege they received in Russia. It would be difficult to overemphasize their anti-Russian tendencies and consequent resentment against the provisional government in Poland. If offered an opportunity, there is no doubt that an extremely small percentage of these people would be willing to return to Poland which is under the direct influence of USSR. If, however, they thought that the



18 June 1945

Polish Government would represent interests similar to those now in the London Government practically all the refugees would accept repatriation.

The Poles in Palestine are a considerable concern to the government in control there. These particular refugees represent the more privileged group of Polish exiles. Out of the refugees coming from Russia the government employees, industrialists and professional people were largely diverted to Palestine. They are predominantly pro-London Government but there are enough liberal thinkers among them so that considerable tension is developing within the Polish group between proponents of the London Government and the provisional government. The British are concerned over the possibility of actual conflict between these two groups and their sympathizers. The Poles in Palestine represent a very serious problem in as much as the cost of living there is extremely high. There is pressure on the part of the British to get the Poles out of Iran. Here too the cost of living is tremendously inflated with the result that the maintenance of the Poles is extremely costly. The Poles themselves are becoming alarmed at the possibility of the withdrawal of British and American troops from Iran. The Poles in India are reasonably well off in rather comfortable camps. There is a considerable amount of resentment at being confined to camp situations on the part of the refugees and a considerable amount of resentment on the part of the Indian Government for having to support it. The Poles in East Africa are presenting a rather serious problem to the Colonial Administration there in as much as these refugees would not conform to standards and patterns of living traditional for Europeans in these areas. In certain areas the Poles outnumber the British Colonials 3 or 4 to 1. Also, the Polish Camps are proving to be a rather considerable drain on the economy of some of these territories. What has proved to be a principal criticism has been the alleged miscegenation between the Polish women in the camps and negroes. It might be expected that that will be the strongest pressure on the Territorial Governments to expel the Poles at the earliest opportunity.

The Polish camps in Iran and India have been thoroughly surveyed by representatives of the Displaced Persons Division of the Cairo office. By the time you reach Cairo nearly all the Polish camps in Africa will have been surveyed. As a result of reports received from these representatives, the conclusions as stated in this memorandum are based upon objective evidence secured by these surveys. The maintenance of the Polish refugees in Palestine, Iran, India and East Africa is a considerable financial burden to the British Government. There have been indications that the British Government would officially request UNRRA to undertake this responsibility. The Displaced Persons representative in India discovered in the files of the Refugee Agent a



18 June 1945

letter from Anthony Eden to the Indian Government and the East African territories stating that he planned to request UNRRA in the strongest possible terms to assume responsibility for the maintenance of these Poles. Whether or not this letter and the decision obtained therein antedated the decision of Prime Minister Churchill to extend Empire citizenship to the Poles is not clear. Quite obviously the political situation within Poland itself will be a strong factor in determining the attitude of the British Government with reference to these Poles and UNRRA. It is difficult to predict the future but it might be expected that Poland will for some time to come be under the direct influence of USSR. If that is the case it may be expected that all except a small number of the Polish refugees will refuse to be returned to Poland. If the Polish Government follows the traditional pattern of the Yugoslav Government the refusal of these refugees to be repatriated will be followed by a declaration depriving them of Polish citizenship. Unless the British Government extends citizenship to this group they will then become stateless. Officials in Cairo attached to the British Government are extremely dubious that Empire citizenship can be extended to any except a small group of these Poles and then under conditions which would make it extremely difficult to obtain.

It would appear at first thought that these stateless Poles would be the responsibility of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. According to the terms of an understanding between Governor Lehman and Sir Herbert Emerson, UNRRA would undertake to provide care for stateless persons up to a period of six months and the Intergovernmental Committee would assume responsibility for such stateless persons after the expiration of the six-month period. At this time I believe it would be unwise for UNRRA to assume that the Intergovernmental Committee would assume such obligations for two very good reasons:

1. The Intergovernmental Committee has distinct financial limitations which at this time would prevent them from assuming such extensive obligations.

2. The Intergovernmental Committee organization provides that before any such obligations are undertaken the matter must be approved by the executive committee and by the governments of Great Britain and the United States, which are the two contributors to the operations expenses of this organization. Historically the Intergovernmental Committee was established to provide care for persons made stateless by the Nazi government. As such, their responsibilities were underwritten by the governments of Great Britain and the United States. Such refugees contemplated in their original terms of reference antedated this war. It does not seem either logical or feasible that the governments of Great Britain and the United States by themselves



18 June 1945

would want to assume the obligations of support of stateless persons created as a result of the political difficulties within their countries. It would appear more likely that they would want to spread such a financial burden over a broader international base. England, which is supporting this group entirely at this time, would only divest itself of 50 per cent of its burden if the maintenance of this group were undertaken by the Intergovernmental Committee. This same logic applies to the 300 Royalist Yugoslavs now in UNRRA camps in the Middle East, augmented by an estimated thousand dissident Partisan refugees. The Royalist refugees have been referred to the Intergovernmental Committee. There is no evidence at hand to indicate that they have accepted this responsibility. It is quite likely that the governments of Great Britain and the United States will refuse to allow the Intergovernmental Committee to accept such a responsibility and insist that UNRRA retain financial responsibility for a period of time in addition to the six month period. Therefore it is well to bear in mind that the UNRRA camps in the Middle East, although they may reach a residual load, will encounter extreme difficulties when faced with the problem of complete liquidation.

It is well to comment briefly on the hazards involved if UNRRA were to assume responsibility with reference to the Poles. With USSR being represented on the Council of UNRRA and the possibility that any agreed upon government of Poland would be also represented, UNRRA would be faced with the greatest possible pressure to return these Poles to Poland against their will. Also, the governments of the USSR and Poland will challenge the continuing expense for maintenance of these groups antagonistic to these governments. Furthermore, UNRRA would be faced with extreme difficulties in determining a place in the world where these people could be maintained. Generally speaking, there is no place in the world where they would be entirely acceptable so that difficulties with any host government might be expected. These Poles themselves will be extremely difficult to handle. They will have strong and sympathetic support from Polish groups in the United States, particularly religious groups. This Polish question is truly one of the most involved and difficult with which UNRRA will be faced.

The other problem which will be presented to you will be the extent to which UNRRA is willing to control the movements of refugees in the parts of the world formerly under the jurisdiction of MERRA. This is a responsibility formally accepted by UNRRA which UNRRA has never performed. The authorities in Egypt, Iran, India and Iraq and probably Africa may very well ask you what UNRRA is prepared to do about assuming such responsibilities. Actually this is distinctly an UNRRA job and one which should be undertaken at the earliest possible date. The reason why it has been neglected so far is because of the reluctance on the part of the Middle East office to establish the necessary outposts and decentralized responsibility to accomplish such a job.



18 June 1945

As the camp and repatriation responsibilities in the Middle East diminish it would appear logical to establish in that headquarters a clearance office for outlying posts in Iran, India, Palestine, East Africa, etc., for the coordination of movement information and the transmission of authorization for the movement of refugees in that part of the world. This is quite apt to be put to you in the strongest possible terms by the military authorities of the British Persian Command, 9th Army in Syria and Iraq, Indian Army, and by general headquarters in Cairo. Generally speaking, the office of the Minister Resident in the Middle East is very disturbed that UNRRA is not undertaking these obligations.

Perhaps some comments on the general attitude toward UNRRA throughout the Middle East may prove helpful in evaluating statements of officials with whom you may have contact. The most outstanding and somewhat disturbing prevailing opinion about UNRRA is that it is an American organization. The fact that it represents all the United Nations had not sunk into the consciousness in that part of the world, largely because the principal officials of UNRRA with whom they have had dealings have been Americans. Although it is not accurate, the fact that UNRRA is viewed as an American organization has certain advantages in a part of the world where generally Americans are held in high regard by native states.

Another factor which merits consideration is that the sections of the world where you will visit have had little direct contact with the effects of this war. I feel confident that they have no compelling reasons to share responsibilities of relief and rehabilitation be it in terms of money or supplies. Securing contributions or allocations of supplies from these countries therefore is not an easy task. They are quite willing to accept all the financial benefits which an UNRRA mission in that country might provide if they did not have to contribute to its support. Generally speaking, the press throughout the Middle East and South Africa has followed the line generally prevailing in the British press in England. This, as you probably know, has been very critical of UNRRA, largely for its inactivity and for bureaucracy. As a result of this unfavorable publicity you may expect among the uninformed serious misconceptions as to UNRRA's functions and limitations.

If you have any specific questions you would like to secure further information on, I shall be happy to provide as much as there is at my disposal.



Telephone:  
LANGHAM 3090

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION,  
EUROPEAN REGIONAL OFFICE,

11, PORTLAND PLACE,

LONDON, W.1.

February 10, 1945.

My dear Governor:

Some time ago I sent you information to the effect that the Polish Government in London desired that UNRRA take over the operation of Polish Refugee Camps in the Middle East. This was conveyed to Mr. Pierce in Cairo, and recently I have had a communication from him urging that we delay any action on this matter until we receive a confidential report on conditions in such camps as have been established for Polish Refugees in the Middle East and East Africa.

Shortly after I received Mr. Pierce's communication, Mr. Nowicki of the Polish Ministry of Social Welfare in London called on me to say that his Government asks that UNRRA should take no immediate action on their request relative to these camps. I informed Mr. Nowicki that we would postpone any step toward assuming responsibility for the camps referred to until we heard from them again. At such time we would have to go into the matter very carefully before a decision could be made.

Faithfully yours,

Fred K. Hoehler.

Governor Herbert H. Lehman.

Cc. Mr. C. Pierce, Cairo.  
Sir Frederick Leith Ross.

DIRECTOR  
FEB 23 1945  
UNRRA

11973



FORM AD-87  
(25 FEB 1946)

UNRRA

CROSS REFERENCE SHEET

DATE

19 August 1944

CROSS INDEX

Merra Camp - 670

Middle East Camp - 602

TO

M. C. McIntosh

FROM

E. R. Fryer

SUMMARY

Information on Middle East Camps

RECORD FILED

Middle East Camps - 670

TYPIST

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DATE

30 October 1946